

CANTO PORQUE ES
NECESARIO CANTAR:
The New Song Movement in Chile, 1973–1983*

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“Para el camino”

Canto a la angustia y a las alegrías.
Canto porque es necesario cantar
para ir dejando una huella en los días,
para ir diciendo cosas prohibidas.¹

“For the Road”

I sing of anguish and joy.
I sing because it's necessary to sing
to leave my mark on time,
to say forbidden things.

Latin American New Song is distinct from the usual stereotypes of Latin American popular music. Songs such as “Para el camino” do not fit into the common categories of salsa, ballads, Spanish-language versions of U.S. hit songs or popularized traditional styles such as the *ranchera* and *cumbia*. Although New Song is not as well known as the more typical styles, its greater social significance has achieved an impact in Latin America far beyond the musical realm.

The roots of New Song can be found in the resurgence of interest in traditional folkloric music that took place, particularly in Argentina and Chile, from the late 1950s to the early 1960s. Since the 1960s, the New Song movement has spread throughout the rest of Latin America to become an important cultural expression that directly addresses current social tensions in the region.

New Song began as a fusion of traditional musical forms with socially relevant lyrics. Although each country has developed variations of New Song that reflect local social and political conditions and musical styles, New Song as a whole can be characterized as music intended to support and promote social change. New Song musicians do not seek to create escapist entertainment but endeavor instead to voice current reality and social problems in a meaningful style. They share a commitment to authentic expression and absolute opposition to what they term the typical “disposable consumer songs” of most commercial music.

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Chile's Nueva Canción was one of the first New Song movements to emerge in Latin America. Beginning in the mid-1960s, it grew and consolidated throughout the rest of the decade and flourished during the 1970–73 presidency of Salvador Allende. The music of the Nueva Canción was outlawed after the military coup d'état of 1973, and the best-known musicians of the Allende period now make music in exile. They still record and tour frequently, and their names—Quilapayún, Inti-Illimani, Isabel and Angel Parra—are internationally recognized.²

The visibility of the exiled musicians and the control of the Chilean media by the military government have tended to obscure the fact that music is also being made inside Chile. One strand of Chilean popular music has been named Canto Nuevo. Although the terms Canto Nuevo and Nueva Canción are used interchangeably in most of Latin America to describe the movement and both translate into English as "New Song," in Chile *Nueva Canción* specifically means music made before 1973, while *Canto Nuevo* refers to the movement since the coup d'état.

Under the military dictatorship, the task of Canto Nuevo has been to communicate the reality of a people whose outlets for group expression and social interaction have been intentionally and systematically restricted. As such, Canto Nuevo has been inherently dissident and consequently has been repressed and marginalized since its inception. This research note will present a brief history of the pre-1973 Nueva Canción and then examine the development of Canto Nuevo, emphasizing the ways in which Canto Nuevo has been affected by Chilean governmental actions and policies. Dates given for the phases of the movement are necessarily approximate because as one of its members explained, Canto Nuevo is "not just a post-1973 way of singing. In what is said and how it's said poetically and musically, Canto Nuevo is a process."³

Nueva Canción from the 1960s to 1973

Chile's Nueva Canción developed in the 1960s out of a process of renewed interest in the country's traditional music.⁴ Rejection of U.S. cultural domination, which was manifested musically by the flood of U.S. and European popular music on the radio, stimulated recognition of the value of Chilean culture. As part of the search for a genuine national identity, young musicians began to perform indigenous Chilean music. The pioneering work of Violeta Parra in gathering traditional Chilean music, promoting it through radio and live performance, and encouraging developing musicians was crucial to this process.

Although she died before the New Song movement was fully

established, Violeta Parra brought to prominence many of the features that together characterize the movement. Primary among those elements was an admiration for Chilean culture and music. Violeta Parra's love of Chile found expression in numerous artistic activities, but her devotion to the people and culture of her country was most evident in the effort she put into collecting hundreds of folk songs from every region of Chile so that they would not be lost forever. Through her efforts, the Chilean public was exposed to Chile's powerful musical traditions. A friend of hers said, "We were stuck in North American and European culture, listening to their music, imitating it, watching their films. . . . Latin American things had no value . . . and Violeta was a kind of bridge, a connection with Chile. . . . There was *nothing* in Chile! But there was all that life in the common people and Violeta had the ability to become part of it, love it, and give it back in her songs. That is, she acted as a translator, so that we could know ourselves."⁵ Violeta Parra also wrote songs based on Chilean folk music to express her own ideas, thus setting the pattern for the songwriters to follow. This 1962 song, which describes an incident that took place while she was in Europe, has become one of her most famous compositions.

"La carta"

Me mandaron una carta
por el correo temprano.
En esa carta me dicen
que cayó preso mi hermano.

Yo que me encuentro tan lejos,
esperando una noticia,
me viene a decir la carta
que en mi patria no hay justicia.
Los hambrientos piden pan,
plomo les da la milicia, sí.

Por suerte tengo guitarra
para llorar mi dolor.
También tengo nueve hermanos
fuera del que se m'engrilló.
Los nueve son comunistas
con el favor de mi Dios, sí.⁶

"The Letter"

They sent me a letter
in the early mail.
In the letter they tell me
they took my brother to jail.

While I'm so far away,
waiting for news,
the letter comes to tell me
there is no justice in my country.
The hungry people ask for bread,
the militia gives them lead, yes.

Luckily, I have a guitar
for lamenting my pain,
I also have nine brothers and sisters
besides the one they locked up.
The nine are communists,
by the grace of God, yes.

