Feminist Musical Activism in Ireland (2016–21) and Feminist Musicology

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Abstract
Music has been a key site of feminist activism in Ireland since 2016. This article explores the multiple ways in which feminist collectives have challenged structural inequalities in Ireland's music world. The discussion of collectives such as Sounding the Feminists, FairPlé, Why Not Her? and Irish Women in Harmony shows that this activism amounts to a larger movement. The movement concerns several genres and cuts across a range of professional and amateur activities, including performance and composition. This article further offers an analysis of the Irish feminist conditions influencing this movement. These include the "Repeal" campaign, whereby activists worked to repeal the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution of Ireland, so that the state would legislate for abortion. The article further calls for a more expansive discourse in feminist musicology to accommodate feminist musical activism and research beyond academia. It also frames and critiques this activism as gendered "equality labour."

Keywords: feminist activism, feminist musicology, Sounding the Feminists, FairPlé, Why Not Her?, Irish Women in Harmony

Introduction

Music has become a key site for feminist activism in Ireland. Since late 2016, several initiatives which can be categorised under that heading have emerged. Irish feminist musical activism spans all genres with significant audiences on the island: popular music, traditional and folk musics, and Western classical/contemporary art music. Despite the high national profile of these initiatives and their public impact on concert programming, pop charts, the airwaves, media discourse, and arts policy, it is only relatively recently that they have become a subject of scholarly interest in Ireland. To date, the FairPlé collective has received most attention (Ní Fhuartháin 2021; Casey 2021; Monaghan 2021; Cusack 2021). Similarly, while two instances of such activism have made headlines abroad, reaching news outlets such as *The Guardian* (Snapes 2020 and 2021: web sources) and the BBC (Meredith 2021: web source), the larger movement currently lies low on the radar of the international academic community. This is starting to change at the level of individual initiatives, due to the burgeoning literature on FairPlé and discussions of Sounding the Feminists at fora such as the virtual launch of the Women in Global Music (WIGM) Network (2021) and the International Women and/in Musical Leadership Conferences hosted in the UK (2019; 2021). In general, though, the umbrella movement is little known outside of Ireland. Even within the country, the groupings of varying size, missions, and degree of formal organisation are rarely discussed as a coherent feminist musical activist movement. Ní Fhuartháin's work (2021) is an exception: it situates FairPlé in relation to other collectives such as Sounding the Feminists. Alluding to the collectives' commonalities and women in traditional/folk music, Ní Fhuartháin calls for the "expansion of research in this area" (5).

Responding to this, my aims with this article are to: define and describe what I perceive as a distinct movement; track its evolution over five years; analyse the nature and impact of its musical work; and argue for the continued conceptual and methodological expansion of feminist musicology so that it engages with such movements. To begin, I give a working definition of Irish feminist musical activism. I then review some recent discussions in anglophone feminist musicology (research which is not limited to the disciplinary boundaries of musicology but described here as "feminist musicology" for the purposes of brevity). I take stock of how these discussions may be applied to the analysis of Irish developments. While the emerging agenda for twenty-first-century anglophone feminist musicology addresses timely and crucial themes, it is sometimes framed in a way that risks excluding the Irish movement from the conversation. This article is an attempt to attend to this, to make those voices heard. My perspective on current debates in the field stems from the following preoccupations:

(1) Although it interacts with global feminisms, twenty-first-century Irish feminism has charted its own path due to national political and historical conditions. These include the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution of Ireland, under which abortion remained illegal until 2018. Relevant too is the decade of commemorations (2012–22) marking the centenary of progress towards and establishment of Irish independence (Fischer and McAuliffe 2015; Frawley 2021; Connolly 2021). Therefore, to what extent can the country's feminist musical developments be examined through the lens of a broader contemporary anglophone feminism? This is a pertinent question, given how the latter discourse has been significantly shaped by postfeminism and popular feminism (McRobbie 2004, 2009; Banet-Weiser 2018; Banet-Weiser et al. 2020), sensibilities which have proven less relevant to Ireland than elsewhere.

(2) As a discourse which originated in academia, how can feminist musicology avoid gatekeeping and accommodate a larger body of feminist musical enquiry? The situation in Ireland illustrates that such work occurs in and beyond the scholarly sphere.

I do not claim to answer these questions comprehensively; instead, I flag them as overarching concerns. I advocate an expansive and nuanced approach to feminist musicology which captures the activism and research occurring within the Irish movement. I further theorise such activism as gendered "equality labour."

Defining the movement

I define Irish feminist musical activism as follows: collective feminist efforts at consciousness raising and campaigning for lasting systematic change to dismantle patriarchal structures in Ireland's music world. This world comprises multiple genres; includes amateur and professional scenes; and operates variously through commercial industry, publicly funded organisations and academia, and grassroots initiatives. I trace the origins of the movement to the mid-2016 announcement of the festival *Composing the Island*, which took place in the National Concert Hall, Dublin in September of that year. The festival commemorated the centenary of the 1916 Easter Rising by exploring the previous century of Irish composition. It was criticised for marginalising women's music (Dervan 2016; Kelly 2016; Watson forthcoming 2023). It prompted discussions between composers, performers, academics, and supporters, who viewed this event as part of a larger pattern of gender bias in Irish music. Emboldened by Waking the Feminists' recent success, the musicians mounted a response. Waking the Feminists was a campaign organised by theatre workers in reaction to news of a different 1916 cultural commemoration. In October 2015, Ireland's national theatre, the Abbey, had announced plans for a 2016 commemorative season titled *Waking the Nation*. Its

overwhelmingly male-dominated representation of playwrights and directors sparked vocal criticism and the formation of Waking the Feminists (Frawley 2021; O'Connell 2021; O'Toole 2017; Donohue et al. 2017). The 2016 gathering of musicians, initially under the banner Composing the Feminists, evolved into a collective called Sounding the Feminists in 2017. This identity is overtly aligned with Waking the Feminists and underlines how such initiatives constitute part of a movement. Not only is Sounding the Feminists situated within a larger musical movement, but its connections with the theatre scene—further evidenced in how Waking the Feminists researchers Brenda Donohue and Ciara L. Murphy mentored and later worked on its projects—highlight the existence of a wider cultural feminist network.

Before detailing Irish feminist musical activism, it is relevant to note my positionality as a co-founder and current member of the Sounding the Feminists Working Group. It follows that I write about this collective as an insider. Elsewhere, I have considered a different aspect of my Sounding the Feminists positionality, by drawing on Sara Ahmed's discussion of the duality of being an academic and diversity practitioner (Watson forthcoming 2023). The goal of the present study, however, is to appraise the larger movement. To do so, I focus on four representative collectives: Sounding the Feminists, FairPlé, Why Not Her?, and Irish Women in Harmony. A comprehensive account of all activism in this period is beyond the scope of the article but other relevant initiatives include Mnásome, Gash Collective, and Girls Rock Dublin.

