

# Kinema Club Conference XIV @ Meiji University 21.-23. November 2014

## Friday, 21. November

- 16:00 Film Screening at the National Film Center  
*Bakudan hanayome*, by Saitō Torajirō, 1934, silent, 22 min.  
*Joriku dai-ippo*, by Shimazu Yasujirō, 1933, sound, 88 min. (English subtitles)

## Saturday, 22. November

- 10:30 Keynote Lecture  
UEDA Manabu: *Changes of Cinematic Spaces in Japan from the Silent Era to the Talkie Era* (in Japanese)
- 12:00 Lunch Break
- 13:30 Johan NORDSTROM: *Technology and Aesthetics at Studio P.C.L. – Towards Liveness in the Sound Image*
- 14:15 Aragorn QUINN: *A Shinsengumi for the Proletariat. Murayama Tomoyoshi's rensageki production of Shinsengumi* (1937)
- 15:00 Coffee Break
- 15:30 Lauri KITSNIK: *Lipreading and Sleptalking. The Transition from Silent to Sound in the Film Scripts of Fushimi Akira*
- 16:15 Woojeong JOO: *Sound as Promotion. Advertisement in/out of Gosho Heinosuke's Hanayome no negoto* (1933)

## Sunday, 23. November

- 10:30 Jonathan M. HALL: *From Silent Affect to Sound Abstraction. Revisiting Inagaki Taruho*
- 11:15 Yuna DE LANNOY: *From Experimental Animation to anime. Analyzing the Soundscape of Ōfuji Noburō's Short Animations in the 1930s*
- 12:00 Lunch Break
- 13:30 NIITA Chie: *From the benshi's Voice to the Actor's Voice. Japanese Cinema and the Radio*
- 14:15 KIMATA Kimihiko: *Kishii Akira and the Jazz Age of P.C.L.* (in Japanese)
- 15:00 Coffee Break
- 15:30 Roundtable Discussion
- 17:00 End

Place: Meiji-University, Surugadai Campus (Kanda-Surugadai 1-1, Chiyoda-ku, Tōkyō), Liberty Tower, 8F, room 1087

organized by Susanne Schermann and Roland Domenig

## ABSTRACTS

**UEDA Manabu** (Waseda University)

*Changes of Cinematic Spaces in Japan from the Silent Era to the Talkie Era*

This paper argues how cinemas, apparatus of film acceptance, changed exhibition practices when the spread of sound in film advanced in Japan. This argument is primarily concerned with the following two points. First, the current research illustrates the change in architectural style of movie theaters. It clarifies the kinds of new equipment introduced to movie theaters during the transition from the silent film era to the talking film era as well as the ways through which changes in movie theater architecture influenced novel film representations transformed with the addition of sound. Second, it discusses the emergence of new live performances in the programs of movie theaters. Although live performances in movie theaters during the silent film era had common features and were combined with the film screening, such as a *katsuben* or a *rensageki*, these became independent programs in the talking film era. Performances such as a chat and a light comedy were separated from film screenings in movie theaters. We consider such a phenomenon of separation live performance from film representation in movie theaters from the viewpoint of modernity in the cities of Japan.

**Johan NORDSTROM** (Meiji Gakuin University)

*Technology and Aesthetics at Studio P.C.L. – Towards Liveness in the Sound Image*

During the 1930s, the ongoing process of mechanical sonorification of cinematic space in Japan gave birth to numerous technological solutions, facilitated by and coexisting with imported foreign technology. A cinema that, due to the presence of the *benshi*, had never really been silent found a new electronic voice in an era permeated by mechanical sound culture. In the vanguard of this technological development stood Studio P.C.L. (Photo Chemical Laboratory), which, with its modern facilities and sound recording equipment, came to be seen as a model for the modern sound film studio. P.C.L.'s innovative use of this new technology gave birth to a new Japanese genre of light entertainment, bright and upbeat, and often infused with music and song, sharing aesthetic traits of musical style, staging, and pacing with that of the urban variety stage such as the "Asakusa opera". These films, like the musical comedy revues on which they were often patterned, catered to the tastes of Tokyo's fast growing new urban middle class. This paper will investigate P.C.L.'s role in the development of the material sound image in 1930s Japan, and to a lesser extent its utilization of existing vaudeville and revue traditions, in terms of both content and talent. In so doing, it will shed light on how, in its early productions, the studio addressed in various ways the problem of the "lack of liveness" in recorded sound.

