

From Ethnic to Sonic Irishness: The Reception of Irish Traditional Music in Germany

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Abstract

This article explores factors that inform the perception and performance of Irish traditional music by German practitioners, for whom transcultural exchange and post-ethnic configurations of musical practice appear to have reshaped historically rooted notions of ethnic-national identity, expressed through European folk music genres in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Tracing historical transcultural musical affinities between Germany and Ireland, as amplified in late 20th century German folk music revival movements, the article also uncovers modern identity politics among German Irish traditional musicians. For these individuals, the idea of 'Irishness' in Irish music has become re-contextualised in post-ethnic configurations of 'Irish' sonic markers, in references to locality, and the possibility of musical relocation. These discursive changes recursively shape the participatory frame of German Irish music sessions. Here, transitions from ethnic to musical and sonic identity markers appear to entail shifts in the gatekeeping regulations of musical prowess, inclusivity, and session etiquette.

Keywords: Irish traditional music, folk music, Germany, identity, ethnicity, authenticity, session

Introduction

In *Subcultural Sounds: Micromusics of the West*, Mark Slobin (1993) has provided a seminal ethnomusicological framework for comprehending the numerous complexities of cross-cultural musical interrelations in the modern, 'de-territorialised' and increasingly fragmented world we live in. Extending an established anthropological and ethnomusicological preoccupation with more disparate sites of ethnographic field research, Slobin analyses music as a fluid and affectively meaningful expressive medium along local, national and intercultural planes of lived musical experience. It is Slobin's discussion of transnational musics, and in particular his concept of "affinity interculture", that frames this article on Irish music making in Germany. Slobin defines affinity interculture as a "transnational performer-audience interest group" (Slobin 1993: 68), comprising individuals that are attracted to musics by choice and often without possessing any ethnic ties to the source domains of the music cultures they identify with. Slobin's model serves as a particularly useful tool for tracing how folk music genres like Irish traditional music have transcended their once ethnically constructed source domain and have become globally received among artists and audiences that do not have any ethnic or diasporic connections to the land of the music's origin. My article draws out Irish music's agency in creating such intercultural affinities among German-born practitioners and extends Slobin's preoccupation with music's mobility across geographical locales (Rice 2003: 156) through an increased focus on how German-Irish musical affinity dynamics have shifted over time.

Existing discourses in Irish music studies and ethnomusicology, which deal with the global mobility of Ireland's vernacular music, have been chiefly focused on the genre's significance for artists and audiences in English-speaking cultural spheres, most

prominently, the Irish diaspora in America (Dillane 2016; O'Shea 2008; Williams 2009). In fact, there appears to be a critical gap in the research conducted on its reception in the continental European context more broadly, and in particular, on Germany's community of Irish traditional music practitioners.

This is rather surprising, since Germany has long represented a prominent site for the marketing of Irish culture and a lucrative touring circuit for Irish artists. Most significantly, it has itself brought a thriving scene of Irish traditional musicians to the fore. In the 1970s many German folk music revivalists avidly identified with performance styles borrowed from the idiom of Irish traditional music. This historically validated German-Irish musical affinity continues to resonate in the form of professional German touring bands performing Irish music and manifests particularly vividly in Germany's highly interconnected Irish music session community. Focusing on Irish music making in Germany can add to new understandings of the routes Irish music practices have taken globally, which moves ethnomusicologists studying Ireland's vernacular music away from simply considering ethnic and diasporic politics of identity construction and negotiation. In fact, this prizes open new modes of musically-mediated relocation and allows us to uncover transformations in the very labels of 'Irishness' and 'Germanness' attached to the folk music genres that were instrumental in consolidating a sense of ethnic identity in the narrative of 19th and 20th century European nationalism. After all, what exactly does the 'Irishness' in Irish music connote and affectively mobilise for practitioners that have no ethnic ties to the country of its origin? This question is situated at the very heart of this article.

At this point, I should acknowledge that politics of musical identity negotiation discussed in my article form part of my own experience as a practitioner of Irish music. This particular outlook also informed fieldwork that I conducted process of completing my undergraduate and postgraduate theses at the University of Limerick. In the next section I briefly outline the ramifications of my ethnographic research among German-born Irish traditional and former GDR folk musicians, to give the reader a sense of the lived musical experiences that underpin my research findings and how I have decided to mediate them.

Notes on Methodology: Conducting Fieldwork in Germany

Having studied Irish traditional music at the University of Limerick for four years at undergraduate level, I am indeed not ethnically Irish. In fact, I am an ethnomusicologist and traditional musician from Germany and came into contact with Irish music in my home town of Berlin. In my teens, I learned how to play the bodhrán and the uilleann pipes, travelled to festivals in Ireland and subsequently decided to move to Limerick to expand on my expertise. As a scholar, I have developed research interests in Irish music studies and became aware of discourses surrounding ethnicity, identity, authenticity and globalisation, which continue to inform the practice of Irish traditional music. Having engaged in these issues, I began to ask myself what is really at stake for German artists playing Irish music and investigated this topic in my senior undergraduate thesis, entitled *The Experience of Irish Traditional Musicians in Germany* (Morgenstern 2016). As part of fieldwork for this research project, I travelled to Germany in the summer months of 2015 to conduct interviews with practitioners from the Berlin, Hanover and Bavaria regions that have engaged with Irish traditional music on both amateur and professional levels. To convey the outcomes of my research to an English-speaking audience, I have presented interview quotations both in the original German version and their English translation. Translated excerpts from my encounters in the field provide the ethnographic foundation of my arguments in the second section of this article. This part of my paper focuses on current experiences of Irish traditional musicians in Germany. In the context of my postgraduate research in ethnomusicology, I extended my inquiry into historical terrain, writing my M.A. thesis on the GDR folk music revival movement (Morgenstern 2017). Quotations taken from my

interviews with former members of the Leipzig-based East German folk music scene in April 2017 should provide the reader with a more in-depth understanding of the popularity of Irish music in the GDR revival. This theme is discussed towards the end of the first section of this article. Framing my ethnographic research on Irish music making in Germany through discursive analysis has necessarily involved the consultation of German-language scholarship in the domain of folk music studies and has required me to mediate contents and idiomatic German expressions in German-language literature into English. This should allow the reader to follow my line of argumentation more clearly.

Combining outcomes from my ethnographic research and discursive analysis I proceed by exploring both the historical and contemporary reception of Irish traditional music in Germany, against the backdrop of folk music and its place in the complex web of nationalism and post-war transcultural exchange between Ireland and Germany. First, I focus on the historically validated fluidity between German and Irish musical traditions, which becomes apparent in terms of the attraction of German romantics to the music of Europe's Celtic fringe and in relation to the co-option of folk music for political nationalist agendas in both Irish and German cultural contexts. In post-war Germany, a 'Celtic' inspiration resurfaced and profoundly underpinned the avid reception of Irish traditional music by German folk music revivalists. Following the ideological corruption of German folk songs by the Nazi regime, Irish music provided a suitable performative alternative for German practitioners who were confronted with the extreme marginalisation of their own vernacular music. In this fragile post-war context, Irish music already took on the post-ethnically-configured¹ quality that appears to structure current encounters of Irish traditional musicians in Germany. Historical evidence of the German-Irish musical affinity intercultural, unpacked alongside the lived, modern-day experience of German Irish traditional musicians aptly illustrates how, for non-native practitioners of Irish music, a once ethnically configured sense of 'authentic' Irishness has been re-contextualised on a musically and socially constructed level. In this new context, music, and what I title 'sonic authenticity', takes agency in recursively shaping both the performance practice itself and the discourses unfolding around it. The final part of my article uncovers how this shift from ethnic to sonic markers of authenticity changes the participatory boundaries of Irish music sessions in Germany, a popular social setting for Irish music making in this particular cultural context.

