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Why does a creative city need its local music? A study of the contemporary Wrocław jazz scene

ABSTRACT: The aim of the article is to look at serious musical leisure activities in selected places in Wrocław, in order to explain their significant contribution to making the capital of Lower Silesia a creative city. Taking the perspective of research on music scenes and leisure studies, the author tries to demonstrate that the music scene in Wrocław, although it didn't develop its original sound, functions in a very effective way, providing a space for personal development, shaping the identity of individuals and the entire city. The discussed places not only serve as a physical space for a performance but primarily are communities based on internal and external cooperation. They are real "meeting places," as the promotional slogan of Wrocław says, for audiences and performers, amateurs, and professionals alike. The article is based on research on the Wrocław music scene conducted since 2019. Live performances that took place before the COVID-19 pandemic and between subsequent lockdowns were taken into account.

KEYWORDS: Music scene, popular music, creative class, cultural space, place

Introduction

It may be trivial to say that the city needs its music. Beginning from Ruth Finnegan's research on "musical worlds" in the early nineteen eighties (Finnegan, 1989), researchers representing many disciplines, from musicology to economics, put local musical practices in the light of various perspectives, reaching far beyond physical space of local venues. The history of popular music provides clear evidence that local and global were and are in mutual relation, crucial for development of new genres, rise of new music stars and advancements in technologies of production and mediation of sound. The aim of my paper is not to reinvent the wheel, but to expand and combine perspectives, which are, in my humble opinion, not present enough in research on local music scenes in Poland. Soundscape studies, leisure studies and the creative class theory complement each other surprisingly well in the context of local music. I will try to demonstrate it on the example of a city in Central Europe, which has neither developed

its sound nor is the largest in Poland, but which contrary to appearances is an excellent field for research into music, soundscape, and creativity.

Sources of city's creativity

What is a creative city then? The term was introduced and widely discussed by Richard Florida (Florida, 2010), but due to the complexity of the issue, let me simplify it a bit. A traditional, "non-creative" city must consist of work opportunities, availability of accommodation and allow people to make strong, family-like ties. But knowledge and creativity have become new sources of wealth creation and economic growth, replacing manual labour and natural resources. Hence the development of industries such as IT or new technologies that require extensive knowledge, problem solving and a constant flow of innovative ideas. Traditional, strong family-like relationships have given way to casual acquaintances, social initiatives, and the creation of new values. The most important features of the city include:

- deep availability of many job offers,
- diversity (the presence of ethnic, national, sexual minorities etc.),
- authenticity (the presence of historical buildings, uniqueness of the surroundings etc.),
- identity (identification with the cultural spaces of the city, not only with the company),
- lifestyle and social interactions (access to places where you can spend time together, e.g. cafes, clubs and access to places with appropriate entertainment). (Kardas, 2012, pp. 29–31).

I will focus on the last two features, as they play a significant role in the context of music in the city.

Citizens of a creative city want to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the diverse labour market on the one hand and the attractions of the urban lifestyle on the other. They are not just looking for a job, but a place where they could develop their careers and live in a creative environment. In the world of the creative class "traditional" places like theatre, opera, or philharmonic are expected, but they are not enough (Brabazon, 2012, p. 54). The music industry improves the lifestyle and leisure time of the creative class, so its representatives gather and keep their innovations. This is confirmed by the research of Anna Kopel, during which the respondents indicated that what counts is a large number of active young people, easy access to a variety of leisure activities, a vibrant local music scene, a wide range of nightlife offers, including options not related to alcohol consumption (Kopel, 2007, pp. 52–53).

Free time is present in "traditional" life, but the lifestyle in a creative city requires leisure, which is not only the gap left after working hours and family duties. It is understood as the entirety of activities to which people devote themselves

voluntarily to rest, entertainment, developing interests and social participation (Pięta, 2004, p. 11). It is also a space of freedom, emphasizing individuality or belonging to certain groups. It is essential in keeping the private satisfaction of the residents. For young people it has the value of creating and manifesting themselves. Creating music has always been an important part of leisure activities over the years and in different cultures, a phenomenon to which Max Kaplan, one of the pioneers of research in this field, drew attention already in the 1950s (Kaplan, 1997). Leisure became an increasingly important and significant element of people's lives, and music was placed at its centre. Local live music in particular should be considered as a critical component of leisure as it is actively involved in creating the authenticity of the city, its identity and the identity of individuals.

