

# CHILEAN SEXTET PLAYS FOLK MUSIC

## Exiled Ensemble Focuses on 'New Song' and Politics

By JOHN S. WILSON

The performance by the Chilean folklore group Inti-Illimani at Avery Fisher Hall on Wednesday evening was as much a political statement as it was a concert. Each aspect complemented the other as the six musicians and singers played and sang what is identified as New Chilean Song. This included traditional songs, settings to poems of Pablo Neruda, the Chilean Nobel laureate, by Victor Jara, a poet who was a leader in the New Chilean Song movement, and works by the Chilean folklorist Violeta Parra.

The group, formed nine years ago when all its members were university students, has been living in exile in Italy since the current regime seized power in Chile two years ago. The music is both a continuation of the effort started in the early 1960's by Miss Parra to establish a popular folk art and play it as an expression of love and longing for the musicians' homeland. This music and the native flutes, panpipes, stringed instruments and drums that they play have been banned by the junta.

Introductions to the songs frequently focused on Chile's political situation. They were delivered in English translations, although the predominantly Spanish-speaking audience was usually chuckling at and applauding the statements before the translation could be made.

The concert had some of the aura of the days of the Spanish Civil War, even to the presence of Pete Seeger, who introduced the group, and the urgent, throbbing beat and rising intensity of songs protesting the circumstances of Chilean nitrate miners, celebrating Simón Bolívar or the Inti-Illimani's own composition, "Toward Freedom."

But this was not a determinedly militant program. In fact, the melodic and rhythmic charm of the music—flutes soaring over the strong, rhythmic strum of guitars and mandolins, the deep, stately sound of the Argentine bombo drum and six voices blended in rich, beautifully shaded melodic lines—was a striking contrast to the circumstances of Chile, the fates of composers such as Victor Jara, who died during the seizure of power, and of the exiled singers themselves.