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# Musical Mutualism in Valparaiso During the Rise of the Labor Movement (1893 -1931)

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## Abstract

The Musicians' Mutual Aid Society of Valparaiso was active from 1893 to well into the twentieth century in what was then Chile's main port city. In this article, I will examine the characteristics of this social organization of Chilean musicians during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and its relationship to the rising labor movement. Moreover, I will report some relevant findings based on a range of archival material. To conclude, I will discuss the role of the Mutual Aid Society of Valparaiso as a forerunner to the creation of the country's first Musicians' Union in 1931.

## Keywords:

Mutualism, unionism, port city, labor movement, music profession.

## Introduction

The melodies of the *orfeón* were just the background music –as the piano notes at the local cinema– of the romantic film that each of them featured every Saturday and Sunday evenings in the town square. After that, everyone would go to the philharmonic hall to dance at the rhythm of the same *orfeón*, which has now become a cheerful jazz-band (Rivera Letelier)

This article illustrates some of the relevant findings of an ongoing research project on one of the earliest working musicians' organizations in Chile: the *Sociedad Musical de Socorros Mútuos de Valparaíso* or SMSMV (Musicians' Mutual Aid Society of Valparaiso) which was founded in 1893. This is the first study of this topic in Chile and its contribution lies in understanding the musician as a worker, a perspective that helps to analyze the history of music in a comprehensive manner.

This research is based on a range of archive material, corresponding to previously unknown and unpublished documents linked to this mutual aid society. The approach to this material as a primary source is also a significant contribution, because the materials were written by the

members of the society, reflecting the discussions that musicians had regarding the definition of their profession, and the main problems that they had with their working conditions. These documents also identify the musicians who were members of this organization, contributing to making these musicians visible. In fact, the names of many of the SMSMV's founders are still unknown to researchers. Fortunately, these documents identify, for the first time, the members of the SMSMV, and allow for the building of individual profiles of their work as musicians. One example of this will be the musician Pedro Césari, who will be addressed as a case study later in the article.

These documents used here are housed in the office of the current Musician's Union of Valparaiso, a fact that indicates the relationship between both organizations, which goes much further than one storing the documents of the other. In fact, I will argue that the SMSMV not only outlined a definition for the music profession at the time, but also laid the groundwork for the first Musicians' Union of the country which followed in the 1930s.

The article presents this discussion in five parts. The first section provides some geographical context on Valparaiso to illustrate some of the key characteristics of port cities and their relationship to the development of music and international exchange. The second part delves into the musical life of Chile at the time, particularly that of Valparaiso, in order to show the type of work Chilean musicians and members of the Society were undertaking. The third part examines workers' conditions and the rise of social organizations in Chile by the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and will explain the characteristics of mutualism within the burgeoning labor movement. The fourth section shares some specific findings from the research detailing the mutual aid society's aims and considering the musicians they included and excluded from their membership. The final section discusses the role of the SMSMV as a forerunner to the creation of Chile's first Musicians' Union in the broader context of the country's labor movement.

### **Geographical Context**

Although not the capital, Valparaiso is Chile's main port city. During the nineteenth century, it was the principal port in South America and a strategic economic center providing a link between Britain, the Eastern Pacific Ocean and Asia. After Independence from Spain in 1818, the country "experienced more than a decade of the intra-elite political turmoil common to

nearly every nascent Latin American republic” (Barr-Melej 20) and commercial growth based on foreign trade. By the late 1880s, following Chile’s victory in the War of the Pacific, the treasury’s coffers were relatively full and a Liberal-Conservative alliance ensured political stability. This attracted hundreds of migrants, especially from Italy, France, Germany and Britain, who settled in Valparaiso. This will be a relevant aspect to bear in mind, regarding both, international connections and the arrival of foreign musicians to the port city that this created.

Shortly thereafter, the city became an important trade center that supplied the Southern Cone, California and Australia. However, this golden age only lasted until the beginning of the twentieth century, when Santiago began to consolidate itself as the center of economic activities in the country and the Panama Canal opened in 1914 transforming the configuration of international trade. Valparaiso then began to exhibit symptoms of economic decline that affected musical life and musicians based in the city.

To highlight the relevance of Valparaiso as a port in the cultural and economic development of the city, I borrow the concept of “Sailortown” that John Belchem applied to the port area of Liverpool. This concept “established many of the representational clichés identified with transience, drink, prostitution and foreignness that became universal in major port cities throughout the globe” (2). Throughout the years, Valparaiso was a place of arrival and departure, not only for seamen but also for migrants from different parts of the world, becoming what Belchem calls “a ‘diaspora space’, a contact zone between different ethnic groups with differing needs and intentions as transients, sojourners or settlers” (5). By the late nineteenth century, Valparaiso was considered “the nation’s doorstep” and the “true economic capital of the country,” particularly receptive to European and North American ideas, consumptions habits and practices (González and Rolle 30).<sup>1</sup>

As a port city, Valparaiso’s proximity to the capital, Santiago, is also significant.<sup>2</sup> This is one of the reasons that international musicians touring in Chile mainly performed in both Santiago and Valparaiso. Many of them performed in Valparaiso first (especially when musicians arrived by ship) and then in Santiago. The same pattern can be found with different types of performing arts (e.g. theater and circus companies). Chilean music historian Eugenio Pereira Salas, illustrates this, by stating that Valparaiso “due its proximity to Santiago, enjoyed the same access to music as the capital” (112).

