

"The people and time will tell if I am an artist"

Music As a Way of Political Action In Chile Since the 1960s

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Introduction

"Almost overnight, he became an instant martyr for leftists the over world -and a legendary spectre that may well haunt Latin America for years." This quote was written on the 24th of September of 1973, by the newspaper Times, 13 days after Socialist President Salvador Allende committed suicide and General Augusto Pinochet took over the control of the country after a military coup. The International response, as this quote suggests, was one of support for the Chilean population, and made Allende an internationally recognized icon. During Allende's government, he nationalized several copper companies, built houses for marginalized people, provided half a litre of milk for all children, raised salaries, among other social advancements.² The days following September 11 were marked by plain violence, as the military stormed civil houses, arresting and executing political opponents, mainly from the left. Victor Jara was among one of them.

He was taken prisoner on the morning of September 12, 1973. He and 600 people from Universidad Técnica del Estado were taken to Stadium Chile, which was turned into a detention and torture centre.³ He was detained and taken there for his political views.⁴ He was a leftist artist who wrote multiple songs that supported marginalized leftist people, inciting them to fight for equality in a very unequal nation.⁵ Victor Jara was tortured in the stadium for three days; his hands were crushed and the soldiers mockingly forced him to play his guitar.⁶ He was executed by a soldier playing Russian roulette with his head.⁷

The brutal murder of Victor Jara serves as

an example of how powerful music can be, especially in a political context. Music speaks to people; it gives them the power and the inspiration to change the world, it educates and brings joy to the soul however it can also be used as means of resistance or social criticism. Victor Jara gave a voice to the working class, sang about their class strugales, denounced injustices, and dreamt about a fair and dignified future.8 This paper explores how music was used to engage in politics in Chile over the last 60 years. To explore this topic, the paper will be divided into four segments: The New Chilean song, Exile, The Return of Democracy, and Music as a way of resistance.

The New Chilean Song explores the revival of folklore music during the 1960s and 70s and how it incorporated elements from different parts of Latin America. It will first explain what the New Chilean Song was and then answer the question 'How was music used during Allende's Presidential election?' Exile explores the exile of musicians during Pinochet's bloody regime and answers the question of 'how music was used inside and outside of Chile as a way of stating opposition?' The legacy of Pinochet covers how Chile started slowly healing and the role music played in the Chilean Spring of 2019. This section discusses the legacy of Chilean music of the last 60 years and 'why can music be considered a way of resistance?'. Since the Chilean Spring of 2019 is a recent and ongoing event, there is a lack of secondary sources, whereas both Chileans and scholars from different nations have broadly covered the period that explores the dictatorship and the New Chilean Song. The names of the songs in Spanish were translated by the author and

tried their best to maintain the meaning from Spanish to English.

The New Chilean Song

On the morning of September 11 1973, President Allende addressed the nation for the last time. In his last speech, he condemned the violent and traitorous acts of the Chilean military forces but also thanked the workers of the country, the women working the fields, and those that would be persecuted by the following regime.9 He also thanked the youth, those who "sang, gave their joy and their fighting spirit."10 Patricia Vilches argues that the previously mentioned quote alludes to the New Chilean Song Movement and that Allende was legitimizing them and thanking them for the role they actively played during his government.11

To better understand the New Chilean Song (NCS), it is essential to look at Chile between 1920 and 1960. During this time. Chile tried to implement a Welfare State as well as an model known economic as Import Substitution Industrialization, a model based on inward industrialization, as a way to combat the devastating effects of the Great Depression of 1929.12 During that time, the Chilean composer and singer-songwriter Violeta Parra started her musical career, a woman who has often been presented as the pioneer of New Latin American Music. 13 Parra travelled to rural areas of Chile, as well as to the places in cities where the working class lived, composing and singing songs based on the struggles of the marginalized classes of modern Chile.14 An example of this is the song "Porque los pobres no tienen" (Because the poor don't have), where she denounces the religious beliefs that have introctrinated Chilean society,

impacting the poor and marginalized members of society as they "appropriate ethereal concepts."15 Violeta exposed the struggle of the Chilean working and rural class throughout her musical career. Despite all this, she was only recognized by most of the Chilean population after her death in 1967.16 Regardless of her late recognition, Violeta Parra contributed greatly to what would soon become the New Chilean Song, as she combined field labour with traditional music to make songs more linked to the people, to put them in service to the working class. Violeta Parra once said, "Today life is harder and the suffering of the people cannot be neglected by the artist."17 This suffering and the hardship of Chilean rural society were reflected during her whole musical career.

