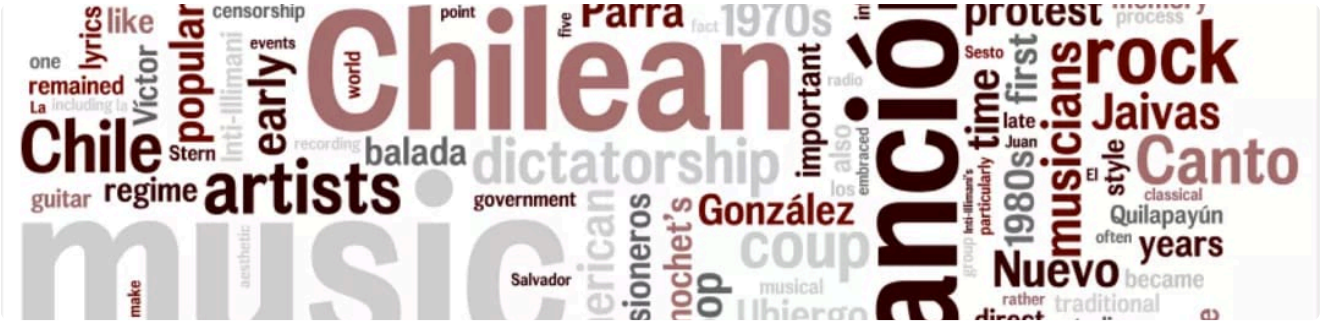
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Nueva Canción

Caio Gomes

During the 1940s and 1950s, the arts became a symbolic battlefield and 'folklore' was understood as a place of resistance to the domination of foreign imperialism. Nueva Canción was born in this envoirenment.

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The musical scenario in the first half of the twentieth century

and the origins of *nueva canción latino-americana*

Transnationality is in the essence of the configuration of popular song in Latin America. The foundation of the formation of sounds, instrumentation, and musical genres which over time were consolidated in the continent and taken as expressions of national cultures, can be found in the intense transatlantic intersection of references of the cultures originating in the continent—from the European cultural universe imposed through colonization, African cultures brought through slavery, the constant and intermittent exchanges among various parts of the continent.

While exchanges and transfers are at the foundations of the cultural formation of the continent, the history of the invention of Latin American nations in the nineteenth century is directly associated with the gradual construction of "national" cultures, which signifies establishing limits and frontiers that distinguish what is "typical" in each new nation being constructed. Configured in this process, through a series of filters and the definition of models, rules, and formats, was what the "national" music of each country would be.

While music went through this "nationalization" movement in the nineteenth century, in the twentieth the development of the culture industry and the growing massified circulation cultural allowed by mechanical reproduction, opened space for the shaping of an internationalized musical market. Musical genres, now strong identified with national cultures, came to circulate and be intensely consumed in the different parts of the world. After the end of the Second World War, with the imposition of the Cold War and the radicalization of ideological polarization, Latin America became a stage of political disputes, in which the cultural industry, already established, had a central role.

On one hand, genres such as the Mexican *bolero*, the Cuban *rumba,* or the Brazilian *samba*, already seen as "typical" of each country and imprinted by the United States and its entertainment industry, became cinema soundtracks, dominating radios all over the continent, and allowing the large multinational companies to sell thousands of records. The songs produced in different parts of the continent were digested by the international cultural industry and gained breadth to breach frontiers and make their names in the United States and Europe.

On the other hand, this strong policy of cultural domination, imposed by the power of the multinationals on the means of communication and the circulation of mass culture, which filtered and imprinted itself on that cultural universe what politically interesting to put into circulation, caused reactions in various Latin American countries. This resulted in an intense process of the reaffirmation of what was understood as "popular culture," in a movement of resistance to the globalization of the culture which was being imposed.

In light of the advance of modernization, urbanization, and the massification of consumption, sectors of the intelligentsia of various Latin American countries reacted by defending the need to revalue elements seen as being characteristic of nationality. The expression of this "national" was to be found in the "popular," in "autochthone" culture, generically understood under the label of "folklore."

During the 1940s and 1950s, the arts became a symbolic battlefield and "folklore" was understood as a place of resistance to the domination of foreign imperialism. Various Latin American countries experienced processes of an intense growth of research into and the dissemination of folklore, to the point of a folkloric boom being talked about at the end of the 1950s and beginning of the 1960s.

Initially, folkloric activity was very linked to the idea of the "rescue" or "preservation" of an anonymous popular culture, which was in danger of becoming extinct due to the advance of mass industrial culture. The folklorist was seen as a type of "savior," with the mission of preventing the "original" culture of the country from being lost.

However, especially from the 1950s onwards, debates in the folkloric field advanced and new perspectives began to be presented. In counterpoint to the more conservative folklorism, there emerged the vision that folklore could not be seen as something agonizing, or as a museum piece which needed to be save from extinction. The role of the folklorist became instead that of keeping the "soul of the people" alive, making folklore the base for the creation of new works.

Rather than untouchable material, folkloric production came to be seen as the creation of authorial works which, in incorporating folkloric information and crossing them with other references, were transformed into expressions of nationality. In the field of popular music, the genres, rhythms, and instruments of traditional anonymous folk songs came to be the matrix of a massive universe of music which gained a leading place in the cultural industry.

Between the 1950s and 1960s, Latin American radios (and also in other parts of the world) were taken over by "folk" singers and groups and their works became great hits with the public. These artists assumed very different postures in relation to entertainment and what "folkloric" production was, resulting in the consolidation of different types of folklorism. Within this intense activity, two names gained special renown as they were the pioneers in an area that sought to give folkloric (or better folk) music space for the transmission of explicitly political and engaged content: Atahualpa Yupanqui and Violeta Parra.

The Argentine musician, composer, singer, poet, and folklorist Héctor Roberto Chavero (1908-1992), who adopted the artistic name of Atahualpa Yupanqui, was a central figure in the politicization of folk type singing. Since the 1930s, Yupanqui travelling around Argentina and other Latin American countries, collecting popular music which served as a base for the development of his authorial work.



Atahualpa Yupanqui (1908-1992), a pioneering Argentine artist in the politicization of folk music

Source: Cancioneros

He had a strong involvement with politics since the 1940s, as he was a member of the Argentine Communist Party, which resulted in intense persecution and his imprisonment various times. His activism involved his work, transforming him into a pioneer in the production of engaged songs based on folkloric material.

VIDEO

View online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0k6kG1WFIA4

Interview with Atahualpa Yupanqui about folklore (1977)

Source: YouTube

"El arriero," composed in 1944, is considered one of the first appearances of social criticism in a folk song, an element which would be a central mark of *nueva canción* from the 1960s onwards. The character in the song lyrics is a rural worker looking after animalothers*" denounced in an original manner the exploitation of their work, showing the abyss existing between the simple man in the countryside and the large rural worker.



Label of 1944 record released by Odeon with the first recording of "El arriero", a song by Atahualpa Yupanqui considered a pioneer in the politicization of folk type music

Source: Cancioneros

In 1949, with the worsening of political tensions in Argentina, Atahualpa left the country. In a scheme organized by the Communist Party, he crossed the frontier with Uruguay and left for France. After going through Paris, Atahualpa started a trip through communist bloc countries, visiting Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Romania, where he gave some musical performances and some talks about Latin America folklore, as well as participating in artistic and political events.

Back in France, Atahualpa managed to make great space for himself in local cultural circuits, appearing with prominence, and dividing the stage with important names from French music, such as Edith Piaf.



Advertisement for presentations of Atahualpa Yupanqui alongside Edith Piaf, published by the Communist journal *Les Lettres Françaises* on 29 June 1950

Source: Fundacion Yupanqui

In addition, in Paris, the Argentine folk artist recorded various phonographs for Le Chant du Monde, a French recording label founded in 1938 and intimately linked to the French Communist Party and famous for maintaining an impressive catalogue of "music from the world."



Labels of phonographs recorded by Atahualpa Yupanqui in Paris in 1951 for *Le Chant du Monde*

Source: Atacris

VIDEO

View online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z81bPPknxDU

"Preguntitas sobre Dios" (1951), by Atahualpa Yupanqui

Source: YouTube

Yupanqui's success abroad contributed to his affirmation as a leading figure in Latin American folk production, guaranteeing him an important place in the universe of references of political songs on the continent.

Alongside Yupanqui, another central reference in folk activities in Latin America in the 1950s was the Chilean composer, singer, fine artist, and folklorist Violeta Parra (1917-1967). In this period, she visited numerous areas in her country meticulously collecting anonymous songs that were part of the traditional Chilean repertoire, gathering material that was the basis for her to develop her authorial work as a composer.



