Performing Chile by the Sea: The Politics of Music in the *Festival Internacional de la Canción de Viña del Mar*

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In 1960, the seaside city of Viña del Mar, Chile staged its first *Festival de la Canción* (Song Festival). The two-part event included musical performances and a competition to select the best new song by a Chilean composer. The following year, festival organizers repeated and expanded the event, adding a folk song competition. Radio Minería broadcast parts of the show to the metropolitan region surrounding Chile's capital, Santiago. During the festival's initial years, the main event was the song competition between composers, rather than the musical performances; two or three musicians performed all the competing songs for the judges.[1] However, in subsequent decades the musical performances would become the most important part of the festival proceedings, overtaking both song competitions. In 1963, the festival was transmitted on television for the first time; in later years, the televised broadcast would propel the event's growth. It was via television that Chileans across the country—and eventually an international audience spanning Latin America, Spain, and the Caribbean—experienced the festival.

Music in Chile, particularly folk music, is filled with political meanings. During the 1970s and 1980s, decades of rapid, transformative change carried out first by the Allende administration and then by the Pinochet dictatorship, Chilean music became ever more politicized and contested. The Allende government promoted *nueva canción chilena* (new Chilean song), a new folk music genre, as a symbol of the new kind of nationhood represented by the Unidad Popular. The Pinochet regime, in reaction, censored the media, exiled nueva canción groups, and murdered the famous singer and activist Víctor Jara. Each government considered music performance a political expression of national identity. The *Festival de la Canción* took place annually throughout both regimes. A public spectacle highlighting the politically charged art form of music, it offers a fascinating window into Chilean cul-

[1] Victor Hugo Moreno and Rodrigo Palma, "Historia de la Festival de Viña - 1960-1969: El Comienzo - 1960," Festival de Viña 2007, accessed January 10, 2024, https://www.emol.com/especiales/vina2007/historia/1960.htm.

ture during the Allende and Pinochet years. With their national and eventually international reach, the festival's televised broadcasts offer rich material for analysis. Few historians have studied the role of television in Chile before 1988, when TV played a key role in the national plebiscite. However, it was during the Pinochet regime, between 1973 and 1988, that the *Festival de la Canción* in its televised form became "iconic" in Chilean culture.[2]

Today, over nine thousand videos of televised festival performances dating from the 1970s to the present are accessible via the *Festival de la Canción's* YouTube channel. This vast audiovisual collection offers an exciting opportunity to explore how the festival gained its prominent role in Chilean culture. Drawing from this rich trove of videos, this study focuses on festival broadcasts from just two years, 1972 and 1982.[3] These were years of significant political change in Chile, spanning Salvador Allende's socialist government and Augusto Pinochet's dictatorial regime. This paper argues that music played a major role in the attempts of both the socialist Allende government and the Pinochet military dictatorship to define national culture from above. It examines the ways the *Festival de la Canción* sometimes reified and sometimes subverted older discourses of national culture. I contend that much of Pinochet's cultural policy took shape in reaction to cultural changes of the Allende years, and that the Song Festival reflected this reaction.

Examining the audiovisual records of the 1972 and 1982 festivals as spectacles of national identity, this paper explores the changing ways the Festival produced Chile and Chilean subjects and the ways its viewers—live audiences in the Quinta Vergara and home TV audiences—understood their Chilean identity through their participation in the festival. By analyzing festival videos both as documentation of the live show in Viña del Mar and as televised broadcasts seen by at-home audiences, I uncover multiple, layered receptions of this national spectacle.

[2] Daniel Party, "Beyond 'Protest Song': Popular Music in Pinochet's Chile (1973-1990)," in *Music and Dictatorship in Europe and Latin America*, ed. Roberto Illiano and Massimiliano Sala, (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), 681. I have only found one work on Chilean television between the period 1974-1987, focused on the Bío-Bío region.

[3] A nearly complete recording of the Televisión Nacional de Chile (TVN) broadcast of the 1972 festival show can be viewed on TVN's web site. Videos from several nights of the 1982 festival are available on YouTube.

I reveal how the festival—an annual event in Viña del Mar since 1960—served as a vehicle for shifting cultural discourses about the Chilean nation, continually adapting to changing political and economic discourses that surrounded it.[4] The nature of the festival as both continuous and constantly changing makes it a compelling focus for an exploration of Chilean cultural history.

