

Santander Orchestra – Artistic Education and Corporate Social Responsibility

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Abstract— This article analyzes the Santander Orchestra project as an example of modern patronage by financial institutions and as a strategy for investing in the development of young musical talent. Drawing on the concepts of strategic patronage, social investment in culture, and the theory of symbolic capital, it demonstrates how Santander Bank Polska integrates educational, artistic, and social initiatives within its CSR/ESG strategy. The project provides young musicians with access to high-quality orchestral training, opportunities to work with renowned conductors and mentors, practical stage experience, and professional development tools. The analysis shows that financing rehearsals, concerts, recordings, and promotional activities enables participants to acquire competencies comparable to those found in professional orchestras and contributes to the development of their social and symbolic capital. More broadly, the Santander Orchestra strengthens cultural infrastructure, promotes Polish artists and repertoire, and enhances Poland's image as a country that supports cultural development and young talent. The project thus serves as a model example of contemporary synergy between the private sector and cultural institutions, generating lasting educational, artistic, and social impact.

Keywords— modern patronage of financial institution, private sector and cultural institutions, cultural economy, development of social and symbolic capital

I. FINANCIAL SUPPORT SYSTEM FOR YOUNG MUSICIANS IN THE SANTANDER ORCHESTRA PROJECT

Financing talent in the cultural sector constitutes one of the key areas of modern patronage by financial institutions, which increasingly treat investment in creative capital as part of their social responsibility strategy (Kaczmarek, Pośluszna, 2021). Santander Bank Polska, through the Santander Orchestra project, employs a support model focused on developing the

artistic and professional competencies of young musicians, creating conditions for their professionalization and active entry into the job market. This type of financial intervention fits into the widely described partnership between the private sector and cultural institutions (Throsby, 2010), aimed at building lasting creative and educational resources.

In this context, the concept of modern patronage is significant, according to which private entities such as banks or corporations not only provide financial resources but also engage in the process of co-creating culture, implementing projects of an educational, social, and developmental nature (Kwiatkowska, 2018). Unlike traditional forms of patronage, modern support models are based on partnership with cultural institutions, fostering innovative initiatives and increasing their social impact (Bendixen & Gran, 2009). This patronage is often an integral part of CSR or ESG strategies (Wójcik-Jurkiewicz, 2017), where culture is viewed as a key component of social capital and a public good requiring systematic investment.

The related concept of social investment in culture treats the financing of artistic activities as a long-term investment yielding returns in the form of social competency development, creativity, and strengthening of cultural identity (Towse, 2011). In this view, culture is not a cost but a resource that supports innovation, social integration, and socio-economic development. Both concepts emphasize the strategic importance of private sector involvement in culture, indicating that it can create lasting value for both society and the organizations acting as patrons.

The bank's investments enable project participants to access education that meets the standards of internationally renowned musical institutions (Wójcik-Jurkiewicz, 2020). The project includes intensive workshops led by conductors and musicians of recognized artistic standing, including laureates of



international competitions, orchestra leaders, and academic lecturers. This model is important from the perspective of research on professional music education, as contact with masters of musical practice is considered a key factor accelerating the professionalization of young performers. The funding provided by the bank covers the costs of fees, workshop organization, and logistical support, eliminating the economic barriers typical of advanced master-level programs. Consequently, participants gain access to education that would be difficult to attain or fully paid for in private settings.

From the perspective of musicians' professional development, participation in a professional process of preparing and realizing artistic events is crucial. The Santander Orchestra, operating in a model similar to that of professional orchestras, includes, among other things: extensive sectional and tutti rehearsals, final concerts in acoustically renowned halls, and participation in recording sessions conducted according to industry standards. This process enables the development of skills that cannot be cultivated solely within traditional music studies. Musicological literature and research on artistic education emphasize that competencies such as collaboration in a large ensemble, score realization under time pressure, performance precision, and the ability to respond to a conductor's interpretation are developed most effectively in conditions akin to professional practice.

Funding from Santander Bank Polska covers the full infrastructure necessary for such undertakings: rental of space, technical support, production of recordings, transport, and accommodation for participants. This allows the musical experience to be focused solely on artistic development, not on organizational constraints. One of the most valuable outcomes of the project is the opportunity to participate in artistic ventures that meet the working standards of professional music institutions. Young instrumentalists participate in preparing symphonic repertoire or special projects, often in collaboration with music industry professionals, including producers, sound engineers, and representatives of record labels.