Valparaiso also enjoyed good transport links with other cities in South America. Especially noteworthy here was the train – “El trasandino” (inaugurated in 1910) – which connected the Argentine city of Mendoza to Santiago and Valparaiso. This railway “kept open an early migratory flow of Argentine musicians travelling to Chile and vice versa” (González and Rolle 485). However, it was not only Argentine, but also European musicians who would come to Chile by way of Argentina. This migratory movement, along with the arrival of immigrants at the port of Valparaiso, must be considered in the broader context of the government program to attract European settlers, in place from mid-nineteenth century to the first half of the twentieth.<sup>3</sup>

### **The Musical Life of Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth-Century Chile**

This section describes the musical life of Chile, especially that of Valparaiso, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and sheds light on the context of working musicians in Valparaiso, understanding the type of work undertaken by members of the SMSMV. I will consider classical and popular urban music, addressing also the music instruction of the time. Here it is worth noting that the SMSMV musicians often worked across different genres, rather than being confined to just one.

Pereira Salas described the classical or concert music scene in Chile as the “arrangements, adaptations and overall variations of lyric arias, with no conceptual difference between the musical content of opera or concert music” (111). This was supported mainly by wealthy families who funded certain composers, live concerts and artistic projects (Pereira Salas 362). As well as individual support, several organizations, such as the Music Societies and Clubs in the main cities, as well those created by groups of musicians originally from abroad (especially Italian and German migrants) also supported the provision of music. These types of societies initially aimed “to spread and promote music as a science and an art” (quoted in Pereira Salas 125). For example, the *Sociedad Musical Orfeón de Santiago* was committed to offering “periodical public recitals” (Pereira Salas 128). By the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century these organizations, along with scientific, artistic and intellectual societies, played an important role in the discussion of the renewal of cultural development.<sup>4</sup>

Opera was the most sought after music in Chile at the time, and the Municipal Theaters in the main urban centers offered a variety of shows, thus laying the groundwork for the “orchestral musician’s life, [which were] mainly teachers from the National Conservatoire of Music, leading to the formation of Conservatoire graduates” (Pereira Salas 356). Chamber music also became widespread throughout the various *tertulias*, or private gatherings (at an upper-class family’s home or a club hall) where figures from the intellectual elite got together to chat and listen to music. The *tertulias* played a substantial role in “the conformation and interaction and consolidation of elite intellectuals and artists, from the colonial period, throughout nineteenth century and up to the beginning of the twentieth” (Peña and Poveda 26).

González and Rolle claim that “popular urban music remained an elusive field of study in Latin America. . . virtually invisible at the musicological research until the final decades of the twentieth century” (22), but by the late nineteenth century, this type of music was being performed in cinemas (to accompany silent films), at festivities in public spaces and in dance halls in the major cities. Music from abroad was often preferred in public gatherings and in motion pictures, at dance halls, on records and on the radio. One example of this came in dance halls where jazz, polka and tango were played.

As a consequence of the competing popularity of the various types of music, musicians developed their skills in different areas of music. Most were involved in more than one music scene and genre, performing in different venues and for different audiences. Combined, these activities meant that by the early twentieth century, Valparaíso and Santiago continued to be the centers of the musical activity.

Musical instruction was an important provider of work for musicians, especially as the only formal institution was the National Conservatoire of Music, located in Santiago. There were also private lessons, affordable only to the upper class, mainly focused on piano, violin and composition. In 1892, the National Conservatoire of Music was incorporated into the Universidad de Chile, the main public university. This reform was not only a move toward the democratization of the study of music in higher education, but was also key in providing an important number of trained musicians for orchestras and groups across the country. It is noteworthy that this Conservatoire provided a class where students could learn to play wind

and percussion instruments and so was likely to train musicians for marching bands, including those that performed in public spaces, such as *orfeones* (Pereira Salas 266, 291; González and Rolle 275).

The role of these *orfeones*, or marching bands was to cheer up public spaces, to accompany the dancing at public festivities and to promote the symbolic representation of the nation through playing patriotic and civic anthems. They performed in public spaces, especially in bandstands in main squares. In addition these bands had a key role in the musical instruction of the time, as they gathered together amateur musicians, of middle and working class origin, who could learn to play music via participating in the *orfeones*.

There were a range of groups including *Orfeones Municipales* (marching bands supported by the Municipalities of the main cities), Immigrants' *Orfeones*, and Workers Federations' *Orfeones*. All of them were economically supported, thus making it affordable for musicians to perform and learn in such bands. The musical instruments used by these bands were also affordable at the time, and the repertoire they performed was not just military music, but also concert, religious and secular music, with the aim of livening up and entertaining the crowd in public performances called *retretas* (González and Rolle 273). Scholars such as Pereira Salas (297) and González and Rolle (276) state that the repertoire of these live *retretas* consisted mainly popular rather than military music.

In 1893 the Chilean government issued a Decree to standardize military marching bands, splitting them in three subcategories: Cavalry Bands, Artillery Bands, and Infantry Bands. The last type corresponded to those *orfeones* who performed in public spaces for entertainment purposes. The importance of this become apparent later in the article, as one of the founders of SMSMV conducted one of these *orfeones*.

