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FADO – THE SPACE OF INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE BETWEEN POLAND AND PORTUGAL

Abstract

This article explores fado music as a medium for intercultural dialogue between Portugal and Poland, focusing on the early 21st century while considering its multicultural roots in Lisbon's marine districts. The study situates itself within broader research on fado's global reach, including its popularity in Japan. The first section examines fado's role in multicultural relations, presenting it as a living heritage and space for dialogue. The second section highlights the integration of Polish and Portuguese cultural elements in fado. The third section discusses fado concerts and festivals in Poland, emphasizing their role in cultural exchange, with a case study on Fado Café in Grudziądz.

Keywords: fado music, intercultural dialogue, Polish fadistas, cultural exchange, living heritage

*In fado, you can sing about joy, love, lost love, jealousy, happiness, sadness, as well as saudade – every part of being human
(Montague 2013).
Mariza*

This article aims to characterize fado music as a space for intercultural dialogue between Portugal and Poland. The focus is on contemporary times, specifically the beginning of the 21st century, while also delving into the multicultural historical background of fado, shaped in Lisbon's marine districts. The author's research fits into the broader context of studies on fado beyond the borders of Portugal. The phenomenon of fado's popularity outside Portugal is described, among others, by the example of Japan, where this musical genre has gained many fans over the last few years

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(Harmony 2018). However, the author will focus on fado in the Polish-Portuguese context.

The first section attempts to answer the question: What is the role of fado in multicultural relations? It presents the theoretical framework of fado as a space for multicultural dialogue between Poland and Portugal, and explores fado as a living heritage. The author also discusses how fado is presented by locals, based on her own autoethnographic experiences.

The second section focuses on the integration of Polish and Portuguese cultural elements in fado, highlighting the work of Polish performers – referred to as fadistas – active within Poland’s music scene. The study profiles three prominent artists: Kinga Rataj, Ola Jaś, and João de Sousa, along with his ensemble Fado Polaco. These individuals were selected as illustrative examples of the growing number of Polish fadistas, though the article acknowledges the broader spectrum of performers in Poland.

The third section analyzes fado concerts and festivals within Poland, showcasing how they have become platforms for cultural exchange. Special attention is given to events held in the post-COVID-19 period, such as the Fado Festival in Grudziądz, the Siesta Festival in Gdańsk, and the touring series “Siesta w drodze” [ENG: Siesta on the Road] organized by Marcin Kydryński, a leading Polish promoter of fado. This segment also includes a case study of Fado Café in Grudziądz, a unique venue where Portuguese culture has significantly influenced the city’s cultural identity.

The methodology incorporates secondary data, including literature, concert reviews, and online sources, alongside primary observations from fado performances, such as a visit to Casa de Fado in Porto. Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with organizers and attendees of events like the Siesta Festival and Fado Café, enhancing the research’s qualitative depth. While this methodological approach provides valuable insights, it is limited to the opinions of a dozen individuals who attended fado concerts and does not supply a quantitative study of the broader fado audience in Poland.

FADO AS A FORM OF INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE AND A LIVING HERITAGE

Intercultural dialogue can be defined as “a dynamic, transformative process in which people from different cultural backgrounds engage in open,

respectful, and reflective exchanges. It involves the co-construction of meaning through interaction and emphasizes empathy, mutual respect, and the understanding of others' perspectives, while also being aware of potential power imbalances and inequalities in the conversation" (Dervin 2016). In the section below, the author presents fado as the space of the intercultural dialogue. Music, as a universal language, has historically played a significant role in shaping intercultural relations, acting as a medium for non-verbal communication, emotional expression, and cultural exchange beyond the confines of national identity (McKimm-Vorderwinkler 2010). According to Adam Świtąła, music used as a tool for intercultural dialogue transcends mere artistic appreciation; it becomes a space where cultures meet within an asemantic field. This approach requires viewing music not as a static museum exhibit but as a dynamic and evolving medium shaped by transcultural influences over time (Świtąła 2008).

