

Modeling an Expansive Musical Body Politic

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Roadmap

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Ethnos & Demos

Internationalist and “American” Examples

“Primordial Attachments” vs “Civic Order”

The problem of capital

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The Detroit Urban Art Orchestra

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Conclusion

From:
Francis, Emerich K.
1965. *Ethnos und
Demos: Soziologische
Beiträge zur
Volkstheorie*. Berlin:
Duncker und Humblot.

Ethnos

implies a community bound by shared lifeworld. As the root of “Ethnography” and “Ethnomusicology,” Ethnos suggests a community characterized more by homogeneity of worldviews and lifeways

Demos

Social agents in this community work together in a relational, but overtly rules-based manner to mediate their differences. There’s more implicit plurality of worldview in a Demos.



Internationalist Aesthetics (it's a small global village after all...)

An outcome of 20th century efforts toward market-based globalization

Nationalist “American” Aesthetics

(a very incomplete list)

“Indianist” composers, e.g., Edward MacDowell and Arthur Farwell

Populist moves such as such as Copeland’s *Appalachian Spring*, or even Gunther Schuller’s third-stream music

Nationalized organizations such as Washington National Opera and National Symphony Orchestra



Trump later [trolled](#) the Center on Truth Social with an AI-generated image of himself as a conductor with a caption that reads, "Welcome to the New Kennedy Center!"



Donald Trump as Kennedy Center conductor / Truth Social

"Since our doors opened in 1971, we have had a collaborative relationship with every presidential administration," the statement said. "Since that time, the Kennedy Center has had a bi-partisan board of trustees that has supported the arts in a non-partisan fashion."



The National Symphony Orchestra Persists despite *all the things*

Still centering a WAM aesthetic and centering the canon, BUT, addresses American plurality through diverse programming and featuring contemporary works by composers such as artists-in-residence like Carlos Simon and has featured Dolly Parton and Ledisi in December 2024, Kendrick Lamar back in 2015. This month alone they've premiered *American Promise*, an NSO commission by Karen LeFrak, Peter Boyer and Joe Sohm's musico-visual work *American Mosaic*, and for tonight they've programmed the Kennedy Center Citizen Artist Fellow Reena Esmail's new double concerto.

“Primordial Attachments” vs “Civic Order”

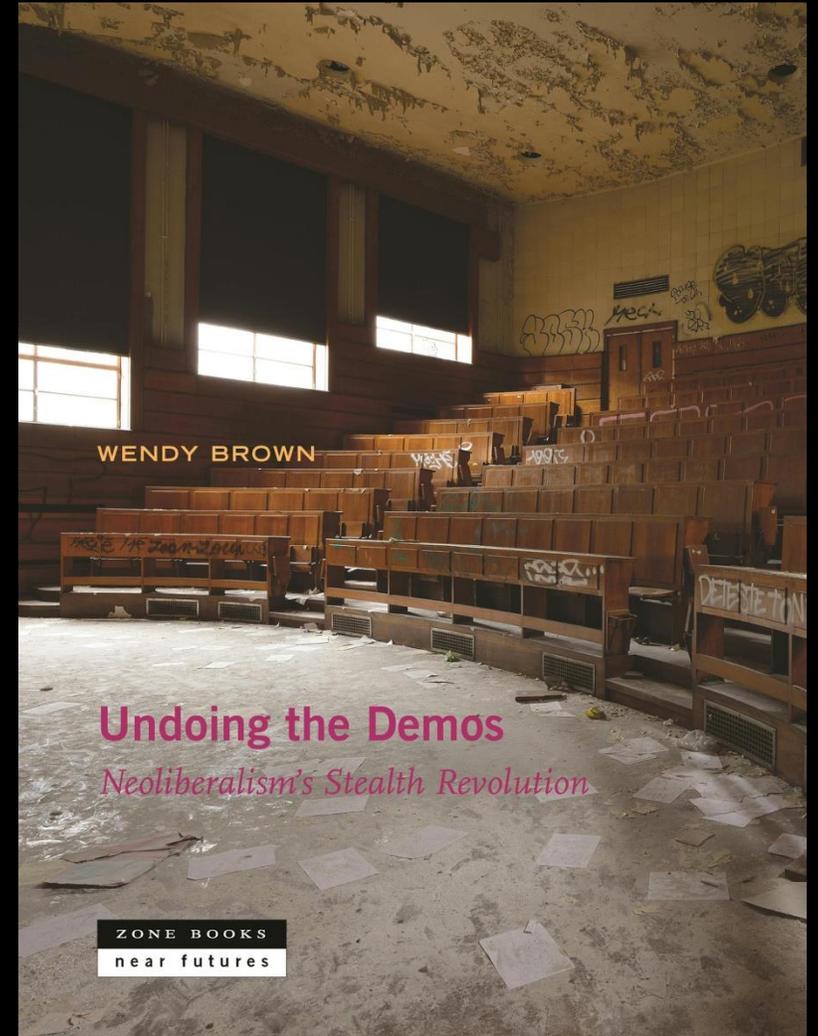
Geertz, Clifford. 1963. “The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States.”