### **Working Conditions and the Rise of Social Organizations**

From the mid-nineteenth century, workers began to organize themselves within the burgeoning artisan and service industries that were gradually developing to meet the needs of urban life in Chile. These processes accelerated due to the expansion of agricultural exports and the development of the mining industry via an oligarchical system that both the liberal elite and rising labor movement criticized. Workers slowly acquired a class-consciousness

and began to organize, initially in the form of mutualism to address their direct concerns regarding their precarious living conditions.

Grez discusses these conditions in the context of the “social question,” which he describes as the social, labor and ideological consequences of increasing industrialization and urbanization (*La “cuestión social”* 9). The “social question” particularly affected the lower classes; most workers lacked any basic social protection. While the entire population was exposed to several diseases, the poorest were the most vulnerable.

Chile experienced socio-economic change similar to that of nineteenth-century Europe, the United States, and neighboring Argentina, which saw the transformation of the country’s human geography with urbanization. “Tens of thousands migrated from rural areas to northern mining camps to feed the nitrate industry’s ever increasing hunger for labor, while thousands more campesinos [peasants] moved to Santiago, Valparaíso and other industrializing cities in search of higher wages” (Barr-Mejel 33). It was in these urban spaces where parts of the middle class coalesced in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, “as sectors indelibly linked to capitalist modernization and ‘classical liberal’ projects that fostered international trade, domestic commerce, and internal migration” (Barr-Mejel 5).

This situation, coupled with the fact that state institutions did not ensure conditions of social wellbeing, led workers who were looking to better their situation to create organizations dedicated to improve their working conditions. In this context, three types of organizations emerged: mutual aid societies, trade unions, and anarchist-led resistance organizations. Of these, it is the first that are most relevant to this article and it is to them that it now turns.

Mutual aid societies sought to fill the gap in the statutory protection of workers. Illanes defines this type of organization as “an autonomous corporate entity, typical of the artisan and working class, which aimed to maintain the physical wellbeing, and promote the intellectual, social and material development among its members” (293). She states that the roots of mutual aid societies can be found in the ideas promoted by the *Sociedad de la Igualdad* (Society of Equality). Founded in 1850 in Santiago by a group of young republicans, intellectuals and artisans, the *Sociedad de la Igualdad* promoted values of brotherhood, which were taken from the ideals of the European Revolutions of 1848. Chilean musician José Zapiola was one of the Society’s prominent members.<sup>5</sup>

Inspired by this model, the new mutual aid societies promoted their members' interests, beginning with physical wellbeing, and later extending into collective interests such as the intellectual development of their members. The SMSMV was preceded by a number of other guilds, including the Typesetters' Society (*Sociedad Tipográfica*) established in 1855, and the Women Workers' Aid Society (*Sociedad de Obreras de Valparaíso*) founded in 1887, both in Valparaíso (see Grez, *De la "Regeneración del pueblo"* 611-615).

The aforementioned efforts of workers to organize themselves served as a catalyst for social change and mobility. In this spirit of change, musicians in Valparaíso accepted the challenge to better their life and working conditions, founding the SMSMV. This was one of the first reported initiatives for the collective organization of working-musicians in the country.<sup>6</sup> Such organizations claimed and struggled for workers' rights. However, it was not until the first decades of the twentieth century that the Chilean State put forth labor legislation to benefit workers and the lower classes, following several protests throughout the country – some of which were violently suppressed. Between 1915 and 1923 specific laws to protect industrial workers were passed, in 1920 the law of compulsory primary education was promulgated, and in 1924 sharing systems for social security funds were created for manual workers and employees. The same year the Ministry of Social Wellbeing was created and the first labor laws were enacted. In 1925 a new Constitution was promulgated, which legalized trade unions and included a Copyright Law.

### **Principal Research Findings on the SMSMV**

Specific findings relating to the Society come from unpublished documents which were found in the office of the current Musicians' Union of Valparaíso in 2012. Since 2015 a selection of them has been available on the website of the project *Memoria Musical de Valparaíso*.<sup>7</sup> The archive contains different types of documents belonging to this organization that account for its own history, such as minutes of meetings, letters, internal accounts and leaflets with information and propaganda of the rising labor movement. These documents offer an insight into the development of the Society, in that they constitute a record of discussions that members had on different topics. In addition, they show the names and age of the members, their role within the Society and, in some cases, the instruments they played.

Overall these documents reveal three things of historical note: the aims of the organization, the names of the members, and their definition of the music profession in terms of who was eligible to join the Society.

### *The founding and aims of the SMSMV*

This Society was founded on 5 December 1893 by 40 musicians from the province of Valparaiso. Membership steadily increased during the following years, reaching more than 100 registered members in the Society's membership fee registry in 1922 (*Libro de Pagos* 1-3). The statutes provide specific information on the Society's objectives of mutual aid. The first article of the Society's rules established that "its main objective [is] the mutual aid of its members" (Sociedad, *Libro de Actas*). In the fourth section of the statutes fifteen articles under the umbrella of Social Benefits are detailed. It is worth noting that the members wrote and discussed the internal rules during the meetings throughout the first couple of years of the organization. This shows not only that the members agreed with the rules, but also that they defined what their main needs were at the time, and documented what they expected the Society could do to help them.