Violeta Parra in a recording session, Santiago, 1957

Source: Fundacion Violeta Parra

In 1955, Violeta Parra travelled for the first time to Europe, invited to participate in the *V World Festival of Youth and Students, held in city of Warsaw, Poland*. She thus made her first incursion into the communist world, also passing through the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia.



Anticommunist propaganda published in Brazil in the newspaper *O Estado de São Paulo*, referring to *the World Festival of Youth*, held in Warsaw in 1955.The Chilean folk musician Violeta Parra participated in this festival.

Source: Estadao

Her journey ended with a period in France where she made a series of performances in bars and made contact with Latin American artists and intellectuals in Paris at that time.



Violeta Parra in L'Escale, Paris, during her first visit to the French capital

Source: Fundacion Violeta Parra

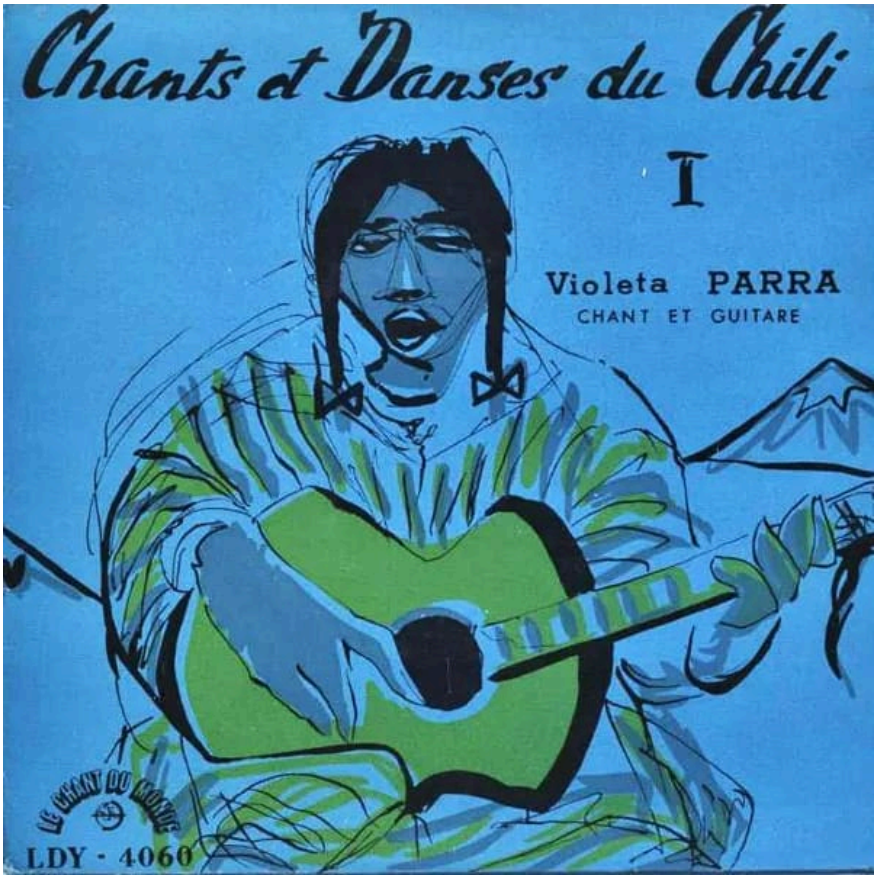
VIDEO

View online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SvsRTQtqAzA

Interview with Violeta Parra recorded in Geneva in 1965

Source: YouTube

Violeta recorded her first solo records in the French capital, two albums released by Le Chant du Monde in which she gave a voice to folkloric themes collected while she had traveled through Chile. She thus found herself in the middle of a scenario of the valorization of culture coming from outside Europe—often understood as categories such as "exotic" and "picturesque"—a space for popular Latin American music.



Cover of the album *Chants et danses du Chili vol. 1*

Source: Perrerac



Image of the LP *Chants et danses du Chili vol. 1*

Source: Gallica

VIDEO

View online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lFTz_e4VLZs

The record *Chants et danses du Chili vol. 1*

Source: YouTube



Cover of the album *Chants et danses du Chili vol. 2*

Source: Perrerac

VIDEO

View online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZEGBb80jmRU

Part of *Chants et danses du Chili vol. 2*

Source: YouTube

During her European trip, Violeta also spent a period in London, where she presented and recorded tracks for an album released by Odeon, as well as performing on BBC television and radio programs, expanding even more the circulation of her work.

In this way, with the communist parties creating possibilities for Latin American artists to visit and present communist bloc countries, the pulsating folk song movement which was strengthening in various parts of Latin America also gained visibility in European cultural circuits. An unprecedented space opened in the European cultural industry, which allowed the affirmation of Latin American folk production in the political, intellectual, and artistic spheres of the old world. This movement of dialogue between popular culture and the circuits of the circulation of the masses led to the development of commercial folk music in Latin America. Given the transformations of the Latin American political scenario, this laid the foundations in the 1960s for a new period of folk projection to be experienced, marked by politicization and the incorporation of social criticism, the origin of a project which became established under the label of *nueva canción latino-americana*.

From the politicization of folk song to the first steps in *nueva canción latino-americana*

In 1959, the Cuban Revolution turned the attention of the entire world to Latin America. The formation of a socialist government in the middle of the Cold War in a small Caribbean island, until then seen as part of the United States' "backyard," caused an enormous impact, animating leftwing movements in various countries.

The idea of "revolution" took over the entire American continent, which glimpsed concrete possibilities of radical political changes. This had a strong impact on the cultural field and the idea that it was necessary to invest in raising awareness among the people to encourage transformation became central for a large part of the Latin American intelligentsia. Many artists identified with leftwing ideas began to try to make art an instrument of social transformation.

Popular songs, due to their massive character and their communication potential, came to be seen as the path to divulge political ideas to a broader public. In various parts of Latin America this led to musical movements gaining force which through an attempted aesthetic renovation of national traditions sought to produce political songs.

During the first half of the 1960s, this engaged song movement, which initially formed in the Southern Cone, established itself under the label of *nueva canción latino-americana*. Its production had as a striking characteristic strong political engagement and the search for the construction of a continental integration project through song.

Nuevo Cancionero Argentino

The first fundamental mark of the constitution of the *nueva canción latino-americana* project was the formation of the Argentine *nuevo cancionero movement*. This was created by a group of intellectuals in the city of Mendoza, which at this moment was experiencing a great cultural fervor. It is significant that the movement was organized outside Buenos Aires, since one of the group's proposals was to question the existence of a central axis of Argentine culture focused on the country's capital, emphasizing the need to incorporate the cultural production of the other provinces in the "national" production.

The movement, whose conception and expansion depended to a great extent on the work of Armando Tejada Gómez (1929-1992) and Óscar Matus (1935-1991), found in the Tucumana singer Mercedes Sosa (1935-2009) one of its best known figures.



The Argentine composer, poet, politician, and broadcaster Armando Tejada Gómez

Source: Tejada Gómez



The Argentine musician Oscar Matus

Source: Tejada Gómez



Mercedes Sosa, the most outstanding voice in the Argentine *nuevo cancionero* who ended up as the "voice of Latin America"

Source: Wikipedia

The movement was officially launched in a concert held in the *Círculo de periodistas* (Association of Journalists), in Mendoza on 11 February 1963. In addition to artistic numbers, the opening night was marked by the first public reading of the *Manifiesto del Nuevo Cancionero*, written by Tejada Gómez and signed by a series of artists and intellectuals. The document outlined the principles defended by the group, starting with the discussion of the panorama of Argentine popular music, but also pointing to the need to look for dialogues which could go beyond national limits and put Argentine songs in contact with other productions from the continent.



Se Llevará a Cabo Esta Noche el "Recital del Nuevo Cancionero"

Un grupo de los artistas que intervendrán, aparecen aquí en una fotografía que se tomó en nuestra redacción

Tal como lo hemos venido anunciando se realizará esta noche, a las 22, en el Círculo de Periodistas, Godoy Cruz 166, el "Recital del Nuevo Cancionero". Con tal motivo han pasado por nuestra redacción algunos artistas relacionados con la organización de este espectáculo literario-coreográfico-musical. Son ellos, Mercedes Sosa, Cesar Matus, Juan Carlos Saravia, Tito Francia, Horacio Thiosería absurdo, sino por la concurrencia de sus variadas manifestaciones.

"El actual resurgimiento del folklore por otra parte, es un signo de la madurez que el argentino ha logrado en el conocimiento del país real. Son los primeros síntomas masivos de una actitud cultural diferente.