In 1964 Violeta Parra returned from Europe and established a cultural center in La Reina, a neighborhood on the outskirts of Santiago. She named the center "La Carpa de la Reina" and ran it almost singlehandedly. The music performed at La Carpa had to meet her high standards of quality and authenticity, and she coached promising musicians toward those ends. Many of the singers who became the foundation of the New Chilean Song Movement performed at La Carpa.

By the time of her suicide in 1967, Violeta Parra had become widely recognized for her extraordinary creativity and contribution to her country. Through her energy and commitment, she had created an awareness in many Chileans of the value of their own traditions. Musicologist Gaston Soublette, who worked with her, says that Parra “took what before had been an object of more or less private investigation and gave it back to the people.”⁷ It is difficult for the casual observer to comprehend Violeta Parra’s crucial role in the emergence of the musical expression that became the New Chilean Song. No one else in Chilean musical history is as universally acclaimed as a key figure. Cuban singer Silvio Rodríguez summed up her importance not only for Chile but for the entire Latin American New Song movement: “Violeta is fundamental. Nothing would have been as it is had it not been for Violeta.”⁸

During the 1960s, the New Chilean Song coalesced around Violeta Parra’s cultural center and the *peña* (a small coffeehouse dedicated to folklore) established in Santiago by her two oldest children, Isabel and Angel. As musicians worked together at La Carpa de la Reina and La Peña de los Parra to refine their skills, they began to compose music that employed traditional styles to express contemporary ideas, particularly their growing political awareness. Recognition that a unique form of expression was developing came in 1969 with a music festival that publicly “brought together for the first time a group of composers and interpreters whose artistic activity had inclined for some time toward a type of song that, although it still had not found its name, was clearly distinguishable. . . .”⁹ The festival, which was sponsored by the Universidad Católica in Santiago and organized by Ricardo García, was named the Primer Festival de la Nueva Canción Chilena, and from this festival the New Chilean Song got its name. University Rector Fernando Castillo defined New Song when he opened the festival with these words: “Perhaps popular song is the art that best defines a community. But lately in our country we are experiencing a reality that is not ours. . . . Our purpose here today is to search for an expression that describes our reality. . . . How many foreign singers come here and get us all stirred up, only to leave us emptier than ever when they leave? And isn’t it true that our radio and television programs seldom encourage the creativity of our artists . . . ? Let our fundamental concern be that our own art be deeply rooted in the *Chilean* spirit so that when we sing—be it badly or well—we express genuine happiness and pain, happiness and pain that are our own.”¹⁰ Reflecting the mood of the festival and the times was this song by Víctor Jara, which was chosen as the best song of the festival. “Plegaria a un labrador” uses Biblical language to convey a message of hope and change.

"Plegaria a un labrador"

Levántate y mírate las manos.
Para crecer estréchala a tu hermano.

Juntos iremos unidos en la sangre.
Hoy es el tiempo que puede ser
mañana.
Líbranos de aquel que nos domina
en la miseria.
Tráenos tu reino de justicia
e igualdad.¹¹

"Prayer to a Worker"

Arise and look at your hands.
Reach out to your brother so you
may grow.
Together we will go united in blood.
Today is the time to build for
tomorrow.
Free us from the one who dominates
us in misery.
Bring us your kingdom of justice
and equality.

By the 1970 presidential campaign, a coherent group of musicians existed who supported the candidacy of the Unidad Popular (UP) representative, Salvador Allende. Artists of the New Chilean Song movement accompanied Allende to political events, sang at meetings and rallies, and composed songs to spread Unidad Popular concepts among the voters. "Venceremos" by Claudio Iturra and Sergio Ortega became Allende's campaign song and was sung constantly throughout the campaign.

"Venceremos"

Desde el hondo crisol de la patria,
se levanta el clamor popular.
Ya se anuncia la nueva alborada.
Todo Chile comienza cantar.

Venceremos, venceremos.
Mil cadenas habrá que romper.

Venceremos, venceremos.
La miseria sabremos vencer.

Sembraremos las tierras de gloria.
Socialista será el porvenir.
Todos juntos seremos la historia.
A cumplir, a cumplir, a cumplir.¹²

"We Will Triumph"

From the depths of our country,
the cry of the people rises.
Now the new dawn is announced.
All of Chile begins to sing.

We will triumph, we will triumph.
A thousand chains will have to
be broken.
We will triumph, we will triumph.
We will learn how to conquer misery.

We will sow the fields of glory.
The future will be socialist.
Together we will make history.
Carry on, carry on, carry on.

After Allende's election, New Song musicians continued their unofficial, but active, involvement with the Unidad Popular government. They played at community gatherings and political events, taking their message to the people through the medium of music, which was recognized as "a major amplifier in the cultural system."¹³ Songs were written about every important event during the Allende era, and they were widely circulated. Shortly after the election, a record album detailing the UP program in song was released. To produce *Canto al Programa*, classically trained Chilean composers Sergio Ortega and Luis Advis collaborated with the New Song group Inti-Ilumini as part of an effort to use "all available means of communication" to present

the UP program in a language and style that were accessible to the people.¹⁴ The album featured such songs as “Canción de la propiedad social y privada,” “Vals de la educación para todos,” and the following explanation of agrarian policy:

“Canción de la reforma agraria”
Ya se acaba el latifundio,
el campo al que lo trabaja.
Se hace la reforma agraria.
El momento es importante—
nadie se ponga adelante.
Y los técnicos agrarios
ya se ponen al servicio
del campesino chileno
que ha encontrado su destino.¹⁵

“Song of Agrarian Reform”
The latifundio has ended,
the land goes to those who work it.
We’re carrying out agrarian reform.
Timing is important—
don’t jump the gun.
And the agrarian technicians
are now at the service
of the Chilean peasants
who have found their destiny.

