

Descriptions of Selected Songs in Common Thread Repertoire Fall 2025 (v3)

(more songs to follow)

A Beautiful Noise [English]

- Song was co-written by eight female songwriters from various backgrounds
- The origin of the song goes back to Ali Harnell, a senior female executive at Live Nation who wanted to do something special for 2020, since it would be the 100th anniversary of women's right to vote in the United States. She first contacted Brandy Clark, one of co-writers of the song.
- But it was Keys and Carlisle who went on to perform the song on "Every Vote Counts: A Celebration of Democracy" a 2020 CBS television special and the two released it as a record, which won a Grammy nomination
- Carlile said in a statement "The evolution of 'A Beautiful Noise' represents a group of incredible women from all different walks of life coming together with a universal message of hope and empowerment....It is an important reminder that we all have a voice and that our voices count." Keys said "Everyone has the power to make beautiful noise and to lift others up with their voice. And now more than ever, we need to let those voices be heard by voting."

<https://www.nme.com/news/music/watch-alicia-keys-and-brandi-carlile-premiere-new-song-a-beautiful-noise-2804881>

<https://variety.com/2020/music/news/alicia-keys-brandi-carlile-duet-beautiful-noise-vote-special-single-1234819508/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Beautiful_Noise

Do You Hear the People Sing? [English]

- Composed by Claude-Michel Schönberg (music), Alain Boublil and Jean-Marc Natel (original French lyrics), and Herbert Kretzmer (English lyrics)
- Song comes from the 1985 English adaptation of Les Misérables, a musical based on a Victor Hugo novel of the same name
- The setting for the song is Paris in 1832, about 30 years after the French Revolution, during the funeral procession for a general who was sympathetic to the poor
- During the procession, the students start to rebel against the king and against their social conditions
- The song has been used widely as a protest song against governments including in Wisconsin, Turkey, Hong Kong, Ukraine, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and South Korea.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/features/les-miserables-hong-kong-protests-do-you-hear-the-people-sing-musical-a9081401.html>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Do_You_Hear_the_People_Sing

<https://myhistorycafe.com/2015/02/11/the-history-behind-les-miserables>

<https://www.afterglowatx.com/blog/2020/4/24/songs-of-protest-how-do-you-hear-the-people-sing-tells-the-universal-story-of-rebellion>

El pueblo unido [Spanish]

- This song was written by Chilean musician Sergio Ortega in conjunction with the Chilean folk group Quilapayún.
- Ortega had been inspired by hearing the phrase “el pueblo unido jamás será vencido” chanted by a man in the street. That chant had been circulating in Latin America since the 1930s when Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, a leading Columbian socialist politician had used it in a speech.
- Both the chant and the song became associated with support of the government of Salvador Allende, the democratically elected socialist, who was overthrown in a military coup d’état fomented by the CIA in 1973, three months after the song had been performed and recorded by Ortega and Quilapayún at a massive concert, and shortly after Sergio Ortega had been appointed Cultural Ambassador of the government. The musicians went into exile afterwards
- Someone involved with that concert is seen on a recent documentary, Hymno, saying of the song when sung there: “it was like throwing a lit match in a meadow...we were amazed by their reaction”
- And indeed, the song has continued to spread like wildfire across the world. There are over 130 recorded versions of the song in over 25 languages. And the song and chant continues to appear in protests around the globe.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5xddDFgwXOk>

<https://stanforddaily.com/2019/09/30/music-x-revolution>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_pueblo_unido_jam%C3%A1s_ser%C3%A1_vencido

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sergio_Ortega_\(composer\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sergio_Ortega_(composer))

Lead with Love (One Foot In Front of the Other)

- Song created by Melanie DeMore an African-American Grammy nominated singer/composer, choral conductor, music director, and vocal activist
- She wrote it on the day following the election of Donald Trump in 2016 in response to the fears expressed by the Latinx and Black children she was instructing at the time
- The song tells us to keep going and to “lead with love.” She has said that she was thinking of those inspirational leaders who have led, motivated by a love, rather than hate of others -- leaders such as Nelson Mandela, Mother Theresa, and Martin Luther King.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=eUbtA8A-Ug>

More Waters [English]

- This song was written in March 2016 by Saro Lynch-Thomason of Asheville, NC, after the passage of the infamous "bathroom bill," HB2, that prevented transgender people from using bathrooms consistent with their gender.
- Lynch-Thomason posted the song on her website in 2017 in response to the early days following the Trump election
- According to her, "this song is about seeing what's coming on the horizon: harder times that are inevitable and unavoidable. But the answer to the fear of what's coming is resiliency and claiming a strength within ourselves that has been there all along."
- She also said that aspects of this song were inspired from elements of African-American Civil Rights and protest songs.

Never No More Again [English]

Never No More Again was written by Terry Tufts, a Canadian singer-songwriter-guitarist who lives off the grid in Ontario with his pianist wife Kathryn Briggs. The song was released on his Transparent Blue CD in 1990 with the title "Never No More" [which I think must be the correct title, rather than Never No More Again??].

Tufts wrote on a webpage "I wrote this [song] after watching the Canadian political debate of 1988 (Ed Broadbent, John Turner, and Myron Baloney *[NB: the latter is Tufts name for Brian Mulroney]*). Free trade was on the block and all the other relevant issues went out the window."

The correction we made in bars 62 to 65 reflect the changes the songwriter made to the lyrics after recording his song. The lyrics "with might and pluck bold vic'try struck on the shores of Chateauguay," refer to a battle in the war of 1812 during which Canadian, British and Mohawk forces repelled American forces.

<https://citizenfreak.com/titles/319349-tufts-terry-transparent-blue>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Terry_Tufts

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_the_Chateauguay

Never Turning Back

- Was created in 1984 by activist singer-composer-activist Pat Humphries, now part of the singing duo known as Emma's Revolution
- Humphries tells a story of how she had just graduated university and had been offered a full-time job with benefits
- But before deciding whether to accept the position, she felt she needed to go to a songwriting workshop put on by singer-composer-activist Si Kahn, who had encouraged her to attend, since she had already been doing some singing in public

- While driving from Ohio to the Omega Institute in the New York State countryside she kept saying the phrase “Never Turning Back” to herself, as she anticipated pursuing music instead of the nice stable job she had been offered
- She turned that phrase into a song at the workshop, and by the end of the week, it was being sung across the Omega Institute retreat campus
- From there the song became closely associated with the women’s movement, even being sung at the United Nations 1995 Conference on Women in Beijing, where 30,000 women sang the song together

<https://americanswhotellthetruth.org/portraits/pat-humphries/>

<https://emmasrevolution.com/track/1288953/never-turning-back>

<https://www.eomega.org/article/songwriting-as-a-radical-act>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uE1UBdYdehM&list=RDuE1UBdYdehM&start_radio=1 (CT version)