

Under the Music: Signs of Resistance Under Pinochet

By Joanne Pottlitzer

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From 1973 to 1990, Chile was governed by a military dictatorship, which had overthrown the elected government of Salvador Allende Gossens three years into his six-year term. Many players participated in the movements for change that led Chile back to a civilian government in 1990 -- social scientists, lawyers, union leaders, grass-roots community leaders, politicians and artists. Least recognized in accounts of Chile's redemocratization were the artists, who, almost immediately after the 1973 coup, began laying a groundwork for later strategies that eventually put an end to military rule.

For novelist and journalist Patricia Verdugo, the role of music was paramount. Verdugo remembered going to Princeton in January of 1978 for some meetings with Chilean physicists. They saw everything as very bleak and told her they saw no end to the dictatorship. They wanted to know when something was going to happen. They had a sensation, as all exiles have, of never being able to return to their country. She assured them that things were happening. "But where?" they insisted.

To their disbelief, she replied:

What is happening can be measured in music. The only way we have of communicating is through music. We can't talk about politics; they don't allow us to hold meetings. But if I hear someone listening to music, I know who that someone is and that's enough for me to know that that person is with me, only because he is listening to Violeta Parra.

She tried to explain to them, and to other exiles when she visited Harvard, what it meant to play the guitar again in the universities. They thought that was "stupid." "No, it is not stupid," she told them, "because you have not lived through the terror. The terror is so great that gathering around a guitar to sing *Gracias a la Vida* by Violeta Parra is a fierce act of dissidence."

Verdugo elaborated:

Music was our first symbol of identity that gave us energy and enabled us to reconstruct groups. I felt I was in one of those animated cartoons, the one where one of the characters--I don't remember which one--is fighting some moles. The moles start digging tunnels underground until suddenly, bup! the house caves in. They undermined everything underground without his ever realizing it. So, I said to the exiles, "That's what is happening. What we are doing is fundamental in terms of communicating with each other through song. You don't see it because it's all underground. It's under the music."

This was understood very well by Ricardo García when he founded the Alerce recording label in 1976. Part of what he did was clandestine, part of it went to the public. He distributed Silvio Rodríguez, the internationally popular

Cuban singer, without the dictatorship finding out who Silvio Rodríguez was. Suddenly, the entire country was singing "Ojalá," which he had written. The Chilean version of the song was recorded by Gloria Simonetti, whose political affiliations were of the far right. Verdugo describes the almost unbelievable situation:

Gloria Simonetti sang "Ojalá" on all the radio stations and it became the number one song of the year. Everyone asked, "Who composed such a wonderful song?" "Silvio Rodríguez." "And who is Silvio Rodríguez?" "An anti-Castro Cuban," someone would say, covering up who he really was, "who, when he says, 'I hope he dies,' he's saying that he hopes that Castro dies." No one knew that Rodríguez was in fact one of Cuba's most renowned popular recording artists, or that Ricardo García had brought the recording of "Ojalá" to Chile. And from then on, Silvio Rodríguez, Pablo Milanés, and the re-releases of Violeta Parra fed us from underneath, underneath, and through music we all knew who we were. Not through politics. Through music.

The following accounts are excerpts from the more than one hundred interviews I made between 1994 and 1999 for a book I am writing, *Symbols of Resistance: A Chilean Legacy*, to tell the artists' story -- a story reaffirming that during times of fear, social inequity, and political conflict, artists can and do influence political process and public opinion.

JOAN JARA , Dancer, teacher

[Joan Jara was married to the well-known singer Victor Jara, who was killed by machine-guns at the Chile Stadium three days after the coup. Earlier this year, that stadium was renamed the Victor Jara Stadium and was turned over to the Victor Jara Foundation in Santiago as a venue for cultural programs.]

From my point of view, the Chilean artists in exile played a tremendously important role in creating awareness internationally about what was happening in Chile. They acted as the living image of Chile. That was certainly true in England, where I was living.

I think more than anything, the music of Chile was a motivating force for solidarity. I have an intimate experience of how the spirit of Victor and his music made people want to know more about Chile. First of all, the story. But then, through the songs, and how the music spread in spite of always being in Spanish. People understood...it was a way of communicating. So many people who went to the first Chilean concert in Queen Elizabeth Hall in 1974 became committed and spent years in the solidarity movement for Chile. So many people.

In New York there was an extraordinary concert at the Felt Forum that Phil Ochs organized, where Bob Dylan made an appearance. That's where the song for Victor had its first performance, the poem that Adrian Mitchell, the British poet, had written. He had told me, "I can imagine this being sung to a Woodie Guthrie tune." I had it in my pocket that night. And backstage I dared to say to Toshi Seeger, "I've got this poem," and I showed it to her. I knew that Arlo Guthrie was going to perform that night, and Toshi said, "Give it to me, I'll take it to Arlo." After reading it, he said, "Oh, yeah, I can imagine what this goes to." So he invented a tune and performed it for the first time there at that concert. Later he recorded it. "Victor Jara of Chile,

Lived like a shooting star, He sang for the peoples of Chile..." A very beautiful song, very, very beautiful.

