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### The sounding object and musical meaning

Electroacoustic music of today draws on a far wider domain of sonic material than did the note-based music of the past. Potential musical material now includes any and all sound: pitched or noisy, intentional or accidental, human-, machine-, or nature-made. Furthermore, recording, synthesis, processing, and loudspeaker technologies temporally and spatially separate our listening experience from sounding sources. The expanded space of sound along with the mediated experience that technologies engender have created a crisis in our understanding of musical meaning. At the center of the crisis is the role that objects play with all of their physical and symbolic meaning-potential.

For traditional western music, references outside the intrinsic structure of the sonic material per se have been considered extra-musical. The pioneering composer and researcher Pierre Schaffer began working with recorded sound material some 60 years ago and developed a “reduced” listening strategy for music which perpetuated the denial of a musical role for extrinsic references in favour of the sound itself. Today, composers and theorists explore many types of relationships between sounds and sources, and the dichotomy between intrinsic and extrinsic musical relationships now seems artificial.

I will elaborate on an “ecological” theory of listening that postulates an active listener engaged in theorizing and testing hypothesis about potential interactions with sounding objects. This leads naturally to a common approach to understanding the electroacoustic music of the past 60 years and more recent interactive sonic arts.

#### **About the Speaker**

[Lonce Wyse](#) wrote his first electronic music piece in 1974. He studied composition at Interlochen Arts Academy and Oberlin Conservatory, received a BS in Math and Computer Science, and has a Ph.D. from Boston University in Cognitive and Neural Systems. He spent a year in Taiwan on a Fulbright Scholarship building computational models of pitch perception before settling in Singapore. He directed interactive sound modeling research at the Mixed Media Modeling Lab in the Institute for Infocomm Research until 2006. He is currently an Associate Professor of Communications and New Media at the National University of Singapore, and directs the Arts and Creativity Lab at the Interactive and Digital Media Institute.

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