Music making as serious leisure

Serious leisure, in contrast to casual leisure, requires some commitment but brings lasting benefits and is not just "pleasant" basic social interactions and behaviours related to self-satisfaction. Amateur musicians in the beginning are not motivated by financial gains or the need to earn a living, although it can be appealing. Music becomes a key element of their identity; they invest a lot of time and energy in it. Amateurs are looking for validation, they seek recognition as members of the community such as a music scene (Hallam, Creech, 2017, pp. 32–35).

The music scene is seen as an alternate term for the musical community, emphasizing the role of music in everyday life, the ideology of ties expressed through music, generating a shared sense of belonging (Kaufman Shelemay, 2011, pp. 363–364). This scene may also be considered as a type of acoustic community – a human community inhabiting a certain space and concentrated around the dominant sound in this space. This sound determines the nature of the community, its needs, and preferences, and regulates its activities. Acoustic information plays a positive role in the life of the community, and its members are often linked by sound sentiment – pleasant sound associations as a result of certain stereotypes or memories (Schafer, 1977, p. 2015; Truax, 1984, p. 58).

Scenes are created by cooperating people, using the possibilities given to them in a specific place and time. Music functions as a form of entertainment and aesthetic satisfaction, a sphere of communication and symbolic representation, a tool for validating social institutions and ritual practices. They consist in an intense, direct interaction between the musician and receptive audiences, shared enthusiasm for specific music and the lifestyle associated with it (Bennett, Peterson, 2004, pp. 1–3). The local music scene is "driven" by locally organized events, mainly concerts, and is reinforced by constant communication and exchange of opinions between its members.

Local scenes are made up of "anchors" or stabilizing institutions such as performance venues, specialized music stores, rehearsal rooms and recording studios, and even labels focused on local performers. These micro-organizational practices bind members of the musical community (Brabazon, 2012, p. 56). For

musicians, it is a platform for acquiring a profession and acquiring the skills of functioning inside the stage, especially contact with the audience. As a result, a city may develop its sound through the particularly effective use of these tools. However, networks of musical infrastructure and audience exist in many places, which are not unique in terms of sound, but are internally diverse. People make music inside the community also without making a new genre, but learn from each other by sharing salaries and premises, musicians, and songs, not as a subculture, but as people who like the same music. Healthy local music scenes are not based on competition, but on cooperation and celebration (Connell, Gibson, 2003, pp. 65–66).

Man – place – city

A special kind of public spaces are cultural spaces which are “islands of festivity”, an accumulation of institutions. Most of all they gather symbolic practices of urban communities, are functionally defined, and are the subject of interaction between material, aesthetic and symbolic values and the community (Rewers, 2014, pp. 26–27). Space is also sonic, which means that sound can organize it, let us recognize it and remember it. The basis of the soundscape is undoubtedly event-related, it means a certain unpredictability, dynamism, which corresponds to the dynamic nature of the city itself (Tańczuk, 2015, p. 19). As we know from performance studies – no event is ever the same.

The main component of spaces are places. A place is a focal point of human experience, identity, memory, and desire, which can be treated as a home, a known and safe space (Dziuban, 2014, pp. 172–173). A city may consist of numerous places which are the result of many factors influencing “who, where and what”. The combination of music with specific places stabilizes them as traditions and true aspects of local cultures, places it in space. They gain their “aura”, as Walter Benjamin would put it, an atmosphere that can go out of the place, spread out. It affects the individual, colours their perception, arises as a result of mutual interactions between community members (Fischer-Lichte, 2008, pp. 186–187). The overall atmosphere is also influenced by the sonic atmosphere of the place – its sonic specificity and stability (Losiak, 2008, p. 261). Music actively participates in creating and emphasizing the atmosphere of the place, it is even expected there and has become a permanent part of the city soundscape.

