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Sociological and Economic Factors Shaping the Culture of Spectacle in the United States, in Comparison with Poland and Europe



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Introduction

Contemporary popular culture increasingly functions through spectacles that attract the attention of millions of people around the world. Performances by major music stars are now a regular feature of sporting events, television galas, and festivals, while concerts themselves increasingly take the form of elaborate audiovisual productions. Huge stages, complex lighting systems, special effects, and broadcasts watched by millions of viewers mean that a musical event ceases to be merely a concert and becomes a media spectacle.

This phenomenon has become so widespread that it is often treated as a natural element of contemporary entertainment. Less often, however, does the question arise as to why precisely the concert and the musical performance so often become the focal point of major public events. What makes certain performances attract the attention of entire societies and continue to function in the media long after they have ended? Why do some events become points of reference in popular culture, while others remain local initiatives, despite similar organizing principles?

These differences become particularly visible when we compare events organized in the United States with those that take place in Europe, including Poland. In the USA, concerts and performances by stars often constitute an integral part of major media events, watched by millions of viewers and functioning as an important element of the entertainment industry. Meanwhile, in the European context, musical events, although often very popular, less frequently achieve a similar media and economic scale. Why do similar formats not generate the same level of interest everywhere? Is this determined by financial resources, the structure of the market, the role of the media, or perhaps by different expectations of the audience?

In recent years, attempts can be observed in Poland to organize events inspired by American models of spectacle. Increasingly large concert productions, elaborate stage designs, and broadcasts intended to attract a broad audience are appearing. At the same time, it is not always possible to achieve an effect comparable to American mega-events, which leads to further questions: can such a model simply be transferred to another country? Does the spectacle function in the same way regardless of the social and economic context? Or perhaps does its success depend on conditions that cannot be easily recreated?

The starting point of this dissertation is the conviction that musical events do not arise in a vacuum, but are the result of specific cultural, economic, and media-related conditions. A concert or festival is not merely a meeting between an artist and an audience, but an undertaking organized under specific market and social conditions, which influence both its scale and the way it is received.

The aim of this work is therefore to analyze the factors influencing the emergence of large-scale musical events in the United States and to compare them with the conditions under which mass events function in Poland. The main research question concerns which cultural, economic, and media-related factors favor the emergence of musical mega-events in the USA, and which mechanisms shape events of this type in the Polish context.

This analysis leads to reflection on the possibility of adapting the American model of musical spectacle to Polish and European settings. Can the spectacular character of events be designed independently of place, or does it result from deeper social and economic conditions? The answer to this question constitutes one of the main problems addressed in this work.

Chapter 1. The Sociology of Popular Music and the Culture of Spectacle

1.1. The Functions of Music in Social Life

Music plays an important role in social life as one of the basic forms of expressing emotions, building bonds, and shaping shared experience. In sociological terms, it is not solely a form of aesthetic expression, but a medium through which individuals shape and experience their identity, relationships with others, and belonging to specific communities. Thomas Turino emphasizes that music functions above all as a social practice — its meaning does not result solely from sound itself, but from the situations in which it is performed and experienced, as well as from the relationships between the participants in these situations¹.

In contrast to forms of communication based mainly on verbal transmission, such as lectures, debates, or written texts, music acts on listeners directly and in multiple dimensions. It conveys meaning not primarily through logically ordered messages or arguments, but through sound, rhythm, repetition, and emotional associations. Turino points out that music engages not only the intellect, but also the body and memory, thanks to which it can evoke strong affective reactions, often difficult to describe unambiguously in words². It is precisely this feature that makes music a particularly effective means of emotional and social communication.

Turino describes the experience of “flow” — a state of intense concentration and immersion in action, in which verbal thinking may become almost suspended. Under conditions of intensive musicking — listening, dancing, playing together — a person may enter precisely such a state, in which they are “being in the moment,” and the boundaries between “I” and “we” become temporarily blurred³. This explains why music is so important in religious rituals, dance, or mass entertainment events: it not only transmits content, but also genuinely changes the way people experience themselves and others.

From a sociological perspective, several key functions of music in social life can therefore be distinguished, which reveal themselves in the analysis of its social functioning:

- the emotional function — music organizes, intensifies, and channels emotions; through indexical connections with the listener’s biography, it builds a “sense of truth” of experience;
- the integrative function — singing, playing, or dancing together produces “communitas,” a sense of being part of a greater whole — a nation, a religious community, a music scene;
- the communicative and symbolic function — music can express protest, political and social identity, from war songs to the music of emancipatory movements;
- the economic function — in the capitalist context, music becomes a commodity, a part of the entertainment industry, a source of revenue from recordings, concerts, and licenses.

In the contexts of the emotional, integrative, and communicative functions of music, it is worth using an illustrative example. An extreme case, invoked by Turino, is Nazi Germany, where music was used as a tool of political mobilization. In 1929, there were around 13,000 amateur choirs in the country, bringing together approximately 1.3 million members⁴. This “mass choral movement” constituted one of the instruments of building national unity and emotional support for the regime.

¹ Thomas Turino, *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation*, pp. 23-65

² Thomas Turino, *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation*, s. 33-48

³ Thomas Turino, *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation*, pp. 33-36; 155-188

⁴ Thomas Turino, *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation*, s. 220-224

This example shows that the integrative function of music can be used both in democratic and authoritarian projects.

1.2. The Culture of Spectacle

Guy Debord's theory of the society of the spectacle makes it possible to convincingly grasp the mechanisms by means of which music — and, in particular, popular music — becomes subordinated to the logic of the late-capitalist spectacle. Debord, analyzing the transformations of modern societies, indicates that the spectacle is not merely the domain of entertainment or aesthetic excess, but a fundamental way of organizing social life. His famous thesis, according to which “in societies where modern conditions of production prevail, life is presented as an immense accumulation of spectacles”, emphasizes the total character of this phenomenon. The spectacle therefore does not function as a collection of individual images or events, but as a system of social relations mediated by images⁵, which replace direct experience and interaction.

Of particular importance in this theory is the concept of pseudo-cyclical time. Debord describes it as time based on natural rhythms — such as day and night, the working week and the weekend, or holiday periods — but transformed by the cultural industry into a market product⁶. This time becomes “time subjected to industrial processing,” which no longer serves regeneration or authentic experience, but is planned, packaged, and sold in the form of ready-made scenarios of experience. In this sense, all social free time is incorporated into the logic of production and consumption, becoming raw material for the entertainment market.

Modern capitalism, as Debord observes, no longer sells only individual goods or services, but “fully equipped blocks of time”⁷. These include not only the event itself, but also space, atmosphere, narrative, and forms of communication and participation. The spectacle therefore functions simultaneously as a specific product — a show, concert, broadcast — and as a model of organizing perception, which imposes a specific way of perceiving the world. Time spent on the consumption of images becomes “spectacular time” in a double sense: it is both time intended for watching and an image of the very consumption of time, in which the manner of spending it is put on display as a socially desired model.

In this sense, the spectacle is not limited to the sphere of entertainment, but performs a function of ordering social experience. It manages the attention, emotions, and imaginings of individuals, shaping what is regarded as important, attractive, and worth experiencing. Music — functioning within the cultural industry — becomes one of the key tools of this organization of experience, because it combines strong emotional potential with the ease of media reproduction and visualization.

With reference to popular music, this means that large events — from award ceremonies to major concerts and festivals — are not merely the “setting” for music. In the logic of the spectacle, they become a privileged place in which the following come together:

- visuality (stage design, choreography, special effects),
- mediatization (television, streaming, social media),
- the consumption of goods (tickets, merchandising, advertising),
- identity narratives (nation, city brand, artist image).

⁵ Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, theses 1-5, pp. 12-13

⁶ Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, theses 149-153, pp. 110-112

⁷ Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, theses 152-154, pp. 111-113

Importantly, the spectacle in Debord's approach is not only entertainment, but a form of power: the "machinery of the spectacle" manages entire areas of knowledge and experience⁸, producing social "stupidity" and replacing direct interpersonal relations with their image-based substitutes. **It is precisely in such a context that the culture of spectacle in American popular music must be understood: major television galas, spectacular sports settings, or mega-festivals are manifestations of a broader social logic in which the citizen's experience is increasingly organized as the consumption of highly elaborate spectacles.**

Critical theory of culture, developed by Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, provides a tool for analyzing the processes in which music functions simultaneously as a source of emotions and as a commodity subject to the logic of the market. Horkheimer points out that theoretical reflection should not be limited merely to the description of social phenomena, but should also take into account their consequences for the way collective life is organized. In his view, the development of modern capitalism favors the dominance of instrumental rationality, oriented toward efficiency and calculation, at the expense of a broader understanding of reason⁹ as a category that guides social aims. In such a context, culture — including music — is increasingly subordinated to the criteria of usefulness, profit, and predictability, which affects the way it is produced, distributed, and received.

It is therefore drawn into the logic of the cultural industry: it becomes a mass-produced commodity, standardized, predictable¹⁰, oriented toward the maximization of profit and the reproduction of existing social relations. With reference to Debord: the spectacle may "blind" society by means of illusion, ceasing to be art in the critical sense and becoming a spectacle that sustains the existing social order.

Turino, in turn, describes this process from the perspective of participants' experiences. Mechanisms that possess a strong potential for building empathy, a sense of psychological coherence, and sensitivity¹¹ may be used to shape consumer habits: when, in the public sphere, people, nature, and social relations begin to be presented in categories of economic usefulness, the repetition of such representations in the media gives them the appearance of obviousness and naturalness, gradually weakening alternative ways of thinking about the world.

Summary

The theoretical perspectives invoked in this chapter — in particular the approaches of Thomas Turino, Guy Debord, and representatives of critical theory of culture — are clearly critical of contemporary forms of popular culture and the mass-events market. Their significance in this work consists above all in an accurate description of the mechanisms organizing contemporary cultural experience, and not in a postulate of the radical rejection of the existing order.

These analyses make it possible to show that popular music and musical events do not function as neutral, one-time forms of entertainment. On the contrary, behind them stand complex social, economic, and media-related processes, encompassing the organization of free time, the management of audiences' emotions, the production of identity narratives, and the subordination of musical experience to the logic of the market and mass communication. A concert, festival, or music gala is therefore not merely an event that one "attends and leaves", but the effect of a long chain of production-related, institutional, and symbolic decisions that influence the way it is designed, received, and experienced.

The first chapter therefore provides a theoretical framework that makes it possible to perceive musical events as complex social phenomena, combining emotions, integration, media, and economics. Such an approach constitutes the starting point for further reflections on the

⁸ Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, theses 24-30; 42-47, pp. 19-23, 29-32

⁹ Max Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, pp. 83-101

¹⁰ Max Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, pp. 102-127

¹¹ Thomas Turino, *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation*, pp. 93-121

American model of musical mega-events and its distinctiveness in relation to European and Polish forms of organizing mass culture.

Chapter 2. The American Model of Musical Mega-Events

2.1. The Culture of Scale — Where Did It Come From?

The American model of musical mega-events grows out of a long historical process in which musical and performative practices gradually moved from local and situational forms toward events designed with mass, mediated reception in mind. As shown in Chapter 1, music performs emotional, integrative, and communicative functions, and under the conditions of late capitalism it becomes incorporated into the logic of the spectacle and the cultural industry. The second chapter develops this perspective, showing how these processes take on a particularly intense and institutionalized form in the United States.

Anthony Seeger emphasizes that American musical heritage was shaped from the beginning as a mosaic of traditions, rather than as a uniform cultural system¹². Writing about the “musical heritage of America,” he points out that Americans have many different musical heritages, “interwoven like strands of a rope, which gain strength precisely through being intertwined”. These different traditions — religious, ethnic, regional — in practice come together in specific social situations: during religious services, parades, folk festivals, or political protests. Seeger emphasizes that music is integral to religious experience — Protestant hymns, gospel — but also to the celebration of community, from local bands to folk festivals, and to the expression of political attitudes and resistance, such as songs of presidential campaigns and the music of movements for women’s, labor, or civil rights.

Music therefore developed simultaneously in many social environments, drawing from African American, European, Latin American, and Indigenous traditions. Each of them brought different ways of organizing performance: different relations between performer and audience, different meanings of rhythm, body, and space, and different forms of communal participation. In the initial phases of development, music functioned above all as a social practice, strongly connected with the everyday life of communities, and not as an autonomous event of a spectacular character¹³.

This hybrid structure of musical culture favored the emergence of forms of performance based on direct participation and improvisation. Seeger points out that encounters between different musical traditions did not lead to their unification, but to transformations and recombinations, as a result of which new styles and genres emerged. Music became a space for negotiating identity and social relations, and performance became a tool for integrating a diverse audience. Already at this stage, a mechanism is revealed that in the later period will prove crucial for mega-events: the need for frames capable of merging diverse experiences into one shared experience¹⁴.

George Lipsitz shows that this process was strengthened by migration, urbanization, and the development of media, which made it possible to cross the boundaries of local music scenes¹⁵. Local performative practices began to circulate much more broadly in society, and music gradually transformed into an element of popular culture with nationwide reach. Along with this

¹² A. Seeger, *America’s Musical Heritage*, pp. 3–12

¹³ A. Seeger, *America’s Musical Heritage*, pp. 35–52

¹⁴ D. Getz, *Event Studies. Theory, Research and Policy for Planned Events*, pp. 16–25

¹⁵ G. Lipsitz, *Time Passages. Collective Memory and American Popular Culture*, pp. 3–27

process, the role of media mediation grew: music increasingly reached audiences not through direct contact, but through radio, recordings, and broadcasts.

From the perspective of Donald Getz's theory of events, the key moment in this evolution was the transition from unplanned and situational events to planned events¹⁶. Musical performance began to be embedded within specific temporal, spatial, and organizational frameworks, and its course became subject to increasing control. The musical event ceased to be merely a social meeting and began to function as a project requiring logistical, financial, and symbolic coordination. This stage prepared the ground for the later escalation of the scale of events.

The analyses contained in the volume *Tourism, Festivals and Cultural Events in Times of Crisis* show that along with the increase in the scale of mass events begin to perform the function of regulating collective emotions, offering intense, condensed communal experiences¹⁷. In this sense, scale is not merely an aesthetic choice, but a response to structural social and media-related needs: the larger and more diverse the audience, **the stronger the need for spectacular forms of integration.**

Contemporary American musical mega-events constitute the culmination of these processes. As Getz indicates, these are events of high experiential value, designed with both participants present on site and a multimillion media audience in mind¹⁸. The scale of these events — measured in hundreds of thousands of participants and the global reach of broadcasts — means that grandeur becomes a structural necessity. In this sense, the American model of mega-events fits into the logic of the culture of spectacle described in Chapter 1: musical experience becomes subordinated to the principles of media reproduction, commercialization, and the management of attention.

2.2. Music as an Element of Every Major Event

In the context of American mega-events, music should not be analyzed solely in terms of the concert performance itself¹⁹. Its role extends far beyond artists' performances and encompasses an entire spectrum of mass events: sporting, political, media-related, and commercial²⁰. As follows from the considerations contained in Chapter 1, music possesses a unique ability to organize emotions and community, which makes it one of the most effective tools of the culture of spectacle.

From Anthony Seeger's perspective, music operates as a mechanism for synchronizing collective experience²¹. Mass events in which tens or hundreds of thousands of people participate require tools that make it possible to simultaneously engage a large and diverse audience²². Music — thanks to rhythm, repetition, and bodily impact — makes it possible to achieve such an effect without the necessity of a uniform interpretation of content²³. In this sense, it becomes an ideal medium for events whose aim is to produce a temporary sense of community.

¹⁶ D. Getz, *Event Studies. Theory, Research and Policy for Planned Events*, pp. 16–25, 55–64

¹⁷ L. Lyck, P. Long, A. X. Grige, eds., *Tourism, Festivals and Cultural Events in Times of Crisis*, pp. 12–19

¹⁸ D. Getz, *Event Studies. Theory, Research and Policy for Planned Events*, pp. 16–25, 55–64

¹⁹ D. Getz, *Event Studies. Theory, Research and Policy for Planned Events*, pp. 85–100

²⁰ D. Getz, *Event Studies. Theory, Research and Policy for Planned Events*, pp. 55–74

²¹ A. Seeger, *America's Musical Heritage*, pp. 41–58

²² D. Getz, *Event Studies. Theory, Research and Policy for Planned Events*, pp. 101–120

²³ A. Seeger, *America's Musical Heritage*, pp. 52–68

George Lipsitz points out that in popular culture music functions as a carrier of emotions and collective memory, one that is easily subjected to media reproduction²⁴. Events that use music gain the ability to cross the boundaries of place and time: they can be broadcast, fragmented, and consumed again in different contexts²⁵. This feature makes music a central element of events designed with spectacular media reception in mind, and not only direct participation.

Donald Getz describes music as one of the key components of designing the event experience²⁶. Planned events require tools that make it possible to control the dynamics of participants' experiences, build tension, and mark climaxes. Music fulfills these functions in a particularly effective way: it organizes the course of the event, determines its rhythm, and strengthens the significance of key moments²⁷. For this reason, it is commonly used not only in concerts, but also in sporting events, political ceremonies, galas, and festivals.

Lise Lyck's analyses contained in the volume *Tourism, Festivals and Cultural Events in Times of Crisis* show that under conditions of competition for attention and resources, music also performs a differentiating and branding function²⁸. Mass events use music to build a recognizable identity and to attract specific audience groups. As a result, music becomes a structural element of the event, one that combines emotional, media-related, and economic functions²⁹.

The described mechanisms of music's functioning in mass events — emotional integration, media mediation, and incorporation into commercial logic — find their particular realizations in various types of American mega-events.

2.3. The Grammy Awards as a Global Center of Musical Spectacularity

The Grammy Awards gala, the annual ceremony of presenting the most important American music awards granted by the Recording Academy, constitutes one of the most recognizable musical events of contemporary popular culture and, at the same time, a clear example of the functioning of music within the logic of a mega-event. Although it derives from the American music industry, its significance extends far beyond the domestic market, encompassing the global circulation of artists, genres, and audiences. The Grammys function as a point of concentration of attention for very diverse musical, aesthetic, and cultural environments, which makes this event attract audiences representing different tastes, lifestyles, and cultural experiences.

One of the key features of the ceremony is its cross-genre and transcultural character. Within a single event, artists representing different musical movements coexist — from popular music and hip-hop, through rock, electronic music, and country, to jazz, experimental projects, and classical music. Such a structure of the program makes it possible to simultaneously attract the attention of audiences with very different tastes and cultural backgrounds. From a sociological perspective, this means that the gala does not address one specific audience, but creates a space in which different segments of the music market and different communities of listeners meet, while music performs the function of integrating dispersed groups of listeners within one shared media spectacle.

²⁴ G. Lipsitz, *Time Passages. Collective Memory and American Popular Culture*, pp. 67–96

²⁵ G. Lipsitz, *Time Passages. Collective Memory and American Popular Culture*, pp. 41–66

²⁶ D. Getz, *Event Studies. Theory, Research and Policy for Planned Events*, pp. 120–135

²⁷ D. Getz, *Event Studies. Theory, Research and Policy for Planned Events*, pp. 120–135, 136–150

²⁸ L. Lyck, P. Long, A. X. Grige (eds.), *Tourism, Festivals and Cultural Events in Times of Crisis*, pp. 45–70

²⁹ D. Getz, *Event Studies. Theory, Research and Policy for Planned Events*, pp. 150–165

The music awards gala becomes a space in which these emotions are publicly concentrated and organized. Through watching the broadcast together, commenting on the event on social media, and identifying with specific performers, audiences participate in the same experience, even though they are located in different parts of the world.

In the case of the Grammy Awards, audiences identify with specific artists and musical genres, while the announcement of the results evokes emotions comparable to those associated with sporting competition. Viewers root for the nominees they support, react to victories and defeats, and artistic performances become the culminating moments of the entire event. The gala therefore performs the function of a social ritual that orders the industry and simultaneously produces a collective emotional experience. In this way, the ceremony not only presents music, but also provides the audience with an opportunity to experience communal emotions, which significantly increases its attractiveness and reach.

An important factor contributing to the global popularity of the event is also the fact that the artists performing and being awarded during the gala function within the transnational circulation of the music industry. During the Grammy Awards, artists are present who come from different countries and continents, create music in different languages, represent different cultural traditions, operate within a broad spectrum of musical genres, and function in different segments of the market and in different age groups of audiences. Thanks to streaming and social media, the audiences of individual artists are globally dispersed, while the gala itself constitutes a space of their symbolic co-participation and encounter.

This stylistic and aesthetic diversity remains in direct continuity with the historical model of the development of music in the United States, described in subsection 2.1. The Grammy Awards can be interpreted as an institutionalized and media-mediated continuation of American musical heritage understood as a mosaic of traditions. Different currents and cultural experiences are not presented here in isolation, but are incorporated into one spectacular order, which organizes diversity through the form of the spectacle.

An important element of this model is also the multigenerational dimension of the event. The presence of both artists with an established position and performers representing current trends allows the Grammys to connect different generations of audiences and to strengthen the sense of continuity of musical culture. At the same time, this ceremony has a clear global reach: broadcast and commented on around the world, it presents artists functioning within international cultural circulation and influencing global music markets.

In this sense, the Grammy Awards illustrate the mechanisms described in subsection 2.2: music functions here as a tool of emotional integration, of organizing the attention of a mass audience, and of granting the event the rank of a global spectacle. The gala is not merely a presentation of popular music, but an example of how the American model of mega-events uses cultural diversity and media scale to produce a shared, global musical experience.