A report from *Los Andes*, a newspaper from Mendoza, announcing the launch of *nuevo cancionero argentino*, on 11 February 1963

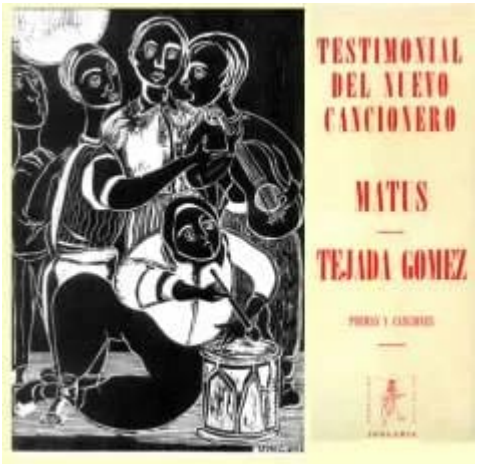
Source: Gourmet musical



Photo taken at the offices of *Los Andes* on the day before the launch of the *Nuevo Cancionero* movement. Standing: Juan Carlos Sedero, Pedro Horacio Tusoli, Tito Francia, Armando Tejada Gómez. Sitting: Víctor Nieto, Mercedes Sosa, Oscar Matus

Source: Los Andes

The initial marks of the recording of *nuevo cancionero argentino* were the *Testimonial del Nuevo Cancionero albums*, which contained poems by Armando Tejada Gómez and his songs in partnership with Óscar Matus, and *Canciones con fundamento*, in which Mercedes Sosa gave voice to various partnership of Matus and Tejada Gómez. Both were released in 1965 by the independent label *El grillo*, led by Matus.



Album cover of *Testimonial del Nuevo Cancionero*, a register of the partnership of Armando Tejada Gómez with Óscar Matus, recorded in 1965

Source: Tejada Gómez

VIDEO

View online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bho8ADyyPB8&t=232s

Testimonial del Nuevo Cancionero

Source: YouTube



Cover of the 1965 album *Canciones com fundamento*, in which the Argentine singer Mercedes Sosa recorded for the first time with the founders of the *nuevo cancionero* movement Armando Tejada Gómez and Óscar Matus

Source: Cancioneros

VIDEO

View online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2hlqMiKYS8w

Canciones com fundamento

Source: YouTube

Uruguayan Protest Song

During the same period, the strong movement of Uruguayan folk renovation enabled a new generation of composers and singers to propose, in dialogue with what had happened in countries such as Argentina, the incorporation of new sonorities and the connection of the folk repertoire with the social and political context of that moment.

Although it did not result in an organized and institutionalized movement as in Argentina, this generation had its production placed under the label of *canción protesta*. The foundation of this new strand was marked by the launch by the Uruguayan label Antar of the debut album of Los Olimareños, a duo consisting of Braulio López (1942-) and José Luis Guerra (1943-), and by the debut album of the composer and singer Daniel Viglietti (1939-2017). These artists, alongside Alfredo Zitarrosa, shaped at this moment the core of engaged Uruguayan music.



Cover of *Los Olimareños*, released in 1962 by the Uruguayan label Antar marking the debut of the duo formed by Braulio López and Pepe Guerra

Source: Cancioneros

VIDEO

View online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EAIWtFenwdw

Los Olimareños

Source: YouTube



Cover of *Canciones folklóricas y seis impresiones para canto y guitarra*, debut record of the Uruguayan musician Daniel Viglietti, released by Antar in 1963

Source: Cancioneros

VIDEO

View online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iEAbIIEv5F4

Canciones folklóricas y seis impresiones para canto y guitarra

Source: YouTube

"Canción para mi América," released by Viglietti on his first album can be seen as the first great work of *nueva canción latino-americana*, by affirming the Latin Americanist discourse and circulating intensely around the continent. It was rerecorded in the following years by the Chilean brother and sister Isabel and Ángel Parra and the Argentine singer Mercedes Sosa.



Album cover of *La peña de los Parra*, released by the Chilean label Demon in 1965, which contains a recording of Canción para mi América"

Source: Cancioneros



Cover of *Yo no canto por cantar*, recorded by the Argentine singer Mercedes Sosa in 1966, which contains a recording of "Canción para mi América"

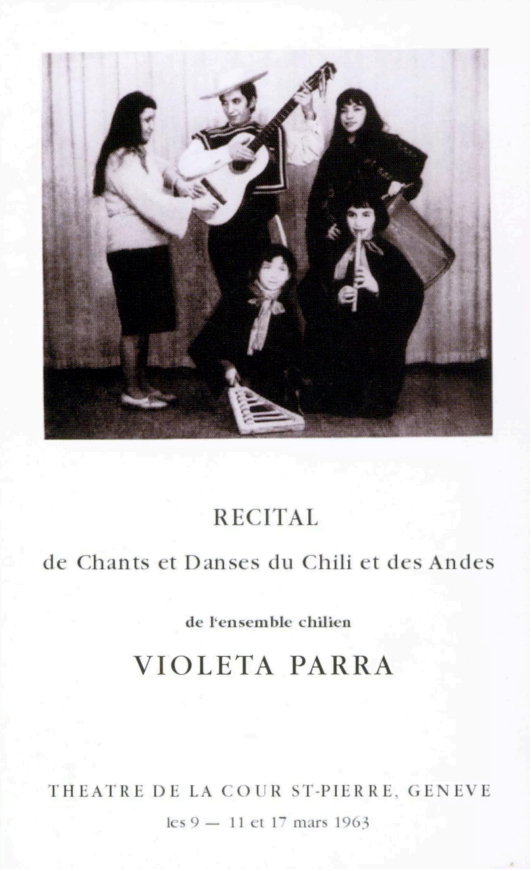
Source: Cancioneros

Chilean *Nueva Canción*

In Chile, a group of artists emerged in what was called *neofolklore*, (a song movement based on folk and strongly linked to the commercial interests of the mainstream music industry), who assumed more explicit and critical postures, distanced themselves from the traditionalism of typical Chilean music, and formed the basis of what would be labelled as *nueva canción chilena*.

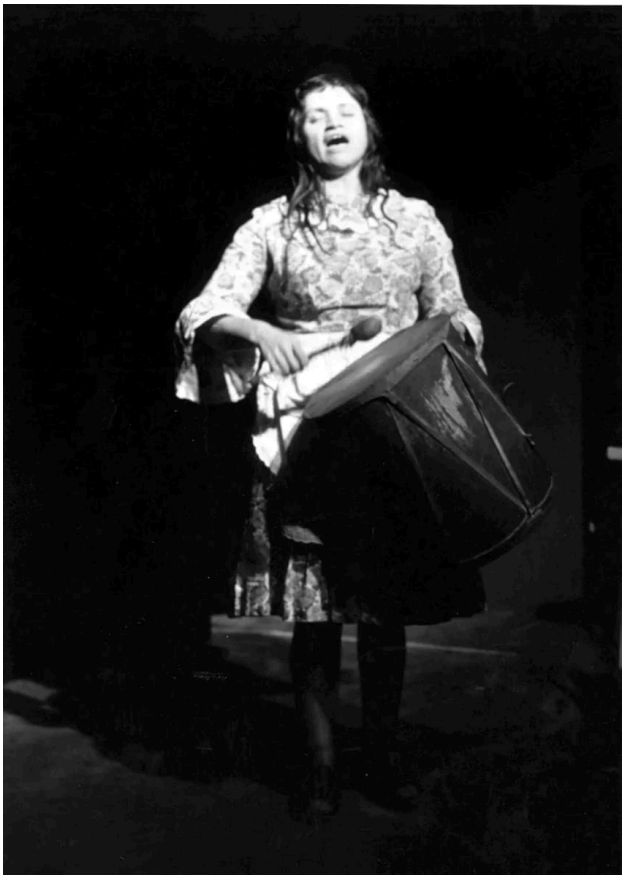
Strongly influenced by what had occurred in the folk music spheres in Argentina and Uruguay, the movement was deeply dependent on the work of Violeta Parra. Following the paths opened by the latter, *nueva canción* undertook an expansion of the sound universe of Chilean folk, also incorporating musical references from other Latin American countries.

The emergence of the movement was directly linked to Violeta Parra's second European experience, this time in the company of her children Isabel Parra (1939-) and Ángel Parra (1943-2017). Traveling again to participate in the *World Festival of Youth and Students*, this time held in the city of Helsinki in Finland, in July 1962, the Parra family visited the Soviet Union, Germany, and Italy, completing the trip with a long period in Paris, which lasted until 1965. During their time in Europe, the Parra family gave series of concerts and presentations to radio and television, establishing a profound connection with European artists and intellectuals, which contributed to maintain the visibility of Latin American cultural production of a folk type in the circuits of the old continent.



Poster for a performance by the Parra family in Geneva in March 1963

Source: Fundacion Violeta Parra



Presentation of Violeta Parra in Plaisance Theater, Paris, in 1963

Source: Fundacion Violeta Parra

Returning from the trip Isabel and Ángel, greatly impacted by the Parisian artistic scene, rented a property in Santiago where they opened *Peña de los Parra,* the foundation of which can be seen as the initial landmark of the *nueva canción chilena movement*.



