

**Katharine Ellis**

Professor of Music

Director of Research

University of Cambridge

*Thinking Institutionally about the French Opera Industry*

In this seminar I think about the art of the possible (and of the impossible) in the writing of operatic histories of France between the 1830s and the 1930s. Drawing on the archival sources of my current book project on provincial France, I explore how the kinds of research questions to which we can plausibly gain good answers differ as between resident-company opera, touring-company opera, open-air opera, operetta, and café-concert. The career structures of theatre workers, from singers and dancers to timpanists and backstage staff, are also brought into play. Understanding the changing strictures within which opera worked proves to be crucial in writing empathetically about an industry which operated, for the most part, against the odds.