2.4. The Super Bowl Halftime Show as an Example of the Integration of Music and Sport

The Super Bowl Halftime Show is a several-minute musical performance — usually lasting around 13 or 14 minutes — taking place during the break of the final game of the NFL American football league. The Super Bowl itself constitutes one of the most important events in American sports culture, functioning as an annual celebration of sport with enormous symbolic and media significance. The inclusion of a musical performance within the structure of this event is not accidental, but constitutes an integral element of its dramaturgy.

The case of the Super Bowl Halftime Show constitutes a model example of the processes described earlier in this work, in which sport, music, and media function as elements of one system of spectacle production.

In the context of mass culture, the Halftime Show functions as a culminating moment that makes it possible to maintain the emotional continuity of the event and, at the same time, to extend its reach beyond the circle of sports fans. Music is used here as a tool for uniting a very diverse audience: both people interested in the game itself and viewers attracted primarily by the spectacular and entertainment element. Thanks to this, the sporting event gains the dimension of a broader cultural spectacle, in which sporting competition intertwines with musical performance.

From the perspective of the mechanisms described in subsection 2.2, music in the NFL performs the function of synchronizing collective experience. The short, intense performance allows the attention of a mass audience to be concentrated at one point in time, generating strong emotions and a sense of communal participation. Music acts here as an element binding together different stages of the event, giving it a clear dramaturgical structure and strengthening its festive character. The break in the game thereby ceases to be merely a moment of technical suspension of the match and becomes one of the culminating points of the entire broadcast, as well as one of the most spectacular media events of the year, during which millions of audience members take part in a shared cultural experience, while the Super Bowl stage functions symbolically as the greatest stage in the world for contemporary artists.

At the same time, the Super Bowl Halftime Show is designed primarily with media reception and commercialization in mind. The musical performance functions as a spectacular product, closely connected with television broadcast, advertising, and global media circulation. Music is subordinated here to the logic of the spectacle: the intensification of sensations, visual attractiveness, and the maximization of audience attention. In this sense, the Halftime Show constitutes a clear example of the incorporation of music into the structure of a mega-event as a tool for managing emotions, attention, and the market value of the event. In this arrangement, the performance also fulfills the function of stabilizing viewership at a key moment of the broadcast, limiting the outflow of viewers and protecting the value of advertising time, whose price during the Super Bowl is among the highest on television. The prestige of these advertisements is also visible through special campaigns intended exclusively for this broadcast, which themselves become an element of popular culture, later subject to analysis and discussion in the media.

The genesis of this solution shows that the present form of the spectacle does not result solely from the development of artistic setting, but constitutes the effect of changes in the economics of sports broadcasts. In the first decades of the Super Bowl's existence, the break had a local and stadium character — marching bands and performances by university ensembles dominated, and their function was reduced to filling the time of the technical break in the game. Along with the development of mass television and the growing importance of media rights, however, this moment came to be viewed as a highly sensitive point in the attention economy: it was precisely then that the risk of viewers leaving their screens was greatest, which directly affected the value of the advertising time being sold and future broadcast contracts. The transformation of the break into a pop-cultural spectacle involving global stars was therefore a structural solution, designed to maintain and expand the television audience, capable of competing for the viewer's attention not only with other channels, but even with the game itself. In this sense, the Halftime Show fits into the logic of the planned event described by Donald Getz, where dramaturgy encompasses not only the stadium space, but above all the rhythm of the broadcast and the experience of the media audience. The effectiveness of this solution can also be explained from Thomas Turino's perspective: music, thanks to its ability to rapidly synchronize emotions and produce a sense of community, stabilizes attention at a moment of potential distraction, and the performance itself not only keeps viewers in front of the screen, but often also attracts audiences uninterested in the sporting competition itself, genuinely expanding the market of the entire event.

The Super Bowl Halftime Show therefore illustrates how, in the American model of mass culture, music functions not only as an autonomous form of artistic expression, but as a key element organizing the course, meaning, and global reach of one of the most important sporting events of the contemporary world, while at the same time confirming the mechanism described by Thomas Turino, according to which music constitutes an effective tool for producing a collective emotional experience on a mass scale.

2.5. Political Rallies, Party Conventions, and Presidential Inaugurations — Music as a Tool of Mobilization

Music plays a role in American political events that goes far beyond the function of an aesthetic setting. Its significance changes depending on the context of the event: from an integrative communal ritual during presidential inaugurations to a tool of mobilization and building engagement during election campaigns and political rallies. In both cases, music becomes an element organizing collective emotions and inscribing politics into the logic of the spectacle.

Presidential inaugurations constitute an example of events of an integrative and symbolically unifying character³⁰. Music performs a ritual function here: it accompanies the moment of the transfer of power, strengthens the sense of state continuity, and builds a narrative of national community above political divisions. In this context, music acts as a medium stabilizing emotions and ordering collective experience, allowing participants and media-mediated viewers to experience the event as a shared, solemn, and historical moment.

The spectacular dimension of these ceremonies is particularly visible in the United States, where presidential inaugurations constitute elaborate media events combining state ceremony with elements of popular culture. In recent decades, artists belonging to the global forefront of popular music have regularly participated in the setting of inaugurations — among others Lady Gaga and Jennifer Lopez during Joe Biden's inauguration in 2021³¹, and earlier Beyoncé, Bruce Springsteen, or Katy Perry. The presence of music stars performs an integrative and symbolic function: music becomes a tool for building an atmosphere of community, hope, and national unity, while the ceremony itself functions as a media spectacle broadcast globally.

Music performs a different function during election rallies and political campaigns, where its aim is not to calm or integrate “above divisions,” but to mobilize and intensify engagement³². Music becomes here a tool for building energy, strengthening identification with the candidate, and maintaining a high level of participants' attention. An appropriately selected musical setting makes it possible to transform a political event into a dynamic spectacle that operates not only at the level of rational communication, but above all at the emotional level.

Such a mechanism is visible during election campaigns in the USA, where campaign rallies take the form of spectacular events combining political speeches with musical setting and performances by well-known artists. The presence of recognizable performers increases media interest and mobilizes participants, also attracting people less interested in the current political debate. For example, Lady Gaga and Jon Bon Jovi performed during events supporting Joe Biden in the 2020 campaign, while during events connected with Donald Trump's campaign, the presence of artists such as Kid Rock or Lee Greenwood was regularly used, and Greenwood's song *God Bless the USA* became one of the most recognizable musical symbols of Republican rallies³³. These performances strengthened the emotional character of the events, increased attendance, and intensified the sense of participation in an event of particular political and social significance.

An equally important role is played by music used directly in election campaigns, where specific songs become carriers of political and emotional communication. A good example is the use of the song *Freedom* during events supporting Kamala Harris's campaign, whose message concerning freedom, equality, and emancipation corresponded with the communication directed toward younger and more progressive voters. The collective performance of the song during

³⁰ A. Seeger, *America's Musical Heritage*, pp. 20–40

³¹ *New York Times*, *Biden Inauguration Features Star Performances*, January 2021

³² G. Lipsitz, *Time Passages. Collective Memory and American Popular Culture*, pp. 97–120

³³ *Washington Post*, *Lee Greenwood's Song Remains Trump Rally Staple*, October 2020

campaign events created a moment of collective mobilization and emotional identification of participants with the political message.

The conducted analysis clearly shows that in the United States, political events function in strong connection with the entertainment industry and the logic of mass media. Presidential inaugurations, election rallies, and political campaigns often take the form of spectacles in which music and the presence of popular culture stars become tools of emotional mobilization, building a sense of community, and attracting the attention of a broad media audience. These events are designed not only as political meetings, but also as media spectacles intended for mediated audiences, which confirms the earlier theses of this work concerning the subordination of events to the logic of the attention market and the mechanisms of the culture of spectacle also in the political sphere. In this context, the spectacle performs the function of symbolically ordering social reality, influencing the way public events are experienced and political processes are interpreted by participants and media audiences.

2.6. Festivals — Coachella as a Paradigmatic American Festival Linking Music, Fashion, and Media

Contemporary American music festivals constitute one of the most elaborate manifestations of the culture of mega-events³⁴. Their significance goes far beyond the presentation of music itself, encompassing the sphere of lifestyle, fashion, social media, and global cultural consumption. Festivals function as events designed not only spatially, but also as coherent cultural experiences combining different areas of participation. In the context of the mechanisms described in subsection 2.2, music at festivals performs the function of organizing the entire experience of participants. A program based on multiple stages and diverse musical styles attracts audiences from different parts of the world, making the festival a space of encounter for people of different nationalities, cultural experiences, and social contexts. The integrative role of music consists here not so much in connecting audiences with different musical tastes, but in producing a temporary community beyond national divisions³⁵, in which participants are incorporated into one intense spectacular experience.

Against this background, Coachella (Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival) is often indicated as an emblematic example of the American model of a festival that is simultaneously a musical, fashion, and media event. The festival takes place annually in Indio, California, and is organized in the formula of two weekends, usually falling in April, while its recognizability results both from physical attendance and from its global impact in digital circulation.

In this sense, music festivals realize the mechanism of the organization of time described in Chapter 1 within the theory of the culture of spectacle. The free time of participants is condensed and transformed into a “package of experiences,” understood as a complex festival experience consisting not only of concerts, but also of the atmosphere of the place, the visibility of the event, the presence of media, and the narrative of uniqueness. The festival offers a clearly separated festive time, distinguished from everyday life and designed as an intense, temporary immersion in the world of music and popular culture. The model of Coachella’s functioning shows particularly well that contemporary spectacular events are not limited to the concert act itself, but to an experience shaped multidimensionally, encompassing space, atmosphere, the narrative of the event, the mode of communication, and forms of participation.

An important aspect of contemporary festivals is their strong connection with media and digital circulation. The festival experience functions simultaneously in the space of broadcasts, online reports, and social media, which additionally extends its temporal impact. Music is an easily recognizable and reproducible element of the event, which makes the festival “last” also before and after its actual ending. In the case of Coachella, this means that the time of the spectacle is additionally strengthened by practices of self-presentation: participants not only consume the

³⁴ D. Getz, *Event Studies. Theory, Research and Policy for Planned Events*, pp. 55–74

³⁵ A. Seeger, *America’s Musical Heritage*, pp. 35–52

spectacle, but also present their own participation in social media as an element of a desired lifestyle.

Coachella also illustrates the process of commercialization described in Chapter 1. The festival functions as a brand in which music intertwines with fashion, sponsorship, and image strategy. Participation in the event becomes an element of lifestyle and a way of symbolically using free time. Music plays here the role of a bond that gives meaning to the elaborate commercial structure and strengthens the emotional dimension of the experience. During Coachella, participants stay on the festival grounds for several days, using campgrounds, accompanying events, art installations, and sponsor zones. The daily program is designed in such a way as to fill the recipient's time to the greatest possible extent, limiting "empty" breaks between successive experiences; as a result, the time spent at the festival becomes spectacular time both as the consumption of the spectacle and as a socially communicated model of spending free time.

In this sense, music festivals, and Coachella in particular, constitute an illustration of the American model of mega-events, in which music organizes space, emotions, and social relations, and at the same time inscribes participants' experience into the logic of spectacle, mediatization, and the market organization of free time. Music functions here as a key tool of the cultural industry, making it possible to transform the festival into a coherent "package of experiences" — simultaneously experienced on site and reproduced in media circulation.

2.7. Why the American Viewer Expects a Show — A Sociological Analysis

The expectation of spectacularity in American mass events is not a spontaneous phenomenon, nor solely the effect of the development of technology or contemporary media. The way musical and cultural events are received is shaped in the United States through a long-term process of socialization, beginning already at the early stages of an individual's life³⁶. The American viewer grows up in an environment in which music, performance, and collective spectacles constitute a constant element of everyday social experience.

Anthony Seeger points out that music in American culture has from the beginning functioned as a communal practice, present in key moments of collective life. One of the first contexts in which an individual experiences music as an element of a mass event is the religious space³⁷. Services, choirs, and communal singing in churches perform an integrative and emotional function, teaching participants that music is a natural tool for building community and strengthening the significance of an event. Already at this stage, the expectation is shaped that important social moments are accompanied by musical and performative setting.

Another important stage of this socialization is the educational system. As the analyses of Seeger and Lipsitz show, American schools play a key role in reproducing the culture of mass events. School orchestras, marching bands, and choirs function not only as artistic activities, but are an integral part of the social life of the school³⁸. They perform during sporting events, ceremonies, and celebrations, often in spaces of significant scale of participation. Already at the local level, young audiences learn that sport, music, and spectacle form an inseparable whole, and that an event without performative setting would be incomplete.

George Lipsitz emphasizes that American sports culture, strongly rooted in school and academic life, plays a special role in shaping viewers' expectations³⁹. Large sporting events, also at the level of high schools and universities, have elaborate musical, visual, and ceremonial settings. From the youngest years, the viewer experiences sport not as pure competition, but as a spectacle in which

³⁶ A. Seeger, *America's Musical Heritage*, pp. 1–25

³⁷ A. Seeger, *America's Musical Heritage*, pp. 26–40

³⁸ A. Seeger, *America's Musical Heritage*, pp. 41–58

³⁹ G. Lipsitz, *Time Passages. Collective Memory and American Popular Culture*, pp. 67–84

music organizes emotions, tension, and the sense of community⁴⁰. This experience becomes a point of reference for the later reception of mega-events at the nationwide level.

In parallel, there functions a strong tradition of theatrical and entertainment culture, whose symbolic center is Broadway⁴¹. Lipsitz indicates that American popular culture has long been based on the combination of narrative, music, and spectacle, and that the musical and popular theater play an important role in shaping ideas about what a “good event” should be. The viewer becomes accustomed to the intensity of sensations, an expressive form, and strong emotional engagement, which influences their later expectations toward mass events.

Donald Getz and the authors of the volume "*Tourism, Festivals and Cultural Events in Times of Crisis*" draw attention to another important factor: commercialization and competition⁴². Along with the development of the market of mass events and the entertainment industry, the number of festivals, sporting events, galas, and ceremonies increases. Under the conditions of such competition, organizers must constantly raise the attractiveness of their events in order to attract audiences' attention⁴³. Spectacularity therefore becomes not only a response to the viewer's expectations, but also a strategy of survival under market conditions. The viewer, accustomed to increasingly intense forms of spectacle, expects that an event will offer something more than the content itself — emotions, scale, and uniqueness.

In this sense, the expectation of a “show” is the effect of an intertwining of long-term cultural socialization and market mechanisms. The American viewer not only consumes the spectacle, but is systematically prepared for it from the youngest years through religious, educational, sporting, and entertainment experiences. Music, present at each of these stages, performs the function of a bond that connects emotions, community, and spectacle into one model of collective experience.

In summary, the American audiences expects a show because spectacularity has become the basic language of mass culture, in which the meaning of social events is communicated. This expectation is not merely a matter of aesthetic preferences, but the result of a historically shaped model of participation in which music, emotions, and spectacle constitute inseparable elements of collective life.

Chapter 3. The Economics of Culture and the Market for Mass Events in the United States

The first two chapters presented and discussed the American model of musical mega-events as both a social practice and a form of spectacle, in which the event is designed as a media and market commodity⁴⁴. As a result, the mega-event — whether a concert, gala, or festival — ceases to be merely an artistic situation and becomes an economic node in which revenue streams from tickets, rights, advertising, sponsorship, licensing, and digital distribution converge⁴⁵.

The third chapter completes this perspective by presenting the economic structure of the American cultural market, with particular emphasis on popular music and mass events. First, it shows why, in the United States, mediated reception is just as important as — and often more

⁴⁰ G. Lipsitz, *Time Passages. Collective Memory and American Popular Culture*, pp. 85–96

⁴¹ G. Lipsitz, *Time Passages. Collective Memory and American Popular Culture*, pp. 41–66

⁴² D. Getz, *Event Studies. Theory, Research and Policy for Planned Events*, pp. 136–150;
L. Lyck, P. Long, A. X. Grige (eds.), *Tourism, Festivals and Cultural Events in Times of Crisis*, pp. 45–70

⁴³ D. Getz, *Event Studies. Theory, Research and Policy for Planned Events*, pp. 150–165

⁴⁴ Thomas Turino, *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation*, pp. 34–36; 41–44

⁴⁵ D. Getz, *Event Studies. Theory, Research and Policy for Planned Events*, pp. 120–135

important than — physical participation⁴⁶: television broadcasting, streaming, and secondary digital circulation, including clips and social media, generate viewership, which in turn translates into advertising prices and the value of rights. Second, it reconstructs the historical dimension of commercialization, from the early music industry to digital platforms. Third, using the Super Bowl as an example, it explains how advertising, sponsorship, and media rights create a particularly intensive mechanism for monetizing collective attention.

3.1. The Cultural Market in the United States

The cultural market in the United States functions as a large-scale and institutionally complex system in which the production of cultural experiences is closely connected with the media industry, advertising, and digital distribution. From a macroeconomic perspective, this sector carries measurable economic weight: according to data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis, specifically the Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account, economic activity in the arts and culture sector — including, among others, music and the music industry, concerts and festivals, recordings and phonographic publishing, streaming, copyright and licensing, audiovisual production, media, advertising, design, and the performing arts — accounted in 2023 for 4.2% of U.S. GDP, which the BEA estimates at USD 1.17 trillion in value added⁴⁷. This constitutes an important background for the further analysis, as it shows that the cultural market, including the market for mass events, is not an “addition” to the economy, but one of its measurable components.

The Recorded Music and Streaming Market: Infrastructure of Global Scale

The structure of the contemporary recorded music market in the United States supports the global-scale circulation of musical content. According to data from the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA), the U.S. recorded music market reached a value of USD 17.7 billion in 2024, measured at retail prices⁴⁸. This value primarily includes revenue from paid and ad-supported streaming, sales of physical formats such as CDs and vinyl, digital downloads, and licenses used in audiovisual media and the digital environment. A key element of this structure is the subscription model: more than 100 million paid subscriptions⁴⁹ indicate the existence of a stable subscription-based consumer base, which forms the foundation for distribution, promotion, and the long-term maintenance of demand.

A global perspective makes it possible to situate the importance of this market within a broader system. According to IFPI data, the global recorded music market reached a value of USD 29.6 billion in 2024, with the North American region — the United States and Canada — accounting for 40.3% of global revenues⁵⁰. This means that almost two-fifths of the global value of the recorded music market is generated in a single region, whose structure is based mainly on streaming platforms, licensing systems, and advanced mechanisms for monetizing digital content.

Although subscriptions outside the United States are not included in the statistical value of the U.S. recorded music market as defined by the RIAA, the global consumption of music distributed through platforms based in the United States nevertheless strengthens the economic and cultural position of American entities. A user in Poland, by using services such as Spotify or Apple Music and consuming content produced and promoted within the American media ecosystem, generates revenue which — through ownership structures, centralized management, and control

⁴⁶ D. Getz, *Event Studies. Theory, Research and Policy for Planned Events*, pp. 136-150

⁴⁷ Bureau of Economic Analysis, *Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account*, 2023 data.

⁴⁸ Recording Industry Association of America, *U.S. Recorded Music Revenues Report 2024*

⁴⁹ Recording Industry Association of America, *U.S. Recorded Music Revenues Report 2024*

⁵⁰ International Federation of the Phonographic Industry, *Global Music Report*, 2024

over distribution infrastructure — to a significant extent supports American companies and the phonographic corporations connected with them.

In practice, this means that even if a given transaction does not directly increase the statistical value of the U.S. market, it increases the global scale of influence of the American model of producing, promoting, and monetizing music. The accumulated effect of millions of such “external” subscriptions translates into a capital, negotiating, and symbolic advantage, **which enables American entities to set the standards of market functioning on a global level** — from recommendation algorithms and premiere formats to the scale and structure of media mega-events.

This concentration of revenue translates into a real structural advantage: distribution models, promotional strategies, licensing standards, and platform practices developed in the North American market exert a particularly strong influence on the global circulation of music. As a result, the American recorded music market functions not only as one of the largest domestic markets, but as a central economic node that significantly shapes the global mechanisms of music production, distribution, and consumption.

The Role of Record Labels and Contracts in the Music Industry

A description of the American cultural market requires taking into account the role of record labels and their contractual relationships with artists, since these institutions organize the global circulation of recorded music to a significant extent: they manage catalogues, distribution, marketing, and copyright and related rights. An artist’s entry into the circulation of the largest labels does not mean only the recording and release of music, but also their incorporation into an extensive infrastructure of monetization, including the licensing of songs, the use of music in films and advertisements through synchronization, promotion on streaming platforms, commercial collaborations with brands, and subsequently the organization of concert tours and presence at major musical events.

This mechanism is reinforced by specific forms of contracts that are widely used in the American market. Traditional recording agreements often include multi-album obligations, under which the label holds rights to recordings, or masters, for a long period, often measured in decades. Increasingly common are also so-called comprehensive, or 360-degree, deals⁵¹, in which the label participates not only in revenue from recordings, but also from concerts, merchandise sales, advertising contracts, and publishing activity. Agreements of this type allow the label to coordinate the artist’s development over a long-term horizon and to integrate various sources of revenue within a single business ecosystem.

