

# **Sunday Bloody Sunday: the Intersection of Music and Social Justice**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis explores the question: can music create social justice change? This question is important because if music has power to institute change through community-building and the residual impact of empathy, then music, along with the arts, can work towards peace-building and social justice changes in a world where police brutality, discrimination and other human rights violations are raging. Research on Irish history, as well as analysis of Irish protest and rebel songs have supplanted the planned interviews of Irish and American musicians and activists; interviews that were upended by COVID-19 imposed limitations. My analysis shows the importance of Irish history and music to American musical styles and how both helped created protest and rebel songs that raised funds for human rights causes and joined people together in community to work towards change.

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*“Music was my refuge. I could crawl into the space between the notes and curl my back to loneliness”- Maya Angelou.*

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## INTRODUCTION

American musician and activist Harry Belafonte said: “*Wherever I go in the world and I look for forces that are struggling against injustice, I always seem to find somebody with a guitar and a voice and they’re always singing to something that inspires the community; no matter how ravaged that community may be.*”<sup>1</sup>

Irish music can easily be considered the original protest and rebel music due to the trials and hardships of which the Irish endured over centuries of colonization, war, famine, and religious and political strife. Understanding Irish history is vital to the appreciation of how authentic Irish sounds crossed the globe with those forced from home, blending with music of other immigrant communities into America’s melting pot, creating community for the displaced and misplaced. Irish music became an important base for American protest movements, from the Dust Bowl to the Civil Rights movements of the 1960s.

Acting on the internationally protected human right to freedom of expression, musical storytelling holds the power to express the plight of those who have had their human rights infringed upon and is vital to the preservation of cultural heritage and memorialization of history. Musical artists have used their platforms to campaign for social change, bringing critical issues to light, raising millions in funding for issues such as the famine in Ethiopia, supporting political parties and civil rights campaigns and evoking emotion from listeners across the globe. Music expresses hope, sadness, loss and patriotism, resting in the grip of reality and escapism.

As such, music easily crosses borders, uniting people in community through empathy and emotion, through the bonds created it can intrinsically link people together to move towards a common goal of social change. Music gives those who are repressed and silenced by

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<sup>1</sup> Crosby, David and David Bender, “*Stand and Be Counted, Making Music, Making History*”, the Dramatic Story of the Artists and Events that Changed America, Harper San Francisco, 2000 (p.1).

human rights violations a voice with which to be heard by nations who have suppressed them, to demand change. Music can act as an educator, the creation and performance of which can encourage peace-building and community. From Ireland to America, in protest or memorial, music at its core is the great equalizer of people.

## CHAPTER 1: THE COMPLICATED HISTORY OF THE EMERALD ISLE

To understand the importance of music to the Irish and its contribution to social justice movements requires an appreciation of the calamities that befell the country returning to time immemorial. These periods of strife resulted in human rights violations and contributed to the creation of music to memorialize events and to both subversively and boldly protest grievous wrongdoings imposed upon them. Poet Thomas Davis said, “*Music is the first faculty of the Irish, and scarcely anything has such power for good over them*”<sup>2</sup>. Music has been a source of release and community building for the Irish people, helping to preserve history, instill pride, console and revive the nation through its periods of chaos and calm.

Analysis of Irish music and the Irish diaspora<sup>3</sup> help show how the music set the tone for the country-western, bluegrass and punk rock music that became a large part of the base of political music of America’s youth, from the dust bowl days to the political unrest of the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights Movement. By explaining the history of Ireland, it is clear how integral music is to connecting and building communities and impacting change, from tiny pubs of a once unified Ireland, to the turmoil of a 1990s Belfast bar. An understanding is gained regarding how music evokes empathy, impacts performance and brings people from all walks of life together, ultimately influencing change, as it unifies and evokes emotion. Songs and campaigns are explored to find meaning, sometimes subversive, depending on the political climate, and oftentimes candid. Together these examples will show how important music is to the big picture of social justice, as it walks hand in hand with change.

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<sup>2</sup> McGarry, Rev. J. G., D.D., *Nationality and Music*, from Irish Man, Irish Nation, Lectures on Some Aspects of Irish Nationality Delivered Before the Columban League, Maynooth, 1946. MercierPress, p. 46.

<sup>3</sup> Plans for interviews of Irish musicians and social justice advocates were unable to be completed due to COVID-19 restrictions.

## 1.1 Colonization and dissention

In the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century England and Anglo-Normans invaded and colonized Ireland, claiming sovereignty, assuming land rights, effectively taking the land from the Irish and displacing much of the population<sup>4</sup>. In 1348 the Black Death overtook Ireland, killing scores of English and Anglo-Normans, while the 1357 wave resulted in deaths of Irish who had survived the initial outbreak<sup>5</sup>. Struggles intensified due to constant power shifts, struggle with newly imposed English laws, language and customs, and constant battles to maintain, or gain, control over the country<sup>6</sup>.

In 1534 Saint Patrick founded the Protestant Church of Ireland<sup>7</sup>, which was deemed the ‘church of the state’ after separation from the Roman Catholic Church; thereafter the English attempted to convert the primarily Catholic country<sup>8</sup> through harsh methods of force that saw a rise in both political and religious sectarianism. In the late 1600s the English renewed colonization of Ireland and conflicts raged, including the Nine Year’s War, resulting again in English rule. Death ravaged the country due to injuries sustained in wars and skirmishes, disease, famine and ‘death by dissention’<sup>9</sup>.