These articles highlighted the role of the musicians' organization to support the wellbeing of its members, helping them access medical care, as is described in the eighteenth article where the Society offered to sick members "doctor and apothecary services; in addition a minimum daily supplementary wage of one peso when the illness disabled the musicians from working" (Sociedad, *Libro de Actas*). To be able to receive these social benefits, the musicians had to have been members in good standing for at least six months.

Considering the expenses that a family must incur after the death of a loved one, the Society also offered payment for funeral expenses, which included the following:

First, an urn whose value does not exceed 50 pesos; Second, right to a burial, as long as it does not entail the burial of a non-family member in a family plot; Third, a first-class hearse; death notices and an entry in the obituaries of each local newspaper where the burial takes place; Fourth, a minimum of ten pesos for the petty expenses (Sociedad, *Libro de Actas*).

It is also important to note that the benevolence aims of this mutual aid society only represented charitable ends. This can be contrasted to what Loft characterized as protective associations as cooperative action among the mutual aid society musicians did not “signify any attempt on the part of musicians to urge their ideas about working-conditions, rates of pay, job-security, etc... on their employers” (271). The SMSMV helped working musicians in need, rather than taking on negotiations with their bosses or employers to better their working conditions. In this sense, it adhered to the ideals of sociability, seeking to better the living conditions, but not necessarily the working conditions, of the more downtrodden musicians in Valparaiso. In addition to the aims described above, associated workers “would be provided with shelter in moments of misfortune” (quoted in Illanes 312).

Mutualism was also characterized by the doctrine of political neutrality, which was stipulated in the second article of the SMSMV’s rules: “The Society does not seek any political aims; therefore it is strictly prohibited to address any issue related to politics directly or indirectly within the organization. Likewise, any discussion on religious matters is prohibited” (Sociedad, *Libro de Actas*). This neutrality ensured the survival of mutualism in its first years, especially during the highly conflict-ridden time in Chilean politics, which saw the rise of a working and middle class. It is important to point out that during this period the Chilean labor movement suffered violent repression on the part of the state. For example, in May 1903, “soldiers and gunfire met striking port workers in Valparaiso who demanded a wage increase and fewer hours. Nearly three dozen strikers were killed and more than eighty wounded” (Barr-Meje 38). Political neutrality here was a double-edged sword, because on the one hand, it helped to maintain the survival of its members, as well as the organization itself, by avoiding becoming involved in the sort of militant activities which other organizations engaged in and carried a certain risk. However, as will be shown later, such neutrality was to become one of the very causes of the crisis of mutualism and the rise of unionism.

### *Members and their Definition of the Music Profession*

During a time when the working class was seeking social acceptance in their search for better conditions of life and work, one question which arose was that of that who was permitted to join the SMSMV. Previous studies of musicians’ organizations in other countries have noted the relevance of defining a musician within their own organizations (Ehrlich; David-Guillou

295; Loft 389, 393-394). Such a definition can protect the artistic status of the profession by, for example, limiting access to it and improving the privileges of members (Loft 2-3). The SMSMV's rules offered some information about its attitude to this question. The first article states the following:

Under the denomination *Sociedad Musical de Socorros Mutuos de Valparaíso*, an association composed of musicians, amateurs and artists of the art of music, as well as all those persons whose admission the board of directors agreed on, is established in this city (*Libro de Actas*).

What is striking about this is that the Society accepted a broad range of musicians as members, but, at the same time, their admission was dependent on the board. It is interesting to contrast this membership criterion with the situation of other musicians' organizations around the world. For example, one of the first organized mutualist societies for musicians in Latin America, the *Sociedade Beneficiencia*,<sup>8</sup> was opened to anyone in Rio de Janeiro who wished to "exercise the profession of musicians, being a singer or an instrumentalist" (Cardoso 433-444). This allowed membership to both singers and instrumentalists, but specified the idea of 'profession' (whatever this word meant for the Society) with no explicit reference to the situation of amateurs. Elsewhere musicians' organizations in the US, Britain and most European countries, did not accept amateur musicians.<sup>9</sup> It is important to point out that often the division between the categories of professional and amateur was not clear and left a grey area between the two. Understanding who could and could not join to the SMSMV, sheds light on this problematic issue and also helps to clarify into which of the two categories musicians fitted. Beyond this comparison, it is worth to bear in mind that a similar profile of the musician would be adopted in the creation of the first musicians' union of Chile in 1931, outlining a definition of the music profession for working and unionized musicians that included amateurs.

The rules of the SMSMV did not define who were the "musicians, amateurs and artists of the art of music." Hence, the Society was arguably able to accept a wide variety of men and women "in the art of music", whether they were professionals or amateurs, composers or performers, instrumentalists or singers, men or women. This raises questions about the types of musicians who were eligible for membership. The internal rules of the SMSMV show some specific requirements necessary in order to be able to join the mutual aid society. For example, an applicant for membership had to be recommended by a member in good standing

who had belonged to the Society for at least six months and was established in Valparaiso. This requirement sought to ensure that applicants were suitable for SMSMV membership and its aims of mutual aid via an internal process of peer recommendation.