In this arrangement, mega-events — discussed in Chapter 2 — perform a dual function. On the one hand, they constitute the culmination of participation and communal experience, in the affective sense described by Thomas Turino; on the other, they are key nodes of the market, in which the visibility of an artist translates into an increase in the value of copyrights, the renegotiation of contracts, and the strengthening of their position in the global media circulation. A performance on a prestigious stage or within a mega-event is therefore not merely an artistic event, but an element of a market strategy with long-term economic consequences.

For this reason, in the American model it is difficult to separate the functioning of record labels from the live events market. The circulation of recordings builds recognition and demand, while concerts and mega-events strengthen the narrative of the artist’s brand, increase their symbolic capital, and raise their monetization potential across other channels. As a result, the music market functions as a coherent system in which long-term contractual relationships ensure the continuity of production, promotion, and the flow of value — both artistic and economic.

⁵¹ *Billboard*, *What Are 360 Deals and Why Labels Love Them*

The Planned Event as an Economic and Media Product

From Donald Getz's perspective, a large share of highly visible public spectacles — stadium concerts, galas, festivals, and sport-music events — are planned events: they are designed and coordinated within a specific logic of the event market, and their "value" is produced throughout the entire organizational and communicative chain, not only in the performance itself⁵². In practice, the American cultural market therefore operates as a sector of the experience economy, in which music is simultaneously:

- a product (a recording, license, catalogue),
- a service (a concert, festival, tour),
- media content (a television or streaming format),
- a tool for managing attention (advertising, sponsorship, and the branding of both the event and the artist).

This coupling makes it possible to better understand the mechanisms discussed in Chapter 2 through the examples of the Grammy Awards, Coachella, and the Super Bowl Halftime Show: in the American model, mega-events are not planned as "just a concert," but as a system composed of event + broadcast + secondary digital circulation, in which individual elements are assigned an economic function in advance.

The Live Segment and the Integration of the Value Chain: What the "Expansiveness" of the Market Means

The market for mass events in the United States is not limited to ticket sales alone, but functions as an extensive end-to-end value chain. It includes the promotion of concert tours and individual events, the contracting of venues, spectacle production, ticket sales and distribution on both the primary and secondary markets, the management of participant data, the sale of packages and additional services, and monetization through sponsorship and advertising. Of key importance here is the model of segment integration, which in the United States has become the basis of a lasting market advantage. An example of this is Live Nation Entertainment, an American company combining the functions of concert promoter, venue operator, and owner of the Ticketmaster ticketing platform.

The significance of this model lies not only in the revenue it generates, but also in the structure and sources of that revenue. Financial data indicate that Live Nation Entertainment generates annual revenue of approximately USD 23.1 billion⁵³, as a result of activity encompassing thousands of events organized simultaneously across many markets. It is also important that these revenues come from many segments at once: concert promotion, venue operation, ticket sales, premium services, and sponsorship contracts. Such diversification makes it possible to finance global tours, acquire local promoters, and undertake long-term infrastructure investments beyond the domestic market.

From a structural perspective, control over infrastructure remains crucial. Documents from the United States Department of Justice from 2024 indicate that Live Nation Entertainment owns or controls more than 265 concert venues in North America, including a significant share of the largest amphitheaters, and, through Ticketmaster, controls primary ticket sales for around 80% or more of the largest concert venues in the United States⁵⁴. News media, including the Associated

⁵² D. Getz, *Event Studies. Theory, Research and Policy for Planned Events*, pp. 150-165

⁵³ Live Nation Entertainment, *Annual Report / Form 10-K*, financial data for 2023

⁵⁴ U.S. Department of Justice, *documents concerning Live Nation Entertainment and Ticketmaster (2024)*; Associated Press

Press, have reported a synthetic figure of approximately 70% as Ticketmaster's share of ticket sales in key American venues.

The significance of this model extends beyond the domestic market. The financial scale of Live Nation Entertainment enables the company to function as a dominant global entity coordinating the live events market, operating in Europe, Latin America, Asia, and Australia. The global position of Ticketmaster and Live Nation Entertainment is directly connected with the fact that the core value of the music market — both in terms of catalogue ownership and streaming infrastructure — has historically and institutionally been embedded in the United States. The dominance of American platforms and labels in the distribution of recorded music created the conditions under which a U.S.-based entity could then develop a scalable, integrated model of concert activity on a global level. As a result, the live event functions not only as a single performance, but as a multiplatform cultural and economic product combining the concert market, media, brands, and the global circulation of content.

Physical Audiences and Mediated Audiences: Two Markets, One Event

Contemporary popular culture mega-events in the United States increasingly show that their actual economic and cultural value does not result solely from the number of participants physically present, but above all from their global media reach. As demonstrated in this work, contemporary media events are designed primarily for mediated reception, and the key indicator of success becomes the number of viewers in front of screens, rather than the number of people present on site. The physical audience remains important as an element that produces the atmosphere and dramaturgy of the event; however, it is television and online audiences that constitute the main market for the consumption of the spectacle. This mechanism can be traced through three different types of events: a sporting event (Super Bowl), a music industry event (Grammy Awards) and a music festival (Coachella).

The Super Bowl — Sport and Music as a Global Media Product

The Super Bowl illustrates particularly clearly the scale of the discrepancy between physical and mediated audiences. Although the event takes place in a stadium and retains the form of a classic sporting event, its actual reach and economic significance are determined by television and streaming reception. In this arrangement, the stadium audience performs the function of a “performative core”: it creates atmosphere, live reactions, and dramaturgy. However, mediated audiences constitute the primary consumer group around which the broadcast format, the structure of advertising breaks, and the spectacle's setting, including the Halftime Show, are designed.

The scale of this disproportion is shown by the numerical data. The official NFL gamebook for Super Bowl LIX indicates stadium attendance of 65,719 spectators present at the venue, while the average television and streaming audience for the same event amounted to 127.7 million viewers⁵⁵. This means that the physical audience constituted approximately 0.0515% ($65\,719 \div 127\,700\,000 \approx 0.000515$) of the total television and streaming audience.

The Halftime Show performance by Kendrick Lamar, produced by Roc Nation, attracted an average television and streaming audience of 133.5 million viewers, setting a new record in the history of the Halftime Show. In addition, Roc Nation's report states that the Apple Music Halftime Show during Super Bowl LIX achieved an unprecedented scale of global reach:

- more than 810 million impressions for the Apple Music Halftime Show,
- 3.65 billion global views, including more than 1.7 billion views of user-generated content,
- the most socially consumed Apple Music Halftime Show in NFL history, recording a 156% year-over-year increase,

⁵⁵ Nielsen Media Research, *Super Bowl LIX Audience Report*, 2025

- 5.7 million mentions on social media (a +90% increase compared with the previous year),
- the video reached number one on YouTube in 28 countries, topped the global Trending tab, and exceeded 50 million views within the first 72 hours.

This shows that the media reach of events of this type is many times greater than physical attendance, and that, economically, the “core” of the product is not the spatial experience in the stadium, but the event as a media format whose value is produced through viewership and then transformed into revenue from advertising time, the sale of media rights, and related licenses.

The Grammy Awards — The Music Gala as a Media Event

A similar mechanism can be observed in the case of music industry events such as the Grammy Awards gala, which — although it takes place in a specific space and gathers an audience on site — is designed primarily as a television and digital event.

In the United States, the gala attracts an average television audience of between 15 and 17 million viewers. For example, the 2024 ceremony reached an average audience of 16.9 million viewers⁵⁶, while the 2025 edition reached around 15.4 million viewers⁵⁷. This broadcast, however, represents only part of the event’s actual reach, since the gala functions simultaneously in global media circulation through streaming platforms and social media. In 2025, the event generated more than 102 million interactions on social media⁵⁸, while fragments of performances published after the gala often reach several or even tens of millions of views on online platforms. Taking into account the international distribution of the broadcast and the later consumption of content online, the global reach of the event is estimated to include at least several tens of millions of recipients. The gala therefore ceases to be a one-time event broadcast on television and becomes a long-lasting media circulation, in which viral fragments of performances, commentary, and the continued reproduction of content online play a key role.

Coachella — The Festival as a Global Online Experience

The difference between physical and media audiences is even more visible in the case of music festivals. The Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival is one of the largest events of this type in the world in terms of the number of participants physically present on site. The total number of participants visiting the festival grounds across both weekends amounts to approximately 250,000 to 260,000 people⁵⁹.

At the same time, the significance of the event extends far beyond the audience present on site. For more than a decade, online broadcasts have become a key element of the festival’s functioning, carried out primarily in cooperation with YouTube, which remains the official streaming partner of the event. In recent editions, the broadcasts have covered as many as six stages simultaneously, allowing a global audience to follow multiple concerts at the same time and making the event, in practice, accessible worldwide⁶⁰.

Viewership data show the scale of this phenomenon. During the 2018 edition of the festival, live broadcasts generated around 41 million livestream views⁶¹, and the broadcasts reached viewers in more than 200 countries around the world. In practice, this means that the number of recipients participating in the event online many times exceeds the physical audience present in Indio. The concerts, however, do not end their media life together with the broadcast: recordings of

⁵⁶ Reuters, *Grammy viewership jumps 34% over last year, CBS says, February 2024*

⁵⁷ Deadline, *Grammys Audience Down 9% From 2024 To 15.4M, February 2025*

⁵⁸ Billboard, *Grammys Generate Over 100 Million Social Media Interactions, February 2025*

⁵⁹ Los Angeles Times, *Coachella Attendance Remains Near 250,000 Across Two Weekends, April 2023*

⁶⁰ The Verge, *YouTube Renews Coachella Streaming Partnership, March 2023*

⁶¹ Billboard, *Coachella Livestream Draws 41 Million Views Worldwide, April 2018*

performances, concert highlights, and individual songs published after the event subsequently reach millions of views in the following days and weeks.

The global media circulation of the festival is further strengthened by social media, which performs the function of a parallel space of participation in the event. The hashtag #Coachella has been used in more than 5 million posts on Instagram, while content marked with this hashtag on TikTok has reached more than 40 billion views. This means that the festival generates a global, dispersed conversation involving millions of users, in which not only concerts function, but also participants' outfits, audience reactions, influencer reports, and viral fragments of performances. As a result, the festival continues to function in social media long after the event has ended, influencing musical, fashion, and cultural trends.

The scale of social media presence also translates into measurable marketing value. Estimates concerning the 2025 edition of the festival indicate that the value of so-called earned media value generated by influencer content published online may have exceeded USD 750 million. The official channels of the event also achieve significant advertising value: the @coachella profile on Instagram generated media value estimated at around USD 6.4 million after the first festival weekend and as much as USD 9.1 million after the second weekend⁶². These data show that Coachella functions not only as a musical event, but also as a marketing platform with global reach, attracting brands, artists, and content creators.

A particular example of the festival's cultural significance remains Beyoncé's 2018 performance, referred to as "Beychella". This concert attracted record online viewership: an estimated 458,000 viewers watched the performance simultaneously on YouTube⁶³, which was one of the highest results in the history of the festival's broadcasts. The entire weekend of broadcasts generated around 41 million views from more than 232 countries⁶⁴, making the concert an event of truly global reach. The performance was widely commented on in the media and analyzed as an important moment of representation of African American culture in mainstream popular culture.

The significance of the concert was further strengthened through its subsequent distribution. The performance was documented in the film "Homecoming: A Film by Beyoncé", which, after its premiere on Netflix, achieved more than 16.6 million trailer views within the first 24 hours⁶⁵, and generated more than 750,000 interactions in its first week of social media presence. Nielsen data also indicated that, on the first day alone, the film was watched in the United States by around 1.1 million viewers, not including audiences using mobile devices and computers. As a result, "Beychella" ceased to be a one-time concert event and became a lasting element of popular culture circulation and one of the most important music streaming events of the year.

Summary

A comparison of these three cases clearly shows that contemporary mega-events today function simultaneously in two spaces: physical and media-based, with the latter generating the fundamental economic and cultural value. The audience present on site creates the performative conditions of the event, but its actual reach and significance are produced primarily in global media circulation, which allows events to function long after their actual conclusion. The economic "core" of the product is not the spatial experience in the stadium, but the event as a media format whose value is produced through viewership and then transformed into revenue from advertising time, the sale of media rights, and related licenses.

⁶² Pulse Advertising, *Coachella 2025: A Marketing Phenomenon*, April 2025

⁶³ GRAMMY.com, *Beyoncé's Coachella Performance Earns Highest YouTube Livestream Numbers*, April 2018

⁶⁴ Tubefilter.com, *Beyoncé Leads YouTube To Record-Setting 41 Million Coachella Views*, April 2018

⁶⁵ Wikipedia (it), *Homecoming (2019 film)*, accessed 2026

Summary of Subsection 3.1

The cultural market in the United States functions as a highly integrated economic system in which the production of music, live events, and media content is closely linked with media, advertising, and digital distribution. This sector carries significant economic weight — in 2023, it accounted for 4.2% of U.S. GDP, or approximately USD 1.17 trillion — while the recorded music and streaming market functions as a global economic node, shaping the standards of market operation also beyond the borders of the United States. Long-term contracts used by record labels, including multi-album agreements and 360-degree deals, integrate various sources of revenue — recordings, licenses, synchronizations, concerts, and commercial collaborations — which makes labels a key link in the live market, connecting an artist's development with the organization of tours and participation in mega-events.

The live events market operates as an extensive end-to-end value chain, encompassing promotion, production, ticket sales, and monetization through sponsorship and media. Control over concert infrastructure and ticket distribution, combined with record-label contracts, enables activity to be scaled globally and links the live market with digital media. The examples of the Super Bowl, the Grammy Awards, and Coachella show that the economic value of mega-events arises primarily from media reach and global viewership, while the physical audience constitutes only the “performative core.” As a result, the American cultural market creates a coherent mechanism in which record labels, music, and live events are mutually connected and drive both economic and cultural value on a global scale.

3.2. The Commercialization of Culture in the United States

In order to properly grasp the contemporary scale of the commercialization of culture in the United States, it is necessary to adopt a historical perspective that shows the long-term development of the market⁶⁶. The American model of musical mega-events is not a sudden phenomenon, nor one detached from earlier forms of music circulation⁶⁷. On the contrary, it is the culmination of a process in which successive distribution technologies, market institutions, and ownership models gradually expanded the scale of the market while strengthening the role of intermediaries controlling access to audiences, rights, and infrastructure.

In this sense, the commercialization of culture in the United States does not consist merely in the growth of revenue or audience numbers, but in the historical transformation of music into a media commodity whose fundamental value lies in its ability to generate and sustain mass attention.

From Sheet Music to the Song Industry: Tin Pan Alley as the Original Market Model

One of the earliest stages in the American commercialization of popular music was the development of the milieu known as Tin Pan Alley⁶⁸. The term refers to a cluster of New York music publishers and songwriters active at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, whose activity was based primarily on the mass sale of sheet music. At that time, the basic market “product” was not yet the recording, but the song itself as a written score that could be repeatedly performed in homes and concert halls.

The Tin Pan Alley model reveals a fundamental feature of the American commercialization of culture: the very early subordination of music to the logic of predictable demand, marketing, and the serial production of repertoire. Already at this stage, the mechanism of the “song factory”

⁶⁶ George Lipsitz, *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture*, pp. 1–18

⁶⁷ George Lipsitz, *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture*, pp. 19–36

⁶⁸ Richard Crawford, *America's Musical Life: A History*, pp. 287–305

emerges⁶⁹, in which success is measured by the ability to produce hits corresponding to current tastes and trends. It was precisely this model that would later become one of the key points of reference for the critique of the cultural industry formulated by Theodor W. Adorno, who pointed to the standardization of form and the calculative character of popular music production.

Phonography, Radio, and Television

The subsequent phases of music commercialization were closely connected with the development of distribution technologies⁷⁰. Phonography transformed music into a material good in the form of recordings and records; radio introduced it into the everyday life of the mass audience; and television gave music a fully audiovisual, spectacular dimension. As a result, the essence of the musical product gradually evolved: from a single song as a notated score in Tin Pan Alley, toward recordings, radio and television broadcasts, and later access to digital streams.

From Adorno's perspective, this meant a deepening of industrial logic: popular music began to function as part of larger media formats⁷¹, subordinated to schedules, ratings, and repeatability. At the same time, however — as Thomas Turino's perspective allows us to see — the very features of music that make its commercialization possible also make it an exceptionally effective tool for organizing emotions, empathy, and a sense of community⁷². The American market learned to use these properties not only to sell recordings, but also to sell social and emotional experiences that can be reproduced on a mass scale.

Digitalization and Streaming: The Globalization of Demand and the Inflation of Content

The most dynamic stage of commercialization falls in the period of digitalization and the development of streaming platforms. In this model, the basic market good is no longer a single physical medium, but access to a catalogue and the user's attention, monetized through subscriptions or advertising⁷³. RIAA data show that the American recorded music market reached a value of USD 17.7 billion in 2024, with revenue from paid and ad-supported streaming playing the dominant role.

At the same time, the number of paid subscriptions exceeded 100 million, indicating the existence of a broad and stable subscription base.

From the perspective of the economics of culture, however, what matters is not only the growth of revenue, but also the change in the structure of the market. The global recorded music market reached a value of USD 29.6 billion in 2024, of which 40.3% was accounted for by the North American region, meaning the United States and Canada. This means that almost two-fifths of the global value of the market is generated in a region whose infrastructure is based on digital platforms, advanced licensing systems, and centralized control of catalogues. Even when music consumption takes place outside the United States, the ownership and distribution structure means that a significant part of economic value flows to American entities.

⁶⁹ Theodor W. Adorno, *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*, pp. 46–55

⁷⁰ George Lipsitz, *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture*, pp. 61–88

⁷¹ Theodor W. Adorno, *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*, pp. 72–88

⁷² Thomas Turino, *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation*, pp. 34–36; 41–44

⁷³ Recording Industry Association of America, *U.S. Music Revenue Report, 2024*

At the same time, streaming leads to an inflation of content and intense competition for attention. Under conditions of almost unlimited access to music, the recording itself ceases to be a sufficient tool for building an artist's stable position. At this point, the market makes a characteristic turn: the concert and the live event return as key elements of promotional strategy.

The Concert as a Tool of the Artist's Mediatization

The transition from streaming to concerts is not accidental in this context. Under conditions of content oversupply and the fragmentation of attention, live events become a tool for intensifying an artist's presence in media circulation. The concert performs a mediatizing function⁷⁴: it generates secondary content, such as press coverage, video materials, and social media communication; it sustains audience interest; and it stabilizes the artist's image as an "event," rather than merely another item in a streaming catalogue.

In this sense, the concert is not only a source of direct revenue, but an element of a broader market mechanism in which the live event drives the entire media circulation, and that media circulation returns in the form of demand for further recordings, tickets, and commercial collaborations. This logic is particularly visible in the case of mega-events, which are designed from the outset as media formats⁷⁵, capable of generating global reach.

Consolidation and Interdependence of Market Actors

The contemporary commercialization of culture in the United States is based on strong consolidation among market actors and on cooperation between them⁷⁶. The functioning of the market may be described as a sequence of interconnected actions: a record label signs a contract with an artist, often a multi-album or 360-degree deal, assumes responsibility for the production and promotion of recordings, and then introduces the artist into the existing media infrastructure and market mechanisms described in Section 3.1. This promotion includes media presence, social media activity, and the use of streaming platforms.

At the next stage, the live market plays a key role, with record labels cooperating with global promoters such as Live Nation Entertainment. The promoter organizes concert tours and major events, monetizing them through ticket sales, sponsorship, and brand partnerships. Media outlets, both industry-specific and general, cover these events, generating reach that in turn attracts advertisers. As a result, a highly consolidated system emerges in which each element reinforces the others, while the artist functions simultaneously as a creative subject, a carrier of content, and an economic node.

This model of consolidation is particularly characteristic of the American market. The integration of promotion, ticketing, venue relations, sponsorship, and audience data makes it possible to scale activity globally and reduces the coordination risks associated with mega-events. In this sense, the commercialization of culture in the United States is not only economic but also institutional⁷⁷, it is based on durable structures of ownership and interdependence that make it possible to transform music into a media product with worldwide reach.

⁷⁴ Donald Getz, *Event Studies: Theory, Research and Policy for Planned Events*, pp. 150–165

⁷⁵ Donald Getz, *Event Studies: Theory, Research and Policy for Planned Events*, pp. 136–150

⁷⁶ Donald Getz, *Event Studies: Theory, Research and Policy for Planned Events*, pp. 271–293

⁷⁷ Theodor W. Adorno, *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*, pp. 88–101

Summary

The commercialization of culture in the United States is a historical process that has developed in stages — from the sale of sheet music, through phonography and radio, to television and streaming — and whose contemporary result is a market integrated around several dominant actors and formats. In this model, the musical event ceases to be merely an artistic act and becomes part of a broad economic system in which the key resource is mass attention.

3.3 The Value of Advertising, Sponsorship, and Media Rights

The economic value of contemporary mega-events arises primarily from the concentration of audience attention in front of screens, which is then transformed into revenue from advertising, sponsorship, and the sale of media rights.

In this subsection, these mechanisms are analyzed primarily through the example of the Super Bowl, as the event with the greatest concentration of attention in the American media system. At the same time, it is indicated that similar processes can also be observed in other media formats, such as the Grammy Awards gala, which shows that this is not an exceptional sporting case, but rather a broader model of how contemporary popular culture events function within the attention economy.

