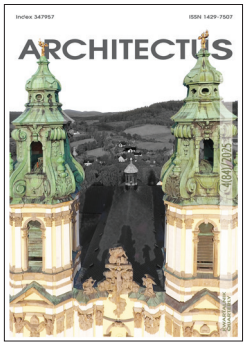

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Pipe organ of the Aula of the Technische Hochschule Breslau (Wrocław University of Science and Technology)

Abstract

This text outlines the history of the organ built by Gebrüder Rieger in 1929 for the auditorium of the Technische Hochschule Breslau. The instrument was an important part of the hall's original design, serving to add splendour to academic events and to conduct music and teaching classes at the Institute of Music Technology – the only body of its kind within the structure of a technical university in the Weimar Republic. As a result of the destruction that engulfed the whole of Wrocław in the final phase of the Second World War, the surviving organ was a valuable possession of the newly opened Polish university in Polish Wrocław. It was repaired and has served for many years of concerts, embedding itself into the city's cultural landscape. During the remodelling of the auditorium in the 1970s, it was relocated as redundant to the St Mary Magdalene Church in Wrocław, which had been rebuilt from ruin and was deprived of its organ as a result of the war. After a short period of use in their new location, the organ was vandalized and remains out of service. The way in which the instrument is situated in the church betrays the ad hoc and makeshift nature of this arrangement, and its current state calls for swift and decisive remedial action. The organ has historic value today and still retains the potential for possible revalorisation and restoration of its primary musical function. This text features a conservation analysis of this object and the possibility of its worthy display in accordance with current conservation standards in its original location, the auditorium of the Wrocław University of Science and Technology.

Key words: organ, relocation, revaluation, architecture, Wrocław University of Science and Technology, Technische Hochschule Breslau

Introduction

This article discusses the organ in the auditorium of the main building of the Technische Hochschule Breslau (now the Wrocław University of Science and Technology). The goal of the authors was to retrace the history of this special cultural heritage asset, a musical instrument that is now almost a century old. In the literature there is a dearth of detailed studies on this asset, with the exception of a small publication from its construction period, *Die Musik an der Technischen Hochschule zu Breslau, nebst Würdigung ihrer Orgel* (Matzke 1929), and the work *Breslauer Orgeln in Weltlichen Räume* (Subel 2015).

Built by the Gebrüder Rieger company in 1929 to enhance the splendour of university ceremonies and concerts, the organ survived the Second World War in a slightly damaged state. When, after the Potsdam Conference, Breslau became part of Poland, the city's broadly understood reconstruction was initiated. A Polish University and Polytechnic University were established in 1945, based in buildings left by the Germans. Although the renovation of the organ was not a priority, it succeeded when the decision was made to hold the World Congress of Intellectuals in Defence of Peace in the auditorium of the Wrocław University of Science and Technology (WUST) in 1948. Over the following years the instrument was also used for non-university events, but in the 1970s, by decision of the WUST Senate, the organ was given to the State Philharmonics in Wrocław. The organ was ultimately installed in the Wrocław Polish Catholic of St Mary Magdalene, which had lost its main organ in a blast shortly after the conclusion of the Second World War. This relocation allowed the organisation of the cyclical Wratislavia Cantans festival in this church. The Rieger organ is now

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damaged and has been silent for years. In light of the plans made to replace it with an instrument that would be better suited for a church interior, it is necessary to perform an analysis and formulate conservation guidelines on solving the current situation in terms of repairing the organ and the feasibility of its relocation. One possible scenario is the return of the instrument to the auditorium of the WUST.

Organs – their role, conservation and relocation cases from Wrocław

Historically, organ music was a very important identity element in the German cultural circle, and the associated organ-building craft is still appreciated today. In 2014, organ building and organ music were placed on the national list of intangible cultural assets, and in 2018 organ building and music were placed on the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List (Hey Pipe Organ Builders 2018). The experience of Polish conservators in maintaining historic organs is slowly catching up with standards from Germany or France, compensating for the backwardness resulting from the underappreciation of organ building during the Polish People's Republic era. Pioneering postulates concerning the principles of recording, protection and the revalorisation of historic organs were formulated in the 1960s by Fr Jan Chwałek and Marian Dorawa (Bielawski 1969; Chwałek 1971). Since then, research on organ building in Poland and in the lands of the partitioning powers has progressed considerably thanks to historical studies and the revival of traditional craftsmanship. At present, historic instruments are being renovated at the highest execution level, with the distinctiveness of the craft of a given period being given the highest respect, and much care is given to faithfully reconstruct sound quality[1]. This applies to the oldest instruments from the 16th and 17th centuries (e.g., the parish church in Olkusz, the parish church in Kazimierz nad Wisłą), but also from periods closer to the time of the Wrocław University of Science and Technology's instrument (e.g., the church of Salesians in Gdańsk-Orunia, the church of the Order of St Dominic in Krakow).