Another quality asked of applicants was that they should be active and committed to the organization, adhere to the values of fraternity and the goals of mutual assistance, and respect their peers. The concern expressed by the board of directors for a member suffering from illness is a good example of what was meant by fraternal values. In these kinds of situations, members would form committees to visit to the sick person. In this same spirit of fraternity, members could invite other musicians to join the Society.

A significant finding is that musicians of marching bands were crucial to the SMSMV. They supported the Society in terms of membership, but also through their participation its activities. For example, after a benefit concert for the SMSMV, they invited the musicians from the *Orfeón Municipal de Viña del Mar* (marching band of Viña del Mar) to join in gratitude for having selflessly collaborated in this concert. Nine of the twelve musicians accepted the invitation and became members on 16 February 1894 (Sociedad, *Libro de Actas*).

Another example of the relation between the marching bands and the SMSMV is shown by one of the founding members and the first President of the Board, Pedro Césari, who was also the director of the *Orfeón Municipal de Valparaíso*, a marching band supported by the Municipality of Valparaiso. This *orfeón* corresponded to the subcategory of Infantry Band, which performed in public spaces, namely in streets and squares in cities across the country, with the aim livening up and entertaining the crowds (Pereira Salas 252, 271).

Césari is well known in the literature on Chilean music, as an Italian composer, instructor and conductor.<sup>10</sup> The research undertaken for this article shows, for the first time, that he was also a mutualist. He was born in Parma in 1836 and settled in Valparaiso from 1884 on. He had previously worked in Italy where he studied violin, conducted marching bands, orchestras and composed military marches, religious music, and some symphonies. In addition, he travelled by Spain and Portugal as an orchestral conductor. In 1896 he wrote the book *Storia della Musica Antica*, which was translated and re-published in Spain, and re-edited as handbook in Chile entitled *La Música, Historia y Teoría*. He had arrived in South America in

1883, performing in Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina and Chile as part of the Ciacchi opera company, prior to his arrival to Valparaíso (Vetro). Here, Césari pursued his music career with overlapping, but different, jobs at the same time. For example, he taught *bel canto* to upper-class young ladies, composed military music, patriotic anthems and several pieces for piano and vocals, and was especially renowned as a conductor of *orfeones* and orchestras.<sup>11</sup>

It is possible to sketch a profile of musicians who were members of the SMSMV, connecting the diverse and uncommon career of Pedro Césari and the characteristics of the marching band musicians. During the first five years of the SMSMV, a large proportion of its members were musicians in the *orfeones* in both Valparaíso and the adjacent coastal town of Viña del Mar. Other members worked as orchestral players in main theatres of the cities, performing for both theatrical companies and silent cinema. There were also some musicians who conducted small orchestras and ensembles to perform at *tertulias*, the upper class private gatherings to chat and listen to music.

Considering the aforementioned characteristics of the *orfeones*, one can state that an important number of the members of this Society were instrumentalists who performed in public spaces where people gathered to dance at celebrations and festivities. Others, like the orchestral players in theatres and cinemas, performed live music to accompany theatrical performances or silent films. In addition many orchestral conductors, in common with Césari, had overlapping jobs in order to make a living from music. This finding can be compared to Ehrlich's categorization of musicians as either 'players' or 'gentlemen' (121-163), wherein the musicians of the SMSMV would fall into the first category. They were anonymous working-musicians, who played to earn a livelihood and came together in organizations to improve their living conditions, rather than to achieve social recognition of the music profession. In contradistinction gentlemen-musicians in the Chilean music scene congregated in organizations such as the societies and clubs linked to the classical or concert music scene described earlier, to disseminate and promote classical music, with the aim of safeguarding the prestige of the profession, rather than bettering the working or living conditions of its members.

### *Excluded Musicians*

The conditions necessary for a musician to join the Society can be considered to be the desirable characteristics that musicians should have in order to build a professional career and reflect forms of behavior that the Society would not tolerate of its members. Some musicians were excluded under specific articles stated in the bylaws and others by discussion among members, which were held with no explicit criteria. The first type of exclusion concerned those with moral failings or illness, and the second, women.

Regarding the explicit exclusions, in the sixth article of the internal rules, it is stated that no one with one of the following conditions could be admitted:

First, a person who had been penalized by justice system with an egregious or infamous punishment; second, one who has acquired the habit of drunkenness, or any another pernicious or degrading vice; and third, one who suffers from a contagious chronic or incurable disease. (Sociedad, *Libro de Actas*)

This exclusion must be understood in the context in which the aforementioned “social question” affected a large proportion of the population. As Barr-Melej describes, “Housing for the working class, for example, varied from unhealthy to truly squalid. Workers crowded into one and two storey *conventillos* (tenements) in the capital and Valparaiso” (34). Moreover, there were fatal diseases to which the upper class was susceptible: “but working-class neighborhoods, many of which had sewer water draining down their streets, were zones of extreme risk. Compounding the situation were preventable maladies, such as alcoholism and venereal diseases, that swiftly made their way through the urban working class (Barr-Melej 34-35).