According to Violeta Parra’s daughter Isabel, an important member of the New Song movement, “We were totally involved in what was happening.”¹⁶ The best-known song of the entire Latin American New Song movement came out of this period in Chile. “El pueblo unido jamás será vencido” is still sung and chanted in Latin America and around the world as a rallying cry.

“El pueblo unido jamás será
vencido”
De pie, luchar.
El pueblo va a triunfar.
Será mejor
la vida que vendrá.

“The People United Will Never
Be Defeated”
Stand up, struggle.
The people will triumph.
The life that is to come
will be better.

Y ahora el pueblo
que se alza en la lucha,
con voz de gigante
gritando “¡adelante!”
¡El pueblo unido jamás será
vencido!¹⁷

And now come the people
who rise up in the struggle,
with the voice of a giant
shouting, “Onward!”
The people united will never be
defeated!

11 September 1973 to Mid-1975

That spirit of militant optimism was dramatically extinguished by the military junta that took power in Chile on 11 September 1973. The junta’s stated goal was to eradicate Marxism and its objective was to reverse the direction of Chilean political and economic development. To achieve these ends, the government and all public institutions were completely restructured, unions were dissolved, political parties were banned, and most opportunities for groups to gather were severely restricted.

The observations of Chilean sociologist José Joaquín Brunner

suggest the impact of these restrictions. Brunner maintains that analyzing any culture requires studying what he calls "the structuring of public space," that sphere where people can exchange ideas. With the advent of the military government in Chile, public space was closed. "In effect, from the most molecular case, such as face-to-face conversation, to massive instances, such as communication organized through radio, press, and television, the communicative dimension of [Chilean] society [was] radically transformed."¹⁸ Such sweeping effects were achieved despite the fact that the government did not have a specific cultural policy, or what Chilean analyst Hernán Pozo defines as a "coherent and deliberate set of actions and measures tending to impose a value system or a vision of the world." Pozo goes on to comment that nonetheless, "governmental actions had *cultural consequences* and some of these were more or less intended or expected."¹⁹

Soledad Bianchi, a Chilean critic and essayist who teaches at the University of Paris, has analyzed these "cultural consequences." During the first year of military rule in Chile, cultural activity virtually ceased.²⁰ Bianchi terms this period, which is commonly known as the "*apagón cultural*" (cultural blackout), the phase of destruction. Bianchi asserts that in order to make a "definitive break in the history of Chile," the military "dedicated themselves to erasing everything that seemed dangerous, subversive, and prejudicial to the political, social, and economic project they proposed." The government took over the mass media, applied strict censorship, and "closed down all means of expression that were not supportive of the new authorities."²¹

The music of the Nueva Canción was severely affected by this media censorship. It was banned from the airwaves, removed from record stores, confiscated, and burned along with books and other "subversive" material during the house-to-house searches that immediately followed the coup. Its musicians were exiled, imprisoned, and, in the well-known case of Víctor Jara, killed.²² Traditional musical instruments had become so thoroughly associated with the politics of the deposed government that playing them was considered tantamount to subversion. Eduardo Carrasco, a member of the exiled group Quilapayún and a New Song analyst, explains, "National music came to be so closely identified with the revolutionary struggle that during the first week of the . . . military government, they called a meeting of the most prominent folklorists to inform them that certain folkloric instruments like the *quena* and *charango* were prohibited."²³

That prohibition was eventually circumvented by conservatory musicians who formed an "Andean baroque" group, which began to play in universities and churches. No sanctions were taken against performances of Bach and other classical composers on traditional folk instruments, due to the novelty of the group's approach and the pro-

tected environment of the university and the church. Barroco Andino provided an opening for the reappearance of traditional music and was part of the “Andean Boom” of 1975–76, when indigenous Andean music manifested a strong resurgence of popularity in Chile. Although the content of these songs was innocuous, the choice of instruments added political overtones, as is demonstrated by a Chilean musician’s comment that the government considered singers to be “extremists and subversives for the mere act of accompanying themselves with *charangos* or *queñas*—instruments proscribed by a ridiculous order that nobody respects any more.”²⁴ At first this music was heard principally in churches, often at human rights events and other implicitly political gatherings. Gradually, small *peñas* were reestablished, making the music available to the general public.

Mid-1975 to 1977

From the strict folkloric interpretations of the Andean Boom, musicians moved toward recreating the music of the pre-1973 Nueva Canción, but they carefully avoided performing any overtly political songs. The revival of this repertoire was quickly dubbed “Canto Nuevo,” a term selected to “suggest a tie with Nueva Canción.”²⁵ Canto Nuevo was both the resurrection of Nueva Canción and a response to the changed situation in Chile. One Chilean musician commented, “the only thing *nuevo* about Canto Nuevo is the conditions under which it is being produced.”²⁶

The most notable of these conditions was the “closure of public space,” which José Joaquín Brunner described as “permitting the authoritarian bloc to . . . impose . . . a single worldview that must be assumed, under threat of force, by everyone else.”²⁷ Canto Nuevo was attempting to express a different outlook, one that was not available through the mass media. Echoing the intention of the original Nueva Canción of the 1960s, Canto Nuevo was a conscious response to the domination of the media by “consumer art, generally foreign.”²⁸ Its initial audience was “an enthusiastic, essentially dissident public reacting against the transnational culture that the officialist communications media are trying to impose.”²⁹ After several years of cultural blackout, Canto Nuevo musicians were working consciously “to defend, promote and search for a national cultural identity, that is, to identify and embody the reality that the majority of the country lives.”³⁰ During this period, numerous organizations were created to support the activities of Canto Nuevo. The Peña Doña Javiera Carrera was established in Santiago in 1975 and became an important showcase for Canto Nuevo. In 1976 Radio Chilena began to devote airtime to the music in a new nightly program, *Nuestro Canto*. In the same year, the Alerce record

company came into being in Santiago. In the words of its founder, Ricardo García, Alerce was created “to rescue a series of scattered values, the leftovers of a movement—the Nueva Canción—that was tied up with my own life.”³¹ In 1977 an independent concert promotion agency was formed, while at the University of Chile a large number of artistic groups banded together to organize what would become the Agrupación Cultural Universitaria (ACU), the first independent student organization since the coup d’état. Many Canto Nuevo musicians gained performing experience through a series of music festivals sponsored by the ACU.

