

# Music, Pandemics, and History

Taught by Cynthia Cyrus, [musicandpandemics@gmail.com](mailto:musicandpandemics@gmail.com)  
Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI)

Winter Term, 2022  
Mondays, 10:00-11:15

January 31:

**MUSIC AS EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY**

Remaining classes: February 7, 14, 21



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## Where we've been...

- Pandemic music's function within narratives
  - a. Apocalyptic, threatening, occasionally transcendent
  - b. an affiliate of All Things Bad, from bad boyfriends (Dysentery Gary) to the framing of war-pandemic-social collapse
- Music as intercession
  - a. Public health + musical prayer = better outcomes



## Big idea, part 1

“social and cultural factors have always played an important role in ... popular attitudes toward vaccines.”

Robert Peckham (Historian)



The Cyrus addendum:



# Music



is an important social-cultural tool  
in the public health arena





FIGURES SHOWING VACCINATION PUSTULES

From a Chinese work on Vaccination



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# 種牛痘穴分圖

痘疹分圖



early 20th century China

A Qing Dynasty diagram of a smallpox vaccination  
<https://www.sixthtone.com/news/1007516/a-brief-history-of-chinese-vaccination-campaigns>.



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Big idea, part 2:

“Pandemics arise when biological and  
social worlds collide”

Robert Peckham (Historian)



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# How to stamp out a deadly disease

Shanghai, China

October 1950—July 1951

- 1) Supplies of potent (liquid) vaccine were assured.
- 2) popular support was enlisted by intensive propaganda.
- 3) teams of vaccinators were trained.
- 4) ongoing supportive measures





# China and the smallpox campaign



~~Koradji:  
chanting~~



Chalkboards

Posters

Parodies

Operas

VACCINE



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# How Does Parody Work?

Bioterrorism Awareness: “Smallpox, the Musical”  
by Dr. Daniel Whitlock, St Cloud, MN, 2003

“The halls are  
awash, with the  
sound of  
mucus.”



An emergency room scene from "Smallpox: A Musical,"  
performed by staff at St. Cloud Hospital.,  
[http://news.minnesota.publicradio.org/features/2003/10/31\\_baxtera\\_smallpoxsongs/](http://news.minnesota.publicradio.org/features/2003/10/31_baxtera_smallpoxsongs/)



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# Familiar music, refreshed for a purpose

CBS News:  
"Neil Diamond  
changes lyrics  
to "Sweet  
Caroline" in  
coronavirus  
PSA"

Mar 23, 2020  
2M views...



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# Gloria Estefan's PSA, "Put On Your Mask"



PBS News Hour interview



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# New music inviting awareness



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# The Ballad of COVID-19 (Stay Inside)

March 2020, By Jack Buchanan



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# Bad Bunny, “En Casita,” May 10, 2020

Featuring Gabriela Berlingeri

I who wanted to see you (I who wanted to see you)  
But you won't be able to (But you won't be able to; no!)  
It's my turn to stay at home, home  
It's time to stay home, home (It's time to stay home)  
I who wanted to see you (I who wanted to see you)  
But it won't be possible (No, no, no, no!)  
It's time to stay home, home (Ah)  
It's time to stay home, home (Hey, hey)



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Audience-appropriate (the Kidboomers)...



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The same rules can apply for adults...



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00:00:03:22  
The vaccine believe it's safe to take  
**ANIMATIC**



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# Similar to AIDS intervention in Africa

**Azi senzeni na** -- By Bongani Magatyana



South African  
Peer Educators



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**Music's strongest role is awareness.**

*– Tute Chigamba, Zimbabwean teacher*

Africans listen to music more than they read books or newspapers or watch TV. Musicians have the opportunity and potential to reach our people and educate them.