Report published by the Chilean magazine *Rincón Juvenil*, in 1966, celebrating the first anniversary of *Peña de Los Parra*, located on 340 Calle Carmen

Source: Slideshare

Peña came to have a fixed group of musicians, including, as well as the Parras, artists such as Patricio Manns (1937-) and Rolando Alarcón (1929-1973), soon joined by Víctor Jara (1932-1973), thereby bringing together what would constitute the central core of the *nueva cancion movement*, permitting their contact with the public and the dissemination of their songs, which were soon recorded.



Patricio Manns, a Chilean musician and participant in the initial group which played in *Peña de los Parra*

Source: Musica Popular

VIDEO

View online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kY0OLa3_TL4

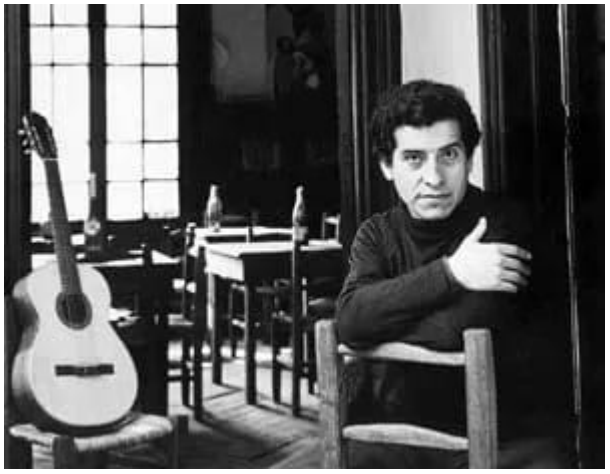
Patricio Manns singing his song "Arriba en la cordillera" in a video directed by Hugo Arévalo

Source: YouTube



The Chilean musician Rolando Alarcón, a participant in the initial group which performed in *Peña de los Parra*

Source: Musica Popular



Víctor Jara, a central figure in *nueva canción chilena*, a musician who joined the musicians' group in *Peña de los Parra*

Source: Musica Popular

VIDEO

View online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4yOjnpVKsoQ

Víctor Jara sings his song "Te recuerdo Amanda"

Source: YouTube

Gradually the movement expanded, being joined by new artists, notably the creation of the folk groups Quilapayún and Inti-Illimani. 1969 marked the beginning of a process of institutionalization, with the holding of the *I Festival de la Nueva Canción Chilena*. This gave a definitive name to the movement, publicized the artists, and allowed the circulation of their works.

VIDEO

View online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HV36HfaRsDs

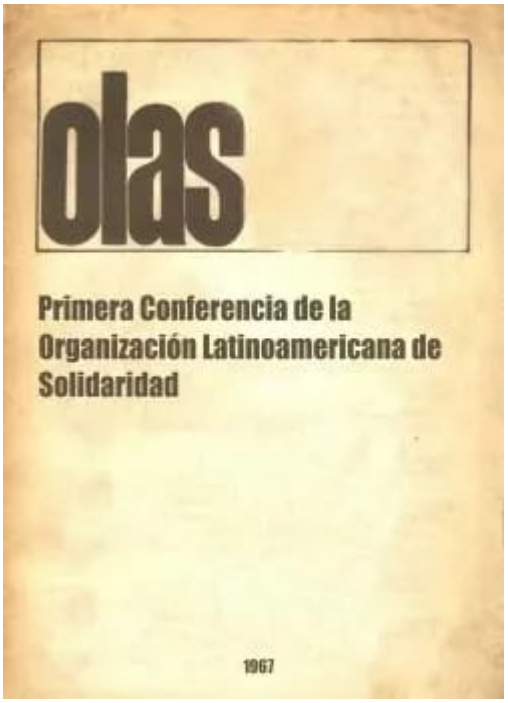
Noticiario Chile en marcha from 1969 reporting on, amongst other news, the holding of the *I Festival de la Nueva Canción Chilena*

Source: YouTube

At the end of the 1960s, with the consolidation of the Argentine *nuevo cancionero*, Uruguayan *canción protesta,* and Chilean *nueva canción*, a model was forged of committed music with a strong Latin Americanist nature. Its composers and singers found their own and original paths and dialogued in distinct manners with the traditional national music of their countries. However, they shared references, which allowed the formation of a common and strongly politicized musical universe, which became established under the label of *nueva canción latino-americana*.

Encuentro de la Canción Protesta (Cuba, 1967) and the debate about engaged music

One of the most significant marks of the affirmation of this political song movement and its projection at a continental level was the holding in Havana, between 29 July and 10 August 1967 of the *I Encuentro de la Canción Protesta*. The event officializing the creation of *Organización Latinoamericana de Solidaridad* (OLAS) was being held at the same moment in Cuba. This sought to bring together the peripheral countries under the leadership of the Cubans.



Cover of the publication with the principal documents from the *Primera Conferencia de la Organización Latinoamericana de Solidaridad*

Source: Wikipedia

Attending the meeting were delegations of artists from 18 countries with the aim of discussing the paths and the possibilities of protest songs. The invited musicians also performed in open air concerts, theaters, and on radio and television. In the debates that were part of the event it was discussed how music could be used as a weapon to denounce social inequalities and the ills of the working people, as well as to raise awareness among the people about engaging in the revolutionary struggle. Aesthetic perspectives were also debated, reflecting on the relationship of protest songs with the folk universe and popular culture and the possible intersection of these references with modern musical elements.

Moreover, the event also affirmed Cuba as the center of the revolutionary experience on the American continent, serving as the platform for the socialist government of the island to defend its model of revolution in the intense debates taking over the global left at that moment. The presence of representatives of different Latin American countries (Argentines, Chileans, Cubans, Haitians, Mexicans, Paraguayans, Peruvians, and Uruguayans), most of them linked to *nueva canción* movements in their countries, demonstrated the search for expanded connections on the continent in order to establish a Latin American protest song network.

Transatlantic dialogues

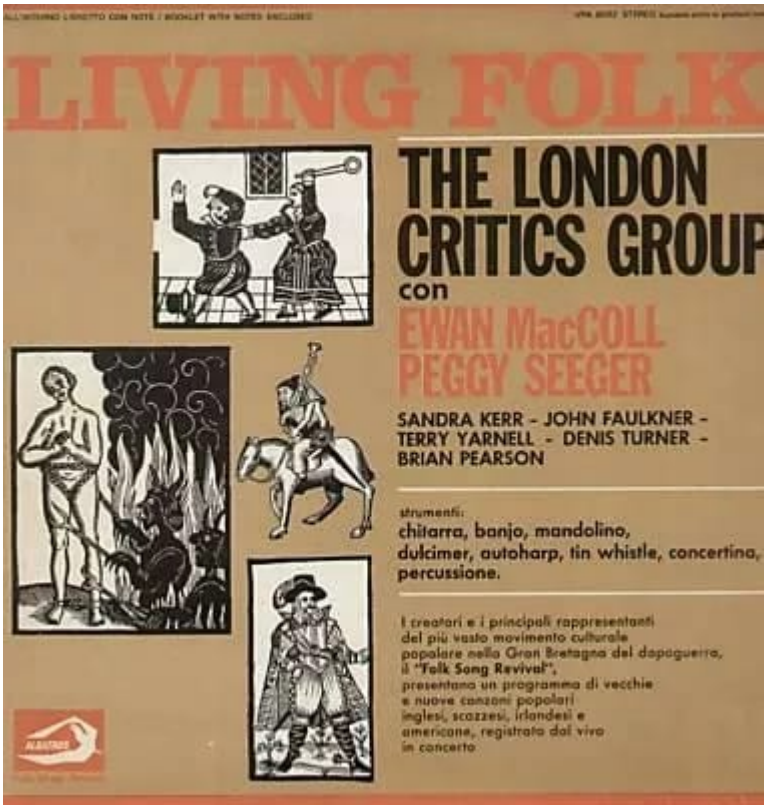
Despite its strong Latin-Americanist mark, the event also sought to expand dialogues beyond Latin American through the participation of delegations from Australia, Spain, France, Great Britain, Italy, and Portugal, which allowed *nueva canción* to open for approximation with different types of protest songs and to pay attention to new themes and demands.

One of the most important groups at the event was the British delegation, consisting of Terry Yarnell, John Faulkner, Sandra Kerr (1942-), and the couple Ewan MacColl (1915-1989) e Peggy Seeger (1935-), collectively known as *The London Critics Group*. This movement, led by the MacColl and Seeger couple, organized meetings in the 1960s and 1970s to discuss the possibilities of political musical and the insertion of folk music in Britain.



Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger, leaders of *The London Critics Group*, central figures in the spread of folk music in Great Britain, in a 1957 photo

Source: Peggy Seeger



Cover of *Living Folk*, released by Albatross in 1970, the register of a show held on 24 April 1968, in Teatro Lirico, Milan, Italy, involving Sandra Kerr, John Faulkner, Terry Yarnell, Denis Turner, Brian Pearson, Ewan MacColl, and Peggy Seeger, members of *The London Critics Group*

Source: Ewan MacColl

VIDEO

View online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=28dh4-yoXwk&list=OLAK5uy_nC5L1PtiHm9jqNPUCy1kTdQAPqyKv6E7M

Living Folk, 1970

Source: YouTube

Through the significant presence of artists from outside Latin American in the Cuban event, *nueva canción* established an important connection with *protest songs* around the world, with the question of anti-imperialism and the struggle against US domination of the continent gaining space in its discourse. Demands such as the decolonization of countries in Africa and Asia, the struggle for civil rights for minorities, and opposition to the Vietnam War, represented by a delegation of the South Vietnam Liberation Front, also came to be part of the repertoire of Latin American musicians.

Canción Protesta and US *folk music*

Another important bridge that was strengthened in the *Encuentro de la Canción Protesta* was with US *folk music*. Since the nineteenth century in the United States the discussion of folklore gained strength, with various researchers going around the country collecting materials which could express the "origins of nationality." In the 1930s, due the impact of the crisis of unprecedented size which shook the country,

critical groups linked to the left gained strength. Along with these groups emerged a set of artists who redefined the perspectives previously adopted by folkloric music, now called *folk music*, seeking to put it to the service of political engagement.

A large part of the musicians linked to *folk music* had ties with the Communist Party and organizations linked to it, which meant that they suffered great persecution in the 1940s, in the context of radical anti-communism symbolized by the activities of the Un-American Activities Committee, which forced some important protest song artists testify, such as Pete Seeger (1919-2014).



Pete Seeger, a central figure of US *folk music* in a 1961 photograph. Pete Seeger arrives at Fed. Court with his guitar over his shoulder. World Telegram photo by Walter Albertin, 1961, Apr 4.

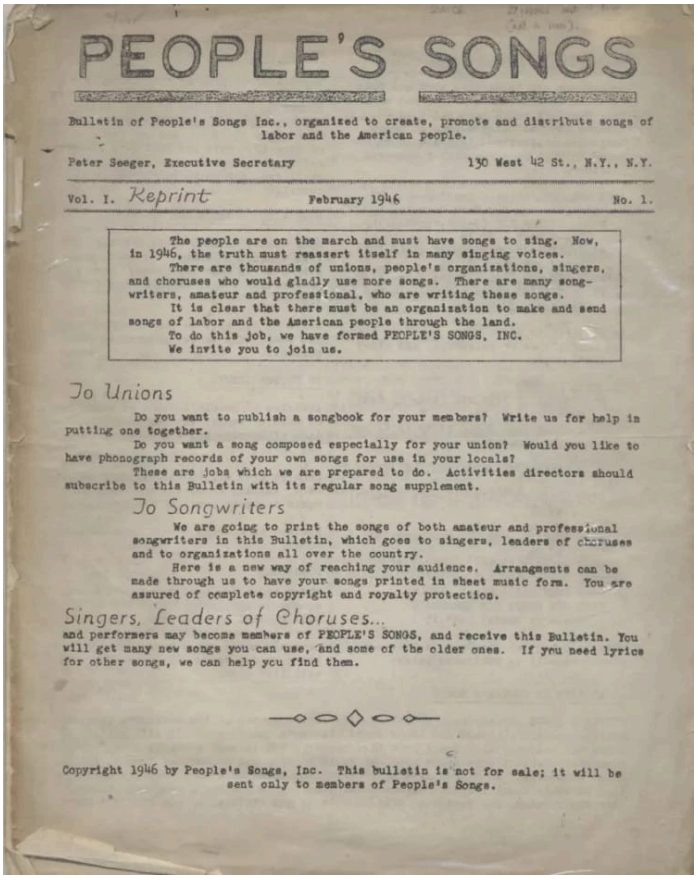
Source: Library of Congress

During the 1950s and 1960s, these folk music artists gained relevance in the US musical scenario, assuming a leading place in the movements which fought against the Vietnam War and for Civil Rights. Songs came to be seen as key to the demonstrations and protests which took place all over the United States. It was in this context that the couple Barbara Dane (1927-) and Irwin Silber (1925-2010) gained importance, acting intensely in the name of the politicization of folk music and its use in the defense of political causes. Irwin Silber was a journalist and executive director of *People's Song* and editor of *Sing Out!*, famous US publications which divulged *folk music* and defended the political action of musicians.



The journalist Irwin Silber and the singer Barbara Dane, leading figures in the defense of folk music in the United States and the engagement of artists in causes such as the struggle for civil rights

Source: Folklife



PEOPLE'S SONGS

Bulletin of People's Songs Inc., organized to create, promote and distribute songs of labor and the American people.

Peter Seeger, Executive Secretary — 130 West 42 St., N.Y., N.Y.

Vol. I. Reprint — February 1946 — No. 1.

The people are on the march and must have songs to sing. Now, in 1946, the truth must reassert itself in many singing voices.

There are thousands of unions, people's organizations, singers, and choruses who would gladly use more songs. There are many song-writers, amateur and professional, who are writing these songs.

It is clear that there must be an organization to make and send songs of labor and the American people through the land.

To do this job, we have formed PEOPLE'S SONGS, INC.

We invite you to join us.

To Unions

Do you want to publish a songbook for your members? Write us for help in putting one together.

Do you want a song composed especially for your union? Would you like to have phonograph records of your own songs for use in your locals?

These are jobs which we are prepared to do. Activities directors should subscribe to this Bulletin with its regular song supplement.

To Songwriters

We are going to print the songs of both amateur and professional songwriters in this Bulletin, which goes to singers, leaders of choruses and to organizations all over the country.

Here is a new way of reaching your audience. Arrangements can be made through us to have your songs printed in sheet music form. You are assured of complete copyright and royalty protection.

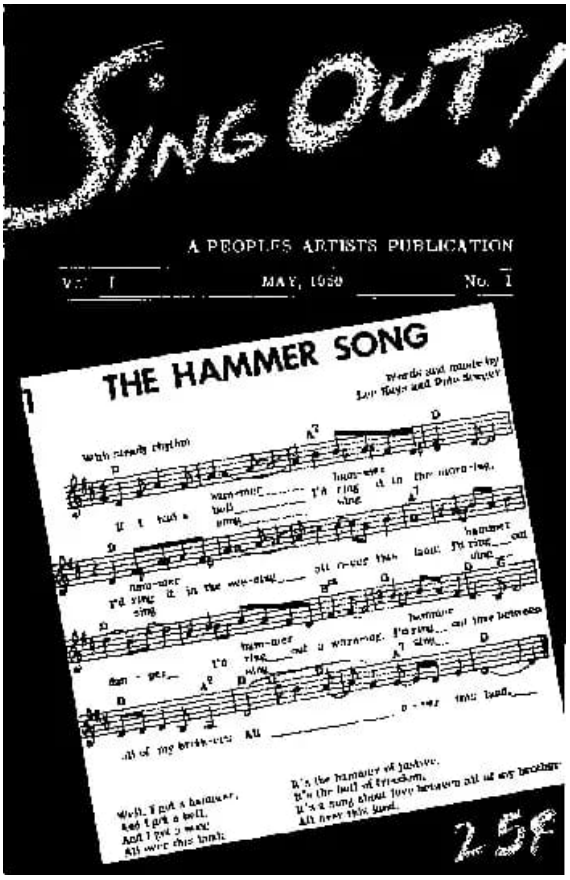
Singers, Leaders of Choruses...

and performers may become members of PEOPLE'S SONGS, and receive this Bulletin. You will get many new songs you can use, and some of the older ones. If you need lyrics for other songs, we can help you find them.

Copyright 1946 by People's Songs, Inc. This bulletin is not for sale; it will be sent only to members of People's Songs.

Cover of the first edition of *People's Songs Magazine*, published in February 1946

Source: SingOut



Cover of the first edition of *Sing Out Magazine*, published in May 1950

Source: Folkmusic History

Barbara Dane, an important jazz and *folk* singer, gained importance playing alongside Pete Seeger in events against the Vietnam War and in 1966 was the first US artist to tour Cuba after the revolution. This activism led her, alongside Silber, to represent the US protest movements in the *I Encuentro de la Canción Protesta*.