The presence of active musicians and a developing organizational framework did not imply that Canto Nuevo faced no difficulties. While government tactics had shifted toward more selective repression of activist political opposition, legal and extralegal controls were still prevalent. In order to produce a concert in a public auditorium, the sponsor was required to solicit permission from the local police and submit a sample of song lyrics and a list of all performers. The police could—and did—deny permission for individual singers or songs or for the entire event. Often permission was not granted until shortly before showtime, leaving producers, performers, and the public in a state of uncertainty. Permission was also frequently denied or revoked at the last minute.³² Access to the mass media, beyond the selective exposure provided by Radio Chilena, was virtually nil. There was (and is) a blacklist of performers who are not allowed to appear on television or radio.

But more commonly, control was sporadic and often informal. As a concert promoter described the situation:

It’s a very irregular set-up; there are many irregularities in these matters. Nothing is defined. The rules of the game are not established but keep changing. If you look for the responsible party, you’re not going to find him because maybe there’s not one person responsible. Maybe the producer of the program invited a singer to perform and then suddenly he ran into someone in the hall who said, ‘I understand that so-and-so’s going to appear on the show. Hey, be careful!’ And that’s it! The producer thinks it over, and then, dying of embarrassment, he calls the singer and cancels the performance.³³

On other occasions, a government official might “suggest” to the manager of a television station that it might be better if a certain singer did not perform. The manager in turn would “suggest” the idea to the producer and so on down the line. Eventually the performer received word that a higher authority had disallowed the performance.

In spite of all these difficulties, 1977 was an active year for Canto Nuevo. In addition to the problematic concerts, there were always opposition functions, church-sponsored performances, and a never-ending demand for musicians to participate in community activities. With a recording company and other institutions specifically intended to pro-

mote its activities, a growing public, and developing artists, Canto Nuevo had become established.

1978 to 1981

Once firmly constituted, Canto Nuevo began to grow beyond simply repeating themes from the Nueva Canción into creating music more directly relevant to the times. Musicians composed their own songs, in which they attempted to deal with Chilean reality as they were experiencing it. This process corresponds to Soledad Bianchi's postulation of a second stage in postcoup art, in which "the social and critical content [of artistic expression] acquire increased clarity."³⁴ The process also coincided with a shift on the part of the government toward more sophisticated and subtle means of controlling political opposition.

The musicians' search for original forms of expression included experimentation with both musical style and song lyrics. Musically, composers moved away from strict adherence to traditional instrumentation and rhythms toward the inclusion of electronic instruments, classical harmonies, and jazz elements. The need to express ideas in lyrics that would not get past the censors if directly stated led to the development of highly poetic texts and complex metaphors. Eduardo Carrasco explains the use of metaphor in song in this way: "Despite being subjected to the most savage repression in our history, the song has not stopped being political. What is significant in the present situation in Chile is that our people have invented another language, a way to say things without saying them, in which the smallest allusion says more than a hundred speeches."³⁵ Musicians complained bitterly about the necessary self-censorship, but it did not prevent them from getting their message across. For example, the following song about the departure of a happy puppeteer expresses an implicit undercurrent of rebellion:

<i>"El joven titiritero"</i>	<i>"Young Puppeteer"</i>
Titiritero joven peregrino, navegante de todos los caminos enamorado de su azul destino, titiritero joven ya no vino.	Puppeteer, young wayfarer, navigator of all paths in love with his golden destiny, young puppeteer never came back.
.
Titiritero, crece nuevamente. Hazte primero luz, luego simiente. Ven a nacer en mi país naciente	Puppeteer, grow again. Become light first, then seed. Come and be born in my infant country
y arranca los dolores de esta gente.	and wipe away the people's sorrows.
.

Hagamos una senda más brillante
 aunque vayamos contra la corriente.³⁶ Let us make a brighter path
 even if we go against the current.

Some songs had dense, intricate story lines and overlapping metaphors. In performance, a spoken introduction could provide the clue to the song's hidden meaning. In other songs, the references were relatively self-evident. For example, winter was often used to symbolize the difficult conditions in Chile after the coup d'état, as is illustrated in the following song.

<p>“Cuando llega el invierno”</p> <p>Cuando llega el invierno, las noches se duermen frías. Cuando llega el invierno, más se endurece la vida, se nos escarcha el alma, se congela la esperanza.</p> <p>.</p> <p>Quédate, compañera. Ya pasa el temporal. Cuando se aclare el cielo, volveremos a volar.³⁷</p>	<p>“When Winter Comes”</p> <p>When winter comes, nights bring cold sleep. When winter comes, life gets harder, our souls frost over, hope freezes.</p> <p>.</p> <p>Stay, my friend. This bad storm is passing. When the sky clears, we will fly again.</p>
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Such songs represented attempts to describe the situation in Chile, to provide an alternative to the mind-numbing commercial music that dominated the market, and to “reflect the feelings of the common people in today’s society.”³⁸ Chilean essayist Soledad Bianchi observed: “When art attempts to be more than mere entertainment, a basic feature that characterizes it is the use of subtle language that escapes formulas and passwords. Painting, theater, literature, and song express themselves in suggestive and subtle form. . . . Responding to the need to bypass censorship . . . , their authors must carry out a greater search that is ultimately more creative.” The resulting work is not a finished product in itself but is completed “within the individual experience and the social and collective context,” through interpretation by the listener or reader or through the interaction of the performer and the spectator.³⁹