Viewership as the Foundation of the Value of Advertising and Media Rights

The economic logic of the Super Bowl is based on an unprecedented concentration of attention. In 2024, the average audience of Super Bowl LVIII amounted to 123.7 million viewers, measured across platforms⁷⁸. A year later, Super Bowl LIX set a new record, reaching an average audience of 127.7 million, while a total of 191.1 million people watched at least part of the broadcast⁷⁹. These are figures that, in the realities of the contemporary media market — dominated by fragmentation and asynchronous consumption — have no equivalent.

From the perspective of advertisers, what is crucial is that the Super Bowl remains one of the few events consumed “live” by a mass audience⁸⁰. An advertisement broadcast during the transmission does not compete here with scrolling through content or on-demand viewing, but reaches viewers at a moment of shared concentration of attention. It is precisely this feature — and not the length of the commercial itself — that forms the basis for exceptionally high advertising rates.

Advertising: Nominal Growth, Inflation, and a Changing Market Structure

During the first Super Bowl in 1967, the cost of a 30-second advertising spot was approximately USD 37,500 to 42,500⁸¹. Adjusted for today’s purchasing power, according to the CPI-U index, these amounts correspond to several hundred thousand dollars. This fact alone shows that commercialization was present from the very beginning.

⁷⁸ Nielsen, „Super Bowl LVIII Draws 123.7 Million Average Viewers, Largest TV Audience on Record”, February 2024

⁷⁹ Nielsen, „Super Bowl LIX Reaches Record High Number of Viewers with 191.1 Million”, March 7, 2025

⁸⁰ Reuters, „Super Bowl audience sets all-time record...”, February 11, 2025

⁸¹ CBS News, „How much do 2025 Super Bowl commercials cost? Here’s the price tag on ads this year”, February 12, 2025

In 2024, the price of 30 seconds of advertising time during the Super Bowl was approximately USD 6.5 to 7 million⁸², while in 2025 rates reaching USD 8 million appeared⁸³. This increase cannot be explained by inflation alone; it is the consequence of a structural change in the media market. Under conditions in which there are fewer and fewer events capable of gathering a mass live audience, the Super Bowl becomes a scarce good, and its airtime becomes one of the most valuable resources in the advertising market.

Maintaining high viewership during breaks protects the revenue of the entire broadcast, not only that of one segment. Moreover, the Halftime Show generates a secondary circulation of content — clips, replays, and social media materials — which strengthens the event's brand and increases its value in subsequent cycles of rights sales, as discussed in detail in Section 3.1, "Physical Audiences and Mediated Audiences: Two Markets, One Event."

Sponsorship: The Economy of Association and Affective Intensity

The second important stream of value is sponsorship, particularly visible in the case of the title sponsor of the Halftime Show. The change of partner from Pepsi to Apple Music shows that sponsorship here does not consist in the simple purchase of logo exposure, but in "attaching" a brand to the culminating moment of collective attention. The sponsor acquires the right to be associated with a prestigious, emotionally charged event whose reach extends far beyond the broadcast itself.

From Turino's theoretical perspective, one may speak here of the purchase of access to a situation of high affective intensity. A brand message embedded in such a context has greater impact because it is inscribed into a communal experience, rather than into a neutral advertising message. Sponsorship of the Halftime Show therefore functions as an investment in symbolic capital that would be difficult to obtain through standard forms of advertising.

An analogous mechanism is visible in the case of the Grammy Awards gala, where corporate sponsorship and partnerships with global brands use the event as a space for promotion and image-building through advertising presence and marketing activities connected with the gala and the industry events surrounding it. The scale of the mediated audience makes the gala an attractive marketing platform for companies operating both in the American and international markets, while the value of sponsorship results above all from the possibility of linking a brand with an event characterized by a high concentration of attention and cultural prestige.

Media Rights as the Financial Foundation of the Entire System

The most important and most stable source of revenue remains media rights. The NFL's long-term agreements with the largest broadcasters — CBS, NBC, FOX, ESPN/ABC — and streaming partners amount in total to sums exceeding USD 100 billion over the course of more than a decade⁸⁴. This scale shows that the economics of the Super Bowl cannot be reduced to a single evening of transmission, but rather concerns maintaining the value of the entire media ecosystem.

In this arrangement, the Halftime Show functions as an investment in the "brand of the whole." It maintains the Super Bowl as a cultural event whose significance extends beyond sport, strengthening the negotiating position of the NFL and broadcasters in subsequent cycles of rights sales. This is consistent with the logic of the cultural industry described by Adorno⁸⁵: the format is

⁸² CBS News, „How much do Super Bowl commercials cost for the 2024 broadcast?“, February 11, 2024

⁸³ Reuters, „Super Bowl audience sets all-time record...“, February 11, 2025

⁸⁴ National Football League, „NFL completes long-term media distribution agreements through 2033 season“, March 18, 2021
Forbes, Priske, „\$110 Billion New NFL Rights Deals...“, March 18, 2021

⁸⁵ Theodor W. Adorno, *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*, pp. 56–60

standardized and optimized in order to maximize the sale of attention while simultaneously sustaining the illusion of uniqueness.

A similar logic can be observed in the case of the Grammy Awards gala, where the sale of rights to television broadcasting and digital distribution remains a key element of financing. The gala constitutes one of the most important annual music programs on American television, which allows broadcasters to obtain high revenues from advertising broadcasts. In 2024, a new multi-year agreement was announced concerning the future broadcast of the gala by The Walt Disney Company, with its value estimated at more than USD 500 million over a ten-year period⁸⁶. This means that the very right to broadcast the event has significant market value, independent of ticket sales or the physical presence of the audience.

The Super Bowl as a Model Example of the Commercialization of Culture

As a result, the Halftime Show reveals the paradox of late modernity: music still genuinely builds community and intensifies emotions, but this community is simultaneously incorporated into the architecture of attention monetization, in which emotions become an economic resource. This is why — despite high production costs — the format is maintained and developed: in the American model, it is not a “concert cost,” but an investment in the price of airtime, the strength of sponsorship, and the value of media rights.

Summary of the Economics of Culture and the Market for Mass Events

The third chapter completes the perspective outlined in the previous parts of the work, shifting the emphasis from the analysis of the experience of participation and the form of the spectacle to the economic mechanisms that enable mega-events to function as a stable and scalable segment of the cultural market. It shows that concerts, festivals, galas, and musical spectacles are not merely artistic events or exclusively social forms of participation, but elements of an extensive economic system in which culture, media, and market infrastructure operate as mutually reinforcing components.

The key conclusion of the chapter is that the American cultural market functions as a highly integrated sector of the experience economy, in which the production of artistic content is permanently connected with media, advertising, and digital distribution. Macroeconomic data show that the arts and culture sector is not a marginal addition to the economy, but a measurable component of it, accounting for a significant share of U.S. GDP. In this context, the market for mass events should be understood as part of a larger economic infrastructure encompassing the production of recordings, streaming, copyright, advertising, audiovisual media, and concert activity.

The analysis of the recorded music and streaming market reveals that the contemporary scale of influence of the American model of culture is not limited to the country's borders. Streaming platforms, licensing systems, and the global distribution of catalogues mean that even music consumption taking place outside the United States strengthens the economic and symbolic position of American entities. As a result, the U.S. market functions as the central node of the global circulation of music, shaping standards of promotion, monetization, and event organization at the international level.

An important element of this structure remains the role of record labels and contractual mechanisms. Multi-album agreements and 360-degree contracts integrate various revenue sources — recordings, concerts, merchandising, synchronizations, and advertising collaborations — making the artist not only a creator, but also an element of a long-term economic strategy. Mega-events function within this system as moments of particular visibility, increasing the value of

⁸⁶ *Variety, Disney Shares Grammys From CBS in First Change for Music Awards in 50 Years, October 2024*

catalogues, strengthening the artist's negotiating position, and driving further monetization through other channels.

From the perspective of planned events, a concert or gala ceases to be a single performance and becomes a designed media product whose value is produced throughout the entire organizational chain: from the production of the spectacle, through broadcasting, to secondary digital circulation in social media. In this model, music functions simultaneously as a product, a service, media content, and a tool for managing attention, allowing mega-events to generate revenue in many segments at once.

The chapter also shows that the live events segment is not simply the sale of tickets, but an extensive end-to-end value chain encompassing promotion, production, venue management, ticket sales and distribution, the use of audience data, and monetization through sponsorship and advertising. The integration of these elements makes it possible to scale activity across multiple markets simultaneously and to link the live market with media and streaming.

In its historical section, the chapter shows that the current market model did not emerge suddenly, but is the result of the long-term commercialization of culture — from the sale of sheet music, through phonography, radio, and television, to streaming — in which successive technologies expanded the scale of the market and strengthened the role of intermediaries controlling access to audiences and infrastructure. This process led to a situation in which the fundamental market value became the ability to generate and sustain mass attention.

Digitalization and streaming simultaneously brought an inflation of content and increased competition for audience attention. Under conditions of almost unlimited access to music, the recording itself ceases to be a sufficient tool for building an artist's position, which leads to a renewed strengthening of the importance of concerts and live events as tools of mediatization. The live event generates secondary content, sustains audience interest, and strengthens the artist's presence in media circulation, thereby driving further consumption of recordings and related products.

The chapter also points to the progressing consolidation of the market and the interdependence of its actors: labels, concert promoters, streaming platforms, and media function as elements of a single system in which each segment reinforces the others, while the artist becomes simultaneously a creator, a brand, and an economic node. The market, in turn, thanks to the integration of promotion, infrastructure, and audience data, is able to operate on a global scale.

The example of American mega-events leads here to one fundamental conclusion: the economic value of contemporary mega-events arises primarily from the concentration of the attention of media audiences, which is then transformed into the value of advertising time, sponsorship, and media rights. The musical spectacle is therefore not an expensive addition to the event, but a tool that stabilizes viewership and increases the value of the entire media ecosystem, in which the emotional communality of participation is incorporated into mechanisms of attention monetization.

The whole leads to the fundamental conclusion of the chapter: contemporary musical mega-events are not an anomaly or a temporary fashion, but the logical result of the historical development of a market in which music, media, and capital have become permanently intertwined. Music still genuinely generates emotions and a sense of community, yet under the conditions of late modernity these emotions simultaneously function as an economic resource. Mega-events are therefore both a social experience and an element of the architecture of attention monetization, constituting a point of intersection between culture and the economy on a global scale.

Chapter 4. Models of Organizing Mass Events in Poland and Europe in Relation to the American Model

The analysis of the economics and market structure of mass events in the United States has shown that the scale of musical mega-events results from the combination of a unified media market, high viewership, and the strong commercialization of rights and advertising. Transferring this perspective to the European and Polish context, however, requires taking into account different structural conditions that influence the ways in which musical events are organized, financed, and received. Chapter 4 undertakes this comparison, focusing on the limitations and specific characteristics of the functioning of mass events outside the American model.

4.1. The European Model of Cultural Funding and Its Differences from the United States

An analysis of the European and Polish model of mass events requires a clear distinction between public expenditure on culture and the revenue generated by the cultural sector within the economy. In the previous chapters, this work focused on the revenue side of the American model, demonstrating that musical and media events in the United States generate a significant contribution to GDP, tax revenues, and economic growth. In this subsection, the emphasis shifts to the expenditure side, that is, to the question of how much the state and local governments actually spend from public budgets on culture and mass events.

Public Expenditure on Culture in Relation to GDP — The United States versus Europe and Poland

In the European Union, public expenditure in the COFOG category “recreation, culture and religion” amounted in 2023 to an average of approximately 1.2% of GDP⁸⁷, which in absolute terms corresponded to around EUR 200 billion annually⁸⁸. Within this category, strictly cultural services accounted for approximately 0.5% of GDP⁸⁹ while the remaining part included recreation, sport, and public media.

In Poland, the corresponding indicator was slightly higher, at approximately 1.3% of GDP, which confirms the relatively strong involvement of the state and local governments in financing culture, including mass events. What is crucial is that these are budgetary expenditures — funds transferred directly to cultural institutions, event organizers, local governments, and public media.

For the United States, comparable data require a different methodological source, since the U.S. does not apply the COFOG classification to the same extent as the EU. However, data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis and the FRED system make it possible to isolate the category of public government expenditure — federal, state, and local — on “recreation and culture.” In 2023, these expenditures amounted to approximately USD 52.7 billion⁹⁰.

⁸⁷ Eurostat, *General government expenditure by function (COFOG), 2023 data*

⁸⁸ Eurostat, *General Government Expenditure by Function (COFOG), aggregated EU-27 data, 2023*

⁸⁹ Eurostat, *COFOG – Cultural services (division 08.2), 2023 data*

⁹⁰ Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), *Government Consumption Expenditures and Gross Investment – Recreation and Culture, 2023*

The nominal GDP of the United States in 2023 was approximately USD 27.4 trillion⁹¹. This means that U.S. public expenditure on recreation and culture accounted for approximately 0.19% of GDP. In other words, U.S. public authorities spend roughly six times less on this area as a share of GDP than the average European Union country.

This comparison is approximate in nature, since the United States does not use the COFOG classification and BEA data are not fully methodologically equivalent.

This comparison is of key importance:

- in the United States, culture and mass events function primarily as a source of revenue for the economy and the public budget,
- in Europe and Poland, culture remains an important area of public expenditure, carried out within the framework of cultural and urban policy.

The Consequences of Low Public Expenditure in the United States

The low share of public expenditure on culture in the United States does not indicate weakness in the sector; on the contrary, as shown earlier, the music and events sector generates a high contribution to GDP. It does mean, however, that mass events there must operate according to market logic⁹², relying on:

- the sale of media rights,
- corporate sponsorship,
- advertising,
- the commercial monetization of attention.

As a result, the financial burden of large musical events rests primarily on market mechanisms rather than on direct public transfers. These events are designed as undertakings that generate their own revenue and indirectly contribute to the public budget through taxes.

Poland and Europe: Events as Public Expenditure and an Institutional Tool

In Poland and in many European countries, the situation is fundamentally different. A significant share of mass events functions as projects co-financed by public institutions, often regardless of their market profitability. A good example is provided by festivals of national and symbolic character.

⁹¹ Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), *Gross Domestic Product, 2023*

⁹² Donald Getz, *Event Studies: Theory, Research and Policy for Planned Events*, pp. 29–31

Case study: The National Festival of Polish Song in Opole

The National Festival of Polish Song in Opole has functioned for decades as an event of high symbolic and institutional significance, while at the same time having limited market potential in comparison with global mega-events. Its organization is based on cooperation between:

- the city of Opole,
- public television,
- state institutions responsible for cultural policy.

This festival is not dependent on maximizing advertising revenue or the sale of media rights in a market sense. Its durability results from institutional continuity and its role in reproducing national musical culture. It is a classic example of an event maintained by the state and local government as a public expenditure, because it is regarded as socially and culturally necessary⁹³.

Case Study: Łódź Summer Festival — A Municipal Event as an Investment in the City

Another variant of the same model is represented by Łódź Summer Festival. In 2025, the festival functioned as a free event organized by the city⁹⁴, whose main aim was not the sale of rights or tickets, but rather:

- to attract a mass audience,
- to generate intense media presence,
- to strengthen the image of the city as an attractive place to live in and visit.

An additional dimension of Łódź Summer Festival 2025 was its role as a tool for promoting the city on a nationwide scale. According to data communicated by the organizer and city authorities, the event generated very high media visibility, extending beyond the local cultural context. During the festival weekend, the name of the event was among the most frequently searched terms on Google Poland, ranking fourth nationwide⁹⁵, which indicates intense public interest and a strong presence in the information circulation.

An important element of this visibility was also its reach on social media. During the festival weekend alone, content published on the official city channels reached a total of approximately 73 million views, while the total reach of materials concerning the event — taking various media into account — was estimated at 31.6 million recipients⁹⁶. These data do not refer to the direct consumption of the event in the ticketing sense, but to the scale of media exposure, which in this model constitutes the key form of “return” on the public expenditure incurred.

The positive reception of the event was also visible on the part of the artists participating in the festival. In numerous statements, they emphasized both the scale of the audience and the high organizational level, technical facilities, and professional artistic support. For some performers, these were among the largest concerts of their careers to date⁹⁷, which strengthens the festival’s position as a significant point on the national map of music events and contributes to its long-term recognition.

⁹³ „TVP i Miasto Opole podpisały porozumienie na organizację 58. Krajowego Festiwalu Polskiej Piosenki”, TVP Information Centre, June 30, 2021

⁹⁴ City of Łódź Office, Łódź Summer Festival – Organizational Information, 2025

⁹⁵ Google Trends, Łódź Summer Festival, Poland, June 2025

⁹⁶ ŁÓDŹ.PL, „Rekord Łódź Summer Festival 2025. Prawie 500 tys. łodzian i turystów na Łódzkich Błoniach! [ZDJĘCIA]”, 30.07.2025

⁹⁷ ŁÓDŹ.PL, „Rekord Łódź Summer Festival 2025. Prawie 500 tys. łodzian i turystów na Łódzkich Błoniach! [ZDJĘCIA]”, 30.07.2025

From the perspective of the economics of culture, the estimated advertising equivalent generated by the event is particularly important, placed at nearly PLN 11 million. Although this indicator does not constitute actual financial revenue, it helps illustrate the scale of media value that the festival produced for the city. Thus, Łódź Summer Festival 2025 functions as an example of an event in which public expenditure is justified through long-term image-related and promotional benefits rather than through direct financial profitability.

Case study: Fryderyki and the Grammy Awards – Different Models of Financing Industry Events

The differences described earlier in the scale of media reception, the size of the audience market, and the scale of spectacle production translate directly into different models of financing this type of event. In some cases, these models are based primarily on mechanisms of market monetization of audience attention, while in others they function to a greater extent thanks to institutional support and the promotional character of the event.

In the case of the Fryderyki awards, the financing model is mixed and fits into the previously described European way of organizing cultural events, in which undertakings of this type function through cooperation between industry organizations, public institutions, and commercial partners. The gala is organized by the phonographic community gathered around the Polish Society of the Phonographic Industry and the Phonographic Academy⁹⁸, in cooperation with a public broadcaster as well as institutional partners and event sponsors⁹⁹.

In recent editions, the event has also received support from public funds, including funding from the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage¹⁰⁰, while the organization of the gala has been connected with the promotion of the host city, which fits into the model described above of using cultural events as tools of urban promotion and cultural policy. At the same time, commercial partners also participate in the financing of the event, as in the case of the 2025 edition, where one of the main partners was ORLEN¹⁰¹ (incidentally a State Treasury company).

The financing model of the Grammy Awards, by contrast, is based primarily on market mechanisms characteristic of the American media industry, where events of this type function as products of the attention economy, generating revenue through the sale of media rights, advertising, and corporate sponsorship. In this case, the event is designed primarily as a media product with a broad reception reach, and its functioning is subordinated to the logic of the advertising market and the value of the broadcast.

A comparison of the two events therefore shows that although the Fryderyki and the Grammys perform a similar symbolic function as industry awards, their models of financing and functioning reflect different systems of organizing the cultural market. In the American model, this type of event functions primarily as an element of the attention economy and as a media product of high market value, while in Poland, and more broadly in Europe, an awards gala more often remains a tool for the promotion of culture and the integration of the industry community, co-financed by public entities and institutional partners.

⁹⁸ ZPAV, *Fryderyk Festiwal i nagrody Akademii Fonograficznej, 2025*

⁹⁹ TVP Information Centre, *Fryderyki 2025 w TVP – relacja i transmisja gali, April 2025*

¹⁰⁰ Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, *Support Programmes for Cultural Events, 2024*

¹⁰¹ Wirtualne Media, *ORLEN partnerem Fryderyk Festiwal 2025, March 2025*

Conclusion

The comparison of public expenditure reveals a fundamental systemic difference:

- United States: a low level of public expenditure on culture, approximately 0.19% of GDP, and a strong emphasis on the market monetization of events,
- Europe and Poland: a higher level of public expenditure, approximately 1.2–1.3% of GDP, and the treatment of mass events as tools of cultural and urban policy.

4.2. Smaller Production Scale and Lower Budgets

When introducing the discussion of production scale and budgets for mass events in Poland and Europe, it is worth first noting the upward trend in the number of events being organized. Data from Statistics Poland indicate that in 2023 the number of mass events in Poland increased by more than 20% compared with the previous year¹⁰², particularly in the segment of artistic and entertainment events. This growth testifies to the high level of activity in the events sector and to the intensification of organizational efforts, but it does not imply a concentration of capital or an escalation of production and budgetary scale comparable to the American model.

In practice, this means that the market is developing quantitatively rather than in terms of scale. Instead of a few very large, highly financed events of nationwide or supranational character, the European and Polish markets produce an increasing number of medium-sized and smaller events that operate in parallel and compete for a limited pool of audiences, sponsors, and public funds. Such a structure encourages the dispersion of budgets and makes it difficult to concentrate them around individual mega-events.

A key factor explaining this situation is Europe's linguistic and cultural fragmentation. In contrast to the United States, where one dominant language and a shared media market make it possible to design events for a unified national audience of many millions, Europe consists of numerous national markets operating within different cultural circulations¹⁰³. Language barriers mean that the musical, narrative, and media message of events rarely achieves full intelligibility beyond the borders of the country in which a given event is organized. Even within popular music, which theoretically has the greatest transnational potential, the reception of artists and formats remains strongly rooted locally.

The consequence of Europe's linguistic and cultural fragmentation is the limited possibility of building mass, supranational mediated reception, which directly affects the audience structure of musical events. In practice, this means that even the largest festivals function primarily on the basis of audiences physically present at the event site.

