

## La Gaîté lyrique, Paris, France : Information + Images

Contemporary Parisian cultural building by Manuelle Gautrand

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### La Gaîté lyrique Paris

Architect: Manuelle Gautrand



photographs © Jean Harixcalde

#### Editorial by Bertrand Delanoë, Mayor of Paris

At the confluence of past and future, here is the new Gaîté lyrique. This historic place, which echoed with the sounds of so many familiar melodies that are part of our common cultural landscape, is re-opening to a new life, one dedicated to digital culture.



photographs © Philippe Ruault

The digital arts are a genuine and developed art form, a reality that we want to showcase by devoting this unique venue to them, in the heart of Paris. It's a form of expression to be taken as such in its originality and its diversity, through its multiple dimensions, from design to cinema, from music to live performance. La Gaîté lyrique will bring this culture to life, for the evolution of our capital.

A city for all kinds of inspiration, for all generations, a city where youth seizes life and its promises, Paris thus opens itself up, ever more, to creativity.

Thank you to all those who made this moment possible. And long live the new Gaîté lyrique.



photographs © Philippe Ruault

#### Editorial by Christophe Girard Deputy Mayor in Charge of Cultural affairs

In 1862, the same year as the Théâtre de la Ville and the Théâtre du Châtelet, the Théâtre de la Gaîté lyrique was inaugurated. Nearly 150 years later, I am delighted that this important venue of Parisian culture is coming back to life after being closed to the public for over twenty years.



photographs © Philippe Ruault

After enjoying its days of glory, from operettas by Jacques Offenbach to productions staged by Silvia Monfort, this prestigious theatre was on the decline. The transformation of the space into a theme park in 1989 was a real fiasco, both financially and in terms of cultural heritage. The beautiful Italian style room of the theatre was completely destroyed and 400 million francs (61 million Euro) were sunk into the project. Abandoned since 1991, la Gaîté lyrique had even been ironically nicknamed "The Sad Mute" by local residents. Bertrand Delanoë, motivated by the desire to bring this historic place back to life, decided, as soon as he was elected in 2001, to save and renovate this magnificent 9500 m2 building in the heart of Paris.

In the midst of a digital revolution that is profoundly transforming our society, Paris is about to inaugurate a major venue dedicated to digital culture. Far from being a mere witness to technological upheavals, la Gaîté lyrique intends to become a place of reference, of continual evolution, that makes sense of these innovations through artists and invention.



photographs © Philippe Ruault

The challenge facing la Gaîté lyrique, an ideal laboratory for the cultural mutations of our time, is considerable: to explore the enormous potential of digital art forms, through a

stimulating mixture of music, graphic design, film, video games, design, fashion, performing arts and festivities. I can't wait to discover the latest 2.0 and 3D nuggets by virtuoso digital artists.

I invite Parisians to come and explore la Gaîté lyrique and make it their own, a place of interactive multi-sensory experiences, a place of experimentation and exchange, a place accessible to all generations. Without a doubt, a joyful effervescence waits for you there.

La Gaîté lyrique Paris location plan + external facade + axo proposal:



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**Forward by Patrick Zelnik President of la Gaîté lyrique & Jérôme Delormas  
Director of la Gaîté lyrique**

Connecting the Theatre of la Gaîté lyrique to digital art forms and contemporary music may seem paradoxical, not to mention incongruous. But what about internet cafes set up in the middle of the Jordanian desert, a few kilometers away from Petra... in some countries, cell phones are available before running water is. Modernity exists only by opposition to tradition.

Japan, then China, moved violently from feudalism and traditional crafts to high end industries. In Paris, the Peï pyramid or Buren's columns have audaciously found (or imposed) their place among historical sites: the Louvre, the gardens of the Palais-Royal. As for the Centre Pompidou, it's been compared to an oil refinery.