A major concert in 1977 provided a dramatic illustration of this system of communication. La Gran Noche del Folklore, billed as Alerce Records’ awards ceremony for the folklorists of the year, was one of the first large shows of its kind since 1973, and the partisans came out in force. The auditorium’s seven thousand seats sold out quickly, and another thousand people clamored in the street for admission. Such a response suggests that this concert was more than simply a public gathering of folklore aficionados. “With the complete closure of all channels of participation, the music became *the* cohesive element,” said one person who attended the concert. “I saw people whom I hadn’t seen since

1973, people whom I thought were in prison or dead.”⁴⁰ The concert served as a meeting place for thousands who had been unable or afraid to gather under any other circumstances. For one night, a public space had been created for a nonofficial gathering.

The award for the best new group went to Aquelarre, a Canto Nuevo group that mixed traditional style with classical and modern elements. The group performed a song about Manuel Rodríguez, a hero of Chile’s war of independence. Like others of its kind, this song recounts his adventures, and as a paean to a long-dead national hero, it was relatively immune from censorship.

“El cautivo de Til Til”	“The Prisoner of Til Til”
Dicen que es Manuel su nombre y que se lo llevan camino a Til Til.	They say Manuel is his name and that they’re taking him to Til Til.
Dicen que en la guerra fue el mejor y en la ciudad deslumbraba como el rayo de la libertad. ⁴¹	They say that in the war he was the best and in the city he shone like the ray of liberty.

When the group sang the word *libertad*, the audience erupted into applause and cheers.⁴² This explosive reaction to a single word was a powerful statement under the extremely restricted conditions of Chile in 1977. The incident illustrates what a member of Aquelarre described as a communication code between the public and the musicians. “To leave to the songs and the applause what one would like to say with words has been perhaps the most important challenge of Canto Nuevo.”⁴³

The government was not unaware of the success of La Gran Noche del Folklore and subsequent concerts. Indeed, many observers contend that the authorities were as disturbed by the possibility of a large public gathering of dissidents as by the content of the music itself, and by 1978, the government had apparently had enough. Permission for the third Gran Noche del Folklore, which was to have been held in May 1978, was revoked the day before the concert.⁴⁴ Alerce Records attempted to schedule another music festival in August 1978, but governmental permission was denied outright.⁴⁵ The government’s repeated denials of permission, rather than a blanket prohibition, effectively ended large concerts.

As Canto Nuevo demonstrated that it could attract large audiences, government efforts to suppress it increased. The methods of control consisted of preventing the music from reaching the public via mass media or major concerts. The radio program that had been a primary outlet for Canto Nuevo was cut back from nightly to weekly programming and then was taken off the air altogether.⁴⁶ One popular

Canto Nuevo group, Illapu, left Chile for greener European pastures in 1980 and was subsequently denied permission to return.⁴⁷ Changes in taxation rules effectively gave the government the power to decide what constituted a “cultural” event and in 1982 drove the concert production agency that had been affiliated with Canto Nuevo out of business.⁴⁸ In 1981 more than eight hundred cassettes of early, nonpolitical songs by Víctor Jara, the slain singer, were confiscated on grounds that they violated an internal security law. The importer of the material was given what he called “a little vacation in jail.”⁴⁹ He was soon released, and six months later the charge was dropped for lack of merit. By 1982 Víctor Jara records were being sold openly in Santiago record stores.⁵⁰ Such incidents illustrate Canto Nuevo’s ambivalent status: it has been allowed to exist, but in a perpetually precarious state.

1981 to 1983

In 1981 Canto Nuevo became more available to the public through increased, yet limited, television and radio exposure. Although still a minority expression, it began to gain a larger following. One of the causes of this newfound popularity was Canto Nuevo’s growing presence at Chile’s annual Festival Internacional de la Canción at Viña del Mar. The Viña del Mar festival, which is extensively covered by the Chilean press, included several Canto Nuevo performers in the early 1980s. Although they sang their most innocuous songs, their presence at Viña del Mar helped legitimize the term *Canto Nuevo* as a type of Chilean popular music.

At the same time, young listeners were tiring of being bombarded by the predictable sameness of the commercial disco music that was saturating the airwaves, and they consequently became more receptive to other musical styles. Simultaneously, the growing availability of cassette tape recorders facilitated informal music exchange and gave greater exposure to Canto Nuevo and other music unavailable in Chile. For example, the music of Cuban singer Silvio Rodríguez circulated widely via this informal network, becoming extraordinarily popular without commercial backing. His ballad style and finely crafted poetry introduced a new dimension for musicians to explore, greatly influencing Canto Nuevo.

Another factor in Canto Nuevo’s growth was television, an important source of exposure for popular music. The severe economic recession of 1980–81 made it financially impossible for Chilean television stations to pay foreign stars. They were thus forced to hire local talent, which was considerably cheaper. As always, only a few Canto Nuevo musicians had access to this medium. The blacklist and unofficial pressures prevented some singers from appearing, and those who

did appear were told exactly what they might and might not sing on television. Despite these attempts to neutralize them and government efforts to promote less threatening artists, the exposure was useful to the musicians and to Canto Nuevo. The fact that the Canto Nuevo repertoire had begun to include songs acceptable for the mass media was not incidental. For several years, restrictions on Chilean society had been slowly easing. Previously, Canto Nuevo had been one of the few ways to express dissident views, which made it a closed, strictly defined musical current. As other channels of interaction and expression were opened, such as occurred with the 1979 authorization of unions and confederations to meet without previous permission, Canto Nuevo could begin to widen its scope. Songs about everyday life and even love songs began to appear in the Canto Nuevo repertoire, which had once consisted almost exclusively of metaphorically disguised protest. Within this slight expansion of public space, musicians found not only the latitude to sing many kinds of songs but also greater freedom to express themselves. The same composer who had written about hope freezing in winter now encouraged the listener to look ahead to the not-so-distant future:

"Vamos a la patria"

Véngase que vamos,
y sin miedo.