Making waves: expanding the scope of feminist musicology

There is a need for academic discussion of a movement which identifies and confronts how gender biases have affected so much professional and amateur musical practice in Ireland. But to what extent is this possible using established disciplinary thought and methodologies in Western feminist musicology? When the field emerged from the 1970s to 1990s it was built on the pillars of recovering women's artistic activity as composers (and, to a degree, as performers); and on critical feminist readings of works (scores, performances, music videos, and so on) by people of all genders (see, among others: Bowers and Tick 1987; Pendle 1991; McClary 1991; Cook and Tsou 1995; Citron 1993; Fuller 1994; Walker-Hill 1995; Davis 1998; Whiteley 1997). The tasks of retrieving women composers from the margins of history and treating their activities and reception as objects of research remain priorities for feminist musicologists, including those working on music in Ireland (see, for example, O'Connor 2010; Beausang and de Barra 2018; Watson 2016; O'Connor-Madsen et al. 2022). Such work, however, should be considered just one set of multiple priorities for contemporary researchers. Like other scholars, I see a distinction between the "first wave of feminist musicology" from the 1970s to early 1990s, when a composer-centric approach dominated, and today's "second wave of feminist musicology" (Hamer 2021, xxii–xxiii).

These two "waves" of feminist musicology are distinct from the bigger "waves" of Western feminist thought and action. Speaking generally, the first of those waves, in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, was largely defined by the fight for women's suffrage. The second wave, during the 1960s and 1970s, centred on the politics of domesticity, reproductive rights, sexual violence, and gender discrimination in education and the workplace. A more diffuse third wave emerged in 1990s, especially in the US, informed by developments as varied as Riot Grrrl subculture, intersectionality theory (Crenshaw 1989), and gender theory (Butler 1990). Instead of promoting an overarching agenda, the third wave recognised "a multiplicity of identities" and the "messiness of lived contradiction" (Snyder 2008: 177). Contemporary fourth-wave feminism can reasonably be characterised by internet activism and a stronger intersectional ethos (Munro 2013), although it is also entangled with postfeminism (Rivers 2017), discussed below.

To return to the waves of feminist musicology, Hamer points out that if the field fails to broaden beyond a focus on composers, it risks "replicating patriarchal historiographical tendencies to focus on the lives of 'great' individuals" (xxiii). Introducing *The Cambridge Companion to Women in Music since 1900*, she describes a resurgence of scholarship on women in music—scholarship which now takes a "more inclusive view of women's work in music" and often exhibits a "cross-genre focus" (xxiii). The "women's work" framing has taken hold in the UK: in 2017, 2019, and 2021, Bangor University in Wales held Annual Conferences on Women's Work in Music. An essay collection edited by conference organiser Rhiannon Mathias further bears that title. Hamer's inclusive approach to feminist musicology is borne out in the *Companion* chapters, which are authored by musicologists, performers, composers, and industry practitioners. Chapters address a range of subject matter, from the field's traditional themes (e.g., women composers) to the challenges of juggling portfolio careers (Power 2021; Duffin 2021).

Further indications that the methodologies of "classic"/first-wave feminist musicology and current anglophone scholarship on women's work in music may be less closely aligned can be seen in how new avenues of research have emerged from a more sociological perspective. Christina Scharff's ethnography and analysis of women composers, conductors, and performers in the classical music industries in Berlin and London (2019) is an example. Similarly, Anna Bull's ethnography and analysis of young performers in British classical music includes the study of gender roles (2019). The rise of this transdisciplinary paradigm of women's work in music suggests directions for how we might study the multifaceted work happening in Ireland. Still, the manifestly feminist politics of the Irish movement demand further engagement with feminism and music scholarship. (Plus: "women's work" is not necessarily synonymous with feminism, nor is feminist work solely the purview of women.)

Hamer's discussion of the "second wave" of feminist music research acknowledges an article which posits a similar claim about a second wave, albeit using different terminology. Macarthur et al (2017) analyse the marginalisation of contemporary women composers in the concert hall and frame their findings as "The Rise and Fall, and the Rise (Again) of Feminist Music Research." The authors assert that "a decline in the scholarship devoted to women's music led to a decline in the amount of music composed by women performed in the concert hall in the first decade of the twenty-first century" (75). Referencing the resurgence of such scholarship, however, they present an "overview of feminist work on music", which surveys texts published between the 1970s and 2016 and shows a post-2010 renaissance (77-80). The overview concludes by identifying "several important avenues of research" in scholarship on women's music, including "archival research […]; analytical research […]; the creation of scholarly editions of women's music […] enabling its performance and recording"; and "the ways in which discrimination has curtailed women composers' career opportunities" (82). On the one hand, this composer-centric discourse makes sense given the thrust of the article—but on the other, conflating "scholarship devoted to women's music" (75) (i.e., music composed by women) with "feminist research in music" / "feminist work in music" (76, 77) is somewhat problematic. It narrows the definition of the latter. It is unclear how such a definition can account for sociological studies of women instrumentalists' working conditions (Scharff 2019), research on how the training grounds of youth orchestras inculcate traditional gender roles (Bull 2019), or empirical investigation into how gender affects participation in Irish traditional music (Monaghan 2021). The emphasis on "women's music" in an article where "the binary division between the male and female habitus is integral to our analysis" (Macarthur et al. 2017: 78) raises questions, too, about whether this perspective includes the study of music by gender-nonconforming people. If it does not, there appear to be limitations to its feminist scope, assuming that feminism is understood as a movement which opposes the patriarchal maintenance of binary gender categories.

The most recent survey of feminism and music scholarship in the twenty-first century (James 2020) is much more cognisant of “innumerable permutations of musics and feminisms” (2020: 1). The focus on “anglophone North American, European, and Australasian feminisms and music” in a study of “the most prominent and urgent issues in twenty-first century feminist scholarship and activism” (2020: 1) opens the door to theorising the multifaceted work of Irish feminist musical activism. Parts of the discussion are explicit about how contemporary feminism is developing inside and outside universities, and how scholars can learn from the more inclusive practices of activists outside the academy (James 2020). This is useful for conceptualising the Irish context; indeed, there is already a close relationship between academia and activism in this country. Sounding the Feminists and FairPlé have deep ties with universities: several members are affiliated with such institutions and events run by collectives have been hosted in those spaces. Conversely, some powerful recent Irish feminist music research—powerful in its industry influence, media reach, and potential economic impact—has been conducted by Why Not Her? This is led by an industry activist, with academics in supporting roles. Therefore, when James urges feminist music scholars to “focus on structures and institutions […] and understand liberation to be a collective project” (2020: 7), it must be said that this mode of thinking and operating had already been ingrained in Ireland’s feminist musical network since 2016.