In 1966 Barbara Dane was the first US artist to tour in Cuba after the revolution. In this photo she appears playing alongside Fidel Castro

Source: Brava

The participation of the US couple in the *I Encuentro de la Canción Protesta* and the contacts they established with Latin American artists had a strong influence on the foundation of their record company *Paredon Records* in 1970, which over 12 years produced 45 records and acted as an important channel for the dissemination of *nueva canción latino-americana* in the United States and the world.

Grupo de Experimentación Sonora (GESI) and the emergence of Cuban *nueva trova*

At the end of the *I Encuentro de la Canción Protesta* it was decided to release a record with songs from various of the artists who participated in the event. Also proposed was the creation of a center which had the objective of keeping the exchanges of experience of engaged song active all over the continent, functioning as a base for *nueva canción*.



Cover of *Canción Protesta/Casa de las Américas*, released in Cuba as a record of the *Primer Encuentro de la Canción Protesta*, held in Havana between 24 July and 8 August 1967

Source: Cancioneros

VIDEO

View online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W9uoccOk15o

Part of the 1968 album *Canción Protesta/Casa de las Américas*

Source: YouTube

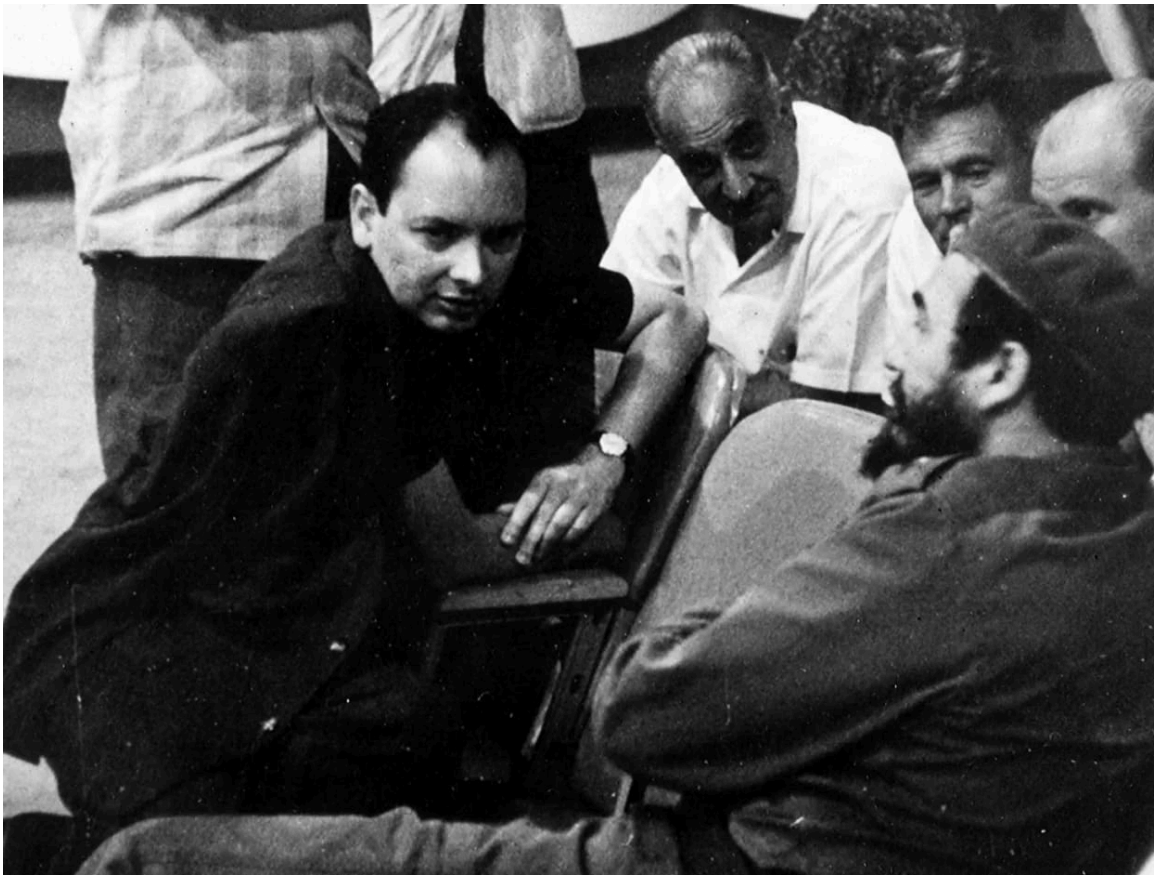
Centro de la Canción Protesta, created in 1967 and based in *Casa de las Américas*, assumed the function of publicizing the production of artists from various parts of the continent and became an important space for bringing together young Cuban artists, who sought to renew the island's traditional music and create new music connected with the country's political moment.



The Cuban *trovadores* Silvio Rodríguez, Noel Nicola, and Pablo Milanés, members of *Centro de la Canción Protesta*, who on 18 February 1968 played for the first time in Casa de las Américas

Source: Cancioneros

Artists such as Pablo Milanés (1943-), Silvio Rodríguez (1946-), and Noel Nicola (1946-2005) first met in *Centro de la Canción Protesta*. However, this did not last long, coming to an end in the middle of 1969.Following the end of the center, its participants were invited to take part in a new project being developed by Alfredo Guevara, a key figure in Cuban culture and director of the *Instituto Cubano de Arte e Industria Cinematográficos (ICAIC)*.



Alfredo Guevara, one of the principal figures in framing of the cultural policy of the Cuban revolutionary government, talking with Fidel Castro

Source: CubaNews

After a trip to Brazil where he came into contact with some of the daring cinema experiences there, impressed with the soundtracks of these films in 1969 Guevara decided to create the *Grupo de Experimentación Sonora (GESI),* linked to ICAIC, aimed at producing soundtracks for Cuban films. The group was led by *Maestro* Leo Brouwer (1939-).



Leo Brouwer, the *maestro* who led the study and research activities of *Grupo de Experimentación Sonora del ICAIC* (GESI)

Source: Entrevista



Cover of Grupo de Experimentación Sonora del ICAIC's first album, released in 1973 by the Cuban label EGREM. The album contained compositions by the Cubanos Silvio Rodríguez, Noel Nicola, and Pablo Milanés

Source: Cancioneros

VIDEO

View online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ddOs3zdKNJw

erformance by Noel Nícola, Silvio Rodriguez, and Vicente Feliú, members of GESI, in Casa de las Americas in 1979

Source: YouTube

VIDEO

View online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FSzN7ihVjJE

Documentary registering the visit of the Argentine singer Mercedes Sosa to Casa de las Américas, 1979

Source: YouTube

GESI was a space for the gestation of artistic production which from the 1970s onwards was part of the movement officially baptized as *nueva trova cubana*, representing a new aesthetic perspective within the increasingly broad and complex universe of *nueva canción latino-americana*. At the same time as a new type of engaged music was being created in Cuba, *nueva canción* spread all over the continent, while movements based on the idea of modernizing national traditional music in order to create songs which could serve as a platform for political discourse gained force in various countries. At the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s, *nueva canción* became a musical phenomenon in Latin America. A broad and complex circuit of music and work was established, allowing this production to reach beyond Latin America.

Political radicalization, military coups, exiles, and the redefinition of circulation networks of engaged music

The highly political content of the repertoire of *nueva canción latino-americana* and the engagement of its artists meant that the political scenario had a direct impact on the development of this artistic production. The constant advance of authoritarianism on the Latin American continent, with the multiplication of military coups and the establishment of dictatorships, brought to this artistic universe a strong discourse in the name of emancipation and the struggle for freedom which would open the way for the revolution.

Given the closure of neighboring countries, the election of the socialist Salvador Allende as president of Chile, representing a coalition of leftwing countries called *Unidade Popular*, made the country into a fundamental space of the affirmation of change. Artists linked to *nueva canción chilena* were intensely engaged in the campaign for the election of Allende and, with his victory, even when adopting different ideological positions within the Chilean left, assumed a leading place in the political process.



Cover of *Canto al Programa*, released in the context of the 1970 Chilean presidential elections. Julio Rojas adapted the political program of *Unidade Popular*, set to music by Luis Advis and Sergio Ortega, and performed by the group Inti-Illimani

Source: Cancioneros

VIDEO

View online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uSi1YdaWhZs

Part of the album *Canto al Programa*, 1970

Source: YouTube

During the three years of the Unidade Popular experience of government, Chile became alongside Cuba a central place for the production of engaged music and also a meeting point for musicians from various parts of the world who wanted to make their art an instrument of political struggle. The dialogue between the two countries was very intense in this period, involving Fidel Castro visiting Chile and Salvador Allende Cuba, as well as the widespread circulation of artists between the two countries.