Such activities fit the model of so-called "education through production," described in research on creative sectors as a method combining the didactic process with real artistic work. Participants learn production standards, principles of communication with technical teams, requirements of the recording market, and the specifics of the contemporary music audience. The project thus serves as a "bridge" between the institutional system of music education and the job market. The opportunity to realize concerts and recordings strengthens the participants' symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 2022). Participation in high-ranking artistic events increases their visibility, professional credibility, and chances for future employment in orchestras or collaboration with cultural institutions.

II. SANTANDER BANK POLSKA AS A PATRON OF THE ARTS

The role of financial institutions in the cultural sector has undergone significant transformation in recent decades (Pawłowski, 2015), shifting from traditional philanthropic

forms of patronage to more complex, strategic, and long-term models (Jakubowska, 2010). Santander Bank Polska exemplifies an organization that actively integrates cultural and artistic education initiatives into its corporate social responsibility strategy. In this way, the bank implements the principles of modern patronage, where supporting the creative sector is treated as an investment in social development and in building organizational value.

The activities of Santander Bank Polska in the cultural sphere are embedded in the broader CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) and ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) strategy (Wójcik-Jurkiewicz, 2020). Within this framework, culture and education are treated as key elements of social responsibility. The bank perceives itself as an entity co-responsible for the development of the community in which it operates, thus for creating conditions conducive to the development of human and creative capital.

Incorporating cultural projects into the CSR/ESG strategy means they are not occasional or marginal activities but an integral part of the organization's long-term plans. This approach aligns with global management trends, according to which investments in culture and education can strengthen an institution's image, build social trust, and contribute to creating non-financial value. As an entity with significant influence, the bank uses its position and resources to shape the social environment by supporting artistic projects, including initiatives aimed at young creators.

Santander Bank Polska's engagement in the cultural sphere focuses primarily on three interconnected areas: education, cultural support, and the development of young talent. The bank conducts and co-finances projects that allow young artists to acquire competencies necessary for entering the job market and to develop their creativity in conditions close to professional ones (Wójcik-Jurkiewicz, 2017).

Support for education encompasses both purely artistic activities such as workshops, master courses, or orchestral projects and the development of business-related competencies. The bank recognizes that a contemporary musician must function in a market that demands both high performance skills and knowledge of career management, communication, and marketing. Therefore, initiatives like the Santander Orchestra combine artistic practice with elements of management education, offering young musicians the tools needed for conscious and effective participation in the cultural sector.

Meanwhile, support for culture as an area of social life includes actions aimed at increasing the accessibility of artistic projects, raising their quality, and creating space for cross-sectoral collaboration. However, the development of young talent remains a key strategic element of patronage activities (Kaczmarek, Posłuszna, 2018). Santander Bank Polska invests in the future generation of artists, creating conditions for them to gain experience at the highest level and to build a career based on competencies valued in the contemporary market. Such activities are long-term in nature, distinguishing modern patronage from one-off acts of support and aligning it with the concept of social investment in culture.

III. SUPPORTING STUDENTS AND GRADUATES OF MUSIC SCHOOLS

The genesis of the Santander Orchestra project is linked to the growing need to support young musicians in the transition from formal education to professional artistic activity. The idea of creating an orchestra emerged as a response to challenges observed in the music environment, such as limited opportunities to gain practical orchestral experience, an insufficient number of programs combining music education with managerial competencies, and increasing expectations of the cultural market towards young creators. This initiative also aligns with the trend of strengthening the role of private entities in the cultural sector, particularly in the area of modern patronage and social investments.

One of the main goals of the project is to create a platform supporting the most talented students and graduates of music universities in Poland. Participants gain access to high-quality orchestral education led by eminent conductors, concertmasters, and pedagogues of international renown. This action responds to the need for practical verification of competencies acquired during studies and to the gap between the artistic education system and the expectations of the professional music environment.

By financing the project, the bank enables young musicians to participate in intensive orchestral sessions and master workshops, which constitute a significant complement to traditional educational programs. The literature emphasizes that the opportunity to work in a large ensemble under the guidance of recognized artists significantly accelerates the professionalization process, develops performance competencies, and strengthens the symbolic capital of young creators.