The organ stock of Wrocław has undergone a series of transformations in the 20th century that are unique in the country. It was primarily the pre-Second-World-War period that can be seen as pioneering the research-based organ conservation that resulted in professional literature. *Der Orgelbau in Schlesien*[2], first published in 1925 in Strasbourg and then renewed and expanded in 1973, can be considered a leading specialist item (Burgemeister 1973). The beginnings of historic organ conservation came at a time when highly intrusive remodels were made, often in good will, but nevertheless resulted in the erasure of the instruments' historical character (e.g., the contemporaneous organ in the Corpus Christi Church, remodelled in 1934). The particularly severe wartime destruction of 1945 led to an irreversible loss of a high number of historic organs, among which many featured outstanding architectural and sculptural designs (e.g., the organ in the cathedral and church of St Mary Magdalene). Finally, the end of the conflagration was followed by the exploitation of the surviving stock of instruments in a way that was the result of the new political and economic reality in which Lower Silesia found itself. Organs from abandoned churches or devastated concert halls were being relocated on an unprecedented scale. These relocations were made both between towns and cities, especially to the churches of Warsaw, Lesser Poland or Lublin, but also within Lower Silesia and Wrocław itself, that had been damaged by war[3] (Brylla 2012; Trzaskalik-Wyrwa 2012).

Among the post-war organ relocations, mention should be made of the largest project of its kind – the relocation of an organ designed for the huge volume of the Centennial Hall (Jahrhunderthalle). The colossal instrument, with 222 voices at its peak (after a looting, this number was reduced by about 30%), was inserted into the much smaller naves of the Cathedral of St John the Baptist, rebuilt after a bombing raid (Bukowski 1959). With this relocation, the architecture, spatial composition and characteristics of the instrument were permanently changed (Fig. 1). The organ was also supplemented by the addition of elements from other Wrocław instruments, but also new elements acquired from domestic and foreign organ-builders. Work is currently underway to revitalise it and properly adapt it to its current location. It is a complex task both because of the enormity of the project and because of the need to tie together into a coherent whole a series of technical and stylistic layers resulting from an intricate history[4].

Another relocation was the transfer of the organ that had been in the WUST in the years 1929–1970 (Technische Hochschule Breslau up to 1945) to the west gallery of the Church of St Mary Magdalene in Wrocław. The modest size of the relocated Gebrüder Rieger organ and the Modernist styling of its case meant that it was not well suited to the grand interior of the Church of St Mary Magdalene. For a time, they were used during concerts, and presumably also for liturgy. Today, various possible scenarios of once again equipping the church with a worthy instrument appear viable, with the most interesting – both due to aesthetic and musicological considerations – being the recreation of the Michael Röder Baroque organ in the gallery, tied with the relocation of the Gebrüder Rieger organ to the WUST auditorium (Czajka-Giełdon, Kirschke 2025).

This should be linked to the relocation of the organ by Gebrüder Rieger to the auditorium of the WUST. The further fate of the current instrument is also an opportunity for the University to take charge of its own heritage. This organ, designed for a lay interior, is a testament to a higher under-

[1] According to data from Statistics Poland for 2022, 21,000 people were organ builders. Only 10% were employed in the public sector. There is a demand for newly built instruments, and existing instruments require ongoing care and maintenance (Mapa Karier 2025).

[2] Architect, conservator and art historian Ludwig Burgemeister, was a co-author of the design of the Technische Hochschule Breslau building complex.

[3] Another great loss was the complete destruction of the organ with its Baroque prospect located in St Elizabeth's Church in Wrocław in 1976. Its reconstruction did not take place until the years 2022–2025.

[4] The individual organ segments were disassembled and repaired in the workshop of the Zych organ company in Wołomin (Ulrich-Kornacka 2024) .