Given that ethnicity, the negotiation of Irishness, and its reception in a climate of globalisation are central concerns in the fields of Irish music studies and ethnomusicology, this article sets out to contribute to our understanding of how music functions as a profound vehicle to both assert and subvert notions of (Irish) national identity. This has wide-reaching implications for the music makers in question and for the claim that Irish music has become a post-ethnically configured and globally received musical practice. To clarify the process in which Irish music can be uncoupled from ethnic ties and becomes meaningful for a global community of practitioners, I now move towards deconstructing the historical relationship between Irish and German folk musics and the political agendas of cultural nationalism.

Historical Entanglements between Folk Music, Ethnicity, and Nationalism in Ireland

My critique of music and its relationship with national identity emerges out of a twofold argument in ethnomusicologist Martin Stokes's (1994: 1-28) introduction to the volume *Ethnicity, Identity, and Music: The Musical Construction of Place*. As Stokes has it, music functions as a means to build, maintain and negotiate the permeability of boundaries erected by social groups to clarify their distinctiveness from others. Thus, emphasizing the 'ethnic' in music poses obvious limitations for non-members of these social groups. On the contrary, Stokes (ibid.: 3-4) acknowledges that music acts as a

profound vehicle for individual relocation to places and memories, allowing practitioners to assert multiple identities and transcending musical and indeed national boundaries. An inevitable tension emerges between music's historically validated capacity to confirm an exclusive sense of ethnic Irishness and strategies that performers employ to access the post-ethnically configured realm of Irish musical practice. To understand the latter, it is necessary to trace the historical axis along which folk music in both Ireland and Germany was put into the service of nationalism. This comparison sheds light on multiple resonances between the two locations, their respective musical traditions and the course of musical practice for present day practitioners.

At the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries in Ireland, antiquarian and Romantic cultural nationalist movements embedded Irish folk music deeply within anti-colonial discourse and the struggle to rid oneself of colonial domination by the British Empire (White 2005: 51-67). Irish Romantic cultural nationalists began to refer to the pre-colonial West of Ireland as an authentic representation of 'Irishness'. In this regard, musicologist Harry White (*ibid.*: 17-18) argues that Irish folk music gained extraordinary integrity as a marker of national identity, even more so than the Irish language at that point. This trend was intensified by antiquarian endeavours to preserve the old folk music repertoire and to compile canons of Irish music, which would serve as a romantic, individualistic political expression (White 1998: 36).

At the Belfast Harp Festival in 1792, Edward Bunting, an antiquarian and musician, was commissioned with the task of transcribing the melodies of the last exponents of the old Gaelic harping tradition, to 'rescue them from oblivion' (White 1998: 40). He published his work in 1797, before Thomas Moore adapted several of Bunting's melodies and set them to his own verses in *Irish Melodies* of 1807. While the sentiment inherent in Moore's songs was a primarily melancholic and nostalgic mourning over the loss of a glorious Irish-Celtic past, his enterprise was equally informed by political events that occurred in Ireland at that time, most prominently, the failed United Irishmen Uprising of 1798 and the Act of Union of 1801. The sentimental body of Moore's *Irish Melodies* thus also embodied a romanticised political longing for nationalist self-determination (White 2008: 38), which was stimulated by the experience of loss and dispossession. Leading into 19th century cultural nationalism in Ireland, one notices the continuous framing of Irish music as the endangered remains of the past, especially in the face of the devastation of the Great Famine. Unlike Bunting's compilation of melodies deriving from the old Gaelic aristocracy, George Petrie's collection of Irish music from 1855 features material gathered from the rural peasantry. This resonated with Central European movements at the time (O'Shea 2008: 5-22). Perhaps the most influential collection of Irish folk music was *The Dance Music of Ireland-1001 Gems*, published by the chief of the Chicago Police Force, Francis O'Neill, in 1907. O'Neill's collection captured a sense of the oral tradition of Irish music and its ethnic quality. Drawing upon his own repertoire and collecting tunes played by other Irish emigrants in Chicago, O'Neill produced a canon of Irish music that was unprecedented in its agency of connecting the Irish nation with its diasporic hinterland (Bohlman 2004: 110).

Prior to the successful reception of O'Neill's publications in Ireland, Douglas Hyde founded *Conradh na Gaeilge*, the Gaelic League, in 1893. Hyde's primary agenda was to de-Anglicise Ireland, by reviving the Irish language and by actively encouraging Irish cultural practices, which became rapidly institutionalised and served the establishment of an independent Irish state. In this context, Irish music scholar Helen O'Shea (2008: 21) contends that the racialised discourse, based on affirming an ethnic Irish national identity and playing out in the struggle for an independent Ireland, was enforced. For example, Celtic myths were employed as a means of stylising a purely Irish past. Relying primarily on religious and political divisions, the Irish were constituted as the Catholic Gael, who stood in opposition to the Protestant coloniser. Crucially, music was

placed at the very heart of this sharpening of the contrast between the colonised Self and the colonising Other.

Much of the theorising that informed this distinction circulated among intellectuals across Europe and derived from German philosopher and theologian Johann Gottfried von Herder's late 18th century theses on folk song and language as integral mediators of cultural specificity and national identity (O'Shea 2008: 8-9). Late 19th century Irish cultural nationalists like Thomas Davis and Douglas Hyde "adopted many of Herder's precepts and applied them to the insular context" (Williams and Ó Laoire 2011: 28). Recognising the Trans-European reception of Herder's theses now leads me to clarify the problematic entanglement of his romantic folk song concept with political agendas of extreme German nationalism in the 19th and 20th centuries. A more thorough outline of German folk music's misuse for propaganda purposed during the Third Reich allows me to show how Irish music provided an alternative expressive medium for post-war German folk musicians whose own folk songs had been abused by the Nazis. This key historical development contributed to the naissance of a German draw towards the idiom of Irish music which persists in the present.

A Problematic Romantic-Nationalistic Legacy of German Folk Songs

At a time when German identity was not yet politically delineated in the form of a unified nation state, Herder composed his essay on *Alte Volkslieder* ("Old Folk Songs") in 1774. Stating that the *Volk*, the German equivalent of "folk", were *unpoliticirt* ("politically unorganised") and thus lacked political organisation in their highly individual and most 'natural' state, Herder first expressed the urge to consolidate a unified German national spirit through the collection of a shared, yet highly distinct folk song repertoire, using the German language as a common denominator in its publication (Bohlman 2017: 21-5). It was here and in Herder's 1778 and 1779 volumes of *Volkslieder*ⁱⁱ that the term *Volkslied* ("folk song") first became coined and was specifically tied to the prospect of channelling cultural distinctiveness and the *Volk*'s individuality into a cohesive German national identity (Bohlman 2004: 42-3).

Already in 1773, Herder had grounded his fascination with the politically-unorganised, 'free' and 'wild' folk, and had argued for the reflection of these attributes in folk song in his writings on Ossianⁱⁱⁱ, James Macpherson's Scottish myth hero, who also served as a prominent model for the Gaelic Revival in Ireland. As West German folklorists Jürgen Frey and Kaarel Siniveer (1987: 116) point out, it was through his essay on Ossian that Herder expressed a romantic, though undoubtedly idealised longing for an unblemished, exotic Celtic past, which fulfilled his vision of folk song as the quintessentially natural expression of the spirit of the folk and their sensitivity. Herder writes:

Wissen Sie, daß, je wilder...je lebendiger, je freiwirkender ein Volk ist...desto wilder... lebendiger, freier, sinnlicher, lyrisch handelnder müssen auch...seine Lieder seyn!