Ireland’s struggle for abortion rights and the question of postfeminism

James states that her account is not comprehensive (2020: 1). Her remit, however, is anglophone North American, European, and Australasian feminisms and music—so, in the absence of specific reference to Ireland, the implication is that the situation in this country accords with general tendencies in that region. While there is common ground, it is also important to recognise the distinct circumstances in which Irish feminist musical activism evolved. Crucially, the movement was built against the backdrop of sustained, intense public debate about and grassroots activism for abortion rights. Until 2018, abortion was unlawful in Ireland. This had been the case since the nineteenth century, but in 1983 an amendment was inserted into the Constitution of Ireland (the Eighth Amendment) to ensure that the law could not be overturned by judicial review. The Eighth Amendment acknowledged “the right to life of the unborn” and the state’s commitment “to defend and vindicate that right.”

During the campaign in the mid-2010s to repeal the Eighth Amendment (the “Repeal” campaign), “pro-choice messages in the media and public spaces signalled a sea change” (Browne and Calkin 2020, 15; see also Connolly 2020 and Watson forthcoming 2023). Artists brought these messages to the street, e.g., Maser’s “Repeal the 8th” mural in Dublin city centre (O’Hara 2020). Music was mobilised too—perhaps most prominently on 23 April 2017, when popular stars such as Mary Black, Neil Hannon, and Loah played the fundraising concert “Repeal: A Night in the Key of 8” at the Olympia Theatre, Dublin (advertisement 2017: web source). A referendum on repealing the Eighth Amendment was finally held on 25 May 2018. An overwhelming majority of voters (two-thirds) supported the proposal, which empowered the state to legislate for abortion. The subsequent 2018 Health (Regulation of Termination of Pregnancy) Act permits termination up to twelve weeks gestation; beyond twelve weeks, termination is permitted only in the case of serious risk to health or fatal foetal abnormality. Historically, the most direct intersection of feminism and music in Ireland had also arisen out of a desire to counter the country’s draconian anti-abortion laws. In 1992, the duo Zrazy released the dance track “6794700” to advertise the phone number of an abortion information helpline; they were duly censored by the national media (Hanlon 2020). At that time, when feminism’s third wave was emerging in the US, Ireland lagged decades behind on what had been a second-wave debate there and elsewhere during the 1960s and 1970s.

James incisively critiques postfeminism and popular feminism before exhorting readers to explore the “other feminisms” (2020: 7) aimed at structural change and driven

by collective action. This suggests that the dominant modes in Western feminist musicological discourse are postfeminism and popular feminism. While this claim may be valid for most of the regions James surveys, it is less convincing when applied to Ireland. Postfeminism and popular feminism rely on "the purported consensus that feminism's aims have been or ought to be achieved" (James 2020: 1). Postfeminism "argues feminism is obsolete because women are already equal to men" (1). James even highlights evidence of this sensibility in musicology, where scholars eschew labelling their work as feminist despite it being recognisable as such (2020: 2, 3). Again, it should be noted that many musicians and researchers in twenty-first century Ireland dissent from such postfeminist values. On the contrary, collectives such as Sounding the Feminists and FairPlé wear their feminist identities on their sleeves.

Ireland and its music world are far from having reached a postfeminist age. Conditions in other Western countries which supported a consensus (whether valid or not) that society had become postfeminist simply did not exist here. Despite the "Celtic Tiger" boom from the mid-1990s until the 2008 recession—when a period of unprecedented economic growth transformed the country into a modern, wealthy nation and cosmopolitan society with a highly educated and increasingly multicultural population—a strong current of underlying conservativism prevailed. As abortion was prohibited, Ireland remained entrenched in "old" feminist battles. Furthermore, the country was only beginning to acknowledge a misogynistic history of institutionalising "fallen women" in the Magdalene laundries and mother-and-baby homes operated by the Catholic Church (Hogan 2020). The last laundry did not close until 1996. These realities made postfeminism impossible. Pivoting to a postfeminist worldview in the post-Repeal era also seems implausible. The 2018 win has not hindered anti-abortion picketing of maternity hospitals nor had any impact on the very restricted abortion services in Northern Ireland (a separate jurisdiction to the Republic). On 24 June 2022, news that the US Supreme Court had overturned the 1973 Roe v. Wade ruling which guaranteed abortion rights made it brutally clear that pro-choice legislation cannot be taken for granted anywhere. In post-Repeal Ireland, the feminist struggle is far from over. Intersectionality must be brought to bear on feminism to recognise and respond to the needs of marginalised women, such as trans women, members of the Travelling Community,[1] and those living in Direct Provision.[2] Another ongoing concern is the epidemic of violence against women. In January 2022, the daylight murder of Ashling Murphy on a public walkway in Co. Offaly sparked a national debate about this matter. Feminist policy and action hence remain urgent live issues.

Unlike postfeminism, popular feminism has made inroads in Ireland, for similar reasons here as elsewhere. It is "popular" in being accessible and media-friendly, celebrating "uplift" and commodifying empowerment, and thus characterised by values which entwine with "neoliberal principles of individualism" and "lean in" feminism (Banet-Weiser et al. 2020: 9, 10, 11). Popular feminism therefore shies away from the structural critique required to instigate change. James cites several "empowerment songs" by UK and US pop acts in the 2010s whose lyrics exemplify popular feminism (2020: 5). Similarly, major Irish women artists of the 2000s and early 2010s were regarded as proponents of popular feminism. In 2007, as Ivana Bacik wrote:

> powerful female singers dominate pop culture as never before (in Ireland, women such as Sinéad O'Connor, Dolores O'Riordan or Samantha Mumba). They represent successful cultural and commercial role models for young women [...] but change for the majority of women cannot be achieved no matter how many women take on those roles (Bacik 2007: 105).

She emphasised that these performers embodied a paradigm of individualist success. However, the pop act which I discuss below as representative of the post-2016 movement disavows popular feminism's individualism. The group Irish Women in Harmony operate in a way which suggests that contemporary artists are choosing a different path to the postfeminism and popular feminism routes.