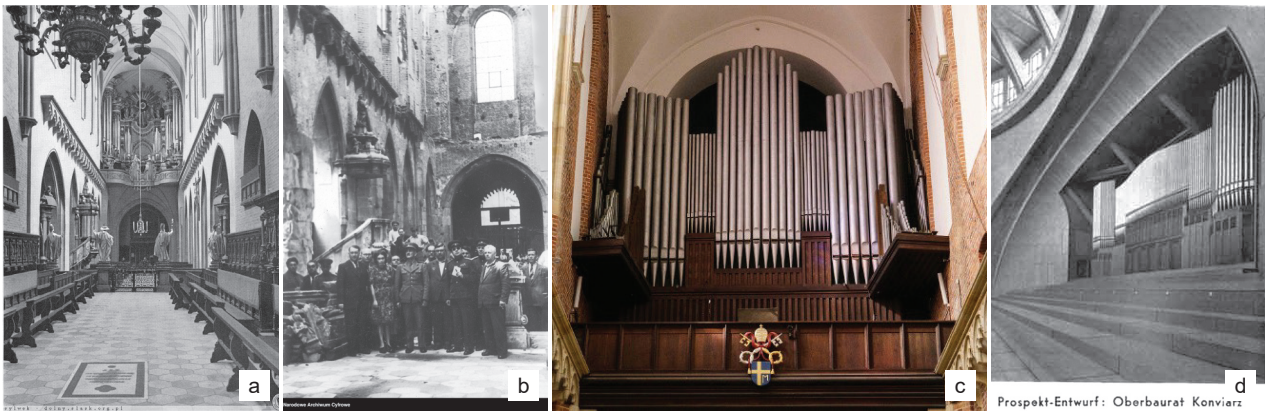

Fig. 1. An example of an organ's transformation due to damage caused by war – the case of St John the Baptist Cathedral: a) Late Baroque organ, photo from ca. 1935 (source: https://polska-org.pl/894026,foto.html?idEntity=545938), b) the organ's condition in 1947 (source: Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe, signature: 3/3/0/9.5/398), c) the organ relocated in fragments from the Centennial Hall, photo from 2024 (photo by M. Pasiewicz), d) Jahrhunderthalle, organ prospect by Sauer, built in 1911–1913, state after extension in 1937 (source: https://polska-org.pl/799235,foto.html?idEntity=542804)

Il. 1. Przykład przekształceń organów w związku ze zniszczeniami wojennymi – casus katedry pw. Św. Jana Chrzciciela: a) organy późnobarokowe, fot. ok. 1935 r. (źródło: https://polska-org.pl/894026,foto.html?idEntity=545938), b) stan organów w 1947 r. (źródło: Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe, sygn. 3/3/0/9.5/398), c) organy translokowane we fragmentach z Hali Stulecia, 2024 (fot. M. Pasiewicz), d) Jahrhunderthalle, prospekt organowy firmy Sauer zbudowany w latach 1911–1913, stan po rozbudowie w 1937 r. (źródło: https://polska-org.pl/799235,foto.html?idEntity=542804)

standing of the art of organ building, which is a convergence of many polytechnic disciplines with the artistry of music. The restoration of the instrument in its original dedicated space, along with the conservation of the surviving substance and complementation as per the best standards of historic organ restoration, would be a most honourable deed.

Technische Hochschule Breslau in the years 1902–1945 and the history of the Gebrüder Rieger organ

At the turn of the 20th century, united Germany was one of the most powerful countries in Europe, whose thriving industry needed a well-educated engineering workforce. Technical schools established as early as the 1820s in Berlin, Nuremberg, Karlsruhe or Munich were no longer sufficient and efforts were therefore made to establish them in additional states. In Breslau, the decision to establish a technical college (Königliche Technische Hochschule) was taken in 1902. In the newly designed complex, between a boulevard and Smoluchowskiego Street (Borsig Strasse), around a dozen teaching and laboratory buildings were planned (Die neue Technische Hochschule in Breslau 1910; Die Technische Hochschule Breslau 1910). They were commissioned in two essential stages: in the years 1905–1914 and, after a pause caused by the First World War and the financial crisis, in the years 1925–1930.