These exclusions made sense in a context where many of the SMSMV’s resources were focused on the health of its members and on helping financially the families of deceased members. It is important to understand the economic reasons behind these decisions. Being accepted as a member of the Society did not guarantee permanent membership, because, as the ninth article stated, a member could be expelled for missing fees payments (Sociedad, *Libro de Actas*). To achieve their benevolent aims, mutual aid organizations were operated and maintained exclusively by their own members. For example, if a member did not pay their membership fees, the mutual aid society received less income with which it would use help their own associates. Therefore, the members themselves were tasked with growing and developing the mutual society.

Though the rules were not explicit about the admission of women, no women became a member until 1937.<sup>12</sup> The minutes of meetings contain examples of discriminatory behavior, seemingly undertaken in order not to jeopardize the spirit of fraternity. Specifically, on 16 February 1894, a woman was proposed for membership for the very first time. It was the President of the Board, Pedro Césari, who proposed the singing teacher Carolina Zúñiga de Vergara as an applicant, but the members did not accept her. The Secretary of the Board wrote the explanation of this event as it follows: “it has not yet been decided if the Society can admit ladies, so the proposal will be left to a second deliberation” (Sociedad, *Libro de Actas*). This second chance never came.

While women suffered this kind of exclusion in several aspects of their everyday lives, they were accepted into other workers’ organizations. At the time, other mutual aid societies already had women members, especially after the creation of *Sociedad de Socorro Mutuo de Costureras* (Mutual Aid Society of Seamstresses) in Valparaiso, Iquique and Santiago during the previous decade.<sup>13</sup> With the advent of these organizations, a new stage of the Chilean mutualism started; at the same time, workers began to have a more positive attitude to the active participation of women in the labor movement. The meeting minutes do not offer further details on the refusal of the proposal for a woman member, given that other workers’ organizations at the time did have women members.

This was largely down to the gender balance within the various professions. While seamstresses were predominantly female, the music profession was considered a men’s profession, despite the fact that there had actually already been women musicians. At the time Chilean women developed their music skills in the confines of the *salón* – where *tertulias* were held – and in the field of (traditional/rural) folk music. Chilean women’s orchestras, based on the model of the *Vienna Damen-Orchester*, emerged at a time when “women expanded their musical skills beyond the piano and singing, including orchestra instruments and *estudiantinas*.”<sup>14</sup> (González and Rolle 322) Notwithstanding, female musicians in Chile faced a considerable discrimination. For example, “the female presence in Chilean orchestras was scant, and practically all the teachers of the National Conservatoire were men, whereas more than half of the students were women – a common trend in other conservatories towards 1900” (González and Rolle 322).

The more conservative groups considered women's work as laying within the domestic sphere, especially at a time when male chauvinism was ubiquitous and went far beyond the field of music. The situation of women in Britain, as analyzed by Ehrlich, can be compared to the Chilean context in that "[p]rejudice against women players was pervasive and, like most prejudices, compounded of fact and myth" (156-157). Thereby, music performed by women developed within the household as a means via which to entertain at social gatherings and to show off the supposed feminine gifts a woman possessed. Such activity was understood as a hobby rather than a job. This may explain why women had a significant presence in *tertulias*, as they constituted intra-household social activities (Barr-Melej 46).

On the other hand, being that music was so closely related to entertainment and other pleasurable activities, women who were immersed in that environment – workers or not – faced considerable prejudice. Prevailing social mores associated the role of women's work with the domestic sphere and the preconceived notion of music as public entertainment would leave women musicians excluded from workers' organizations like the SMSMV. However, the idea of women developing their skills intra-household, was widespread among the middle and upper classes, rather more so than the working class. Considering the contextual backdrop of "social question", working-class women had to earn money to make a living, regardless as to whether the job was carried out inside or outside the home. Taken together, these findings may suggest a correlation between the exclusion of women and the social class of the members of the Society.

Throughout a large part of the history of the SMSMV, not only were no other women put forth as possible members, but in addition none of the existing members felt moved to discuss the topic again. After this veiled rejection one can infer that there was an unofficial ban on the entry of women into the organization which was not recorded in the minutes. Women regularly mentioned in the Society's records are generally members' spouses or daughters, especially those of the deceased. In this respect, women appear as direct beneficiaries of the institution but not as participants or decision makers in this particular workers' organization.

### **From Mutualism to Unionism in Music and the General Labor Movement**

This section will highlight two main ideas. The first concerns the relationship between music and social organizations, such as mutual aid societies and trade unions, and the second delves into the internal characteristics and values of these musicians' organizations and their relationship with the general labor movement. Regarding the relationship between music and social organizations, I draw on the idea posited by Angèle David-Guillou:

“The opposition between art and labour is central to the way they [musicians] think about themselves. This attitude is quite unique, even within the artistic field. Music, unlike painting for instance, is originally immaterial and thus historically it did not have a value. Court musicians would receive a pension to allow them create freely. It was never a payment in exchange for a production. Only the vulgar street musician was paid for his song. It may seem to be a rhetorical subtlety, but the distinction is in fact essential.” (290)

Musicians organized themselves in order to better their living conditions, at a time when virtually all artisans were organized. This raises questions about how Chilean musicians organized themselves in a time when the burgeoning labor movement was changing the broader context. How did musicians define themselves through the development of their own organizations? Furthermore, how did their specific way of self-organizing affect the transformation of musicians' organizations?