Fado, a musical genre deeply rooted in Portuguese culture, exemplifies this intercultural dynamic. While inherently tied to Portugal, fado also holds supranational significance as an intangible heritage of humanity. Many Portuguese point to fado as the music that defines the Portuguese soul. Fado does not have to be sad or sorrowful – it can be joyful and lively, though the concept most often associated with fado is *saudade*, a longing for the past, for people and things lost, for unfulfilled love. According to the Portuguese narrative, this term is difficult to define precisely in languages other than Portuguese (Elliott 2017). However, Polish literary scholar Ewa Łukaszyk points out that the untranslatability of the word 'saudade' is a kind of national myth of the Portuguese, who want to emphasize the uniqueness of their emotion of longing (Łukaszyk 2019).

Despite linguistic barriers, the emotions conveyed through fado are universally accessible. This is one of the reasons fado was inscribed on UNESCO's List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2011. Intangible cultural heritage is described as "a living heritage that consists of practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, and skills transmitted from generation to generation within communities. Intangible cultural heritage encompasses traditions, expressions, and skills passed down within communities, providing them with a sense of identity and continuity (Bourdeau, Gravari-Barbas & Robinson 2018). The UNESCO list presents heritage that holds common value for humanity and is at risk of being forgotten (UNESCO 2023). Intangible cultural heritage refers to the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge and skills (UNESCO 2003). Recognition of

important practices, customs or artistic forms as the intangible heritage of humanity is particularly important in the era of globalization, unification of the world and cultures. Federico Lanzerini draws attention to this in the article *Intangible Cultural Heritage: The Living Culture of Peoples*, in which he emphasizes the need to protect and promote intangible heritage through the use of such legal means as inscription on the UNESCO Intangible Heritage List (Lenzerini 2011). The author also notes the need to give local communities the opportunity to cultivate their heritage. In the case of fado, performers of this music genre should participate in the process of preservation fado as the living intangible heritage.

In July 2024, the author participated in a fado show in Porto. It was not a concert organized in a traditional Casa de Fado (even though it was named Casa de Fado), but rather a performance aimed at tourists wanting to become familiar with Portuguese fado. The author, along with a group of friends from Poland who had never been to a traditional Casa de Fado before, attended the concert. The advertisement promised a unique experience of authentic fado combined with a glass of Porto wine for the price of 19 euros (A Casa de Fado). The concert venue appeared authentic – it was located in the basement of the São João Novo church, beneath the sacristy (A Casa de Fado). The basement had good acoustics, dimmed lighting, and candles on the tables, setting an atmospheric scene. Each attendee received a glass of Porto wine.

Before the concert began, the host introduced the band: one female vocalist, a man playing the Portuguese guitar² and another man playing the standard guitar. The performance was of high quality, with a repertoire consisting mainly of songs originally performed by Amália Rodrigues.³

Midway through the concert, the host gave a brief introduction to the history of fado. According to his narration, fado originated from rural traditions and was primarily performed in the countryside before moving to the cities. This narrative, however, is misleading. In reality, fado originated

² Portuguese guitar – a twelve-string, pear-shaped stringed instrument traditionally used in Fado music, a genre deeply connected to Portuguese culture. It has six courses of two strings each, typically tuned in a way that gives it a distinct, bright, and resonant sound.

³ Amália Rodrigues (1920–1999) – the legendary fado singer, who introduced fado to international music scenes. She was born in Lisbon and started her career in 1940's. Throughout her career, Amália released numerous albums and collaborated with various poets and composers.



Photo 1. Poster of Live Fado Show in Porto.