I left Chile one month after the coup and returned for a visit the first time in January of 1981, a very bad time, a very repressive time. I felt I had to come back to Chile, one, to sort of smell it. And to interview people who knew Victor before I did. I was taken to small, clandestine places that were supposed to be the local football club, or something, where there were peñas [small clubs, popular since the mid-sixties, where musicians played, usually music from the New Chilean Song movement, and where wine and *empanadas* were served] going on with lots of young people singing. That was one way people had of keeping things alive, keeping spirits up. It preserved a sense of identity, keeping the strings of memory alive.

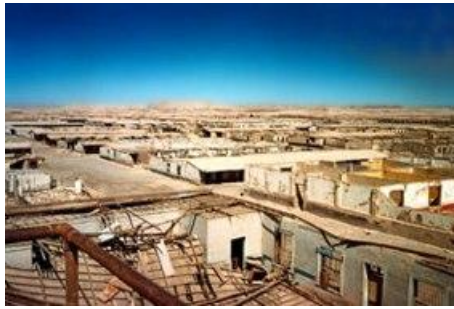
I came back to stay just after my book, *Victor: An Unfinished Song*, was first published in London in 1983. [A Spanish version was published in Spain that year; the book was republished in the United States in 1984 under the title, *An Unfinished Song: The Life of Victor Jara*, by Ticknor & Fields, New York; a new edition will be published in London in September 2001]. I took a plane from Australia, where I was promoting the book, to Easter Island and on to Santiago thinking that I wasn't going to be let in. But they did let me in. Just before Christmas of 1983. They told me that if I didn't take part in anything political, I could stay; otherwise, out. So I was relatively careful. I didn't want to go out, for example. I did go to funerals.

There were so many funerals. They were obvious political demonstrations. That's what I most remember about that time. Funerals of people who were killed for this or that. And also funerals of well-known people like the actor Roberto Parada or Rodrigo Rojas [the young man who was set on fire by Pinochet's henchmen]. That was where we would meet, in the cemetery. Really. It was terrible. And of course there were songs, along the way and in the cemetery. Running from the tear gas and all that. Matilde [Pablo Neruda's widow]. That's what I most remember.

ANGEL PARRA, Composer, Singer

[Angel Parra is part of a remarkable family. One of his uncles was a poet and a troubadour, another a union leader all his life; his uncle Nicanor Parra is a physicist and Chile's best known poet on an international level after Neruda; his sister Isabel is a prominent singer and musician, as are his son Angel and his niece Tita. His mother, Violeta Parra, is one of Chile's true folk heroes, a luminous musical talent as composer and lyricist who inspired many who created the New Chilean Song movement of the 1960s and 1970s. In 1965, Angel and Isabel established a small club in the house they had recently bought, where exponents of the New Chilean Song came to perform: the Peña de los Parra. People went there to listen to Victor Jara, Rolando Alarcón, Patricio Manns, Isabel, Angel, many young musicians. Later, peñas appeared in cities all over the country, all exact copies of the Peña de los Parra: low tables, carafes instead of bottles of wine, candles, with empanadas and croquettes for sale at intermission.]

Those 1,000 days [of Allende's Popular Unity government] seemed like one single day, one single day and one single night -- until September 11. All that had been elation, street parties, dance, murals of that time became overshadowed by another reality, like a magnificent sunny day that suddenly begins to cloud over, and there is a horrible storm.



Overview of Chacabuco, the abandoned mining town in Chile's northern desert, used by the military as a concentration camp for political prisoners during the early years of the dictatorship. Photo Copyright © Joanne Pottlitzer 1995

From September 14, 1973, until the middle of 1974, I was held prisoner in different jails. I was at the National Stadium until they closed it on November 9 [1973], and in Chacabuco for six months. A next-door neighbor turned me in. But I knew they had to find me sooner or later. I think there were two people the military wanted to use as examples: Victor and me. That day [September 11] Victor was at the Technical University, and that very day they arrested him. I fell three days later. I've always said, very seriously, that I'm alive thanks to the death of Victor. It was about who they got first, who to use as an example: "This is what happens to little singers for getting involved in politics." My experience in the National Stadium is very painful -- I have it repressed. One day I'll get it out. Maybe the most important thing that can be said is that once we were in prison, and everyone knew that we were there, we developed a cultural program inside the jails of Chile, an enormous program. There were hundreds of cultural agitators in prison. There came a time when it was much more to the dictatorship's advantage to send us abroad than to keep us in the jails, because we were making more noise inside than outside.