Cover of *Isabel Parra y parte del Grupo de Experimentación Sonora del ICAIC*, recorded in Havana and Santiago do Chile between October 1971 and October 1972, and released in Chile in November 1972, a demonstration of the connections between Chilean and Cuban artists during the Unidade Popular government

Source: Cancioneros

VIDEO

View online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tQIwmy5cwBM&t=396s

Isabel Parra y parte del Grupo de Experimentación Sonora del ICAIC

Source: YouTube

In the first half of the 1970s, the aesthetic perspectives and the political slogans of *nova canción latino-americana* expanded and this intense construction of a circulation network of its artists was strongly affected by the recrudescence of authoritarianism on the continent. The 1970s were marked by the radicalization of the dictatorships in the Southern Cone. While in the second half of the 1960s the continent had experienced an authoritarian escalation, in the 1970s it got much worse. In 1973, the military coup in Uruguay crystalized the authoritarian experience which had been underway in the country, while the military coup in Chile ended the experience of the *Unidade Popular* government. In 1976, the closure was completed with the coup led by General Jorge Rafael Videla and the establishment of a new dictatorship in Argentina. In this scenario engaged artists were transformed into privileged targets of the new owners of power. Censorship, persecution, torture, disappearances, death, and the violence which marked the new governments directly affected the *nueva cancion artists*.

One of the most striking episodes in this process was the brutal murder of the Chilean Víctor Jara who on the day of the military coup, 11 September 1973, was arrested and brought to the National Stadium, which was converted into an enormous prison camp. There the musician was barbarously tortured and killed by the agents of the security forces, becoming the greatest symbol of the violence which befell politically engaged Latin American artists.



Soldiers guarding prisoners in the National Stadium in 1973

Source: Memorias



Prisoners in the National Stadium in Chile, when it was used as a prison camp in 1973

Source: Blog

For the musicians who remained in their countries, the challenge was now to survive in the middle of violence and continue with their work, even under the imprint of censorship and repression. The aim came to be the discovery of means to resist the dictatorship and to make music a weapon in this struggle.

However, for many artists who were especially targeted by the new regimes, exile was the only way out. A large part of the central figures of *nueva canción latino-americana* went into exile between the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s.

For many Cuba, the revolutionary center of the continent, and Mexico, a country with a long tradition of sheltering those persecuted politically, were the nearest options to try to escape from repression. In these countries solidarity movements with the victims of dictatorships on the continent were established, which used artists and the *nueva canción* repertoire as a mobilization instrument.

In 1974 in Mexico the album *México Chile Solidaridad* was released, with recordings by engaged Mexican artists in honor of the Chilean people. Two albums were released in Cuba: *Jornada de solidaridad con la lucha del Pueblo de Chile*, with *nueva trova cubana artists*, and *Compañero presidente*, an important project with representatives of *nueva canción* from various parts of the continent to pay tribute to Salvador Allende, killed in the conflicts when the military took power.



The album *México Chile Solidaridad*, released in México in 1974 by *Discos Pueblo*. In this record various important stars of Mexican *nueva canción* recorded songs in honor of the Chilean people

Source: Perrerac

VIDEO

View online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hKr6VSnn-9Y&t=34s

México Chile Solidaridad, 1974

Source: YouTube



Album cover of *Jornada de solidaridad con la lucha del Pueblo de Chile*, a collective record released by the Cuban label EGREM in 1974

Source: Cancioneros

VIDEO

View online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VdQGmBbovso

Jornada de solidaridad con la lucha del Pueblo de Chile, 1974

Source: YouTube



Album cover *Compañero presidente*, released by the Cuban label EGREM in 1975. In this record a number of Latin American artists paid tribute to the Chilean president Salvador Allende, killed in the conflicts during the military coup in Chile, in September 1973

Source: Cancioneros

VIDEO

View online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AjhzDXonLGQ

Compañero presidente, 1975

Source: YouTube

Projects such as this had an important role in the mobilization process of movements resisting the dictatorships and in sheltering their victims, but also demonstrated how in this period *nueva canción latino-americana* had already assumed a leading role in the continent's political struggles.

While initially neighboring countries became escape routes, over time many looked for refuge in more distant places, especially European countries which were willing to shelter the exiles. In various parts of the world, solidarity movements with the victims of Latin American dictatorships were being formed. These movements found in music an important path to disseminate their political discourse, especially in the sense of denouncing the atrocities being committed by the new established authoritarian governments.

The experience of exile, although it signified a harsh blow for *nueva canción latino-americana*, in the end became a moment for the re-dimensioning of projects. While the old circuits of engaged art were ended by repression and censorship, new and even broader networks were established due to the intense circulation of artists through the formation of a musical network of exile. In various countries collective records were released which consolidated a musical universe understood at this time as typical of *nueva canción*.

Moreover, these records transmitted a repertoire which assumed a voice of resistance and intended to raise awareness, both among the community of exiles and the population of the countries sheltering them, about the need to fight against dictatorships. The awareness that the experience of exile would not be as brief as initially believed and the need to find means of survival and restart their careers meant that the exiled artists had to look for paths to insert themselves in artistic circuits in the countries sheltering them. Many labels opened their studios and catalogues to artists linked to *nueva canción*.

Paris was one of the most important centers of Latin American exiles in Europe. Many leftwing activists took refuge there and various important *nueva canción latino-americana* artists settled in France, such as the Chileans Isabel and Ángel Parra and the Uruguayan Daniel Viglietti. The French label *Le Chant du Monde* was one of the spaces which welcomed exiled artists. It had a long tradition of paying attention to Latin American folk, while its catalogue contained albums by Atahualpa Yupanqui and Violeta Parra.



Cover of *Ángel Parra de Chile*, a 1976 album by the Chilean artist released by the French label *Le Chant du Monde*

Source: Cancioneros

VIDEO

View online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N2YYO4bucHo

Ángel Parra de Chile, 1976

Source: YouTube

Also in Paris smaller labels linked to political activists also welcomed Latin American artists, as is the case of the independent label *Expression Spontanée*, created by the French composer and singer Jean Bériac. The label recorded and released albums by Karaxú, a group founded in exile by the Chilean Patricio Manns with the aim of producing propaganda for *Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria (MIR)*, a group which defended armed resistance against the military dictatorship.



Cover of *Chants de la résistance populaire chilienne*, released by *Expression Spontanée* in 1974. The album by the Chilean band Karaxú, formed in exile under the leadership of Patricio Manns. It was composed of Franklin Troncoso, Bruno Fléty, el "Negro" Salué, el "Negro" Larraín, and Mariana Montalvo and was a tribute to the murdered leader of MIR, Miguel Enriquez, who had been murdered

Source: Cancioneros

VIDEO

View online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BMCBeV23Hs8

Chants de la résistance populaire chilienne, 1974

Source: YouTube

VIDEO

View online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PryqAJeX6Do

Performance by Karaxú in Sweden in 1975

Source: YouTube

Other European cities also held important groups of exiles, as in the case of Rome. In Italy, the label *I Dischi Dello Zodiaco,* linked to *Vedette Records,* founded by the Musician Armando Sciascia in 1962, was a redoubt of Latin American artists, holding in its catalogue records by *nueva cancion* names, such as the Chileans from Inti-Illimani.

Although tragic the experience of exile allowed the insertion of Latin American artists in musical circuits all over the world. In the second half of the 1970s, the production of exiles managed to achieve high sales in European circuits, creating a broad interest in musical production in Latin America, but also calling attention to the region's political problems and opening space for denunciations of the atrocities committed by the dictatorships. While on the one hand, the military coups signified an abrupt closing of