In addition to the aforementioned characteristics of mutual aid societies, their political neutrality is a particularly salient point. In attempting to bring together a majority of workers of certain field behind the goal of mutual aid, this type of organization had to stay politically neutral. However, without a critical and reflexive attitude towards society as a whole, all the mutual aid societies could do was to assess and modify their internal rules according to a given situation. In a sense, this was what the Society did: respond to local problems by offering benevolent solutions and providing support to musicians and their families when in need. As with other mutual aid societies of the time, the SMSMV addressed the symptoms rather than the causes of the working musicians' problems.

This should not be read as a criticism of mutualism itself, because this kind of organization offered concrete solutions to workers' problems, which it may not have been possible to be resolve in any other way at that time. However, political neutrality was one of the reasons for the crisis of mutualism and the rising power of unionism, especially in a time when the social situation was becoming increasingly untenable and the burgeoning labor movement was

gaining traction.<sup>15</sup> But such a position was not unusual and Barr-Melej notes that Chilean “[t]rade unions before 1900 did not champion Marxist ideology and generally responded to local grievances rather than national ones” (36). Notwithstanding this movement acquired greater ideological consistency after the first decade of the twentieth century, when:

“the trade union movement meshed with the *mancomunales* [mutual aid societies] and members of the POS [*Partido Obrero Socialista* or Socialist Workers’ Party] to form the first major umbrella union in the country’s history, the Chilean Workers Federation (*Federación Obrera de Chile*).” (Barr-Melej 36)

From the 1920s on, the difference between unionism and mutualism was becoming clearer. They offered two different paths for the labor movement, one more political than the other. The labor unions grew rapidly, especially after the great depression of 1930. Then, in 1931 the Musicians’ Union of Valparaiso was established as the very first musicians’ trade union in Chile.

Surprisingly, the findings show that at the time of the foundation of the Musicians’ Union, the Society still existed and continued to do so. Their documents register activity until the 1970s, which indicate that both organizations coexisted for several decades. Yet, undoubtedly, the growth of one brought about the decline of the other.<sup>16</sup>

## **Conclusion**

This is the first study to investigate working-musicians’ organizations in Chile, and, despite its exploratory nature, it offers fresh insights and relevant findings in this area. It has argued that the Musicians’ Mutual Aid Society of Valparaiso set the tone for the music profession at the time, and laid the groundwork for the country’s first Musicians’ Union.

The geographical context of Valparaiso influenced the Society’s definition of the music profession that it outlined for its members, not just because of the specificities of Valparaiso as a port city, but also due its implication in international exchange. An important finding in this research was that one of the founders of the Society was an Italian musician, Pedro Césari. It is possible to argue that this Society, being one of the earliest mutual aid

organizations for musicians in Chile, facilitated international exchanges within the European settlers in the country.

A second implication of the geographical context of Valparaíso in the Society's definition of the music profession was the backdrop of industrial development and the debates on the "social question" that this port city was facing at that time. This study has shown that the precarious living conditions of the musicians served as a catalyst for the creation the SMSMV. Hence, the musicians who were members of this Society were also those lacking social protection, rather than those in a more privileged position within Chilean society.

The musical life of urban Chile is a significant aspect in understanding the profile of musicians who were members of the SMSMV and also in articulating a definition of the music profession through this research. Despite their position in Chilean society, the members of the SMSMV worked mainly as instrumentalists in *orfeones*-style bands, much like the one conducted by a founding member, Pedro Césari. Accordingly, it is important to highlight the role of marching bands in musical training, especially for low- and middle-class musicians. Middle-class Chilean musicians were trained mainly in military bands, and at the National Conservatoire of Music, especially after its incorporation into Universidad de Chile. This, coupled with the fact that women were excluded from the Society, supports the idea that the Society's members were mainly from the rising middle-class.

Although this study focused on the first years of the SMSMV, the research reveals that this organization brought together middle-class, male musicians that mostly – but not exclusively – played popular music, possibly with no other prior musical instruction other than that of the *orfeón* in Valparaíso or Viña del Mar, or the few music academies in the city, such as the one organized later by the same SMSMV.<sup>17</sup>

This article analyzed the characteristics of mutualism in the context of the rising labor movement, and discussed the role of this Society in relation to the first Musicians' Union in Chile. I argued that the Musicians' Mutual Aid Society of Valparaíso was a forerunner to the first Musicians' Union, serving more as a precursor rather than providing a model to follow. The Musicians' Union was founded by a group of these same mutualized musicians and, in its first years, shared some members. However, it did not pursue the same ends as the society, as the spirit of this new kind of organization was much more political. Despite the fact that

the Musicians' Union was born under the wing of the Society, it instead followed the organizational model of the emergent trade unions that were established in the first decades of the twentieth century.

The challenge now is to conduct further research in this field and to outline the characteristics of the first Musicians' Union in Chile and to ascertain whether its understanding of the music profession mirrored that put forth by its predecessor, the SMSMV.