“To subordinate these specific and familiar identifications in favor of a generalized commitment to an overarching and somewhat alien civil order is to risk a loss of definition as an autonomous person, either through absorption into a culturally undifferentiated mass or, what is even worse, through domination by some other rival ethnic, racial, or linguistic community that is able to imbue that order with the temper of its own personality...The insistence on recognition as someone who is visible and matters and the will to be modern and dynamic thus tend to diverge, and much of the political process in the new state pivots around an heroic effort to keep them aligned.” (109)

The Problem of Capital

Brown, Wendy. 2015. *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution*. Zone Books.

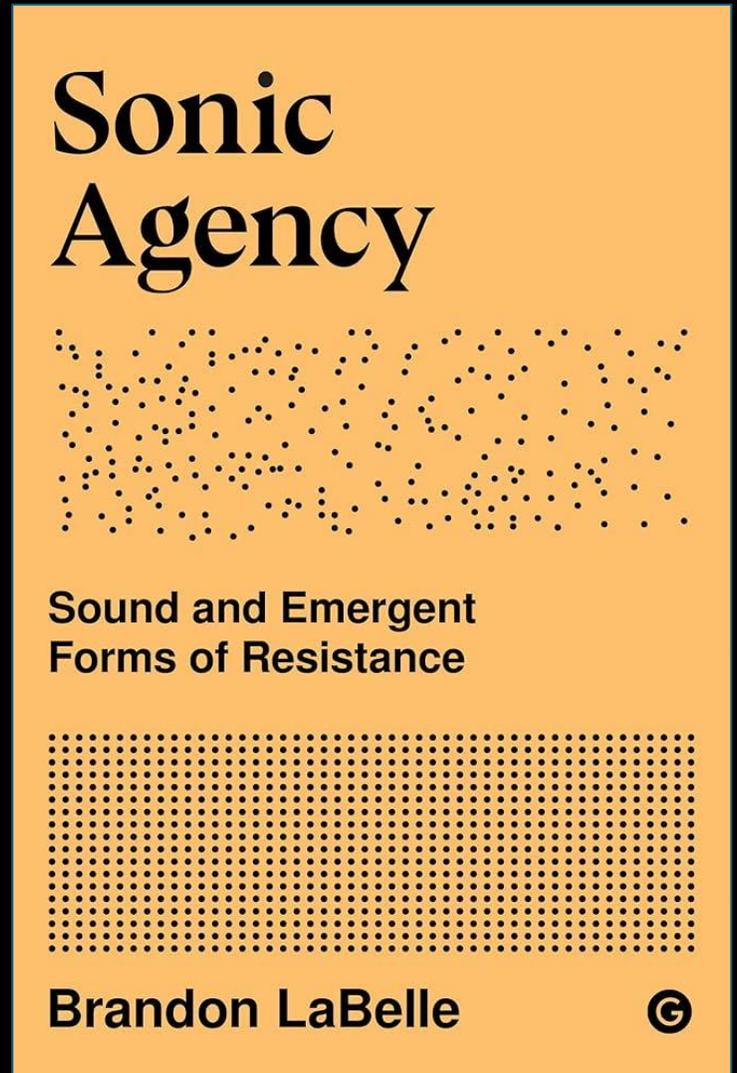
“All conduct is economic conduct; all spheres of existence are framed and measured by economic terms and metrics, even when those spheres are not directly monetized. In neoliberal reason and in domains governed by it, we are only and everywhere *homo oeconomicus*, which itself has a historically specific form. Far from Adam Smith’s creature propelled by the natural urge to “truck, barter, and exchange,” today’s *homo oeconomicus* is an intensely constructed and governed bit of human capital tasked with improving and leveraging its competitive positioning and with enhancing its (monetary and nonmonetary) portfolio value across all of its endeavors and venues. These are also the mandates, and hence the orientations, contouring the projects of neoliberalized states, large corporations, small businesses, nonprofits, schools, consultancies, museums, countries, scholars, performers, public agencies, students, websites, athletes, sports teams, graduate programs, health providers, banks, and global legal and financial institutions.” (10)



Sonic Agency

LaBelle, Brandon. 2018. *Sonic Agency: Sound and Emergent Forms of Resistance*. Goldsmiths Press.