("You know, the wilder...livelier, freer-acting the folk...the wilder...livelier, freer, more sensual, lyrical...its songs have to be!")

(Herder 1828: 15).

Herder's writing allows us to trace historically documented affinities between Ireland and Scotland, two regions located at Europe's 'Celtic fringe', and Germany through the lens of folk song. Crucially, this occurred at a time when the territory nowadays referred to as 'Germany' was no more than a cluster of independently-ruled kingdoms and principalities and Herder's thesis on the possibility of putting the songs of the people into the service of the nation surfaced long before a unified German Empire came to fruition in 1871. Nevertheless, it is clear that endeavours to identify a German music culture, at least partly inspired by folk music practices in other European countries at the time, contributed to the establishment of a German nation.

Inspired by Herder's theories on language and song, 19th century German romantics gained an interest in local folk songs which, according to ethnomusicologist Philip Bohlman (2004: 46), gradually became elevated to the level of a national German repertoire. But what constituted the national for a nation that was yet to be politically defined? In this case, it was the common cultural denominator – the German language. Arguably, the most prominent collection in this regard was Ludwig Achim von Arnim and Clemens Brentano's *Des Knaben Wunderhorn: Alte deutsche Lieder* ("The Youth's Magic Horn: Old German Songs"). This work, two volumes of which were published in 1806 and 1808, included an abundance of old German songs. However, the editors decided to augment their accessibility by transferring regional dialects into the High German language. A canon of orally transmitted, local German folk songs was compiled as a unique representation of 'Germanness', as Bohlman astutely points out: "Songs classified as German demonstrated the qualities of a common culture, a nation still in the process of achieving unity." (Bohlman 2004: 86).

In the period between the two World Wars, Germany had lost a considerable number of settlement areas. At that time, folk song anthologies, such as *Landschaftliche Volkslieder* ("Folk Songs from Their Landscapes"), published by the German Folk-Song Archive in Freiburg im Breisgau in 1924, served not only as means of promoting German sonic authenticity. In fact, they were also used to justify German military expansion to reclaim territories lost during World War I (Bohlman 2004: 65). This development was particularly problematic, as it soon underpinned the Nazi regime's misuse of German folk music to "represent the nation to the aggrandizement of self and the denigration of other" (ibid.: 67).

During the Third Reich (1933-45), the Nazi-regime exploited German folk music's popular appeal, by systematically implementing the genre in their ideology to educate, mobilise and control the masses. The co-option of folk music by the Nazis led to an intense, racially motivated underscoring of Germanic national identity. A move from folk music as individual expression, as Herder had once put it, to an anti-individualistic, popular appeal (Sweers 2005: 72) is particularly apparent in terms of Nazi endeavours to expand upon the then popular folk music repertoire of ballads, carols and dances. The Nazi folk music concept now included newly composed and politically loaded marching and propaganda songs that were employed to educate the German youth in the context of the *Hitlerjugend* ("Hitler Youth") and the *Bund Deutscher Mädel* ("League of German Girls"), two centralised youth organisations. The new political connotations of folk music repertoire and the performance context of marching drills and propaganda events profoundly altered this generation's understanding of what German folk music signified, as ethnomusicologist Britta Sweers (ibid.: 75) asserts. Furthermore, extreme views emerged, which stipulated that German folk music was part of a "biologically determined Germanic national identity" (Sweers 2019: 2).

The previous comparison between folk music and nationalism in both German and Irish contexts reveals numerous parallels. In both scenarios, music underwent a journey from an expressive medium of cultural distinctiveness to a marker of ethnic exclusivity and was subsequently put into the service of nationalist agendas. At the transition between the 18th and 19th centuries, in both countries individuals emerged who canonised a national repertoire. Furthermore, Romantic cultural nationalism in the two locations was informed by Herder's theory that each nation is culturally specific, which manifests in language and folk culture. In Germany, language and folk song were instrumental in unifying the nation, whereas Ireland's ethnic language was slowly vanishing and thus supplanted by the valorisation of other components of the ancient Gaelic heritage, with music at the heart of this.

Although similarities are apparent between the two countries and their folk movements, perhaps the most important distinction to be made in relation to Nazi Germany is that folk music became co-opted in political agendas which led to some of one of the most horrific crimes of modern Europe, the genocide of European Jews and

Roma (Bohlman 2004: 20). Crucially, it is the trauma and devastation of the Holocaust that provides a starting point for the examination of a post-war identity crisis, in which the idiom of Irish music provided a sonic alternative for a German folk music repertoire that had become intensely intertwined with the label of Nazi abuse. Such analysis leads us to comprehend, in Martin Stokes's framework, the shift from ethnic concepts of 'Irishness' and 'Germanness', markers and boundaries that distinguish one ethnic group from another, to the post-ethnic process of relocation across these erected boundaries. In this process, the idea of 'ethnic music' takes on a new, trans-cultural role, as becomes particularly prevalent when considering the reception of Irish music in post-war Germany.

Post-War Revival, Escapism, and *Ersatz* Nostalgia

After 1945, the arrival of the Allied forces in Germany caused widespread demographic changes that left regional German folk music traditions highly marginalised. At the same time, politically charged marching songs were forbidden. A resulting break in the transmission of folk songs, now intertwined with the tag of Nazi propaganda, led to the alienation of traditional material from its original performance context. In the 1950s, this marginalisation of performance traditions stimulated what Sweers (2005: 79) calls "post-war escapism", characterised by the public's need to seek refuge from folk music's nationalistic connotations in nostalgic and idyllic representations of the German landscape. This need was to be satisfied and displayed visually in form of the *Heimatfilm* ("film with a regional background"), a film genre which projected a *Heile Welt* ("idyllic world") image, the hope that the harsh post-war reality would soon turn into an intact world. The *Heimatfilm* found its textual and sonic adjunct in the form of highly popular, newly composed *volkstümliche Musik* ("folk-style music"), a genre replete with associations of kitsch and artificiality, that was conceived to cleanse folk music of its nationalistic connotations by portraying an idealised, clichéd image of the German cultural heritage.

It is in this fragile post-war context that the need for an *Ersatz* folk music tradition emerged. In 20th century anthropological scholarship, *Ersatz*, the German equivalent for "replacement", has become intrinsically interwoven with the concept of nostalgia, as outlined by Arjun Appadurai (1996: 76). A compound of the Greek *nostos* ("return home") and *algia* ("longing"), the etymology of nostalgia indicates the romantic yearning to revisit a specific setting of time and space, coupled with the need to reconfigure (cultural) identity and the homeland. Writing on *Ersatz* nostalgia, Appadurai (1996: 77-8) critiques the way that mass merchandising draws upon nostalgia as a means to promote a way of life that is either lost forever or that has never been lost at all. As Appadurai has it, *Ersatz* nostalgia, so readily co-opted for mass-merchandising purposes, cannot satisfy the real longings of those that have actually lost the means of cultural and indeed musical expression, as is the case in the German experience. In the late 20th century folk music revivals that existed as counter-movements to *volkstümliche Musik* in both post-war German states, we witness how the *Ersatz* nostalgia projected by folk-style music is limited and has to give way to music that could address revivalists' real longings for musical and cultural identity. Wolfgang Leyn, member of the seminal Leipzig-based GDR folk band *Folkländer*, describes a shared disdain for *Ersatz* nostalgic folk-style music among members of the revival scene:

Damals...konnte man deutsche Volkslieder gar nicht mehr singen, weil alles entweder verkunstet oder verkitscht war...Dann gab es auch die volkstümliche Musik, die als Volkslied bezeichnet wurde. Das wollten wir nicht und das waren eigentlich unsere ärgsten Feinde.