Que vamos a cantar nuevas
canciones.

Que vamos hacia allá después
de todo.

Que vamos a borrar este mal rato.

Que vamos a la patria
y a su parto.⁵¹

"Let's Go Home"

Come on, let's go,
and without fear.

We're going to sing new songs.

We're going onward after all.

We're going to erase this bad
moment.

We're going to our homeland
and its birth.

Recourse to sarcasm allowed comments that still could not be made directly, as in "En esta época." This song mocks even itself in its mimicry of the official promotion of consumerism as the universal panacea.

"En esta época"

En esta época en que vivo,
todo es muy atractivo
en condiciones para ser feliz.
Hay mucha paz y mucho orden.

Ya no hay tanto desorden.

Ya se acabaron mis problemas.
Cada día tiende a mejorar.
El ápice de mi existencia

"These Days"

These days,
everything is very pleasant,
and there are reasons to be happy.
There's lots of peace and lots of
order.

There's no longer such disorder.

My problems are over.
Every day tends to get better.
The apex of my existence

se mide en la confluencia
de los bienes que puedo comprar.

Estoy cansado de saber
que andan personas por allí
diciendo que esto aquí está muy mal.
Esos poetas y cantantes,
escritores y estudiantes
que no saben más que reclamar,

que no han visto las noticias.
Ya no hay tanta avaricia.
Todo el mundo hoy puede comprar.
Hasta los pobres de hoy en día
fuman de categoría.⁵²

is measured in the flow
of the goods that I can buy.

I'm tired of hearing
that some people are going around
saying that things here are very bad.
Those poets and singers,
writers and students
who know only how to make
demands,
who haven't seen the news.
There's no longer such avarice.
Everyone these days can buy.
Even the poor people these days
smoke classy cigarettes.

One composer noted the expanded possibilities for expression in a song called "Metáforas en extinción." Another ventured to compose a song in honor of Nueva Canción martyr Víctor Jara.

"Homenaje"

Tu vida era tu vida,
la mía, otra historia.
Y el mundo era testigo
de los días.

No vacilaremos
en tenderle una canción.
Un millón de voces
le dirán que no fue en vano
que nos diera su boca.

Víctor, gran ausente,
desde siempre te cantamos.

¿Dónde se han ido
los días de amistad?
¿Dónde está lo hermoso
que fuimos a sembrar?
Y maldigo el presente.⁵³

"Homage"

Your life was your life,
mine, another story.
And the world was witness
to those days.

We will not hesitate
to offer him a song.
A million voices
will tell him that
he did not give us his voice in vain.

Víctor, absent hero,
forever we'll sing with you.

Where have
the days of friendship gone?
Where is the beauty
we went out to sow?
And I curse the present.

While still a far cry from the name-calling and partisan rallying cries of the pre-1973 Nueva Canción movement, such songs represent a significant shift away from lyrics about butterflies emerging from cocoons and the changing of the seasons.

May 1983 to May 1985

Important changes took place in Chile beginning in May 1983, when the first Día Nacional de Protesta was held. The incessant and expanding political *efervescencia*, as some Chileans wryly called it, af-

ected all aspects of Chilean society; and as one of the principal vehicles of dissent, the Canto Nuevo movement did not remain on the sidelines. During the short-lived *apertura*, musicians were busier than ever, performing frequently at all kinds of meetings and political events. For example, Canto Nuevo musicians were among the more than three hundred participants in the Congreso de Artistas y Trabajadores de la Cultura de Chile, which met in December of 1983 to create an organization to represent them and coordinate their work. "Toda la cultura contra la dictadura" was the slogan of this congress. At the opening session of the congress, a song was dedicated to the Movimiento Democrático Popular, a major opposition coalition.

"Canción al Movimiento
Democrático Popular"

De lejanas ciudades y campos
suena lejos rebeldes clarines.
Pobladores se unen al canto,
socialista el futuro de Chile.
Se organiza el pueblo y resiste.
Los batidos se encuentran sus
manos
trabajando por la patria libre.

En el puño está la victoria.
El camino es ponerse de pie.
"¡Rebelión!" es el grito de gloria,
Popular el acento también.
Compañero, espera la historia.
Para el pueblo será el poder.⁵⁴

"Song to the Popular
Democratic Movement"

From distant cities and fields
the rebel bugles are heard.
The people join in the song,
the future of Chile is socialist.
The people organize and resist.
The downtrodden find themselves
working for a free country.

Victory is within our grasp.
The way is to get moving.
"Rebellion!" is the cry of glory
shouted by the people.
Compañero, wait for history.
Power will belong to the people.

This song, which strikingly resembles Allende's 1970 campaign song "Venceremos" in both music and lyrics, was met with ardent cheers and applause, followed by energetic chanting of "El pueblo unido jamás será vencido."⁵⁵

Also in December 1983, Alerce Records revived the concert series that had been disallowed for five years, this time without obstacles. The Chilean magazine *Análisis* described the significance of this event: "The struggle to recover democracy, the struggle for freedom of creation has not been in vain. Organizations are reemerging, protests are taking place, some exiles are coming back, the prohibition on importing books can no longer be sustained . . . , and on this list of small gains is also the return, after five years, of 'La Gran Noche del Folklore'."⁵⁶ The comeback of La Gran Noche del Folklore was a clear indicator of change in Chile.

