

The thesis focuses on the Lisbon cultural phenomenon of the traditional urban music, fado, with an emphasis on its professional practice. The paper informs about different cultural/historical approaches to the origins and evolution of fado music in the city of Lisbon, stressing the point of view of the Portuguese musicologist Rui Vieira Nery. It then moves on to explain the impact of dictatorship and later Salazar's fascist regime on the professionalization of fado during the years 1926 – 1974, which entailed a radical change of status of a fadista artist, who was abruptly separated from the original popular practise of fado. The next chapter focuses on the history of specific places of professional fado performance called fado houses, which emerged during the 1930s.

The theoretical knowledge of the chapters "History of Fado Music", "Professionalization of Fado Music" and "History of Fado Houses" unites in a case study of a fado house called Mesa de Frades in the historical quarter of Lisbon – Alfama. The case study is based on a two-month field research in the city of Lisbon and aims at fado as a performance genre involving performers and audience in a communicative process using verbal, musical, facial and bodily expression. It includes observation of the musical roles of fado performers and their mode of interaction. On one hand, the Mesa de Frades is a good example for observation of a characteristic professional fado performance; on the other hand, it is a specific place in the context of other fado houses in Lisbon, as it has witnessed a revitalization of the original spirit of a night get-together of fado artists, poets and their friends which used to be common in the prime of fado houses in the 1950s and 60s. Mesa de Frades accordingly represents a renaissance of fado music in general, observed mainly since the beginning of the new millennium.