Source: author's personal archive

in Lisbon's port districts and was initially performed on the streets by the lower classes. The host also mentioned the song "Casa Portuguesa"⁴. He presented the piece as showing the beauty of the simple life of the Portuguese without unnecessary luxuries. In reality, the song was used by Salazar's propaganda as an explanation for the economic failure of the regime and the poverty of the Portuguese. The host omitted any reference to fado's multicultural origins, its role in Salazar's politics, or the regime's

⁴ "Casa Portuguesa" – in English "The Portuguese Home." The author mentions this part of the lyrics: In a

*Portuguese home, it is so good
to have bread and wine on the table.
and if someone humbly knocks at the door,
we invite them to sit at the table with us
This sincerity is good, so good,
the sincerity which people never deny.*

(Amália Rodrigues – Uma Casa Portuguesa: English Translation)

control over fado's transition from street performances to Casas de Fado. From author's perspective, this was hugely misleading for people who met with fado for the first time and did not know anything about its complex historical background. However, their overall experience seemed to be very positive. The author made short interviews with the fado show participants about their feelings after their first fado experience. In general, they felt encouraged to participate in future fado concerts and to explore fado music further. Nonetheless, the performance demonstrated how fado transcends linguistic barriers. Short interviews with audience members revealed that many, despite not understanding Portuguese, found the music emotionally evocative and expressed interest in exploring fado further. The confusing narrative could diminish the richness of the songs' messages and unable to build multicultural dialogue with the deep heritage and history complexity understanding.



Photo 2. Fadistas during Live Fado Show in Porto.
Source: author's personal archive

The aspect of knowing or not knowing the Portuguese language is crucial in building the discourse on fado as a space for intercultural dialogue. According to the research conducted by Carvalho, Madeira, Monteiro, Lopes, Palrão (2023) many participants in fado concerts emphasize that they experienced the emotions of fado and fadistas even though they do not understand Portuguese. These researchers investigated perceptions of fado authenticity and emotions in TripAdvisor reviews from four fado venues (one theatre with a fado show and three fado houses – Casas de Fado). According to the research, experiencing emotions in fado without knowing the language was one of the most important factors influencing the awarding of a low or high rating to a given fado venue. The authors emphasize the possibility of participating in fado without knowing Portuguese as a universal, living intangible heritage (Carvalho, Madeira, Monteiro, Lopes & Palrão 2023).

Fado is also a field for intercultural dialogue – a space where music of different influences, different languages, lyrical messages of many authors of different nationalities mix. The definitions of intercultural dialogue and the role of music in it given earlier in this article are linked to the history of fado. One of the researchers of the multicultural background of fado is Rui Vieira Nery, the Portuguese historian and musicologist. His book *A History of Portuguese Fado* (2012) was the first such comprehensive work on the market, covering both the history of fado from its beginnings to contemporary fado. Despite the difficulties with the sources (for a long time the history of fado was transmitted orally), Nery did a lot of work to investigate the roots of fado. He proves the Brazilian origins of this genre, which firstly was performed as a dance, and notices the African influences in it. Some musicians and researchers believe that fado was actually born at the junction of Portugal, Brazil and Angola, as a result of intercultural flows between these cultural areas (Golemo 2019). The Afro-Brazilian origins of fado became the inspiration for the creation of the Fado Dançado (danced fado) project, which has been developed for several years by the Batoto Yetu Portugal association. Its goal is to reach the roots and reconstruct the original form of danced fado, which was popular in the 18th century among African slaves in Brazil (Golemo 2021). Nina Pielacińska underlines the wide variety of perspectives on the origins of fado and shows the innovation in the Nery's research. Pielacińska states: "The numerous theories about the origins of fado certainly complicate the search for credible sources on the genre's source, but at the same time, they attest to the

richness and diversity of cultural influences” (Pielacińska 2018). As Karolina Golemo observes, fado’s transcultural nature allows it to transcend social, geographical, and linguistic boundaries, adapting to diverse contexts while retaining its emotive core (Golemo 2019). According to Nina Pielacińska (2018), fado itself fits perfectly into the character of not only the Portuguese soul, but also the Polish one, hence the popularity of this music in the country on the Vistula.