A good example is Open'er Festival, the largest music event in Poland, which physically gathers around 110,000 to 140,000 participants over several days¹⁰⁴. This constitutes very high attendance in national terms, but remains limited to local spatial reception. At the same time, the scale of mediated reception of events of this type remains clearly smaller. Broadcasts of selected concerts carried out by Polish Television have reached audiences of several hundred thousand viewers for individual reports¹⁰⁵, without the character of a regular, multiplatform international

¹⁰² Statistics Poland, *Mass Events in 2023*, Warsaw, 2024

¹⁰³ European Commission, *Fragmentation of the single market for the on-line video-on-demand services (SMART 2012/0027)*, 2014

¹⁰⁴ Alter Art, „Dwudziesta edycja Open'era za nami! Dziękujemy!”, 2 July 2023;
Alter Art, „Open'er 2025 za nami! Dziękujemy!”, 8 July 2025

¹⁰⁵ Press, „Widownia koncertów Open'er Festivalu w TVP 1 dochodziła do 455 tys. osób”, 12 July 2025

circulation. Sample data indicated an average audience of approximately 455,000 viewers, with peak results reaching around 570,000 and a total reach of about 1.6 million recipients¹⁰⁶.

An important indicator of the festival's presence in the digital space is also provided by media and social media monitoring data, indicating a reach of approximately 15.6 million potential recipients and 3,300 mentions in the analyzed period¹⁰⁷. This scale remains significant in the context of the Polish market, yet it is many times smaller internationally than in the case of festivals designed as global events, where media circulation constitutes a central element of the event's functioning.

Similar mechanisms are visible in the case of industry events. The Fryderyki gala brings together artists operating primarily in the domestic market. The creators represent various musical genres, but:

- they function mainly within the Polish media circulation,
- they produce music primarily in Polish, and occasionally in English,
- their recognizability outside Poland remains limited.

This means that audience integration takes place within the national market rather than on a supranational level, which naturally limits the scale of the potential audience.

The Fryderyki gala also functions as a television event, but its media reception remains primarily domestic and reaches a scale many times smaller than analogous American events. The 2025 edition was watched by an average of around 900,000 viewers¹⁰⁸, with moments exceeding one million recipients, while online broadcasts on the public broadcaster's services reached around 38,000 views. Post-concert materials and fragments of performances function almost exclusively within the Polish media circulation and do not generate comparable international reach.

This means that although the event is designed for mediated reception, its actual scale of media impact remains limited to the domestic market, which directly translates into a moderate production scale and different models of event financing.

A similar difference is also visible in the case of sports broadcasts. In Polish broadcasts, the break in a match primarily serves a practical and organizational function. During this time, broadcasters focus on airing advertising blocks, studio analyses, and materials summarizing the first part of the match, while the stadium setting is usually limited to organizational announcements, sponsor contests, or music played through the venue's sound system.

There is no model, however, of a spectacular artistic setting functioning as a separate media event that would attract an additional audience to television screens. This follows directly from the scale of the media market and viewership of sporting events in Poland, which even in the case of the most important national team matches usually reach between approximately 8 and 15 million viewers. For example, the Poland–England match played in 2021 at the National Stadium was watched by an average of around 8.7 million recipients¹⁰⁹.

In social terms, the break is treated by viewers as a technical moment that does not enter into the proper experience of the sporting spectacle. Stadium audiences use this time to leave the stands or visit food and beverage points, while television viewers often step away from their screens or shift their attention to other activities.

¹⁰⁶ *Jastrząb Post*, *Znamy wyniki oglądalności Open'era w TVP*, July 2025

¹⁰⁷ *Techsetter*, *Letnie festiwale muzyczne w Polsce: emocje, wspomnienia i... zasięgi*, August 2025

¹⁰⁸ *TVP Information Centre*, *Prawie 1 mln widzów oglądało galę rozdania nagród muzycznych – Fryderyków*, April 2025

¹⁰⁹ *Wirtualnemedi.pl*, *8,7 mln widzów meczu Polska–Anglia w TVP. Rekord oglądalności reprezentacji*, September 2021

This situation resembles the model that existed in the United States before the transformation of the game break into an autonomous musical spectacle. The introduction of the Halftime Show changed this mechanism, making the break one of the culminating points of the event and an element that maintains audience attention throughout the entire broadcast.

As a result, musical events in Poland and Europe are designed primarily as “here and now” experiences, focused on the quality of production realized on site and the satisfaction of the physical audience. There is no mechanism that, in the American model, enables the escalation of budgets through the sale of media rights and access to hundreds of millions of mediated viewers¹¹⁰. Media coverage — most often limited to selected television broadcasts, online materials, and social media activity — primarily serves a promotional and image-building function, rather than constituting the main source of event monetization.

Against this background, it is worth pointing to an exception that proves the rule: the Eurovision Song Contest. Eurovision functions as one of the few European musical events whose foundation is mass mediated reception. The contest finals regularly gather more than 150–160 million viewers worldwide¹¹¹, which brings them close to the scale of American media mega-events. What is crucial, however, is that Eurovision is not a market venture in the classical sense. Its organization is based on cooperation between public broadcasters associated within the European Broadcasting Union, and a significant share of production costs is covered by public funds and broadcasters’ contributions, as described in detail in Section 4.1.

Eurovision therefore shows that achieving a large production scale in Europe is possible, but it requires institutional support from the public sector and is not based on the purely market logic of selling media rights. In this sense, it constitutes a systemic exception rather than a model that can be replicated by most music festivals.

In conclusion, the smaller production scale and lower budgets of mass events in Poland and Europe result from a combination of several structural factors: linguistic and cultural fragmentation, the limited number of physical audiences, the absence of mass mediated reception, and the fragmentation of the market into many parallel events. Europe is producing an increasing number of mass events, but these are events designed locally and nationally, without the possibility of concentrating capital and attention at a level comparable to American mega-events. It is precisely this market structure — rather than a lack of ambition or organizational competence — that defines the real limits of the scale and budgets of European mass events.

4.3. The Role of Public Television and the Structure of the Media

A key feature of the European model of mass events is the strong institutional role of public television. In European Union countries, public media are responsible for a significant share of the production, co-production, and broadcasting of mass events, both cultural and entertainment-oriented. According to data published by the European Broadcasting Union, around 78% of the revenue of public broadcasters in Europe comes from public funding, while only the remaining share is market-based¹¹². This revenue structure has a significant impact on programming and production strategies, making it possible to produce events whose existence does not depend on maximizing advertising revenue or the sale of media rights.

¹¹⁰ Donald Getz, *Event Studies: Theory, Research and Policy for Planned Events*, pp. 25

¹¹¹ European Broadcasting Union, „Eurovision Song Contest 2024 breaks new records...”, 23 May 2024

¹¹² European Broadcasting Union, *Funding of Public Service Media 2023*, EBU research report

Telewizja Polska — Funding Structure and the Importance of Public Funds

In the Polish context, this model is particularly visible in the case of Telewizja Polska. In 2023, the total value of public funds transferred to Telewizja Polska amounted to PLN 2.662 billion¹¹³. Of this amount, PLN 314 million consisted of actual revenue from the radio and television licence fee, while PLN 2.348 billion took the form of budgetary compensation for uncollected or lost licence-fee revenue, transferred in the form of Treasury securities.

This means that citizens' actual licence-fee payments accounted for only around 12% of the public funds received by TVP, while the clear majority of funding took the form of a direct state transfer. This mechanism confirms that the functioning of public television in Poland is not based on a market relationship between broadcaster and audience, but on public-policy decisions that compensate for the structural absence of universal licence-fee financing.

By contrast, Telewizja Polska's strictly market-based revenue from advertising and sponsorship in 2023 amounted to PLN 893.2 million¹¹⁴. These data show that even licence-fee and advertising revenues combined would not have been sufficient to cover the company's operating costs, which in 2023 amounted to approximately PLN 3.7 billion. Nevertheless, Telewizja Polska reported a positive financial result, closing the year with a net profit of around PLN 298 million, which was a direct effect of including budgetary compensation as revenue. In the same year, budgetary compensation accounted for approximately 66% of all key revenues of Telewizja Polska, clearly indicating the dominant role of the state as the actual guarantor of the broadcaster's activity.

This funding structure directly affects the market for mass events. Public television does not function solely as a distributor of content, but often acts as a co-organizer, co-producer, and stabilizer of events whose cultural and symbolic significance is regarded as more important than criteria of market profitability¹¹⁵. This is illustrated, for example, by the case study of the National Festival of Polish Song in Opole.

The Cultural and Public-Service Function of Public Media

An important element of the European media model is also the highly developed cultural and public-service function of public broadcasters¹¹⁶. In the case of Telewizja Polska, this is reflected, among other things, in the existence of specialized thematic channels such as TVP Kultura, TVP Historia, and TVP Nauka, which regularly cover and co-create cultural, scientific, and artistic events. These channels provide a permanent media base for festivals, concerts, anniversaries, and non-commercial initiatives.

The regional branches operating within the TVP3 structure also play a special role in this system. The regional character of these channels enables the continuous presence of public media in local cultural events, from city festivals and scientific initiatives to events of historical and identity-related character. In this way, public media not only broadcast events, but actively participate in their legitimization and reproduction in the public sphere.

¹¹³ Telewizja Polska S.A., *Report on the Use of Licence Fee Revenue and Public Funds for 2023*

¹¹⁴ Telewizja Polska S.A., *Financial Report of Telewizja Polska S.A. 2023 (operating results)*.

¹¹⁵ European Broadcasting Union, *Funding and advertising in public service media*

¹¹⁶ European Broadcasting Union, *Funding and advertising in public service media*

The Distinctiveness of the Media Structure in the United States

The funding structure of public media in the United States is fundamentally different from the European model. Federal support for public broadcasting is provided through two institutions: the Public Broadcasting Service and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting¹¹⁷. Their activity is limited to funding and coordinating non-commercial public stations, most often local or regional in character and frequently connected with universities, foundations, or local governments.

At the same time, public funds are not directed in any way to the dominant commercial television networks, such as ABC, CBS, NBCUniversal, CNN, or Fox¹¹⁸. These entities operate entirely on the basis of market mechanisms, financing their activity through advertising, the sale of media rights, operator fees, and subscription models¹¹⁹.

Importantly, even within the American public sector, the share of federal funding remains relatively low. Data indicate that funding from the CPB accounts on average for around 10–15% of the budgets of public stations¹²⁰, which means that they too depend to a significant extent on private donations, foundation grants, and support from local communities. As a result, the American public broadcasting sector has neither the financial scale nor the institutional capacity to serve as a systemic base for the market of mass events.

Consequently, the main media circulation of mass events in the United States is shaped almost exclusively by large private commercial networks, whose activity is subordinated to the logic of competition, advertising, and the maximization of viewership. This model differs significantly from the European one, in which public media — mostly financed from public funds — play a central role in the production and broadcasting of events of cultural, social, and symbolic significance.

Summary

The role of public television in Poland and Europe is one of the key factors distinguishing the European model of mass events from the American model. The dominance of public funding means that mass events function primarily as tools of cultural, symbolic, and identity-oriented policy, rather than as market products designed to maximize the value of media rights. At the same time, this structure limits the scale of commercialization and supports the continued existence of events of social significance, even when their economic profitability is limited. In the following subsections, these conclusions make it possible to perceive more deeply the impact of the limited role of advertisers, different standards of commercialization, and the specific production and reception conditions characteristic of the European market for mass events.

4.4. The Lesser Influence of Advertisers and Limited Commercialization

The conclusions from Sections 4.1–4.3 make it possible to situate the issue of advertisers within the broader institutional structure of the European market for mass events. Since a significant share of large cultural and media projects in Poland and Europe functions within a model in which public transfers and public broadcasters play an important role, the influence of advertising capital on the shape of events takes a different form than in the American model. This does not mean an absence of commercialization or sponsorship, but rather a limitation of their “agency” in designing the entire system, including its scale, production rhythm, and principles of monetization.

¹¹⁷ Corporation for Public Broadcasting, *Public Broadcasting Funding – How CPB Funds Public Media*, 2023

¹¹⁸ Congressional Research Service, *Public Broadcasting and the Federal Role*, Report RS22168, updated 2023

¹¹⁹ U.S. Federal Communications Commission, *The Economics of Broadcasting*, FCC Media Bureau, 2022

¹²⁰ Congressional Research Service, *Public Broadcasting and the Federal Role*, Report RS22168, updated 2023

In Polish conditions, sponsorship and advertising in culture are largely supplementary rather than dominant. This is confirmed by the findings of research conducted by the National Centre for Culture, specifically the TNS OBOP report *Sponsoring kultury*, in which a sample of 400 companies showed that in 2009 only 126 entities sponsored cultural projects, while at the same time indicating a relatively stable overall level of sponsorship since 2007, but without a clear increase in the share of culture. The report's summary also emphasized that culture is not the main area in which companies allocate sponsorship budgets. From the perspective of the mass-events market, this means that although sponsors may strengthen selected projects, they less often constitute a stable financial foundation for entire formats at the nationwide level.

This arrangement has direct consequences for the degree of commercialization of the events themselves. In the American model, discussed in Chapter 3, mega-events are designed as tools for maximizing the value of advertising and rights, because the scale of the mediated audience makes it possible to “sell attention” as a key economic resource. In Poland and Europe — as follows from the previous subsections — the opposite situation occurs more often: events are legitimized by public goals, such as mission, cultural policy, symbolic identity, and city promotion, while the advertising and sponsorship component performs the function of co-financing, closing the budget, or increasing visibility.

This is particularly clear in the case of television events. As shown in Section 4.3, public funds accounted in 2023 for approximately 66% of *Telewizja Polska*'s key revenues, while market-based revenues, meaning advertising and sponsorship, constituted a clearly smaller part of the broadcaster's budget. This financial arrangement indicates that advertisers — despite their significant importance — do not play the role of the sole or overriding guarantor of the broadcaster's functioning, and therefore do not comprehensively determine strategies for the production of mass events.

As a consequence, large televised concerts and event projects produced by broadcasters in Poland often fulfill image-related and programming functions: they build the recognizability of the channel, strengthen the relationship with the viewer, and provide “communal moments” in the schedule, which may translate into audience loyalty beyond the event itself. This means that a television event is sometimes treated as an investment in future viewership and the broadcaster's position, and therefore indirectly also in the advertising attractiveness of the schedule, but it is not designed primarily as a one-off “maximizer” of advertising time and rights sales on a scale comparable with the American market.

It should also be clarified that the limited influence of advertisers should not be understood as a “lack of market” or “lack of commercialization,” but as a different distribution of financial weight and a different institutional logic. Sponsorship and advertising genuinely co-create Polish mass events, but more often in a selective model — selected brands, selected formats, and often local goals — rather than as a mechanism that independently sustains the entire architecture of mega-events. In this sense, the European and Polish model is characterized by limited commercialization, understood not as the absence of market elements, but as the absence of the dominance of advertising logic over the public-institutional logic described in Sections 4.1–4.3.

4.5. Infrastructure and Production Competences

The technical advantage of the United States in the production of mass events does not result solely from access to more modern technologies, but above all from the long-term continuity of the market and the scale of investments that have accumulated for decades within the entertainment industry. The American market for mass events operates in a serial mode: stadiums, arenas, production companies, technical teams, directors, and broadcast crews remain in constant circulation among high-budget mega-projects¹²¹. Such repeatability makes it possible to systematically improve production competences, standardize processes, and rapidly implement new technical solutions.

¹²¹ *Live Nation Entertainment, Annual Report (Form 10-K), 2023*

In this model, infrastructure is not used occasionally, but is exploited almost continuously. Spectacle venues are designed with television broadcasts, sporting events, concerts, and globally oriented performances in mind. Production companies and technical teams operate under conditions of constant demand for high-scale productions, which encourages the accumulation of experience and the consolidation of know-how on a scale that is difficult to achieve in a fragmented market.

In Europe and Poland, technical infrastructure also exists and in many cases meets high quality standards, but its use is much less continuous. Large events are usually episodic, seasonal, or occasional, rather than embedded in the rhythm of regular mega-productions. As a consequence, production competences develop more slowly, because the market does not generate a sufficient number of very high-budget projects that could systematically consolidate and scale advanced technical solutions.

This situation is also compounded by a historical factor connected with the pace of development of media and phonographic technologies. Already at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the United States became the main center of the commercialization of phonography and sound recordings, which initiated a lasting connection between audio technology and the mass market. As Theodor W. Adorno describes in his analyses of the cultural industry¹²² the American model of music production developed from the beginning in close connection with market mechanisms, technological standardization, and mass distribution, which supported the rapid development of production and technical infrastructure.

At the same time, as Thomas Turino indicates, already in the first half of the twentieth century a model of popular music as a social practice coupled with mass media, recording, and broadcasting took shape in the United States, generating constant demand for the development of technical infrastructure. In Europe, this process unfolded more slowly and under more varied institutional conditions, while in Central and Eastern Europe it was additionally subject to systemic constraints, which delayed the full integration of spectacle technologies with the mass market.

Today, the significance of historical differences in production infrastructure is indirect and does not constitute a decisive factor. Access to modern production technologies, sound systems, video production, and stage solutions is now largely global. However, the historically shaped difference in market scale — as follows from Stanisław Trzciński's analyses of the organization and continuity of music production — means that in the United States these technologies are implemented faster and tested under conditions involving a much larger number of very large-scale productions. In Europe, their adaptation more often takes place within individual projects, without the effect of seriality that would allow for full cost amortization and the long-term improvement of production competences.

4.6. Audience Expectations, Attempts at Imitation, and Their Limitations

A sociological analysis of audience expectations toward musical events in Poland and Europe shows that socio-cultural factors also influence the limitations on the development of the “total show” formula. As the research and analyses of the music market conducted by Stanisław Trzciński demonstrate, music audiences do not constitute a homogeneous group, but are characterized by clear segmentation and by diverse forms of participation in musical culture, ranging from dispersed listening to more engaged forms of reception ¹²³. In the context of the European market, this means that the audience does not function as a unified mass of recipients whose needs could be fully satisfied by a single dominant, spectacular event format. In contrast to the American model, the audience market is characterized by lasting segmentation, and dominant practices of participation do not generate pressure toward the escalation of spectacula- rity.

¹²² Theodor W. Adorno, *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*, pp. 126–130

¹²³ Stanisław Trzciński, *Infected with Sound*, pp. 371–381, 393–394, 478–503

The starting point is the everyday mode of music consumption. Trzciński describes the dominance of dispersed and utilitarian listening¹²⁴, in which music functions as an element in the background of everyday activities, rather than as the object of an intense, concentrated experience. Under conditions of widespread access to content — through radio, streaming, and mobile devices — music loses the status of a scarce good, and its presence in social life undergoes a process of “de-eventization.” As a consequence, a large share of audiences does not feel the need to participate in concerts or events with a high degree of narrative and production complexity. For this segment of the audience, the musical event is not a natural extension of listening practices, and its absence does not generate a sense of loss.

Trzciński’s analyses also emphasize the importance of performance quality, repertory coherence, and the authenticity of the message as factors significant for audiences participating in musical culture. At the same time, part of the audience prefers events of a more selective and intimate character, allowing for closer contact with the performer and a more focused musical experience. In this context, elaborate spectacularity and an intense visual setting do not always constitute the primary source of an event’s value. For many participants, atmosphere, identification with the community of participants, and a sense of authenticity of experience prove to be more important.

Musical events always perform a social function, regardless of their scale or artistic character. Both large-scale festivals and smaller concerts or local events constitute spaces for building relationships, participating in a community, and symbolically identifying with a particular lifestyle, music scene, or cultural environment. The differences concern above all the form and scale of these experiences. In European and Polish conditions, events of a more local character occupy a particularly stable position — both geographically and socially — being more strongly rooted in specific cities, regions, and communities of participants.

The limitations of spectacularity under consideration do not apply only to the market for musical events, but are visible more broadly in the organization of public events in Poland and Europe, including political events. In Poland, election rallies usually have a more traditional character and less often use elaborate musical settings as a tool for the emotional mobilization of participants. Election meetings focus primarily on candidates’ speeches, the presence of local activists, and direct contact between politicians and voters, while musical elements — if they appear — most often serve as a technical background to the event rather than as an autonomous spectacular component.

The difference in relation to the United States results both from a different tradition of conducting political campaigns and from the lower degree of mediatization of the events themselves. Polish rallies less often function as spectacles designed for broad television or online reception, and more often as local meetings that mobilize the electorate through direct contact. As a result, emphasis is placed on programmatic communication and political credibility rather than on the spectacular character of the event. In the broader European context, political events more often retain an informational and organizational character, while social mobilization is based on the local dimension of meetings rather than on spectacular media production. This shows that the separation of the political sphere from the logic of the entertainment industry remains a durable feature of the European model of public culture.

Summary

The diversity of reception practices has direct consequences for the functioning of mass and televised events¹²⁵. In Polish and European realities, events broadcast by the media primarily perform a legitimizing and image-building function: they confirm the significance of performers, institutions, or cities, and fit into the television schedule and seasonal cycle, while usually not functioning as events of exceptional, breakthrough importance on the scale of the entire media year. Viewers’ expectations toward such events are relatively conservative and predictable: the

¹²⁴ Stanisław Trzciński, *Infected with Sound*, pp. 72

¹²⁵ Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, theses 25–26, pp. 20–21

recognizability of the format and the sense of shared viewing are important, while there is no pressure to create one-off, totalizing spectacles of maximum narrative intensity.