In Chacabuco, the camp in the north, we lived in pavilions, houses that had belonged to the nitrate mining town of Chacabuco when the English were there at the beginning of the 20th century. When copper replaced nitrate as our principal export, the mine and the houses were eventually abandoned. (Salvador Allende had decided to make that mining town into the first national monument to the working class. He got as far as inaugurating it, and then workers ended up there as prisoners, along with artists.) There were two rooms, a small patio and a hot plate where we prepared our meals. The houses had no roofs. We covered them with canvas. We covered doors and windows with *arpilleras* [The patchwork craft done by women who participated in workshops created in early 1974 by the Pro Peace Committee to relieve their tensions and anxieties. The women were usually from working-class neighborhoods; their husbands, partners, sons or fathers had lost their jobs or had been detained and disappeared].

I remember Gonzalo Palta, an actor who was a fellow prisoner there, directed one of the theater groups in Chacabuco. A young man who had directed a chorus in the Communist Youth organization mounted a chorale with more than 400 prisoners. We created mural newspapers. There were many journalists in the jails and excellent illustrators and caricaturists, so we didn't need photographers -- besides, we didn't have cameras. They drew with pencils. Once it was known that you were in prison, we could receive packages from outside, with food, with books, with materials to write with. Some of us wrote poetry while we were there.

We didn't have a radio, but we had music, the music we made ourselves. The miners of the María Elena Union sent me a guitar. Later a *quena* appeared, then a *bombo*, until we ended up with a small orchestra inside the camp that played different kinds of Latin American music.



Sculpted tree trunk in Chacabuco, northern Chile. Artist: anonymous political prisoner. Photo Copyright © Joanne Pottlitzer, 1995

There was also intense activity in popular culture. Prisoners who had been manual laborers would ask organizations to provide materials so that they could continue to work with their hands. Materials found on site were also used. Jewelry and other crafts were made out of scrap metal, cloth and pebbles. This form of cultural work began to occur in all the jails. It was the only form of power there was to maintain our spirit, maintain a state of mind that belonged to us and not to those who dominated us -- or who wanted to dominate us.

At first there was a good deal of opposition to these activities. In our case -- there were 1,200 of us in the north -- we formed what we called an "old people's committee" and selected a representative to talk to the military authorities.

And once they saw what it was all about, we were able to do our shows. The guards would even ask our permission to attend. Every Saturday we'd put on a play by "improvised" playwrights, people who had never written plays. Every week they'd write a different script, a play that lasted 40 or 50 minutes. Of course they were comedies; we couldn't tell our dramas there. It was all about keeping the prisoners' morale and dignity as high as possible.

There were humorous things. When you leave an experience like that alive, you remember many more positive things than negative. For example, there was a tiny little man who played the role of Tarzan in skits because he was the only one who had a leopard-skin print bikini. And he continued playing the role because he had those bikinis. Many funny things.



Renovated theater building at Chacabuco. The building was renovated in 1992 by the Goethe Institut in Santiago. Photo Copyright © Joanne Pottlitzer, 1995

Three or four months after my release, which had been accelerated by international pressure from artists like Yves Montand, Aznavour, Joan Baez, I was summoned to appear at the investigation division of the Political Police. I was told by an official that I had to leave Chile. There was no official document but it was a very direct threat. So, at the end of 1974 I went to Mexico, where I lived for two years before going to Paris.

ROBERTO MARQUEZ, musician, singer, director of Illapu

We were one of the last groups to join the New Chilean Song movement, at the end of 1970. We recorded our first record, *Música Andina*, in 1972 with

DICAP, the Communist Youth label, which opened the door for us to introduce our music at festivals in Santiago. We're from the north of Chile and played music from that region, which was barely known here in Santiago at that time. Many people from central Chile felt that music didn't belong to our country because it sounded more like music from Perú and Bolivia. They didn't understand that part of the Andean music corresponds to northern Chile and Argentina as well.

We were very young when we started. My brother José Miguel was 13 when we came from Antofagasta to Santiago. I was 17. We were the first to leave home. Four of eleven children were in the group. It was difficult for our mother to accept, but we knew what we wanted to do with our lives. By September of 1973 we were in high gear. Everyone was predicting a bright future.



Illapu
Photo Copyright © *Música Popular Chilena - 20 Años 1970-1990* Edited by Alvaro Godoy and Juan Pablo González

The coup was very traumatic. All the people in the DICAP catalog were persecuted by the regime, including us, although we were not very political nor were we connected to a political party. We were very young and were not very clear about anything, but we felt Allende's government was doing good things for our people. We were automatically marginalized from the media and were called to appear at a regiment, as were all the singing groups. Andean instruments -- *charangos* [small stringed instrument made from an armadillo shell], *quenás* [reed flutes] -- were banned. So was wearing a poncho. As a result, we were banned from performing in this country. So, half of the Illapu returned to Antofagasta, to the womb, so to speak. Three of us stayed in Santiago, where we sang in cafés, little things to keep active.

