

"Venceremos"

Víctor Jara and the New Chilean Song Movement

Gabriel San Román • Foreword by T.M. Scruggs

When the socialist politician Salvador Allende dramatically won Chile's presidential election in 1970, a powerful cultural movement accompanied him to power. Folk singers emerged at the forefront, proving that music could help forge the birth of a new society. As the CIA actively funded opposition media against Allende during his campaign, the New Chilean Song Movement rose to prominence, viscerally persuading voters with its music. Víctor Jara, a central protagonist at the time, became an icon in Chile, Latin America, and beyond for his revolutionary lyrics and life. Inti-Illimani, Quilapayún, and other musicians contributed by singing before audiences of workers outside factories or *campesinos* in Chile's rural countryside.

A short cultural history, "Venceremos" charts the development of the movement from the years before Allende's victorious campaign to the brutal U.S.-backed military coup on September 11, 1973, that overthrew his presidency and imposed the dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet. Featuring interviews from key figures and lyrical analysis, "Venceremos" gives insight into how the New Chilean Song Movement's revolutionary anthems came to be.

From the early folkloric documentation of Violeta Parra in Chile's countryside to "Venceremos," the triumphant anthem of Allende's Popular Unity Coalition, the music of Chile's Nueva Canción was shaped by the larger history occurring all around it. Within the songs, all the hopes, dreams and apprehensions of the nation were reflected. At the same time, as its influence grew, the cultural movement claimed its own principal space as catalyst of not only Chile's musical but its political future as well. So dangerous were its creations that the Pinochet dictatorship censored and attempted to destroy them. Most tragically, Víctor Jara's life was taken in the bloody repression that immediately followed the coup.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gabriel San Román is a multimedia journalist from Anaheim, California. He worked as co-producer on the daily drive time *Uprising* morning show on KPFK Pacifica Radio in Los Angeles from 2005–2011. In addition to radio, he began authoring articles for the *Orange County Weekly* in 2006 and has since become a contributing writer. San Román's interviews, reviews and writings have additionally been published in *Truthout*, *Z Magazine*, and *Common Dreams* as well as numerous other online and print media outlets.

ABOUT T.M. SCRUGGS

T.M. Scruggs has taught at the Universidad Centroamericana (Managua, Nicaragua); Florida International University (Miami); the Universidad de los Andes (Mérida, Venezuela); and in 1994–2009 was the sole ethnomusicologist at the University of Iowa. His research focuses on the use of music to construct social identity and effect change, primarily in the Americas.

ACCOLADES

"A well-written history and analysis that never forgets what the subject matter is: music for the ages."

—Gustavo Arellano, editor, *OC Weekly*, and syndicated columnist for *¡Ask a Mexican!*



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