*– Anonymous Cameroonian interlocutor*





## Thomas Mapfumo's "Mukondombera" (1994) from *Hondo*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cD50qbF3EAU>, 1.41-2.47

Amaihweee tapera tose  
amaihweee tapera tose  
vakomana topera tose  
vasikana chirwere chauya  
chirwere chauya panyika  
tamba wakachenjera pasi pano paipa  
chenjera chirwere chauya .....  
shamhu huru yatumwa na Mwari

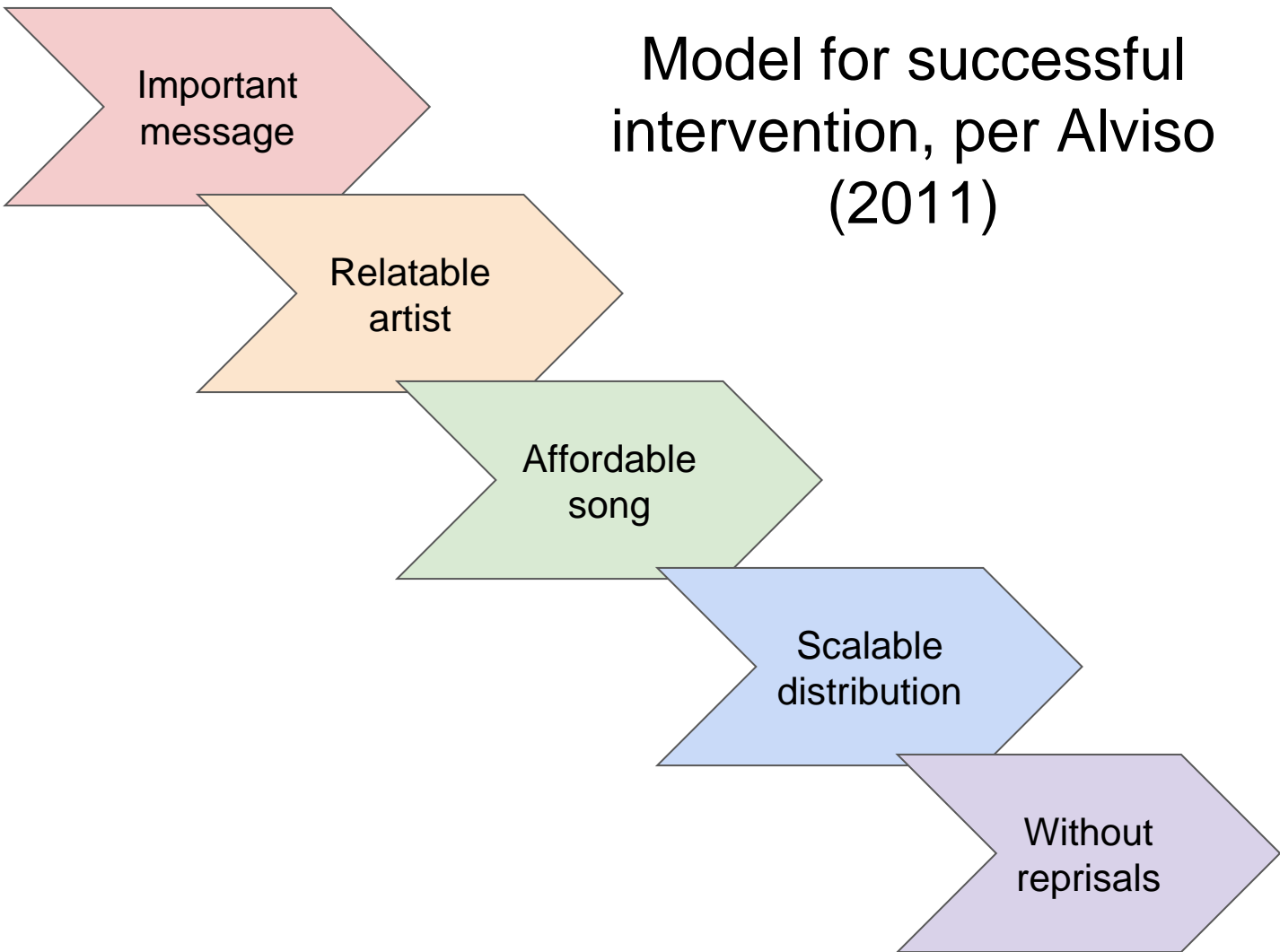
You should stop fooling around, men  
You should stop fooling around, girls,  
Beware of this plague,  
this illness has come,  
If you are not afraid, you will perish  
play smart in this evil world  
beware the plague is coming .....  
a great scourge sent by God