Canto Nuevo has continued to reflect Chile's tumultuous politics. The Chilean government's reimposition of a state of siege on 6 November 1984 and other countermeasures against opposition militance sharply limited artistic expression. Musical activity was not elimi-

nated by the sudden end to the *apertura*, but it was again curtailed with "the return to the dark side of the moon," as one musician characterized the revival of "the problems of permission, police, taxes, etc."⁵⁷

The continued existence of Canto Nuevo under the difficult conditions imposed by the military dictatorship demonstrates the persistent need for an outlet for popular expression. "The Nueva Canción and now Canto Nuevo are two moments in a single movement, with a present and a past," writes a Chilean journalist. "The popular song is alive because it has transcended fads, styles, and governments."⁵⁸ Because New Song is an expression of the reality of many Chileans, it has always been "the product of a people and not of an industry."⁵⁹ The continued vitality of the New Chilean Song movement in the face of difficult and constantly changing political, social, and economic conditions testifies to its importance as a channel of popular expression. Canto Nuevo musicians are committed to their role as "social communicators," and they are very much aware that their music is directly tied to present conditions in Chile. Although those conditions may remain difficult, the musicians affirm that "the task of Canto Nuevo cannot be abandoned."⁶⁰ The following Canto Nuevo song embodies the unified sense of purpose not only of Chile's Canto Nuevo but of the richly diverse Latin American New Song movement.

"El canto del hombre"

El canto nació del hombre.
Nació con el pensamiento.

Los hombres cruzaron valles.
Fueron trazando senderos.
Traspararon las montañas
y el canto anduvo con ellos.
Llegó a todos rincones
con su mensaje sincero,
distinto en cada región
y el mismo en todos los pueblos.

Nadie pretenda cambiarlo
ni estancarlo mucho menos,
que el canto cambia en el hombre,
con la cultura y el tiempo.

Mas nunca será falsario
que lo ha de borrar el tiempo.
Puede morir un cantor
y el canto sigue latiendo.⁶¹

"Song of Man"

Song was born of man.
It was born along with thought.

Men crossed valleys.
They made paths as they went.
They crossed mountains
and their song went with them.
It reached all corners
with its sincere message,
distinct in every region,
yet everywhere the same.

Let no one try to change it,
much less try to hold it back,
for song changes within man,
with culture and with time.

But what will be lost in time
will never be falsified.
A singer may die,
but the song pulses on.

NOTES

1. "Para el camino" by Nelson Schwenke, performed by the Chilean group Duo Schwenke-Nilo.
2. Music of the Nueva Canción Chilena is available in the United States from several small record companies. Albums by Inti-Illimani, Víctor Jara, and Quilapayún are available from Monitor Records, 156 5th Ave., New York, NY 10010. The anthology *Chile: Songs for the Resistance* was released by Paredon Records, P.O. Box 40268, San Francisco, CA 94140. Another anthology entitled *Chile Vencerá* was released by Rounder Records, 186 Willow Ave., Somerville, MA 02144. Recent Inti-Illimani albums that illustrate the evolution of the group's music in exile have been released by Redwood Records, 476 West MacArthur Blvd., Oakland, CA 94609. Music of other Nueva Canción artists such as Violeta Parra, Isabel and Angel Parra, and Patricio Manns is available from various record importers. Music made in Chile since 1973—that is, Canto Nuevo—is unavailable outside of Chile.
3. Interview with anonymous musician in Santiago, July 1983.
4. For first-person descriptions of the Nueva Canción Chilena, see Osvaldo Rodríguez, *Cantores que reflexionan: memoria y testimonio* (Madrid: Ediciones Literatura Americana Reunida, 1984); Joan Jara, *Víctor Jara: An Unfinished Song* (New York: Ticknor and Fields, 1984); Jean Clouzet, *La nouvelle chanson chilienne* (Paris: Seghers, 1975). Also useful are Juan A. Orrego-Salas, "La Nueva Canción chilena: tradición, espíritu y contenido de su música," *Literatura Chilena en el Exilio* 4, no. 2 (Spring 1980):2–4; and Rodrigo Torres, *Perfil de la creación musical en la nueva canción chilena desde sus orígenes hasta 1973* (Santiago: Centro de Indagación y Expresión Cultural y Artística [CENECA], 1983).
5. Bernardo Subercaseaux and Jaime Londoño, *Gracias a la vida: Violeta Parra, testimonio* (Buenos Aires: Galerna, 1976), 66.
6. "La carta" by Violeta Parra. I am grateful to Osvaldo Rodríguez and Silvia Rühl for their assistance with song translations.
7. Subercaseaux, *Gracias*, 71.
8. Patricio Krebs Merino and Juan Ignacio Corces, "Entrevista exclusiva: Silvio Rodríguez," *La Bicicleta*, Sept. 1981, p. 24.
9. "Discusión sobre la música chilena," compiled by Carlos Orellana, *Araucaria de Chile* 2 (1978):115.
10. Translation of a tape recording of the opening remarks by Fernando Castillo, Rector of the Universidad Católica, at the Primer Festival de la Nueva Canción Chilena in Santiago in 1969.
11. "Plegaria a un labrador" by Víctor Jara. This song is included in his album *Vientos del Pueblo*, Monitor Records MFS 778.
12. "Venceremos" by Claudio Iturra and Sergio Ortega. This song is included in the Inti-Illimani album *¡Viva Chile!*, Monitor Records MFS 769.
13. Stafford Beer, *Brain of the Firm*, 2nd ed. (Chichester: John Wiley and Sons, 1981), 289.
14. Liner notes to the album *Canto al programa*.
15. "Canción de la reforma agraria" by Sergio Ortega, Luis Advis, and Julio Rojas, is performed by Inti-Illimani on the album *Canto al programa*.
16. Ernesto González Bermejo, "Isabel Parra, enemiga del olvido y la desesperanza," *Crisis*, August 1975, p. 49.
17. "El pueblo unido jamás será vencido" by Sergio Ortega and Quilapayún. This song was recorded on the Quilapayún album *El pueblo unido*, Monitor Records MFS 773.
18. José Joaquín Brunner, *La cultura autoritaria en Chile* (Santiago: FLACSO, 1981), 86.
19. Hernán Pozo, *Orientación cultural y educacional chilena (1973–1981)*, CIDE Documentos de Trabajo no. 14 (Santiago: Centro de Investigación y Desarrollo de la Educación, 1982), 32. Emphasis in original.
20. Soledad Bianchi, "El movimiento artístico chileno en el conflicto político actual," *Revista Casa de las Américas* 130 (Jan.–Feb. 1982):147.
21. *Ibid.*
22. According to witnesses, Jara was arrested on 12 Sept. 1973 and was taken to the Estadio Chile, which was being used as an impromptu prison. There he was recog-