A second, equally important goal is to create an integrated professional development path for future musicians. The Santander Orchestra is not limited to providing performance opportunities but encompasses a broad range of educational activities that allow participants to understand the realities of the music market. This includes, among other things: classes in self-presentation and personal branding, workshops on cultural and artistic project management, knowledge of the recording market, copyright law, and collaboration with cultural institutions, and developing business competencies within educational programs organized by the bank.

Such an integrated educational model reflects the concept of holistic career support, which recognizes that a contemporary musician must possess both high artistic skills and organizational as well as communicative competencies. Creating such a development path facilitates a smoother transition from the educational stage to professional activity and increases young artists' chances of stable functioning in the cultural sector.

The financing of culture by Santander Bank Polska within the Santander Orchestra project exemplifies strategic patronage, where private funds are allocated to educational, production, and organizational activities with high social impact. The bank acts as the main investor, enabling the realization of cultural ventures at a level that would be difficult

to achieve for young artists or non-governmental organizations without the support of financial institutions. Funding covers both the artistic process and elements supporting the professional development of participants and the promotion of events and creators.

The primary area of the bank's investment is financing the organization of intensive orchestral rehearsals, concerts, and professional recording sessions. These funds enable the rental of rehearsal spaces, concert stages with appropriate acoustic parameters, the purchase of sheet music, and the provision of technical and logistical support. Consequently, project participants can work in conditions similar to those of professional orchestras, significantly enhancing the quality of their artistic education. Financing recordings additionally allows for documenting and disseminating the orchestra's work, promoting young musicians, and increasing the project's reach.

A key element of the project is collaboration with a mentoring staff of high professional competency – distinguished conductors, concertmasters, soloists, and academic lecturers. Santander Bank Polska covers their fees and associated costs, enabling the creation of an educational program meeting the standards of international master courses. Literature on the professionalization of musicians emphasizes that contact with masters of artistic practice is crucial for developing performance and interpretive competencies, as well as for building motivation and a sense of belonging to the professional community.

Funding also includes an educational component extending beyond traditional music education. The bank invests in workshops, training, and programs developing soft and organizational skills, such as career management, self-presentation, communication, and knowledge of the music market. An example of such activities is the “Play As You Wish” program, which is an integral part of the project. Investment in professional development tools allows young musicians to function better in a diverse and competitive cultural environment and prepares them for various artistic and managerial roles.

The last significant area of funding is the production of promotional and phonographic materials, which play a key role in building the project's visibility and the individual career paths of participants. The bank finances, among other things, the production of audio and video recordings, promotional materials, photographic documentation, and informational publications. These materials serve both archival and marketing functions – they allow for presenting the project's results in the public sphere and support young musicians in the process of self-promotion. Access to professionally prepared recordings is particularly valuable, as it serves as a gateway to auditions, competitions, and artistic programs.

IV. RESULTS AND SOCIAL IMPACT OF THE SANTANDER ORCHESTRA PROJECT

The results of the Santander Orchestra project extend beyond direct artistic effects, creating a multidimensional social, educational, and cultural impact. Analyzing the project from the

perspectives of cultural policy, the economics of culture, and the theory of social capital, one can identify a series of mechanisms through which bank patronage contributes to strengthening the art ecosystem in Poland. The project not only enables the realization of valuable artistic events but also generates processes of long-term change, both in the biographies of young musicians and in the image of Polish culture on the international stage.

Concerts and professional recordings produced by the Santander Orchestra constitute a form of material project heritage that remains in cultural circulation after the end of project editions. Audio and video recordings can be used by cultural institutions, universities, and researchers, supporting the dissemination of classical music and music education. From a scientific point of view, these recordings serve a documentary function, enabling analysis of the performance practices of the younger generation of musicians and their interpretation of the repertoire. Furthermore, concerts held in prestigious artistic centers contribute to strengthening cultural infrastructure by increasing its accessibility and building an audience for classical music.

V. DEVELOPMENT OF PARTICIPANTS' CAREERS AND PROMOTION OF POLISH MUSIC AND TALENT

One of the most important social results of the project is its impact on the career paths of young musicians. Participation in the Santander Orchestra provides experiences rarely available within formal music education: working with a highly professional orchestra, interpreting symphonic repertoire under the guidance of esteemed conductors, and participating in recordings meeting phonographic standards. Literature on musicians' professional development emphasizes that such experiences strengthen the so-called symbolic and cultural capital of individuals, increasing their competitiveness in the job market (Kaczmarek, Pośluszna, 2018c).