The traditional fado, as the music of Lisbon, firstly was performed in poor districts by people from low social classes, probably mostly by prostitutes and people from the margins of society. Maria Severa (1820–1846) is considered to be the first well-known fadista of the Mouraria neighborhood. Severa, due to her love affair with Count Vimioso was the first to introduce fado to the upper class, but until the codification of fado by the Salazar regime, fado performers were street musicians, and this type of music was associated with the poorest social classes (Elliott 2017). In the 1950s, Salazar decided to make fado a national tourist product of Portugal. Fadistas stopped performing in the streets, and those with special permission began singing in Casas de Fado dedicated to the genre (Golemo 2019). “Censorship prohibited singing about social problems, politics, the economic crisis and the desire to change the country. Fado was to convince listeners that even living in poverty one can be a happy person who enjoys their modest possessions”, explains Pielacińska (2018). Fado was performed on a variety of occasions, also during ceremonies of a religious nature (Gozdecka 2018). It is worth noting that Salazar’s policy of making fado a national tourist product of Portugal also contributed greatly to the commercialization of the genre. There is currently an ongoing discussion in the academic, musical and tourist communities about the authenticity of contemporary fado (Mariniak 2023).

Over the last six years, fado in Poland has gained significantly more popularity, which continues to grow. In the following sections, the author characterizes some Polish-speaking fado musicians and the main events gathering fado lovers in Poland, demonstrating fado as a space for intercultural dialogue between Poles and Portuguese. All examples described in this article aim to present fado as a unique platform for intercultural exchange between Poland and Portugal. The author examines concerts, festivals, musical works, and performers involved in fado, including both Portuguese fadistas performing in Poland and Polish musicians singing fado in Portuguese.

From this perspective, fado becomes a meeting place for Polish and Portuguese cultures, an opportunity to build transnational bonds without the need to understand each other's native languages. It serves as an expression of emotions and sentiments common to both the Portuguese and Polish souls, an attempt to adapt the Portuguese concept of "saudade" to Polish melancholy and nostalgia.

POLISH-SPEAKING FADO SCENE

MARZENA NIECZUJA-URBAŃSKA

Marzena Nieczuja-Urbańska is the first fado singer in Poland. In 2003 she was encouraged by Maciej Nowak, the director of the theatre where she worked ("Teatr Wybrzeże") to start a new project, singing fado. Initially, she was unwilling to agree – fado was unknown and unrecognizable in Poland. When she got familiar with fado, its sounds, expressions, and emotions, she agreed to perform a fado recital after all. The premiere took place in 2003 and in 2004 she received the award for the biggest theatrical-musical event of 2004, being awarded the Marshal of the Pomeranian Voivodeship's Prize (Pielacińska 2018).

The contemporary list of Polish fadistas includes a few names: Anna Maria Jopek, Dorota Miśkiewicz, Kinga Rataj, Ola Jaś, Piotr Lemański. Below the author describes the work of selected Polish-speaking fadistas, who combine Polish and Portuguese culture in their music.

KINGA RATAJ

Kinga Rataj made her debut on the Polish music scene by winning First Prize at the National Student Song Festival in Krakow in 2006. Then, she began performing a fado repertoire, which earned her the unofficial title of an ambassador of the genre. In 2011, Kinga Rataj performed in the concert "Tudo isto é fado" [ENG: Everything is Fado], featuring exclusively Portuguese songs. Rataj became deeply interested in fado and began singing it fluently in Portuguese. She carefully curates her repertoire, aiming to blend two musical traditions – Polish and Portuguese (Pielacińska 2018). Rataj performs in Polish theatres, philharmonic halls, music clubs, museums, and at Fado Café, which is described in the next chapter of this article. The artist performs songs by some of the greatest fado singers, including

Mariza, Amália Rodrigues, and Cristina Branco. Kinga Rataj is a good example of an artist who, in selecting her repertoire, creates space for intercultural dialogue at the interface of the Polish music scene and Portuguese fado originally performed by the most popular Portuguese fadistas.

