

in her research. One notable example is her analysis of “Finding My Way,” a song composed by Stewart Wilson, who became homeless at twelve (158). Harrison’s analysis elaborates the intense struggles and survival endeavours of a vulnerable musician. By making the urban poor’s challenges in life and successes through music-making visible, she encourages the reader to empathize with them.

Harrison compellingly uses ethnography to show the feelings and emotions of vulnerable and marginalized musicians and music therapists. Many of her research participants face anxiety and PTSD that the process of music-making controls and reduces. She traces the enhancement of capabilities of the urban poor by explaining the progress of their mental state through music. An interview with Indigenous participant Taninli explores this progress of finding belonging in music-making spaces (125). While the reader may wish to see more extensive explorations of such affective experiences of the participants, the examples selected are quite evocative.

Overall, Klisala Harrison’s *Music Downtown Eastside* is a significant text for academic and non-academic readers to understand and empathize with the urban poor in Canada. This book can become an essential text for the disciplines of music, ethnomusicology, applied ethnomusicology, development studies, and Canadian studies. 🍀

Slominski, Tes. 2020. *Trad Nation: Gender, Sexuality, and Race in Irish Traditional Music*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press. 238 pp.

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“How Irish is Irish traditional music?” is the tag line for *Trad Nation*. A loaded question, but in this timely and important monograph, ethnomusicologist Tes Slominski is in fact asking a more nuanced, more consequential, and likely more contentious question: How Irish — if normative “Irishness” is read as white, male, cisgendered, heterosexual, and nominally of Irish ancestry — should Irish traditional music be, and how might it move beyond the strictures of an ethnic nationalism that excludes certain sounds and bodies from both its history and present-day activities? It is worth noting, for those less familiar with this musical genre, that Irish traditional music today has a global reach and is played by many musicians who are not ethnically Irish in a transnational “network of scenes” that includes not only Ireland but also Britain, the United States, Canada, Australia, Germany, France, and Japan, among other countries (16, 165).

Slominski’s first stated aim is to “introduce musicians and topics that have not been discussed widely — or at all — in the existing literature on Irish traditional music” (5). She accomplishes this goal amply, first via three historical chapters focusing on women traditional musicians in 20th-century Ireland, and then with two ethnographic chapters that bring to light the experiences of women, queer, and non-white musicians in the present-day scene. Her ultimate goal, however — her

stated second aim — is to “argue for the separation of Irish traditional music from Irish ethnic nationalism” (5). This is a tall order, and it is to Slominski’s credit that she takes a fairly non-polemical approach; instead, she grounds her argument in meticulous archival and ethnographic research. Still, it’s not difficult to imagine the naysayers, as Slominski herself recognizes (with typically forthright phrasing): “Some readers might ask why a genre tied to Christian whiteness played in societies still organized around reproductive heteropatriarchy should concern itself with race, sexuality, or gender” (153). At a time when RTÉ, Ireland’s national broadcaster, is reporting headlines such as “#Mise-fosta calls halt to sexual wrongdoing in traditional Irish music” (Murphy 2020), however, Slominski’s argument deserved a considered hearing.

Chapter 1 examines the place of early 20th-century women musicians, such as Bridget Kenny, May McCarthy, Mollie Morrissey, and Mary Kilcar, in Irish traditional music history. Using a rich set of archival sources, including poetry, song, newspapers, political cartoons, and tune collections, Slominski argues that only certain tropes of womanhood — namely, nurturing mother or innocent maiden — were legible in the context of the Irish nationalist movement of the early 20th century. She examines the slippage between nation-as-woman/woman-as-nation and women-as-people, arguing that the historical legibility of the latter is determined in part by their alignment with the former, but also noting that the categories of “mother” and “maiden” were restricted by social class and social norms. This chapter closes with a counterexample in the person of flute player Lucy Farr who, because

she was a spinster, never played outside her house and goes unmentioned in Captain Francis O’Neill’s canonical *Irish Minstrels and Musicians* (1913).

Chapter 2 is both a profile of fiddler and dancer Treasa Ní Ailpín (1894–1983) and a critique of the gendered underpinnings of a common present-day discourse that pits art music and traditional music against one another. As Slominski notes, women were much more likely than men to receive formal musical training in early 20th-century Ireland, but that did not preclude them from also being accomplished traditional players. This chapter is a tour-de-force of the workings of historical forgetting: The under-representation of women on early commercial recordings of Irish traditional music; the ways in which context might cause a recording to misrepresent a musician’s style (for instance, when Ní Ailpín recorded tunes for transcription, she likely omitted ornamentation); and the gendered double standard of style that labels women’s use of vibrato in slow airs “inauthentic,” while men who do the same become valued tradition bearers. For readers involved in Irish traditional music or dance, though, the bombshell drops when Slominski connects several threads from Irish dance history and Ní Ailpín’s scant recording history to argue convincingly that Ní Ailpín was the composer of ultra-popular céilí dances “The Walls of Limerick” and “The Siege of Ennis.”