In the Polish and European cultural context, attempts to imitate the American model of spectacularity encounter structural limitations. Initiatives inspired by the aesthetics of the “big show” usually focus on the superficial elements of form — the scale of stage design, the dynamics of production, or the number of visual effects — without being rooted in actual audience practices. What is missing is both a unified audience and a media ritual that would give such events the status of a universally expected cultural moment. As a result, these projects often remain one-off or experimental in character and do not enter into a cycle of long-term reproduction.

The market does not systematically “reward” the escalation of spectacularity, and the absence of clear audience pressure means that costly spectacular formats do not obtain a stable economic or cultural justification. This tendency is visible not only in the sector of musical events, but more broadly in the organization of public events, including political ones, which in the European model more often retain an informational and local rather than spectacular character. As a result, the European and Polish model of mass events remains embedded in the logic of diversity, selectivity, and project-based organization, in which attempts to transplant the American narrative of spectacularity reveal their structural limits.

Expert Interviews

Agnieszka Rapacka, the Phonographic Academy and the Fryderyki Awards

Agnieszka Rapacka is the coordinator of the Phonographic Academy at ZPAV and has for many years been responsible for the course of the Phonographic Academy’s “Fryderyk” competition. Her perspective is important for this thesis because it makes it possible to view the Fryderyki not only as an awards gala, but also as an event functioning at the intersection of the music industry, institutions, media, market promotion, and the Polish model of cultural funding.

The conversation concerned above all the role of the Phonographic Academy and the Fryderyki awards in the Polish music market, the comparison between the Fryderyki and the Grammy Awards, the limitations resulting from the smaller scale of the Polish market, the economic and public-service function of the event, the significance of the spectacular setting, and cooperation with cities, public institutions, and sponsors. Particularly important were the themes showing that the Fryderyki can be treated as a Polish, institutional and industry-based variant of the culture of spectacle, adapted to conditions different from those of the American mega-events analyzed in this thesis.

The Fryderyki as an Industry Event and a Visible Form of Organizing the Music Market

Agnieszka Rapacka’s statements indicate that the Fryderyki perform the function of an industry event which, at the same time, becomes visible to a broader public. They are not merely a media gala or a one-off entertainment event, but a mechanism for organizing the music environment and indicating the phenomena regarded by the industry as significant. What is important is that the award is not created solely by the organizer, but by the music community itself, gathered around the Phonographic Academy.

Rapacka emphasized:

„Above all, what matters is that the community really does have an influence on this award.”

In this context, the Fryderyki may be treated as an event in which the music community publicly presents its own way of valuing music. The gala not only presents artists, but also reveals the mechanisms by which the industry functions: which phenomena are noticed, which areas of creativity require recognition, and how the Polish music market organizes itself.

The significance of the Fryderyki therefore lies not only in the presentation of statuettes, but also in the fact that industry mechanisms of evaluation and prestige are presented to the public in the form of an event. This is particularly important from the perspective of this thesis, because it shows that a musical event does not function as an isolated gala, but as part of a broader institutional, media-related, and industry-based arrangement. The audience can see not only performances and artists, but also a symbolic image of how the music community defines its own value.

The interview also raised the issue of changes in the way the Fryderyki function. Rapacka indicated that for some time the event had a more industry-oriented and closed character, whereas in recent years the organizers have sought to increase its external visibility again:

„In recent years, we have indeed tried to move outward; we began organizing large stadium events and engaging a broader public more actively on social media.”

This fragment relates well to the thesis of this work concerning the mediatization of musical events. The Fryderyki remain an industry event, but they increasingly also function as a media and promotional project, whose significance is built not only during the gala itself, but also through social media, the presence of artists, and communication with the audience.

The Fryderyki and the Grammy Awards: A Similar Function, a Different Market Scale

One of the most important elements of the interview was the comparison between the Fryderyki and the Grammy Awards. Rapacka indicated that the Grammys are a real point of reference for the Phonographic Academy, particularly when creating categories and nomination systems. This is therefore not only a matter of the general similarity between the two events as music awards galas, but also of specific organizational inspirations.

„When creating categories, the members of the Council constantly refer to the Grammys and try to use not only the categories themselves and the names of the categories, but also the systems for selecting nominations.”

This statement is significant because it shows that the American model of a musical event can function as a point of reference for Polish industry institutions. The Fryderyki adopt certain elements of thinking about a music award from the Grammy Awards, particularly with regard to the system of categories and nominations. At the same time, the interview shows that the similarity of symbolic function does not mean that the entire model can simply be transferred. The Polish market operates under different economic, media-related, and organizational conditions, and therefore the Fryderyki must adapt American inspirations to the local scale.

The Smaller Scale of the Polish Market as an Organizational Limitation

Rapacka indicated in detail that the smaller scale of the Polish market affects the way in which the Fryderyki categories are constructed. The Academy would like to recognize more genres, currents, and niche phenomena, but the number of submissions in particular areas often does not allow for the creation of too many separate categories.

„The American market is, however, much, much larger, and it works better there because they have something to divide.”

This statement relates directly to one of the main theses of this work: the limitations of the Polish model do not result merely from budget constraints or a lack of ambition on the part of organizers, but from the actual structure of the market. A smaller number of submissions, a smaller scale of phonographic production, and a more limited market mean that American solutions cannot be copied mechanically. Even if the Fryderyki are inspired by the Grammys, they must function under conditions in which a detailed mapping of all genres and subgenres is not always possible.

The example of the alternative music category shows this problem particularly clearly. In a single category, electronic music, guitar-based alternative music, and experimental alternative music may meet, because the Polish market is too small for each of these scenes to be consistently separated into distinct categories. Thus, the scale of the market affects not only the budget of the event, but also the very way in which music is symbolically ordered.

The Economic Logic of the Fryderyki: A Public-Service Project, Not a Purely Commercial One

One of the most important parts of the interview was the statement concerning the economic logic of the Fryderyki. Rapacka clearly indicated that the event is not organized primarily as a profit-oriented undertaking.

„This is something we do as part of our statutory activity, precisely of a promotional and educational kind, in support of the producers’ market.”

„It is absolutely not a project that brings us exceptional profits.”

„For us, it is rather a public-service project, definitely.”

This theme relates very strongly to the distinction between the American and the Polish-European model of culture. In this thesis, American musical events are analyzed as part of the attention market, connected with advertising, sponsorship, broadcasts, and media rights. In the case of the Fryderyki, the economic logic is different. The gala is not primarily a self-sufficient commercial product, but a tool for promoting the market, strengthening the industry environment, and building the prestige of Polish music.

This does not mean that the Fryderyki function outside the economy. They require funding, partnerships, and sponsors. The difference, however, lies in the fact that their meaning is not justified by direct profit, but by their promotional, educational, and industry-related function. In this sense, the Fryderyki clearly illustrate the Polish-European model of a musical event, in which the value of the event is not measured solely by profitability.

Sponsors, Public Funds, and Cooperation with Institutions

Rapacka’s statements indicate that the Fryderyki function within a mixed model: they combine their own resources, sponsors, cooperation with cities, and support from public institutions. The expert pointed out that obtaining sponsors for cultural events is difficult:

„This is a project for which we usually look for sponsors, and they are not easy to find, because in general it is not easy to find sponsors for culture.”

This statement corresponds well with the thesis of this work concerning the lesser influence of advertisers and limited commercialization in Poland and Europe. Musical events may seek sponsors, but they do not function within the same system of commercial profitability as American mega-events. For this reason, cities, public institutions, and ministerial funds become particularly important.

Rapacka gave specific examples of cooperation with cities:

„For example, we have organized the jazz gala together with the City of Warsaw for the second time already.”

„This year we organized the classical music gala with the City of Wrocław. The city became fantastically involved not only in the organization of the gala itself, but also in a great many promotional activities around it.”

She also mentioned promotional activities such as a “Fryderyk weekend,” concerts, or a “Fryderyk tram.” This shows that the Fryderyki can be used not only as an industry event, but also as a tool for city promotion and local cultural policy. Rapacka emphasized the two-sided character of this cooperation:

„It is a great help both for the Fryderyki and for the city.”

The interview also raised the issue of ministerial funds:

„As far as ministerial funds are concerned, this is also always good support, and it is worth making use of it.”

This theme shows that the Fryderyki fit into the Polish-European model of culture, in which musical events develop through cooperation between the industry, local governments, public institutions, and sponsors. It is not a purely commercial model, but a mixed one, based on combining an industry-oriented mission with various forms of organizational and financial support.

The Spectacularity of the Fryderyki under the Conditions of the Polish Market

Rapacka indicated that the organizers aim for the gala to become increasingly modern, impressive, and memorable. The Fryderyki draw on foreign inspirations, follow technological solutions, and seek to create special performances and artistic collaborations prepared specifically for the gala.

„We do not want to make boring galas; we want to create spectacles that will be remembered in some way.”

This fragment shows that the Fryderyki also fit into the logic of the culture of spectacle. They are not merely a technical ceremony for presenting statuettes, but an event designed with stage, media, and emotional attractiveness in mind. At the same time, this spectacularity has a different justification than in the American model. It does not primarily serve the maximization of advertising profit, but rather the promotion of Polish music, the increase of the market's visibility, and the building of the event's prestige.

Rapacka also drew attention to organizational limitations:

„We also have this problem that we announce the nominations quite late, which results from the entire edition cycle, and then there is relatively little time between the announcement of the nominations and the gala itself.”

This statement clearly shows that the spectacularity of an event does not depend solely on the ambitions of its organizers. It requires adequate time, budget, artist availability, infrastructure, production facilities, and market scale. In this sense, the Fryderyki confirm one of the main theses of this work: the American model cannot be transferred directly, because behind spectacularity stand specific organizational, economic, and media-related conditions.

Conclusions from the Interview

The interview with Agnieszka Rapacka presents the Fryderyki as a Polish, institutional and industry-based variant of the culture of spectacle. The event draws on the model of the Grammy Awards, but functions within a much smaller market, with a more limited scale of submissions, smaller budgets, more difficult access to sponsors, and a greater role played by public partnerships.

The conversation indicates that the Fryderyki are not a simple copy of the American gala, but an adaptation of a similar symbolic function to Polish economic, media-related, and institutional conditions. The gala organizes attention around music, strengthens the prestige of artists, and promotes the market, but it does not operate primarily according to the logic of profit. Its significance derives rather from its industry-oriented, promotional, and educational mission.

The most important conclusion from the interview is that the spectacularity of a musical event always depends on a specific context. The Fryderyki show that, in Poland, the culture of spectacle may take a more institutional, industry-based, and publicly supported form. The event may be spectacular, but at the same time it does not have to be subordinated to the commercial monetization of attention to the same extent as American mega-events.

Anna Ceynowa, ZPAV and the Polish Music Market Council

Anna Ceynowa is the Communications Director of ZPAV, President of the EMPOWER POLAND Foundation, and Chair of the Polish Music Market Council. Her experience includes both work in an industry organization representing producers of phonograms and videograms, and activity aimed at developing the Polish music market, promoting Polish music, the creative sectors, and legal and institutional solutions supporting creators. For this reason, her statements are particularly important for the analysis of the Polish music market as a system encompassing phonography, the concert sector, public institutions, local governments, legal regulations, audiences, and relations with the global market.

The conversation concerned above all the structure of the Polish music market, the presence of American capital, the role of major labels, independent entities and self-releasing artists, the dynamic growth of Polish phonography, the importance of local repertoire, export opportunities, the role of law and public institutions, and the specific character of the Polish concert sector. Particularly important was the indication that the Polish market is developing increasingly quickly and professionally, but does not function according to the same model as the American market.

The Structure of the Polish Music Market and the Presence of American Capital

One of the most important points of the interview was the organization of the structure of the Polish music market. Ceynowa indicated that it can be divided into three main areas: global major labels, independent entities, and self-releasing artists, who rely primarily on digital distribution. Major labels are of particular importance, however, because they represent the greatest capital, organizational resources, promotional capabilities, and connections with the global circulation of music.

„One area is represented by the so-called major companies, meaning global music labels, of course connected with American capital, which have a very strong presence in Poland.”

This fragment shows that the Polish music market is strongly connected with the global music industry, and particularly with American capital. The majors operating in Poland are not merely one of many elements of the market, but actors of especially great importance. They have capital, experience, promotional tools, international structures, and access to global standards of

operation. For this reason, their presence influences not only phonography itself, but also the way of thinking about artist promotion, distribution, streaming, and opportunities for foreign expansion.

Alongside the majors, there are local independent labels and artists who release music on their own. Self-releasing artists are an important sign of the digital transformation of the market, but their position is not comparable with the capabilities of the majors. The Polish market should therefore be understood as a mixed arrangement: on the one hand, local and independent forms of activity are present; on the other, global entities, often connected with American capital, retain a very strong position.

The Professionalization of the Market under the Influence of Global Companies

Ceynowa emphasized that the presence of major labels in Poland contributed to the professionalization of the Polish market. Global labels introduced organizational, promotional, and business standards already present in Western markets. In this sense, American capital influences not only the ownership of some entities, but also the way the entire market functions.

„The processes introduced by the major companies into Poland caused a certain part of the professionalization of the Polish market to become unified with how it looks globally, including in the United States”.

Professionalization here means above all the adoption of specific standards of work: ways of planning promotion, catalogue management, digital distribution, working with artists, and thinking about career development in a broader international context. This should not, however, be understood as the disappearance of locality. Global organizational models may function in parallel with local repertoire, the Polish language, and the expectations of domestic audiences.

In this sense, the Polish market is not a simple copy of the American market. Rather, it uses some of its tools and standards, but adapts them to its own conditions: smaller scale, a different language, a local audience, and a stronger participation of public institutions and local governments.

The Dynamic Growth of the Polish Market and Its Limited Global Scale

A second very important theme was the assessment of Poland's position in the global phonographic market. Ceynowa indicated that Poland is currently achieving record results and aspires to enter the top fifteen largest music markets in the world.

„We aspire to be among the strict top fifteen largest music markets in the world. We are currently in sixteenth place globally, which is an absolutely phenomenal record result in the history of the Polish phonographic market.”

This fragment shows that the Polish market is no longer marginal. It is developing dynamically, moving up in rankings, and becoming increasingly visible to foreign companies, digital platforms, and artists. At the same time, Ceynowa clearly emphasized that even such a high position does not mean a scale comparable with the largest markets.

„The share of our phonographic market in the value of the global market amounts to less than one percent”.

This is a very important distinction. Poland may be a growing and increasingly professional market, but it still remains a market limited by scale. Compared with the United States, Japan, or the United Kingdom, it does not have the same capital, media, or consumer base. Therefore, the development of the Polish market should be analyzed as a process of rapid growth, but not as entry into the same category in which the American music industry functions.

Locality as a Strength of the Polish Market

After discussing market growth, the issue of locality becomes particularly important. Ceynowa emphasized that one of the greatest strengths of the Polish market is local repertoire. Polish audiences are very willing to listen to Polish music, and local artists dominate the top streaming rankings.

„In our case, this local factor is very important. It is a major advantage.”

Later in the conversation, she clarified: „In streaming, we are reaching even close to eighty percent listenership of Polish, that is, local music.”

This fragment shows that locality is not a weakness of the Polish market, but one of the main mechanisms of its growth. Polish repertoire is strongly present at the top of streaming rankings and is increasingly marking its position in radio as well. Audiences identify with the language, lyrics, cultural context, and emotional closeness of the artists.

Ceynowa noted that, in terms of production, Polish music increasingly reaches a world-class level, while its strength remains locally rooted:

„The quality of our productions is at a world-class level. The lyrical layer, the layer of contextual references, is very much local, and this is the strength of our music and of European music in general.”

This is an important point in the analysis of differences between Poland and the United States. The Polish market can develop professionally and make use of international standards while at the same time preserving its own local identity. Locality does not stand in contradiction to professionalization; rather, it is the element that makes it possible to build a strong bond with domestic audiences.

The Potential for Exporting Polish Music

The interview also raised the issue of exporting Polish music. Ceynowa indicated that many young artists today show greater openness to functioning within international circulation. This results from the digital accessibility of music, global inspirations, streaming, and the possibility of cooperation with foreign entities.

Ceynowa spoke about young artists who, thanks to global access to music, are increasingly prepared for international circulation:

„This also creates greater openness to export for young artists who, from the very beginning, are, one might say, export-ready.”

However, caution is necessary. Polish music exports are not yet a phenomenon on a scale comparable with English-language or Spanish-language markets. Ceynowa pointed rather to potential than to an already achieved breakthrough. Majors and global companies may facilitate export through contacts, experience, and investment opportunities, but the mere presence of these companies is not enough to build a lasting international position for Polish artists.

Poland's entry into the top fifteen largest phonographic markets could, however, increase the interest of foreign entities in cooperation with Polish artists:

„I think this will also further strengthen export opportunities for Polish artists, if only through greater openness to international collaborations.”

Export is therefore an important direction of development, but it remains dependent on market scale, Poland's negotiating position, international collaborations, and the interest of global partners.

Law, the State, and Public Institutions

One of the strongest parts of the interview concerned law and the institutional environment of the market. Ceynowa repeatedly emphasized that the development of the music market depends not only on artists, labels, and audiences, but also on legal regulations, the protection of copyright, and public policy.

„Good law, first of all, does not get in the way — and ideally, it should help.”

The conversation included examples such as the DSM Directive, the private copying levy, regulations concerning artificial intelligence, and the social security of artists. This shows that, in the Polish and European model, the music market is not left solely to commercial mechanisms. Regulations are important because they are intended to create more stable conditions for creators, producers, and rights holders.

Ceynowa placed particular emphasis on the importance of copyright and related rights protection in Europe:

„Europe, in contrast to the United States, attaches greater importance to the protection of copyright and related rights — and I believe this is a significant advantage for us.”

This fragment clearly shows the difference from the American model. In the United States, greater importance is attached to the logic of the market, capital, technology, platforms, and commercial scale. The success of musical events and products is more often determined there by investment capacity, sponsorship, advertising, media rights, access to mass audiences, and the ability to monetize attention. In Europe, and also in Poland, the role of law, regulation, the protection of creators, and public mechanisms for supporting culture remains more important.

This does not mean that the Polish market is not a commercial market. Rather, it means that its development takes place within a different order: more regulated, more dependent on public institutions, and more oriented toward protecting the conditions under which creators operate. Ceynowa's statements clearly show that, for the Polish music market, law is not an addition, but one of the fundamental conditions of its stable development.

Local Governments and Free Events as a Pillar of the Polish Live Sector

The most important element of the interview concerning musical events was the role of local governments. Ceynowa indicated that, in Poland, a significant part of the concert sector is based on events financed by local governments, that is, concerts that are free of charge for audiences.

As she stated: „There is indeed an enormous role played here by local governments, which in fact are responsible for roughly half of the development of the concert sector”.

This fragment is crucial for the analysis of the Polish market for musical events. In Poland, the live sector is not based exclusively on ticketed concerts and private promoters. A very significant role is played by cities, municipalities, and local governments, which organize concerts, festivals, city days, and other events available to the public free of charge. The second important segment consists of ticketed events organized by private promoters. Ceynowa also mentioned a third, smaller segment of private and corporate events.

This division significantly distinguishes Poland from the American model. In the United States, the sector of musical events is more strongly connected with private capital, ticket sales, sponsorship, advertising, and media rights. In Poland, by contrast, a large part of the concert experience is created thanks to local governments and public funding.

Ceynowa also noted that local-government events are important for access to culture:

„It is a way of bringing music and culture to audiences even in the smallest towns”.

These events make it possible for people who would not necessarily buy tickets for a commercial concert to participate in culture. At the same time, they constitute an important area of work for artists, managers, production teams, stage technicians, event companies, gastronomy, hospitality, and transport. In this sense, a local-government concert is part of a broader local economic and social ecosystem.

Positive and Negative Effects of the Local-Government Model

Ceynowa did not describe the local-government model one-sidedly. On the one hand, she indicated that it is a very important pillar of the market and increases access to culture. On the other hand, she pointed out that free concerts may accustom audiences to the idea that one does not need to pay for music.

„On the one hand, we have a factor connected with spoiling the market, because if the audience is accustomed to concerts being available free of charge, it is less willing to pay for a concert.”

This tension is particularly important. The local-government model strengthens the market because it gives artists space to perform, provides audiences with access to culture, and allows local events to develop. At the same time, it may reduce the audience’s willingness to pay for concerts, especially if, over the years, recipients become accustomed to the free presence of major names at city events.

Ceynowa indicated that this is not a matter of simply rejecting the model. Local-government concerts perform too important a social and economic function. The issue is rather how this system should evolve: how to increase audiences’ respect for artists’ work, how to build a readiness to pay for culture at least symbolically, and how to improve production quality.

In this sense, the Polish local-government model has both strong advantages and clear risks. It increases access to culture, develops local communities, and drives the events economy, but at the same time it may consolidate the belief that music as a stage experience should be available without the recipient bearing the cost.

The Live Market, Competition among Events, and the Limited Audience Budget

Ceynowa pointed out that, after the pandemic, the Polish concert market rebuilt itself very quickly and began to develop dynamically. The number of festivals, arena concerts, and stadium concerts increased, and more and more Polish artists began to function in formats previously dominated mainly by foreign performers. On the one hand, this testifies to the growing strength of the Polish music market; on the other, however, it introduces a new kind of competition: events begin to compete not only for the audience’s attention, but also for its limited budget.