We began to function again as a group at the end of 1974, when those who returned to Antofagasta reorganized and started performing in a *peña* called El Tambo Atacmeño at the University of the North. We joined them there, then moved back to Santiago and made a record shortly after the New Year of 1975. Shortly after the Andean instruments were banned, a group called the Barroco Andino appeared. They played baroque music with those Andean instruments, and the *charango*, the *quena*, the *zampoña* [pan pipes], were once again legitimized. So when Illapu reappeared, we reclaimed our music.

In 1976 we made *Despedida del Pueblo*. On that album, we recorded a song that we had heard in Argentina when we went there to learn about the country and its music: a *candombé* with an Argentine *zamba* rhythm. We added *charangos* and *quenás* and mixed it differently. It told of a black man, José, who had a very hopeful message. Nothing very deep politically, but something could be interpreted from the lyric, from metaphors that conveyed much more than what the song itself said. There are phrases that people made their own.

El Candombé para José became a kind of hymn of political prisoners. They would sing it when a new prisoner was brought in or when a prisoner was released.

**Candombé para José
(Roberto Ternán)**

En un pueblo olvidado no sé porqué
Y su danza de moreno lo hace mover
En el pueblo lo llamaban negro José
Amigo negro José.

Con amor candombea el negro José
Tiene el color de la noche sobre la piel
Es muy feliz candombeando dichoso él
Amigo negro José.

Perdonáme si te digo negro José
Eres diablo pero amigo negro José
Tu futuro va conmigo negro José
Yo te digo porque sé.

Con mucho amor las miradas cuando al bailar
Y el tamboril de sus ojos parece hablar
Y su camisa endiablada quiere saltar
Amigo negro José.

No tienes ninguna pena al parecer
Pero las penas te sobran negro José
Que tú en tu baile las dejas yo sé muy bien
Amigo negro José.

Perdonáme si te digo negro José
Eres diablo pero amigo negro José
Tu futuro va conmigo negro José
Yo te digo porque sé
Amigo negro José
Yo te digo porque sé
Amigo negro José.

**Candombé for José
by Roberto Ternán**

In a forgotten town I don't know why
And his dark man's dance makes him move.
In the town they call him Negro José,
Friend Negro José.

Negro José dances with a lot of love,
He has the color of night on his skin.
He's very happy dancing, ecstatic, our
Friend Negro José.

Forgive me if I tell you Negro José,
you are devil but Friend Negro José.
Your future is linked to mine Negro José,
I tell you because I know. When he starts to dance, a lot of loving glances,
and the drumbeat of his eyes seems to talk
And his bedeviled shirt wants to jump,
Friend Negro José.

You seem to have no troubles,
But you abound in troubles, Negro José.
You leave them behind in your dance, I know that very well,
Friend Negro José.

Forgive me if I tell you Negro José,
You are devil but friend Negro José,
Your future is linked to mine Negro José,

I tell you because I know,
Friend Negro José.
I tell you because I know,
Friend Negro José.

Journalist Patricia Verdugo had also spoken about this song:

In November of 1976, Pinochet, through U.S. pressure basically, had no other alternative but to open the prisoners' camps. (Later, there were other prisoners, but this marked the end of political prisoners jailed since the coup.) When the last camp, Tres Alamos, was opened, I was there covering the event. All the prisoners were lined up with their knapsacks and their bundles waiting to be liberated. When the doors are about to be opened, some of them decide to say good-bye to each other and the way they have of saying good-bye starts with singing *El Negro José*. Then, all the voices -- we're talking about hundreds of people in a huge patio of a concentration camp -- start to sing, and then their families who are outside waiting for them also start to sing. You felt these thousands and thousands of voices joined in one song and there was nothing more to say. One song said it all.

End Part I

CRIMES OF WAR

Cultural Supplement

Under the Music: Signs of Resistance Under Pinochet

By Joanne Pottlitzer

PART II

This is the second installment of Joanne Pottlitzer's series of interviews with Chilean songwriters and musicians. During the dictatorship, music became an essential form of communication, a sign of identity, a force for mobilization. Artists, and musicians in particular, helped lay the groundwork for later strategies that put an end to military rule.

JAIME SOTO LEON, composer, musician, founder of Barroco Andino

Most of the music of Allende's time was associated with his Popular Unity government, even the instruments: the *charango*, the *quena*, everything. Even a folk tune, or an instrumental piece, played on those instruments was considered associated. A book by Yehudi Menuhin [*The Music of Man*] mentions it in one of the chapters: "If there was ever any doubt about how important music can be for a country, look at what happened in a country in the southern part of South America, where music was banned because of the ideological meaning it could have. Music becomes dangerous..."



Inti-Illimani
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I wondered how we could get around officialdom without being branded as Communists or Socialists. And I thought about my old friends Bach, Vivaldi, Handel. It would be unthinkable for the military to censor a concert of those composers, even if we played their music on *charangos* and *quenás*. At the time, those instruments were not heard on the radio or in concerts, nothing.