In music scenes the role of places is crucial because music and space shape each other. Music is created and heard in certain physical spaces. Incubators and archives of popular music are clubs and pubs. They facilitate the performance of music, provide the ground for the future success of music, and remind people of past experiences and sounds. They are also the “fuel” for the economy of nightlife – places that support local creative activity rely first on consumption. Places create musical opportunities and condition the repertoire; it is not only buildings as a commodity in the economy of nightlife, but they also create the background of people’s lives in the city (Brabazon, 2012, pp. 66–67; Bennett, Peterson, 2004, pp. 17–19).

The authenticity of a place is often assessed on the basis of the feeling of intimacy, “locality”, a sense of the local aura. In its ideology, live music is the most

important because of the communication considered to be the most direct, intense, and spontaneous (Connell, Gibson, 2003, p. 211). Works of popular music are used to give oneself a kind of self-definition, place in society, creating identification. The space is as important as the repertoire performed because extra-musical sounds or the decor of the place create specific “landscapes” with a specific atmosphere that gives the place authenticity, and the music is woven into the process of its perception. Light and smell also contribute to the feeling of the atmosphere – the experience is multisensory. Popular music reflects a place through words and images, metaphorically through increased perception, through sounds that are symbolic of the place and performances that create a sentimental space. Popular music also builds the identity and meaning of an individual by organizing time and managing feelings, it gives a sense of uniqueness, freedom from everyday life (Frith, 1987, pp. 143–144). Increasing globalization, electronic production, commercialism and the “lack of location” of Western popular music, by which it has been denied its authenticity, sparks the locality into action.

The most attractive spaces are the products of long social development. The city centre is considered to be the most important space, as it forms the framework of social life where we feel the individual character of the city, its scale and rhythm of life (Pazder, 2008, p. 22). It is also the most sonically active. It enables the realization of free time, which plays a significant role in the context of the creative class theory. It is worth emphasizing that the city’s identity reflects the processes taking place in it. It can be described as “unique mood, atmosphere, character” (Lewicka, 2012, p. 61). The overall atmosphere is also influenced by the sonic atmosphere of spaces and places. For example, the Wrocław Market is considered to be the most representative and significant space, among others due to the high concentration of musical events and almost 24/7 sonic activity, known and recognizable (Losiak 2008, p. 261).

It can be said that globalization in relation to sounds manifests itself in their translocal circulation, distribution, in shaping their audibility and assigning them meanings and values, in adaptation of global phonic phenomena.

Robert Losiak points out that:

The analysis of music in the light of research on the city’s soundscape should [...] take into account the broadest possible interpretation of this presence, defining the context of music in the city. Its overriding aim seems to be the possibility of answering the question about the importance of music in the culturally understood city space (Losiak, 2008, p. 254).

The researcher distinguishes types of music occurring in the city due to its relationship with the city. These are:

- 1) music in the city, universal, devoid of direct reference to its cultural or sonic tradition,
- 2) music for the city, deliberately related to the tradition and history of a given place.
- 3) the music of the city, i.e., peculiar to it (Losiak, 2008, p. 254).

The music of the city “is conducive to the preservation of a certain tradition conditioned historically, ethnically, religiously and artistically; it builds the iden-

tity of the place and people” (Losiak, 2008, p. 255). In his articles, Robert Losiak seems to suggest that first of all the music must function in the city for a long time in order to become part of its sonic identity. However, I believe first of all the place participates in creating the atmosphere of the city. A place must have a long history to make its music the music of the city. The music has to be accepted by the community as theirs.