I begin by analyzing televised broadcasts of the international show. With performances by Chilean and international artists before a live Chilean audience, the festival served as a spectacle of nationhood for Chilean viewers while presenting an internationalized, cosmopolitan version of Chile to an international audience. I then turn to the folk song competition. Folk music has long been a politically charged genre in Chile, and the history of the folk competition in the *Festival de la Canción* illustrates the political implications of folk music. I find clear connections between changes in folk music at the festival and the cultural policies of the Allende and Pinochet administrations. Indeed, the folk competition was omitted from the festival for the first eight years of the Pinochet regime, only returning in 1981. The contested existence of the folk song competition exemplifies the way folk music, as a form of popular culture, offered a site of struggle over the meaning of Chilean identity, or *chilenidad*.
Performing Chile in the International Show

In 1972, TVN broadcast the festival show, which typically included Chilean and international musicians and comedians. That year, festival directors decided that the show would comprise renditions of each of the twelve songs that had won the popular song competition since the festival's first year. By inviting the festival's past winners to perform, the show emphasized continuity with the past, reinforcing the festival's annual tradition. This decision also highlighted the national character of the festival. In its first years, the event was simply known as the *Festival de la Canción* de Viña del Mar, and only Chilean composers could submit their works to the song competition. Although early shows did include international performers, in its first years the festival was not an explicitly international event. However, in 1968, the organizers accepted international submissions to the popular song competition for the first time, and the event became known

[4] The festival has occurred annually since 1960 except for cancellations in 2021 and 2022 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

as the Festival Internacional de la Canción de Viña del Mar.[5]

The festival's shift to an "international" event complicated the meaning of the spectacle. As a national event, the festival promoted a vision of Chile as a national body or identity. Transmitted in 1972 on the state television channel, it featured primarily Chilean performers, and composers, and reached a Chilean audience. As an international festival, the event situated itself as part of a modern international community, featuring international performers and airing internationally. Indeed, the festival eventually garnered recognition as Latin America's most influential music festival, with a growing international audience and increasing visibility throughout the Spanish-speaking world.[6]

By 1972, non-Chilean composers had won the song contest twice, a Spanish composer in 1968 and a Yugoslavian in 1971.[7] However, the 1972 festival show emphasized the national aspect of the festival. Even though the competition now accepted international entries—a Dutch composer wrote the winning song in 1972—recalling all the previous winners meant recalling mostly Chileans. In the 1972 show, each previous awardee performed their winning song and received a new trophy in honor of their previous victory. Until 1968, the contest had only included Chilean submissions, so most of these winners were Chileans. Hence, the public spectacle of the festival show reiterated the past success of Chilean musicians. Now that some trophies were going to foreigners, perhaps a recognition of earlier Chilean victors seemed particularly important to the festival organizers. If "public spectacle is a locus and mechanism of communal identity through collective imaginings that constitute 'nation,'" then the representation of past winners who were almost all Chilean may have encouraged viewers to understand Chile as a culturally victorious nation.[8]

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[5] The folk competition, however, continued to accept only Chilean songs until the 1990s.

[6] Valeria Perasso, "Viña Del Mar, 'El Monstruo' Cumple 50," *BBC Mundo*, February 25, 2009, http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/spanish/misc/newsid_7911000/7911472.stm.

[7] In fact, the 1971 winner was afterward disqualified for having performed the song prior to the competition. Moreno and Palma, "Historia de la Festival de Viña."

[8] Diana Taylor, *Disappearing Acts: Spectacles of Gender and Nationalism in Argentina's "Dirty War"* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), ix.

The 1972 show was rarely overtly political or nationalistic, but at certain moments, performers and audience members took an active role in the nation-producing spectacle. Sometimes this meant defining Chilean identity in contrast to other nations. In 1972, one of the award presenters was Inés Sánchez de Revuelta, a Cuban journalist living in exile in Costa Rica. Although most of the festival did not refer to politics, Sánchez de Revuelta took the microphone to make a political statement, saying, "I would like to say about my land of Cuba what you say about Chile, that it is, and will be, free.".[9] Using the festival microphone to address the Chilean nation, Sánchez de Revuelta understood the Festival stage as a national stage. She defined Chile as a positive example of freedom, in contrast to the political oppression occurring in Cuba. Her statement shows that the festival, a national cultural event, could not be entirely separated from the political sphere. The irony that two years later Augusto Pinochet would attend the festival and many Chilean musicians themselves would be exiled only reaffirmed the event's political relevance. The festival stage was a national stage, and the festival audience was the nation at large.

