



The Soundscape of Modernity: Architectural Acoustics and the Culture of Listening in America, 1900--1933 (MIT Press)

By *Emily Thompson*

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In this history of aural culture in early-twentieth-century America, Emily Thompson charts dramatic transformations in what people heard and how they listened. What they heard was a new kind of sound that was the product of modern technology. They listened as newly critical consumers of aural commodities. By examining the technologies that produced this sound, as well as the culture that enthusiastically consumed it, Thompson recovers a lost dimension of the Machine Age and deepens our understanding of the experience of change that characterized the era.

Reverberation equations, sound meters, microphones, and acoustical tiles were deployed in places as varied as Boston's Symphony Hall, New York's office skyscrapers, and the soundstages of Hollywood. The control provided by these technologies, however, was applied in ways that denied the particularity of place, and the diverse spaces of modern America began to sound alike as a universal new sound predominated. Although this sound -- clear, direct, efficient, and nonreverberant -- had little to say about the physical spaces in which it was produced, it speaks volumes about the culture that created it. By listening to it, Thompson constructs a compelling new account of the experience of modernity in America.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In a pioneering study of America's culture of listening, University of Pennsylvania professor of the history and sociology of science Emily Thompson depicts a culture busily rationalizing, quantifying and taming sound in *The Soundscape of Modernity: Architectural Acoustics and the Culture of Listening in America 1900 1933*. Beginning with the extraordinary (and little known) career of architectural engineer Wallace Sabine, from his felt-covered acoustical correction of the Rhode Island House of Representatives to his role in the influential design of Boston's Symphony Hall, Thompson analyzes the checkered (and ultimately futile) history of noise abatement and the implications of the introduction of electronics. Her account culminates in the design and construction of Rockefeller Center, and is powered throughout by the utopianism of the scientists, architects and engineers she depicts.

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Review

This book takes on entirely new territory in the still-emerging scholarship on our aural history and does so with panache and clarity. It is an exemplar of how the history of technology and culture should be done.

(Susan Douglas, Catherine Neafie Kellogg Professor, University of Michigan)

A good book opens your eyes; this one opens your ears as well.

(Stuart W. Leslie, Department of the History of Science, Medicine and Technology, The Johns Hopkins University)

...an absorbing book, as accessible in its technical content as it is provocative in its cultural interpretations.

(Daniel J. Kevles *The New York Review of Books*)

...enlivened by copious photographs and architectural illustrations -- a valuable source.

(Tom Perchard *The Wire (UK)*)

This is a marvelous book and a seminal primer on how and why technology modified our taste.

(Derek Sugden *The Architectural Review*)

Thompson's narrative is elegantly written and wonderfully engaging.

(Leon Botstein, Los Angeles Times Book Review)

The Soundscape of Modernity describes the modern development of acoustics in wonderful and easily understood detail.

(John Bishop *The American Organist*)

From the Inside Flap

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--Stuart W. Leslie, Department of the History of Science, Medicine and Technology, The Johns Hopkins University

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Erik Figaro:

The reason why? Because this *The Soundscape of Modernity: Architectural Acoustics and the Culture of Listening in America, 1900--1933* (MIT Press) is an unordinary book that the inside of the guide waiting for you to snap that but latter it will zap you with the secret the idea inside. Reading this book next to it was fantastic author who write the book in such incredible way makes the content on the inside easier to

understand, entertaining technique but still convey the meaning totally. So , it is good for you for not hesitating having this nowadays or you going to regret it. This book will give you a lot of positive aspects than the other book have such as help improving your talent and your critical thinking means. So , still want to postpone having that book? If I were you I will go to the reserve store hurriedly.

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