## 1.2 The Rise of Religious Sectarianism and the Great Famine

The 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries saw English confiscation of land and denial of rights to those remaining part of the Catholic Church. In 1798 the Irish Rebellion<sup>10</sup> began from the desire to create a free Ireland, a fight against English rule, limits on Catholic Church members and the imposition of the English language on the Gaelic speaking Irish. Though the rebellion

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<sup>4</sup> Neufeld, Timothy D., “*U2: Rock N Roll to Change the World*”, Rowman and Littlefield, 2017, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Kelly, M., “*Unheard-of-Mortality...The Black Death in Ireland*”, Features, Issue 4 (Winter 2001), Medieval History (pre-1500), Volume 9, accessed at: <https://www.historyireland.com/medieval-history-pre-1500/unheard-of-mortality-the-black-death-in-ireland/>.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, Neufeld, p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> “*Church of Ireland: History & Concept.*” *Study.com*, (2015), [study.com/academy/lesson/church-of-ireland-history-lesson-quiz.html](https://study.com/academy/lesson/church-of-ireland-history-lesson-quiz.html).

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.* Church of Ireland.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.* Neufeld, p. 3.

<sup>10</sup> Bartlett, Professor Thomas, “*The 1798 Irish Rebellion*” (2011), published in History of British Empire, accessed at: [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/empire\\_seapower/irish\\_reb\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/empire_seapower/irish_reb_01.shtml).



was lost, the Irish united in community and song, maintaining a sense of pride and culture, through protest. Ultimately the English and Irish parliaments agreed to include political members from both sides<sup>11</sup>, and in 1801 the UK of Great Britain and Ireland merged as a sovereign state until the year 1922<sup>12</sup>. During this period there were four unsuccessful rebellion attempts to end the rule of the English, to include 1916's Easter Rising, and ultimately, in 1922, 5/6 of Ireland won succession<sup>13</sup>.

Simultaneously, the Great Famine, from 1845 to 1851, occurred as result of fungus that killed most of the potato crops the island relied substantially on<sup>14</sup>. The poorest Irish farmers sustained greatest loss due to their reliance on the crops for income, as well as the nutrients needed for survival. The basic human rights to food and water were continually infringed upon during this period in which starvation was common; even worse, crops uninfected by the blight were sent overseas and the British monarch did little to help those affected. Due to colonialism, the Irish had far less land than the English settlers and this division resulted in a disproportionate number of Irish citizens dying from starvation.<sup>15</sup> Over one million people perished and another million left Ireland due to years of political unrest, poverty and loss, hoping to earn enough money to send home to their families in Ireland<sup>16</sup>.

Throughout the famine many rural Irish musicians were dying from starvation and disease that ultimately threatened the end of traditional Irish music. Traditionally, music was transmitted from one generation to another orally; historically there was little transcription of songs<sup>17</sup>. Irish migrant laborers began to pass the music orally to others at work, in fields and factories, on battlefields and in bars, both in Ireland and the United States; thus preserving the

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<sup>11</sup> *ibid.* Neufeld, p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> McConnel, Dr. James, "Irish Home Rule: an Imagined Future", (2011), accessed at: [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/victorians/home\\_rule\\_movement\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/victorians/home_rule_movement_01.shtml).

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, Dr. McConnel.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, Neufeld, p. 3.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, Neufeld, p. 3.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, Neufeld, p. 4.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, Neufeld, p. 4.

musical traditions that otherwise may have been lost forever<sup>18</sup>. After the famine ended, the majority language in Ireland was English thereby contributing to the ways future music was written, sung, and passed forward. It also resulted in a combination of the two languages and the English language adapting some Gaelic phrases now found in Ireland and Irish traditional music. Clearly, Irish music has played an integral role in Irish nationality and identity, from the nostalgic to the romanticized, the battlefields to the home-front.

### 1.3 Home Rule and the Troubles

Between 1870 and 1900 the Irish continually sought self-rule, desiring autonomy and a free Ireland when *Home Rule Bill* legislation was attempted<sup>19</sup>; though it was technically authorized, with limitations in 1914, enactment was postponed due to the outbreak of war<sup>20</sup>. In 1916 the Easter Rising began in dissent to British rule and from 1919 to 1921 guerilla wars were fought between British forces and those in opposition<sup>21</sup>. In 1921 a cease-fire was issued and in 1922 Ireland was partitioned, Northern Ireland remaining part of the U.K., while the southern counties became the Republic of Ireland, thusly changing Ireland as a country, entirely.<sup>22</sup>

Music remained a large part of the Irish nation during this period, both in confronting loss and expressing grief, and also expressing protest. In 1917 an Irishman, John McNally, was charged for climbing on stage after a performance and singing “*Easter Week*”, a song that celebrated the circumstances of 1916’s Easter Rising<sup>23</sup>.

*“An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth; let this be our battle cry.  
Revenge for the men who died in Dublin; they murdered them in Kilmainham.”*<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, Neufeld, p. 4.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.* McConnel.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, McConnel.

<sup>21</sup> History.com editors, *Irish Free State Declared*, A&E Television Networks, February 9, 2010, accessed at: <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/irish-free-state-declared>.

<sup>22</sup> *Government of Ireland Act 1914*, U.K. Parliament, accessed at: <https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/evolutionofparliament/legislativescrutiny/parliamentandireland/collections/home-rule-1914/gov-of-ireland-act-1914/>.

<sup>23</sup> “*Mayo Man Arrested for Singing Rebel Songs*”, Century Ireland (1917), accessed at: <https://www.rte.ie/centuryireland/index.php/articles/mayo-man-arrested-for-singing-rebel-songs>

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, Century Ireland.

McNally was charged under the Crown's *Defence of the Realm Act*, which criminalized singing songs that may "*cause disaffection with the King and his subjects*"<sup>25</sup>, certainly violating his freedom of expression in a time when all actions were seen as either for, or against, the Monarchy.

