# Theorizing musical politics through case studies: Feminist grooves against the Temer Government in today's Brazil

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**ABSTRACT**

Inspired by Karen Barad's theoretical developments within the field of "post-humanist performativity" and Martha Nussbaum's work on "political emotions" alongside Herder's notion of "empirical aesthetics" this article proposes the concept of *musical politics* to examine how the aesthetic power of musical sound expresses politics in specific contexts. The concept of musical politics encompasses the ways in which musical sounds and bodies interact temporally to produce political expressions and communities. This is applied to a study of the performance of music at political protests against Michel Temer in Brazil, 2016, as part of the *Fora Temer* [Out with Temer] movement. Combining ethnographic and musical analysis of three protest events, the author illustrates how the performance of music helps to constitute a temporary public space of political critique and feminist emancipation. Reading the data through the lens of musical politics draws attention to the ways in which specific organizations of musical soundings in time (for example, the shape of a rhythm or melody) contribute to the making of social spaces in which politics and aesthetics intersect temporally. The study also illustrates the ability of music to extend political viewpoints during the commotion and chaos of a large protest, thus adding durability to political street protests.

**KEYWORDS**

post-humanist performativity; political emotions; empirical aesthetics; musical politics; political protest; Brazil

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## INTRODUCTION AND EXISTING RESEARCH

Inspired by Karen Barad's (2003, 2007) theoretical developments within the field of "post-humanist performativity," Martha Nussbaum's (2013) work on "political emotions," and Johann Gottfried Herder's notion of empirical aesthetics (c.f. Guyer, 2007, pp. 354–358; Klette Bøhler, 2013a), this article proposes the concept of *musical politics* as a means by which to examine how, in specific contexts, the aesthetic power of musical sound expresses politics. Musical politics encompass the ways in which musical sounds and bodies interact temporally in particular places to produce political expressions and communities. I apply this concept to the performance of music at political protests against the non-elected president of today's Brazil, Michel Temer, as part of the *Fora Temer* [Out with Temer] movement. This performance helps to constitute a temporary public space of political critique and feminist emancipation, and my analysis of musical politics will draw attention to the ways in which specific organizations of musical soundings in time (for example, the shape of a rhythm or melody) contribute to social spaces in which politics and aesthetics intersect temporally. Theoretically, my argument builds on Barad's (2007, p. 131) understanding of agency as divided—in the hands of both humans and material objects—and Nussbaum's (2013) argument that politics primarily gain power, not via values and ideologies, but via "eudemonistic emotions" (p. 11) that transform them into something more than mere abstract principles. The article's case studies demonstrate that the experience of musical soundings produces engaged feminist communities through shared acts of listening, singing, and dancing. In the context of the predominance of white males in the Temer administration and its general opposition to the various government institutions that once worked for women's rights, I argue that musical sounds represent powerful spaces of feminist critique and emancipation in today's Brazil.

### *Current state of research on music and politics*

Existing scholarship on the politics of music has already elaborated upon the ways in which music is "articulated," "mediated," or "embedded" in larger political contexts and discourses (see Bohlman, 2004; Frith, 1998; Garcia, 2005, 2009; Middleton, 1990; Napolitano, 2004; Negus, 1996; Paranhos, 2005; Ridenti, 2007; Zan, 2001). Studies have looked at music as an integral part of political movements (see Drott, 2011; Eyerman, 2002; Eyerman & Jamison, 1998; Turino, 2008, pp. 189–225), a contested space of authorship and copyright (see Bennet, Frith, Grossberg, Shepherd & Turner, 2005; Feld, 2000; Johansson & Berge, 2014; Marshall & Frith, 2013), a space of constructing gender politics and feminism (see Aparicio, 2010; Hawkins, 2002, 2009, 2017; McClary, 1991; Whiteley, 2013a, 2013b), an aspect of the state's prioritization through cultural policy (see Bennett et al., 2005; Laing, 1999; Moore, 2006, pp. 80–107), and a vehicle for the political meanings of song lyrics (see Baker, 2011; Perna, 2005; Rose, 1994). Much of this work relies on theories of popular culture that place music's political contexts above

its texts (e.g. Negus, 1996, p. 192). In summarizing the field, John Street (2003) argues that existing studies have developed a substantial "political theory of music," but lack a corresponding "musical theory of politics" that accounts for the engagements (and pleasures) produced by the experience of specific musical soundings: "It is the political possibilities inherent in pleasure that are important. Musical—or any other cultural—texts cannot be read simply as documents of political aspiration or resentment or compliance" (p. 126).

My concept of musical politics seeks to fill this gap via an analysis of the ways in which the experience of musical soundings produces feelings of beauty and pleasure in human subjects that encourage specific forms of political participation. The concept is intended to grant more agency to the actual musical sound, compared to the existing scholarship mentioned above, and builds on studies by Walser (1995), Street (2003, 2012, pp. 62–79), Shank (2014) and my own work (Klette Bøhler, 2013b, 2016a) that take the aesthetic qualities of music as their starting point for political analysis.

## CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

### Temer, the Fora Temer movement, and the rise of Brazilian feminism

After an impeachment process against elected president Dilma Rouseff that was suspected of being a camouflaged judicial and parliamentary coup (see Da Silva, de Lorenzi Pires & Pereira, 2016; Milan, 2016; Muniz, 2016; Singer, Boito Jr, Gomes, Ribeiro, Fagnani, Solano & Ferreira, 2016),[1] former vice president Michel Temer took office on May 12, 2016.[2] In defiance of the progressive feminist politics of the Labor Party administration of Lula and Rouseff from 2003 to 2016 (Abers & Tatagiba, 2014; Bekhouche, Hausmann, Tyson & Zahidi, 2013; Machado, 2016; Singer, 2012) Temer reversed a wide array of social welfare programs (see Klette Bøhler, 2017, 2016b; Loureiro, 2017; Paiva & Hillesheim, 2017; Romero, 2017), leading to massive street protests around the country and the consolidation of the *Fora Temer* [Out with Temer] movement. By September 2016, there were daily protests in all of Brazil's major cities, involving millions of Brazilians marching against the new president. As a group of working-class women explained to journalist Kimberly Brown in Sao Paulo in August: "This is a patriarchal and machista society [macho society] . . . We've fought against this for years and achieved successes, but now they're taking all that away" ([Brown 2016](#), para. 3). This group of women were particularly concerned by the Temer administration's harsh spending caps on social programs, the closing of government ministries, and the undermining of labor rights, all of which hurt the hard-won status of women in Brazil in recent years.

However, what most provoked Brazilian feminists and other groups, was the shutting down of the Ministry of Human Rights, Women's Rights, and Racial Equality, as well as the termination of long term negotiations with the Brazilian branch of the global organization titled the World March of Women (WMW) concerning the legalization of abortion.[3] Also alarming was the appointment of Fatima Pelaes as the new head of the special Secretariat of Policies for Women.

Pelaes is a former congresswoman who was also a stated opponent of the decriminalization of abortion. Tas Carla Vitoria, a member of the Brazilian feminist organization Sempreviva, described the appointment of Pelaes as follows:

> It is really dangerous for us that there is someone who is in charge of the [Secretariat of Policies for Women] who is against the autonomy of women . . . So this government [the Temer administration] is implementing serious projects that are taking away our rights that we have already won. ([Brown 2016](#), para. 22)

Temer's substantial cuts to social programs and political organizations brought with them the potential to severely impact the lives and social autonomy of Brazilian women, and it is this that provides the background and context for the multiple demonstrations against the Temer government and informs the importance of feminist politics to these protesters.

## CONCEPTUALIZING MUSICAL POLITICS AS A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

I conceptualize *musical politics* as a synthesis of theoretical perspectives that underscore the relational agency of both humans *and* material factors (Barad, 2003, 2007), and the politics of emotions (Nussbaum, 2013). These perspectives are rooted in an empirical understanding of aesthetics (Guyer, 2007, pp. 354–358; Klette Bøhler, 2013a). As opposed to existing understandings of agency as primarily related to human intentionality, Karen Barad views agency as relational *and* causal, arguing it actually plays out through multiple interactions between humans and non-human materialities (2003, p. 817, 2007, pp. 175–176). Her argument recalls Giraudo and Martel's (2015) definition of agency as "the ability to act" (p. 484) and underscores how agency can be instigated by both subjects and material conditions. She therefore invites research into how materiality "comes to matter" (Barad, 2003, p. 810) in relation to the interactions between humans and material objects in various contexts.[4]

Barad proposes the terms "phenomena" and "intra-actions" as analytical lenses through which to investigate these forms of relational agency. "Phenomena" are the ways in which object(s) come to matter in these processes (Barad, 2003, p. 815), and they represent the smallest units of analysis in Barad's framework. It is important to note that they are not separable, but inseparable—that is, they are "intra-acting components" (Barad, 2003, p. 815), such as, for example, the temporal "human-sound-space relations" of making music at political protests. An "intra-acting" notion of relational agency emphasizes the ways in which agency is multiple in nature and moves in different directions among objects and humans in an ongoing "ebb and flow" (Barad, 2003, p. 817). Such "intra-actions" generate different ways of interacting with materiality (including sound), both individually and collectively, through which subject and object take the lead at different times in sequences of cause and effect. For example, musical sound generates emotions and constructs a musical community during a political demonstration, and the bodily work performed by this singing community modifies the sound waves through

further acts of singing later on (for example changes in frequencies and loudness). The point is that materiality both marks and is marked by human bodies, and these "subject-object relations" make people act, think, feel, and be together in new ways. It is in this way that agency is divided and in the hands of both humans and material objects.

However, any type of empirical research into these processes will enact what Barad (2003, 2007) terms an "agential cut" that makes certain forms of relational agency visible at the expense of others. In applying these conceptual arguments to an empirical analysis of music in political protests, I will need to perform such "cuts" temporally in order to shed light on the small-scale relationships through which musical sound both shapes and is shaped by human practices. This occurs via a dynamic temporal relationship between subjects and objects through acts of singing and playing. To properly understand the musicality of these forms of relational agency and the ways in which the perception of musical sound can generate strong feelings, I must situate these arguments within what I call *empirical aesthetics* (Klette Bøhler, 2013a, 2013b).