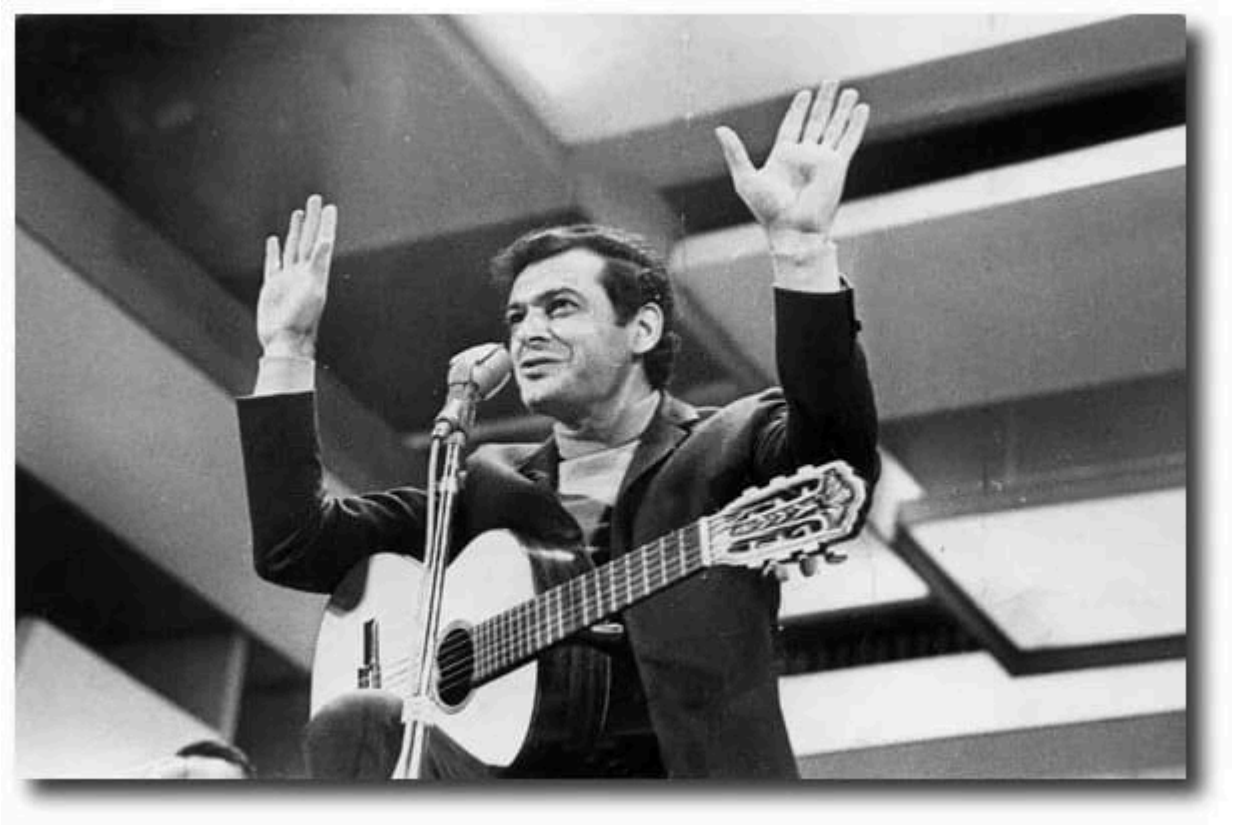
the channels of the circulation of *nueva canción* established in the 1960s, on the other, the fact that many had been obliged to go into exile meant that circulation circuits were re-dimensioned, allowing the movement to reach an unprecedented scale of repercussion.

Música popular brasileira (MPB) and its connections with *nueva canción*

At this moment of the redefinition of the circulation circuits of *nueva canción*, an important connection was established with the experience of engaged music which had developed in Brazil. The context of the establishment of authoritarian governments in various Latin American countries allowed an approximation with the Brazilian reality, under a dictatorship since 1964.

The first experiences of political engagement in the field of Brazilian popular music occurred in the first half of the 1960s, when proposals for structural reforms animated progressive sectors with the possibility of changes in the country. At this moment, artists linked to the *bossa nova movement*, which had emerged at the end of the 1950s, began to defend the need to review song themes, in order to connect them with the political scenario.

Composers such as Sérgio Ricardo (1932-) and Carlos Lyra (1939-), central figures in *bossa nova*, came to criticize the themes of the movement, which were excessively linked with middle class sectors from the South Zone of Rio de Janeiro, defending the need for new questions. Music had to be politicized, giving rise to what is called *bossa nova nacionalista*.



Sérgio Ricardo performing in *Festival de Música Popular Brasileira da TV Record*, in 1967

Source: Acervo



Cover of the album *Sérgio Ricardo*, released by Continental in 1973. In this record, Sérgio Ricardo established an intense dialogue with *nueva canción*, recording tracks such as "Canto americano," a song with lyrics in Spanish affirming a continental identity

Source: Discogs

VIDEO

View online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tr51CQXOURw

"Canto americano" from *Sérgio Ricardo*, 1973

Source: YouTube



Concert by Carlos Lyra, one of the precursors of the politicization of music in Brazil, in Parque Chapultepec, Mexico City, 1966

Source: Carlos Lyra

VIDEO

View online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kHqS5LzDGFc

Spanish version of Samba da Benção, sung by Carlos Lyra

Source: YouTube

This was the starting point for an engaged music movement which following the 1964 military coup assumed the front line in the resistance to the dictatorship. During the 1960s, various artists joined the movement, seeking to develop music which without giving up the aesthetic conquests of *bossa nova* had the objective of reconnecting with the popular through the incorporation of genres such as samba. The record industry, radio stations, and especially television channels had a crucial role in the strengthening of this movement. Song festivals which became one of the principal products of the Brazilian cultural industry, functioned as a platform for publicizing engaged music and were the stage of intense disputes between the different groups which were rivals from both the point of view of aesthetic projects and political projects.

This universe of engaged Brazilian popular music, which became institutionalized as *música popular brasileira (MPB)*, remained to a certain extent removed from the process of the formation of *nueva canción latino-americana*. Few effective dialogues were established between Brazilian engaged musicians and the important names of political music in neighboring countries until the middle of the 1970s. With the intensification of authoritarianism in the continent, the sharing of the experience of resistance to

violence and the repression of military governments drew Brazilian artists closer to their neighbors, initiating a series of connections. Artists central to *MPB*, such as Elis Regina (1945-1982), Milton Nascimento (1942-), and Chico Buarque (1944-), collaborated in a close manner with Argentine, Chilean, and Cuban artists during the decade and incorporated in their repertoires referential *nueva cancion songs*.



Images from the 1976 show *Falso Brilhante*, in which Elis Regina sang songs from the precursors of *nueva canción latino-americana* Atahualpa Yupanqui ("Los Hermanos") and Violeta Parra ("Gracias a la vida").

Source: Elis Regina



Falso Brilhante, 1976

Source: Elis Regina



Cover of the album *Falso Brilhante*, released by Philips in 1976, in which Elis Regina recorded "Los Hermanos" by the Argentine Atahualpa Yupanqui and "Gracias a la vida" by the Chilean Violeta Parra

Source: Elis Regina

VIDEO

View online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Gue812Dm4k

"Los Hermanos" from *Falso Brilhante*, 1976

Source: YouTube

VIDEO

View online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dSaWZwS_DgE

Elis Regina singing "Gracias a la vida" by the Chilean composer Violeta Parra, in the *Falso Brilhante* show in 1976

Source: YouTube



Cover of the album *Geraes*, released by EMI-Odeon in 1976, in which Milton Nascimento recorded "Volver a los 17" by the Chilean Violeta Parra, with the participation of the Argentine singer Mercedes Sosa

Source: Discogs

VIDEO

View online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cyr7SdyHxYE

Part of the song "Volver a los 17" from *Geraes*, 1976

Source: YouTube

VIDEO

View online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ADB1nhUJV_8

Mercedes Sosa and Milton Nascimento singing "Volver a Los 17" by Violeta Parra, on *Fantástico* television show in 1976

Source: YouTube



O Globo de Terça-feira 28/2/78

Chico Buarque depõe sobre Cuba

Chico Buarque de Holanda deixa a Secretaria de Segurança, onde ontem prestou depoimento (e também na Polícia Federal, num total de dez horas), após chegar de Cuba e Portugal. O escritor Antônio Callado, que também esteve em Cuba, passou 12 horas detido. Segundo ambos, o tema dos depoimentos foram os seus contatos em Cuba; além disso, foram apreendidos para exame 78 discos e 92 livros de Chico. (Página 12)

Report published in *O Globo* in 1978 which tells of the summons Chico Buarque received to make a statement to the police after returning from Cuba, where he was a member of the jury for a literary award and established contact with artists linked to *nueva trova*

Source: Jobim



Guilherme Araújo (alto à esquerda), Zezé Mota, J. Moraes, Regina, Simone, Gonzaguinha, Fredera, Paulinho Nogueira, Marieta Severo, Djavan, Walter Franco, Chico Buarque e Nelson Ayres no embarque para Cuba, 1979

Photo showing the Brazilian delegation including, amongst others Chico Buarque, which went to Cuba in 1979

Source: Blogdazeze



Cover of the album *Chico Buarque*, released in 1978, in which the Brazilian singer recorded "Pequeña seresta diurnal," by the Cuban *nueva trova* composer Silvio Rodriguez

Source: Qobuz

VIDEO

View online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1NJp92xBu0M

Part of the song "Pequeña seresta diurna" from the 1978 album *Chico Buarque*

Source: YouTube

VIDEO

View online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WZu1su-cCp4

> Silvio Rodríguez and Chico Buarque sing "Pequeña serenata diurna" in Cuba in 1983
>
> **Source:** YouTube

At the end of the 1970s and principally in the 1980s new questions emerged, provoking a radical revision of the aesthetic and ideological perspectives of *nueva cancion artists*. In this new reality of Latin America, marked by the political opening, the legacy left by the activism of *nueva canción* had to find its space with the disputes of memory which marked redemocratization, beginning a new moment of musical production in the continent.

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