

The History of Presidential Campaign Music
Lecture Notes
Eric T. Kasper and Benjamin S. Schoening

[SLIDE ONE]

- A. Introduction: Why Music Matters in Politics (**Why does it matter?**)
1. Emotional appeal of music
 - a. Overt and covert messages
 - b. Most effective vehicle of propaganda
 2. Mnemonic Device (helps you remember)
 3. Political Meaning in Music
 - a. Protest music examples – Civil Rights Movement, Women’s Movement, Anti-Vietnam War Movement
 4. Government Use of Music
 - a. National anthems
 - b. Military marches
 - c. Propaganda: Cold War, War in Iraq
 5. Censorship
 - a. Plato’s *Republic* recommends government control of music
 - b. 1920s – Soviet Union bans the old Russian national anthem, “God Save the Tsar”
 - c. 1980s – Zaire creates a Music Censorship Commission
 - d. Today – North Korea imposes imprisonment for those who listen to foreign radio broadcasts
 6. Campaigns
 - a. A way to get the message out in a “safe” way
 - b. Emotionally-charged way to get out the message
 - c. A way to get people out to rallies to volunteer
- B. Early Use of Campaign Music – Songs with lyrics written about the candidates (1780s-1920s)
1. “Follow Washington” (1789)
 - a. Written more as coronation music
 - b. Lyrics: http://lyrics.wikia.com/wiki/Oscar_Brand:Follow_Washington
 2. “Tippecanoe and Tyler Too” (1840)
 - a. Written for William Harrison and John Tyler
 - b. Printing Technology & Songbooks
 - c. Expansion of the Right to Vote
 - d. Negative Campaigning
 - e. According to contemporary observers, this song “sang” Harrison into the presidency.
 - f. Lyrics: https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Tippecanoe_and_Tyler_too
 3. “Lincoln and Liberty” (1860)
 - a. Written and performed by the Hutchinson Family Singers for Lincoln
 - b. First case of celebrity being used by/for presidential candidate
 - c. Lyrics: <http://balladofamerica.com/music/indexes/songs/lincolnandliberty/index.htm>
 4. “Turn the Rascals Out” (1892) (no example available)
 - a. Written for Cleveland’s second election for a second term run

- b. One of the earliest examples of complete new songs (new text and music)

[SLIDE TWO]

C. The Radio and TV Era of Campaign Music – Appeals to celebrity; using the new media (1930s-1970s)

1. “Happy Days Are Here Again” – Ben Selvin and the Crooners (1932)
 - a. Used by Franklin Roosevelt
 - b. Pop song, completely adopted without changes (but this was still rare)
 - c. Trying to cheer people up during the Great Depression and think about the future
 - d. Lyrics: <http://www.exelana.com/lyrics/HappyDaysAreHereAgain.html>
2. “I Like Ike” (1952)
 - a. Melding TV & Song
 - b. Cartoonish
3. “Kennedy” (1960)
 - a. Like a radio advertisement with accompanying pictures

[SLIDE THREE]

D. The Pop Music Era – Using pre-existing music; same tactics as social movements; appealing to younger voters (1970s–present)

1. “Bridge Over Troubled Water” – Simon & Garfunkel (1972)
 - a. George McGovern campaign song
 - b. About the Vietnam War
 - c. Lyrics: <http://www.paulsimon.com/us/music/paul-simons-concert-park-august-15-1991/bridge-over-troubled-water>
2. “God Bless the U.S.A.” – Lee Greenwood (1984)
 - a. Ronald Reagan campaign song
 - b. The entire song works for the candidate
 - c. Appeal to patriotism, freedom, military, American symbols
 - d. Lyrics: <http://www.metrolyrics.com/god-bless-the-usa-lyrics-lee-greenwood.html>
3. “Don’t Stop” – Fleetwood Mac (1992)
 - a. Clinton campaign song
 - b. Message – he would take the country in a new direction
 - c. Focus moves to the “one-line” wonder: campaigns look to the use of a song’s hook for their message, ignoring the larger message behind the original song
 - d. Shorter attention spans
 - e. Misrepresentation? (The song was written about a break-up between two band members)
 - f. Lyrics: <http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/fleetwoodmac/dontstop.html>
4. “I Won’t Back Down” – Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers (2000)
 - a. Used by George W. Bush campaign
 - b. A song about standing up for your beliefs
 - c. Used without permission – Petty threatened to sue
 - d. Lyrics: <http://www.metrolyrics.com/i-wont-back-down-lyrics-tom-petty.html>

[SLIDE FOUR]

- E. The Internet Era – YouTube; Unsolicited music; letting supporters decide your song; candidates singing; extended playlists; overlaps with the Pop Era (2000s-present)
1. “I Got a Crush on Obama” – Amber Lee Ettinger (2008)
 - a. Sexually suggestive
 - b. Not the attention the Obama campaign really wanted
 - c. Lyrics: http://www.lyricsmania.com/i_got_a_crush_on_obama_lyrics_obamagirl.html
 2. “Obama Anthem” – Glenn Beck (2008)
 - a. Negative lyrics about Obama
 - b. Set to the tune of the old Soviet National Anthem
 3. “You and I” – Celine Dion (2008)
 - a. Hillary Clinton allowed her supporters to vote for her campaign song by completing an online ballot.
 - b. Controversy – song by a Canadian singer, originally written for a Canadian airline advertisement
 - c. Lyrics: <http://www.metrolyrics.com/you-and-i-lyrics-celine-dion.html>
 4. “America the Beautiful” – Sung by Mitt Romney (2012)
 - a. Performing candidate: a trend begun by Clinton with his saxophone
 - b. Singing voice not very good...
 5. “We Take Care of Our Own” – Bruce Springsteen (2012)
 - a. Obama’s main theme song
 - b. One of 28 songs on his Spotify playlist
 - c. About protecting those who are vulnerable
 - d. Lyrics: <http://www.springsteenlyrics.com/lyrics.php?song=wetakecareofourown>
 6. “Born Free” – Kid Rock (2012)
 - a. Romney campaign song
 - b. One of 19 songs on his Spotify playlist
 - c. About being able to do what you want (without government interference)
 - d. Much different than his 2008 song – “A Little Less Conversation”
 - e. Lyrics: <http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/kidrock/bornfree.html>
 - f. Lyrics: <http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/kidrock/bornfree.html>
- F. **If you were running for president, which song would you choose?**

For additional information on the history of campaign music, please see Benjamin S. Schoening and Eric T. Kasper, *Don't Stop Thinking About The Music: The Politics of Songs and Musicians In Presidential Campaigns* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2012).