Ceynowa indicated that the problem lies in the fact that the audience member is not able to participate in everything. If more and more large, expensive events appear on the market, then audience spending begins to concentrate around a few of the largest concerts or festivals.

„The wallet of the average participant in music events in the country, which previously was spread across a larger number of smaller-scale events, is now being concentrated in a few stadium concerts or festivals”.

This statement shows an important tension within the Polish live market. The development of large events increases the prestige of the market and demonstrates its professionalization, but at the same time it may weaken smaller and medium-sized concerts. An audience member who allocates funds to a large festival or stadium concert often gives up several smaller club events. As a result, the situation of mid-level artists becomes particularly difficult — those who are no longer debutants, but who do not have a position allowing them to attract a mass audience on their own.

This problem is also connected with the Polish specificity of local-government concerts. Since a significant share of the public has access to free events organized by cities and municipalities, the willingness to regularly pay high prices for concerts may be limited. This does not mean that audiences do not want to participate in culture; on the contrary, interest in concerts is growing. The problem lies rather in the fact that, with the increasing number of events and the limited budget of audiences, selection becomes increasingly important: the viewer chooses a few of the largest or most prestigious events, while smaller concerts more often lose their audience.

In this sense, the development of the Polish live market is ambivalent. A greater number of large events testifies to the maturation of the market, but at the same time deepens competition between artists, promoters, and concert formats. Ceynowa draws attention precisely to this imbalance: the dynamic growth of the market does not automatically mean the stability of all its segments. Artists and organizers operating between the small local scene and the largest commercial events remain particularly exposed to risk.

Conclusions from the Interview

The interview with Anna Ceynowa presents the Polish music market as a dynamically growing system, but one developing under conditions different from those of the American market. Polish phonography is professionalizing, benefiting from the presence of global major companies and adopting some international standards of operation, but this does not mean a simple transfer of the American model. American capital has considerable significance in Poland, particularly through global labels, but it functions within an arrangement in which local labels, Polish repertoire, domestic audiences, and public support mechanisms also retain an important role.

A particularly important conclusion from the conversation is the distinction between market growth and market scale. Poland is achieving record results and aspires to enter the top fifteen largest phonographic markets in the world, but its share of the global market still remains below one percent. This means that the Polish market is becoming increasingly visible, but it still does not possess a capital, media, and consumer base comparable to that of the United States. In this sense, its development should be understood as a process of strengthening the local market, and not as entry into the same category in which the American music industry functions.

The conversation also emphasizes the importance of locality as one of the main strengths of Polish music. Ceynowa's statements show that Polish repertoire functions very strongly at the top of streaming rankings, and that its value results not only from production quality, but also from language, cultural context, and closeness to audiences. Locality is therefore not the opposite of professionalization, nor a limitation on development, but one of the factors building the position of the Polish market. Export opportunities exist, especially thanks to streaming, cooperation with global companies, and Poland's growing position, but at this stage they remain more a potential than a stable mechanism of global expansion.

An important element of the interview is also the role of law, the state, and public institutions. Ceynowa points out that the development of the music market requires an appropriate legal environment, the protection of copyright and related rights, regulation of new technologies, and solutions supporting artists' security. At this point, the difference between the Polish-European

and American models becomes particularly clear. In the United States, greater importance is attached to the logic of capital, technology, platforms, and commercial scale, whereas in Poland and Europe greater weight falls on regulations, public institutions, and the protection of the conditions in which creators operate.

The theme most directly related to the market for musical events is that of local governments and the live sector. The conversation indicates that, in Poland, a significant share of concerts and musical events develops thanks to cities, municipalities, and local governments. This model increases access to culture, makes contact with music possible also outside the largest urban centres, and creates an important area of work for artists and technical personnel. At the same time, it carries the risk of accustoming audiences to free events, which may limit their willingness to pay for ticketed concerts.

The interview also shows the ambivalence of the dynamic development of the live market. In Poland, more and more large festivals, arena concerts, and stadium concerts are appearing, which testifies to the growing strength of the market and to the increasing scale of musical events. At the same time, the audience's budget remains limited. If the public allocates funds to a few large, prestigious events, less money remains for smaller club concerts and mid-level artists. Combined with the strong presence of free concerts, this creates a tension between the development of spectacular formats and the stability of the broader musical ecosystem.

The conversation as a whole leads to the conclusion that the Polish music market is developing its own model of functioning: increasingly professional and connected with the global industry, yet still strongly local, public-institutional, and regulated. The American model remains an important point of reference through capital, global companies, production standards, and commercial scale, but it does not exhaust the way the market operates in Poland. In the Polish case, the culture of spectacle grows not only out of the monetization of attention and commercial competition for audiences, but also out of local repertoire, local governments, law, public access to culture, and the gradual maturation of the entire market.

Andrzej Olękwicz, ZPAV and an Analytical Perspective on the Music Market

Andrzej Olękwicz is a music market analyst at ZPAV. He has worked at the organization since March 2023, while previously he spent more than twenty years working in market research, including at Kantar Polska and TNS. As he himself emphasized, his perspective results above all from working with data, reports, sales charts, streaming, airplay, and analyses of the value of the phonographic market.

His statements are important for this thesis because they reveal the broader economic background of musical culture: the structure of the market, the position of global actors, the scale of Polish phonography, differences between Poland and the United States, and the ways in which audience attention is monetized. In contrast to more institutional or organizational interviews, Olękwicz's statements make it possible to look at musical culture through numbers, revenues, market shares, and the mechanisms through which platforms and media operate.

The Position of the Majors and American Capital in Poland

One of the most important themes of the interview was the position of the global major labels on the Polish market. Olękwicz indicated that the share of majors and local producers in Poland is distributed more or less evenly, but with a slight advantage on the side of global companies. These data refer to the phonographic market, that is, revenues from the exploitation of music recordings, and not to the entire music market, which also includes publishing or the concert sector.

Later in the conversation, Olękiewicz estimated that the majors' share may be around 55%, and in some areas even around 60%. He also indicated that the entire Polish phonographic market reaches a value of approximately 289 million dollars, meaning that it is approaching one billion złoty. If more than half of this value belongs to the majors, this points to a very strong position of global capital in Poland.

These data show that the Polish music market cannot be analyzed solely as a local market. Even if Polish artists and Polish repertoire are very popular, a significant part of revenues, distribution, and market organization remains connected with global companies. American and Western capital therefore influences not only the presence of foreign music, but also the way the market functions: streaming, promotion, catalogue management, marketing, and the development of artists' careers.

Poland as a Market Lagging Behind the United States

A second key theme of the interview was the comparison between Poland and the United States. Olękiewicz described Poland as a market that is growing rapidly, but still remains one stage behind the U.S.:

„We are roughly one developmental stage behind the United States.”

Poland is currently the sixteenth largest phonographic market in the world and, in recent years, has advanced from a position outside the top twenty. Olękiewicz indicated, however, that the most important difference between Poland and the United States does not lie solely in their position in the ranking, but in the stage of market development. According to the data he sent after the interview, the Polish phonographic market grew by 13.7% compared with 2024, whereas the American market increased by only 3.3%. This means that Poland is a dynamically developing market that is catching up, while the United States is a more mature, larger, and stabilizing market.

At the same time, the mere dynamics of growth do not yet mean a comparable scale. Olękiewicz pointed out that the phonographic market of the United States is around forty times larger than the Polish one, and that the disproportion is also visible per capita. In the U.S., the digital market alone generates around 31 dollars per inhabitant, whereas in Poland this figure is around 7 dollars. This shows that the American audience is much more strongly integrated into the paid circulation of music, primarily through subscriptions and other forms of regular monetization.

This clearly shows that Poland is a market with great potential, but still one that is monetized to a much lesser extent. The United States is a more mature and saturated market, in which a larger share of audiences has already been incorporated into paid models of music consumption. Poland is still increasing the number of listeners, developing streaming, and gradually accustoming audiences to paying for access to music.

Monetizing Audience Attention

The most important difference between Poland and the United States concerns the way in which listeners' attention is monetized. Olękiewicz explained that the United States is at a stage where the market is not so much acquiring new users as increasing revenue from each listener. Poland, by contrast, is still a growth market: it is acquiring new listeners, developing streaming, and only gradually building stronger mechanisms of paid music consumption.

„While the United States commercializes, extracting more from each listener, in our case we are still increasing the number of listeners.”

In the United States, subscription streaming, meaning paid premium models, plays a greater role: according to the data sent by Olękiewicz, it accounts for 55% of the U.S. phonographic market, compared with 48% in Poland. At the same time, free ad-supported video, primarily YouTube, retains a much more significant role in Poland: in the U.S., this segment generates around 7% of the market and is declining, whereas in Poland it accounts for around 19% and is still growing. Olękiewicz noted that Poland is “only now acquiring attention and monetizing that attention,” whereas in the U.S. the market is already more saturated.

This leads to an important conclusion for the thesis: the American model of musical culture is more strongly subordinated to the logic of commercializing the audience. The listener’s attention is transformed into revenue there more quickly and more effectively. In Poland, this process is underway, but it has not yet reached the same level. The Polish market is therefore both dynamic and delayed: it is growing quickly, but still generates significantly lower value per listener.

Olękiewicz also put it very simply: „As Poles, we spend relatively little on music.”

This sentence connects well with the broader problem discussed in the thesis: the Polish audience uses music intensively, but is not yet as strongly accustomed to paying regularly for music as the American audience. This applies both to subscriptions and to broader spending on musical culture.

Radio as a Channel of Influence for the Majors and Foreign Music

A particularly important element of the interview was the issue of radio. Olękiewicz indicated that radio shows a different structure of listenership than streaming. In streaming, Polish audiences very often choose local artists, whereas in airplay the position of the majors and foreign repertoire is more strongly visible.

„If we look at the top one hundred in airplay, meaning what radio stations play, we see that barely one third are Polish tracks; that is where the strength of the majors is visible.”

Later, he indicated that, on radio, around 60–70% of the weekly chart may consist of tracks by the majors and foreign repertoire. This is very important because it shows that global entities influence not only the structure of revenues, but also the everyday visibility of music. Radio, as a mass medium, still plays a role in shaping audience habits: what listeners hear regularly, what becomes familiar, and what functions as mainstream repertoire.

Olękiewicz noted, however, that the influence of radio does not automatically translate into streaming.

„Despite the fact that radio pumps this Western music, streaming reacts to it only moderately.”

This distinction is very significant. Radio more strongly reflects the power of the majors and foreign music, whereas streaming shows audiences’ choices more directly. It can therefore be said that global entities have greater control over traditional promotional channels, but they are not able to completely impose listeners’ tastes within the space of streaming.

Locality as a Counterweight to Global Dominance

Despite the strong position of the majors, Olękiewicz emphasized that Polish repertoire performs very well in streaming. According to his analysis, among the one thousand most-streamed tracks, the share of Polish entries was 53.2% in 2023, 51.8% in 2024, and 55.9% in 2025. Even more importantly, the share of Polish tracks in the weighted total number of streams was higher than the share of entries itself: 57.2% in 2023, 56.3% in 2024, and 60.3% in 2025.

This is an important counterpoint to the thesis about the strength of global entities. The Polish market uses global platforms, global tools, and distribution structures, but listeners very often choose local artists. This means that the American infrastructure of the music market does not eliminate locality. On the contrary, streaming may strengthen local repertoire, because it allows audiences to directly choose music that corresponds to their language, experience, and cultural context.

„The Polish catalogue, Polish artists, and the Polish music business are learning quickly and bravely defending themselves here against the flood.”

This statement clearly shows the tension present in the Polish market. On the one hand, it operates within the structure of the global industry, in which American and Western entities hold a strong position. On the other hand, Polish repertoire remains resistant to the full domination of foreign music. Locality is therefore not only a cultural element, but also an economic factor that influences streaming results and the structure of the market.

The Positive Influence of the Majors: Transfer of Know-How and Professionalization

Olękiewicz did not present the presence of the majors solely as a threat. His statements also included the theme of the positive influence of global companies on the professionalization of the Polish market. The majors transfer Western standards of production, marketing, working with artists, and catalogue management onto Polish ground.

„Many of these good practices, or this Western production quality, are being transferred to the Polish market.”

Another important mechanism is the rotation of employees between the majors and local labels. People working in global companies later move to independent entities, or vice versa, thanks to which knowledge, competences, and organizational standards circulate across the entire market. Olękiewicz indicated that local companies learn from the majors in the areas of production, marketing, and building the environment around an artist, while at the same time they are often able to react more quickly than large corporations.

This theme shows the ambivalent character of globalization in the music market. The majors have a capital and structural advantage, but their presence may also strengthen the local market through the transfer of competences. As a result, Polish labels, managers, producers, and artists learn how to function in a modern, competitive music system.

Conclusions from the Interview

The interview with Andrzej Olękiewicz presents the Polish music market as a dynamically developing market, but one that is still weaker and less monetized than the American market. Poland is moving up in rankings, increasing the number of listeners, and developing streaming, yet it still remains “one developmental stage behind the United States.” The greatest difference concerns the level of commercialization: in the U.S., audience attention is already being transformed into revenue more effectively, whereas in Poland this process is only still developing.

The conversation also confirms the significant position of the majors, that is, global entities connected with American capital. Their share of the Polish market is around one half, and in streaming it exceeds half of revenues. This means that the Polish music market cannot be analyzed solely as a local market. It is part of the global structure of the music industry, in which the largest companies influence distribution, promotion, the organization of work, and financial flows.

At the same time, Olękiewicz's statements show that the influence of global entities does not mean the complete subordination of the Polish market. Local repertoire functions very strongly in streaming, and Polish audiences willingly choose domestic artists. Radio remains a channel in which the presence of the majors and foreign music is more strongly visible, but streaming shows greater listener autonomy and the durability of local tastes.

The most important conclusion from the conversation is therefore that the Polish music market functions in a tension between global control and local resilience. American and Western entities have enormous capital, organizational, and promotional significance, but Polish music does not disappear from the market. On the contrary, thanks to streaming, local artists, and the industry's gradual learning process, Polish repertoire is becoming one of the main mechanisms of growth. In this sense, the interview with Olękiewicz develops the main thesis of this work: musical culture in Poland remains part of the global system of spectacle, but it does not operate according to the same principles as in the United States.

Karolina Rudzik, JoséSong Passion Development Foundation

Karolina Rudzik is the founder and president of the JoséSong Passion Development Foundation. The JoséSong Passion Development Foundation was established in September 2023, and Karolina Marta Rudzik serves as president of its management board. The foundation's objectives include, among others, organizing cultural and artistic projects, competitions, festivals, concerts, performances, educational activities, and initiatives aimed at integrating and activating children, young people, and adults.

The main and most recognizable brand of the JoséSong environment is the National Festival of Foreign-Language Song JoséSong, addressed to young people from upper-secondary schools. The festival is intended for participants aged 16–26 and is co-organized by the JoséSong Foundation, the Mayor of the Bielany District of the Capital City of Warsaw, and the Bielany Cultural Centre. Its strategic partners are the Faculty of Modern Languages at the University of Warsaw and the Faculty of Applied Linguistics at the University of Warsaw. The project was nominated for the Warsaw Cultural Education Award in 2018, became its laureate in 2019, and in 2020 received a statuette at the Bielany Culture Gala in the category of "Cultural Education."

The activities of Karolina Rudzik and the JoséSong Foundation focus not only on organizing musical events, but also on the development of young artists, strengthening their stage confidence, sense of agency, and emotional competences.

The JoséSong Festival as a Local Form of the Culture of Spectacle

Karolina Rudzik's statements make it possible to present JoséSong as an example of a local, social, and educational organization of musical culture. In contrast to the American mega-events analyzed in this thesis, the foundation's activity is not based primarily on commercial, advertising, or market logic. Its foundation remains locality, cooperation with public institutions, youth development, and the building of community around music.

The most important point of reference is the JoséSong Festival, because it is this event that most fully shows how a musical event can become not only a vocal competition, but also a space of emotions, integration, education, and social activation. The festival performs the function of a social event: it gathers an audience, organizes attention, evokes emotions, and allows participants and recipients to experience music as a communal practice. In this sense, JoséSong can be interpreted as a national initiative with strong local roots — organizationally and institutionally connected with the Bielany district of Warsaw, while at the same time extending beyond its immediate area thanks to participants arriving from different parts of Poland. The spectacularity of the event does not result from an enormous budget or global reach, but from the intensity of experience, as well as from its social, educational, and emotional impact.

JoséSong therefore does not constitute a negation of the logic of spectacle, but rather shows its local and social variant. The event still organizes attention, emotions, and community; however, its value does not result from global transmission, a multimillion audience, or the commercial monetization of attention, but from its educational, intergenerational, and local impact.

In the interview, the emotional function of music appeared particularly strongly. According to Rudzik, events organized around JoséSong generate real emotions: emotion, joy, excitement, stimulation, and a sense of shared experience. The reception of music depends on the repertoire, the listeners' personal experiences, their current disposition, and their relationship with the piece being performed. Music therefore affects both young performers and the audience. For the foundation's participants, a stage performance becomes a form of personal and emotional development, while for recipients the musical event becomes an opportunity to experience emotions together. At the same time, the festival fosters the creation of a more lasting community of vocalists and experts gathered around the Foundation, within which relationships, friendships, artistic collaborations, and new projects inspired by JoséSong's activities can develop.

An important element of the conversation was also the intergenerational dimension. JoséSong events attract not only young people, but also parents, grandparents, and grandchildren. Music therefore performs a function of connecting different generations. Shared participation in a concert or festival strengthens family and local bonds, creating a community based on direct contact, co-presence, and emotional experience.

Cooperation with local institutions also proved particularly important. Rudzik indicated that the foundation's events are organized in cooperation with public and local partners, such as the Bielany District Office, cultural centres, schools, universities, and local media. This support takes various forms: providing spaces, organizational assistance, promotional support, mutual media activities, partnerships, and cooperation based on mutual benefit. Local institutions are therefore not merely the background of the event, but one of the conditions of its existence.

Funding, Public Institutions, and the Local Model of Culture

One of the most important themes of the interview was the financing of culture. Karolina Rudzik indicated that public institutions, local governments, grants, and local partnerships are crucial for the foundation's activity. Without such support, organizing events would be very difficult, and in many cases impossible. Public entities are of particular importance, since access to other sources of funding, including external grants, is limited and highly uncertain.

These statements correspond well with the distinction described in this thesis between the American and the European model of organizing mass events. The American model is based to a greater extent on private capital, sponsors, advertisers, media rights, and the commercial monetization of attention. The Polish-European model more often requires the support of public institutions, local government, schools, cultural centres, and local media. The thesis has indicated that the smaller production scale and lower budgets of events in Poland and Europe result, among other factors, from market fragmentation, limited mass mediated reception, and the lack of capital concentration comparable to American mega-events.

In the case of JoséSong, the value of the event is not measured solely by profitability. The significance of the festival and of the foundation's activities results above all from their social, educational, and local impact. The success of the event means creating a space for the development of young people, strengthening the local community, activating residents, and showing that music can be a tool of education, integration, and emotional support.

Local and Public Media and the Visibility of the Event

The interview also raised the issue of local and public media. Rudzik indicated that media support from such entities is of great importance to the foundation. Local media help build the recognizability of the event, reach new audiences, and strengthen the foundation's image. The primary aim here, however, is not profit, but the expansion of the initiative's social impact.

This theme connects with the analysis of the role of public television and the media structure in Europe. The thesis indicated that one of the features of the European model of mass events is the strong role of public media, which are responsible for a significant share of the production, co-production, and broadcasting of cultural and entertainment events. The funding structure of public media means that they can produce events whose existence does not depend solely on the maximization of advertising revenue.

On a local scale, a similar mechanism is visible in the activity of JoséSong: public and local media strengthen the event because they support its social, educational, and promotional function. Their significance lies not only in publicizing the event, but also in making initiatives visible that do not necessarily have to be attractive from the perspective of major advertisers, but that possess social, educational, and local value. In this sense, local and public media can function as an element of the institutional base of culture, supplementing the limitations of the commercial market.

Rudzik's statements also show that a contemporary musical event exists not only in the physical location where the concert takes place. Media materials, reports, online promotion, and broadcasts become an important element of the foundation's recognizability. Rudzik pointed out that the broadcast of the most recent concert was important for the organizers because it made it possible to expand the audience and reach people who could not participate in the event on site. At the same time, the physically present audience remains the most important from the perspective of the direct experience of emotions, atmosphere, and the relationship between performer and recipient. Mediated reception therefore does not replace live participation, but expands the reach of the event and strengthens its recognizability.

Impact on the Life of the Local Community

Karolina Rudzik's statements also show that local musical events influence the way a district and city are perceived. In the case of JoséSong, Bielany is of particular importance, presented as a green, friendly, and attractive space for young people. Cultural events make it possible to promote the district, encourage young residents to use free or accessible cultural offerings, and strengthen their sense of belonging to the local community.

The foundation's activities therefore fit into a broader function of local culture: they not only organize free time, but also co-create the image of a place, activate residents, and show that the district can be a space of development, participation, and creativity. In this sense, JoséSong performs social, educational, promotional, and integrative functions. Locality is not a limitation in relation to the great spectacle, but a separate resource: it makes it possible to build direct relationships, strengthen participation, and create an event rooted in a specific community.