Sounding the Feminists and classical/contemporary art music

Sounding the Feminists evolved into a collective over several months from late 2016 to early 2017. On 25 June 2016, composer Jane Deasy organised a "Composing the Feminists—Open Meeting" in Pearse Street, Dublin "to acknowledge the significant lack of music written by women being performed in NCH's *Composing the Island* centenary programme" (Waking the Feminists: web source). Two meetings followed at the Contemporary Music Centre (CMC) in 2017, both of which I attended. At the meeting on 10 February 2017, it was agreed that the group would be named Sounding the Feminists. On 7 April 2017, a Sounding the Feminists Working Group was elected on behalf of a large cohort of women and allies of all genders to campaign for gender equality in music. Chaired by composer Karen Power, the Working Group first reported to supporters at a public meeting in late 2017. Subsequently, perhaps due to the formation of partnerships and public profile, the descriptor Sounding the Feminists became interchangeable with the Working Group. Hence, reference to Sounding the Feminists' activities here denotes activities pursued by the Working Group.

The mission statement affirms the collective's solidarity with Waking the Feminists. It lists priorities, starting with "gender balance issues/intersectional feminism issues" and continuing with gender audits, community building, networking with international organisations, creating fairer systems in the professional sphere, and liaising with educational institutions to support younger generations (Sounding the Feminists 2017: web source). The first public meeting, on 13 September 2017, was held at the Irish Music Rights Organisation (IMRO) building in central Dublin and livestreamed on social media. Members of the founding Working Group spoke (Ann Cleare, Amanda Feery, Jennifer O'Connor-Madsen, Power, Watson), as did Brenda Donohue from Waking the Feminists and policy analyst Olwen Dawe (Quinn 2017). A large event attracting representatives from national arts, media, and educational organisations, plus musicians and industry workers at various career stages, it facilitated constructive dialogue and introduced the collective to a public beyond the immediate music circles of its origins.

In theory, Sounding the Feminists is not aligned to a specific genre, but in practice it has become associated primarily with classical/contemporary art music, due to a five-year partnership initiative with Ireland's National Concert Hall (2018–23) which is co-funded by government agency Creative Ireland and the NCH. So far this has supported several projects, including co-curated chamber series in 2018–19 and 2019–20. Each series comprised six concerts at the NCH's smaller venues which explored historical and contemporary repertoire by women composers in the Western art music tradition. The partnership also facilitated a Commissioning Scheme for women, with inaugural prizes in 2019 awarded to Jennifer Walshe (as Established Composer) and Claudia Schwab (as Emerging Composer). Walshe's commission *Imagining Ireland: A Dataset* was staged at the NCH for a livestream premiere on 26 September 2020. Two further NCH-STF schemes supported women's musical creativity in 2020–21 and adapted to the Covid-19 pandemic, which forced the postponement of the chamber series. The Commissioning Scheme was supplemented by a Recording Award and Project Award. Regardless of association with the NCH and its identity as an institution focused on classical/art music, the genre-agnostic nature of these schemes was reflected in the fact that pop trio Wyvern Lingo won the Project Award (Wyvern Lingo NCH announcement 2021: web source).

From the outset, Sounding the Feminists envisaged these schemes as open to "female-identifying musicians and composers from all musical idioms." Emphasising a range of musical possibilities, the 2018 call invited "score-based" or "non-score-based" proposals, such as "improvised, electronic, sound-art, or installation-type composition" (NCH-STF Call for Submissions 2018: web source). Three aspects of the schemes are valuable in understanding contemporary feminism and music in Ireland: the appeal to

"female-identifying" practitioners, the creative openness, and the call for "collaborative works from more than one musician or composer." The first point, the invitation to all who identify as women to apply, reflects Sounding the Feminists' commitment to trans-inclusive feminism. From the collective's earliest meetings in 2017, activists and supporters have included LGBTQ people. It may be reasonable, though, to question the extent to which Sounding the Feminists in its present configuration can amplify trans voices, given that the current Working Group (2019–22) solely comprises cisgendered women. The lack of gender diversity is not easily resolved, as there are few openly trans musicians in Ireland (Harding 2021). I say this not to attempt to justify a dominant cisgendered perspective. The aim is the opposite: to reiterate the need for a feminism which enables trans women and gender-nonconforming people to safely express their identities in musical spaces and to build trans-inclusive leadership into the infrastructures of feminist collectives.

Returning to the artistic aspects of the commissioning scheme, the non-prescriptiveness of musical idiom stems from a feminist perspective which recognises how gender discrimination intersects with class background in Ireland's classical/contemporary art music scene.[3] As in other countries, composers in Ireland develop musical competencies prior to embarking on specialised compositional training in higher education. Proficiency in score-based instrumental or vocal performance and knowledge of Western classical music theory are prerequisites for further study. Where Ireland differs from other countries, though, is in the inconsistent level of music education provision in the primary and secondary state school system. It is an outlier in Europe, one of only five nations where music education in schools is judged insufficient to "provide students with skills and knowledge to continue their studies in higher education" (Tchernoff 2007: 46–47; 89–90). Consequently, young people interested in studying music, especially score-based performance and theory, must seek private tuition. Those who lack the financial means and social supports to access this are seriously disadvantaged. Recognising that a social barrier exists to entering the composition profession, Sounding the Feminists intended the Call for Submissions to reach not only conventionally trained composers but also those women from marginalised class backgrounds whose formation and careers may have followed atypical routes.

The scheme's openness to all musical idioms also facilitated collaborative projects. While the classical/art music tradition is invested in the idea of a work created by a single Composer-God (to paraphrase Barthes on the Author-God; Barthes 1977), idioms such as popular music are frequently collaborative. The scheme's support for potential collaboration encourages, in turn, feminist solidarity. Collaborative modes of working and leadership have been mobilised as feminist strategies in the arts, academia, and various workplaces internationally (Page-Lieberman and Potter 2018; Mayhew 2015; Pratt 2010). In Ireland, the political system offers an interesting example of feminist collaboration and leadership. Two elected members of the national parliament (the Dáil), Catherine Murphy and Róisín Shortall, have served as co-leaders of the Social Democrats since 2016. Feminist collaboration was evident in the 2021 Project Award. As part of their "Radio Somewhere" production, Wyvern Lingo performed duets with Loah and Denise Chaila (Wyvern Lingo press release 2021: web source). By doing so, they gave a platform to more Irish women, to artists who happen to be women of colour.

Another point concerning the inclusive feminist ethos of the commissioning schemes relates to age. By virtue of "Established" and "Emerging" Composer categories, Sounding the Feminists is age-inclusive, recognising that artists may "emerge" at any life stage, accommodating the realities of how childbearing and parenting can impact women's careers. Intersecting biases of age and gender affect artists in the commercial popular music industry too, as noted below with reference to the singer Imelda May.