Beyond Violeta Parra is the context in which the New Chilean Song emerged. The 1960s were a period of change throughout the world. The world was divided in two, the West under the United States, and the East, influenced by the Soviet Union. The triumph of the Cuban Revolution was seen as a threat to the United States as well as the political advancements of leftist movements in South America which would ultimately lead to the creation of 'Operation Condor', a network for US-backed military dictatorships with the goal of eliminating opposition. 18 South America became a place where a constant tug of war was played. In this context, the New Chilean Song emerged as a social movement fueled by political changes. By incorporating traditional Chilean and Latin rhythms into its protests, the movement presented itself as a new option to understand the social and cultural processes of the 1960s in Chile. 19

Three years before Violeta Parra's death, a small bar was opened in Santiago, known as "La Peña de los Parra", where wine was served and traditional Chilean music was played.²⁰ From 1965 to 1970, the Peña would be the place where the New Chilean Song interpreters would gather, serving as a location where people could enjoy the New Chilean Song interpreters.²¹ The Peñas are traditional Chilean celebrations in locations where people could listen to socially linked music and allowed them to engage in political discussions and activities.

Musicians from the New Chilean Song

Quilapayún was formed in 1965, and it was one of the most important groups born out of the New Chilean Song (NCS) movement. Like the other NCS groups, Quilapayún had no leader and no frontman, valuing collective work over individual work. Originally, the group was formed by Julio Carrasco, Eduardo Carrasco, and Julio Numhauser, who took inspiration from folklore music. At the end of 1965, the trio met Angel Parra, son of Violeta Parra, and implemented new instruments like the guena, a traditional Andean flute, and charango, a Bolivian string instrument, to their music, giving them a more altiplanic sound.²² Quilapayún music was composed of altiplanic melodies, romantic songs, but most importantly social struggles and manifestations. At the time, it was no secret that the group had Marxist ideas, as they played at student federations, leftist parties. syndicates, and workers' unions, while also publishing new music on the Dicap label, a label company created by the Communists Youths of Chile in 1967.23 With that label, Quilapayún would release "Por Vietnam" (For Vietnam), the first-ever Dicap album.²⁴

Inti-Illimani was born in 1967, out of an interest in Andean rhythms from three students of the Universidad Técnica de Estado, be it from Chile or from somewhere else in Latin America.²⁵ The songs *Alturas* or Tatatí are clear examples of Inti-Illimani's characteristic sound. Alturas is a threeminute song where the song is guided by the charango and siku (a panpipe from the Andes mountains), the same as Tatatí. where they implement the guena, leaving the siku aside. Both songs are accompanied by Spanish guitars, strumming to a rhythm guided by a fur drum. The instrumental arrangements by Inti-Illimani show a clear difference from Quilapayún, as they were not guided by politics, but rather by their passion for Andean music. They were not militant of any political party before 1970, although they had contacts with the Communist Youths of Chile, and the (at the time) developing class consciousness of workers' unions and syndicates actively contributed to their music.²⁶

Without a doubt, the most influential and famous artist of the New Chilean Song is Victor Jara.²⁷ Victor Jara was born in rural Chile in the year 1932, his mother taught him how to play the guitar, and years later he would learn Gregorian singing, which allowed him to participate in "Carmina" Burana" when he was 21 years old.²⁸ In 1957 he met Violeta Parra, who would inspire him to keep singing.²⁹ In the beginning, his music was characterized by traditional Chilean music, mainly from rural areas, and the songs were produced for the people working the fields. 30 In 1966, he released his first album, where the song "El Arado" relates the hopes of a land worker for a change and how the work left him completely devastated.31

In 1967, he would compose "El Aparecido", a song dedicated to Che Guevarra, and in the same LP the song '"Canción de cuna para un niño vago" (Lullaby for a homeless kid), a song that criticises a sc Alturas at Tatatí abandoned children. Since his beginnings, Jara show Alturas athy towards the marginalized members, questioning the radical tenancy in Chile and the creation of a diverse, equal, and just world. Tatatí, voice would be heard by the working class, who would open their eyes to the unfair oligarchical policies that ruled rural Chile.