A repeated chorus frames the verses; the first verse (given here)  
is 1.41-2.36



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# Model for successful intervention, per Alviso (2011)



# Intervention was hard, even in the USA

1981( Bobbi Campbell) > 1983 (first funding) > 1985 (Ryan White)

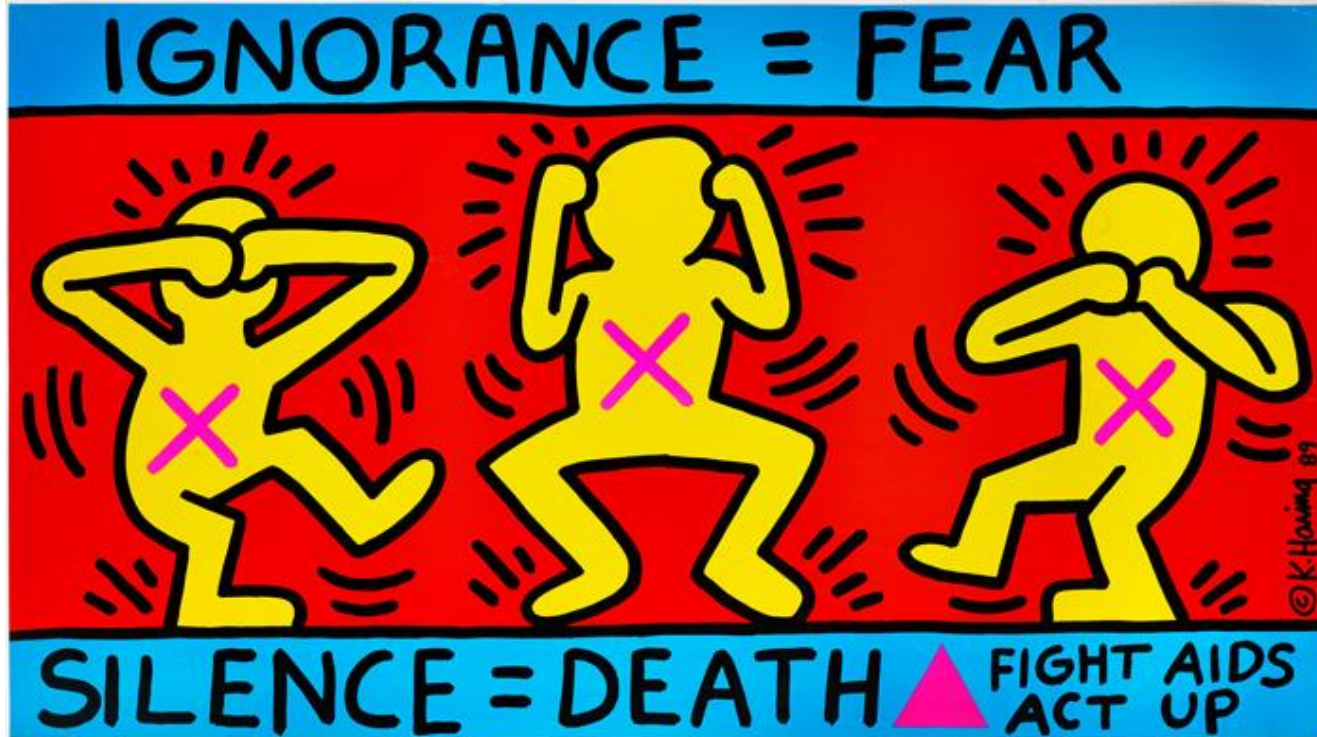
“gay cancer”