Wroclaw – the meeting place

The official promotional slogan of the capital of Lower Silesia is “Wroclaw – the meeting place”, which is used to create a vision of modern economic centre based on contacts in the sphere of business, relations with other cities, regions, and countries, as well as a city of culture, rich in artistic and cultural events. This has an impact on creating a positive image of the city and transmitting its character, which allows for the development of the local economy and stimulates the inflow of investments and new residents. It also creates a sense of connection with the place, organizes free time, stimulates cultural tourism, and develops intellectually and emotionally. In the opinion of citizens, the well-separated, bustling centre filled with service and gastronomic premises, is the city’s greatest asset (Wojnar, 2016, p. 228). The market square is the de facto centre of the city, offering a multitude of experiences regardless of the season or time of day. Local authorities also invested a lot of funds in the development of the technological and scientific sector, as well as in the cultural sector in last two decades – the most in Poland, which indirectly contributed to the title of the European Capital of Culture 2016 (Wojnar, 2016, p. 230). Wroclaw is also a well-promoted city.



Figure 1. Wroclaw Market Square. Slawek Ilski, CC BY 3.0

Wrocław's attractiveness is also influenced by its multiculturalism and openness, resulting from the total exchange of people after World War II, which opened the door to reinterpreting cultural heritage and building identity based on dialogue and openness. Moreover, as one of the leading academic centres, Wrocław attracts numerous students who influence the vitality and colourfulness of the city's cultural and social life. Students are also the most common users of public spaces and supporters of local enterprises – the third most popular pastime of students in Wrocław is attending concerts and outdoor events (Kędzior, 2019, pp. 72–78).

Contemporary Wrocław jazz scene in the Old Town

I distinguished the most significant spaces of the city, key places, and leading musicians as a result of research conducted since 2019. It consisted firstly of online surveys, which were distributed on Facebook in groups dedicated to local cultural events and on the official profile of the Institute of Musicology of the University of Wrocław. The surveys mainly included questions about artists, venues and music genres associated with the local music scene. I then conducted interviews with Wrocław musicians, the outcomes of which were used to verify the results of the surveys and to distinguish the final group of venues that were the subject of the research. Later, I took part in a total of 45 live concerts and 10 online concerts between April 2020 and November 2021. During the live concerts I conducted short, casual conversations with listeners about their reception of the event and the venue itself.

The subject of this part of the paper is a slice of the contemporary “jazz world” in Wrocław. I treat “jazz” as an umbrella term covering a wide range of musical genres and sub-genres, the reasons for which are explained below. The musicians perform different repertoire in different places and for different audiences – jazz is the common denominator of their activities.

I present the four most important places within the Old Town jazz scene. They are located in various parts of the Old Town of Wrocław, but if you want to pass all of them, an 18-minute walk is enough. Each place differs in size, character, role of the music, and the degree of “professionalism” of the musicians performing. However, each of these places is connected by people and generates “music of the city”.

Focusing on jazz in this article is also a result of the above-mentioned research. This genre was indicated as characteristic for Wrocław by the largest number of survey respondents (46%). Also, the music club most frequently mentioned by respondents is Vertigo Jazz Club and Restaurant. Among the seven most frequently mentioned music festivals that are associated with Wrocław, three of them are jazz festivals. Therefore, there is no doubt that this music genre is well established in the city.

