

Lecture by Lorraine Plourde

Distracted Listening: Background Music, Noise, and Ambient Sounds in Recessionary Tokyo

July 15, 2010 (Thur), 5:00 pm – 6:30 pm, Room 301 (Building 10, 3F)



In the public spaces of urban Japan, one's every movement is mediated through sound. Japan's soundscapes—including subway melodies, crosswalk jingles, and background music in cafes—are frequently described as chaotic and cluttered, while Tokyo residents are often characterized as complacent and unable to resist such aural noise. This talk examines the relation between Tokyo's dense soundscape with the emergence of new modes of listening, focusing on experimental musical forms including noise music and *onkyo*, a minimal, improvised form of electronic music that demands a heightened sense of hearing. The talk considers the notion that the audience's sense of hearing has changed as a result of listening to *onkyo*, as well as the broader implications of losing and regaining one's senses and the disciplinization of aurality in post-bubble Tokyo.

Lorraine Plourde is a Lecturer in Anthropology and Media, Society, and the Arts at SUNY Purchase. She received her PhD in Sociocultural Anthropology from Columbia University in 2009 and her MA in Ethnomusicology from the University of Washington. She is currently working on her book manuscript, "Difficult Music: The Politics of Listening and Aurality in Tokyo," an ethnography that examines experimental listening practices, spectatorship, and print media consumption in Tokyo's avant-garde music and art scenes.



Lecture in English / No registration necessary