Sounding the Feminists designed the commissioning scheme criteria with inclusivity concerns in mind because the categories of gender, age, social class, and ethnicity can overlap to marginalise individuals from professional participation in composition and

musical creativity. Despite the schemes' inclusive ethos, however, their effectiveness may be compromised by the larger issue of "systemic racism in music and the arts" in contemporary Ireland (Farhat 2020: web source). In 2020, 62% of the Arts Council of Ireland's Strategic Funding for music was spent on classical/art music organisations. Farhat claims that this reflects a structural "bias towards classical music and 'white' art" embedded in the Council's decision-marking processes (2020: web source). Yet, there is encouraging evidence of Irish initiatives challenging the associations between classical music and whiteness. Significantly, these originated as part of the feminist movement. Such efforts include the programming of *Finding a Voice*. On a smaller scale, they further include the STF-NCH 2019–20 chamber series: in November 2019, pianist Andrew Zolinsky's concert featured Etudes by the South Korean composer Unsuk Chin (CMC 2019b: web source).

Finding a Voice is an annual festival based in Clonmel, Co. Tipperary, directed by Róisín Maher. Running since March 2018, it focuses on women composers "through the ages and around the world." By describing *Finding a Voice* as one of "several different initiatives" in Ireland seeking to enact change, Maher has alluded to its role in a larger feminist movement (Quinn 2020: web source). The festival is increasingly attentive to intersectionality, a concept which originally theorised the interlocking racism and sexism experienced by Black women (Crenshaw 1989). The 2020 programme included a showcase of work by US Black composer Mary Lou Williams (*Finding a Voice* brochure 2020: web source). 2021 featured the work of two Japanese musicians, improvisor Izumi Kimura and composer Keiko Abe (*Finding a Voice* brochure 2021: web source). The opening concert of the 2022 series, by pianist Samatha Ege, highlighted twentieth-century US Black composers Margaret Bonds and Florence Price (*Finding a Voice* Twitter page 2021: web source). In 2020 Maher observed that there was "more awareness now than there was three years ago" of the need for gender equality but cautioned against organisations becoming complacent and simply programming "some" women on concerts still dominated by men (Quinn 2020). By diversifying the composers presented at the festival, the organisers of *Finding a Voice* have resisted such complacency and modelled an approach to programming which could be more widely used.

The art music sector has yet to reckon properly with the absence of Irish women of ethnic minorities, including Travellers. This is part of the general problem which Farhat identifies: the structural marginalisation of minorities (Farhat 2020). One sign that organisations are becoming more aware of their obligations may be seen in the 2021 announcement of an initiative to promote wider participation in composition. As noted above, in Ireland this profession is socially stratified, typically populated by people from white, middle-class backgrounds. The NCH Creative Lab brings an urgently needed response to these conditions. This composition programme of eight months' duration targets "young people aged 12–18 […] from communities that are traditionally underrepresented in music composition […] for example, Black, Asian, the Mincéir/Traveller and Roma communities, other minority ethnic communities within the island of Ireland, as well as women, transgender, non-binary, and gender nonconforming people" (NCH Creative Lab 2021: web source). Further signalling its inclusivity, the call emphasises that notational literacy is not a prerequisite. Free of cost to participants, the programme offers individual tuition, professional development, and opportunities to have music professionally performed. Participants are mentored by two composers—Sounding the Feminists founding member Amanda Feery and Emma O'Halloran. The ethos of Creative Lab is evidently informed by feminist principles as part of the greater struggle to address the lack of diversity in contemporary art music.

Returning to Sounding the Feminists, the Working Group has engaged with organisations in addition to the NCH. In 2019, an Arts Council of Ireland grant facilitated a collaboration with CMC to scope a gender audit of publicly funded composing opportunities on the island of Ireland. Ciara L. Murphy, who co-authored Waking the

Feminists' *Gender Counts* theatre audit (Donohue et al 2017), served as researcher (CMCa 2019: web source). This overlap between feminist collectives is indicative of a broader alliance. A sense of solidarity motivated two further Sounding the Feminists projects: (1) a workshop series in 2019 funded by IMRO on professional development for women in music industries; (2) a symposium in November 2018, co-hosted with the Department of Creative Arts, Media, and Music at Dundalk Institute of Technology. That event brought together scholars, activists, performers, and industry experts to discuss women in popular and traditional music in Ireland. In breaking down barriers between academia and industry activism, it fostered dialogue which can expand the capacities of feminist musicology.

Beyond those activities, Working Group members have individually and collectively engaged with other organisations, contributed to consultations for the Arts Council of Ireland, and lobbied politicians for support. What I have described remains an incomplete narrative of the labour undertaken by Sounding the Feminists. It may be assumed that FairPlé, Why Not Her?, and Women in Harmony similarly perform more labour than that which is documented. Gaps in the records of feminist musical labour—roles which are mostly unpaid and ancillary to the musician's artistic workload—should be a real concern for contemporary feminist musicology. In Ireland, FairPlé have thoroughly chronicled their main achievements so far, but it cannot be assumed that collectives have the resources to undertake such work.

FairPlé

Continuing in chronological order of the movement's history brings us to FairPlé, "an inclusive, grass-roots organisation founded to address gender balance in Irish traditional folk music performance, production, and promotion" (Casey and Cawley 2020: web source). FairPlé emerged in 2017 when "female voices within the traditional music community, like Pádraigín Ní Uallacháin, Niamh Dunne, and Karan Casey started to question why there were so few women performers headlining festival line-ups and concert billings." It progressed into "a coalition of people […] to end sexual harassment, improve working conditions, and address the gender imbalances so evident in concerts and festival line-ups" (Casey and Cawley 2020: web source). It developed "in a transnational context […] from Waking the Feminists and Sounding the Feminists here in Ireland, to the #MeToo movement which began in the United States" (Casey and Cawley 2020: web source). The acknowledgement of Irish feminist initiatives predating FairPlé demonstrates that campaigners identify themselves as part of a larger force. Their evolution echoes that of Waking the Feminists and Sounding the Feminists. Just as Waking the Feminists had commandeered the Abbey Theatre as a public forum on 12 November 2015 and Sounding the Feminists followed with the IMRO meeting in 2017, FairPlé held its first open gathering at Jury's Inn in Dublin on 28 January 2018.