We called ourselves Barroco Andino from the very first. The name was the idea of one of our members, Renato Freyggang, who went on to play with the Inti-Illimani. We began by giving concerts in churches. Our first rehearsals were in December 1973. Our first performance was the following February in the Dominican church of La Serena [a colonial town about 200 miles north of Santiago].

We were very lucky. For nearly two years we were practically the only group heard in Chile. I remember once a colonel called a meeting of all the folk musicians in Santiago and told them to be careful, not to make waves, and that the Barroco Andino was an exception. They couldn't suppress us. We were doing concerts in parishes, in churches, and we filled them. Some people may have attended them as a kind of political meeting, a place of meeting, but as far as we were concerned, we were making music. We said nothing related to anything political. If there was any revolutionary attitude we showed as musicians, I think it was the fact that we were there; we were performing; we were playing instruments associated with the Popular Unity and making that music ours. Music that was "new" had not been heard by many people. And in some way Barroco Andino prolonged the New Chilean Song in Chile.

In those first years, whenever we went on tour—to Arica, to Antofagasta, or to Rancagua—I always arranged for us to play in the jails. I would talk to a priest and ask him to talk with such-and-such a person, so the request wouldn't come directly from us. We played in all the jails, because there were political prisoners in all of them.

In Arica [the most northern town in Chile, on the Peruvian border] I had a friend whom I had met the year before on tour with the Quilapayún, when I was directing the *Cantata de Santa María de Iquique*. He worked in the cultural outreach program at the State Technical University in Arica and had treated me very well. The next time I saw him was when we sang in Arica's jail. We embraced each other. We didn't say much, but it was very emotional to see each other there. Only months before, I had been in his house, and he had been so kind to me. I learned later that he had died; they killed him. I think the story is like this: They were transporting political prisoners by truck to another city. During the night they told them to get off the truck to relieve themselves, and they fired on them...they said they had tried to escape.

It's absurd what I'm about to say, but sometimes I felt better in the jails, because outside I felt I had little purpose. Nothing ever happened to me, but it was never the life I had before 1973, when I had many friends, many projects planned.

Between 1974 and 1976 we made three records and three cassettes and received all the prizes there were to give from the critics. We had tremendous audiences, all over Chile. So, yes, we had an impact. In 1977 the group dissolved.

Then in 1984, a friend of mine who taught music at a high school, began to call me on the phone insisting that I reestablish the Barroco Andino. I wasn't sure. I didn't have as many contacts as before; I didn't know many instrumentalists. So he told me that he would get a group of people together, young people, and that we could do it. We did it. There were ten instrumentalists, besides me; more folk instruments, more *zampoñas*; we recuperated a cello, which was necessary for some Bach pieces (the arrangements have always been mine); and there were better voices. Our first concert was held in 1985 at the University Parish on Pedro de Valdivia Plaza.

The following year we toured the south of Chile, through the Ministry of Education. The Ministry told me to eliminate a piece by Violeta Parra: *Calambrito Temucano*, a totally inoffensive instrumental. I didn't put it in the program, but we did it as an encore. They didn't even notice. The audience did, because I announced it. That was the last national tour we did.

A kind of double game was played with the Barroco Andino. I think the military ultimately found us inoffensive. And it wasn't in their best interest to ban us.

PATRICIO LANFRANCO, composer, singer

At the time of the coup, in 1973, I was in my second year of Chemical Engineering at the University of Concepción, a school categorized during that period as the Red University of Chile. It was a progressive university, with 23,000 students, where basically two or three organizations headed up the student movement: MIR [*Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria* (Revolutionary Left Movement)], the Socialist Youth and the Communist Youth. Our focus was to maintain direct access to the progressive cultural movements and a clear connection with Santiago.

After the coup I spent six or seven months living underground in Quilpué, a small inland town near Viña del Mar. I didn't dare go to Santiago until much later. I was a member of the Communist Youth and had a close relationship with Party members. They were very accessible people who would come to your house to talk and discuss issues. You felt a participant of an historic, interesting movement that was part of your life, part of the common experience.

Chile in 1973 had a very solid artistic movement. It had the New Chilean Song; it had a theater movement and a new painting school. Art concepts had changed in 1968 and 1969, when on one hand, Matta's influence appeared everywhere and on the other, painting went to the streets and became murals. The political brigades who painted the murals, even the brigades of the Right, competed for walls to campaign for their candidates. Cities, like Concepción and Valparaíso, were characterized by their murals. They were cities of colors. Then the military painted over the walls, and, for a long time after the coup, the walls were gray.

Fortunately, the biggest exponents of Chilean music were on tour in Europe when the military coup happened. The Quilapayún, for example, was abroad; so was Isabel Parra; so was Patricio Manns, the Inti-Illimani, all of them. And they stayed abroad in exile. The same in the field of painting, in the field of poetry. Lucky for them. But that meant that the generation immediately following them were without mentors, without people who could orient them in cultural matters, without people to talk to, go to a bar with and sit down and argue and dialogue and soak up what they had to teach.