The audience also participated in the festival as a representation of national identity. During pauses between song performances, spectators could be heard chanting in unison, "Chi chi chi, le le le, viva Chile!" (Long live Chile!).[10] Audience members who cheered for Chile at an "international" festival identified themselves as patriotic members and supporters of the Chilean nation. Viewers watching the festival at home on their televisions would have heard and recognized this chant. Even if they had never set foot in Viña del Mar, they could consider themselves part of the national culture by recognizing—and perhaps even participating in—this national chant.

In this way, the festival's at-home television viewers could understand themselves as culturally Chilean. By viewing this national spectacle, the television audience positioned itself as part of

[9] "Yo quisiera decir de mi tierra Cuba, lo que ustedes dicen de Chile, que es, y será libre." All translations are mine. "Festival Internacional de la Canción de Viña del Mar," broadcast by Televisión Nacional de Chile in February 1972. Televised performance, 92 minutes. Posted October 6, 2014. http://www.tvn.cl/especiales/nuestrahistoria/decada70/festival-internacional-de-la-cancion-de-vina-del-mar-1442443. 1:00:30.

[10] "Festival Internacional de la Canción," broadcast by Televisión Nacional de Chile, 16:23, 16:40.

a national culture. Viewers watched the song festival on Televisión Nacional de Chile, cheered on Chilean winners, and heard the live audience chant for Chile. These sights and sounds came together in the spectator's experience to produce a nation-building spectacle. The visual and auditory spectacle of the 1972 televised broadcast of the Festival Internacional de la Canción functioned as "[a hub] from which people imbibed their national positionality."[11]

Thus, the televised performance of the *Festival de la Canción* is rich with meaning on two levels. First, not only did visual and aural elements create meaning within the national cultural context, but the fact that the performances were televised added another dimension to the spectacle. Second, it also embodies the connection between cultural and economic history embodied by the rise of communications technology and mass media. A close analysis of the 1972 International Song Festival has shown how performers, presenters, and spectators understood the festival as a national spectacle. It was a space where Chilean audiences could affirm their chilenidad through nationalist chants in support of national musicians, while organizers and performers could position Chile as a model of both cultural and political success in an international context.

Ten years later, in 1982, the festival show looked very different. Over time, the role of the festival's song competition was declining, increasingly overtaken by the international show, the focus of the televised broadcast. A documentary produced for the festival's fiftieth anniversary argues that television was the most important motor of the festival's growth.[12] Certainly, the 1982 production appears much more consciously designed for television than its 1972 predecessor. To begin with, the announcer in 1982 addressed not only the audience present in the stadium but also the television audience, aware that the performance was being broadcast to the national audience. He explicitly connected these two audiences in an appeal to the nation, urging the live audience to cheer on the performers loudly so that "the whole country, through the screen of Televisión Nacional, knows

[11] Taylor, *Disappearing Acts,* 121.
[12] Miguel de los Santos San Martín, Miguel. *Festival de Viña - 50 Años de historia*. Directed by Fernando García Blottiere. Corporación de Radio y Televisión Española, 2010. Documentary, 51 min. Posted December 17, 2010. http://www.rtve.es/alacarta/videos/otros-documentales/festival-vina-50-anos-historia-17-12-10/967659/. 27:21.

you're here."[13] Shots of the audience appear in the broadcast several times, and it looks enormous; the 1972 broadcast did not even show the audience.[14] The television audience might feel connected to the in-person spectators by seeing them on screen and hearing them yell and cheer; at the same time, the live audience knew that the national television audience was watching and listening.

The show was also more technologically advanced by 1982, with light shows, smoke machines, and a large ornate set. The Quinta Vergara now had elaborate lighting displays, a multi-level stage, and walls decorated with flowers. The televised broadcast also now included a logo reading "XXIII Festival Internacional de Viña del Mar" and a jingle that sang "Viña es un festival, música junto al mar," ("Viña is a festival, music bythe sea")—elements that were absent in 1972.[15] More effort and investment had clearly been put into the televised broadcast of 1982.