Empirical aesthetics does not treat aesthetics as a primarily philosophical discipline (e.g. Hegel, 1979, pp. 10–11; Kant, 2008, pp. 73–79; Manns, 1998, pp. 1–28) or as a sociological tool of class positioning (Bourdieu, 1984). Instead, it builds on Herder's (1763/1985) important insight that aesthetics is founded upon the production of *feelings* and *interestedness* in the experience of beauty and pleasure: "What is properly aesthetic is feeling; not concept, even less judgment of taste" (Herder in Klette Bøhler, 2013b p. 65).[5] In a critique of his mentor Kant, Herder elaborates on this by defining aesthetics as an empirically grounded theory premised on interestedness in the experience of art:

> Beauty however has interest . . . For what does the word mean? . . . If something does not concern [berifft] me, how could I find satisfaction in it? In order to please, the poet, the artist, indeed nature itself must first be interesting to us . . . Interest is the soul of beauty . . . No beautiful work of art or of nature shall therefore be without interest for us. (Herder as cited in Guyer, 2007, p. 360)

Herder accuses Kant of jumping to a priori conclusions with his influential notion of "disinterested experiences of the beautiful" (Kant 2008, p. 79) and argues polemically, with reference to his teacher, that "sensation without object . . . is a contradiction in human nature, [and] therefore impossible" (Herder as cited in Guyer, 2007, p. 361). Herder instead suggests that interestedness is a condition of the aesthetic, and that all aesthetic experiences are founded upon the perception of aural or visual objects. It is this meeting between human subjects and various objects in art experiences that makes powerful experiences of beauty and pleasure possible.[6] Inspired by a combination of disciplines from the humanities, the natural sciences, and psychology, Herder insists upon the importance of developing empirical methods that would provide a fuller understanding of the complex perceptions at play in emotional experiences of beauty and pleasure (see Herder as cited in Norton, 1991, p. 48). Despite passing references to Herder, much recent

work on groove and music in ethnomusicology and popular music studies (see Danielsen, 2006; Meneses, 2016; Klette Bøhler, 2013a), as well as within neuroscience and music psychology, echoes Herder's arguments (see Brown & Dissanayake, 2009, pp. 43–50; Huron, 2009, pp. 154–156; Witek, Clarke, Wallentin, Kringelbach and Vuust, 2014).

Taken together with Barad's concept of relational agency, empirical aesthetics can shed light on how interestedness and feelings generate experiences of beauty and pleasure through "intra-acting agencies" played out in "human-sound-space relations" while experiencing or performing music in political protests. This dimension of musical politics may provide a model for understanding how subjects and sound mutually influence one another while music is being made during political demonstrations. However, a robust notion of musical politics also asks us to theorize how these relationships interact with the political, and therefore to conceptualize the role of emotions in politics.

In terms of expressly political or protest music, one vital contribution of the "intra-acting agencies" of sounds and people is emotion. In her book *Political Emotions* (2013), Martha Nussbaum theorizes about the surplus value that emotions bring to politics. Through an eclectic analysis of music, poetry, art, symbols, and political speeches, Nussbaum argues that emotional conviction and engagement are prerequisites of a truly just and democratic society. The power of these political emotions lies in their ability to translate the political from the theoretical into something concrete upon which people are able to act emotionally. Nussbaum proposes the notion of "eudemonistic emotions" to describe the ability of emotions to convert abstract political principles into deeply felt convictions:

> [T]he major emotions are "eudaimonistic," meaning that they appraise the world from the person's own viewpoint, therefore to that person's evolving conception of a worthwhile life . . . If distant people and abstract principles are to get a grip on our emotions, therefore, these emotions must somehow position them within our circle of concern, creating a sense of "our" life in which these people and events matter as parts of our "us," our own flourishing. (Nussbaum, 2013, p. 11)

Nussbaum (2013) also points out that both music (pp. 36–52, pp. 401–402) and poetry (pp. 65–90) have been crucial to the production of eudemonistic political emotions, adding substance to the abstract principles of fraternity, nation, and democracy. However, Nussbaum does not offer actual evidence of how this might play out materially in our perception of musical soundings (for example, specific melodies or rhythms), or of how such musical soundings might therefore also be political. Yet, reading Nussbaum's quote in light of the proposed notions of *empirical aesthetics* and *relational agency*, we see that political emotions are the product of interweaving subjects and objects (including musical sound). More importantly, interpreting Barad's and Herder's arguments in light of Nussbaum's notion we might get a fuller understanding of how relational agency—at play in music aesthetics— generates political emotions while experiencing or performing music in protest movements. Nussbaum's concept of "eudemonistic emotions" may shed light on the

added value that music brings to politics on the street by blurring the distinction between logos and pathos, and allowing people to feel and express political statements and thus participate in political communities.

In short, the concept of musical politics underscores how specific organizations of material soundings create eudemonistic emotions through "intra-acting" agencies in "human-sound-space relations" that generate new forms of political communities and political critique. I will draw upon this theoretical framework in order to analyze the interchanging nature of subjects and soundings in contemporary feminist protest movements in Brazil. In addition to the aforementioned theoretical arguments, the Brazilian cultural context is also crucial to any engagement with these levels of musical-political meanings. When relevant, therefore, I will also describe how musical experiences activate context-specific meanings through cultural reference. Before presenting how the framework might be applied to political movements in present Brazil, I will describe the specific methodologies I have employed.