Religious strife persisted even after division of the countries, battles raging between the primarily Protestant North and the majority of the country that was Catholic<sup>26</sup>, essentially becoming a battle of the Pope versus the King of England, the North versus the Republic. Throughout this period Catholics in the North faced discrimination based on their religious views and rejection of British rule in a period known as the *Troubles*<sup>27</sup>. In the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century friction between Protestants and Catholics, especially in the North, became visible with the creation of terrorist organizations, in-fighting, paramilitary operations and conflict resulting in a civil war wherein the streets of Belfast and other Northern Ireland cities were fraught with tension and fear<sup>28</sup>.

The Irish Republican Army (IRA) was created with the desire for an autonomous, and reunified, Ireland in the early part of the century. The Unionists, on the other hand, were supportive of the Protestant Church, and Union Jack, who dominated the North. The Unionists preferred the separation and did not want English rule to change as that would effect and potentially limit their rights, as these were the citizens who most benefited, by way of land ownership, financial earnings, and safety.<sup>29</sup>

The period of the Troubles, also referred to as a 'low-level' war, wrecked havoc upon the island for 30 years. Ultimately, the Good Friday Agreement, a peace agreement, was signed in 1998. However, even today Belfast and Northern Ireland cities show the remnants of the

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<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*, Century Ireland.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*, History.com editors.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*, Neufeld, p. 5.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, Neufeld.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, Neufeld.

recent past, with barbed wire and fences blocking Protestant neighborhoods from Catholic. People still predominantly work in the part of the city that they identify with through their religion, and tension is notable.<sup>30</sup> Accordingly, this period brought pain and trauma to the island and resulted in the rise of punk rock underground performances of protest (bands include Stiff Little Fingers, Thin Lizzy and The Undertones), the use of centuries old parade march cadences in parades to indicate loyalty to your side, and songs of dissonance sung quietly in pubs to show solidarity or rebellion throughout the Republic.

A strong example of the value of protest and rebel songs is that they have long been banned throughout the Republic and Northern Ireland: at sporting events, concerts, parades and pubs. In 2014, the Football Association of Ireland's chief, John Delaney, was required to issue a public apology for singing "*The Ballad of Joe McDonnell*", a song about a Provisional IRA member who died during his hunger strike in 1981, at a Dublin pub<sup>31</sup>; to the immediate banning from broadcast within the U.K., by the BBC, of Paul McCartney and Wings' "*Give Ireland Back to the Irish*", due to its inflammatory nature regarding the massacre known as 1972's Bloody Sunday:

*"Tell me how would you like it  
If on your way to work  
You were stopped by Irish soldiers  
Would you lie down do nothing  
Would you give in or go berserk"*<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Notably, in March 2021, loyalist paramilitary groups via the Loyalist Communities Council, wrote a letter threatening of the "permanent destruction" of the peace agreement unless changes were made in light of the post-Brexit deal regarding arrangements for Northern Ireland. More information accessible at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-56276653>

<sup>31</sup> "*FAI Chief John Delaney sorry for nationalist song*", ESPN (2014), accessed at: <https://www.espn.com/soccer/league-name/story/2162639/headline>.

<sup>32</sup> McCartney, Sir Paul and Wings, "*Give Ireland Back to the Irish*", the Paul McCartney Project, accessed at: <https://www.the-paulmccartney-project.com/song/give-ireland-back-to-the-irish/>.

## CHAPTER TWO: HISTORICAL MUSICAL STORYTELLING

Music, to include chanting, was a method of praise within churches and religious ceremonies and rituals and moved into public forays through classical music, as an accompaniment to dance and work, for entertainment of crowds, and to provide a historical account through today's popular music<sup>33</sup>. The resulting musical stories united people through remembrance and honoring of the past to create a new future. Even at its earliest conception music was likely the foundation for community and peace building and perhaps unwittingly, the cultural preservation of a rich Irish history based both on oral and written songs, melodies and tunes.

### 2.1 The Origination of Music

From the earliest days of Irish and global history, debate surrounds the origination of music, though the general presumption is that music was created to bring people together in communities, to provide a method of storytelling to be passed among generations. The earliest of music, predating language, was likely in the form of motor impulses to include rhythmic clapping and body slapping, as well as humming<sup>34</sup>. Early historical findings show the development of primitive instruments created based on *“four factors: available material, technological skills, mythic and symbolic preoccupations, and patterns of trade and migration”*, the tools and resources available to a society were dependent upon their location in the world and the people society was comprised of.<sup>35</sup> Primitive instruments were created from animal bones, wood and stones; instruments evolved, language converged with the instruments and what is considered modern day ‘song’ emerged.

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<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*, Westrop.

<sup>34</sup> Montague, Jeremy, *“How Music and Instruments Began: A Brief Overview of the Origin and Entire Development of Music, from its Earliest Stages”*, University of Oxford, *Frontiers in Sociology*, accessed at: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fsoc.2017.00008/full>.

<sup>35</sup> Westrop, Jack Allen, *“Musical Instrument”*, University of Oxford, July 26, 1999, accessed at: <https://www.britannica.com/art/musical-instrument>.

## 2.2 Irish Styles of Music

As aforementioned, cultures utilize music to chronicle and preserve history from one generation to the next. With a lengthy history of political and cultural dissension, it is no wonder the Irish are incredibly passionate about storytelling, conversation, the written word, and the *craic*<sup>36</sup>. Irish music is distinguished from other styles of music by the fact that it was, and is, often transmitted orally, rather than by the written word; therefore both learned and transferred through generations by mouth and ear<sup>37</sup>. This method of communal musical transmission and double entendre allowed politically motivated protest and rebel music to be modified to protect the performer from backlash, while also still telling the story and demanding for change. It also assimilated with other forms of music, reinventing itself with the times<sup>38</sup>.