- nized by a soldier who berated him, shouting, "Sing now, bastard!" Witnesses say Jara sang, his hands were beaten by the guard and he was then led away. His corpse was later found near the Santiago cemetery, with the hands and body beaten and three bullet wounds. "Viuda de Víctor Jara declaró ante la justicia," *La Segunda de la Hora* (Santiago), 8 June 1981, p. 13.
23. Orellana, "Discusión," 115. The *quena* is a pre-Hispanic flute generally made of bamboo, and the *charango*, a small stringed instrument resembling a mandolin. These traditional instruments of the indigenous peoples of the Andes are frequently used in New Song music.
 24. José Morales, "El canto nuevo," *Araucaria de Chile* 2 (1978):175.
 25. Alvaro Godoy, "Ricardo García: un Alerce se levanta," *La Bicicleta*, Apr.–May 1981, p. 16.
 26. Interview with anonymous musician in Santiago, June 1983.
 27. Brunner, *La cultura autoritaria*, 87.
 28. Alvaro Godoy, "Introducción," *La Bicicleta*, Apr.–May 1981, p. 4.
 29. Fernando Paulsen S., "El nuevo canto," *Análisis*, Jan.–Feb. 1982, p. 4.
 30. Centro de Indagación y Expresión Cultural y Artística, "El canto popular en el período 1973–1978," mimeo, Santiago, 1978.
 31. Godoy, "Ricardo García," 15.
 32. At least ten people whom I interviewed—musicians, concertgoers, and producers—confirmed these occurrences. No printed documentation is available in the Chilean press of the period, probably due to the intimidating political climate.
 33. Interview with anonymous producer in Santiago, July 1983.
 34. Bianchi, "El movimiento artístico," 151.
 35. Orellana, "Discusión," 115.
 36. "El joven titiritero" by Eduardo Peralta.
 37. "Cuando llega el invierno" by Pato Valdivia.
 38. Ana María Foxley, "Trovadores del Canto Nuevo," *Hoy*, 28 Jan.–3 Feb. 1981, p. 35.
 39. Bianchi, "El movimiento artístico," 151.
 40. Interview with anonymous musician in Santiago, July 1983.
 41. "El cautivo de Til Til" by Patricio Manns. Transcribed from Alerce cassette no. 211 made at La Gran Noche del Folklore, Santiago, 1978.
 42. Several Chileans interviewed described this moment, which I later verified by reviewing the Alerce cassette of the concert, cited in n. 41.
 43. Unpublished manuscript by anonymous musician, Santiago, n.d.
 44. "Corte resolverá suspensión de 'La Gran Noche del Folklore'," *La Tercera de la Hora* (Santiago), 21 Dec. 1979, p. 7.
 45. Interview with Ricardo García of Alerce Records, Santiago, July 1983.
 46. Interviews with anonymous producer and musician in Santiago, July 1983.
 47. "Sólo algunos minutos pudieron estar en Chile los 'Illapu'," *La Tercera de la Hora*, 8 Oct. 1981, p. 55.
 48. Interview with Miguel Davagnino of Productora Nuestro Canto in Santiago, July 1983.
 49. Conversation with record importer in Santiago, July 1983.
 50. "Escollos en el camino," *Hoy*, 6 May 1981, p. 44; and "Ricardo García en libertad incondicional," *El Mercurio*, 13 Aug. 1981, p. 10C.
 51. "Vamos a la patria" by Pato Valdivia.
 52. "En esta época" by Nelson Schwenke, performed by Duo Schwenke-Nilo. Transcribed from a recorded performance in Santiago in July 1983.
 53. "Homenaje" by Luis LeBert.
 54. "Canción al Movimiento Democrático Popular" sung by Grupo Napalé. Transcribed from *Chile: Ten Years of Cultural Resistance*. Excerpts from the inaugural program of the Primer Congreso Nacional de Artistas y Trabajadores de la Cultura de Chile, 8–11 Dec. 1983. Cassette produced by La Peña Cultural Center, Berkeley, Calif.
 55. From tape of the congress. See n. 54.
 56. "Un triunfo: la quinta noche del folklore," *Análisis* 7, no. 71 (20 Dec. 1983–3 Jan. 1984):48.
 57. Letter from Chilean musician, Dec. 1984.

58. Alvaro Godoy, "Introducción," 4.
59. Alvaro Godoy, "El nuevo canto chileno: entre el consumismo y la marginalidad," *Mensaje* 299 (June 1981):265.
60. Unpublished manuscript by anonymous musician, Santiago, n.d.
61. "El canto del hombre" by Pedro Yáñez.