(“Back then...one could not sing German folk songs anymore, because they were either kitsch or too artificial...Then there was *volkstümliche Musik*, which was framed as folk song. We didn’t want that and those were our most vicious enemies.”)

(Leyn, 12 April 2017, personal communication).

The need to identify an alternative medium of creative expression was eventually satisfied by other European folk music traditions, most prominently, Irish and Scottish traditional music. These genres gradually shifted into the focus of artists and became more popular in the reassessment of German post-war identity (Sweers 2005: 80). As Sweers later clarifies, Anglo-Irish traditional music served as a novel sonic model and performative platform to revive German folk music traditions that had become widely extinct since the Nazi Era:

...the encounter with international, especially then-popular Scottish-Irish artists not only stimulated new research in local traditions. It also provided a musical basis in the face of the extreme marginalization of performance traditions. Many German folk bands thus started as “Irish folk bands” in the 1970s and often adapted related instruments, arrangements and performance styles to newly composed and traditional material. (Sweers 2019: 4).

In terms of textual elements of folk songs that were conveyed sonically through an Irish and Scottish-inspired performance style, David Robb (2007), in *Protest Song in East and West Germany Since the 1960s*, suggests that members of the West German protest song movement set out to reframe German folk music in terms of its democratic, oppositional attributes. They re-appropriated song repertoire associated with the 1848 Revolution, an uprising against repressions exerted by rulers in the various German principalities existing in 19th century, in order to critique political issues in the present. For example, West German artists like Hannes Wader, *Liederjan* or *Zupfgeigenhansel* performed 1848 revolutionary material to address the prevailing social conformity in face of the apparent Nazi background of their parents’ generation and that of many state employees at the time (Sweers 2005: 79).

Focusing on the shift towards an Anglo-Irish sonic inspiration, which West German artists drew upon, is equally significant in relation to the folk music scene that developed in the in the German Democratic Republic from 1976 onwards. In fact, this leitmotif not only unveils parallels between the folk music movements in the two German states, but it also forms an important reference point for historical analysis of the popularity of Irish and Scottish music in modern day Germany. While an Irish-Scottish soundscape also accompanied the songs of East German folk musicians, their identification with the oppositional messages communicated in folk songs about Ireland’s post-colonialist struggles of emancipation from the British Empire was equally significant. When interviewed on the textual and sonic ramifications of his music making, Jürgen B. Wolff, lead singer with *Folkländer* (Wolff, 12 April 2017, personal communication), comments that Irish rebel songs like “Roddy McCorley” and “The Foggy Dew”, emigration songs like “Mursheen Durkin”, and recruitment songs like “McAlpine’s Fusiliers” were particularly topical from a socio-political stance in the East German context. In fact, these songs mirrored then widespread concerns among GDR artists and audiences, resonating with desires to emigrate to the Federal Republic of Germany and the encounters of many with the compulsory military service in a state that outlawed the expression of pacifism (Robb 2007: 20).

The growing need to communicate the protest messages inherent in Irish songs to a broader German-speaking target audience meant that GDR folk musicians had to reconnect with their own democratic German-language protest song heritage that had been banned by the Nazis. In this context, it is fruitful to consider Svetlana Boym’s extension of Appadurai’s *Ersatz* nostalgia. In her work *The Future of Nostalgia*, Boym (2001: 41) argues for the multiplicity of nostalgia, a sentiment that may dwell intensely on the frictions between present and past experiences (‘reflective nostalgia’) or actively seek to re-establish continuity with a lost past. It is this latter meaning, and Boym’s

typology of 'restorative nostalgia', which is most useful in understanding the thematic agency of Irish protest songs in bridging a rupture in the transmission and performance of similarly oppositional German-language folk songs. Wolfgang Leyn (2016: 22) outlines how thematic overlaps between Irish songs and 19th century German protest songs^{iv} led to a performed resurfacing of 1848 revolutionary songs in the GDR. The topicality of 19th century German folk songs in the GDR context meant that they could be used, on a historically subversive level, to voice critique of the state's organisational structures. Yet, East German folk musicians had to carefully mediate lyrics surrounding themes of communist regime critique in a climate of state-imposed censorship. It is important to comprehend the complexities of this mechanism and to unpack it in greater detail.

The naissance of the GDR folk music scene can be traced back to the formation of the East Berlin *Hootenanny Klub* in 1966, initiated by Berlin-resident Canadian folk singer Perry Friedman. The *Hootenanny Klub* provided a platform for spontaneous singing sessions that students and other aspiring folk musicians could engage in (Leyn 2016: 11). These artists re-interpreted workers' songs, usually framed as a 'sacred' repertoire of the socialist state and the working class, in a setting that creatively borrowed sonic elements from other music genres, such as jazz and popular music.

In 1967, however, the *Hootenanny Klub* was taken over by the GDR youth organisation *FJD* ("Free German Youth") and, in reference to the 1917 October Revolution in Russia, renamed *Oktoberklub*. This strategic move asserted the ideological control of the *SED* Party ("Socialist Unity Party of Germany") over artistic expression, by promoting a *DDR-konkret* ("GDR-concrete") repertoire as a canon for its *Singebewegung* ("Youth Song Movement"). The label *DDR-konkret* signified that artists could only compose and perform song material which served the interests of socialist progression and the proletariat and fostered a strong sense of GDR identity. In this context, Robb (*ibid.*: 230-33) clarifies that the growing dissatisfaction with the movement's objectives was rooted in folk singers' realisation that freedom of speech was in fact limited and that the *Singebewegung* represented a vehicle for the indoctrination of Communist Party objectives. Notably, the state-conforming *Singebewegung* itself also provided fertile ground for the rapidly emerging state-critical *Liedermacher* ("balladeers") like Wolf Biermann, who was expatriated from the GDR in 1976 for voicing open regime critique in his songs.

In this regard, Robb (*ibid.*: 227) critiques the discourse on GDR folk music as being caught up in the predicament that artistic expression was exclusively sacrificed to the imperatives of state-imposed censorship. He reveals a more nuanced perspective on the issue by referring to those performers that firmly identified with the agenda of the *Singebewegung* on the one hand, and, on the contrary, by acknowledging musicians that had to carefully navigate between intermittent state conformity and dissidence, since their livelihoods relied on state institutions that provided a performance platform and the necessary funding. By balancing between state conformity and subversion, GDR folk singers exploited a primary contradiction in the state's cultural policy. The GDR government cherished the 1848 song material as an intrinsic part of the state's revolutionary *Erbe* ("heritage") (*ibid.*: 18). For example, musicologist Inge Lammel's collection of 1848 songs, *Lieder der Revolution von 1848* ("Songs of the 1848 Revolution"), published in 1957, was intended to be performed specifically in the context of the *Singebewegung*, framed as a historical legitimisation for the ongoing struggle of the proletariat in the 'workers' and peasants' state' (Lammel 1957: 3), and employed to underscore the progressive spirit of the *Aufbau* ("construction") years after 1950, the period in which the GDR state was formed.