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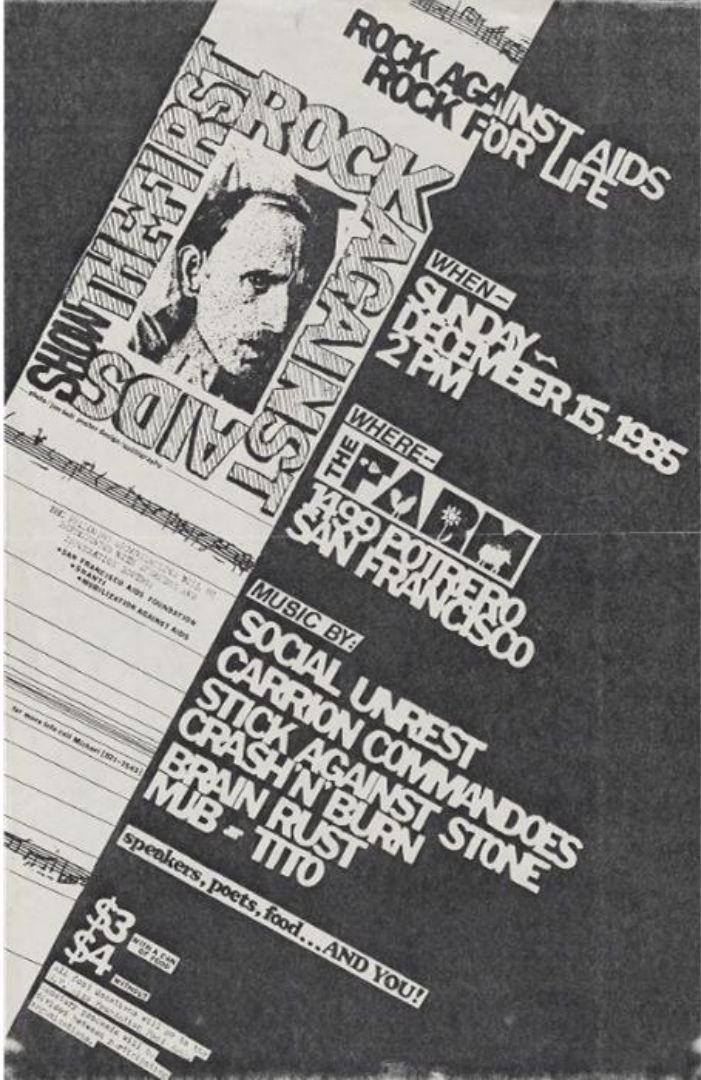


ACT UP: “How long does it take before you get angry and fight back?”



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# Fundraising, 1985

“Rock against AIDS / Rock For Life”

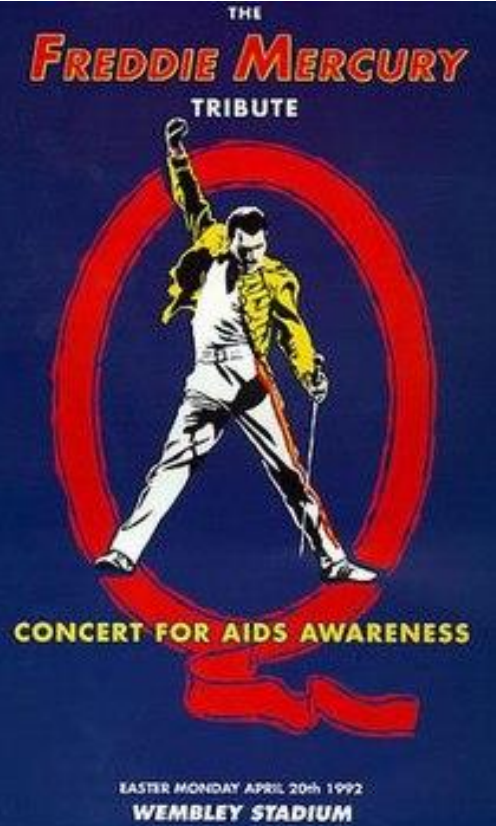
Note: Rock Hudson disclosed his diagnosis in 1985

We could finally talk about the illness.



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# Freddie Mercury Tribute Concert, 1992



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# Fundraising and Charity: Empowered Musicians

- 1985: "That's What Friends Are For" -- **American Foundation for AIDS Research (AmFAR)** -- **Dionne Warwick, Stevie Wonder, Gladys Knight and Elton John**
- 1991: "Don't Let the Sun Go Down on Me" -- 10 **Charities for AIDS**, children, and education -- **George Michael, Elton John**
- 1992: "One" -- Proceeds going towards **AIDS research** -- **U2**
  - "The band feels that [AIDS] is the most pressing issue of the day, and we really have to focus people's attention to the AIDS plague that has been with us for 10 years."
- 2001: "What's Going On" -- **Artists against AIDS Worldwide** -- [MISC]
- 2007: "Sing" -- **Treatment Action Campaign** -- **Annie Lennox** in collaboration with **Madonna** and 22 other artists
- 2009: "Home" -- **AIDS Project Los Angeles** -- **La Toya Jackson**





# AIDS Quilt (1987)



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Most songs are about crucial times in  
our lives...

