



Programa Workshop

"Materialities, practices and industries in popular music"

Jueves 6 de Noviembre de 2025

Sala Postítulo

SAUMUS 3-5, El Bosque 1290, Viña del Mar

Horario	Ponencias
10:00 - 11:45	<i>A Playlist of International Protest Songs. Workers' Songbooks of the early 20th century in the Southern Cone.</i> Eileen Karmy <i>Mejor los Beatles, ¡vamos! Sound, Co-presence, and Epistolary Uses of the Cassette under Dictatorship.</i> Laura Jordán <i>Discourses and socio-political involvement of Chilean musicians in music press: the case of indie composers.</i> Arturo Figueroa-Bustos
11:45-12:00	Coffee break
12:00 - 13:30	<i>Gender Representation on Billboard's Hot Latin Songs Chart (1987-2024).</i> Daniel Party <i>Singing for the algorithm: A look at the platformization process of the Chilean music industry.</i> Macarena Lavín

A Playlist of International Protest Songs.

Workers' Songbooks of the early 20 th century in the Southern Cone

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This paper is part of a larger research project about popular songbooks as cultural artifacts that facilitate collective musical practice. One of the case studies is workers' songbooks of the early 20th century, which are defined as a particular type of popular songbook, in a pocket-sized format, that included song lyrics and were produced by workers' unions rather than commercial entrepreneurs. The materiality of workers' songbooks informs us about a type of workers' musical practice of the early 20th century: amateur, creative, and participatory (Turino 2008, DeNora 2000). Unlike popular songbooks that included folk and popular songs that widely circulated in South American cities (Cornejo 2023, Ledezma & Cornejo 2020), workers' songbooks included almost exclusively songs with revolutionary lyrics, which can be broadly considered as protest songs. What did they sing about? How were these songs sung at the time? How did workers learned them? Where were they from? Analysing the repertoire included in workers' songbooks allows us to unveil the playlist (or canon?) of protest songs of the early 20th century, to shed light on the key role that contrafacta had in workers' musical practice, and to understand how songbooks helped in the transnational circulation of protest songs.

Mejor los Beatles, ¡vamos! Sound, Co-presence, and Epistolary Uses of the Cassette under Dictatorship

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In this paper, we wish to bring together two realities which, although generally studied separately, interacted intensely in the context of the Chilean dictatorship (1973-1990): cassette cultures and the culture of exile. Although distinct, these two cultures share certain features that we wish to highlight. On the one hand, the cassette is distinguished by particular characteristics which, incidentally, differentiate it from the record: the ductility of its medium (which allows the content to be organized at will and the tape to be re-recorded), its portability (which favors its capacity for circulation) and its accessibility (being a relatively inexpensive object). All these qualities have facilitated diversified modes of use, emphasizing the user's personal intervention and collective participation in its production and listening. On the other hand, the cultures of exile are marked by fundamental experiences such as local or transnational mobility, the preservation of cultural identity and a fragmented temporality of life, requiring the reorganization of personal meanings of the past and recent memory. As we intend to demonstrate, these two dimensions are visible and, moreover, constitute the main feature of personal and collective cassette use during the 1970s and 1980s.

How do cassette cultures intertwine with the culture of exile? To answer this question, we focus on a historical and musicological approach to one cassette belonging to the Quilapayún ensemble's musical archive.

In 1981, a poet who called himself Jonás sent a recorded cassette to Eduardo Carrasco (artistic director of Quilapayún), connecting El Tabo to Paris. On it, his voice alternates with radio news fragments and excerpts of songs. The analysis of this recording sheds light on the uses of the cassette as sound letter and mixtape, revealing the creative practices surrounding the medium, the interactive quality between its users, and its particular role in the context of dictatorship and political exile.

Discourses and socio-political involvement of Chilean musicians in music press: the case of indie composers

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Music journalism has needed to become a legitimate topic (Inglis, 2010) to gain readers, resources, and greater social validation. In doing so, it has imbued popular music with ideological significance (Shuker, 2017, p. 224). This, in turn, has necessitated musicians speaking on topics beyond the musical; by being interviewed, musicians have participated in the social and political conversation of their time. In Chile, this media construction of local musicians as commentators on social and political contingencies has intensified in recent years, as the post-dictatorship transition has receded. Indie musicians are emerging in Chile within this context, with the 21st century.

A textual analysis of a sample of 121 interviews with 19 independent musicians from 2005 to 2018 shows that they have been forced to navigate between their own interests, the demands of their audiences—who have recently had more direct access to them through digital platforms—and the media outlets that cover them, in a context that has become significantly politicized. They are alert to the risk of their creations becoming clichés or pure criticism, neglecting the artistic aspect. They champion a more personal, unconfined expression. In this sense, addressing social issues from an emotional perspective would fulfill an appropriate political function for them.

This analysis is the first step in a larger project (Fondecyt de Iniciación), which aims to explore the mediated public positioning of Chilean musicians on the various contingencies and social situations of their respective eras, based on interviews given to high-circulation specialized magazines during the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s.

Gender Representation on Billboard's Hot Latin Songs Chart (1987-2024)

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In the mid 2010s, Billboard magazine noted a striking gender gap in its Latin charts: “Latin music has long been dominated by male artists, and, oddly, during the past few years their sway has increased” (Cobo 2015). The data was, indeed, striking. For almost half of 2015, no song with a woman as main artist appeared on Billboard’s Hot Latin Songs chart, and no such song reached the #1 position of that chart in 2013, 2014, 2015. Inspired by this news, we set out to study longer-term trends in gender gaps on Billboard’s Hot Latin Songs Chart. This chart was established in 1986, and it initially relied on airplay from Spanish-language radio stations in the United States. Since 2012, its methodology has expanded to include digital sales, radio airplay, and online streaming. We constructed a dataset of all songs that charted between 1986 and 2024, adding demographic and musical data (92448 observations in total). This dataset enabled us to explore several key questions regarding gender gaps in the chart: Were the mid-2010s an anomaly? Was this drought related to the rise of urban music genres, such as reggaetón? Was it related to the newfound relevance of streaming? And how do gender gaps in Latin music compare to gaps identified in previous research on other music styles, such as pop, country and R&B?

Singing for the algorithm: A look at the platformization process of the Chilean music industry

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In this study, we analyze the platformization process in the Chilean music industry from the perspective of musicians and intermediaries. Through a mixed-methods research design—including surveys and interviews with musicians and executives from record labels and digital distribution companies (content aggregators)—we explore the centrality that digital platforms have acquired in the production, distribution, and monetization of their creations, using the case of Spotify, the most widely used platform by musicians, labels, and audiences nationally and globally (Statista, 2021; 2024).

The research question that guided this study is: How has the "platformization" process occurred in the Chilean music industry? If this process is not necessarily uniform across cultures and markets, how has it been experienced by the actors that make up the music industry, specifically artists, labels, and intermediaries such as distributors and content aggregators in Chile? In this research, we focus on three aspects: 1) production dynamics, or how musicians' creative activities have been affected in the current digital ecosystem, as well as the development of resistance strategies to the current conditions of music production offered by digital platforms; 2) distribution and marketing dynamics, or how the roles and commercial relationships between musicians, labels, and intermediaries have been redefined; and 3) monetization dynamics, or the processes, practices, and strategies through which musicians, labels, and intermediaries manage to generate income from their activities.

*Team

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