In contrast, folk musicians, who began to dissociate themselves from the state-conforming youth song movement, shifted their focus towards song material in Lammel's collection and ethnologist Wolfgang Steinitz' (1954) democratic folk song canon *Deutsche Volkslieder demokratischen Charakters aus sechs Jahrhunderten*

(“German Folk Songs of Democratic Character from Six Centuries”), that referred to defeat and the failure of the Revolution in 1848. The texts of the GDR’s revolutionary heritage allowed both the metaphorical association with the failure of the socialist utopian dream and the reframing of the historical theme of *Deutsche Misere* (“German misery”), or German society’s inability to achieve lasting democratic changes from the bottom up. Furthermore, Robb (2007: 18) suggests that 1848 *Auswandererlieder* (“émigrés’ songs”), mirrored the growing desire of many GDR citizens to leave the country, a subtext that was clearly understood by audience members on a highly intellectual level. Moreover, these songs could not be readily censored, due to their association with the state’s revolutionary heritage and their dissemination in folk song collections. In his recently published chronicle of the GDR folk music scene, entitled *Volkes Lied und Vater Staat* (“Folk Song and Father State”), Wolfgang Leyn refers to Jürgen B. Wolff and his comment on the performance of ambiguous song texts:

Die Folkbands wurden Meister im Jonglieren mit Anspielungen, Witzen und Parabeln. Es entwickelte sich in ihren Liedern eine zweite Bedeutungsebene, die sich fast automatisch herstellte, wenn ein Stück erklang.

(“The folk music bands were masters in the juggling of hidden references, jokes and parables. The inherent subtext in their songs installed itself almost automatically, as soon as a piece resounded.”)

(Wolff in Leyn 2016: 14).

Leyn (*ibid.*: 12) asserts that the culturally representative function of the state-controlled *Singebewegung* was overemphasized at the expense of individual artistic expression, leading performers to discover alternative creative niches, particularly the sonic models of Irish and Scottish traditional music which members of the newly emerging GDR folk music scene encountered in the context of the annual *Festival des politischen Liedes* (“Festival of Political Songs”), the state-funded international political song festival held annually in East Berlin. This event, an unprecedented window to the cultural sphere beyond the Wall, allowed East German artists to witness touring acts, such as Scottish folk singer Dick Gaughan and the Sands Family from Northern Ireland (Robb 2007: 232-33). Irish and Scottish performers exerted a profound impact on the soundscape, repertoire and performance style pursued by GDR folk musicians, even before they turned their attention to their own democratic folk song heritage.

Leyn’s account of Irish and Scottish repertoires and soundscapes that served as expressive models for GDR folk musicians reveals that Anglo-Irish artists taught young performers a lesson in “*erdverbundenem Gruppenmusizieren*” (Leyn 2016: 20), which translates as “earthbound group musicking” and reflects and Jürgen B. Wolff’s (in Leyn 2016: 36) point that predominantly the participatory characteristics of Irish traditional music appealed. Referring to the circulation of illegally imported records of Irish folk bands from West Germany in the GDR, Wolfgang Leyn adds that many folk musicians were drawn to a romanticised exotic otherness inherent in Irish forms of instrumentation and an omnipresent feeling of belonging that Irish melodies conveyed. Moreover, he claims that songs performed by seminal Irish ballad bands like The Dubliners evoked an affinity with the vivid history of Irish rebellion against the British coloniser:

Zum einen ist die irische Musik einfach eine sehr schöne Musik. Sie ist in gewisser Weise von ihren Instrumenten und Melodien her exotisch...Dieses Irische war irgendwie immer präsent und es lag uns nahe, weil wir uns da gut eingefühlt haben...Es hat uns irgendwie gereizt...Die Dubliners kamen damals auf und das hat uns irgendwie imponiert. Dazu kam noch, dass es ganz gut in dieses anti-imperialistische Weltbild hineinpasste...Irland war ja die erste Kolonie Englands...Das stand in dieser Tradition der Aufstände.

(“Firstly, Irish music is an aesthetic kind of music. Its instrumentation and melodies are exotic...The Irish element was omnipresent and it was particularly close to us, because we could adopt its feeling...That somehow appealed to us...The Dubliners emerged at that time and we were somehow impressed. In fact, it fitted in with our anti-imperialistic world view.

For example, Ireland was England's first colony...It was a tradition of rebellion.")
(Leyn, 12 April 2017, personal communication).

Crucially, after decades of political-nationalist abuse of folk song in Nazi Germany, post-war escapism, and censorship of folk song material by the East German government, practitioners expressed a renewed longing for this romantic element, to the exotic, 'natural' character of other folk music genres that Herder had already articulated in his elaborations on Ossian in the late 18th century. Writing from the West German perspective three years prior to the fall of the Berlin Wall, Frey and Siniveer conclude their book on folk music history with the claim that the German draw to other European folk music genres, such as Irish and Scottish traditional music, is rooted in a desire to dissociate oneself from the ideologically, nationalist and commercially tainted discourses surrounding Germany's own folk music heritage. This interest in other cultures, in turn, also stimulated a renewed interest in the German folk music repertoire:

Folklore ist bei uns ideologisiert, nationalisiert, kommerzialisiert;...es gibt eine ganze Reihe von Ländern in Europa...in denen Folklore einen ganz anderen Charakter und eine andere Funktion hat...Hier zu lernen heißt, unser oft genug "verflachtes Folklorebewusstsein"...wieder zu vertiefen.

("In our case, folklore has been ideologically co-opted, nationalised, commercialised;...there are a number of countries in Europe...in which folklore is characterised quite differently and serves a different function...In this case, we can learn how to deepen our own 'shallow folklore consciousness'...again.")

(Frey and Siniveer 1987: 307).

This is precisely what occurred when East German folk musicians started to re-assess folk song material in Wolfgang Steinitz' 1954 folk song collection to identify how German songs that were not part of the popular and state-conforming repertoire compared to their Irish counterparts, as ethnomusicologist Axel Hesse (in Leyn 2016: 21) contends. Listening to the few commercial recordings of Scottish and Irish bands that could be purchased in the GDR, many East German musicians became drawn to bagpipes as a sonic icon of Celtic exoticism. The challenge of acquiring these instruments in the sealed-off GDR encouraged the construction of bagpipes by pioneering instrument makers in East Berlin. Soon, different types of bagpipes became part of the local folk music soundscape, a development, which contributed to a renaissance of German medieval music and materialised a once extinct *altdeutsche* ("Old German") identity (Gehler 2014: 6).

What might we conclude about Irish music's significance in the context of East and West German folk music revivals in the post-Nazi Era? Importantly, the Irish idiom became a suitable sonic *Ersatz*, a desired replacement for a German folk music culture that had been abused in the service of mass mobilisation, was employed to articulate racial purity and became subsequently alienated from its original performance context and thus marginalised. Furthermore, this music provided an attractive alternative to the sound of commercial *volkstümliche Musik* and was adopted by members of West German protest song movements and East German artists, who elegantly voiced state criticism in a climate where censorship of artistic expression was widely practiced. To comprehend how Irish traditional music, an ethnic music genre, became post-ethnically configured and attained sonic iconicity for German folk music revivalists, it is fruitful to investigate this affinity dynamic through the paradigm of Celtic music^v.