## METHODS FOR STUDYING MUSIC AS A TEMPORAL POLITICAL OBJECT

The following ethnographic and aesthetic analysis engages with the ways in which music supplies an experience of political expression and emancipation within the context of the *Fora Temer* protest movement in today's Brazil. For my data sources, I draw on a combination of field notes, video, and audio recordings from three selected events organized by the *Fora Temer* movement in 2016 at which I conducted participant observation.

### *Selecting field sites and conducting participant observation in the* Fora Temer *movement*

The first event I analyze is from a major protest involving approximately twenty thousand participants on August 24 at Praça Mauá in Rio De Janeiro, during the Olympic Games. My field notes from this event center on a vocal performance by five women in their late forties that they gave on the street while walking to Praça Mauá. It attracted the attention of many other protesters, and I also followed up with the five women afterwards. Two of the singers described themselves as *petistas* (aligned with the party PT, Partido dos Trabalhadores), while the rest had no party affiliation, but described themselves as deeply engaged in politics and the *Fora Temer* movement.

The second event was the performance by the *maracatu*[7] group Baque Mulher in Rio during the August 23 mini-festival Cantar Pela Democracia [Sing for Democracy]—a one-day music event and theater performance arranged by artists and others within the movement. The festival featured several established artists from Rio, along with thousands of participants in the audience. Baque Mulher is a female *maracatu* orchestra network encompassing various ensembles from around the country that fights for feminist causes through music performance under the slogan "*Somos uma revolução! Feminismo poético*" [We are a revolution! Feminist poetics] (Baque Mulher in Facebook retrieved 17th of May 2017 from

https://www.facebook.com/MaracatuBaqueMulher/). I took field notes during the event and videotaped parts of the *maracatu* performance after obtaining the written consent of the performers.

The third field note is from a major protest in Brasilia on September 13, organized by several syndicates and political organizations within the movement and involving approximately 20,000 participants. This analysis examines the performance of a *Fora Temer* "funky *carioca* groove" performed by the ANEL group (*Ambleia Nacional de Estuantes Livres* [National Assembly of Free Students]) from Salvador (ANEL in Facebook retrieved 29th of October 2017 from https://www.facebook.com/anelnacional/). "Funky *carioca*" is a groove-based music style developed in Rio in the 1990s that has become a key element of Brazilian popular dance music (Mizrahi, 2015; Moehn, 2012, pp. 112–113; Vianna, 2014). Most of the participants in this performance were women in their early twenties, and the music brought new energy and life to an event that had otherwise been governed by monotonous speeches by syndicate leaders.

### Using musical analysis as a method to unpack the interplay between soundings and protesters

Drawing upon the presented arguments concerning empirical aesthetics, I use ethnographically informed music analysis to describe how specific organizations of musical sound generate a sense of beauty and pleasure as we experience them. Following Danielsen (2006), my method of groove analysis pays particular attention to the ways in which specific organizations of sound in time propel the listener toward the rich phenomenological pleasures of "being-in-the-groove." First, my method recognizes the repeating basic unit of one to four bars that underpins the groove and its various interlocking rhythms. Second, it generates descriptions of the aesthetic impact of these sounds on the participating listener through words, drawing upon Barad's theoretical arguments. The goal is to ground the listener's feelings of presence and pleasure from the groove experience in the perception of its dense rhythmic layers against an established pulse that can be extracted from the sounds. It is this interaction between a shared pulse, often articulated as one-two-three-four movements triggered in the body (for example, foot tapping, dance steps or nodding), and various new musical soundings that generates these forms of pleasure. This interaction depends in part upon the inherent aesthetic meaningfulness of repetition (Danielsen, 2006, pp. 163–169). However, it also depends upon *changes* in the temporal organization of interlocking musical soundings, through cross-rhythms (rhythms that hint at other pulse levels) and complex patterns of syncopation that increase musical energies (Klette Bøhler, 2013b).

Also important are the melodic aspects of the musical-political communication in the *Fora Temer* movement, and in particular the ways in which specific melodies generate a sense of beauty that delivers certain words with great emotional force and facilitates their repetition. To analyze these musical soundings, I describe how specific melodic movements within a scale with a tonal center (diatonic, leaps, repeated tones, changes in rhythm, etc.) invest the sound with emotional

expressivity and enable the sung words to capture the listener. I also focus on how syllables are transformed into tones and tonal relationships, as well as on the aesthetic impact of these relationships.