These changes were connected to the broader rise of television as both a mass communication medium and a key outlet for artists in Chile during the Pinochet regime. In the Pinochet years, television became an increasingly important space for musicians to gain exposure as record labels and other media were censored.[16] If "[m]usic production illustrates [a] reciprocal relation between technology, especially the technology of the mass media, and popular culture," then this reciprocal relation exists not only in the production of musical records, but also in the production of musical performance like the festival show.[17] The importance of technology was rising in Latin America, and changes in the Viña del Mar Festival clearly illustrate technology's growing role. The festival producers hoped to show Chile to the world as an international, cultured, and technologically advanced nation. By the 1982 telecast, the stage had expanded, and the show itself had also become much more elaborate. Opening night began with a choreographed dance

[13] "Todo el país, a través de la pantalla de la Televisión Nacional, sepa la presencia de ustedes." San Martín, *Festival de Viña – 50 Años*, 4:56.
[14] Obertura, Festival de Viña 1982," Canal Histórico del Festival de Viña del Mar, YouTube video, 6:50, from a Televisión Nacional de Chile broadcast in February 1982. Posted July 31, 2014. https://www.youtube.com /watch?v=0ZLW9APUog4. 9:30.
[15] "Obertura, Festival de Viña 1982," Canal Histórico del Festival de Viña del Mar, YouTube video, 11:35, from a broadcast by Televisión Nacional de Chile in February 1982. Posted August 22, 2014. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kx7YczfSEjg. 0:29.
[16] Party, "Beyond 'Protest Song,'" 681.
[17] William Beezley and Linda Curcio-Nagy, *Latin American Popular Culture: An Introduction* (Wilmington, Delaware: SR Books, 2000), xv.



Figure 1: The 1972 set was simple with a one level stage and individual singers performing with a band. The festival orchestra was located in the pit. "Festival Internacional de la Canión de Viña del Mar," broadcast by Televisión Nacional de Chile in February, 1972, 11:38



Figure 2: The 1982 set included a stage with multiple levels, lights above and below, and a choreographed dance group. The festival orchestra sat on stage behind the performers. "Obertura, Festival de viña 1982," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-0ZLW9APUog4, 1:30.

sequence performed by a group of men and women dancers in coordinated turquoise spandex outfits, set to a song in English.[18] This performance contrasted markedly with the 1972 international show, which included only music, not dance, and took place on a small, simply decorated stage. Indeed, the 1982 opening dance production with its lights and costumes is certainly more interesting to watch as a viewer looking at the performance on a screen, than the performance from 1972 (figures 1 and 2).

The 1982 festival show emphasized international performers, such as Spain's Miguel Bose and England's The Police. However, it also included significant displays of national symbols. During the opening dance performance, a dancer emerged in the center of

[18] "Obertura, Festival de Viña 1982," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-0ZLW9APUog4.

the set, waving a Chilean flag, while the other dancers circled her (figure 3).[19] Seconds later, the audience could be heard chanting "Chi chi chi, le le le, viva Chile!"—as they did in 1972.[20] Although the show included more acts than in 1972, it also indluded blatantly nationalistic displays, an element absent from the earlier show.

In addition to its displays of technology and nationalism, the televised broadcast also revealed the economic ideology behind the festival. According to festival promoters, the event was initially conceived with an economic purpose. It intended to show off the beaches of the seaside resort town Viña del Mar, Chile's "garden city," to promote domestic tourism.[21] Yet the 1972 broadcast did not actively promote tourism; it simply aired the festival show to a TV audience. The 1982 broadcast, in contrast, included segments highlighting various tourist attractions in Viña del Mar. The broadcast opened with a voiceover announcing, "Viña del Mar, tourism capital of Chile."[22] In another segment, a shot of people exiting the municipal casino was accompanied by a voiceover describing the casino as the city's "principal center of nighttime attractions."[23] The televised representation of the festival showed Viña del Mar in particular, and Chile in general, as a cultured destination, with a music scene that attracted international artists, and as a cosmopolitan destination, where people could spend their leisure time (and money) in the casino and on the beaches. The appearance of famous international artists at the festival may have supported this nationalist vision: their presence revealed Chile as a nation connected to cosmopolitan international culture. As Ian Biddle and Vanessa Knights have argued, "foreign" and "national" music are not necessarily mutually exclusive in the production of a national identity.[24] Consumption of both can be equally meaningful in defining a nation that strives to be cosmopolitan and cultured in an era of globalism. Hence, the celebration of famous international musicians at a festival consciously

[19] "Obertura, Festival de Viña 1982,"
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ZLW9APUog4, 2:27.
[20] "Obertura, Festival de Viña 1982,"
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ZLW9APUog4, 3:04.
[21] San Martín, *Festival de Viña*, 0:42, 4:44
[22] "Viña del Mar, capital turística de Chile." "Obertura, Festival de Viña 1982," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kx7YCzfSEjg, 4:07.
[23] "Principal centro de atracción nocturna." "Festival de Viña 1982, Obertura Presentación Jurado Noche Inaugural," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=09iDmsqmTfQ, 0:08.