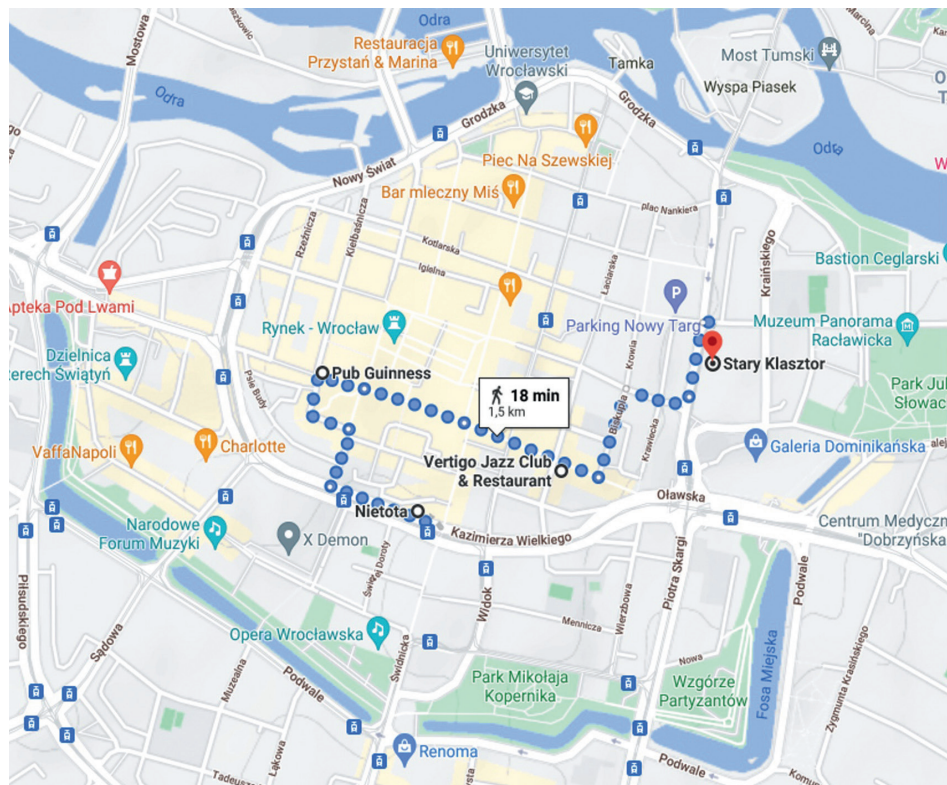


Figure 2. Map of the Wrocław Old Town (area surrounded by water) with the described places marked

The Guinness Pub is located on the corner of Solny Square, surrounded by noisy restaurants, bars, and clubs. The place did not appear in the surveys, but was repeatedly mentioned by local musicians, both Wrocław stars such as soul and jazz singers Natalia Szczypuła and Ola Turoń, and artists at the threshold of their musical career, for example R&B singer Angelika Klimek. 100% of Guinness Pub concerts between 01/01/2019 and 31/12/2021 were performed by Wrocław-based musicians¹. However, there are about 2 gigs a month in the Guinness Pub, so I don't treat it on a par with further afield venues where music plays a much more important role.

As you can see in the photo below, the music is pushed definitely in the background. The centrally placed bar dominates both spatially and sonically. The stage is very small, "hidden" among the tables – it is only a raised floor that can accom-

¹ Data on the number of concerts comes from the venues' official Facebook pages. Nowadays, this social network is the main tool to promote venues and music activities, not only locally, as confirmed by both interviews with musicians and the literature (Moir, 2017, pp. 232–235). Normally, an event organised in a venue has a separate page with information such as the date and time of the concert and information about the artists performing.

modate up to two musicians. The vast majority of guests are focused on talking and drinking, the reactions to music are usually minor and performers rarely communicate with the audience. Several times I noticed that pub staff asked musicians to play quieter. Therefore, mainly acoustic, close to the original covers of popular rock, R&B and pop hits are performed. Interestingly, however, not only beginners perform there, but also semi-professionals and even professionals from time to time. For example, the GINEZ Trio band pictured below, which was founded especially for purpose of playing in Guinness Pub, features Mateusz Kowalczyk, one of Wroclaw's most recognised performers. He is the originator and lead singer of one of the most popular tribute shows in Wroclaw – Tribute to George Michael. Ola Turoń summed up the specificity of this place well. She said that “the stage has as much space as a table [in a cafe]”, but the place is visited by a lot of loud foreigners who sometimes like to sing full voice with the artist and dance by the stage. That's why the repertoire must be well known for almost everybody. According to the singer, performing at the Guinness provides a lot of fun. Although she performs there less frequently as she is giving the venue over to a new generation of artists, she always enjoys returning there from time to time.



Figure 3. Concert of GINEZ Trio, Guinness Pub, 27.08.2021

The next place is **Nietota**, which I consider a true centre of the scene, not because it is the most popular, not because it gathers the *crème de la crème* of musicians, but because it gathers everyone – from hobbyists and amateurs who take their first steps, to the most famous Wrocław names. You will hear here both the aforementioned Natalia Szczypuła with her band and debutants such as Basia Krzykwa or Angelika Klimek.