OLA JAŚ & JOÃO DE SOUSA

In 2020, Ola Jaś released her debut album, *Jasna* [ENG: Bright]. The album's musical production was overseen by João de Sousa, renowned for his *Fado Polaco* project, which blends fado with Polish musical traditions. *Jasna* is an album that reflects both the influence of fado and the characteristic Portuguese melancholy, intertwined with a Polish sense of nostalgia. The songs are performed in both Polish and Portuguese, though most of the lyrics are in Polish. The album was released on Valentine's Day, and even the cover art echoes the theme of bittersweet love, one of fado's favorite motifs. These themes appearing in the lyrical layer of the album are a kind of Polish answer to the translation of the Portuguese "saudade."

The cover features Ola Jaś, sitting with a wistful expression, beneath a stormy sky (Pepliński 2020). Despite the promotional challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the duo managed to perform a few concerts, including one at the famous *Café do Elétrico* – well-known from the film *Imagine*, directed by Andrzej Jakimowski – in Lisbon's Alfama district (Gierak).

JOÃO DE SOUSA & FADO POLACO

The album *João de Sousa & Fado Polaco* appeared on the Polish music market in September 2012, released by the Wrocław-based label Iberia Records. It was a special year for fado – in November 2011, UNESCO awarded it the title of intangible cultural heritage, and the years leading up to this moment of recognition – the time of the campaign to mobilize the fado community of academics and practitioners – were filled with various activities: new books and record releases, cultural projects in Poland and abroad, and even the modernization of the Lisbon Fado Museum. "Fado simply became much louder," observes Grażyna Jadwyszczak (2015, 342). Indeed, "Fado Polaco" was truly a bridge between Portuguese and Polish music. The artist blended traditional Polish music genres with Portuguese variations of fado. Jadwyszczak clarifies that the album "Fado Polaco" is not classical fado, but rather "fado novo," though it still retains many

characteristics of classical fado: João's melodious voice, the lyrics, and the Portuguese guitar.⁵

CONCERTS AND FESTIVALS – THE BRIDGE BETWEEN POLAND AND PORTUGAL

The section dedicated to contemporary fado singers performing in Poland in 2024 begins with a reference to the phenomenon of the artist known as Mísia, who passed away in July this year. Mísia (Susana Maria Alfonso de Aguiar) was a fadista whose popularity outside Portugal surpassed even that in her homeland. A native of Porto, she brought bold innovations to fado, incorporating new arrangements featuring instruments such as the violin and accordion. Her final album, *Ruas* [ENG: Streets], released in 2009, achieved gold record status in Poland (Zatyka 2024).

The list of fado artists who performed in Poland in 2024 is impressive and underscores the genre's growing popularity in the country. Mariza played in Poland twice in January, first at the Poznań International Fair Hall and then at the concert hall of the Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra in Katowice. In July, she performed at the Fado Festival in Grudziądz, and in November, she is scheduled to perform at the National Forum of Music in Wrocław. Pedro Moutinho embarked on a concert tour as part of the "Siesta w drodze" [ENG: Siesta on the Road] series, an initiative taken by journalist Marcin Kydryński. Maria Emília performed in September during the Siesta Festival in Gdańsk. Ana Moura's concert is planned for November 2024 at the Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra concert hall in Katowice. Kinga Rataj also gave several fado concerts in 2024 in various Polish cities and towns.

In addition to the major Fado Festivals described in this article, annual events featuring fado music, such as Fado in Katowice, are organized by the Association of Portugal Lovers, My Lisbon Story.

These examples illustrate how fado fosters a dynamic space for intercultural dialogue between Poland and Portugal. Far from being a static museum exhibit or an artificial construct, fado remains a living medium of cultural exchange and interaction (Świtłała 2008).