[24] Ian Biddle and Vanessa Knights, *Music, National Identity and the Politics of Location: Between the Global and the Local* (Abingdon, Oxon, GBR: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2007), 23.



Figure 3: Opening of International show, 1982. "Obertura, Festival de Vina 1982," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ZL-W9APUog4, 2:26

represented as Chilean defined Chile as central, not peripheral, to international musical culture.

The Pinochet government's cultural policy emphasized Chile's place in the international sphere, connected to Europe and North America. The government did not control the festival, and not every musical act was necessarily a political performance. However, the *Festival de la Canción* was a dominant, even "iconic" venue during the Pinochet dictatorship, and it embodied acceptable national culture under the Pinochet regime.[25]

In 1975, the Pinochet government released its "Política cultural del estado de Chile" (Cultural policy of the state of Chile), outlining the regime's cultural policy and its goals for Chilean culture. The document revealed a sense of cultural inferiority, stating that Chile was far from "the driving forces of cultural progress" and existed in a "tangential or marginal situation with respect to the global routes by which civilization travels."[26] Thus, it was necessary to open Chile to outside influences and to disseminate internationally an image of Chile as an advanced and cultured nation.[27] As an internationally televised event, the Viña del Mar festival did just that, representing Chile as modern and connected to Western culture. If "the basic goal is to project the cultural image of the country in the continent and the world," as affirmed in an *El Mercurio* article quoted in the cultural policy, then the Viña del Mar Festival, with its international renown, did so compellingly.[28]

[25] Party, "Beyond 'Protest Song,'" 681.

[26] "Los centros motores del progreso cultural;" "una situación tangencial o marginal respecto de las rutas mundiales por donde transita la civilización." Asesoría Cultural de Chile. "Política cultural del gobierno de Chile." (Santiago de Chile: Secretaría General de Gobierno, Junta de Gobierno: 1975), 13.

[27] Asesoría Cultural de Chile, "Política cultural del gobierno," 14.

[28] "La meta básica es proyectar la imagen cultural del país en el continente y en el mundo." Asesoría Cultural de Chile, "Política cultural del gobierno," 98.

Defining Chile through the Folk Song Contest

In February 1981, for the first time in eight years, the Viña del Mar International Song Festival once again included a *folclórica* competition to select the best new Chilean folk song. Although the folk competition began in 1961, the festival has omitted the event since 1974. The international competition did not include folk songs but focused on pop forms such as *balada*.[29] The decision to bring back the folk competition was a significant gesture, although it was neither simple nor straightforward. Folk music in Chile had a controversial and politicized history since at least the early twentieth century. To understand why the return of the *folclórica* competition was both meaningful and controversial, we must recall the contested history of folk music in Chile.

Folk music is a form of popular culture. William Beezley and Linda Curcio-Nagy define popular culture as "the set of images, practices, and interactions that distinguishes a community and often serves as a synonym for national identity." Though it exists in constant interchange with elite culture, popular culture is the culture of the everyday. National elites often appropriate and refashion forms of popular culture to create high culture.[30] In Chile and other Latin American countries, "national" music often took shape through this elite appropriation of popular culture. Lacking their original musical forms, Latin American bourgeoisie turned to folklore to create symbolic national music traditions.[31]

In Chile, this national music was known as *música típica.* Its consolidation began in the 1920s, aided by the radio; the new technology enabled the dissemination of music over the nation's large geographic area.[32] *Música típica* came from the country along the rural-to-urban migration patterns followed by both peasants and landowners. Urban elites in the central zone around Santiago, lacking their own autochthonous, class-based musical symbols of national identity, listened to and celebrated peasants' music as a

[29] For more on *balada,* see Daniel Party, "Beyond 'Protest Song.'"