Both the groove and the melodic analysis will be represented through music transcription—a more precise and refined system of representation than words alone for the identification of aesthetic meaning in music (e.g. Blacking, 1973/2000, p. 26; Walser, 1991). However, as underscored by Walser (1995, 2003) and Danielsen (2006), transcriptions alone are not sufficient to represent this level of musical meaning, but must be complemented by aesthetic written descriptions of the various experiences, both portrayed and otherwise, identified by constellations of tones and sounds through those transcriptions. Lastly, the identification and analysis of specific organizations of sound in the analysis below should be understood as "intra-acting" material sound waves that shape, and are shaped by, participating human subjects, in a Baradian sense. All the theoretical perspectives will be operationalized at this level of sound, and specific musical soundings will serve as data for the interpretation of how Baradian intra-acting phenomena and Nussbaum's eudemonistic emotions play out as empirical examples of musical politics. In what follows I apply the presented theoretical and methodological arguments to the empirical analysis of the three field notes described earlier.

## ANALYZING MUSICAL POLITICS IN THE *FORA TEMER* MOVEMENT

### Singing against Temer through Beethoven's Ninth Symphony at Praça Mauá, Rio de Janeiro

On August 24, the last day of the 2016 Olympic Games, a large protest against Temer was arranged at Praça Mauá in Rio. People sang and shouted against the non-elected president. Among the protestors were five women in their forties who sang their own arrangement of a melody based on the major theme in the fourth movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. The arrangement is depicted in Figure 1.

As in Beethoven's symphony, the diatonic movements of the women's melody move through fifteen syllables (see phrase 1) from the third (E in C major) to the fifth, then down to the root (see bars 1 and 2), before concluding with an alternation between the root and the third that ends on the second (see bars 3 and 4). While the first twelve syllables are sung as marching quarter notes, the last three disrupt this pulse with a syncopated figure that adds additional weight to the following downbeat (see bar 4). These tonal and rhythmic relationships "intra-acted" in a Baradian sense on the listening and singing bodies that were participating in the event. On the one hand, the sounds propelled an emotional engagement and enjoyment among the participants, as was evident from their smiles, regular hand movements following the pulse of the melody, and commitment to singing together as more people joined in.

*Figure 1: Music transcription of the melody of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony as sung during the* Fora Temer *demonstration. The tempo is approximately 140 beats per minute.*

On the other hand, these changes in the singing community modified the relationships between the sounding events, so that, for example, the second phrase (bars 4–8) became louder and more in tune than the first phrase (bars 1–4). The sung tones were further situated in the sonic context of a demonstration that included other protesters screaming "*Fora Temer*" [Out with Temer] in the background. These sounds also "intra-acted" with these described musical relationships, providing a specific political setting for this singing. Still, thanks to the aesthetic interest generated by the intra-acting "human-sound-space relations" of the performance of the melody, the music occupies the foreground, while the screaming occupies the background. The first two phrases lent great emotion to the sung words that filled the air: "*Eu quero democracia não aceito golpe não!*" [I want democracy. I don't accept the state coup!]. Recalling the symphony, this performance repeated the melody twice (see phrase 2 from bars 5–8), with a small variation in the coda (bar 8) during the repeat.

The next phrase (phrase 3) generated melodic tension by starting on the second scale degree (bar 9) and alternating between repeated tones (bar 9), leaps of a third (last tones in bar 9 and 10), and diatonic movements (bar 10 and 11) before concluding by dropping a fifth from the second scale degree to the fifth scale degree below, or the dominant (bar 12). Further tension derives from the alternation between quarter and eighth notes (bars 10 and 11). The feelings suggested by the first phrase are intensified by these tonal relationships, and the singing women indicate their own musical engagement through their facial expressions, which reflect their presence, joy, and emotional commitment. The words of this phrase follow upon the previous: "*Volta Dilma, volta querida, pra presidencia do Brazil*" [Come back Dilma (Rouseff, prior president), come back beloved, to take back the presidency of Brazil].

*Interpreting Beethoven's presence in the* Fora Temer *protest*

The sounds act upon, and intra-act with, the singing and listening bodies in a Baradian sense, giving rise to complementary actions (smiles, expressions of joy, invitations to others to join the musical space of the protest) and realizing an action of their own—that is, their vocal production through the physical labor of these participating bodies. However, as underscored by Barad, agency in the example above is not rooted in matter, but in the temporal dialectic relations between the musical soundings and the human bodies that both produce and perceive these sounds through multiple intra-actions. While the tonal relationships of the melody have a material agency as sound waves as they move the people, their materiality changes as the bodies of the singers start tapping the pulse of the song and sing louder. More importantly, these intra-actions generate eudemonistic emotions that enhance political engagement and add a sense of durability to the protests. The feelings produced by the sung tones intensify the political message and enable its repetition, each time with a different mode of "intra-action" with the expectations of the singing and listening bodies as they become familiar with the sounds. The shapes of, and relationships within, these musical soundings make the political into something more than slogans and words, and blur the distinction between logos and pathos, as theorized by Nussbaum (2013). The sung words' political power also resides in their directness: "Eu quero democracia, não quero golpe não. Volta Dilma" [I want democracy, I don't want a coup, no. Come back Dilma]. Such phrasing positions the Temer government within a longer history of coup and dictatorship in Brazil. Through acts of singing, the women remind their fellow protesters of the importance of bringing back the first elected female president of Brazil.