So, why can't we sing about AIDS?



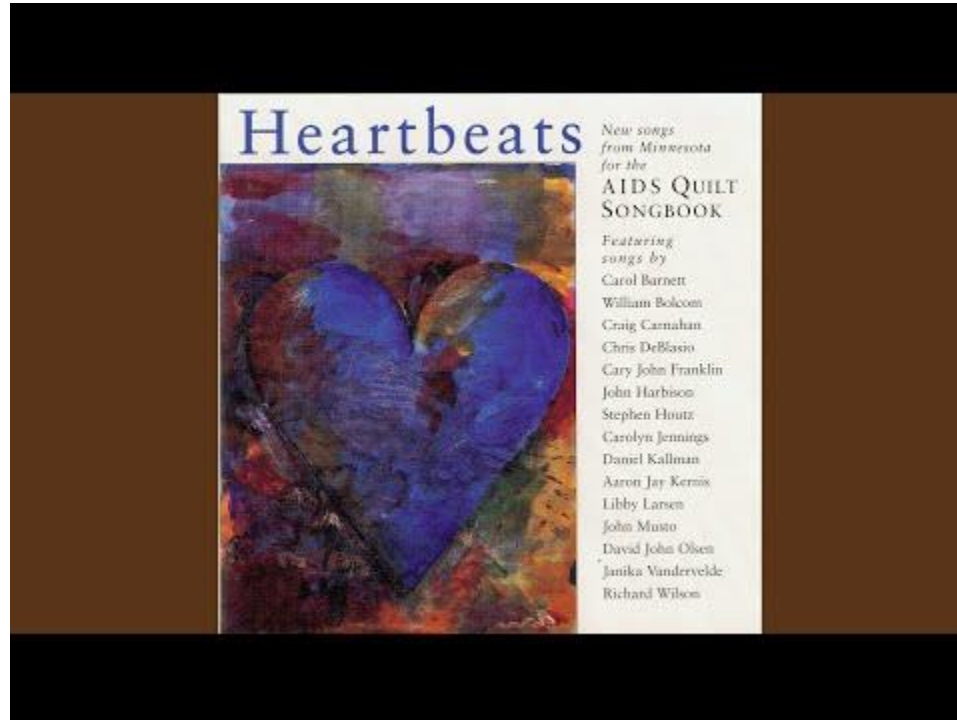
—Baritone **William Parker**



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# AIDS Quilt Songbook: Libby Larsen, Perineo

“I hold out my  
now, empty. I  
breathe in my  
trust. ...I  
breathe in my  
health... in  
and out...in  
and out.”