Locality, Independence, and the Example of Kayax

An important supplement to the interview was the issue of the Polish music market and the role of local, independent entities. In response to a question concerning the structure of the music market, including record labels, publishers, publishing, and management, Karolina Rudzik drew attention not so much to a quantitative comparison between the Polish and American markets, but to the qualitative dimension of the activity of specific entities. A particularly important example was the Kayax label, which Rudzik indicated as a model that clearly shows the value of a local, more authorial, and less mass-oriented approach to music.

Kayax presents itself as a company covering various areas of the music industry: management, promotion, marketing, PR, representation of creators, and record publishing. For years, Kayax has built its brand as a publisher and management agency supporting the careers of Polish artists. In this context, Rudzik's statement can be read as indicating an alternative to the largest global mechanisms of the music industry. In her view, the value of entities such as Kayax lies in creating music that is less mass-oriented, more niche, locally rooted, and at the same time well produced and professional.

This fragment broadens the understanding of locality present in the interview. Locality does not refer only to a district, city, or public institutions, but also to a mode of operating within the music industry. The example of Kayax makes it possible to indicate that professional music production does not have to be identified exclusively with global commercialization and mass scale. It may also mean supporting more authorial, niche, and culturally rooted forms of creativity. This does not mean rejecting the professionalization of the music market, but rather indicates that professionalism does not have to be equated solely with mass character and subordination to the global mechanisms of the cultural industry.

Conclusions from the Interview

The interview with Karolina Rudzik presents the JoséSong Passion Development Foundation as an example of a local culture of spectacle of a social, educational, and intergenerational character. The spectacle does not here take the form of a large, commercial show based on global reach, a multimillion audience, and the maximization of advertising value. Rather, it takes the form of a local event that, through music, organizes emotions, builds bonds, strengthens young performers, and activates the community.

The conversation indicates that music in JoséSong's activity performs several functions at once. It is a tool for the personal development of young artists, a way of building stage confidence, a form of emotional support, a space of intergenerational integration, and an element of promoting local culture. The musical event is therefore not limited to the performance itself, but becomes a social process embedded in relationships between performers, audiences, institutions, and place.

The example of JoséSong also shows the significance of the Polish-European institutional model. The foundation's activity depends on cooperation with local government, schools, cultural centres, local media, and public partners. The value of the event is measured not only economically, but also socially: through its impact on young people, the local community, cultural education, and access to culture.

The additional thread concerning Kayax makes it possible to expand the analysis to include the issue of local and independent actors in the music market. Rudzik's statement indicates that professional, well-produced music does not have to be created exclusively within the largest, mass structures of the music industry. Local or independent entities can play an important role in preserving authenticity, identity, and cultural diversity.

The entire interview leads to the conclusion that the model of the American mega-event does not exhaust the possible forms of the culture of spectacle. In Polish conditions, spectacularity may take a different form: more local, institutional, communal, and educational. JoséSong constitutes an example of an event that does not compete in scale with American mega-spectacles, but performs a similarly important social function — it organizes emotions, creates community, and gives music a meaning that goes beyond entertainment itself.

Sunil Iyengar, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the American Perspective on the Cultural Sector

Sunil Iyengar is the Director of the Office of Research & Analysis at the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency of the United States responsible for supporting the arts and culture. His perspective is particularly important for this thesis because it represents the American side and makes it possible to look at culture not only through individual musical events, but also through data, public policy, cultural participation, funding, and the relationship between art and the market.

In the interview, Iyengar repeatedly emphasized that the NEA is not a dominant institution in the American cultural system in the sense in which ministries of culture or strong public funding models function in many European countries. The NEA is a federal public agency, but its budget and scope of activity are relatively limited in relation to the entire American cultural sector, especially when compared with the enormous commercial sector. For this reason, his statements clearly show the specificity of the American model: the state supports culture, but it does not organize it centrally, nor is it its main source of funding.

Cultural Participation: The Dominance of Media and Technology

The first important theme of the interview concerned the ways in which Americans participate in culture. Iyengar pointed to a very significant tendency: today, the dominant way in which Americans come into contact with art and culture is through technology and digital media.

“One of the most popular ways for people to engage with any art form is through technology, through digital media.”

Later in the conversation, he clarified that this may include downloaded video, music streaming, and other forms of digital consumption of artistic content. According to him, around 80% of Americans engage in such activities, whereas a much lower percentage participate in live artistic events.

This theme is very important for the thesis because it shows that American culture functions to a large extent through media, screens, platforms, and digital distribution channels. The experience of culture is not limited to physical presence at an event, but increasingly takes place through technology. This fits well with the analysis of the culture of spectacle as a system for organizing audience attention through images, media, and easily accessible content.

Iyengar, however, does not reduce participation in culture solely to passive consumption. He pointed out that many Americans still actively create art: they play instruments, sing, draw, paint, or engage in other forms of artistic expression. This means that technology has changed the way culture is consumed especially strongly, but it has not completely replaced active participation and creativity.

The American Capacity to Create Events on a Mass Scale

The second key theme was the capacity of the United States to create events of enormous national and global reach, such as the Super Bowl halftime show, the Grammy Awards, or major festivals. Iyengar indicated that such events should be understood primarily as part of the private and commercial sector, rather than as the result of public funding for culture.

Referring to the Super Bowl, he said:

“You just mentioned the Super Bowl. It’s obviously a major, very well-funded activity, a lot of sponsors, a lot of commercials.”

This fragment clearly shows the basic difference between the American model and the Polish-European one. The largest American cultural and media events are created through the concentration of capital, sponsorship, advertising, media, private investment, and the enormous strength of the entertainment industry. Their scale results primarily not from state action, but from the capacities of the market.

Iyengar emphasized that the private sector operates at a completely different level of funding than public institutions. Mass events are part of the entertainment industry, which has powerful budgets, sponsors, and mechanisms for monetizing audience attention. In this sense, the American culture of spectacle is based on the ability to combine art, media, advertising, sport, television, stars, and audiences into a single event of enormous reach.

It is also worth noting that Iyengar mentioned the economics of musicians. He observed that many of the highest-grossing artists obtain a significant share of their income from touring.

“A lot of musicians who are top grossing musicians are getting most of their funding, most of their support through touring.”

This confirms the importance of the live sector in the American model. Concerts and tours are not merely an addition to phonography, but one of the main sources of income for the biggest artists. In the case of music stars, the live event therefore becomes part of a larger economic system: promotion, media, sales, sponsorship, tours, merchandise, and the building of the artist's global brand.

Public Funding of Culture in the United States: Important but Not Dominant

One of the most important parts of the interview concerned public funding of culture in the United States. Iyengar clearly emphasized that the NEA supports artistic projects across the country, but is not the main funder of American culture.

“We are not, like in many countries, the predominant funder of the arts.”

This sentence is crucial for comparison with Poland and Europe. In the American model, the federal state does not play the role of a central organizer of culture. The NEA supports projects, but it does not finance the entire functioning of institutions in the way that often occurs in European public models.

Iyengar explained that the NEA primarily funds specific artistic projects, rather than the ongoing operations of organizations.

“We don't provide operating support for arts organizations.”

This means that an organization does not receive money simply in order to maintain its activity, building, staff, or permanent presence in a city. It may, however, receive a grant for a specific project. Iyengar himself emphasized that this is a very important difference from many European models of cultural funding.

The matching-funds principle is also important. The NEA requires an organization to secure additional funds corresponding to the value of the grant.

“For every dollar we fund, the organization raise another dollar or have another dollar.”

This shows that even public funding in the United States is strongly connected with the logic of co-financing, local engagement, and an organization's ability to raise money from other sources. The state does not replace the market or local structures, but rather supplements the system.

Iyengar also indicated that 40% of NEA funding goes to state arts agencies. This is important because the American system of public support for culture is not exclusively federal. States, local communities, non-profit organizations, private foundations, and donors all play an important role. This model is therefore decentralized and multi-source, but it does not have as strong a public-institutional character as in Poland or in many European countries.

The Market as a Mechanism of Cultural Selection

The interview included a very important distinction between what the market chooses and what requires public support. Iyengar observed that, in the American system, the marketplace decides what “rises to the top” and becomes recognizable.

“On the one hand, the marketplace is determining what rises to the top and becomes known and The visibility of culture in the United States depends to a large extent on the market: on what attracts attention, generates revenue, gains sponsors, audiences, media coverage, and distribution platforms. The largest events and artists achieve scale because they are able to function within commercial circulation.

At the same time, Iyengar explained that public funding exists precisely in order to support those areas that the market itself will not serve:

“There’s certain art forms and experiences that the marketplace can’t or won’t go to.”

This is very significant. The NEA does not compete with the entertainment industry and does not try to finance an equivalent of the Super Bowl or the Grammy Awards. Its role is rather to fill gaps: to support communities that lack access to culture, non-profit organizations, arts education, local projects, and art forms that would not achieve financial viability in a purely market-based system.

In this sense, the interview confirms that the American model of culture is based on the strong dominance of the market, but is not entirely devoid of public mechanisms. The state acts rather where the market does not reach: in smaller communities, in education, in accessibility-oriented projects, and in social initiatives.

Access to Culture and the Geographical Role of the NEA

Iyengar emphasized that, despite its relatively small budget, the NEA performs an important geographical and social function. The agency supports projects across the United States, including in places that the commercial sector does not reach.

“The NEA, even though it’s a relatively small funder, it actually is much more geographically distributed.”

This fragment is important because it shows the social function of public funding in the United States. The market concentrates where there is an audience, money, infrastructure, and the possibility of profit. The NEA, by contrast, can support remote, local, and less commercially attractive communities. As a result, public funding does not so much create the largest spectacles as ensure more even access to culture.

Iyengar noted that, in some communities, without public support, what would be available would mainly be commercial culture or the most recognizable forms of entertainment present in the media. The NEA therefore helps broaden access to art beyond what the market can most easily distribute.

This clearly shows the difference between two levels of American culture. At the mass level, major events, the entertainment industry, media, and the market dominate. At the public level, the NEA supports projects that have social, educational, local, and accessibility-related significance, but are not necessarily spectacular in the media sense.

The Global Influence of American Culture

Another very important theme was the global position of American culture. Iyengar indicated that, from an economic perspective, the United States exports far more artistic products and activities than it imports.

“We export far more than we import in the arts.”

He also indicated that this means a trade surplus in the area of arts and culture. Later in the conversation, he clarified that, in the export of arts-related activities, products, and goods, the United States achieves a surplus of around one billion dollars.

This fragment directly supports one of the main theses of the work. The United States not only creates culture for its own market, but exports it globally. American cultural products, media formats, music, film, events, genres, and artistic brands influence other markets. This makes the American model of the culture of spectacle a globally influential model.

Iyengar also drew attention to the historical dimension of this expansion. He mentioned the Cold War, cultural diplomacy, and the use of art as a tool for promoting democratic values. He noted that the Department of State still conducts artistic exchanges and promotes American art abroad.

In this way, American culture functions simultaneously as a sector of the economy, a tool of soft power, and a form of symbolic influence. It is not only a matter of selling cultural products, but also of exporting lifestyles, values, formats, and ways of participating in culture.

W ten sposób amerykańska kultura działa jednocześnie jako sektor gospodarki, narzędzie miękkiej siły i forma symbolicznego wpływu. Nie chodzi wyłącznie o sprzedaż produktów kultury, ale także o eksport stylów życia, wartości, formatów i sposobów uczestnictwa w kulturze.

Music, Sport, Politics, and the Organization of Collective Emotions

The final important theme concerned the role of art in organizing community, attention, and public emotions. The question referred to the presence of music in sport, politics, ceremonies, galas, festivals, and civic holidays. Iyengar pointed to several phenomena that fit well within this problem.

First, he spoke about art as an element of social planning, community development, and cross-sectoral activities. Art may be present in urban planning, health, education, local planning, or the economic development of communities. Second, he pointed to research showing a correlation between participation in the arts and civic engagement.

“We’ve seen a lot of correlations through research of arts and civic engagement.”

This is important because it shows that, in the United States, art is understood not only as entertainment, but also as an element of community-building, creativity, civic activity, and the solving of social problems. Iyengar noted that art may be used not only to communicate messages or evoke emotions, but also as a form of creative problem-solving within communities.

In the context of this thesis, this can be read as a supplement to the analysis of the culture of spectacle. The American system does indeed have an enormous capacity to organize mass attention through sporting, media, and entertainment events. At the same time, at the level of public policy, art is also described as a tool of participation, civic engagement, and community development.

Conclusions from the Interview

The interview with Sunil Iyengar is particularly important because it provides an American systemic perspective. It shows that the cultural sector in the United States functions within a model in which the market, media, technology, sponsors, the private sector, and the entertainment industry play an enormous role. The largest events, such as the Super Bowl halftime show, the Grammy Awards, or major concert tours, are not primarily the result of public funding, but of the market's ability to concentrate capital, attention, and audiences.

At the same time, the interview shows that public funding of culture in the U.S. exists, but performs a different function than in Poland and Europe. The NEA is not the dominant funder of culture and does not provide organizations with permanent operating support. It supports specific projects, requires matching funds, and directs a significant share of its resources to state arts agencies. Public support serves above all to fill the gaps left by the market: increasing access to culture, supporting less privileged communities, arts education, and local projects.

The most important difference from the Polish-European model therefore lies in the proportion between the market and public institutions. In Poland and Europe, public institutions, local governments, grants, and public media more often co-create cultural events and provide them with organizational support. In the United States, the largest cultural scale emerges primarily through the commercial sector: sponsors, advertising, private capital, concert tours, media, and global platforms.

Iyengar's statements also confirm the global character of the American model. The United States exports more culture than it imports, and its art, music, media, and event formats have international significance. American culture therefore functions not only as entertainment, but also as an element of the economy, diplomacy, and soft power.

The conversation as a whole makes it possible to better understand why the American culture of spectacle reaches such a large scale. It results from the combination of a wealthy private sector, strong media, technology, sponsorship, the entertainment industry, and the capacity for the global distribution of content. The state is not the main producer of spectacle here, but rather an institution that supplements the market where the market itself does not provide access, diversity, and the social function of culture.

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to answer the research question of why the model of mega-events characteristic of the United States does not find a full equivalent in Poland and Europe. This aim was pursued by explaining how musical mega-events function simultaneously as social experiences and as elements of an integrated economic system. The analysis conducted — encompassing sociological, media-related, and economic perspectives — makes it possible to formulate a clear conclusion: these differences do not result from the level of market development, organizational competences, or access to technology, but from different structural conditions that determine the functioning of culture, media, and mass events in both systems.

In Chapters 1 and 2, it was demonstrated that a musical mega-event cannot be understood solely as a concert or artistic spectacle. Drawing on Thomas Turino's concept, it was indicated that music is a social practice capable of generating intense affective experiences, a sense of community, and the integration of participants. At the same time, by referring to Guy Debord's theory, it was shown that contemporary musical events function as part of the society of the spectacle, in which experience is mediated by media and transformed into a cultural product. Donald Getz's perspective, in turn, made it possible to understand the event as a "planned event" — a project in which every element, from stage design and dramaturgy to transmission, is subordinated to a specific production and communication logic.

Chapter 3 developed this analysis by shifting it to the level of the economics of culture and the market for mass events in the United States. It was shown that the cultural sector there carries measurable economic weight, accounting for approximately 4.2% of GDP, or around USD 1.17 trillion, while the recorded music market — worth USD 17.7 billion in 2024 — functions as a central node in the global circulation of musical content. The key conclusion of this part of the thesis is that contemporary mega-events in the United States are designed primarily as media products whose value is created not through the mere presence of the physical audience, but through the scale of mediated reception.

This phenomenon was illustrated in detail through examples such as the Super Bowl, the Grammy Awards, and the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival. The analysis of data showed that in the case of the Super Bowl, the physical audience constitutes only a marginal share of the total audience, approximately 0.05%, while the crucial factor is the broadcast audience exceeding 120 million viewers. Similarly, in the cases of the Grammy Awards and Coachella, the fundamental economic value of the event is generated within global media circulation, including broadcasts, streaming, and the secondary distribution of content online.

In this context, the mechanism of attention monetization, discussed in Section 3.3, is of particular importance. It was demonstrated that the economic value of mega-events is generated by transforming viewership into revenue from advertising, sponsorship, and the sale of media rights. The example of the Super Bowl shows that the concentration of mass attention makes it possible to achieve record advertising rates and to build the long-term value of the entire media ecosystem, whose foundation consists of multi-year broadcasting-rights contracts. In this model, the musical event — including the Halftime Show — performs not only an artistic function, but above all an economic one, stabilizing viewership and increasing the value of the entire broadcast.

Chapter 4, which constitutes the main comparative part of the thesis, makes it possible to answer the central research question concerning the cultural, economic, and media-related factors influencing the emergence of large-scale musical events in the United States and in Poland. Through the analysis of the European and Polish model, it first demonstrated a fundamental difference in the structure of cultural funding. In contrast to the United States, where public expenditure on culture amounts to approximately 0.19% of GDP, in the European Union and Poland it reaches approximately 1.2% and 1.3% of GDP, respectively. This means that in Europe, culture functions to a large extent as an area of public expenditure, rather than as a sector generating revenue on the basis of market mechanisms.

The consequence of this difference is a different logic in the functioning of mass events. As shown through the examples of the National Festival of Polish Song in Opole, Łódź Summer Festival, and the Fryderyki gala, these events primarily perform institutional, cultural, and promotional functions. Their organization is based on cooperation between local governments, public institutions, and public media, and their continuity does not depend on maximizing advertising revenue or selling media rights. In contrast to the American model, in which an event must "earn money," the European model allows it to function as a public cost justified by cultural and social values.

The second key factor limiting the development of mega-events in Europe is linguistic and cultural fragmentation. Unlike the unified American market, Europe consists of many national markets, which makes it difficult to build mass, supranational mediated reception. As shown in Section 4.2, even the largest events — such as Open'er Festival — are based mainly on physical audiences, while their media reach remains limited to the domestic market. The inability to concentrate

attention at a level comparable to the United States directly translates into smaller budgets, lower production scale, and limited opportunities for monetization.

The structure of the media system also plays an important role. In Europe, and especially in Poland, public broadcasters occupy a dominant position in the sphere of cultural events, and their activity is financed to a large extent from public funds. As demonstrated through the example of Telewizja Polska, public funds constitute the majority of the broadcaster's budget, which means that its activity is not fully dependent on the advertising market. Consequently, mass events produced by public media fulfill a public-service and cultural function, rather than an exclusively commercial one. This is a fundamental difference from the American system, which is dominated by private media networks operating under conditions of intense competition for viewers' attention.

The analysis conducted in Section 4.6 supplements this picture with the perspective of audiences. It was shown that European audiences are strongly differentiated and segmented, while dominant practices of music consumption — often dispersed and utilitarian in character — do not generate pressure for the development of spectacular, high-budget event formats. In European and Polish conditions, participation in musical events often centers around more local, communal, and intimate forms, in which atmosphere, accessibility, and the possibility of direct participation in a shared musical experience play an important role. Elaborate spectacular settings and large-scale production are not always the primary factors determining the value of an event for participants. As a result, demand for “total show” formats remains more limited than in the American model, which also weakens the economic incentives to produce large-scale musical spectacles.

The expert interviews conducted confirmed the above findings and made it possible to refine them from the perspective of practitioners in the music market and cultural institutions. Agnieszka Rapacka's statements show that Polish industry events, such as the Fryderyki awards, may refer to American models, especially the Grammy Awards, but they do not constitute their simple copy. Rather, they are a local adaptation of a similar symbolic function, adjusted to a smaller market scale, a different financing model, and the greater importance of an industry-related, promotional, and educational mission. A similar conclusion follows from the interviews with Anna Ceynowa and Andrzej Olękiewicz, who indicate that the Polish music market is dynamically professionalizing, developing streaming, the concert sector, and cooperation with global entities, yet it remains less monetized than the American market and more strongly dependent on regulations, public institutions, local governments, and local audiences. The interview with Karolina Rudzik additionally shows that, under Polish conditions, a musical event may primarily perform a social, educational, and communal function, rather than an exclusively commercial one. In turn, the conversation with Sunil Iyengar confirms that in the United States the greatest scale of the culture of spectacle emerges primarily thanks to the private sector, media, sponsorship, technology, and the global distribution of content, while public funding plays a rather supplementary role. Taken together, the interviews therefore confirm the main thesis of this work: the difference between the American and the Polish-European model does not lie solely in the size of budgets, but in a different logic of organizing culture — in the United States, one that is more market-based, media-driven, and commercial; and in Poland and Europe, one that is more institutional, local, regulated, and socially rooted.

The comparison of all the analyzed factors leads to a clear conclusion that answers the research question: the model of mega-events characteristic of the United States is the product of a specific configuration of structural conditions — a unified media market, a high concentration of attention, the dominance of market mechanisms, and the integration of the music and media industries — which are not present in Europe and Poland. Consequently, the European model of mass events takes a different form, based on public funding, market fragmentation, a smaller scale of mediated reception, and diverse practices of participation.

The final conclusion of the thesis is therefore that musical mega-events in the American model do not constitute a universal pattern for the development of the cultural market, but are the result of a specific economic and media configuration. In European conditions, mass events perform different functions — cultural, social, and institutional — and their value cannot be reduced solely to their ability to generate revenue, but also includes the reproduction of identity, social integration, and the promotion of cities and regions. Thus, the differences between the analyzed models should not be interpreted in terms of deficiency or delay, but as an expression of different logics of organizing culture in the contemporary economy.

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