...a means for enabling new conceptualizations of the public sphere and expressions of emancipatory practices - to consider how particular subjects and bodies, individuals and collectives creatively negotiate systems of domination, gaining momentum and guidance through listening and being heard, sounding and unsounding particular acoustics of assembly and resistance. (4)





The Detroit Urban Art Orchestra

modeling an “Ethnos” orientation

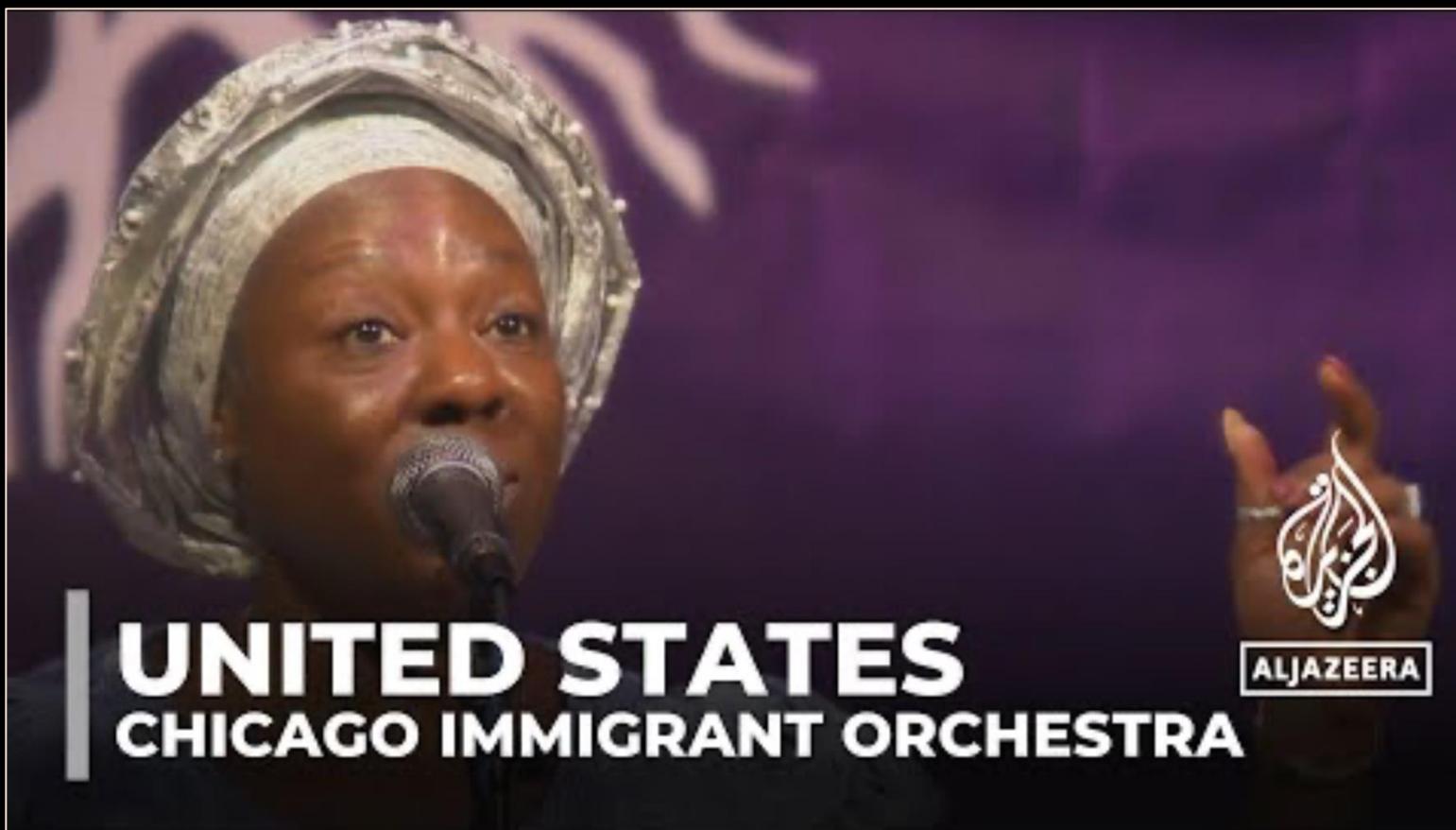
- founded in 2022 and is lead by Kresge Fellow, 3x NAACP Image Award winner and 3x Grammy nominated saxophonist/composer De'Sean Jones
- a 20+ member group featuring strings, harp, horns, a full rhythm section, percussion, vocals, DJs, and Jones on tenor saxophone
- Recognized in 2025 for its excellence and service by the Detroit City Council with a “Spirit of Detroit Award”