Furthermore, participation in the project fosters the building of social capital – networks of relationships that can lead to future artistic and professional collaborations. Young musicians thereby enter the community of practitioners, significantly facilitating their access to music institutions, competitions, festivals, or residency programs.

The project also serves a promotional function, contributing to strengthening the position of Polish music and culture in the international artistic circuit. On one hand, it demonstrates the high quality of music education in Poland; on the other, it highlights the Polish repertoire. Through recordings, broadcasts, and the presence of young musicians on domestic and international stages, Polish culture becomes more visible and recognizable. The participants themselves, developing solo and orchestral careers, become “ambassadors” of the Polish music school, showcasing its high level and creative potential (Jagodzińska, 2013). Thus, the Santander Orchestra contributes to building the brand of Polish culture in a systemic, non-incidental manner based on investment in human capital.

From a macro-social perspective, the project strengthens

Poland's image as a country that supports cultural development and invests in young talent. The actions of Santander Bank Polska show that the private sector can be an active participant in cultural policy, co-creating support models based on partnership and social responsibility (Kaczmarek, Pośluszna, 2018b). In many countries, similar initiatives act as catalysts for change in the cultural sector, increasing access to artistic education, professionalizing the environment, and raising the level of creativity.

In the Polish context, the Santander Orchestra becomes an example of successful cooperation between business and cultural institutions, which may inspire other entities to undertake similar initiatives. Such projects also create a positive international message, presenting Poland as a country open to the development of art, supporting young creators, and investing in cultural resources of strategic importance for the future of society (Kaczmarek, Pośluszna, 2018c).

Analysis of Santander Bank Polska's actions indicates that financing culture can be treated as a long-term investment in social capital, not merely as philanthropic activity or an element of organizational image-building. The Santander Orchestra project proves that well-designed and managed cultural initiatives have the potential to generate extensive educational, social, artistic, and economic benefits. By investing in young musicians, the bank supports the development of competencies fundamental to their future professional activity and ability to participate in social life (Kaczmarek, Pośluszna, 2021a). More broadly, this action contributes to strengthening social capital by developing networks of cooperation, building trust in institutions, and creating environments conducive to innovation and cultural activity (Kaczmarek, Pośluszna, 2021b).

The Santander Orchestra also exemplifies a modern approach to patronage that integrates social and educational goals with a long-term business responsibility strategy. This model assumes the active participation of the private sector in the processes of creating and disseminating culture, not just financing isolated initiatives. This enables the building of projects with a complex structure, combining professional music education, support for individual development, and the promotion of high culture in the public sphere. Such an approach increases the durability of social effects and strengthens the role of private institutions as full-fledged partners in the cultural policy system.

The model presented by Santander Bank Polska can inspire other economic entities, regardless of industry or profile of activity. This practice shows that investing in culture is possible even within the classical commercial activity of enterprises and, when implemented strategically, brings tangible benefits both to beneficiaries and to the funding organizations themselves (Bendixen, 2001). In today's world, where the importance of human and creative capital is growing, engagement in culture becomes a significant competitive asset and an element building a responsible and socially sensitive corporate image.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

The Santander Orchestra project has the potential to influence the broader sphere of culture in Poland. By promoting high educational standards, stimulating innovative practices of cross-sectoral cooperation, and strengthening the position of young creators, this initiative contributes to the professionalization of the artistic community and increases its resilience to economic and social changes. It also enables the development of competencies that are significant not only in the music sector but also in other areas of social life, such as teamwork, creativity, communication, and adaptability. In an international perspective, examples like the Santander Orchestra also influence the building of a positive image of Poland as a country favorable to culture, oriented towards supporting talent, and open to public-private partnership models.

The Santander Orchestra is not only an artistic project but also testimony that strategic investment in culture is becoming an important element of contemporary social and business management. Its success indicates a direction that other institutions can follow when seeking effective ways to build social value (Hausner, 2015). This model proves that culture when appropriately supported has the potential to generate multidimensional value, both for individuals and for entire communities.

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