⁵ Full transcriptions of the songs by the *Fado Polaco* band, with lyrics in both Portuguese and Polish, as well as descriptions can be found in Pielacińska (2018).

FADO CAFÉ. FADO FESTIVAL AND FADO NAD WISŁĄ IN GRUDZIĄDZ

The author conducted interviews with the two owners of Fado Café, who are also the main organizers of the Fado Festival in Grudziądz: Wojciech Litwiński and Tomasz Bąkowski. Established in 2016 near the main square in Grudziądz, Fado Café originated from a deep passion for Lusophone music. Tomasz Bąkowski recalls that, during his school years, he was an unusual child who developed an affinity for this genre, with Cesária Évora being his favorite artist. Initially, Litwiński expressed skepticism about introducing fado to Grudziądz. However, as Bąkowski reflects, “I just liked the word ‘fado’ so much.” This enthusiasm marked the beginning of their journey – a project driven by a shared passion and a commitment to spreading appreciation for Lusophone music.



Photo 3. Fado Café in Grudziądz.
Source: author's personal archive

Litwiński and Bąkowski recall the early days. Kinga Rataj, one of Poland's best-known fadistas, began her fado career at Fado Café in Grudziądz. She performed there during fado evenings and later at other events. In the summer of 2024, she sang during the "Fado nad Wisłą" [ENG: Fado by the Vistula] Festival in a tram adapted to resemble Lisbon's iconic Tram 28. This year marked the first edition of "Fado nad Wisłą," and the program included an azulejos workshop, a Portuguese breakfast, wine tasting, and other events focused on topics related to Portugal (Informacja Turystyczna w Grudziądzu 2024).

The Fado Festival is an annual event organized thanks to the determination of Litwiński and Bąkowski. Their hard work in promoting fado has resulted in ongoing collaboration with city authorities and businesses, both local and nationwide. Grudziądz is a city with 90,000 residents. Of course, it is not a city where fado is the dominant music genre among its inhabitants, but people from all over Poland and abroad come to the festival. Wojciech Litwiński, with pride and emotion, recalls this year's festival: "So many people came to Grudziądz without tickets for Mariza's concert. They were standing outside the theatre with posters saying they wanted to buy tickets. We did our best to organize additional seats for them."

In 2024 was the seventh edition of the Fado Festival, and the line-up, as every year, was hugely impressive: António Zambujo, Teresinha Landeiro, Piwnica pod Baranami (a Polish band), and the Queen of Fado – Mariza. The organizers emphasized their appreciation of Portuguese-speaking artists. Wojciech Litwiński added: "Once, while walking through the streets of Lisbon, Pedro Moutinho spotted us and shouted: Ooo, Grudziądz!"

Over the past seven years, many world-famous artists have performed in Grudziądz: Camané, Sara Correia, Maria Emília, Marcelo Rebelo da Costa, and many more. "We feel quite connected to the Portuguese soul. We love to relax and enjoy the sun, but we live in a hurry. In Portugal, they focus on the better side of life, and Poles want to learn that!" – explain Wojciech Litwiński and Tomasz Bąkowski, addressing the popularity of Portuguese culture in Poland.

Fado is emotional, but a whole festival dedicated only to fado would be too much. We mix Portuguese and Polish music. During our Fado Festivals, we host artists from both Portugal and Poland, such as Kayah, Edyta Geppert, Anna Maria Jopek, and Piwnica pod Baranami. And the entire event is always hosted by the amazing Marcin Kydryński,

the organizers clarify the main idea behind their event. This highlights how important a role Grudziądz plays in building a Polish-Portuguese space for intercultural dialogue.

After the interview, the author had no doubts as to why Grudziądz is often called “Little Portugal” (Sikorska 2020). The dedication of Wojciech Litwiński and Tomasz Bąkowski to promoting Portuguese culture has established them as genuine cultural ambassadors for Portugal. Grudziądz serves as an exemplary case of how Portuguese culture can seamlessly integrate with Polish influences.