Nietota was the third most mentioned music club or bar in surveys and the first in interviews with musicians. The venue is very popular – as of 18/11/2021 Nietota was liked by 14881 people on Facebook. Between 01/01/2019 and 31/12/2021 the club hosted 309 concerts, 90.29% of which were by local musicians. This is the highest percentage among all clubs or bars in the area (excluding the aforementioned Guinness Pub).

Nietota is located on the very busy Kazimierza Wielkiego Street, which, paradoxically, allows the music to “seep” through the walls and windows and reach passers-by. I noticed many times that the sounds of music and fun inside the venue attracted new guests. The bar stands out clearly in space, but the centrally placed stage draws attention to the music. There is also a place to dance by the stage. The sounds of the bar are heard during the concerts, but are not as dominant as in the Guinness Pub. The attention of the vast majority of guests is focused on music, which may be because:

- a) Nietota is promoted primarily as a bar with live music,
- b) many events are available for a small fee,
- c) Nietota has numerous regular guests, many of whom also perform on its stage.

The concerts are very varied, from acoustic evenings, through jam sessions, to tribute shows performed by a whole big band. Although the repertoire is dominated by covers, the arrangements are sometimes original, inspired primarily by soul, R&B, and jazz. There is also a place for original songs, performed mainly by more experienced artists as part of the concert programme, and even during fully original concerts. Some of the artists I talked to started their careers during jam sessions that made them valuable contacts. Many of them, despite their career development, are eager to return to Nietota thanks to a friendly atmosphere, an engaged, spontaneous audience and managers open to new ideas. Many events are very crowded, it is difficult to find a standing place, even more so to sit down. Nietota is a popular place with a relaxed atmosphere, so the guests are dominated by young people, and you can also see many regulars. Many of them are also musicians. Sometimes Nietota’s guests even include such legends of Polish music as Leszek Możdżer – composer, jazz pianist and music producer.

Ola Turoń pointed out an average sound system, which is compensated by a great atmosphere and guests with a relaxed, playful attitude to the performance. Moreover, the singer emphasized a very friendly bartending team, thanks to which the musicians stay after the concert to party in Nietota until its closing. Angelika Klimek, despite her short activity on the local scene, calls Nietota “home”, because it was here that she started performing and making key acquaintances. Angelika has

repeatedly emphasized the influence of, *inter alia*, Natalia Szczypuła on the development of her career. Basia Krzykwa, member of the indie duo Lewiracja (currently in hiatus), considers Nietota an important place, because live music appears there regularly and the interest in authorial material is growing. It opens opportunities even for less experienced music authors.



Figure 4. Groove Night feat. Angelika Klimek (in the middle), Nietota, 03.06.2021

Then there is the **Vertigo Jazz Club and Restaurant**, located in the basement of the building on Oławska Street. Vertigo was the most mentioned music club in surveys and the second in interviews with musicians. The venue is extremely popular – as of 18/11/2021 Vertigo was liked by 35358 people on Facebook (second best result among all venues surveyed), and between 01/01/2019 and 31/12/2021 the club hosted 624 concerts (the best result), of which 89.26% were concerts by Wrocław-based musicians (the second result).

As the name suggests, it is a music club first. The concerts are ticketed, the guests are served by waitresses, and the décor of the venue is reminiscent of 1930s art deco. The stage is centrally located, the bar is at the back so that its sounds do not disturb the music. The whole atmosphere of the place is much more “prestigious”, which also results from the repertoire. Traditional jazz, swing, blues, and traditional pop are performed by the best vocalists and instrumentalists from Wrocław. The repertoires of performers include jazz standards, jazz arrangements of popular songs, and, to a greater extent than before, the original material. Many amateur musicians dream of performing at Vertigo but lack experience or courage. Some of Vertigo stars described the start of cooperation with this club as a breakthrough in their career. Due to the constant group of musicians performing in this place, many guests come up not only for a specific programme, but to