James Porter (1998: 216) has argued that contemporary conceptions of Celticity and Celtic music are not necessarily based on Celtic language competence or one's identification as ethnically Irish, Scottish, Welsh, Manx, Cornish, or Breton. Once a locally rooted phenomenon and now circulating in global cultural flow, Celtic music has become a much more participatory concept, allowing practitioners to express multi-layered musical affinities. In response to this point, Scott Reiss (in Stokes and

Bohlman 2003: 163) notes that it is primarily music's sonic iconography and mobility that can create imaginary landscapes of relocation. Consequently, classifying music as 'Celtic', sonically and affectively "allows people access to...a domain of 'Celtdom' denied to them by the complexities of, for example, a Celtic language or the theoretical and practical difficulties of maintaining a coherent political identity." (Stokes 1994: 6). How exactly did this play out in the 1970s German folk music revival context? In this scenario, what I tentatively term 'Celtic-inspired' nostalgia, moving from *Ersatz* to restorative attributes, allowed revivalists to rediscover 'organic' characteristics of German folk music that were sacrificed to the imperatives of a fascist political agenda. In light of these historical complexities, it is significant that the close of the Nazi Era heralded a shift from understanding folk music in ethnic and nationalist terms to conceiving of it as globally accessible music. It is this post-ethnically configured realm, the lived experience of non-native practitioners of Irish traditional music, that clarifies how, in reference to historical ramifications of folk music making in Ireland and Germany, the current perspective of practitioners leads us to reassess and shape Irish music discourses. In the following section I draw upon interviews with members of the contemporary German Irish traditional music scene to critically assess how their heightened attention to musical features and ideas around sonic, in contrast with ethnic, 'Irish' authenticity informs the way Irish music is performed in Germany.

From Ethnic to Sonic Markers of Authenticity

Unfortunately, an optimistic perspective on Irish music making in Germany, uncoupled from the genre's ethnically configured source domain, stands in contrast to the opinion of 20th century Irish music scholar Seán Ó Riada and remarks by flute player Seamus Tansey. In *Our Musical Heritage*, Ó Riada (1982: 19-20) argues that Irish music has remained untouched by the influence of European art music streams as its forms, style and standards remain 'purely Irish'. Likewise, he suggests that foreign influences became quickly absorbed and 'Gaelicised' into the 'river' of Irish music. O'Shea (2008: 1-4) critiques this notion of an unchanged tradition, as it emerged from a potential fear of cultural contamination in the context of a real and existing modern, multi-ethnic Irish society. Indeed, this anxiety resurfaces and quite drastically plays out in Tansey's contribution to the 1996 Crossroads Conference, where he states that one cannot sacrifice the pure, authentic qualities of Irish music in the face of the various cross-cultural influences that it might be exposed to.

Tradition versus Change. If that's change...the mongrelisation, the bastardisation, the cross-pollination, the copulation of our ancient traditional music, with other cultures, then I say we want none of it... (Tansey in Vallely et. al 1999: 213).

The claim of authenticity in relation to Irish traditional music is pertinent in both Ó Riada's and Tansey's accounts and serves as metaphorical gunpowder to affirm their agenda of promoting ethnic purity of Irish music. As 'authenticity' appears so readily accessible for appropriation in value judgements, even outside the realms of ethnicity, and if, as Martin Stokes (1994: 7) writes, authenticity is no more than "a discursive trope of great persuasive power", it nonetheless remains a highly complex linguistic tool employed to account for musical practice. And so I turn to the lived experience of Irish traditional musicians in Germany in order to show how exactly notions of authenticity and ethnicity inform their performance practice. What is at stake for practitioners of a music that is so readily cherished as being globally accessible?

During an interview with Bavarian fiddle player Ralf Mayer (whose name is changed here) in 2015, the theme of music, national identity and ethnicity emerged in relation to his motivation to play Irish traditional music. When I asked him why he became interested in the Irish genre, he promptly explained that personally, he sees no correlation between music and national identity at all:

Meiner Meinung nach ist es ganz generell so, dass irische traditionelle Musik für alle Menschen da ist, und es gibt keinen Deutschen Stil...in erster Linie ist es die Musik...Musik hat nichts mit Nationalität zu tun, das möchte ich nochmal betonen...

(“In my opinion, Irish traditional music should generally be accessible to all people and there is no...German style (of fiddle playing)...Most importantly, we are talking about music...Music has absolutely nothing to do with nationality, I just want to emphasize that again...”)

(Mayer, 22 July 2015, personal communication).

A striking feature of Ralf’s account is the definite disjuncture he draws between music and nationality. For him, it is simply the enjoyment of music making that attracted him to Irish music in the first place. Being German does not have anything to do with that decision. In a later comment on the Germanness or – Irishness of his musical practice, he compares music with language as a mode of communication (Mayer, 22 July 2015, personal communication). Ralf argues that languages are accessible and spread globally, as does (Irish) music. While he acknowledges the origin of Irish music in Ireland, he emphasizes the word ‘music’ as significant. This contradiction in Ralf’s comments reveals that, in spite of rejecting any correlation between music and national identity, he senses a draw of Irish music to the land of its origin. Ralf shows an interest in folk music traditions and underlines their ties to a specific locality. This also manifests in his claim that listening to and playing Irish traditional music enables him to relocate himself musically, which is prevalent when he talks about regional styles in Irish music:

Natürlich habe ich dann auch in die verschiedenen Stile reingeschnuppert. Man hat sich dann zunächst in den Clare-Stil und dann in diese Sligo-Ecke verliebt...natürlich ist es etwas Lokales, und das macht den Reiz aus. (Mayer, 22 July 2015, personal communication).

(“Of course, I also delved into the various styles. At first, I fell in love with Clare style and subsequently the style, tunes and sets associated with the Sligo region...Of course, style is bound up with locale. That is what makes it attractive...”)

(Mayer, 22 July 2015, personal communication).

The above excerpts validate Stokes’s argument that music is a profound vehicle for individual relocation to places and memories, thereby allowing practitioners to construct multiple identities that transcend musical and ethnic boundaries. Although he possesses no ethnic ties to the Sligo region, Ralf relocates himself musically, by playing Irish traditional music from this particular locality. When bringing forward the claim of musical relocation in the lived experience of Irish traditional musicians, it is important to investigate how authenticity, a term historically intertwined with much ethnic-national discourse on the making of Irish music, plays out for musicians who possess no ethnic ties to Ireland. Here, John O’Flynn (2009: 175) posits that authenticity in Irish music is frequently judged on the basis of perceived ‘Irish’ sonic markers. In an interview, Berlin flute player Tom Reinhardt evidences O’Flynn’s point, assessing the characteristics of an authentic Irish sound based on the inclusion of stylistic parameters, such as ornamentation and instrumentation, which differ from European art music:

Ich versuche aber schon, möglichst mit den irischen Verzierungen und im irischen Stil zu spielen...die Rolls, Cuts, Grace Notes, die machen das ja aus.

(“Nevertheless...I try to play Irish ornamentation and maintain an Irish style...rolls, cuts, grace notes, they make the music what it is.”)

(Reinhardt, 17 August 2015, personal communication).

Classically trained flute player Linda Jansen (17 August 2015, personal communication) describes the rattling of keys on a sliver flute as a non-Irish sound and mentions her encounters at Irish music workshops in Germany, where she was told by her Irish-born teacher to avoid using her tongue for articulation purposes.

Instead of resorting to tongue articulation, a stylistic feature often employed by classically trained flute players, she was urged to use her fingers to play ornaments instead.

Both Tom and Linda understand authenticity in sonic terms and it is in their accounts that one notices a shift from the ethnic claim of authenticity to a heightened engagement with musical features, which characterise what they conceptualise as Irish music. This suggests that for non-native practitioners, the Irishness in Irish music has become uncoupled from a historically constructed ethnic plane and has moved to a sonic, musically and globally accessible level. Yet, this sense of sonic 'Irish' authenticity comes at a prize and can only be attained through continuous practice and immersion in the Irish traditional repertoire, as Linda points out later:

Um uns richtig irisch zu fühlen, müssten wir es viel intensiver machen...Authentisch im Sinne von irisch? Das finde ich erstrebenswert, aber ich bin nicht authentisch, weil ich nicht gut genug bin...