Between 1973 and 1975 the students lay low to know what and whom we could count on. Then, around 1975, they began to apply pressure. And curiously, they found a very concrete way of publicly poking a little fun at the enormous repression of anything that smelled of politics: Instead of creating student centers, or student groups, they created student cultural organizations; they created workshops -- music workshops, art workshops, theater workshops, painting workshops. The student movement began to take shape through those workshops.

I was one of the creators of the cultural movement at the University of Chile. In 1977 an extremely important movement was formed called ACU [*Agrupación*



Inti-Illimani's return to Chile, September 1988.
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Cultural Universitaria (University Cultural Group)], which I headed in 1980 and 1981. It provoked, confronted, and said to the [professional] artists, "Look, we're students, we're doing this, and what are you doing?"

We organized enormous festivals: music festivals, painting festivals, theater festivals. We couldn't organize the students through union or university demands; we had to do it very carefully, through artistic demands. Those student cultural activities acted more as a kind of safety valve, an outlet for expressing what the students were feeling, than as a pretext for political organizing. I believe that the movement was very honest. Many in ACU were not members of any party, I'd say the vast majority.

When I was arrested in 1981 and disappeared for five days, they had to let me go because of national, and especially international, pressure. I had been a party leader of some influence (in 1981 I left the Communist Party over an important difference of opinion on how to confront the country's political situation), and people knew they couldn't touch me because I had considerable strength within the student movement.

While I was president of ACU, its secretary was a member of Ortiga, a famous group in the *Canto Nuevo*, and we became friends. With two or three others from Ortiga we formed an interesting new group. It was interesting from a musical point of view because the harmony of a soprano, a tenor, a contralto, and a baritone or bass did not exist. There were none in the musical movement. And the idea of working with women was an important challenge, musically and politically. There were seven of us, and we called ourselves Amauta.

We too became part of the *Canto Nuevo*, which was in formation at that time and so named by Ricardo García of Sello Alerce to differentiate it from the New Chilean Song. Among its emergent interpreters were Eduardo Peralta, Santiago de Nuevo Extremo, Capri, Isabel Aldunate, Ortiga, Napalé, Amauta. There was fluid communication among the groups, but nothing comparable to what had existed during the years of the New Chilean Song: the conversations, the discussions about where we wanted our art to go, whom it should represent, what was it we wanted to say, what was the real expression of popular music. There was no ideological connotation, no articulated movement. So I would not say that the *Canto Nuevo* is a movement that succeeded the New Chilean Song. *Canto Nuevo* was a name under which a number of artists who were anti-dictatorship somehow came together, but their goal was not to end the dictatorship. Their fundamental mission was to express themselves as musicians, to make music in a difficult, complicated, complex time.

Those were times of great loneliness, great anguish, a strong feeling of defeat, when life was all uphill, you'd lost friends, you'd lost work, you'd lost the University, you'd lost your parents -- very hard times, very, very hard -- and you would come to a place like Nano Acevedo's Peña Javiera, the only authentic *peña* that existed early in the dictatorship, where the spirit booster's life was as hard as yours. If you were a musician, you could go there with your guitar -- or if you didn't have a guitar but said, "I'd like to sing," there was a guitar there that you picked up and you sang. It was going to a place where there were others like you, as bad off as you, and you didn't feel alone, so you felt better. Those experiences were valuable; they gave us strength, a sense of power. Nano Acevedo was very courageous, he was very courageous.

Nano Acevedo, composer, musician.

Saturday was a bad night for restaurant owners. Fear was widespread and besides, there was a curfew. Finally, the owner said, "Alright, try it once, this coming Saturday." That night the place was full and he did a good business. He charged a small cover for us and the rest (the food and drink sales) were his. Little by little, by word of mouth, the place began to fill up, we added Friday nights and could almost live on what we earned there two nights a week. When the curfew was 11 o'clock, we'd start at 8 and end at 10:30 or quarter to 11. There was a certain kind of car, taxi, that was allowed to run a few minutes over the curfew. As the curfew got later, we'd extend the hours of the *peña*. Sometimes we'd stay there till the next day. The police would come now and then. They'd padlock the place and cart everyone off to jail. The *peña* lasted until 1980. I let it go, not because I had to, but because I was tired of it and there was no longer any risk involved. I'm addicted to risk. Some people are addicted to marijuana, cocaine, tobacco, alcohol. I'm not addicted to those things, but I love to do things that are not so easy...

You had that nourishment from the artists performing there who sang, who played, from the person beside you, across from you, etc. And you'd think about what the artist said, about the song, and you'd sing it, you'd go out and get the cassette. Those were the things that made you feel alive, that gave meaning to your expression, to your way of being. It was your contact with the prior generation, with whom you couldn't have a conversation or discussion. We would listen to those songs and would say, "Now what did Patricio Manns mean by 'life's meanderers'?" And we'd go round and round until we came to an interpretation of a poetic phrase. Well, that's how the *Canto Nuevo* emerged.