Later in 2018 they hosted a Day of Action on 9 June, with twenty-eight worldwide events aimed at "raising awareness of gender disparities within traditional and folk music," and the *Rising Tides* festival in Dublin on 8–9 September, which featured panel discussions about gender discrimination in the industry (Casey and Cawley 2020: web source). Further parallels between FairPlé and Sounding the Feminists are evident in how the collectives interact with academia. Just as Sounding the Feminists collaborated with DkIT for the November 2018 symposium, FairPlé and the Centre for Irish Studies at National University of Ireland, Galway co-hosted a Women and Traditional/Folk Music symposium on 9 February 2019 (Ní Fhuartháin 2021). A full overview of FairPlé's activities is accessible online. The organisation is much larger than Sounding the Feminists. The strength of this extended network became apparent in June and July 2020 when the #MiseFosta (in English: #MeToo) campaign gathered momentum. The first tweets tagged #MiseFosta and citing sexual misconduct in Irish traditional music were published on 22 June 2020 by Edel Ní Churraoin and Pauline Scanlon. Their

accounts of sexual assault and predatory behaviour by male musicians sparked a wave of solidarity and further disclosures. A month later, on 23 July 2020, *RTÉ Investigates* reported on sexual abuse and harassment in the scene. Among those interviewed were FairPlé's Karan Casey and Úna Monaghan. Monaghan's ethnographic research on the scene details how "mechanisms and structures […] privilege the contribution of men," while women "suffer the effects of gendered power dynamics, male violence, domination, and aggression, including sexual violence" (Monaghan 2021: 21, 25). The #MiseFosta campaign exemplifies how initiatives such as FairPlé connect with an international feminist movement encompassing grassroots social media, mainstream media, and academia.

Feminist collectives and "equality labour"

Committing to additional volunteer labour behind the scenes has been critical to advancing the mission of FairPlé and Sounding the Feminists. Members of both were consulted as stakeholders in the Arts Council of Ireland's *Equality, Human Rights & Diversity Policy & Strategy*, with the collectives' impact cited in the subsequent published policy (Arts Council policy document 2019). Both have lobbied government officials to raise concerns about gender injustices; both have run events to support women. Individuals associated with the collectives have produced quantitative research on gender bias. As mentioned, the Arts Council has supported Sounding the Feminists to analyse publicly funded opportunities available to composers in Ireland. Prior to that, composers Ann Cleare and Jennifer Walshe had compiled statistics on gender representation in *Composing the Island* (personal correspondence). FairPlé activists Úna Monaghan and Úna Ní Flannagáin have similarly analysed data on gender discrimination in traditional and folk performing scenes (FairPlé 2021; Monaghan 2021). As discussed below, Why Not Her? also produce data analysis of gender inequality on radio.

The commonalities between Sounding the Feminists and FairPlé reveal a troubling irony: a pattern of campaigners (mostly women musicians) undertaking similar types of extra labour (mostly unpaid and invisible) on an ad-hoc basis in efforts to improve overall conditions in Ireland's amateur and professional music scenes. The situation is unsustainable for several reasons, starting with the paradoxically highly gendered distribution of what I conceptualise as "equality labour" in music. This relates to Hofman's concept of music as labour (2015) insofar as it concerns "musical working regimes" and "musicians as affective workers" (Hofman 2015: 2). The gendered distribution of equality labour in Ireland negatively affects musical working regimes. It leaches the essential creative resources of time and energy from women activists, particularly those who compose and perform for a living. It thus risks exacerbating the gender gap which activists seek to eradicate.

The less visible, less immediately productive aspects of equality labour require further attention. The gendered nature of equality labour appears consistent with existing patterns of gendered segregation of (paid) labour in the culture industries. Women in the culture industries tend to work in coordination and facilitation roles behind the scenes (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2015). Such segregated, unseen work is inherent in equality labour. To effect feminist change, essential tasks include background strategising and planning, not to mention the affective labour that goes into "the underlying layers of 'people work'" (Duffin 2021: 259) with external stakeholders. These efforts, which ultimately benefit well-funded organisations as well as marginalised individuals, are too reliant on goodwill. Volunteers may be committed to the feminist struggle, but the infinite demands of activism leave them at risk of burnout. That the burden of action is mostly shouldered by women musicians, including those in precarious employment, reflects the neoliberal conditions of the creative industries. For example, Scharff's studies of young female classical musicians show that these performers feel compelled to adhere to

neoliberal values such as entrepreneurialism, which increasingly govern cultural work (Scharff 2019: 65). Even though busy rehearsal and concert schedules commonly lead to injuries, these workers have developed strategies of "self-management" instead of "attempting to change workloads or work conditions" (Scharff 2016: 221, 223). More generally, pressure on individuals to maintain portfolio careers is reinforced by a precarious labour market. Such precarity is a feminist issue and "point of cross-industry solidarity" (James 2020, 8). It is further reason to resist the normalisation of equality labour as voluntary, as an additional task for the precarious musical worker (whether that worker is a composer, performer, academic, etc.). One solution would be to reframe equality labour as a role which is integrated into and adequately compensated by well-resourced organisations.

Why Not Her?

The Why Not her? campaign came to public notice in June 2020. Led by music industry consultant Linda Coogan-Byrne, the collective comprises a small number of volunteers. Their campaign is "aimed at amplifying the voices of Womxn in the music, entertainment and the arts industry" (Why Not Her? 2020: web source) To date, it has focused on conducting and publishing quantitative research into "gender disparity on the airwaves", i.e., the playlisting policy bias against individual womxn musicians and acts fronted by womxn on Ireland's commercial radio stations.[4]

Coogan-Byrne states that their strategy hinges on data-driven research because "data is possibly the most powerful tool" (Why Not Her? 2020: podcast). They have produced several publications, starting with the *Gender Disparity Data Report* in June 2020. The period covered spans 1 June 2019–1 June 2020. The methodology comprises: (1) an overview of the "gender disparity […] in the Top 20 most played songs by Irish artists on each individual radio station in Ireland over the period" and (2) a more concentrated presentation of "the Top 5 most played songs [by Irish artists] on each station" (Coogan-Byrne et al. 2020a: web source). The second part illustrates how acute the gender bias is. The study presents a gender analysis of Irish acts playlisted in one year across twenty-seven radio stations, twenty-six of which predominantly broadcast popular music. RTÉ Radio 1, as a news-driven station, is the exception; it is also exceptional as the only station with a 50/50 gender balance in its Top 20 rotation of Irish acts. Analysis of the other stations shows four Top 20 Irish playlists solely consisting of male acts, while the remaining twenty-two playlists comprised 80–95% male acts. To conclude, the report marshals leading voices in the industry to demand action. This, plus subsequent reports, progress updates, and calls to action have generated extensive and international media coverage.

Why Not Her? differs to FairPlé and Sounding the Feminists due to its roots in the commercialised popular music industry. Activity in the other two collectives is mostly based around performance scenes, composition, festival curation, and working conditions. Why Not Her? targets radio as a driver of gender inequality in popular music. Nonetheless, it is allied with the larger movement. The reports feature invited statements from Sounding the Feminists and FairPlé (e.g., see Coogan-Byrne et al. 2020b), while the "About Us" webpage cites #MiseFosta and conversations about social justice. The three collectives share a strategy of mobilising data as a rationale for advancing the feminist cause. For Why Not Her? this is *the* rationale and baseline against which change is measured in subsequent reports.

