



song was picked for a wedding) and how this might inform future decisions (like what music to play at a funeral). In her concluding chapter, Istvandy makes a plea for more work connecting music and memory, particularly ‘in a time of increasing availability of music’, in which there has been a surge in ‘the ability to use soundtracks more reflexively than ever’ (p. 140). Additionally, the author claims that *The Lifetime Soundtrack* offers a conceptualisation of, and a vehicle for, researching musical memories in everyday life beyond anecdotal snippets.

The strength of this book lies in its rich presentation and discussion of the interview fragments: the participants’ narratives are presented abundantly and offer strong illustrations of the notion of ‘the lifetime soundtrack’. Although it is sometimes distracting to read through lengthy interviews, they do shore up Istvandy’s arguments and observations. The quotes offer clear and lively illustrations of the theory. Even if the conclusions drawn from these personal memories seem self-evident sometimes, this is because the testimonies are often surprisingly universal and relatable to one’s own music memories. This makes this book highly accessible and enjoyable to read, including for an audience outside of academia.

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***Sounding Dissent: Rebel Songs, Resistance, and Irish Republicanism.* By Stephen R. Millar. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2020. 264 pp. ISBN 978-0-472-13194-5**

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In October 2022, a social media storm ensued following the Republic of Ireland women’s football team’s win to qualify for the 2023 World Cup. Video footage emerged of the team singing the chorus of The Wolfe Tones’ ‘Celtic Symphony’, showing the women dancing and singing the lyrics ‘Ooh ah up the RA’ (repeated six times) as they celebrated. The offending lyrics in question – written by the band’s Brian Warfield in 1987 to commemorate the centennial of the Celtic Football Club – allegedly refer to graffiti around Glasgow but are taken by many as vocalising support for the Irish Republican Army. Thus the team’s historic win was somewhat overshadowed by the overwhelmingly negative media responses leading to a formal apology from Football Association of Ireland, and later, a EUR 20,000 fine from UEFA for violating ‘the basic rules of decent conduct’. Yet contrary to the team’s remorse, the general public response to the incident appeared to tell a different story. The song swiftly re-entered the charts both in Ireland and the UK, reaching the number 1 and 2 spots, respectively. This incident highlights the ongoing tensions accompanying contemporary performances of Irish rebel music that have not – and may never truly – dissipate. And with a photograph of the song’s composer Warfield (and his banjo) on the cover, this controversy further illustrates – quite fittingly – the very real anxieties and continuing tensions surrounding Irish rebel songs today that Stephen Millar examines in his book *Sounding Dissent*:

Rebel Songs, Resistance, and Irish Republicanism. Indeed, this viral video reveals the very disjuncture Millar problematises in his book, whereby some see singing rebel songs as a 'relatively safe and benign means to offer tribute to the past rather than support for continued paramilitary activity' (p. 185).

Sounding Dissent offers a thorough and original analysis of the ways in which popular music and politics intertwine throughout the history of Irish republicanism and the composition and performance of Irish rebel music. Centred on contemporary ethnographic research conducted with Irish republican musicians in (West-)Belfast and bolstered by archival research and musical analysis of a wide repertoire of Irish songs, Millar offers the first in-depth scholarship on Irish rebel music – a music that, as the incident above shows, is still very much listened to and performed today in Ireland and beyond. The book is effectively prefaced by Millar's own positionality as a Scottish researcher of mixed Scots-Irish and Catholic-Protestant heritage, which may help explain Millar's ability to conduct such impressively comprehensive fieldwork in such a highly polarised site. Citing the damage caused by some recent examples of researchers working in Northern Ireland, Millar also provides a thoughtful overview of the unique concerns and ethical considerations taken on board in doing this research, which makes for essential reading for any ethnographers working in such an environment.

The book moves forward chronologically and quickly, starting with a useful, if tentative, definition of Irish rebel music, and masterfully traces the connection between today's rebel songs and historical sources such as broadside ballads and Fenian songs. Irish rebel songs, as Millar explains, become a way of being heard, a way of articulating narratives and memories of oppression and violence, while simultaneously playing a role in the reproduction of opposition, dissent and marginalisation. As such, *Sounding Dissent* goes a long way to reveal what has been ignored. Millar glides through Ireland's and Northern Ireland's history, pausing to examine key songs from the rebel canon such as 'Kevin Barry', 'Four Green Fields' and 'Back Home in Derry', or at significant moments that yielded particularly musical responses, including the 1916 Easter Rising, Bloody Sunday, the H-Block Hunger Strikes and many, many more.

Millar's writing is perhaps at its most persuasive in Chapter Three's discussion of the 'sounds of internment' and how music became weaponised during this especially dark period in Northern Irish history. Here Millar details the mundane and yet distressing ways that music as torture became routine by both republicans and the state during The Troubles (1968–1998), through the psychological pain of forcing republican internees to sing loyalist songs, and the physiological pain of inflicting music at extremely loud volumes, bringing new examples to the growing field of music and trauma studies (Cusick 2008; Rogers 2021). Millar continues by detailing how republicans responded by writing works that fit the 'well-established patterns of musical propaganda' and shun 'historical accuracy for emotional affect' (p. 113). In Chapter Four, Millar describes the more positive ways in which music aided and abetted political prisoners interred at the H-Blocks, where music helped support those inside, and old and new songs were used as a source of deep comfort and sustenance. For Millar, Irish rebel songs are used as sonic weapons and acoustic shields, as well as social activities.

