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VISITING PROGRAM

TSVP TALK

A Brief History of Hawking Radiation

2026

THU.

Feb. 5

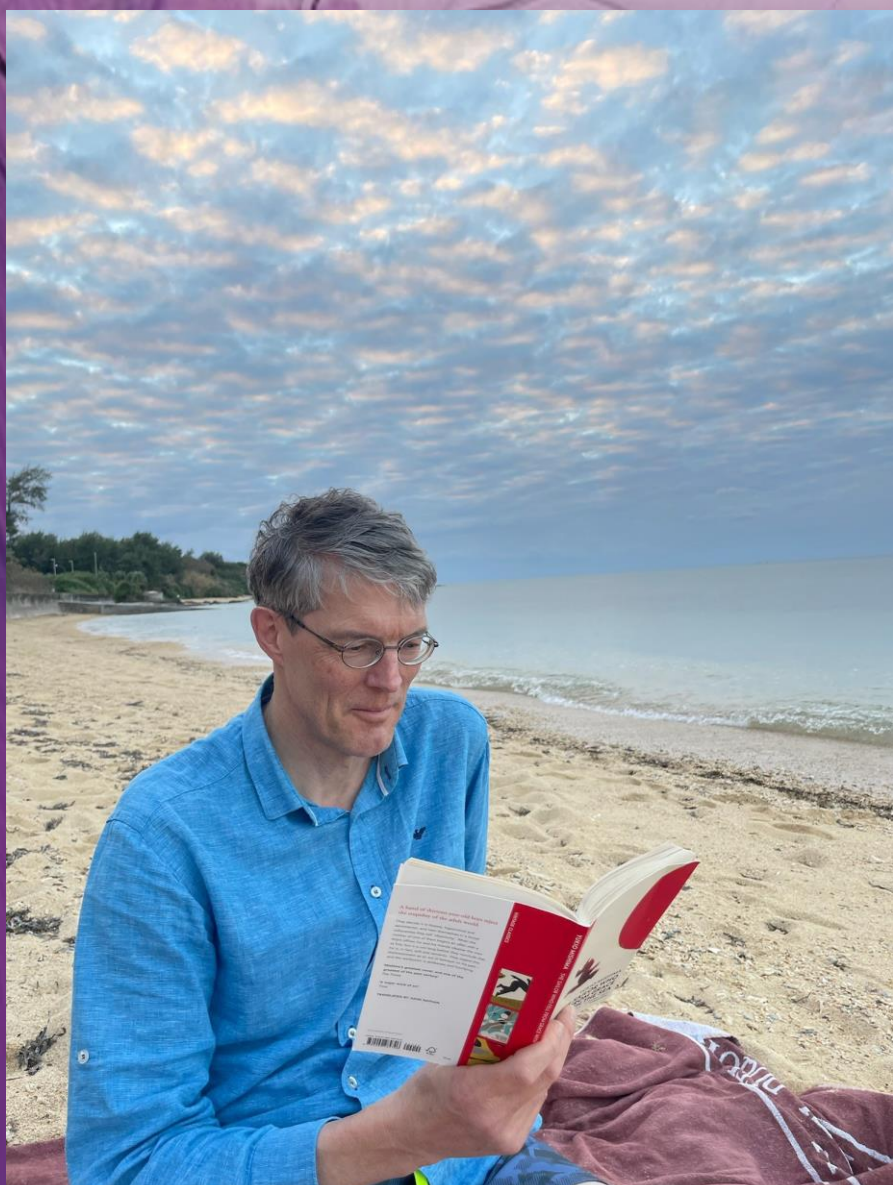
15:00–16:00

HYBRID

L5D23, ZOOM



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'It is fair to say that Stephen's discovery ranks as one of the most important results ever in fundamental physics.' This is what colleagues of Stephen Hawking (1942-2018) wrote in his obituary as a Fellow of the Royal Society, referring to his prediction from 1974 that black holes radiate and eventually evaporate. I will explain this discovery and its context to non-experts, but the main point of the talk will be to discuss its fascinating history and even psychology, using primary sources, Hawking's archive at Cambridge University Library, other historical documents, as well as oral history. The central figure in this history turns out to be Russian bomb veteran Yakov Zeldovich, against traditional history that assigns a crucial role to John Wheeler's group in Princeton. I will also review Hawking's earlier work and style, and pose a question: exactly how does 'singular genius' relate to 'collective achievement'? (Joint work with Jeroen van Dongen, University of Amsterdam)

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Klaas Landsman

Klaas Landsman is a Dutch mathematical physicist who is also active in the history and philosophy of science and as such founded the Radboud Center for Natural Philosophy in Nijmegen, The Netherlands, in 2023. He is the author of more than a 100 scientific papers, two monographs on quantum theory, a textbook on general relativity, and several popular science books.

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