("To feel more Irish, we would have to immerse ourselves more in the music...Being authentically Irish? That's my goal, but I'm not authentic, because I'm not good enough...")

(Jansen, 17 August 2015, personal communication).

Tom and Linda's comments reveal that, for German practitioners, claims of authenticity in relation to Irish traditional music have shifted from an ethnic to a sonic and globally accessible level. However, their use of the term 'authentic' still erects binary opposites between Western art and Irish music, or Irish and non-Irish sonic markers. In fact, these musicians emphasize that the acquisition of musical skills is integral to attaining sonic authenticity. This complexity mirrors Helen O'Shea's (2008: 2) argument that "authenticity performs a legitimising, hence gatekeeping function in discourses...in which ideas about Irish music are embedded." As popular social contexts for music making, Irish music sessions represent sites where gatekeeping regulations of sonic authenticity and musical prowess are negotiated among practitioners. Indeed, the shift from ethnic to sonic markers inherent in these negotiations also causes a shift in the social, participatory frame of Irish music sessions and determines who gets to join the inner circle of session musicians. The final section of my article explores how ideas around musical capital and sonic authenticity shape the social and participatory characteristics (Turino 2008: 23-65) of Irish music sessions in Germany.

The Stakes of Participation: Encounters at an Irish Music Session in Berlin

In Rudolstadt, Germany, I...sat in a session and I was amazed by the fact that everybody played together...the feeling of leaving the position of a mere listener and to join...the ranks of the music makers, was fascinating. (Bauer, 24 August 2015, personal communication).

Hanover-based bodhrán player Max Bauer portrays sessions as primary contexts for Irish traditional music performance both in Ireland and in Germany and highlights the inclusivity of these events. His response represents an intensely positive perspective on the session as a setting where participation, inclusion and uncomplicated transitions between the realms of audience members and music makers can occur. On the other hand, Ralf Mayer offers a very different perspective on the issue, openly admitting that selecting a few musicians with equal levels of musical skill makes sessions more enjoyable:

Man möchte mit Leuten spielen, mit denen man auf einem Level ist und mit denen das Musikmachen Spaß macht...Die schönsten Sessions sind eh zu dritt, im Privaten, wo man wirklich in die Musik eintauchen kann...

("I like playing with musicians that are performing at the same level as me. Then the process of music making becomes truly enjoyable...The best sessions involve three people, in private, where one can delve into the music properly...")

(Meyer, 22 July 2017, personal communication).

The role of musical prowess as a requirement for participation at Irish music sessions is also problematized by Linda Jansen. As a novice to the world of Irish music, she feels discouraged by the professional level of musicianship displayed at her local Irish music session and perceives it as exclusion. Linda (17 August 2015, personal communication) states that, "In case of the Berlin Super-Session, I always felt that beginners weren't particularly welcome". In fact, Linda learns that belonging to the 'inner circle' of an Irish music session requires a certain capital of musical skill and knowledge. This encounter stands in contrast to Max Bauer's view, which arguably romanticises the session as a generous, inviting musical community. Taking these conflicting perspectives into account, what initially appears as a romantic idea of involvement actually reveals itself as a patina of inclusion, under which decisions on the terms and conditions of participation are strictly governed by a cluster of session 'leaders'. It is in this situation that the previously examined notion of sonic Irish authenticity is used to regulate boundaries of participation. Peeling away the patina of inclusion that German musicians are confronted with in the session context allows me to unpack other issues at stake when Irish traditional musicians in Germany attempt to assimilate into their local session community.

In terms of critiquing the romantic, participatory session, Helen O'Shea (2008) accounts for the unspoken rules that govern the acceptance into and rejection from the liminal space of the 'inner circle' which session musicians occupy. This argument is reflected by Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin, who concludes his *Pocket History of Irish Traditional Music* with a contribution on session etiquette. He argues, that "each session has its own internal logic, social code and sense of time" (Ó hAllmhuráin 1998: 160). According to O'Shea, the fine edge between spontaneous music making and overarching, implicit regulations bears potential for conflict and is situated at the very centre of determining, who gets to participate. Significantly, both O'Shea and Ó hAllmhuráin refer to the governing authority exerted by session leaders, select musicians who are regarded as being 'in charge' of the session. Making a case for the centrality of musical capital, Irish flute player Hammy Hamilton (in Vallely 2011: 611) adds that their control over sessions is informed by factors like instrumentation, reputation, age, and most notably, by ability.

The fact that Linda Jansen calls her local session the 'Berlin Super Session' reveals a veritable aesthetic statement and signals her desire to become assimilated into what she perceives as an 'authentic' session community. For her, the notion of authenticity unfolds on the basis of sonic characteristics of Irishness, the musical capital that is necessary to acquire, and the knowledge of unwritten rules governing the decision on who gets to enter the 'inner' session circle. Linda's experience serves to illustrate how a shift from ethnic to sonic conceptions of the 'Irishness' in traditional Irish music exerts a profound influence on the ramifications of musical practice and communicates a lot about the aspects of Irishness that music transports for practitioners in a globalised society.

While in historical terms, being ethnically Irish and playing Irish music mattered in articulating one's position in post-colonial discourse on Irish independence from the British coloniser, the post-ethnically configured concept of Irishness in Irish music seems to have taken on a new, sonic role that recursively shapes the social, participatory boundaries of the tradition, its associated discourses, and the musical practice itself. Although members of the contemporary German Irish music community reject the prevalence of ethnic markers of authentic Irishness in their performance practice, they nonetheless articulate specific views on the sounds and manners of performance that are desirable to attain and that define what renders Irish music Irish

to them. Deconstructing the romanticised Irish music session discourse and taking the lived experience of German Irish traditional musicians into account leads us to comprehend, on a broader scale, that music is not just an expressive medium of intercultural affinities. In fact, it can itself become an agent for the creation and structuring of affinity cultures (Slobin 1993: 68).

Conclusion: Reassessing Irishness

This article has traced the historical and current reception of Irish traditional music by German practitioners, allowing me to unravel various forms of identity negotiation mediated through Ireland's vernacular music for artists that possess no ethnic ties to Ireland itself. This complexity inevitably calls for a (re)assessment of what 'Irishness' really means for the musicians in question and how it becomes remodelled in a globalised field of musical practices and recursively related discourses.

In the course of historical paths which Ireland and Germany have taken, folk music was employed to consolidate a sense of ethnic identity, whether tethered to Irish anti-colonial rhetoric or endeavours to achieve German unification. The darker aspects of music's capacity to affectively mobilise people on these grounds become apparent when considering the sharp contrasts between Self and Other that were musically underscored in both countries, whereas in Germany, folk music took a particularly devastating agency in serving the regime that initiated the Holocaust. Consequently, understanding the relationship between the post-war shame that Germans felt in relation to their own, ideologically corrupted folk music heritage and the role of Irish music as a sonic model for the reinvigoration of its performative practice reveals why discussing different facets of nostalgia is key to historically trace affinities between German and Irish folk music genres. In post-war Germany, it is striking that elements of Irish music sonically accompanied protest and folk song movements and song texts that, in metaphorical fashion, conveyed regime critique and were frequently subject to state censorship in the GDR. Perhaps, this points us to conclude that in times of heightened, often enforced social organisation and institutionalisation of artistic practice, the yearning to relive Herder's *unpolicirte* folk music imagination resurges.