Profoundly – and perhaps proudly – revisionist, Millar's project is ambitious in identifying the many people and practices that went behind writing and re-constructing rebel songs in an Irish context. He meticulously records how rebel


songs' texts were often written to be sung over well-known pre-existing melodies, which aided a more effective circulation. While some Irish readers may be aware that many song texts were often written by those on the front lines or behind bars, it may come as new information to international readers that such well-known ballads as 'Back Home in Derry' were written by Irish republican Bobby Sands while in prison isolation. The military and militant ties within rebel music are continually explored in several later chapters. In Chapter Six, for example, Millar describes how despite being in a post-Good Friday Agreement era, Belfast's contemporary rebel music scene remains rife with violent references. From musicians playing gun-shaped guitars to songs that sample the sounds of actual gunfire, together these analyses exemplify Irish rebel music's multifaceted concept of ethics and aesthetics, of violence and of resistance. The chapters, then, work either in order or in isolation, and may be useful in teaching at undergraduate and graduate levels across an array of subjects (not least ethno/musicology, Irish studies, anthropology and peace and conflict studies). While these chapters can make for difficult reading at times, Millar's scholarship on this otherwise little-known subject matter is an immensely rich and important contribution to the field.

The history of Irish rebel music – and Irish republicanism writ large – has largely been voiced from a male perspective. If there was one omission in this otherwise exceptionally comprehensive book, it is that the voices and experiences of women in the Irish rebel music scene are almost completely absent. Millar acknowledges from the outset that the rebel music scene is overwhelmingly dominated by men on stage, in recordings and in audiences, stating that 'there are clear parallels here between the exclusion of women from the republican narrative and their lack of representation within the rebel music scene' (p. 6). Granted, it would have been impossible to include every song by everyone, and as the first in-depth study of Irish rebel music the book covers a remarkable breadth of repertoire over 100 years. Some songs and stories of women's role in the republican cause were briefly mentioned at various points in the book, such as 'Bring Them Home', written about two sisters Marian and Delours Price, and Kathleen Largey's collaboration with the Flying Column. The role of other Irish women who were active republicans and folk singers, such as Kathleen Behan (who recorded a folk album and appeared on RTÉ and BBC radio and television), appeared to be completely absent from the contemporary Irish rebel soundtrack. Perhaps others will be inspired to build on Millar's extensive groundwork to continue research into these – and many other – forgotten women in the history of Irish republicanism and rebel song.

With its overarching theme of the intricate relationship between music and agendas of justice, it is fitting that *Sounding Dissent* was the debut release with the University of Michigan's Music and Social Justice series. In the two years since this title's release, and under series editors William Cheng and Andrew Dell'Antonio, four more compelling titles have ensured a vigorous discourse on issues surrounding music and social justice will continue, with studies on Venezuela's El Sistema programme (Stainova 2021), GALA choruses and social change (MacLachlan 2020), and hip-hop's fight for social justice (Bonnette-Bailey and Belk 2022).

Music made during and about resistance remains a vital part of contemporary Irish culture. Millar's book powerfully demonstrates how rebel songs can be forms of education about Ireland's – and Britain's – history, as well as potentially 'offensive and defensive sonic weapons' (p. 177). If one of the book's aims might be to illuminate how Irish music and politics are continuously connected, then the book has

achieved this goal tenfold. In *Sounding Dissent*, Millar shows us how music – and song, in particular – provides a radical means of communication, collaboration, participation, expression and even survival.

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***Shades of Springsteen: Politics, Love, Sports, and Masculinity.* By John Massaro. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2021. 255 pp. ISBN 978-1-9788-1616-9**

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Some of the worst feedback I have ever had as an academic came from a student who left an anonymous comment having completed my Sociology of Work module. In answer to the boilerplate question 'What did you least like about the course?', they wrote: 'The playing of Bruce Springsteen'. And in response to the prompt 'How could this course be improved?', they simply suggested: 'Stop playing Bruce Springsteen'. I was a little crestfallen. The object of the student's complaint was my use of Springsteen's track 'Youngstown' during a lecture on deindustrialisation. As I'd explained to my class when I teed it up on my PowerPoint presentation that day, the near 4 minute track beautifully describes the arc of industrialisation, through boom and bust to the loss of industry in the 1970s and 1980s. Although obviously about Youngstown Ohio, the track nonetheless stands for a far wider shared story of the process of industrial ruination and economic decline. Indeed, Youngstown itself transitioned from the booming Steeltown USA in the 1950s to becoming a longstanding poster child for the ravages of deindustrialisation and its half-life. Needless to say, I ignored the student's critical feedback.

This anecdote was front and centre in my mind reading John Massaro's *Shades of Springsteen: Politics, Love, Sports, and Masculinity*. The book is a wonderful portmanteau collection of the author's writing, thinking and teaching about The Boss. This is a deeply personal book for Massaro. He relates how he became a Springsteen fan having been gifted the album *Bruce Springsteen & the E Street Band Live 1975–1985* while suffering from depression and experiencing a bout of unemployment. Later in his career, Massaro began to teach a course to students on Springsteen and the politics and meaning of his lyrics.