SIESTA FESTIVAL IN GDAŃSK

Siesta Festival is the oldest annual festival gathering people interested in fado and different music genres from the Lusophone world. The idea for this event was born from the music audition conducted by Marcin Kydryński – a Polish radio journalist and one of the most significant popularizers of music from Africa, Spanish and Portuguese-speaking countries. His broadcast called “Siesta” (from 2020, “Time of Siesta”) was aired every Sunday on the Third Program of Polish Radio (“Program Trzeci Polskiego Radia”) from 2001 to 2020, and since 2020, it has been on the radio schedule of “Radio Nowy Świat.” Moreover, Kydryński published a book titled *Lisbon: The Music of My Streets* (Kydryński 2023). This book is a portrait of Lisbon seen and heard by Kydryński over the years. In 2008, the President of Portugal awarded him the Order of Merit, 4th Class, in appreciation of his contributions to the promotion of Portuguese culture.

His engagement in promoting non-standard sounds for the average Polish listener enabled him to gather a wide audience. In 2011, the first Siesta Festival took place in Gdańsk. In 2024, the 14th edition was organized. Gdańsk is an extraordinary city for organizing this type of event, as observed by Adrian Tyszkiewicz (2023). Tyszkiewicz draws attention to the history of Gdańsk, especially the time when Gdańsk had the status of a Free City, and the current policy of building intercultural and international integration created by the city authorities. According to him, a city with such a tradition of openness and acceptance of cultural flows is a perfect place to organize a festival of “Happy Music,” i.e. music from African, Lusophone and Spanish-speaking countries. The spirit of freedom of Gdańsk perfectly emphasizes the open nature of the festival, to which every fan of this type of music is invited. The atmosphere of the festival is complemented by the

location of the Baltic Philharmonic (the main venue of the events) located on the Mottawa River, not far from the beach and the sea. This is definitely a location that Siesta fans associate with this type of music, with the countries the artists come from.



Photo 4. Lura during Siesta Festival.

Source: author's personal archive

Each year, this festival attracts people interested in Lusophone culture, world music, jazz, and much more. During the special evening called "The Night of Fado," the best fadistas from all over the world perform. This year, Maria Emília, the Brazilian fadista who grew up in Lisbon, took over the stage.

The usually insular Lisbon fado community welcomed this young woman with open arms. She sang with none other than Mário Pacheco and performed with him multiple times at the famous Clube de Fado. Since the release of the

remarkable album “Casa de Fado,” the entire fado community has recognized Maria Emília as one of the most interesting young voices on the contemporary scene. And we will be hosting this young woman in Gdańsk,

said Maciej Farski, co-organizer of the Siesta Festival, in “Dziennik Bałtycki” (Chudzyński 2024). The entire concert hall in the Baltic Philharmonic Hall was arranged to imitate a Portuguese Casa de Fado. Fado was performed after dinner, the lights were dimmed, and the atmosphere guaranteed the feeling of Lisbon’s Casa de Fado. Participants in Maria Emília’s show emphasized the authenticity of the performance – the universal value of fado played no matter where on the globe. It seemed that most of the participants were deeply familiar with fado. Many of them were fans of Lisbon, regularly visiting the capital city of Portugal to listen to fado; the vast majority listened to the weekly broadcasts of “The Time of Siesta” conducted by Marcin Kydryński.

“Sobremesa” means “dessert” in Portuguese. It is the title of an album released by Anna Maria Jopek in 2011. On *Sobremesa*, Anna Maria Jopek performs with some of the most renowned artists from Lusophone countries, like – Camané (called “The Prince of Fado”), Sara Tavares, Tito Paris, Paulo de Carvalho, Yami, Ivan Lins – the list of singers featured on the album is impressive. The album creates a space for the blending of cultural and musical influences from Poland, Portugal, Cape Verde, Angola, and other Lusophone countries.

