

## Keynote Talk

**Deborah Wong (University of California, Riverside)**

### *Bio*

**Deborah Wong** teaches at the University of California, Riverside and is an ethnomusicologist. She specializes in the musics of Asian America and Thailand and holds an MA and PhD (1991) from the University of Michigan and a BA, *magna cum laude* (1982), in anthropology and music from the University of Pennsylvania. She has published two books: *Sounding the Center: History and Aesthetics in Thai Buddhist Ritual* (University of Chicago Press, 2001) addresses musicians' rituals and their implications for the cultural politics of Thai court music and dance in late 20th-century Bangkok, and *Speak It Louder: Asian Americans Making Music* (Routledge, 2004) focused on music, race, and identity work in a series of case studies including Southeast Asian immigrant musics, Chinese American and Japanese American jazz in the Bay Area, and Asian American hip-hop. She is a member of Satori Daiko, the performing group of the Taiko Center of Los Angeles, and her book in progress will address Japanese American drumming in California. She is President of the Society for Ethnomusicology for 2007-09. Dr. Wong is also a keynote speaker and course facilitator of the inaugural Summer Institute for Critical Studies in Improvisation at the University of Guelph.

### *Abstract*

#### **"Improvisation in American Taiko"**

Improvised solos in Japanese American drumming are a site of experimentation where ideas about tradition and intercultural fusion run into one another. They are also a place where fear and machismo crystallize, and where gendered ideas about skill are put front and center. Wong will show several video examples of taiko improvisation and will try to get inside the moment of free play.