Allende Presidente!

Allende's victory in 1970 marked the firstever election of a socialist president and the consolidation of the New Chilean Song was fundamental to the election, as their socially committed music was used to promote Allende's presidential campaign.35 Even in 2022. Victor Jara's name is associated with Allende's government and his campaign implemented during the 1970s.36 The propaganda song "Venceremos" (We will win) is a clear example of how the New Chilean Song contributed to the campaign. "Venceremos, venceremos con Allende en septiembre a vencer" ("We will win, we will win, with Allende in September we'll win").37 The song "Canción del poder popular" was also composed by members of the New Chilean Song, in this case by Inti-Illimani "Porque esta vez no se trata de cambiar un presidente, será el pueblo quien construya un Chile bien diferente." 38 (Because this time it is not about changing a president, it will be the people who build a very different Chile.) After Allende's victory, the song was incorporated into the album Canto al programa, an album dedicated to Salvador Allende and his presidential victory. The two mentioned songs can serve as examples of

how the New Chilean Song was implemented during the presidential campaign, and, after Allende's victory, the NCS spread through Chile like never before, while also creating songs in support of the process.³⁹ Even the lyrics from the song Venceremos changed to adapt to the changing times after Allende's victory in the album Canto al program. "Venceremos venceremos, mil cadenas habrá que "romper"40 (We will win, we will win, a thousand chains we will break.)

The New Chilean Song during the time became deeply attached to Allende's presidency as well as international themes. One of the most famous Chilean protest songs is "El derecho de vivir en paz" (The right to live in peace), a song composed by Victor Jara in 1971 in honor of Ho Chi Minh, condemning the US intervention in Vietnam.⁴¹

Indochina es el lugar Más allá del ancho mar Donde revientan la flor Con genocidio y napalm La luna es una explosión Que funde todo el clamor El derecho de vivir en paz Indochina is the place Beyond the wide sea, Where they ruin the flower With genocide and napalm. The moon is an explosion That blows out all the clamor. The right to live in peace.⁴²

Victor Jara's songs from 1970 to 1973 were focused on supporting Allende's government as well as its political party, the Unidad Popular, accumulating hate from the Chilean right-wing, hate that would be unleashed in 1973.

Exile

Due to the New Chilean Song artists' link with Allende's government, it was not a surprise that they soon became a focus of persecution, torture, and exile. Pinochet's regime forced over a million people out of

the country, fifty thousand were tortured and around three thousand people were detained by the military never to be seen again. ⁴³ The record labels that had published NCS music were forced to stop publishing, and artists were put under severe scrutiny by the military, blaming them for the political division within Chilean society. ⁴⁴

The children of Violeta Parra, Angel and Isabel were the founders of La Peña de los Parra and, as mentioned before, it served as a space for the diffusion of the New Chilean Song and a place for political discussions and debates. The Peña was raided by the military on various occasions and was forced to close. Isabel and Angel's names appeared on a list of names that had to present to the authorities.45 Isabel after hiding in a friend's house found political asylum in the Venezuelan embassy.46 Angel was detained until February 1974 and wanted to keep pursuing a musical career inside Chile, however, the military deported him from Chile in November of the same year as his figure was associated with the Unidad Popular and Allende, which was forbidden in Chile after the coup.47 Inti-Illimani and Quilapayún were outside of Chile when the military came to power, the first one being in Italy, and the other one in France, starting their exile before the military coup.48