listen to specific artists. One of them is aforementioned Natalia Szczypuła, jazz and soul singer and songwriter. She started performing in Wrocław around 2011 and is now a leading musical figure in the city. The singer is professionally associated with the Vertigo club, among others because of the Vertigo Band of which she is the leader. It is a representative band of this club, which graces the most important events of the year. She co-forms it with Mateusz Witkowski (drums), Piotr Treliński (guitar), Jan Chojnacki (trumpet) and Żenia Betliński (bass guitar / double bass). They all belong to a group of Wrocław's most prominent instrumentalists, who have also collaborated with numerous other Wrocław performers.

During the concerts, the audience is by far the most devoted to the music, also by being encouraged to clapping, singing, and dancing, but it is not as spontaneous and free as in Nietota. What draws attention, however, is the much lower noise of conversations compared to the previously discussed places. There are also more older people among the audience, as the number of seats is limited and there are usually no standing places. One of the most interesting opinions about this place was given by Kasia Szyszka, a vocalist and backing singer who works with most of the leading artists in Wrocław. She is also a member of the trio "Vertigo Angels" with Ola Turoń and Natalia Szczypuła. The trio performs original arrangements of popular songs and jazz standards with some of the members of Vertigo Band.

Kasia emphasises that Vertigo has its own specificity, which gives certain possibilities as well as limitations. In Nietota the atmosphere is very spontaneous, and nobody is ashamed to react vividly, whereas in Vertigo the elegant atmosphere can build up a distance both for the musicians and the audience. The interior of the venue is perfectly soundproofed and equipped with a good sound system. Moreover, the audience listens much more attentively while sitting at the tables. Therefore, according to her, it is an excellent place to perform jazz, but it requires very

good skills, as simply any stumble will be heard. Kasia in no way sees this as a disadvantage, but as an integral part of the venue's character, which is expected by many regulars. That being said, sometimes people can point out that there is less "pure" jazz in Vertigo. The club consciously opts for variety, as it allows it to attract a larger audience without compromising the image of a classy place. The club makes sure that only the best of the best in Wrocław perform on its stage.



Figure 5. Concert of Vertigo Angels, Vertigo, 29.05.2021.
Singers from left: Ola Turoń, Natalia Szczypuła, Kasia Szyszka

And finally, **Stary Klasztor** (The Old Monastery), an important place for two reasons. Firstly, it is a common space for the “jazz” and “rock” scenes, especially the latter. Secondly, Stary Klasztor hosts mainly Polish and world music stars. The venue was liked by 36 740 people on Facebook (the best result) and hosted 563 concerts between 2019 and 2021. But only 24.33% of them were concerts by Wrocław-based musicians. In the survey results, Stary Klasztor was the second most frequently mentioned music club, which is partly due to the numerous concerts by nationally and internationally known stars.

Stary Klasztor consists of several halls, but I will focus on the largest and most important – the Gothic Hall, located in the building of the former church. Hence, the severe interior of the hall and the very specific acoustics of the church, strong reverberation especially. All musicians I talked to paid attention to these difficult acoustics, but many of them simply do not care about it, just like Wojtek Kielbasa. He is a singer, songwriter and guitarist who became well-known thanks to his performances at the Wrocław Market Square. Nowadays he performs sold-out concerts in Nietota, Vertigo and Stary Klasztor with original repertoire, covers and one-man tribute shows to Ed Sheeran, John Mayer and Coldplay.

The Gothic Hall in Stary Klasztor is in fact a concert hall – there are both standing and sitting concerts, usually the former, thanks to which the audience has the most space for active movement, but also is fully focused on the reception of the performance. Many concerts open a small bar offering a limited selection of drinks. The stage is large, centrally located. Wrocław musicians perform here mainly during larger festivals and tribute shows, which accumulate large audiences and, as a result, high income. Solo concerts by local musicians are a real rarity, but when they perform, they often present their original material. The audience is very diverse and depends on the nature of the concert.