Sobremesa was also performed during the Siesta Festival in 2024 at the Sary Maneż concert hall in Gdańsk. Anna Maria Jopek sang in a duet with Yami, accompanied by musicians from Lisbon: Vicky Marques, Victor Zamora, and Tiago Oliveira. *Sobremesa* is not strictly a fado album; it combines various musical genres, styles, and influences, all unified by the Lusophone cultural space. A significant portion of the songs is sung in Polish, making the Polish influence on the album undeniable. Polish, in this context, becomes a means of expressing the Lusophone soul.

As stated on the ticket website for the event:

The album immediately became one of Anna Maria’s biggest hits. Tours, awards, and emotions followed. Since then, much has happened in the singer’s musical journey. She is now in a different place, but she agreed to the festival organizers’ request to once again immerse herself in the Tagus and remind us of those distinctly “siesta songs.” (Interticket 2024).

The author had the opportunity to speak with some of the concertgoers. The older generation fondly recalled the tours from 2011–2012, describing them as “unforgettable.” For the younger generation, it was the first time hearing *Sobremesa* live, and they thoroughly enjoyed the concert as well. The concert hall did not resemble a Casa do Fado; it was more like a standard jazz club, which matched the nature of the music – as noted, *Sobremesa* is not a fado album.

Some attendees mentioned that a more elaborate introduction to the songs would have been appreciated. Marcin Kydryński, the host of the Siesta Festival concerts, only briefly greeted Anna Maria Jopek and the band at the beginning. During the concert, Yami invited the audience to dance several times, and they eagerly joined in, swaying spontaneously to the Lusophone rhythms.



Photo 5. Motława River near the Baltic Philhamonic Hall.
Source: author's personal archive

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this pilot study demonstrates that fado serves as a genuine space for intercultural dialogue between Poland and Portugal. The genre is experiencing growing popularity, with new initiatives centered around fado emerging each year. Moreover, the most renowned fadistas regularly perform in Poland, reflecting the country's increasing appreciation for this musical tradition. Polish audiences are enthusiastic participants in fado performances, as evidenced by events like the "Fado nad Wisłą" Festival, which also highlight broader interest in Portuguese culture. The Siesta Festival in Gdańsk and the Fado Festival in Grudziądz showcase fado in Poland as a living heritage, receptive to cross-cultural influences. The case of Fado Café in Grudziądz exemplifies this phenomenon, serving as "Little Portugal" – a cultural embassy created by two passionate owners committed to blending Portuguese traditions with Polish charisma.

Polish artists performing fado, such as Kinga Rataj, Ola Jaś, and the Fado Polaco band – which integrates Polish folk elements with fado – illustrate the genre's potential as a platform for intercultural dialogue. Nostalgia, sentimentality, and melancholy, inherent to both Polish and Portuguese cultures, resonate deeply within fado's lyrical and musical expression. Themes of longing for the past, unfulfilled love, and dreams forge emotional connections between Polish and Portuguese audiences, fostering a growing interest in fado concerts among Poles. Furthermore, the author's findings, supported by research (Carvalho, Madeira, Monteiro, Lopes & Palrão 2023), demonstrate that linguistic barriers do not prevent audiences from experiencing the profound emotional depth of fado.

This study opens up new avenues for future research on fado as an intercultural space in Poland. It could be explored in the broader context of UNESCO's Intangible Heritage List. Further interviews with fado singers and popularizers in Poland could be conducted, and the linguistic aspect should be investigated. Another research in the topic could include a comparative study of fado as a space for intercultural dialogue in Poland and, for example, Japan, where this musical genre also enjoys significant popularity. The research presented in this article might be expanded with a deeper historical analysis of the development of fado's popularity in Poland and an exploration of other intercultural spaces shared by Poland and Portugal.

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