Irish music includes several defining styles including traditional songs called *Sean-nós*, which translates from Gaelic to ‘old-style’ in English<sup>39</sup>. These traditional Gaelic songs are sung unaccompanied by a melodic voice<sup>40</sup>, often haunting and sad. This style of Irish music has been handed down through generations as a way of storytelling and is considered “*the most ‘Irish’ of Irish musical forms*”<sup>41</sup>. Another original style of Irish music is that of the form of ‘harping’, which involves playing of the Celtic harp, a common and recognizable cultural symbol of the Irish<sup>42</sup>, also used as an act of rebellion against English rule as the harp’s use was synonymous with all things Irish, and therefore banned. The color green and shamrocks were also banned as being indicative of all things Irish during a period when simply being Irish was absolutely

<sup>36</sup> The term *craic* refers to fun and enjoyable entertainment or conversation.

<sup>37</sup> O’Connor, Nuala, “*Bringing it all Back Home*”, the Influence of Irish Music (ADD), p. 16.

<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*, O’Connor, p. 59.

<sup>39</sup> “*Irish American Song*”, the Library of Congress Celebrates the Songs of America, Performing Arts Encyclopedia, accessed at: <https://www.loc.gov/item/ihas.200197397/>,

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*, *Irish American Song*.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*, O’Connor, p. 16.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*, O’Connor, p. 9.

prohibited. The song “*The Wearing of the Green*” which tells of the clear and continuous violations upon the Irish’ human rights, as result of the Irish Rebellion of 1798:

*“I met with Napper Tandy and he took me by the hand  
He said: "How's dear old Ireland and how does she stand?  
She's the most distressful country that you have ever seen  
For they're hangin' men and women for the wearin' of the green”<sup>43</sup>.*

Rather than convincing Irish listeners, or readers, to stop wearing green per the English law, however, songs like this helped spread the word to rebel, in spite of the consequences at risk. In this instance, it was both commentary on the human rights violations being instituted by the government, as well as building a community of subversive rebellion.

### 2.3 Musical Instruments

Instruments were vital to the Irish sound, as they precluded, in many cases, the lyrics that later became so meaningful to particular causes and became instrumental to Irish and American protest and rebel songs. William H. Grattan Flood’s recognized ten or more core instruments used as a part of traditional Irish music, to include a selection of harps; the fife/flute or *feadan*; the oboe or flute; the *cuislenna* or bagpipes; and the *fidil*<sup>44</sup>. The combination of these instruments paired with vocals became the basis of Irish music and later played a large role in what came to be known as American bluegrass, country, rock, folk, and punk music, which is also some of the most politically driven music.

As previously highlighted, the harp is vital to both the Irish identity and politics, easily identifiable as authentically Irish. Around the world, the harp is recognized as a symbol of the Republic of Ireland as the harp is easily recognizable on business logos such as Guinness and Ryan Air and is even visible on the Irish passport. Harpists were included in the Irish court system in the 10<sup>th</sup> century; however, use of the harp was banned during British rule, as the harp

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<sup>43</sup> Boucicault, Dion, “*The Wearing of the Green*”, accessed at: <https://www.bellsirishlyrics.com/wearing-of-the-green.html>.

<sup>44</sup> Flood, William H. Grattan, “*A History of Irish Music*”, Chapter III, accessed at: <https://www.libraryireland.com/IrishMusic/III.php>.

was seen as a symbol of resistance<sup>45</sup>. In 2019 the Irish harp, and Irish harping, were placed on the UNESCO list of culturally significant items due to its value to the Irish over 1,000 years<sup>46</sup>.

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<sup>45</sup> Vardy, Alison, “*Harp History*”, <https://www.alisonvardy.com/harp-history.html>.

<sup>46</sup> “*Irish Harping*”, accessed at: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/irish-harping-01461>.



## CHAPTER THREE: REBEL AND PROTEST MUSIC

Irish music is performed solo and unaccompanied (*Sean-nós*<sup>47</sup>) or by several musicians and singers. *Irish trad sessions*<sup>48</sup> tell a story and encourage a communal atmosphere in cities and villages such as Galway, Dublin, and Doolin. They are a method of entrusting songs, lyrics and music to others, preserving history and tradition through congenial drinking songs to anti-war anthems. Though much of this music is nostalgic, many of the traditional songs hold political and rebellious meanings beneath tunes and lyrics that have been safeguarded for centuries.

### 3.1 The Róisín Dubh

One such pub, the Róisín Dubh Pub, borrows its moniker from an Irish political song that originated during the Nine Years War, the literal translation of which can be attributed to a variation of ‘Dark Rosaleen’, ‘Dark Little Rose’, or ‘Black Rose’, and is presumed written by the men of Red Hue O’Donnell Camps<sup>49</sup>. Both Gaelic and English lyrical translations leave room for speculation, from the allegorical to the political. A literal translation suggests the song is a romantic sentiment from a man to his beloved, but as translated by Padraig Pearse (one of the leaders of the Easter Rising in 1916) the lyrics suggest that Roisin is indeed Ireland and that she shall stand tall and rise above any tribulations that beset her; likely regarding Norman and English invasions<sup>50</sup>. This holds importance to speculation that ‘the black rose’ may have been a code name for Ireland when English rule prohibited referring to the country as such (and those doing so risked death). Many songs of the period referred to Ireland by code names, which could be used to quietly plot and plan rebellions, particularly against British rule during

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<sup>47</sup> “*Irish American Song*”, the Library of Congress Celebrates the Songs of America, Performing Arts Encyclopedia, accessed at: <https://www.loc.gov/item/ihas.200197397/>.

<sup>48</sup> McNeela Instruments, “*The Irish Trad Session Explained*” (2019), accessed at: <https://blog.mcneelamusic.com/2019/11/11/the-irish-trad-session-explained/>.

<sup>49</sup> Marshall, John Johnson, “*Popular Rhymes and Sayings of Ireland*”, Chapter II (1924), accessed at: <https://www.libraryireland.com/social-history/popular-rhymes/index.php>.