Resistance

Pinochet's policies aimed to exterminate any and every kind of opposition, creating a cultural blackout during the first years of the regime. However, that did not mean that people stopped consuming culture. Even though the Peña de los Parra closed, the number of folkloric peñas grew, which served as a place of encounter and union of

dissident sectors of society, becoming a fundamental space to organize and plan a political resistance. 49 The most famous and dangerous form of opposition was the Frente Patriotico Manuel Rodriguez (Manuel Rodriguez Patriotic Front or the FPMR), an urban guerilla responsible for the death of senator Jaime Guzman, a key person in the development of the Chilean constitution of 1980, and a failed assassination on Pinochet.⁵⁰ The guerilla used homerecorded songs in cassettes and used them as propaganda. The cassette proved to be a effective method to government interception, as they circulated easily and were homemade.51 Among the songs used by the FPMR is the Anthem of the FPMR, Hymn of the Rodriguista Militias, and Commander Tamara

Los Prisioneros was a band formed in 1979 Their first album was released in 1984, titled La Voz de los 80, with songs filled with resentment. The band called the people to not trust and follow the national leader. Pinochet, in the song No Necesitamos Banderas. 52 In the song Latinoamerica es un pueblo al sur de Estados Unidos the band incites to not fall in Westernization, exposing how the big nations saw and still see Latin America as well as the impact that the cold war had in the territory". 53 The album's titular song, La Voz de los '80 encouraged the population to be agents of change during the 80s, a theme that was well developed throughout the album.54 Despite the censorship imposed by Pinochet, the group still managed to break through by using pirated cassettes, impacting greatly the collective memory and idea of identity among the generation born during the military dictatorship.55 In the years that followed, the band released over five.

albums, and among them was the song *Por qué no se van*, a song that criticized the Latino that wanted to become a "second-hand westerner", criticizing the Eurocentric views that were and still are very common in South America. ⁵⁶ *El Baile de los que Sobran* criticized the quality of education the low sectors of Chilean society received when compared to the quality of private institutions that the higher classes enjoyed, a song that became an anthem during various political demonstrations and protests in Chile ⁵⁷

The Patriotic Front wrote songs that aimed to incite violent, armed action, used as propaganda, whereas Los Prisioneros wrote songs that did not actively aim for the creation of armed opposition, but tried to use music as a peaceful way of stating opposition. This opposition would spread around the youth who were born during the military dictatorship, exposing the fake idea of a "perfect" country, and becoming the main cultural platform for resistance against Pinochet. Many scholars considered their lyrics the key component of their music for the social and cultural relevance that they possess.⁵⁸

New Chilean Song in exile

The number of Chileans that were forced into exile was significantly high, which allowed them to set in motion various manifestations and acts with the goal of exposing the violence that the military exercised on the civil opposition. ⁵⁹ As a result, in various parts of America, as well as in Europe, new institutions were created to aid the refugees and work on political and cultural diffusion. Countless protest acts, concerts, and festivals were carried out around the globe where the participation of

the New Chilean Song proved to be fundamental when analyzing the political spectre of Chile. 60

During exile, and after the solidary euphoria came to an end, Inti-Illimani Quilapayún, as well as other exiled Chilean artists, were forced to professionalize their music. They were seen as professional artists and were judged under those criteria, allowing the artists to grow as a result of exile.61 Even though they were forced to professionalize, their militant aspect suffered no change, singing for those that were displaced, changing the themes from collective popular struggle to spreading the idea of non-violent resistance to reach utopian freedom. This change did not mean that they abandoned their political ideas, they chose to focus them on peacemaking rather than a polarizing one.62

The Legacy of Pinochet

The 1989 Plebiscite brought an end to the terrifying regime, and Chile started to slowly heal its wounds. The governments that followed supposedly aimed for the reconciliation between opposing classes and the pursuance of justice for those whose human rights were violated. The fact that Augusto Pinochet died without facing justice for his actions, as well as the lack of assumption of responsibility from the sectors involved, and the change from "Dictatorship" to "Military Regime" in school texts, proves the point that the pursuit of justice by the Chilean state was mediocre. 63 By 2013 only 262 people were convicted for humanitarian crimes, with over a thousand cases still pending.64