Common to such collectives is the free labour of highly qualified, experienced researchers. The Why Not Her? call for volunteers asserts: "We have all given our time for free. It's a labour of love and a deep passion of ours to seek equality. The patriarchal system needs to be dismantled but we can't do it on our own" (Why Not Her? web source). This exemplifies the problem of equality labour: it is gendered, unpaid, peripheral to the system, and exacts an emotional cost. Although the roster of volunteers

working on the reports regularly changes, the initiative is led by women. Moreover, their framing of this as a "passion" echoes McRobbie's concept of "passionate work": that is, "work without protection" born in an era of austerity and high unemployment which can only promise creative, personal reward (2016: 36). Such work, especially when performed by young women, operates as a "distinctive mode of gender re-traditionalization" because it demands "management of female affect […] to find and express such enjoyment" in the work and "can be construed as a willingness to work all hours for very little pay in the hope of gaining a foothold in the field" (McRobbie 2016: 108). The truth of this critique is born out in the conclusion to the 2021 *RADIOACTIVE* report. It is blunt about the toll this "passion work" exacts. A relentless, invisible workload is exacerbated by the hierarchical dynamics of engagement between activists and the establishment. What is truly alarming is the danger posed by "passion work." As Coogan-Byrne writes:

> We have spoken, emailed, zoomed and been on numerous calls with Politicians, Broadcasters, and Authority figures [*sic*] in a quest to find out […] why womxn and artists of colour are so badly excluded and from the airwaves and broadcasting in Ireland. We have still yet to receive an answer. Our questions were often met with threats. Threats to our livelihoods and wellbeing (Coogan-Byrne et al. 2021a: web source).

Here we see the force of patriarchal resistance that feminist labour elicits, the violence threatened to discipline womxn and allies doing the passion work of equality labour.

Reference to patriarchal *system* in the volunteer appeal alludes to the web of hegemonic social structures that sanction sexism in conjunction with other forms of oppression such as racism, ageism, homophobia, and transphobia. Why Not Her? affirms its intersectional, trans-inclusive feminism in two publications from 2021: (1) the *RADIOACTIVE* 12-month progress report on Irish radio; (2) *Twenty Years of the Irish Singles Charts*. From the start, the collectives' reports have defaulted to the label *womxn* rather than women, while *RADIOACTIVE*'s note on gender categories asserts that "female" denotes "anyone who self-identifies as a woman" (Coogan-Byrne et al. 2021a: web source). This progress report offers a more granular analysis than the original audit, representing three categories of Irish artist in each playlist—male, female, and collaborative (mixed gender) acts—and their ethnic identity, classified as white or people of colour. While documenting improved gender balance at 2FM and Spin 103.8, many stations had made little progress. Statistics for people of colour showed that very few—often zero—appeared in the Top 20 rotation of Irish artists across stations. Further scrutiny reveals a dismal situation for women of colour: their presence in playlists is often contingent on association with larger groups such as Irish Women in Harmony. *RADIOACTIVE* concludes with a narrative that teases out inequalities beyond those captured in the graphic analysis. Singer-songwriter Áine Tyrrell highlights industry bias against women who choose to raise families, while chart-topper Imelda May cites discrimination against women over forty as a detriment to career progression. The comment by an anonymous DJ or station manager that he excluded May from playlists because she is "too old" proves her point (Coogan-Byrne et al. 2021a: web source).

The research offers an instructive comparison between May and the younger, male singer-songwriter Dermot Kennedy. On 23 April 2021 May's new album *11 Past the Hour* topped the charts, despite receiving fewer than 100 radio plays during the week of the chart's compilation. Kennedy, meanwhile, was played over 1,000 times in that period and claimed the top spot the following week with an album released two years earlier (Coogan-Byrne et al 2021a). Closer scrutiny of the charts reveals that *11 Past the Hour* had vanished from the Top 50 by 14 May (Official Irish Album Charts 2021: web source). The implicit correlation of radio rotation and sales is made explicit in the *Twenty Years of the Irish Singles Charts* report (Coogan-Byrne et al. 2021b). From 2000–2019, male artists secured 78.1% of number ones achieved by Irish artists, while collaborative acts garnered 12.5% and female artists 9.4%. 96.4% of Irish artists who reached number one

were white (Coogan-Byrne et al. 2021b: web source). The authors situate the charts within the music industry's ecosystem and advise gatekeepers to promote equality by following an action plan devised by Why Not Her?

This report mainly comprises analysis of the "Official Chart" over twenty years. As an addendum, it surveys the new "Homegrown" singles chart launched in June 2019, which runs parallel to the "Official Chart." While it is better in terms of gender balance and diversity, prior to July 2020 neither women nor people of colour had topped the chart (Coogan-Byrne et al. 2021b). The breakthrough on both fronts occurred simultaneously with Irish Women in Harmony.

Irish Women in Harmony

Irish Women in Harmony was founded in June 2020 by singer/songwriter and producer RuthAnne. I argue that the group's ethos, organisation, and output function as feminist activism. Its work is reminiscent of Sounding the Feminists, FairPlé, and Why Not Her? in seeking to support those disenfranchised by the music sector. RuthAnne explains that the group aims to challenge "what sometimes seems like a male dominated industry […] to inspire the young girls of today" (IMRO 2020: web source). Their strategy is to work as a team to perform, record, and promote women in the Irish popular music industry. Establishing more platforms for women artists to create, compose, perform, and record is a strategy also pursued by Sounding the Feminists, but the inherently collaborative Women in Harmony initiative powerfully assembles dozens of women under one banner. "This is about the collective, not any one person standing out," the founder asserts (Smither 2020: web source). That commitment to a larger cause is affirmed in the rhetorical refrain "it's not a song, it's a movement," repeated on the group's website and promotional materials.