[30] Beezley and Curcio-Nagy, *Latin American Popular Culture*, xi, xiii-xvi.

[31] Juan Pablo González, "'Inti-Illimani' and the Artistic Treatment of Folklore," Latin American Music Review / Revista de Música Latinoamericana 10, no. 2 (1989): 268; Beezley and Curcio-Nagy, *Latin American Popular Culture*, xvi-xvii, Juan Pablo González, "Vertientes de la música popular chilena," in Godoy, Alvaro, and Juan Pablo González, ed. *Música popular chilena: 20 años, 1970-1990* (Santiago de Chile: Departamento de Programas Culturales de la División de Cultura del Ministerio de Educación, 1995), 14.

[32] González, "Vertientes," 13.

symbol of national culture and identity. Because of this upper-class appropriation of rural music, the bands that played *música típica* in the city were at least as connected to wealthy bosses as much as to the workers, farm laborers, or *huasos* (gaucho-like figures from the central Chilean countryside) that their music purported to represent.[33]

Beginning in the 1960s, the association of *música típica* with the white upper class in Chile led some progressives to reject the music as a form of national culture.[34] During the 1960s and 1970s, a new form of folk music gained popularity throughout Chile, one that billed itself as a more authentic representation of the national character. Propelled by musician and ethnomusicologist Violeta Parra's 1960s work collecting folk songs from all the regions of Chile, this was nueva canción chilena, or new Chilean song. Musicians of nueva canción chilena hoped to recuperate elements of Chilean rural popular music that *música típica* ignored. Their compositions highlighted Andean and indigenous musical traditions, incorporating instruments such as flutes and *charangos*.[35]

Nueva canción became particularly important and politicized during the Allende years, 1971 to 1973. Víctor Jara, a famous singer, Communist party member, and vocal supporter of the Allende government, came to be seen as a symbol of Allende's Unidad Popular party.[36] Additionally, Allende declared the nueva canción groups Inti-Illimani and Quilapayún cultural ambassadors of his Chilean government. Nueva canción reclaimed Chilean folk music and rewrote it with a leftist political message. But because of its association with leftist politics, after the military coup of 1973, nueva canción and its artists became victims of the new regime's violence and oppression. In the first days of the coup, Víctor Jara was murdered in the national stadium; Inti-Illimani and Quilapayún, both abroad as cultural ambassadors when the coup occurred, were prohibited from re-entering the country.[37] Unsurprisingly, the folk competition was removed from the *Festival de la Canción* due to its strong connections to leftist politics, especially since Pinochet himself attended the 1974 festival.[38]

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[33] González, 18.
[34] González, 19.
[35] Osvaldo Rodríguez, "La nueva canción chilena," in Godoy and González, *Música popular chilena*, 80-81.
[36] Rodríguez, "La nueva canción chilena," 88.
[37] Party, "Beyond 'Protest Song,'" 675.
[38] Perasso, "Viña del Mar, 'El Monstruo' cumple 50."

The regime still needed forms of national culture and ways to express Chilean identity. Thus, after the initial repression of folk music, *música típica* began to resurge, revalorized as the authentic expression of chilenidad.[39] In 1979, the Pinochet government declared the *cueca*, a form of *música típica* and traditional dance, the national dance of Chile by law. The law stated that *cueca*, the music and the dance, was "the most genuine expression of the national soul" and "an expression of authentic unity."[40] Performing *cueca* was therefore a state-sanctioned act meant to express the Chilean nation's unity and soul, as understood by the Pinochet regime.

In this context of the revalorization of certain kinds of traditional music, the 1981 Festival Internacional de la Canción organizers decided to bring back a folk song competition. The return of the folk competition was an important moment in the song festival's history, because as an internationally televised event, the festival projected an image of Chile to thousands of viewers, domestic and international. Bringing back folk music represented some degree of vindication of the genre in the national field. However, as I will explain, only some folk music was allowed, so it was only a partial, conditional return—in name and appearance, but not in its entirety. The acceptance of certain forms of folk music, but not others, demonstrates how the Pinochet regime selectively co-opted national cultural forms to advance its political agenda while characterizing itself as all-inclusive and representative of the entire national body.