<sup>50</sup> *ibid.*, J. Marshall.

the centuries of colonization, civil unrest and religious persecution. The lyrics coincide with this assumption, as well:

*“Little Rose, be not sad for all that hath behapped thee:  
The friars are coming across the sea, they march on the main.  
From the Pope shall come thy pardon, and from Rome, from the East-  
And stint not Spanish wine to my Little Dark Rose.  
Long the journey that I made with her from yesterday till today,  
Over mountains did I go with her, under the sails upon the sea,  
The Erne I passed by leaping, though wide the flood,  
And there was string music on each side of me and my Little Dark Rose!”<sup>51</sup>*

### 3.2 Mick Moloney and Irish Protest Music

Mick Moloney, an Irish music scholar and musician renowned for his work in the folk and traditional arts, said in an interview regarding Irish music as a catalyst to rebellion, *“here's a long tradition of Irish protest songs. There are literally thousands of songs, and they all were on the theme of resisting injustice.”*<sup>52</sup> Upon arrival to America the Irish found they were unwelcomed outsiders, displaced and disowned, met with varying degrees of suspicion and hostility, frustrated at having left a homeland that let them down<sup>53</sup>. Though facing discrimination and feelings of displacement, common sentiments felt by immigrants across the world in today's modern times, the Irish enlisted and made up a large component of the Union Army; they also worked to build the country's infrastructure, on railroads and dams, and building construction<sup>54</sup>. Doing so, they formed a community of their own, one created through common interests and backgrounds, shared loss, and reluctant hope for the future. Their allegiance to America gained them more acceptance within their communities, yet they held steadfast to their Irish roots; music was the consistent thread that connected them to their homeland- and to each other.

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<sup>51</sup> “*Roisin Dubh*”, accessed at: [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Róis%C3%ADn\\_Dubh](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Róis%C3%ADn_Dubh).

<sup>52</sup> Kate Beaudoin, “*10 Songs that Prove Irish Music Is the Original Protest Music*” (2015), accessed at: <https://www.mic.com/articles/112942/10-songs-that-prove-irish-music-is-the-original-protest-music>.

<sup>53</sup> *ibid.*, O'Connor, p. 55.

<sup>54</sup> Hitchner, Earle, “*Tribute to Irish America*”, Irish Echo Newspaper Corp (2002), accessed at: <http://mickmoloney.com/articles/hitchner.html>

Together, combined with the sounds of music created by other immigrant communities, and particularly in conjunction with African slave music, empathy and commonality were found in response to human rights infringements, and the result was the later birth of bluegrass and country music. From Woody Guthrie's Dust Bowl anthems of protest and The Clancy's songs about Irish diaspora, to Pete Seeger's "*No Irish Need Apply*"<sup>55</sup>, to the soundtrack/s of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement, the music, instruments and tunes, paved the way for all protest and rebel music found throughout America and the globe; the music used in marches and protests, parades and battlefields, fundraisers and memorials.

### 3.3 Bob Geldof and Fundraising for Social Change

Discussion regarding Irish protest and rebel music is incomplete without discussion of Bob Geldof's contribution to the protest music genre and overall social justice movements. Geldof is a prolific native Irish musician who immigrated to America and his music was a flagrant statement of the times, past and present, in Ireland and abroad. One of his most politically charged songs was "*Banana Republic*"<sup>56</sup> performed with the Boomtown Rats, a pop meets punk rock band of the 1970s and 1980s. Superficially, the song was a catchy pop song made for radio, with a sanguine reggae con ska beat and rhythm. However, a careful listen to the lyrics behind the cheery tune reveals a scathing political statement about the times- one that is arguably relevant, present-day. The lyrics indicate the singer is returning home to a place that he no longer recognizes. His commentary centers on religion and the Catholic Church, politicians and state corruption through police forces and potentially misplaced nationalism.

*"Banana Republic  
Septic Isle  
Screaming in the Suffering sea  
It sounds like crying  
Everywhere I go  
Everywhere I see*

<sup>55</sup> *ibid.*, O'Connor, p. 55, 104.

<sup>56</sup> Boomtown Rats "*Banana Republic*" (1980), accessed at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k2IwOemnjbl>.

*The black and blue uniforms  
Police and priests  
And I wonder do you wonder  
While you're sleeping with your whore  
That sharing beds with history  
Is like a licking running sores  
Forty shades of green, yeah  
Sixty shades of red  
Heroes going cheap these days  
Price, a bullet in the head”<sup>57</sup>*

Geldof and his band spoke directly to their fans, from the outliers and misfits to the upper middle class, releasing a substantial catalog of music that gave these people a voice, a way to take a stand on issues that were important to them. They created a community of people who wanted to speak of the truth. They wanted to yell and chant and show their anger regarding the injustice within the world, and they did.

In 1984, Geldof continued his activism through music and used his platform as a way to fundraise for social justice matters through his creation of Band Aid and later, Live Aid. Band Aid was a charity super group comprised of almost 40 high profile artists (including U2s Bono, Sting, and Boy George and Duran Duran, among others) collaborated and performed Geldof and Midge Ure’s song “*Do They Know It’s Christmas?*”<sup>58</sup> as a fundraiser for famine in Ethiopia. Rather than being entirely political, the primary focus was to enjoin people in the shared cause of saving lives, through connection and community. Over 8,000,000£ were raised from the sale of more than 3,000,000 albums and the charity event was quoted as one that “*taught Bono how to care*”<sup>59</sup>. Bono went on to become a vocal social justice activist, using his platform to spread knowledge for causes throughout the world at both his concerts and in his own fundraising work. “*Do They Know It’s Christmas?*” raised millions for famine relief, while

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<sup>57</sup> *ibid.*, Boomtown Rats.