An architectural proposal was developed in 1925 by Max Schindowski and Fritz Schirmer, and the technical designer was architect Gottfried Müller, who oversaw the construction proper carried out in the years 1925–1928. The elongated body of the building, aligned along the east–west direction along the Oder embankment (Fig. 2a), was connected to the older part by curved side wings (east and west), creating a spacious, trapezoidal-shaped inner courtyard. The three-storey high front building featured a basement and an immense usable attic. The symmetrical, three-storey façade that faced Wybrzeże Wyspiańskiego (Uferstrasse) was covered with plaster and was given a steep roof and modest stone detailing to better fit with earlier, Historical-Revival buildings. The 9-axis central section of the building was accentuated within the 27-axis façade. The ground floor featured an arched arcade supported by massive pillars, bound at the first-floor level with a wide balcony. It was connected with an auditorium, which filled two storeys and featured a gallery on which an organ was placed (Fig. 2b). The separated section was accentuated in the roof area by three adjacent triangular gables. The building's mass was simple and heavily cuboid, which set it apart from the older sections. The façade was enriched by the installation of sculptures by Kurt Bimler in the window pediments of the auditorium, depicting prominent academics. The rich ornamentation of the bay window on the west façade was created by Albert Krämer (Die Technische Hochschule Breslau 1985; Gmach główny – część nowsza 2010).

Located on the first floor of the new main wing of the building, the new auditorium was opened in June 1928. The spacious hall, measuring 31.8 × 14.7 m and 9.15 m high, offered a floor space of around 475 m^2. The eastern part of the room had a wide podium and a flat audience seating 400 people. Opposite, on a large balcony accessible from the second floor, was another 100 seats with an amphitheatre layout and an organ, centrally located between the two entrances. From both the front and the courtyard, the auditorium was illuminated by full-height, rhythmically arranged windows. The large volume of the hall, its elongated layout and wooden coffered ceiling, as well as the oak panelling and wooden furniture, reflected and diffused sound, which gave a specific character to the acoustics of the interior – not very good for speeches, but perfectly suitable for organ concerts.

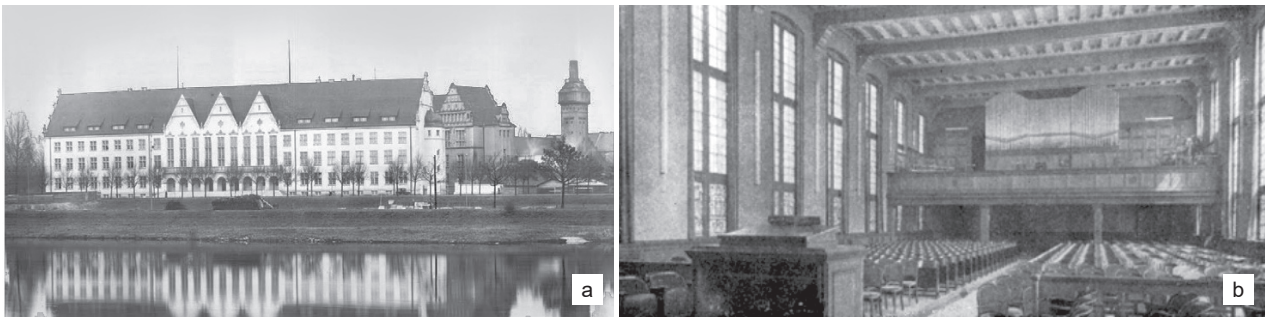

Fig. 2. Main building of the Technische Hochschule: a) as seen from the side of the Oder River, circa 1930, under the three identical gables, nine tall windows indicate the location of the auditorium (source: Burak, Dackiewicz and Pregiel 2010), b) interior of the auditorium in 1929, after the commissioning of the Gebrüder Rieger organ (source: Matzke 1929, 5)

Il. 2. Budynek główny Technische Hochschule: a) widok od strony Odry około 1930 r. – pod trzema identycznymi szczytami dziewięć wysokich okien wskazuje lokalizację auli (źródło: Burak, Dackiewicz i Pregiel 2010, 83), b) wnętrze auli w 1929 r., po oddaniu do użytku organów firmy Gebrüder Rieger (źródło: Matzke 1929, 5)

Table 1. Original disposition of the organ of the Technische Hochschule Breslau auditorium, now located in the church of St Mary Magdalene in Wrocław, builder: Gebrüder Rieger, op. 2375, year of construction: 1929 (elaborated by K. Czajka-Giełdon)
Tabela 1. Oryginalna dyspozycja organów auli Technische Hochschule Breslau, zlokalizowanych obecnie w kościele pw. św. Marii Magdaleny we Wrocławiu, budowniczy: Gebrüder Rieger, op. 2375, rok budowy: 1929 (oprac. K. Czajka-Giełdon)

