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Peter Szendy FRANCE

Embodying Music

The author

Peter Szendy (born 1966 in Paris) is a French philosopher and musicologist.

He teaches at the Universit e de Paris X Nanterre and is a consultant to IRCAM (Institut de Recherche et Coordination Acoustique/Musique), an organization that has been a pioneer in electroacoustic innovation and a mecca for contemporary music. His * coute, une histoire de nos oreilles* (Listen, A History of Our Ears) is a critique of Romantic and Modernist conceptions of listening. Paying close attention to arrangements as « signed listenings » and to the juridical history of the listener, Szendy suggests an alternative model based on deconstruction: listening, he argues (quoting C. P. E. Bach), is a « tolerated theft », and our ears are always already haunted by the ear of the other.

In *Sur  coute. Esth tique de l'espionnage* (2007), he draws on Foucault's analysis of the Panopticon and Deleuze's Postscript on the Societies of Control in order to show how the act of listening always entails issues of power and dominion. *Sur  coute* proposes an archeology of overhearing, following many paths, from the Bible to spy movies like Hitchcock's *Torn Curtain* or Coppola's *The Conversation*.

In *Membres fant mes : des corps musiciens* (2002), Szendy rethinks the concept of body as construed in the history of Western musical thought and sketches the outlines of a « general organology » based on the rhetorical concept of « effiction ». In his book on Moby Dick (*Prophecies of Leviathan. Reading Past Melville*), he develops a theory of reading as prophecy, while reassessing Derrida's famous sentence: « il n'y a pas de hors-texte ».

Bibliography

Kant in the Land of Extraterrestrials: Cosmopolitical Philosophies (Fordham University Press, 2013)

Hits: Philosophy in the Jukebox (Fordham University Press, 2011) translated by Will Bishop

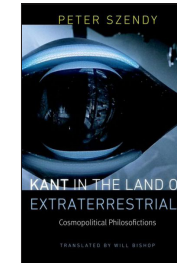
Prophecies of Leviathan: Reading Past Melville (Fordham University Press, 2010)

Listen: A History of Our Ears (Fordham University Press, 2008)

Thursday Oct 10th | 7.30 | NYLA

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Kant in the Land of Extraterrestrials: Cosmopolitical Philosophies (Fordham University Press, 2013)



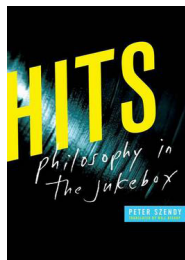
"Yes, Kant did indeed speak of extraterrestrials." This phrase could provide the opening for this brief treatise of philosophofiction (as one speaks of science fiction). What is revealed in the aliens of which Kant speaks and he no doubt took them more seriously than anyone else in the history of philosophy are the limits of globalization, or what Kant called cosmopolitanism.

Before engaging Kantian considerations of the inhabitants of other worlds, before comprehending his reasoned alienology, this book works its way through an analysis of the star wars raging above our heads in the guise of international treaties regulating the law of space, including the cosmopirates that Carl Schmitt sometimes mentions in his late writings.

Turning to track the comings and goings of extraterrestrials in Kant's work, Szendy reveals that they are the necessary condition for an unattainable definition of humanity. Impossible to represent, escaping any possible experience, they are nonetheless inscribed both at the heart of the sensible and as an Archimedean point from whose perspective the interweavings of the sensible can be viewed.

Reading Kant in dialogue with science fiction films (films he seems already to have seen) involves making him speak of questions now pressing in upon us: our endangered planet, ecology, a war of the worlds. But it also means attempting to think, with or beyond Kant, what a point of view might be.

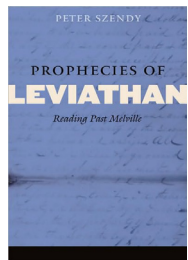
Hits: Philosophy in the Jukebox (Fordham University Press, 2011) translated by Will Bishop



Hits: Philosophy in the Jukebox is an extraordinary foray into what Apple has convinced us is the soundtrack of our lives. How does music come to inhabit us, to possess and haunt us? What does it mean that a piece of music can insert itself-Szendy's term for

this, borrowed from German, is the earworm-into our ears and minds? In this book, Peter Szendy probes the ever-growing and ever more global phenomenon of the hit song. Hits is the culmination of years of singular attentiveness to the unheard, the unheard-of, and the overheard, as well as of listening as it occurs when one pays anything but attention. Szendy takes us through our musical bodies, by way of members and instruments, playing and governing apparatuses, psychic and cinematic doublings, political and economic musings. The hit song, Szendy concludes, functions like a myth, a force of repetition that grows by force of repetition. In the repetition generated by the song's relation to itself, Szendy locates its production as a fetishized commodity, a self-producing structure, and a self-desiring machine. Like a Deleuzian machine, then, the hit song is a technology of the self, or better, a technology of rule, a bio-melo-technology. After reading this book, one can no longer avoid realizing that music is more than a soundtrack: It is the condition of our lives. We are all melomaniacs, Szendy tells us in his unique style of writing and of thought. We are melo-obsessive subjects, not so much driven to a frenzy by a music we hardly have time to listen to as governed and ruled by it.

Prophecies of Leviathan: Reading Past Melville (Fordham University Press, 2010)



In his brilliant and thorough afterword, Gil Anidjar situates Prophecies of Leviathan among Szendy's other works and shows how the seemingly tautological self-prophecy really announces a new "ipsology," a "pluralization of the self" through a "narcissism of the other thing."

Listen: A History of Our Ears (Fordham University Press, 2008)



In this intimate meditation on listening, Peter Szendy examines what the role of the listener is, and has been, through the centuries. The role of the composer is clear, as is the role of the musician, but where exactly does the listener stand in relation to the music s/he listens to?

What is the responsibility of the listener? Does a listener have any rights, as the author and composer have copyright? Szendy explains his love of musical arrangement (since arrangements allow him to listen to someone listening to music), and wonders whether it is possible in other ways to convey to others how we ourselves listen to music. How can we share our actual hearing with others? Along the way, he examines the evolution of copyright laws as applied to musical works and takes us into the courtroom to examine different debates on what we are and aren't allowed to listen to, and to witness the fine line between musical borrowing and outright plagiarism. Finally, he examines the recent phenomenon of DJs and digital compilations, and wonders how technology has affected our habits of listening and has changed listening from a passive exercise to an active one, whereby one can jump from track to track or play only selected pieces.