Unfortunately, video footage of the 1981 folclórica competition, the first since 1973, is currently inaccessible online. However, videos from 1982 are available, providing a fascinating insight into folk performances during the Pinochet regime. The 1982 folk competition began on the festival's second night. Like opening night, it began with a short dance performance. This time, the dancers performed *cueca*, Chile's official national dance. Men and women dancers entered the stage from both sides in couples, wearing traditional clothing and carrying handkerchiefs, a necessary prop for the dance. They performed a few moments of *cueca* before posing with a large pennant in the blue, white and red of

[39] González, "Vertientes," 19-20.

[40] "La más genuina expresión del alma nacional;" "una expresión de auténtica unidad." Ministerio Secretaría General de Gobierno, Decreto 23, "Declara la cueca danza nacional de Chile," September 18, 1979, http://www.leychile.cl/Navegar?idNorma=224886.

the Chilean flag (figure 4).[41] Their performance represented Chilean *cueca*, now an official symbol of national identity, to Chilean viewers and the worldwide TV audience.

The *cueca* performance and the song performances positioned *música típica* not just as representative of Chile, but as the *only* form of Chilean folk music. *Música típica* employed idyllic imagery of the countryside, not political slogans, or descriptions of the Andes, to represent the nation.[42] Two songs, "La Tejedora" and "El Trauco," celebrated the culture and countryside of Chiloé, a southern island with a distinct culture. In his "La Tejedora" performance after receiving the first-place prize, singer Pedro Messone incorporated *cueca* dancing.[43] Another song, "Te Quiero Conocer," incorporated musical elements of the *cueca* and described the geographic regions of Chile, dividing the country into north, center, and south.[44] The lyrics mentioned cultural figures that symbolized the regions: "in the center the *huaso*… in the south the *chilote*," thus employing politically acceptable cultural references to represent Chilean national identity.[45]

In addition to their musical style, some of the show's musicians wore clothing that represented a certain vision of traditional Chilean identity. Like the dancers with their symbolic *cueca* handkerchiefs, Pedro Messone and his backup band wore attire typical of the *huaso*, sporting short white jackets with matching pants and black fringed sashes at the waist.[46] This attire contrasts with both the typical garb of nueva canción chilena groups, who favored Andean-style ponchos, and the modern-day outfits worn

[41] "Santiago del Nuevo Extremo, El Trauco, Festival de Viña 1982, Competencia Folclórica," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UrPxVgwodhg, 0:16-0:46.
[42] Rodríguez, "La nueva canción chilena," 81-2.
[43] "Pedro Messone, La Tejedora, Festival de Viña 1982, Competencia Folclorica," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qK0bPC0Efks; "Santiago del Nuevo Extremo, El Trauco, Festival de Viña 1982, Competencia Folclórica," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UrPxVgwodhg, 13:43
[44] "Conjunto Quimapan, Te Quiero Conocer, Festival de Viña 1982, Competencia Folclórica," https: www.youtube.com/watch?v=W6yQTGPSC_k, 0:45
[45] "En el centro el huaso...en el sur el chilote." "Conjunto Quimapan, Te Quiero Conocer," 3:08.
[46] "Pedro Messone, La Tejedora, Competencia," 1:29.

by the international show's performers. It represented a politically acceptable, non-subversive ideal of Chilean folk culture, one that resonated with the dominant, Eurocentric narrative of Chilean history that the *huaso* and *cueca* embodied.



Figure 4: Opening of Folcorica competition, 1982. "Festival de Vina 1982, Obertura Presentacion Jural do Noche Inaugural," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=09iDmsqmTfQ, 0:49

A more complicated folclórica performance was Alejandra Alamos's rendition of "Hoy te llamo Violeta."[47] The song refers to Violeta Parra, a central figure in Chilean folk music and ethnomusicology.[48] Intriguingly, although Parra's work was foundational for nueva canción chilena—a genre still prohibited in Chile and excluded from the 1982 folk competition, the competition organizers accepted a song eulogizing her as a valid entry for international television performance.[49] Yet although the song refers to Parra, it is in no way nueva canción. The backup music is performed not even by a *cueca* band, but by the festival orchestra.

