

23 The Recording That Never Wanted to Be Heard and Other Stories of Sonification

[Get access >](#)

Jonathan Sterne, Mitchell Akiyama

<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195388947.013.0115> Pages 544–560**Published:** 21 November 2012

Abstract

This article uses the story of the phonautograph as a way of investigating the development of a cluster of practices called “sonification,” or the transformation of nonsonic data into audible sound. It begins with introducing the phonautograph and reasons as to why its study is relevant under the field of sound studies. It considers the possibility of listening to a phonautograph recording as marking an aesthetic and epistemic shift in the history of sound. It then reviews a range of practices of sonification, all of which move data and experience between the sonic and nonsonic registers. This study advances three nested methodological propositions. It argues for attending to the modularity of sensory technologies, modularity of the relations between senses, subjects, and technologies, modularity of the senses themselves. Finally, the article concludes by returning to the case of the phonautograph in order to advance some speculative propositions regarding the present conjuncture in the history of sound.

Keywords: [phonautograph](#), [sonification](#), [nonsonic data](#), [audible sound](#), [modularity](#)

Subject: [Applied Music](#), [Sound Studies](#), [Music](#)

Series: [Oxford Handbooks](#)

Collection: [Oxford Handbooks Online](#)

You do not currently have access to this chapter.

Sign in

 [Get help with access](#)

Personal account

- Sign in with email/username & password
- Get email alerts
- Save searches
- Purchase content
- Activate your purchase/trial code
- Add your ORCID iD

Sign in >

[Register](#)

Institutional access



Sign in through your institution

[Sign in through your institution](#)

[Sign in with a library card](#)

[Sign in with username/password](#)

[Recommend to your librarian](#)

Institutional account management

[Sign in as administrator](#)

Purchase

Institutions

Flexible purchasing options

Browse products >

Individuals

[Recommend to your librarian](#)

Buy on Amazon >