On September 5 of 2009, Victor Jara had a second funeral that had countless

attendants. When he died, his widow buried him in an unmarked grave so that the military could not find and defile his body, but in 2009, Jara traversed Santiago for the last time, accompanied by a crowd of people, honoring the memory of all of those who were affected by Pinochet dictatorship, tortured. exiled. murdered disappeared. 65 A spokesperson of Foundation Victor Jara mentions how "that day we brought him to life, and since then he's been with us."66 This quote confirms the notion that his persona and his memory as of 2022 are still present in Chilean and South American society, and has led many recent South American artists to take inspiration from his music.

Even though Pinochet's dictatorship came to an end, his policies are still present in Chilean society, as the constitution that was written during times of political persecution still has not been changed. Present Chilean society is going through a lot of changes to become a fair and dignified society. After a plebiscite in 2020. Chile decided that it was time to change the constitution established in 1989. In October 2019, a massive wave of protests demanded a change in the neoliberal system, the legacy of Pinochet. An increase in the price of public transport was the last drop. "It's not 30 pesos, it's 30 years" became the most famous phrase that englobed the general feeling of the people.⁶⁷ During the time, President Piñera said "we are at war, against a very powerful enemy", installed a curfew, and declared a state of emergency, something that had not happened since Pinochet's dictatorship and polarized the people even further.68 On October 25, five days after Piñera's violent speech, Victor Jara's "El derecho de vivir en paz" was played by musicians in the

peaceful protest "A thousand guitars for Peace". Another song that was played during the protests was "El baile de los que sobran" by Los Prisioneros, a song that most of the participants knew, generating a partylike environment, and deeply linked to the inequalities that Chile has. "It's a song for all of us who lost out, but that's still cool because it's like throwing them in the face, look what I do with your arrogance, I'll dance it to you."69 The two songs used in the protests serve as a way of stating resistance peacefully. They are not on the frontlines or in the barricades, fighting the police forces, they are with their guitars, with their voices, singing and dancing, expressina their needs politely peacefully. As of 2022, there are still protests going on in Chile.

Conclusion

The New Chilean Song brought a new way of making politics in Chile. From Violeta Parra's songs about the rural areas of Chile to the peacemaking dream of Victor Jara, shows how the New Chilean Song was deeply connected to the marginalized sectors of society, inside or outside of Chile. The commitment of the New Chilean Song helped Allende become president, where changes based on a socialist way to power aimed to provide better care for the marginalized sectors of Chile. When Pinochet's regime violently ended Allende's presidency, the resistance was done inside and outside of Chile, where Los Prisioneros generated a sense of union and identity in a generation marked by repression and fear. Inti-Illimani, Quilapayún, and other exiled artists and civilians denounced internationally the humanitarian crisis inside Chile Victor Jara's second funeral served as a way to honour the artist as well as the

memory of all the exiled, tortured, and disappeared during the dictatorship. Once again songs were used as a way of resistance in 2019, to encourage the protesters and demonstrate peacefully the Chilean discomfort.

Given these points, it is clear that politically-oriented music in Chile during the last 60 years was used to denounce the conditions of the marginalized Chilean population, promote political campaigns, encourage the population to work together towards a common goal, and resist the tyranny of Pinochet and state violence started in 2019 as well as encouraging the creation of collective identity and the importance of memory, two themes very important when studying a society that went through a military dictatorship.

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"I AM A WORKER OF MUSIC, I AM NOT AN ARTIST,
THE PEOPLE AND TIME WILL TELL IF I AM AN ARTIST.
AT THIS MOMENT I AM A WORKER AND A WORKER
LOCATED WITH A VERY DEFINED CONSCIENCE, PART
OF THE WORKING CLASS THAT FIGHTS FOR THE
CONSTRUCTION OF A BETTER LIFE."

Victor Jara

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¹⁶ Vilches, 198.

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²⁴ Alvarez Fabela, 32.

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