Perhaps the folk competition is as telling for what it omits as what it includes. It omits all trace of nueva canción chilena, the reference to Violeta Parra aside. It omits any mention of groups such as Inti-Illimani and Quilapayún, who were appointed cultural ambassadors of Chile by Salvador Allende, exiled by Pinochet in 1973, and only allowed to return in 1988. Though these groups maintained their popularity in Europe, the show that ostensibly showcased the nation's best folk music did not even mention them within Chile.[50] Because the festival's 1982 folk competition made no overtly political statement, one might easily infer that Chilean folk music had always been apolitical or had been depoliticized after a period of controversy. Considering the history of folk music in Chile, it would be too

[47] "Alejandra Alamos, Hoy te llamo Violeta, Festival de Viña 1982, Competencia Folclórica" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GOCxz8LL3No.
[48] "Alejandra Alamos, Hoy te llamo Violeta," 0:51
[49] González, "Vertientes de la música popular chilena," 22.
[50] Party, "Beyond 'Protest Song,'" 675.

simple to suppose that folclórica could be depoliticized at all.

The folk competition still carried a political message, albeit implicitly: the popular culture acceptable under the Pinochet regime emphasized traditional conceptions of chilenidad, centered around *huaso* and *cueca.* There was no space for forms of popular culture that challenged those narratives. In a country where folk singer Víctor Jara's politics became a death sentence, folk music could not be apolitical. By allowing folclórica back into the festival, the regime created an appearance of openness—allowing the return of a cultural form that had previously been suppressed—while it continued to suppress art that contradicted the dictatorship's homogenous narrative of national culture. Like the international show, the televised 1982 folk competition projected a particular image of national culture to the nation and the world. This image, however, had clear political implications. The folk competition defined Chilean folk music as traditional, non-controversial, and apolitical, even if this was never true.

Political repression also led to the policing of cultural expression. Only representations that show the nation in a positive light are allowed, despite the repression and brutality that might be occurring in the real world.[51] The 1982 folk competition represented Chilean popular culture in such a way. Folk music in Chile was by no means a safe or peaceful activity during the Pinochet regime. Yet the spectacle of the *cueca*-playing, *huaso*-imitating singers, dancers, and musicians of the 1982 folk competition did not mention this violent reality. Instead, it projected an image of victorious nationhood aligned with the regime's official narrative. When understood in the context of the repression of nueva canción chilena, therefore, the reappearance of folclórica at the *Festival de la Canción* takes on a very different meaning: though not explicitly controlled by the Pinochet regime, the festival was complicit in furthering the regime's cultural narrative at the expense of other, repressed forms of Chilean culture. One must analyze the folk competition not only in terms of visibility presented but also in terms of what it concealed. In the case of folclórica at the festival, nueva cancion chilena's absence revealed as much as *cuecas* presence.

The processes by which art forms like music become commodified and commercialized, embodied by such events as Viña del Mar's Festival Internacional de la Canción, are deeply imbri-

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[51] Taylor, *Disappearing Acts,* 102.

cated with the workings of power and politics.[52] In my analysis of historical performances from the festival, I have shown how the event served as a venue for the producing of politically charged narratives about Chile and its place in the international community. Examining two televised broadcasts of the festival, separated by ten years and drastically different political circumstances, this article has explored the way politics shaped the festival's televised spectacle. Further, it has revealed how these cultural spectacles in turn promoted certain narratives of nationhood, through both what they displayed and what they omitted. The televised performances of the international show and the folk competition strove to represent Chile as a technologically modern, culturally cosmopolitan, and historically grounded nation. Yet the changes between the 1972 and 1982 festivals illustrate how national ideals changed between the Allende years and the Pinochet dictatorship; promoting a narrative of national success and progress became increasingly important under Pinochet's regime of cultural and political repression.

Today, the Festival Internacional de la Canción de Viña del Mar is Latin America's largest and most revered musical event.[53] From its inception, the festival has been inextricably tied to political and economic narratives about Chilean statehood and Chilean identity. These narratives continue to inform the production and consumption of this globally recognized event more than six decades later. The festival's ever-increasing visibility in global popular culture, now facilitated by social media and the internet, shows that the Festival Internacional de la Canción de Viña del Mar continues to serve a decisive role in constructing cultural narratives about the Chilean state even now.

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[52] Marc Hertzman, *Making Samba: A New History of Race and Music in Brazil,* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 8.

[53] Leila Cobo, "Chile's Vina del Mar Fest To Offer Refunds" http://www.billboard.com/biz/articles/news/1210538/chiles-vina-del-mar-fest-to-offer-refunds; Perasso, "Vina del Mar, 'El Monstruo' cumple 50," http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/spanish/misc/newsid_7911000/7911472.stm.