De'Sean Jones & the Urban Art Orchestra

Detroit Performs: Live From Marygrove

Detroit PBS (2022) - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8cUYMKrQ0u0&list=RD8cUYMKrQ0u0&start_radio=1



Chicago Immigrant Orchestra

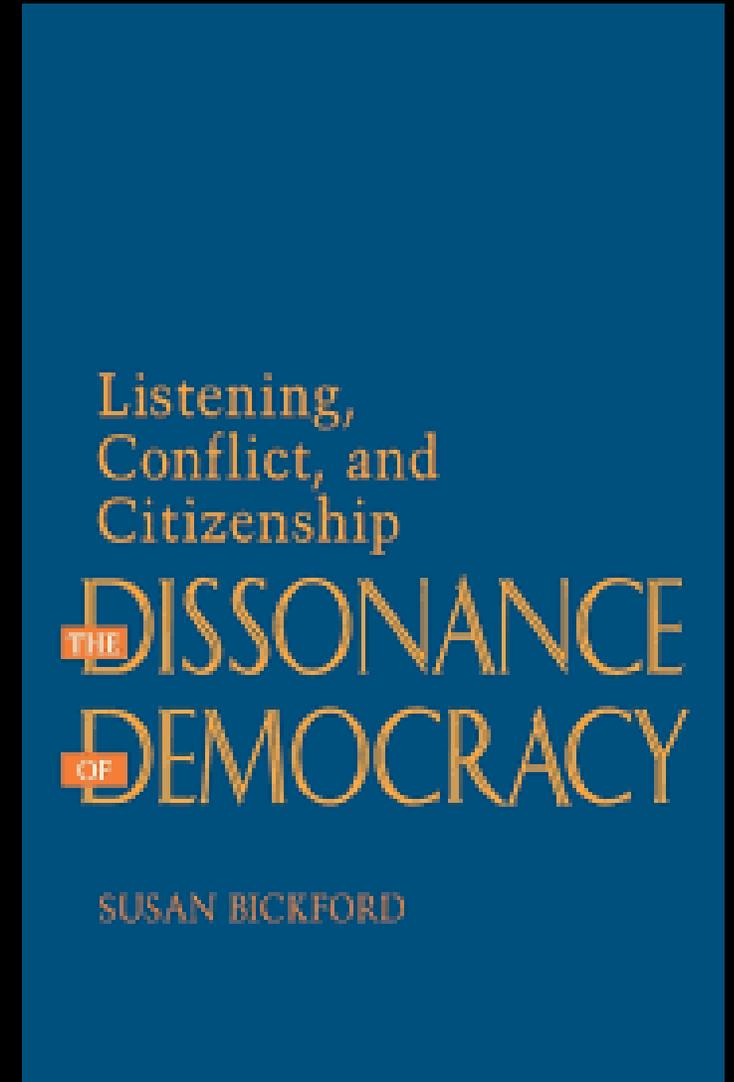
“US city hails model of unity in a divided world”

Al Jazeera English (2025) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQuQTLZI-tE>

The necessity of the in-between

Bickford, Susan. 1996. *The Dissonance of Democracy: Listening, Conflict, and Citizenship*. Cornell University Press.

“The world itself is what is in-between, what relates and separates us as subjects. Through speaking and listening to one another, we give that in-between particular meaning: we figure out how it relates and separates and how we might change and reconstitute the character of those relations and that distance. The goal here is not to erase the distance, but to be able to speak, listen, and act together across it. It is not our agreement that defines our intersubjectivity in this sense but our effort” (171).



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<https://www.thebeautifulmachinemag.com/blog/post/de-sean-jones-big-performance-at-cliff-bells--urban-art-orchestra>

Thanks,
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