In the 1970s German folk music revival context, Irish music and its quality of 'Irishness' already took on the kind of post-ethnic role that becomes relevant to current German practitioners of Irish traditional music. It is the level of sonic Irishness, uncoupled from ethnic belonging, that attracts listeners and practitioners to a globally accessible music genre, but in turn exerts an important impact on discourses and the musical practice itself. Alongside gatekeeping rules of session etiquette, sonic Irish authenticity plays out in the construction of unspoken regulations that prescribe, who can and who cannot participate in an Irish music session. Thus, the underlying key argument in this article is that music functions as a profound vehicle for the mobilising of identity. However, it can also alter the meaning of a specific identity layer, such as Irishness. It is precisely music's twofold capacity to affirm and transform identity that tells us why it is highly important in the multifaceted field of musical practices that we, as ethnomusicologists, continue to engage in.

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Endnotes

ⁱ For a further exploration of the concept of 'post-ethnicity' in musical experience and a critical discussion on various identity politics and creative processes mediated through post-ethnic configurations of musical practice, see Irish ethnomusicologist Aileen Dillane's (2013) article on Chicago-based Irish-American fiddle player Liz Carroll: Dillane, A. (2013). Composing Identity, Fiddling with (Post)Ethnicity: Liz Carroll's "Lake Effect". *MUSICultures* (Canadian Society for Traditional Music), 40(1), 7-34.

ⁱⁱ A second edition of Herder's *Volkslieder* was posthumously published in 1807 by Johann von Müller in Tübingen, Germany. This reissue appeared under the now more widely known title *Stimmen der Völker in Liedern* ("Voices of the People in Song"). See: Herder, Johann Gottfried von (1828). *Stimmen der Völker in Liedern: gesammelt, geordnet, zum Theil übersetzt durch Johann Gottfried von Herder. Neu herausgegeben durch Johann von Müller*. Stuttgart: Cotta.

ⁱⁱⁱ In Herder's *Briefwechsel über Ossian und die Lieder der alten Völker* ("Exchange of Letters on Ossian and the Songs of the Ancient Peoples") (Herder, transl. in Bohlman 2017: 140-167) and in his 1794 essay on *Homer und Ossian* ("Homer and Ossian") (Herder, transl. in Bohlman 2017: 172-185), one can specifically identify his attempt to negotiate correlations between ancient Greek epics and Celtic myth heroes. This equips Herder to legitimize his ideal characterisation of the folk and the expression of its distinctiveness through song as 'wild' and 'unpolitic' and indicates a historically rooted Germanic draw to the culture of the European fringe. For a recently published, thorough translation and analysis of Herder's writing on music and nationalism, consult: Bohlman, Philip Vilas (2017). *Song Loves the Masses: Herder on Music and Nationalism*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.

^{iv} German studies scholar David Robb (2009) has unearthed thematic resonances between German and Irish folk songs dating from the time of the 1848 Revolutions in Europe. Initially, Robb delineates important nuances between German and Irish cultural contexts, focusing primarily on Germany's rapid industrialisation and emerging working class consciousness in the 19th century, which contrasted with Ireland's rural societal fabric and the experience of colonial rule at that time. However, he equally clarifies that significant commonalities unfold in relation to 19th century songs dealing with widely experienced issues of hunger, emigration, and, most notably, rebellion. For further details, see: Robb, David (2009). A Common European Song Heritage in the Nineteenth Century Songs of Ireland and Germany. *Traditiones*. 38(1), 141-160.

^v In his article *Locating Celtic Music (and Song)*, James Porter (1998) problematizes the term 'Celtic music', noting that the concept is largely elusive and "riddled with linguistic, cultural and ideological implications" (Porter 1998: 205). According to Porter, Celticity can attain multiple meanings, whether tied to a particular locality, used to classify language competence, or constructed on the basis of ethnic identification. In terms of my own usage of Celtic music as a framework to make sense of findings which surfaced in the context of my ethnographic research, I draw upon Porter's argument that Celtic music can also evoke broader meanings and can become a site for the flourishing of intercultural affinities (ibid.: 208). This particularly applies when it is employed by people who do not define 'Celtic' in ethnic or linguistic terms.

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Endnotes

ⁱ For a further exploration of the concept of 'post-ethnicity' in musical experience and a critical discussion on various identity politics and creative processes mediated through post-ethnic configurations of musical practice, see Irish ethnomusicologist Aileen Dillane's (2013) article on Chicago-based Irish-American fiddle player Liz Carroll: Dillane, A. (2013). Composing Identity, Fiddling with (Post)Ethnicity: Liz Carroll's "Lake Effect". *MUSICultures* (Canadian Society for Traditional Music), 40(1), 7-34.

ⁱⁱ A second edition of Herder's *Volkslieder* was posthumously published in 1807 by Johann von Müller in Tübingen, Germany. This reissue appeared under the now more widely known title *Stimmen der Völker in Liedern* ("Voices of the People in Song"). See: Herder, Johann Gottfried von (1828). *Stimmen der Völker in Liedern: gesammelt, geordnet, zum Theil übersetzt durch Johann Gottfried von Herder. Neu herausgegeben durch Johann von Müller*. Stuttgart: Cotta.

ⁱⁱⁱ In Herder's *Briefwechsel über Ossian und die Lieder der alten Völker* ("Exchange of Letters on Ossian and the Songs of the Ancient Peoples") (Herder, transl. in Bohlman 2017: 140-167) and in his 1794 essay on *Homer und Ossian* ("Homer and Ossian") (Herder, transl. in Bohlman 2017: 172-185), one can specifically identify his attempt to negotiate correlations between ancient Greek epics and Celtic myth heroes. This equips Herder to legitimize his ideal characterisation of the folk and the expression of its distinctiveness through song as 'wild' and 'unpoliert' and indicates a historically rooted Germanic draw to the culture of the European fringe. For a recently published, thorough translation and analysis of Herder's writing on music and nationalism, consult: Bohlman, Philip Vilas (2017). *Song Loves the Masses: Herder on Music and Nationalism*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.

^{iv} German studies scholar David Robb (2009) has unearthed thematic resonances between German and Irish folk songs dating from the time of the 1848 Revolutions in Europe. Initially, Robb delineates important nuances between German and Irish cultural contexts, focusing primarily on Germany's rapid industrialisation and emerging working class consciousness in the 19th century, which contrasted with Ireland's rural societal fabric and the experience of colonial rule at that time. However, he equally clarifies that significant commonalities unfold in relation to 19th century songs dealing with widely experienced issues of hunger, emigration, and, most notably, rebellion. For further details, see: Robb, David (2009). A Common European Song Heritage in the Nineteenth Century Songs of Ireland and Germany. *Traditiones*. 38(1), 141-160.

^v In his article *Locating Celtic Music (and Song)*, James Porter (1998) problematizes the term 'Celtic music', noting that the concept is largely elusive and "riddled with linguistic, cultural and ideological implications" (Porter 1998: 205). According to Porter, Celticity can attain multiple meanings, whether tied to a particular locality, used to classify language competence, or constructed on the basis of ethnic identification. In terms of my own usage of Celtic music as a framework to make sense of findings which surfaced in the context of my ethnographic research, I draw upon Porter's argument that Celtic music can also evoke broader meanings and can become a site for the flourishing of intercultural affinities (ibid.: 208). This particularly applies when it is employed by people who do not define 'Celtic' in ethnic or linguistic terms.