**Aragorn QUINN** (Stanford University)

*A Shinsengumi for the Proletariat: Murayama Tomoyoshi's rensageki Production of Shinsengumi*

The Shinsengumi was not an obvious choice for glorification in performance by a troupe with Marxist sympathies. After all, the group was the epitome of the Japanese feudal spirit, and they engaged in acts of brutal thuggery and extortion in order to stem the collapse of the Tokugawa Shogunate against the forces of the Meiji Restoration. Yet Murayama Tomoyoshi's 1937 *rensageki* production with the Zen'eiza troupe titled *Shinsengumi* did indeed attempt to recuperate the memory of the Shinsengumi into a tradition of resistance on behalf of the proletariat. Billed as a "talkie *rensageki*", a genre both fully theater and fully film, Murayama's production debuted long past the years when *rensageki* enjoyed its greatest popularity. This paper argues that Murayama nimbly utilized the hybridity inherent in the genre to play multiple performative temporalities against each other: it rewrote the past into a tale about Japan's leftist future through performance in the present. In doing so, it helped to codify conventions of historical drama that would help shape popular postwar television and film.

**Lauri KITSNIK** (University of Cambridge/Kyōto University)

*Lipreading and sleeptalking: The transition from silent to sound in the film scripts of Fushimi Akira*

The advent of sound in early 1930s Japan brought changes to all parts of film production and with it a considerable crisis. Its effect on screenwriting led to a number of notable writers falling silent while others made it across the divide and produced some of the most influential scripts of the era best remembered for the emerging revisionist *jidaigeki* and *shōshimin eiga*. Among writers excelling at the latter was Fushimi Akira, best known today for his long collaboration with the director Goshō Heinosuke. At the time, Fushimi steadily churned out first-rate original material while becoming notorious for his radical treatments of literary works in adaptation. By examining a number of Fushimi's scripts, this paper aims at bringing to the fore the severely understudied topic of screenwriting in Japanese. I will address both the silent era practice of reading dialogue from the actors' lips and how later whole film narratives were being structured around its sound elements. In addition, I will attempt to trace the screenwriter's own authorial voice in the descriptive passages of the script. In sum, this paper provides a new perspective on the 1930s scriptwriter trying to write and find a way around the talkie crisis.

**Woojeong JOO** (Nagoya University)

*Sound as Promotion: Advertisement in/out of Goshō Heinosuke's Hanayome no negoto (1933)*

The advancement of talkie was more a socio-cultural phenomenon than merely a technological change. In order to discuss this point, this paper investigates the role of cinematic sound as a promoting device either of the film itself or of extra-textual commercial product. From the silent era, Japanese film was deployed as a medium for promotion, for example in the form of product placement in association with various commodity manufacturers. The coming of sound in cinema was recognized by advertisers as a new opportunity to expand the ability of this promoting platform. Goshō Heinosuke's *Hanayome no negoto/The Bride Talks in Her Sleep* (1933) is a good example to clarify this connection between sound cinema and modern commodity culture. Through the leading actress Tanaka Kinuyo's voice, the film not only appeals to its male audiences with the suggestiveness of female voice in sleep, but also allows product placement in the text, which is also extra-textually synchronized with commercials on non-filmic media. Bringing in discourses of critics on this film and the examples of actual commercials using the motifs from the film, I will present how sound cinema was appropriated by and integrated into the modern commercial culture of Japan in the 1930s.