Chapter 3 tells the story of Julia Clifford, one of the few women to be enshrined in the Irish traditional music canon of tradition bearers. In Slominski’s telling, Clifford was a forthright woman who was “mad for the tunes” and navigated the gendered structures of her worlds, in Ireland and England, so as to maximize her play-

ing time. Slominski offers a rich variety of source material, including Clifford's own words, interviews with those who knew her, and a close listening of her recordings. Framing the chapter as a reflection on biographical writing, Slominski notes that biographers must balance writing about an individual ("who") with their place in a larger social grouping ("what") and asks how the "who" of Clifford's gender shaped the "what" of her work as an Irish traditional musician. At the same time, she demonstrates how Clifford navigated the "who" in such a way as to claim more space for the "what." Rather than recounting Clifford's full life story, this chapter instead uses biography to reflect on her place in the narrative of Irish traditional music. As such, it acts as a linchpin, connecting the first two chapters with the last two, which are based primarily on ethnographic research.

The final two chapters foreground the voices of women, queer, and non-white musicians in present-day Irish traditional music. Chapter 4 begins from the premise that "the music itself" has agency, that it urges us in certain directions, and that the give-and-take relationship between musicians and sounding tunes — Slominski references Suzanne Cusick's "On a Lesbian Relationship with Music" here — generates a desirable state of "flow." This is a participatory, community-centred genre in which "most Irish traditional musicians live for a good session" (104). A "good" session depends on relationships between musicians and tunes as well as between musicians. This flow may be interrupted, however, by the interpersonal dynamics of the session. As much as the "music itself" might want to engage with all musicians, humans put up barriers to other humans

and, in the contexts described by Slominski, especially to women, queer, and racialized musicians. These musicians are then more likely to leave the scene for more welcoming spaces.

Chapter 5 brings together the historical and ethnographic work of the previous chapters to interrogate belonging in the world of Irish traditional music. Citing Althusser, Slominski describes the "ideologies that operate in trad" (154) and asks who is "interpellated" as an Irish traditional musician, and how. What follows is an incisive discussion on the topic of whiteness in Irish traditional music and how whiteness may be conflated with Irishness: the common assumption, for instance, that a white musician in this genre is of Irish descent, or the way that whiteness allows non-ethnically Irish musicians to claim a sort of honorary Irishness. Meanwhile, for non-white musicians, including those of Irish descent, Irishness is not an option; rather, they confront the "aggression of disbelief" (165). This chapter also draws a connection between the aesthetic valuing of silence in Irish traditional music and the silencing or exclusion of certain bodies and voices. As Slominski notes, it is one thing to appreciate the spaces between the notes and the words unsaid between sets of tunes, and quite another to promote what amounts to a culture of silence around sexual harassment and a "don't ask, don't tell" policy with regards to homosexuality or genderqueer musicians. And for musicians of colour, passing by remaining silent is, of course, impossible.

Trad Nation poses questions that go well beyond Irish traditional music. How does cultural nationalism map onto the bodies of musicians and their sonic outputs? Why do we associate the native with

the natural and the foreign with the artificial, and gender the former as male and the latter as female? How can participants in a musical scene reshape the assumptions of normative and Otherness that guide interpersonal interactions within that scene? Can we write women, queer, and non-white musicians back into history not by foregrounding their exceptionalism but simply by documenting their presence?

Trad Nation will have broad appeal across the disciplines of ethnomusicology, musicology, and folklore for its subject matter, solid theoretical grounding, and rigorous historical and ethnographic research. Scholars of Irish traditional music will find new readings of well-known musicians and repertoire here, as well as some new faces and voices. Chapters from this book would work well as readings for both undergraduate and graduate courses. This monograph will also be of interest to a global audience of Irish traditional musicians, who will likely appreciate Slominski's critical insider perspective and learn from her research into overlooked histories.

Trad Nation is a well-written and arresting critique of the Irish traditional music scene. It addresses issues around gender, race, and sexuality that are rarely, if ever, discussed openly in that scene. Slominski is deeply embedded in this musical world and her first-hand experience coupled with her critical lens make this a deeply engaging book. 🍀

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As “the first book-length comparative historical and comparative examination of women and popular music in Asia,” (4) *Vamping the Stage* adopts an Asia-centric approach to studying female entertainers from the early 20th century to the present. As a whole, this edited collection argues that modernity in Asia has been marked by female performers' movement “from the margins to the mainstream” and that this centrality of the female entertainer has strongly shaped Asian popular cultures. The connecting thread that makes this comparative approach work is the early 20th-century development of the cultural