Certain details of the three singles released to date are striking. All are produced by RuthAnne—sole women producers are still uncommon in the industry—and feature a large cast of performers. Thirty-two vocalists and seven instrumentalists collaborated on the first single, a cover of the Cranberries' hit "Dreams" which entered the "Homegrown" charts at number one on 26 June 2020.[5] Contributors spanned generations and genres, from Grammy-winning folk singer Moya Brennan to emerging R&B artist Soulé. Parts were recorded remotely due to the Covid-19 pandemic, yet the final mix and accompanying video evoke a sense of solidarity rather than individual isolation. RuthAnne composed the next release "Together at Christmas," on which the parts of thirty women were augmented by a choir of eighteen girls under the age of twelve (*Stellar* 2020: web source). This can be heard as a translation of feminist intent into action, from "inspiring" younger girls with the first single to giving them a platform on the second single. The July 2021 release of "Only A Woman" is a collective endeavour on a reduced scale. It is less a cover and more a contemporary reworking of a track composed by Eleanor McEvoy for the 1992 Irish folk compilation album *A Woman's Heart*. The single opens with a newly recorded chorus performed by McEvoy. The original sung verses are replaced with spoken-word verses by FeliSpeaks, while the remaining choruses are shared by RuthAnne, Erica Cody, and Aimée.

The song choice was prompted by public comparison of Irish Women in Harmony to the *Woman's Heart* project and a desire to explore "what it is to be a woman today" (Rowley 2021: web source). In 1992, *A Woman's Heart* had provided a "communal voice" for listeners: in particular, the title track "Only A Woman's Heart" became an "anthem for women", expressing "mutual understanding, solidarity, and support" (Cusack 2022: 110). The 2021 "Only A Woman" retains this "communal voice" and updates it to reflect the more ethnically diverse demographic of contemporary Irish society. Two of the performers are women of colour (Cody and FeliSpeaks). Arguably, it is FeliSpeaks' contributions which chiefly distinguish this recording from its predecessor. Therefore, the 2021 release centres a representative voice from a doubly marginalised demographic in

Ireland: women of colour. FeliSpeaks' words strengthen this representation. For example, her first verse pays homage in Black vernacular to "the queens that came before me". References to womanhood, glass ceilings, and safe spaces further embed her new verses in contemporary feminist discourses. While "Dreams" and "Together at Christmas" had already presented Irish Women in Harmony as a community of women and girls of diverse identities, "Only A Woman" goes beyond this with lyrics that evoke the multicultural perspectives and experiences of twenty-first-century Irish women.

"Only a Woman", like the 2020 "Dreams," can also be heard as an expression of intergenerational feminism. Both tracks are based on songs originally released in 1992. McEvoy's cameo on the 2021 single before she metaphorically passes the mic to FeliSpeaks symbolises exchange between women of different generations. Irish Women in Harmony engage with Irish popular music of the 1990s in ways which canonise the work of the Cranberries' Dolores O'Riordan and McEvoy. The foundations of this canon-building had already been laid. O'Riordan's premature death in January 2018 precipitated a reappraisal of her work (Dillane 2018). "Dreams" has also enjoyed a resurgence due to its ubiquity in the soundtrack to the sitcom *Derry Girls*. In 2019, McEvoy steered *A Woman's Heart Orchestrated*. This was a live performance by McEvoy, Maura O'Connell, and Wallis Bird, accompanied by the National Concert Orchestra. Concerts were held at the National Concert Hall and Wexford Opera House in February 2020. With a television broadcast on RTÉ1 in April 2020, the album extended its contemporary reach. By mid-2020, "Dreams" and "Only a Woman's Heart" had claimed a place in Irish popular culture as 1990s' classics, as artistic legacies gifted by one generation of women to another. In that sense, Irish Women in Harmony pay tribute to their musical forebearers.

The group direct their feminism beyond the musical world to social causes. All proceeds from their first two singles were donated to charity. "Dreams" raised over €230,000 for Safe Ireland Covid-19 Emergency Fund, a nationwide service for women and children fleeing domestic violence (Safe Ireland: web source). RuthAnne cited the group's commitment to supporting this work as the primary motivation for recording and releasing the track (Nialler9 2020). Safe Ireland welcomed it as "a strong community response […] to send a powerful message to those living with domestic abuse: they are not alone" (Safe Ireland 2020: web source). Profits from "Together at Christmas" went to ISPCC Childline. The fund-raising dimension of the Irish Women in Harmony project illustrates the public benefits of feminist musical activism. This impact is a further reason to pay closer attention to such activity.

Conclusion

This article has argued that music has become a major site for feminist activism in Ireland since 2016. Several feminist collectives have formed. While groups such as Sounding the Feminists, FairPlé, Why Not Her? and Irish Women in Harmony each have their own missions and constituencies, their proliferation in the last five years points to a shared commitment to gender-equality action. This musical activism paralleled a bigger social surge of grassroots feminism, centred on the campaign to repeal the Eighth Amendment of the Irish constitution.

The collectives have made several interventions to raise awareness about gender equality and create more equitable conditions in the music industries, academia, and amateur scenes. Interventions include new artistic opportunities (recordings, live performances, composition commissions) and strategic actions (meetings, workshops, conferences, industry partnerships, media engagement, research, and policy consultation). These testify to a dynamic feminist movement which uses diverse strategies to advance its goals. However, much of this progress relies on voluntary labour undertaken by women. Therefore, it is essential to find ways of reducing the gendered load of "equality labour" and embedding it in organisations as compensated work.

One component of Ireland's recent feminist activism is research (e.g., Monaghan 2021; Coogan-Byrne et al 2020a, 2020b, 2021a, 2021b). While some researchers employ familiar musicological and ethnomusicological methodologies, others operate in industry rather than academia and disseminate their work in different forums. Therefore, it is necessary to expand definitions and practices of feminist musicology, to be cognisant of studies conducted beyond academia and the value of their findings. Regardless of origin, the research I have mentioned shares common ground. It examines, in various ways, how the country's professional music industries and amateur scenes are constructed and experienced in gendered terms. That body of work (this article included) thus forms part of what Hamer calls the "second wave" of feminist musicology. At the same time, it arose out of specific circumstances in twentieth-first-century Ireland which go beyond music and, perhaps, amount to a feminist "wave" in their own right.

Notes

[1] Since 2017, Travellers (people who belong to the indigenous Irish nomadic group known as the Travelling Community) have been legally recognised as an ethnic minority.
[2] Direct Provision is the state system which provides food, shelter, a minimal weekly payment, and medical services to asylum seekers in Ireland. Amnesty International has condemned the poor quality of life in Direct Provision as a "human rights scandal" and is lobbying the Irish Government to end the system. See: https://www.amnesty.ie/end-direct-provision/.
[3] In referring to this intersection, I am influenced by Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality, and acknowledge that she originated the concept specifically to articulate the oppression of Black women in the US (Crenshaw 1989). Crenshaw, however, also recognises the term's more diffuse present usage (Steinmetz 2020). I employ the latter usage here.
[4] They have also published studies on UK radio stations.
[5] For a full list of the performers on "Dreams", see: https://imro.ie/news/irish-women-in-harmony-share-dreams-in-aid-of-safe-ireland/

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