### August mini-festival Cantar Pela Democracia: Expressing Fora Temer *through* maracatu *grooves in Rio*

One day earlier, on August 23, the mini-festival Cantar para Democracia was arranged by the *Fora Temer* movement in Rio de Janeiro. It featured the Rio-based women's orchestra Maracatu Baque Mulher. The orchestra's thirty-one members formed a large square comprised of three lines of performers in the middle of the concert venue Circo Voador. Seven dancers and a lead percussionist playing the *repinique* drum stood in front, followed by nine *agbe* players and two *gonguê* players in the line behind them, and eleven *alfaia* players in the back. Interlocking sound waves from these three lines formed a dense *maracatu* groove that the dancers translated into joyful movements while articulating a solid "one-two-three-four" pulse through their footwork. Thousands of participants in the audience also tapped along with the dancers' footwork, so that this pulse became a common point of reference. The experience of the groove's play with this shared pulse through its interlocking syncopations, rhythmic displacements, and breaks gave rise to powerful sensations of aesthetic pleasure and energy during this political event.

These interlocking syncopations were composed of three interacting layers upon which the *repinique* constantly added rhythmic ornaments and shorter improvisations that further enriched the groove. The rhythms played on the *agbe*

and *gonguê* created a dense, repeating flow of subdivisions in the middle, as well as high frequencies that added forwardness and energy to the groove, while the *alfaia* drums in the bass register constantly introduced shifting accentuations through new rhythmic sequences, as this transcription indicates:



*Figure 2: Music transcription of three* maracatu *grooves (I, II, and III) with different* alfaia *patterns. The tempo is approximately 120 beats per minutes.*

There are three distinct *alfaia* patterns here. First, a marching pattern accentuates the first three eighth notes, as well as a heavy downbeat in the following bar (see groove I). Next, a cross-rhythmic break adds energy by destabilizing the first groove (see groove II)—the four first strokes (see square A in groove II) imply a three-against-four cross-rhythm via a series of punctuated eighths. This disruption is then stabilized into the 4/4 pulse through the four last accents of the *alfaia* pattern in groove II (see square B). In all, the aesthetic effect of these new sounds, especially when experienced against the established pulse and in the context of the preceding marching groove, produces a deeper bodily connection to the rhythms and a new level of energy in the experience. The third groove (see last bar) introduces a new two-bar basic unit and a fresh sense of rhythmic stability, yet in relation to its marching predecessor, it is snappier and more joyful, thanks to two sixteenth-note displacements on the third and fourth beats. This sequence repeats multiple times as the participating listener is led deeper into the groove experience.

Next, the break articulated in groove II disrupts the stability of the groove and generates expectations of new sounds to come—sounds that are not produced by strokes on a drum, but by the coordinated bodily work of the percussionists. The following transcription illustrates the organization of these new sounds:

*Figure 3: Music transcription of a* Fora Temer *groove, in a call-and-response pattern with groove II. The tempo is approximately 120 beats per minute.*

Distributed as syllables over two eighth notes on the second and fourth beats (see bar 2) are the words "*Fo-ra Te-mer*" [Out with Temer]. The second time through, hundreds of audience members join the chorus, which has now become part of a call-and-response dialogue with groove II. This sequence repeats ten times. After another pause, the *maracatu* orchestra adds still more energy by calling out a new statement, "*Baque mulher, baque mulher*" [Hit woman, hit woman], paraphrasing the rhythm of the galloping *agbe* drums (see the *agbe* rhythm, third layer from the top in figure 3).

*Understanding the politics of the* maracatu *groove*

The meanings associated with this call-and-response underscore the interplay between politics and aesthetics in the *maracatu* experience. On the one hand, "*baque mulher*" simply means "hit the drums woman," and in this way encouraged the formation of a gendered groove community during the event. On the other hand, in a more metaphorical sense, "*baque*" implies "hit" in the sense of fight or continue the struggle, and in that way encouraged the women to fight for their rights in the context of the *maracatu* groove as an act of resistance against the Temer government and its misogynist politics. Like the name of the *maracatu* orchestra, the words "Baque Mulher" reminded participants about the importance of creating female groove ensembles to challenge the male-dominated Afro-Brazilian music traditions (Albernaz, 2011; Lima, Oliveira & Albernaz, 2012). On multiple levels, then, the performance of the Rio-based *maracatu* group articulated a feminist politics and performed an explicit critique of the Temer administration. Shortly after the concert, however, the lead drummer and leader of the ensemble positioned the feminist politics of this music in a broader context of racialized and gendered minorities: "Through our music we fight for those with no voice, blacks, women, gays, transsexuals, and now we are playing against the Temer government" (conversation following the concert, August 23, 2016).

Read in the light of Barad's and Herder's arguments, we could frame these various relations between organizations of musical soundings in time and feelings of pleasure and political emancipation as intra-acting agencies that bind sounds and

people together in practice. The sounds intra-act diachronically with the sounds that precede them, enabling them to generate forms of aesthetic sensations for the listening subject(s). They intra-act synchronically with the thousands of participating human bodies that are united in an aesthetic community of political expression that otherwise would not exist. As the diachronic and synchronic dimensions of the intra-acting agencies interplay in the space of Circo Voador, musical sound waves both shape and are shaped by the people participating in the event. The sounds of the groove trigger pleasure and corresponding movements, and those movements shape the development of the *maracatu* groove in turn by contributing to an increase in its tempo and loudness. By partaking bodily in the groove narrative (which develops temporally from groove 1 to groove 2 to groove 3, and so forth), the participants can extract heightened sensations from the sounds as they get deeper into the groove. It is through these feedback loops of intra-acting agencies spinning between subjects and objects that Herderian interestedness and pleasure are constructed.