Figure 6. Tribute to George Michael, Stary Klasztor, 19.02.2021. In front, from left: Kasia Szyszka, Ola Turoń, Mateusz Kowalczyk, Tomasz Jędrzejewski

Conclusion

It may therefore seem that an amateur musician starts at the Guinness Pub or Nietota and slowly climbs the career ladder, reaching Vertigo and Stary Klasztor as a professional. Of course, such a direction exists, it is natural, but the process is not only linear. In fact, there is a constant flow of musicians between these places. Vertigo Angels members conduct jam sessions and solo concerts in Nietota. Leader of GINEZ Trio and the leading vocalist in Tribute to George Michael are the same person. Instrumentalists participate in numerous projects, both within the jazz and rock scene. “Everyone” can be met “everywhere” because they can perform a different repertoire, use different arrangements, and the relationship with the audience is different. Sometimes they want to be a part of a spectacular show on a big stage, and sometimes they just want to be a lounge singer. In addition, as members of the community, musicians themselves spend their leisure time in the venues where they perform, also listening to concerts of other musicians – whether for entertainment, support or looking for new talents.

Although covers dominate, which is a natural phenomenon in local music scenes, opportunities open to present original works, bolder arrangements of famous hits, or presentation of work of less known artists, well suited to the character of a given place. Sebastian Łobos, a pianist especially associated with Vertigo, pointed out the relationship between the character of the place during the interview. He gave an excellent example: Nietota, which is more of a bar where “people dance and beer is poured” and Vertigo, a sophisticated jazz club, bring two different types of audience. “I can’t imagine Michael Bublé [songs] in Nietota, but it sells well in Vertigo. [...] You have to reckon with each venue, choose the right repertoire and have a good time yourself”.

Local performers sing mostly in English – the dominant language in popular music, understandable for foreigners. Thanks to this, every resident of Wrocław, regardless of their origin, can fully enjoy the concert. It is worth emphasizing that the contemporary Wrocław jazz scene is characterized by distinctive leaders (mainly vocalists) who are key in stabilizing the music scenes and setting directions for their development. They are also “magnets” attracting viewers. A model example are the local tribute shows, i.e., concerts consisting in performing the music of an existing or contemporary musical group or a soloist with the greatest possible fidelity. Tribute bands often provide music from artists who, for example, are missing in a given city. (Moore, pp. 217–218) The best musicians in Wrocław usually take part in these projects, and the concerts attract large audiences and generate considerable income. As almost all the musicians I spoke to stressed, on the one hand it “spoils the market” because only covers are performed, but on the other it helps promote both the place and the artists themselves. After gaining enough recognition, they can perform their own repertoire. As Ola Turoń and Kasia Szyszka pointed out, there has been a certain “oversaturation” of tribute shows in Wrocław, but at the same time there has been a noticeable increase in interest in original material, original arrangements of well-known compositions or repertoire of less popular musicians. For example, Angelika Klimek, although

performing only from mid-2020, quite quickly began to include the repertoire of R&B artists such as Jorja Smith, Angie Stone or Jill Scott, practically absent in the repertoires of other Wrocław vocalists. In addition, she found a niche, which is R&B music. Thanks to this she began performing with a full band in the autumn of 2021, which includes, among others, bassist Rafał Krzywosz and guitarist Aleksander Klewaczew. They are among the most recognized and “in demand” instrumentalists in Wrocław.

As shown by the example of Wrocław, the local music scene is an important element of the urban soundscape, which influences the identity of the city, which in turn influences its attractiveness and authenticity. I’ve shown only a few places that make up one of the city’s many musical communities. They are spaces for serious musical leisure, regardless of the degree of professionalism – allowing you to start and develop your career through membership in a harmonious, co-operative, and open communities. These are places attractive to music audiences, both residents looking for “their own places”, and tourists looking for “something local”, regardless of their nationality, origin, etc. Wrocław has not developed its sound, but the strong integration of live music with places that create the most significant spaces of the city undoubtedly makes the local scene authentic and very effectively influences the perception of Wrocław as a creative city. Because without places there are no people, without people there are no places. And without them – there is no city.

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