I'd say that what most identifies the *Canto Nuevo* is its language, more than the music. Its language is sibylline, clandestine, with a subliminal message. When I say, "Spring is the doors of your house, my love," I'm offering the whole society, the new world, the desire to live again in the midst of this powerful winter we're living. It was almost telepathic. The language of the New Chilean Song was explicit, combative. Categorically, that was its social expression. The idea of the *Canto Nuevo* was to be able to write and say things without people knowing the hidden message, except your friends, of course. That was an important challenge.

The Nueva Trova Cubana had enormous influence on us, on the *Canto Nuevo*. So did Pablo Milanés, Vicente Feliú, Silvio Rodríguez. I think they taught us how to say many things; they taught us a way of kneading language, a way of using words, verbs, that Chileans did not teach us. The Quilapayún didn't teach us that, the Inti-Illimani didn't teach us that, Violeta Parra didn't teach us that. Well, maybe Violeta. Violeta was the most poetic element of the New Chilean Song.



Violeta Parra
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CLEMENTE RIEDEMANN, Poet, Lyricist - Puerto Montt.

[Riedemann is one of Chile's most prominent poets. During the late 1970s and the 1980s, he worked with the popular singing duo, Schwenke & Nilo, writing lyrics for many of their songs.]

I had joined MIR in Valdivia when I was in high school. I was 17. It was the end of 1970, just after Allende's election. For that reason alone I was the object of personal repression after the military coup, as were all my friends. We all went through the experience of prison and torture. Some left prison in very bad shape and were never again what they used to be; others died; others went into exile. I was one of those who preferred to stay, at the age of 20. I remember there were people much younger than I in prison, people who were 14 and 15, children, really.

I was in prison for six months, from September 1973, a few days after the coup, until March 1974. I was picked up alone. We spent most of our time alone to lessen the possibility of being picked up all together. Periodically we had coordination meetings, which ended up being survival meetings. They found me at one of those meetings and took me. I had gone to see my parents, to tell them I was alright and not to worry. That was a mistake. When you're young, they suppose that sooner or later you'll visit your mother and father. That's how it was. There was a huge network of informants. Maybe it was one of the neighbors.

I hadn't lived at home for almost a year. I had come to an understanding with my father, who was right wing. Months before the coup, when the situation was so tense, so conflictive, so dangerous, my father asked me to leave the house thinking about the safety of the family. And I accepted that. I understood perfectly.

My father and I had the same name, so the day they arrested me they took him, too. My father fell partly because they had no information and because he had my name. They released him soon after, but not before they tortured him. I saw them torture my father, and he saw them torture me.

We were jailed in Valdivia on Isla Teja, where the university is, a new prison that Allende had built. It's as though he designed it precisely for all his followers. I had been a student on that very island. I was prisoner with the dean of my department, most of my professors and most of my student colleagues. It was as though they had merely moved the department of the university to the jail.

When my father and I were taken, my mother, who was always a mother, a protector (politics are irrelevant to her), did what all women did: she talked to officials, colonels, lieutenants, military people, taking advantage of a certain radius of influence she had and personal acquaintances to get us out. My father was released almost immediately after a couple of her interventions, a few of her telephone calls. They left me inside, which is how it should have been.

After many negotiations I was finally released. One thing in my favor was my age. I wasn't of age yet. And to a lesser degree, the kind of relationships my father had with people of the Right and the military. Third, the few political offenses I had on my record. And fourth, maybe it was a star that protected the poet.

After I got out of prison, I had to go to work because my father died shortly after the coup. He had been ill, but I think the prison experience affected him psychologically. From the time he was released in September until January, when he died, he was depressed. I went to the hospital to see him a few days before he died.

As I remember it now, that was a powerful experience. They gave me permission to see him, with two soldiers armed to the teeth. And then when he died, they allowed me to visit the house and the wake. I went with a soldier, who didn't leave me even when I went to the bathroom. He was very young and was just performing his duty. I promised him that I wasn't going to try to escape and that I intended to stay until they buried my father. He left. I also talked to the commander of the regiment and asked him please not to send a soldier with me the following day when they were going to bury my father, and again promised not to escape. With difficulty, the commander said, "I'll look into it," or something like that, "Alright," he said, "but when it's over I'll be waiting for you myself at the entrance of the cemetery."

In spite of the pain of the circumstances of my father's death, there was also a strange feeling of being free -- to participate in everything, go to the cemetery, participate in the funeral ritual. When it was over, and we were leaving the gates of the cemetery, there across the street was the commander. Seeing him there was more horrible than all that had gone before. It's wrenching to be forced to interrupt a familial process. I should have replaced my father right then and there as the financial support of the household, but I couldn't. I had to go back to jail.

That moment was the worst. More than the situation itself, what devastated me the most was not being able to go home and perform my duty as head of the family, not being of any use to the people who needed me so. I wished I could have done what Shostakovich was able to do in his Seventh Symphony: transcend the prison walls to reach those who were able to listen with a message of resistance and hope.