However, these pleasures are not only aesthetic, but also political, because the sounds repeat "*Fora Temer*" [Out with Temer] at the mini-festival Cantar para Democracia [Sing for Democracy]. Read in the context of Nussbaum's arguments, the production of Herderian interest and pleasure through "intra-acting" agencies translates the political into eudemonistic emotions and activates participating listeners through their shared political feelings. Unlike Nussbaum, however, I locate these emotions in specific musical soundings, thus strengthening the empirical validity of the argument. Less than a month later, a "*Fora Temer* funky *carioca*" groove activated other bodies, both politically and aesthetically, in the capital Brasilia.

### *The September protest in Brasilia:* **Fora Temer funky carioca*: "The women are in the streets to fight"***

On September 13, tens of thousands of participants from various organizations and syndicates gathered in Brasilia, with the National Union of Free Students from Salvador in Bahia representing the most vocal participants. Driven mainly by women, the massive throng of protesters raps about woman's rights, using an original *funky carioca* groove made up of the *maracatu* drums *alfaia* (which have a deep bass sound) and the two drums *tarol* and *caixa-de-guerra,* which sound like snare drums. The groove was further enriched by homemade drums constructed out of soybean oil cans in aluminum. Sometimes the rap was amplified through a megaphone used by one of the union leaders from Salvador. The ways in which the sounds of the rhythms from the drums and the rap interlock in a *funky carioca* groove can be illustrated in the following music transcription:

*Figure 4: Music transcription of a* funky carioca *groove (line below) with a feminist rap (line above). The tempo is approximately 140 beats per minute*. Tarol *and* caixa-de-guerra *are represented on the first line, while the* alfaia *drums are present on the line below.*

The interlocking rhythms of these instruments create an engaging *funky carioca* groove that starts with a *tresillo* rhythm over the two first beats (see square A in all bars), played using the bass sounds of the *alfaia* drum, followed by two snare sounds (played in unison by the *tarol* and *caixa-de-guerra*), two eighth notes on the *alfaia* on the third beat, and an accented snare sound on the fourth beat.[8] The strokes, and in particular those played on the *tarol* and *caixa-de-guerra,* were doubled by the homemade aluminum drums as more people partook in the groove after each repetition.

This one-bar basic unit repeats throughout and is enriched rhythmically by the following words, which were rapped in unison: "*Nem recatada, e nem do lar, a mulherada tá na rua pra lutar!*" [We are neither maiden-like, nor house-women—the women are in the streets to fight!]. The accentuation of off-beats in the two first words (phrase 1, *nem recatada*, bars 1–2) adds a rich complementary rhythm that intensifies the *funky carioca* groove, after which the rhythmic density and energy is increased by the other words in the stream of eighth notes (see phrase 3 in bars 3–4). The rap repeats over the same groove, but gains force with each repetition, plunging the participating listener and rapper deeper into the groove through the organization of the sounds. After several repetitions, a woman with a megaphone joins the rap and amplifies the sounds even more. The amplification expands the community of the groove as more and more people participate by dancing, listening, playing, and singing. The sounds make people jump and dance with joy and add a sense of festivity to the political protest, which to this point has been characterized by monotonous political slogans and speeches from (male) syndicate leaders. The groove shifts the focus and places the black women of Bahia center stage through a funky groove that calls upon women to fight.

*Understanding the musical politics of the* funky carioca *groove*

As in the prior examples, the *funky carioca* groove in Brasilia gains its vitality through multiple "intra-acting" agencies in various temporal "human-sound-space relations." With each repetition of the groove, more people partook in acts of singing, playing, and dancing, which again modified the sounding events of the following repetitions. As more people joined, the volume increased and the timbre changed (through the entry of the megaphone, for example). The shifting social conditions of the groove also impacted its temporal organization (when people started striking drum sticks on soybean oil aluminum cans), as the groove is enriched aesthetically by these "participatory discrepancies" (Keil & Feld, 2005, pp. 96–96). This change in sonic character added flavor and presence to the music and made it both "personally involving and socially valuable" (Keil & Feld, 2005, p. 96). In short, the multiple intra-acting agencies that move between the social and the material throughout the groove generate Herderian interestedness and pleasure, through which, in turn, a political critique is rapped.

The rapped words are a cultural reference to an interview given by Temer's much younger wife, Marcela, in the conservative magazine *Veja* under the headline "*Marcela Temer: Bela, recatada e 'do lar*" [Marcela Temer: Beautiful, maiden-like house wife], in which she described herself as a maiden whose place is in *la casa*, and who loves beautiful dresses and supports traditional gender roles. The female protesters at the event in Brasilia define their gendered identity in opposition to Temer's wife, using the word "*nem*" [neither], and urging Brazilian women to take to the streets and fight for their rights under the Temer government. The rap contests multiple political proposals from the government that will impact the life, autonomy, and well-being of Brazilian women, including the administration's shutdown of the Ministry of Human Rights, Women's Rights, and Racial Equality.