<sup>58</sup> Majewski, Lori, “*The Making of Band Aid*”, Rolling Stone Magazine (2014), accessed at: <https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-news/the-making-of-band-aid-secrets-and-stories-from-the-star-studded-session-172815/>.

<sup>59</sup> *ibid.*, Majewski.

also bringing awareness to a global cause; it was the first large-scale charity musical project to do so. It reached number 1 on record charts and was the inspiration for subsequent musical charity songs such as “*We Are the World*”<sup>60</sup>, which raised over 60 million USD for famine in Africa. It’s no wonder “*Do They Know It’s Christmas?*” kicked off such a firestorm of charity fundraising for social justice movements, in light of lyrics such as:

*“There’s a world outside your window  
And it’s a world of dread and fear  
Where the only water flowing  
Is the bitter sting of tears  
And the Christmas bells that ring there  
Are the clanging chimes of doom  
Well, tonight thank God it’s them  
Instead of you”*<sup>61</sup>

The following year, Geldof reunited with Ure to create a multi-artist rock concert called Live Aid to raise money for African famine relief<sup>62</sup>. In London, Prince William and Princess Diana opened the event and when it reached JFK Stadium in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (USA), more than 1,000,000,000 viewers viewed it via satellite across more than 100 nations<sup>63</sup>. The global reach was astounding, and the entire event raised more than 125 million for direct famine relief programs<sup>64</sup>. With high-energy performances by the who’s-who of the music industry, it again shone a light on issues in Africa, creating actual changes for the people affected by famine in the African nations. Queen Elizabeth II knighted Geldof for his work with the charitable organizations and he continued his charitable work, this time addressing global poverty through the creation of Live 8 concerts that took place in 11 different countries

<sup>60</sup> USA for Africa *We Are The World*, accessed at: <https://usaforafrica.org/we-are-the-world/>.

<sup>61</sup> Band Aid, “*Do They Know It’s Christmas?*” (1984), accessed at: <https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/midgeure/dotheyknowitschristmas.html>.

<sup>62</sup> History.com editors, “*Live Aid concert raises 127 million for famine relief in Africa*” (2009), A&E Television Networks, accessed at: <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/live-aid-concert>.

<sup>63</sup> *ibid.*, History.com editors.

<sup>64</sup> *ibid.*, History.com editors.

in 2005<sup>65</sup>. When promoting these concerts Geldof was quoted as saying “*We don’t want your money, we want your voice*”<sup>66</sup>. It worked, after billions saw the concerts globally and the G8 voted to thereafter cancel the debt of some of the world’s poorest countries, and elevate funding for African nations<sup>67</sup>.

Geldof seems to have perfected the notion of using his celebrity to elevate matters of social justice in to the human psyche. This happened in other charity events that came later, certainly, but he found a way to evoke empathy in those who knew nothing about the famine in an African country, or the ongoing poverty of people in the margins, into something they cared about and wanted to help change. This occurred almost entirely by promoting bands people were interested in, gathering them together in community, and by creating a platform where impactful music could be performed. This resulted in two things, both empathy for plights of the marginalized, one that perhaps had been previously out of sight, as well as the ability to raise funds to actually create change where change was needed. This, in and of itself, created something tangible to help communities suffering from injustice, while also encouraging others (both artists and fans) to take note and do the same.

### 3.4 “Angel”

As noted heretofore, music can be effective in creating change through fundraising. Sarah McLachlan’s “*Angel*” floats through the background of a 2007 American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) commercial as she tells viewers about abandoned and abused animals left behind, asking briefly for donations of any amount<sup>68</sup>. The campaign was quiet, but direct, all who viewed the campaign can remember clearly the look in the dog’s

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<sup>65</sup> Fricke, David, “*Bob Geldof: The Man Who Wouldn’t Take No for an Answer*” (1985), accessed at: <https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-news/bob-geldof-the-man-who-wouldnt-take-no-for-an-answer-50155/>.

<sup>66</sup> *ibid.*, Fricke.

<sup>67</sup> Forrest, Adam, “*Did Live 8 Work?*” (2015), accessed at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/adamforrest/2015/07/13/did-live-8-work-10-years-on-the-debt-burden-returns/?sh=252cb5b737cb>.

<sup>68</sup> Strom, Stephanie, “*Ad Featuring Singer Proves Bonanza for the A.S.P.C.A.*” [https://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/26/us/26charity.html?\\_r=1](https://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/26/us/26charity.html?_r=1).

eyes as they shivered in the cold, chained, thin and malnourished. The emotion evoking visuals combined with the sorrowful lyrics raised over 30,000,000 Dollars for the ASPCA in the first two years after the ad aired on TV throughout America. The two-minute ad featuring “*Angel*” was the non-profit’s single most successful fundraising effort - ever - raising amounts unheard of in the non-profit world. It’s no wonder when you listen to the lyrics in tandem with the images on screen, that the campaign was such a success, garnering massive awareness for the issue regarding cruelty to animals.

*“Spend all your time waiting  
For that second chance  
For a break that would make it okay  
There's always some reason  
To feel not good enough  
And it's hard at the end of the day...”*<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> McLachlan, Sarah, “*Angel*”, accessed at: <https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/sarahmclachlan/angel.html>

## CHAPTER FOUR: THE AMERICAN MELTING POT

### 4.1 “Danny Boy”

Music has always been a staple of the religious, played in churches in times of praise, at joyful weddings, and funerals in times of loss. A good example of this is the Irish ballad “*Danny Boy*”<sup>70</sup> whose lyrics were written by English songwriter Frederic Weatherly in 1913. The melody was originally titled *Londonderry Air*, and was overheard by Weatherly’s sister-in-law, who had emigrated from Ireland<sup>71</sup>. After Weatherly was introduced to the melody, he added the melancholy lyrics to which the song is recognized for today. This song was likely written about the grief of leaving one’s home country, and became an anthem for Irish Americans and Canadians who had left their homeland for North America in droves in the year following the songs publishing<sup>72</sup>. The meaning of the song changed through the years, based on where and when, and for whom it was performed. North Americans have adopted this Irish tune as an international song of love, loss and Irish diaspora. “Danny Boy” is often performed at American funerals and memorials, including those of beloved deceased American President John F. Kennedy, Jr., politician John McCain, Elvis Presley and even at Princess Diana’s funeral, though the lyrics had been altered. Danny Boy was played at many of the Irish American firefighters, police officers and emergency workers funerals after the tragic events of 9/11 in New York City. Since the Irish first began immigrating to the United States, Danny Boy has been performed on bagpipes at fallen police officers funerals. The song is indicative of the power of music to bring people together, and unite them in spite of shared loss, creating community and resulting in empathy.

