

**Title:** Irish Music, Black Lives Matter, and Festival Spaces: Song Performance as Soft Protest and an Invitation to Social Change.

**Description:** This paper examines the ways in which a Folk Music festival in Ireland engaged with a specific Black Lives Matter moment in Ireland in 2020, during a pivot to online formats in the face of Covid19 lockdown protocols, when Black Irish artists featured more prominently in public domain. Specifically, it addresses questions about anti-racist activism and protest around racialised bodies in the Irish music festive context in relation to the genre of Irish traditional music. Focussing on key performances by Black artists curated by Temple Bar Tradfest, the paper asks how such creative outputs might be best understood as a form of 'soft' social protest, finding resonance with 'soft diplomacy' approaches taken by the current Irish government. Ultimately, the paper explores how specific performances from this period can be understood as desiring and prefiguring social change in relation to the history, ownership, and the politics of 'Irishness', with all the attendant challenges and tensions this brings.

**Bio:** Dr. Aileen Dillane is an Ethnomusicologist and Senior Lecturer in Music at the Irish World Academy, University of Limerick. She is Co-Director the Centre for the Study of Popular Music and Popular Culture at UL that has an associated book series *Popular Musics Matter: Social, Cultural and Political Interventions* (Rowman & Littlefield). Aileen's research interests include local/global Irish musics; musical migrations and diasporas; protest musics; European popular culture; urban soundscapes and critical citizenship; and music festivals. She has co-edited seven books, including *Songs of Social Protest: International Perspective* (2018), three special journal editions, published over forty articles and books chapters, delivered over eighty conference papers and keynotes, and is deputy editor of ICTM Ireland's online journal *Ethnomusicology Ireland*. Aileen was the Irish PI on the recently completed HERA(EU)-funded research project, *FestiVersities: European Music Festivals, Public Spaces and Cultural Diversity*.