The presented description of how specific forms of musical politics add emotional engagement, awareness, and a sense of presence to the protesters can be considered as musical dimensions of "eudemonistic emotions" (Nussbaum, 2013). The political power of the intra-acting agencies of sounds and sociality shift the auditory focus of the demonstration from amplified individual political speeches performed on microphone by male syndicate leaders to a female-led, dynamic and more democratic *funky carioca* groove. As in the previous cases, the Brasilia protest's intersections between politics and aesthetics add durability and presence to the gender politics of the heterogeneous *Fora Temer* movement. The organizations of sound allow feminist politics to remain the focus of attention for a longer period via the music's mobilization of pleasure. Moreover, the catchiness of the groove enables these political words to impress themselves upon the memories of the participating bodies.

**CONCLUSION**

These three cases represent contrasting empirical examples of musical politics through which an act of feminist emancipation and a political critique of the Temer government were grounded in a particular organization of intra-acting agencies

(Barad, 2003) of musical sound and *Fora Temer* demonstrators that produced eudemonistic emotions (Nussbaum, 2013). The analysis demonstrated that musical politics in today's Brazil can take different aesthetic shapes, ranging from the hymn-like marching melody of the major theme in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony to the seductive interlocking rhythms of *maracatu* and *funky carioca* grooves. These musical-political configurations express different political convictions through, for example, melodies dedicated to the return of Dilma Rouseff as Brazil's president and groovy rapped statements of political activism that call upon Brazilian women to fight the Temer administration.

Taken together, these cases also foreground the ability of music to extend political viewpoints during the commotion and chaos of a large protest. Because all three pieces were repeated several times, they lent a sense of durability to specific political statements by fusing them with the eudemonistic political modes of engagement and pleasure. Thus, within the concept of musical politics, we might locate the notion of *musical-political durability* to capture the ways in which political statements can be repeated and infused with emotion through uniquely musical forms of structure. This is particularly relevant when it comes to heterogeneous political movements such as the *Fora Temer* movement, within which multiple political viewpoints are fighting for attention. While the music is clearly being shaped by the movement, the movement is also being shaped by the music via the soundings of its protests. Feminist politics in Brazil would never benefit in the same way from a movement as heterogeneous as *Fora Temer* if people were not able to condense complex political convictions into catchy melodies, rhythmic phrases, and grooves that produce pleasure, engagement, and emotional commitment.

The concept of musical politics contributes to existing theory and scholarship by questioning Keith Negus's (1996) concluding consideration in his influential *Popular Music Theory*: "One of the implications of what I have been arguing in this book is that we cannot locate the political meaning of music in any sound text" (p. 192). Given a redefinition of aesthetics as empirical (Herder in Guyer 2007), of agency as relational (Barad 2003, 2007), and of politics as emotional (Nussbaum 2013), we have the stepping stones to build a "musical theory of politics" (Street 2003, p. 126) that is better equipped to capture the complex relationship between sound texts and politics without disregarding the agency of musical soundings from the outset. Crucial in this regard, as Herder (in Guyer 2007) underscores, is the development of empirical methods that complement participant observation and interviews with actual musical analysis. However, as with any empirical method, musical analysis has its strengths and weaknesses. Yet, unlike words alone, it is able to identify specific organizations of musical soundings that generate aesthetic interest and therefore lend themselves to additional interpretations of the relationship between the musical and the political. As illustrated by this study, this methodology can enhance the empirical validity of musical expressions of politics in context and thus produce a more robust and musically sensitive theory of musical politics.

**ENDNOTES**

[1] See also journalistic articles written in 2016 about the Temer government in the Brazilian newspapers and webzines such as *midianinja*, *esquerdadiario*, *cartacapital*, *brasildefato*, *ocafezinho*, *diariodocentrodomundo* and *conversaafiada*.

[2] While Temer started acting like a president on this day by making substantial political changes and appointing a new cabinet of ministers, he was not officially inaugurated as president until August 31, 2016, when Dilma Rouseff had to give up the position due to her impeachment.

3 The World March of Women is an international feminist action movement connecting grass-roots groups and organizations working to eliminate the causal roots of poverty and violence against women.

[4] Similar arguments have also been made within the field of new materialism by Braidotti (2013), Coole and Froost (2010), Klette Bøhler and Giannoumis (forthcoming), Massumi (2013), Thompson and Biddle (2013), and Tiainen (2013), among others.

[5] Translated by the author from the following original quote in German: "*Das eigentlich Aesthetische ist Gefühl; nicht Begriff; noch weniger Urteil, des Geschmacks; und am wenigstens seine Regel.*"

[6] Related arguments were made by Baumgarten (1750/2009) and developed later within the field of music aesthetics and music psychology by Stumpf (1911/2012), and Stumpf and Hornbostel (1911/2015), among others.

[7] Maracatu is an Afro-Brazilian groove-based music tradition from the state of Pernambuco based upon percussion and singing in call and response.

[8] For research on *tresillo*, see Floyd (1999), Klette Bøhler (2013a), and Washburne (1997).

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