*“But when ye come, and all the flowers are dying,  
If I am dead, as dead I well may be,*

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<sup>70</sup> Weatherly, Frederic Edward, “*Danny Boy*” (1913). *Historic Sheet Music Collection*. 45.  
<https://digitalcommons.conncoll.edu/sheetmusic/45>.

<sup>71</sup> Deignan, Tom, “*Danny Boy*” (2020), accessed at: <https://www.irishcentral.com/roots/history/danny-boy-history>.

<sup>72</sup> CBS News, “*Surprising Origins of 100-Year-Old ‘Danny Boy’*”, (2013), accessed at: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/surprising-origins-of-100-year-old-danny-boy/>.



*Ye'll come and find the place where I am lying,  
And kneel and say an Avè there for me.  
And I shall hear, though soft you tread above me,  
And all my grave will warmer, sweeter be,  
For you will bend and tell me that you love me,  
And I shall sleep in peace until you come to me!”<sup>73</sup>*

#### 4.2 “Truth, Justice and Rock & Roll”

Music can play a role in social justice change through politicians as much as it can through celebrity. Former Democratic U.S. President Jimmy Carter was a connoisseur of music, raised with an adoration of gospel music and later the rock and roll of the 1960s and 1970s. He used music throughout his campaigns for Senator for the State of Georgia, Governor of Georgia, his Presidency, and his time in the White House, to further causes and shine a light on social justice. He found that music was an aspect of life that brought people together; “*music breaks down barriers*”<sup>74</sup>, he said, describing music’s ability to connect to the soul and change minds through the empathy generated. As a Georgia State Senator from 1963 to 1967 his time in office encompassed the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; as Governor of Georgia from 1971 to 1975 he continued support of the civil rights movement, his campaign was purported to embody the principles outlined in the Civil Rights Act<sup>75</sup>. He consistently represented the desire for equality, especially in the American South, which at that time was separate, and far from equal. He chose musical artists to perform at charity and political events who represented his values: the Allman Brothers, Bob Dylan, Willie Nelson, Aretha Franklin and Johnny Cash; all of whom helped him gain visibility, electoral votes, fundraising dollars, and wide spread support, not just for his campaigns, but for issues he stood for: “*Truth, Justice...and Rock & Roll*”<sup>76</sup>.

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<sup>73</sup> *ibid.*, Weatherly.

<sup>74</sup> CNN Films Premieres “*Jimmy Carter: Rock & Roll President*”, directed by Mary Wharton, Juice Distribution, published April 2020: aired live on cable network CNN, January 3, 2021, accessed at: <https://cnnpressroom.blogs.cnn.com/2020/11/11/cnn-films-premieres-jimmy-carter-rock-roll-president-on-january-3rd/>.

<sup>75</sup> *ibid.*, CNN Films.

<sup>76</sup> *ibid.*, CNN Films.

During his Presidency, he supported the idea of using ‘soft power’, or the use of culture and music, to affect civil rights changes<sup>77</sup>. Human rights matters were at the forefront of his National Security policy making and later earned him the Nobel Peace Prize for his work with the Carter Center. Even in his mid 90s he continued physical work building Habitat for Humanity<sup>78</sup> homes for the indigent; his political and personal lives intersected at the crossroads of his belief system, thereby encouraging others in politics and at home, to do the same. Historians have noted that music was a conduit his political election successes as well as a shining example of how music can effect change during a period of time when America was experiencing massive turmoil, change due to the civil rights movements and as a country<sup>79</sup>.

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<sup>77</sup> *ibid.*, CNN Films.

<sup>78</sup> “*Carter Work Project*”, Habitat for Humanity, accessed at: <https://www.habitat.org/volunteer/build-events/carter-work-project>.

<sup>79</sup> *ibid.*, CNN Films.

## CHAPTER FIVE: EMPATHY

Woven throughout the examples heretofore shown, music impacts people in myriad ways, contributing to social justice movements through its unique ability to create empathy and emotion- shared feelings within groups and communities that grow and expand as the music extends its reach. This emotion transcends physical and emotional borders, allows for people to heal and find dignity within the bonds of shared commonalities. Music creates compassion and empathy through storytelling and is incredibly valuable to the human experience, one that every person on the planet experiences. Empathy, while having a natural or genetic component, is a learned product of one's environment, a clear result of communal gatherings and also contagious feelings experienced when listening to music, particularly music that has political or cultural undertones. This is never more perspicuous than in Civil Rights footage of peaceful demonstrators in Washington, D.C. singing "*We Shall Overcome*"<sup>80</sup>, or the crowded Belfast bar footage of Stiff Little Fingers singing the rage-fueled "*Wasted Life*", uniting the crowd during the turbulence of the Troubles, when singing such lyrics was both politically and societally controversial and could have immense ramifications:

*"I could be a soldier  
Go out there and fight to save this land  
Be a people's soldier  
Paramilitary gun in hand  
I won't be a soldier  
I won't take no orders from no-one  
Stuff their fucking armies  
Killing isn't my idea of fun..."*<sup>81</sup>

Officially, the Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines empathy as: "*The action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another of either the past or present without having the feelings,*

<sup>80</sup> Baez, Joan, "*We Shall Overcome*" at the march on Washington (1963), accessed at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7akuOFp-ET8>.