**Jonathan M HALL** (Pomona College)

*From Silent Affect to Sound Abstraction: Revisiting Inagaki Taruho*

Inagaki Taruho (1900–1977) occupies a curiously remote, but vital place within the Japanese canon of film criticism. No one would dispute Taruho's position as a key contributor to a Futurist movement that found in cinema a prime example of the mechanically emotive nature of a mass-machined affect. "The Russo-Japanese War," Taruho writes in reference to Japan's first decade of cinema, "was the first to use modernity's machinery, but so too never had there been such a romantic harmony between machine and man." In retrospect, contemporary critics also recognize Taruho as an early Japanese chronicler of silent cinema's international history and its relation to phonographic recording. The nature of sound in this transition from "silent" cinema to the talkies was something Taruho would continue to reflect upon through the 1960s and early 1970s in such essays as "Searching for Pathé's Red Cock." [1964/1970] This paper documents Taruho's attention to the internationalism, or global nature, of silent cinema's history and his retrospective uncovering of affective patterns within cinematic spectatorship as the sound-era began, the affective archaeology, we might call it, of transition-era cinema. Yet, by pursuing Taruho's specific interest in American vaudeville actors on the silver screen in the late 1920s and early 1930s, Harry Langdon (1884–1944) and Larry Semon

(1889–1928), this paper also pursues Taruho's extraordinary understanding of their screen performance as "an abstraction of the A-[anal-] sensibility." Fascinated by the movement from silent to sound cinema, Taruho was unique in recognizing the importance of cinema for its "reverse course for eros." As the boyishly innocent, still deadpan faces of Langdon and Semon reveal, Taruho must be recognized as Japan's first queer film theorist.

### **Yuna DE LANNOY**

*From experimental animation to anime: analysing the soundscape of Ōfuji Noburō's short animations in the 1930s*

This paper investigates the evolution of Japanese animation in the 1930s. The paper in particular presents Ōfuji Noburō's contribution to the early development of sound in Japanese animation. Throughout his career, Ōfuji experimented with such different techniques as stop-motion animation using Japanese *chiyogami* papers, cell animation as well as shadow pictures to create a unique synthesis of sound and image. Along with his other comedies, the paper examines such short pieces as *Muramatsuri* (1930) and *Haru no uta* (1931) and discusses how Ōfuji established his own aesthetic style independent from the mainstream Japanese animation of the time. Moreover, it considers Ōfuji's work in the context of the international boom for American cartoons during the late 1920s until the late 1930s and also in relation to the experimental animations by the European avant-garde artists in the same period. The paper analyses how Ōfuji aspired to transform animation into an artwork to be appreciated not only by children but also by broader spectatorship, and ultimately argues that he is indeed a forerunner of today's anime with their purportedly 'grown-up' contents.

### **NIITA Chie (Meiji Gakuin University)**

*From the Benshi's Voice to the Actor's Voice: Japanese Cinema and the Radio*

With the coming of sound, Japanese film industry began to cooperate with other sound media, including radio. After the 1925 start of radio broadcasts in Japan, radio drama versions of films were a popular genre alongside *rakugo* and *naniwabushi*. Roughly, there are two kinds of radio drama related to film. The first type is "film story" (*eiga-monogatari*); it was performed by famous *benshi*, and most of the source films were foreign, such as *Stella Dallas*. "Film story" was popular from 1927 to 1931, around the same time when talkies from abroad began to appear in Japanese movie theatres. The other type is "broadcast film drama" (*eiga-geki*), developed in the early 1930s. It featured the same cast as the film itself, and the source films were limited to Japanese. They resemble the contemporary radio dramas made in Hollywood (e.g. Lux Radio Theatre) that allowed audiences to hear the voices of the film's stars. This presentation will try to show that the radio helped change the mode of reception as well as production of Japanese cinema, from attending to the *benshi*'s voice to listening to the voice of the actor.

### **KIMATA Kimihiko**

*Kishii Akira and the Jazz Age of P.C.L.*

Kishii Akira is known as one of the biggest actors in Japanese film. Affiliated with the Sumō Club of Nihon University before entering the film world Kishii came to show himself at his best when he left the Nikkatsu studio of the silent period in order to join the newly established sound film studio P.C.L., a predecessor of Tōhō. A new singing comedian star was born. When singing his charming baby face and giant swaying body was a funny sight indeed, but he had an unflinching sense for Jazz and a beautifully sweet crooner voice in the fashion of a Bing Crosby, whom Kishii admired. In this presentation I will examine the appeal of Kishii Akira's songs and explore the Jazz Age of the P.C.L. studio.