La Gaîté lyrique Paris interior prior to works + redevelopment:



images © Manuelle Gautrand

The Theatre of la Gaîté lyrique is inaugurated in 1862. On this same date, Thomas Edison - the son of a used goods dealer - starts working at the telegraph office of Port Huron in Michigan (USA). While there, in 1864, he invents a duplex telegraph making it possible to send two messages on one wire in opposite ways. But above all, while working there he invents the first phonograph, in 1877, which is to the music industry what the printing press is to the book industry. Inventions, scientific discoveries, are factors in social and economic progress. But they also produce resistance, controversy and anxiety. Some people were afraid to speak into the first telephones for fear of losing their voice.



photograph © Vincent Fillon

On a more serious level, the negative effects can be dramatic. Albert Einstein, born in 1879, declared on the eve of the detonation of the first atomic bomb that his  $e=mc^2$  equation was the "greatest mistake of his life". It is to be hoped that the inventors of the Internet make no such declaration in coming years. The digital language, based on binary code (0 and 1), was born in the 1960's but only began to develop in the 1980's, thanks to the mass industrialization of computers between 1980 and 2000. The digital revolution took place for certain technologies and services that use digital calculations: digital television, digital radio, digital telephones, compact discs, DVDs, etc. As for the Internet, it was conceived in the United States in the 1970's and imposed on the general public in the 1990's.

La Gaîté lyrique is interested in the digital world from a creative angle. Historically, advancements in technology have become precious tools for artists. They have also raised the stakes. George Méliès, born in 1861, was one of the originators of special effects in film. Similarly, the Lumière brothers (born in 1862 and 1864) brought about the development of the film industry. In the 1960's, the evolution of video was a significant contributing factor in the rebirth of the visual arts and pop music. The DVD, digital television or 3D create new challenges for artists: design, graphic art, film, animation, visual arts, multimedia shows, music, etc.

The history of la Gaîté lyrique coincides with the history of technological innovation. They are of the same "era". Today, the project that is bringing la Gaîté back to life is set on exploring our era. It's the era of digital revolutions that upset our lifestyles, our relationship to knowledge, our ways of thinking about the world, our social relationships. Artistic creation is also deeply transformed.

For some, new technologies produce increasingly individual behaviors, yet their usage leads to the observation that our societies have a great need for collective, group experiences. Video games can be a collective experience, the networks are vehicles for the community, the music video turns into an audiovisual concert, the portable Internet changes the way in which images and music are produced, consumed and shared.

A place to experience life, la Gaîté lyrique puts these technological upheavals to the test. La Gaîté lyrique feeds the debate about the stakes of the digital revolution in progress and thus puts into perspective some of the most innovative and exciting creative productions of our time.



photographs © Vincent Fillon

## La Gaîté lyrique Opening

Wednesday March 2nd, 2011

5 days of discovery: from Wednesday March 2nd to Sunday March 5, 2011

In 1862: The Theatre of la Gaîté lyrique is inaugurated.

In 2011: la Gaîté lyrique returns to the forefront under the initiative of Bertrand Delanoë, Mayor of Paris, and Christophe Girard, Deputy Mayor in Charge of Cultural Affairs, who are motivated by the desire to bring this leading venue of Parisian culture back to life. The direction of la Gaîté lyrique is entrusted to Jérôme Delormas.

La Gaîté lyrique is a Cultural Institution of the City of Paris, assigned by DSP (Délégation de Service Public) to naïve, the Troisième Pôle and INEO, a subsidiary of GDF SUEZ. Its board of directors is led by Patrick Zelnik, President, Steven Hearn, Vice-president, and Sylvie Dao, Administrator.

From the phonograph to the iPad and from the movie projector to 3D, innovations in technology are at the root of the evolutions that followed. They have always been precious tools for artists and creative endeavors. La Gaîté lyrique is not only a witness to these upheavals, it is also a stage for the evolving creative expression of our time.

On March 2nd, 2011, la Gaîté lyrique opens in the heart of Paris and provides, on a daily basis, a meeting point between technology, art and the public. La Gaîté lyrique, an open-minded place open to the world year round, explores digital culture in all its shapes and forms: from music to graphic art, video games, film, and including theatre, dance, fashion, design, architecture...

The 7-floor, 9700 m<sup>2</sup> building has been completely reinvented by architect Manuelle Gautrand.



photograph © Regis Grima

La Gaîté lyrique Paris images / information from Manuelle Gautrand architecte