

THE WILLIAM AND MYRTLE HARRIS DISTINGUISHED LECTURE
SERIES IN SCIENCE AND CIVILIZATION



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**THURSDAY,
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4 PM (PDT) // CHEN 100, CHEN
NEUROSCIENCE RESEARCH BUILDING

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ENGINEERING FIDELITY: EARLY RADIO AND THE TRAUTONIUM IN BERLIN IN THE 1920s AND '30s

This talk analyzes the collaborations between radio engineers, physicists, physiologists, and musicians in Berlin during the 1920s and '30s. The skills, practices, and techniques relevant to the improvement in the fidelity of radio broadcasting were relevant to the invention of the most important German electronic musical instrument, the trautonium. This instrument was initially popular since it could replace a myriad of more traditional musical instruments due to its ability to alter its tone color. After the War, it became an important instrument for sound effects in Hollywood and West German films.

Myles W. Jackson, an internationally renowned historian of science whose breadth of research extends from molecular biology and physics to intellectual property and privacy issues. He is the author of three books: *Spectrum of Belief: Joseph von Fraunhofer and the Craft of Precision Optics* (MIT Press, 2000), *Harmonious Triads: Physicists, Musicians, and Instrument Makers in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (MIT Press, 2006), and *The Genealogy of a Gene: Patents, HIV/AIDS and Race* (MIT Press, 2015). In addition to two volumes he edited and co-edited, respectively, *Perspective on Science: Gene Patenting* (MIT Press, 2015) and *Music, Sound, and the Laboratory from 1750–1980* (Chicago University Press, 2013), Jackson has published more than fifty articles, book chapters, and encyclopedia entries on the history of science and technology from the Scientific Revolution to the present.

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