<sup>81</sup> Stiff Little Fingers, "*Wasted Life*" (1979), accessed at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n3mqtXQAunw>.

*thoughts, and experience fully communicated in an objectively explicit manner*”<sup>82</sup>. Not only a natural talent, but a skill enhanced through the likes of literature, Renaissance paintings, theatre and music, art directly enhances the viewer/listeners ability to feel empathy for causes and people outside themselves. In doing so, it brings the masses together and bypasses differences.

When understanding the value of music to social justice movements, it is important to understand how empathy empowers people to work towards changes, both individually and interpersonally. *“In empathizing, we, while retaining fully the sense of our own distinct consciousness, enter actively and imaginatively into others’ inner states to understand how they experience their world and how they are feeling, reaching out to what we perceive as similar while accepting difference, and experiencing... our own resulting feelings, appropriate to our own situation as empathic observer, which may be virtually the same feelings or different but sympathetic to theirs, within a context in which we care to respect and acknowledge their human dignity and our shared humanity.”*<sup>83</sup>

Frans de Waal, a researcher in primatology and empathy, stated that empathy is vital to humanity and it plays a vital role in cooperation amongst people.<sup>84</sup> He stated, *“If we could manage to see people on other continents as part of us, drawing them into our circle of reciprocity and empathy, we would be building upon, rather than going against, our nature.”*<sup>85</sup> Indeed, through greater understanding and meaningful connection, empathy can help to broaden the size of one’s world and is thereby useful in reducing stereotypes and hatred. As de

<sup>82</sup> Merriam-Webster Dictionary, accessed at: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/empathy>.

<sup>83</sup> Laurence, F. (2007) *“Music and empathy”* In O. Urbain & P.V.d. Dungen (eds) *Music and conflict transformation: Harmonies and dissonances in geopolitics* London: I.B. Tauris, pp. 24.

<sup>84</sup> de Waal, Frans, *The Evolution of Empathy*, September 1, 2005, accessed at: [https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/the\\_evolution\\_of\\_empathy](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/the_evolution_of_empathy).

<sup>85</sup> *ibid.*, de Waal.

Waal summarizes, “*emotions defy ideology*”<sup>86</sup>; when humans feel empathy towards others, their decisions and motivations are based on shared commonality that is humanity.

People have a natural tendency to project their own beliefs, feelings and ideations upon others as an attempt to understand people that you may not know by filtering your idea of them through your own personal lens, a pair of colored glasses, so to speak. Naturally, music can affect one's thoughts and thereby moods and behaviors through the sounds and lyrics presented. A strong and energetic beat can energize one's body, encouraging movement through the art of dance, affecting performance on the playing field. The slow and haunting echo of strings may evoke a long-forgotten memory of a place or time; the lyrics of a song may describe a faraway country you have never visited, foreign lands, love and loss you may never have personally experienced in a time you weren't born into. To illustrate, the heart-breaking sounds of the violin in “*Theme*” from the movie *Schindler's List*<sup>87</sup> invoke the lasting sadness of the devastation of Auschwitz and Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Additionally, music is used in political campaigning, in military marches, protest chants, commercials, national anthems, and is seen in every facet of life. Music has the power to both enlighten and enrage and empathy brings people together to heal trauma, resolve conflict and create peace.

Certainly empathy extends to understanding of the marginalized and those whose human rights have been infringed upon: colonized and occupied countries, those killed at the hands of police, the Navajo Nations' lack of clean, running water, and unaccompanied migrant children left at the Mexican border. Music affects empathy through the songs that are passed generationally through storytelling, creating connection and community. This is partially due to music's ability to present messages in a way that is less threatening and thereby gets truly

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<sup>86</sup> *ibid.*, de Waal.

<sup>87</sup> Williams, John, “*Schindler's List Theme*” with Itzhak Perlman, accessed at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cLgJQ8Zj3AA>.

heard by a wider audience. As music can help produce an empathetic response, then it is certainly useful in bringing people together, lessening racism and xenophobia as well as encouraging and producing social changes that could result in a world that protects human rights for all.

## CONCLUSION

Music connects, heals, and binds people together communally; its power helps bring forth social change and peace to those impacted by human rights abuses far and near- telling the story of the marginalized, the discriminated, the persecuted and dislocated. It builds community where there is none, through empathy and connection, and this empathy leads to community and the creation of real sustainable change. From battlefields to parades and protests, to fundraising and awareness campaigns; music informs and educates, lifting the voices of the silenced. From the green cliffs of western Ireland to the dusty plains in Oklahoma, the sounds of Ireland impacted social changes locally globally, and continue to impact the styles of today's popular music that fuel the rage and the sadness of the marginalized, while also bringing about identifiable changes and hope. When the question is posed: does music lead to social change? The answer is a resounding yes. As Musician Pete Seeger said, “...*when one person taps out a beat, while another leads into the melody, or when three people discover a harmony they never knew existed, or a crowd joins in on a chorus as though to raise the ceiling a few feet higher, then they also know there is hope for the world.*”<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Good Reads, Pete Seeger Quote, accessed at: <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/666905-once-upon-a-time-wasn-t-singing-a-part-of-everyday>.

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## APPENDIX A

### ***CAPSTONE PROJECT- LINK TO PLAYLISTS***

#### **Irish Protest and Rebel Song Catalog:**

<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLbQPpECOE7dBTnUgG0n8tpDGeUXJxMOjo>

#### **American Protest and Rebel Song Catalog:**

<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLbQPpECOE7dAt0mcNtCAUQZMwRju6Y9ri>