# TLC, “Waterfalls” (1994)

seven weeks at No. 1  
on Billboard Hot 100

2 Grammys

AIDS is popular  
culture’s concern...  
finally



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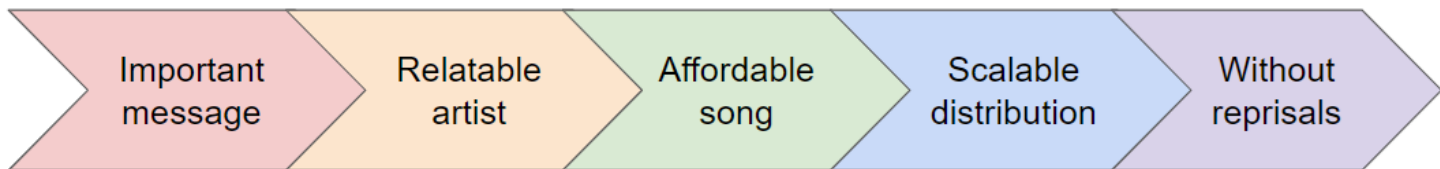
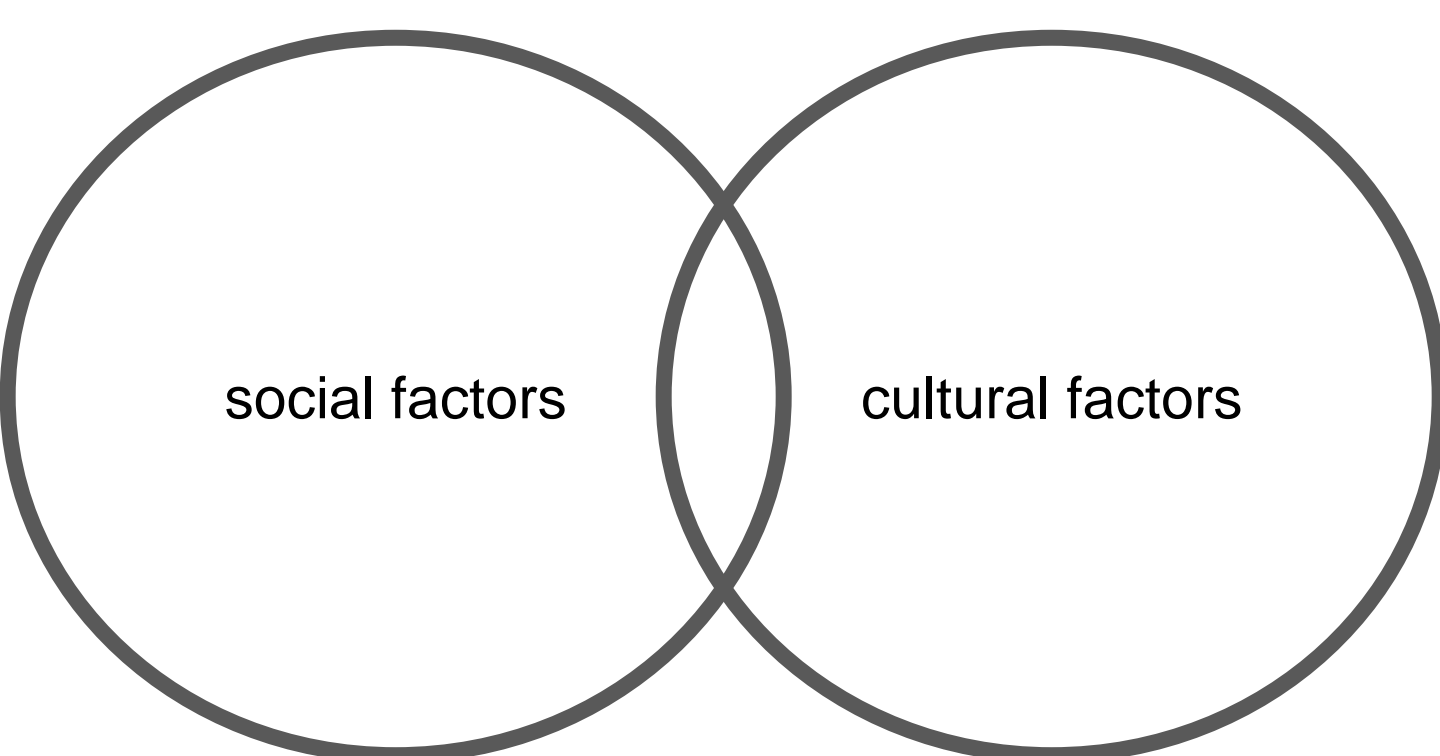


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The Cyrus addendum:



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# Bibliography

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Bull World Health Organ. 1981; 59(6): 913–917. PMID: 6978198. PMCID: PMC2396138.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2396138/>

Ric Alviso, "Tears Run Dry: Coping with AIDS through Music in Zimbabwe"

Gregory Barz, *Singing for Life: HIV/AIDS and Music in Uganda*

Gregory Barz, *The Culture of AIDS in Africa: Hope and Healing in Music and the Arts* (Ed.)

Fraser G. McNeill, *AIDS, Politics, and Music in South Africa*



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# On-Call: COVID-19 – extended access to the opera

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xDb70FfOSMc>

And, their website and the playbill is here:

<https://bellissimaopera.com/covidopera/>



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Questions,  
Observations,  
Discussion?



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