I returned to literature, a vocation that had been incubating since high school, when I resumed my studies in 1978, after a five-year interruption, at the Austral University in Valdivia. It was there that I met Nelson Schwenke and Marcelo Nilo. Nelson and I were classmates at the School of Anthropology. Marcelo was a music student. I was 25; they were 21, 22.

Schwenke and Nilo were adolescents when they experienced the coup; they were 13 and 14. They experienced it without a political conscience. In spite of our different life experiences and that small age difference (which is more noticeable at that age), we were able to connect on some levels. We agreed, for example, that we wanted to defend freedom of expression and that we had to invent spaces to show our art. Official spaces were forbidden to us. Between the option of not doing anything (an option that many took, and legitimately) and inventing alternative spaces, we chose the latter.



Nelson Schwenke, Marcelo Nilo and Clemente Riedemann. Valdivia, June 1987. Photo Copyright © "El Viaje de Schwenke & Nilo" by Clemente Riedemann, 1989.

We could never perform out in the open, not on stages, not on television, not on official radio stations. We had to build a large underground network, supported by the Catholic Church, which gave us spaces in its parishes, chapels, educational centers, schools. Within that small margin of mobility the universities also played a very important role. It was a risk because meetings or large gatherings could never be controlled a hundred percent. Many times they'd cut off the electricity during a performance, things like that. But even without amplification or lights, the performance went on, *a capella* and in the dark. We always had a response, almost mystical, from our audiences: the youth, the students.

Most of our poetry got to people through audiocassettes because of their easy mobility, and to some degree, that dictated the style of our work. The cassette carried our experience to the regions and provinces far from Santiago and to the network formed by Chileans in exile all over the world.

Nelson Schwenke, composer, lyricist, musician.

[Worked with Marcelo Nilo and Clemente Riedeman]

At that time there was a penetration of Anglo music, very distorting disco music, a total negation of folk roots. We thought that kind of cultural imperialism too brutal. It didn't allow us to sing to the city of Valdivia. We were Valdivians. Why couldn't we sing about the rain? So we talked about the rain, but under the rain were feelings of people in the middle of a difficult, adverse geographical context. And people began to understand those messages, not so much about rain, but certainly about the night -- the dictatorship.

The university gave us spaces not realizing the consequences. It even financed our first recitals, thinking it was supporting just another university group. They didn't realize, nor did we, what those recitals meant in the later organization of student centers. They were innocently given out of a pressing need to express ourselves, with no political consciousness. We were very young. We did it because the university deprived us of everything. We did it for our intellectual survival. I am convinced that our generation was not conscious of the importance that art had at the time. I think we were like the men who painted their caves with artistic images: they didn't know what they were doing, but knew it was necessary to do, to communicate.

Marcelo Nilo, musician.

[Worked with Nelson Schwenke and Clemente Riedeman]

People would follow us. Nelson's parent's house was ransacked. He had to move out. When they located where he was living, they'd stand outside at the hour of curfew. Nelson used to stay dressed all night in case they'd come to take him. But they only harassed him. Several friends, even some of the university professors, took turns walking with him wherever he went so they wouldn't pick him up on the street. You could see them following us; you'd know that if you left the house, they'd be there. One time we were all in our dressing room at the Cariola Theatre, where we were playing for a human rights event -- many things were done at that theater; it was accessible because it belonged to the actors union. The dressing rooms were small, not much bigger than 5' x 7'. There were five of us in the group: the bass guitar, the viola, violins. And as we were tuning our instruments, I noticed that there were six in the room, not five. None of us knew the other person, but there he was in our dressing room, pretending to be tuning our guitars. And he let us see him! I think that was their job: to make us aware of their presence. Fortunately, they never arrested us -- though they did arrest friends of ours.

Schwenke & Nilo's first three recitals in Valdivia caused an impact. We wrote our poems and our songs based on things we talked about with people. It's called "the importance of registering memory." That material obviously touched directly on emotions and desires of many Chileans for opening up the situation -- particularly the young people, who are rebels and questioners anyway, with their illusions of freedom, even more so in that time of absolute repression, of darkness.

Poetry has enormous status in Chile. Two Nobel Prizes, at least fifteen major poets, all of whom were born in the provinces with nostalgia: Nicanor Parra, Gonzalo Rojas, even Neruda, worked in Santiago and from there they leapt to the world, their visions sieved through the cultural filter of Santiago. If I had repeated that story of the provincial poet who goes to Santiago, my language would probably have ended up being similar to the standard, and eventually I would have been accepted as one of those poets. But writing from the provinces and having a vision of my country and of the world from that perspective has made my language distinctive, in the songs I wrote and in the poetry I've been able to build, just for having stayed here. Everyone always told me it was crazy. And it is, if you believe in a literary career as a progression in status in the literary and social hierarchy. I'm convinced now more than ever that I made the right decision.

End Part II