## Notes

1. All English translations of texts cited in this article that were originally published in Spanish – from both the literature on Chilean music history and documents from the SMSMV (such as meeting minutes and internal rules) – are my own. Transcriptions of archival material are available from the author upon request.
2. Valparaiso is located at 124.36 km (77.27 miles) to the west of Santiago.
3. In the belief that a larger population would increase the economy, and that a population of European settlers will be better for the country, “this program sought to populate the land and promote industry and the exportation of raw materials in specific regions of the country” (Cano y Soffia 132). This policy was informed by an idealized, colonial, image of Europeans. As stated by Chilean historians, “the idea was not just to bring people to an almost uninhabited country, but to bring better people” (Villalobos et al. 456).
4. Among these organizations were the Sociedad de Música Clásica (Classical Music Society), founded in 1879; the Sociedad Cuarteto (Quartet Society) established in 1885; the Club de la Unión de Valdivia (Union Club of Valdivia) established in 1879; and the Sociedad Reformada de Valparaíso (Reformed Musical Society of Valparaiso) founded in 1881. Following this tide, in the 1920s the Sociedad Bach (Bach Society) was established, and later played a relevant role in designing the institutionalization of Chilean music in the 1940s (Castillo 11, 15).
5. In addition to the establishment of the Sociedad de la Igualdad, Zapiola was a key figure in the development of music in Chile. He wrote a treatise for teaching music, created the music program at the Escuela Normalista de Santiago, and became the director of the National Conservatoire of Music in 1857 (Pereira Salas 97).

6. The Musicians' Mutual Aid Society of Santiago was founded on September, 15, 1889, and both organizations maintained frequent and close communication.
7. Chilean Musicologist Cristian Molina and I carried out this project in 2015, after the documents were found. In order to disseminate our research findings and, above all, make available the documents uncovered, we created the website [www.memoriamusicalvalpo.cl](http://www.memoriamusicalvalpo.cl), on which a selection of the digitalized documents of the SMSMV and research reports are available.
8. Although not a mutual aid society, this organization was focused in the mutual support. Sociedade Beneficiencia was founded in Rio de Janeiro in 1833, and followed the statutes of the Saint Cecilia Brotherhood, created in the same city, alongside the church Nossa Senhora do Porto in 1784 (Cardoso 433-444).
9. By the end of the nineteenth century, musicians' unions were established in Britain, France and the U.S. by orchestra members (Jempson 2-5; David-Guillou 289-291). A similar situation occurred with orchestral musicians in Portugal and Belgium where musicians' unions were established by the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Deniz; Murray). Although the comparison is made between different kinds of organizations, the Chilean mutual aid society is not directly comparable to these musicians' unions because of two reasons. First, at the time there were not yet musicians' unions in Chile and, secondly, the musicians' mutual aid societies of those other countries were no longer functioning, having been replaced by musicians' unions. What both types of organizations had in common was that they were created by musicians themselves, i.e. by those who made a living from music and wanted to improve musicians' working conditions. Other musicians' societies in Chile at the time, like Sociedad de Santiago, while also being created by musicians, sought to spread classical music and gather together academic musicians who did not necessarily making a living from music, rather than being formed to improve musicians' lives and working conditions,
10. Italian Pietro Cesari become Pedro Césari in Chile because, at the time, foreign names were translated into their Spanish equivalents.
11. One of his compositions was the patriotic piece, "Canto a Prat" and another the piano waltz, "Adiós a Valparaíso."
12. Rosa Fürth de González was the wife of Abraham González, President of the SMSMSV board and she was elected to hold the position of Assistant Treasurer in February 1937. However, there were women linked to the SMSMV, who also

attended some meetings but were not members of the organization. One example is those who studied in the Music Academy created by the SMSV in 1918 (see Note 17). In the general meeting of 18th January of 1919 five women performed some pieces which they had learned at this Music Academy (Sociedad, *Libro de Juntas Generales*).

13. Some guiding examples are the Sociedad de Obreras (Women Workers' Society) founded on November 1887 in Valparaiso, the Sociedad de Socorros Mutuos "Igualdad Obrera" (Mutual Aid Society "Equal Workers"), also founded in Valparaiso on November 1890, and the Sociedad de Obreras de Iquique (Iquique's Workers Society), established in May 1890 in the northern port city of Iquique (Grez, "*Regeneración*" 611- 615).
14. *Estudiantinas* was a kind of band comprised mainly of string instruments, such as guitars, *bandurrias*, mandolins and violins. However, "unlike the Spanish model, formed by university students set by a tradition dating back to the very birth of the Spanish university in the thirteenth century, Chilean *estudiantinas* were comprised of amateur musicians" (González and Rolle 61).
15. Grez considers the period from 1891 to 1924 as the height of mutualism in Chile. After 1925 mutualism entered to stage of crisis and decline when the social legislation was approved. For example, law 4.057 provided the right to unionize and the law 4.054 created a Compulsory Health Insurance for workers. Such legislation had a substantial impact on the mutual aid societies, harming them and opening the path for the creation of trade unions (Grez, "*Trayectoria*" 309).
16. For example in the session of November 6, 1926, after realizing the difficulties of assembling the majority of the members of the SMSMV, the Board decided to modify the SMSMV's election system in order to help it in such situations. In 1927 several meetings were cancelled because they were not quorate.
17. In 1918 the SMSMV created a Music Academy where the members of this Society could work as instructors and anybody in the city could attend it.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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