I. Manual – Hauptwerk	II. Manual – Oberwerk (in an expression case)	Pedal
Principal 8’ Gedackt 8’ Salicional 8’ Oktave 4’ Bach-flöte 4’ Oktave 2’ Mixtur 4 fach 2 2/3’ Dulcian 16’ Vox humana 8’ (in a separate expression case)	Flöten Principal 8’ Nachthorn 8’ Fernflöte 8’ Viola di Gamba Vox coelestis 8’ Gems-horn 4’ Rohr-flöte 4’ Sifflöte 2’ Kornett 3–4 fach 4’ Trompette harm. 8’ Regal 4’	Offen-bass 16’ Subbas 16’ Oktave 8’ Gedackt 8’ Bass-flöte 4’ Posaune 16’ Dulcian 16’ (transmission from 1. man.) Regal 4’ (transmission from 2. man)
Aids		
manubria: 4 O-H, 16 O-H, 4 O, 16 O, O-H, H-P, O-P	Buttons under manual 1: Auslöser, Fr. Komb. II, Fr. Komb. I, Tutti, Handreg ab., Zungen ab, Tremolo O, Tremolo Vox hum.	Foot-operated levers: Octavkoppeln, Normalkoppeln, O-P, H-P, Koppeln aus Walze, Rollschweller ab. Walec Crescendo II man. louvre pedal Vox humana louvre pedal

On 21 July 1928, the new main building of the Technische Hochschule Breslau was officially opened and consecrated. The final element of construction was the installation of an instrument (29 voices, 2+P) by the Gebrüder Rieger company of Jägerndorf (now Krnov, Czech Republic) in the auditorium in 1929 (Table 1). The organ case, 7 m wide, 6 m deep and 6 m tall, was harmoniously fitted into the central space of the balcony. Pneumatic action operated conical wind chest. In front of the organ was a place for singers and a free-standing counter. The Modernist aesthetics of the instrument’s case corresponded to the austere, historical Modern design of the hall. The case was designed as open – that is, without an architectural finial[5]. The upper front line was drawn by pipe outlets formed into two outermost, slightly risalit-like towers and a flat central field (Fig. 3)[6].

[5] In Breslau, the first organ with architecture in a Modernist spirit was installed in the Centennial Hall in 1913. Between the wars, such instruments were built, among others, in the Church of the Holy Family at 68 Monte Cassino Street (Damaschke-Strasse, Zimpel) and the concert hall of the radio station in Karkonoska Street (Rundfunk Breslau, Waldenburgerstrasse).

[6] The organ was first played on 23.06.1929. On this occasion, a lecture entitled “Die neue Orgel in ihren zeitgeschichtlichen und lokalen Zusammenhängen” [New organ in a historic and local context] was delivered by Professor Hermann Matzke (Die Technische Hochschule Breslau 1985, 339).

This organ was one of the first instruments in Wrocław to be built in compliance with the Orgelbewegung's principles – a style of sound distinct for the 1920s and 30s which drew from Baroque organ musical heritage (Prasał 2019, 156).

The organ was highly significant to the academic community of the University, which in the 1910s resounded with music. The growing activity of the university's musical and singing ensembles was coordinated by Professor Hermann Matzke, a versatile musician who took up the post of lecturer in music in 1924 and founded the Collegium Musicum – an organisation for choirs and instrumental ensembles. He headed Germany's only academic Institute for Music and Music Technology (Musik und musikalische Technologie) up to 1945[7]. With the new instrument, organ playing could be trained during courses. The activity of this body was certainly also a form of substantive and technical support for the developing instrument building sectors, among which organ building grew especially dynamically, in no small part due to the application of electricity in the operation of action mechanisms.

In 1933, in the face of the 1929–1930 financial crisis, it was decided to merge the excellently functioning Technische Hochschule with a school that had an entirely different profile, the Schlesische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Breslau. This coincided with the political upheaval in Germany, namely the Nazis' rise to power. The Technische Hochschule tried to maintain its autonomy in this situation[8]. The period's university reform did not have a significant impact on Hermann Matzke's classes, whose curriculum referenced both technical and humanistic matters (Burak 2010). The Institute of Musical Technology was maintained until the end of the German university, and this despite the administrative repression by the fascist authorities, which intensified from around 1942 onwards and found organ-building to be costly and to consume a considerable amount of valuable raw materials (tin, lead, copper and silver).

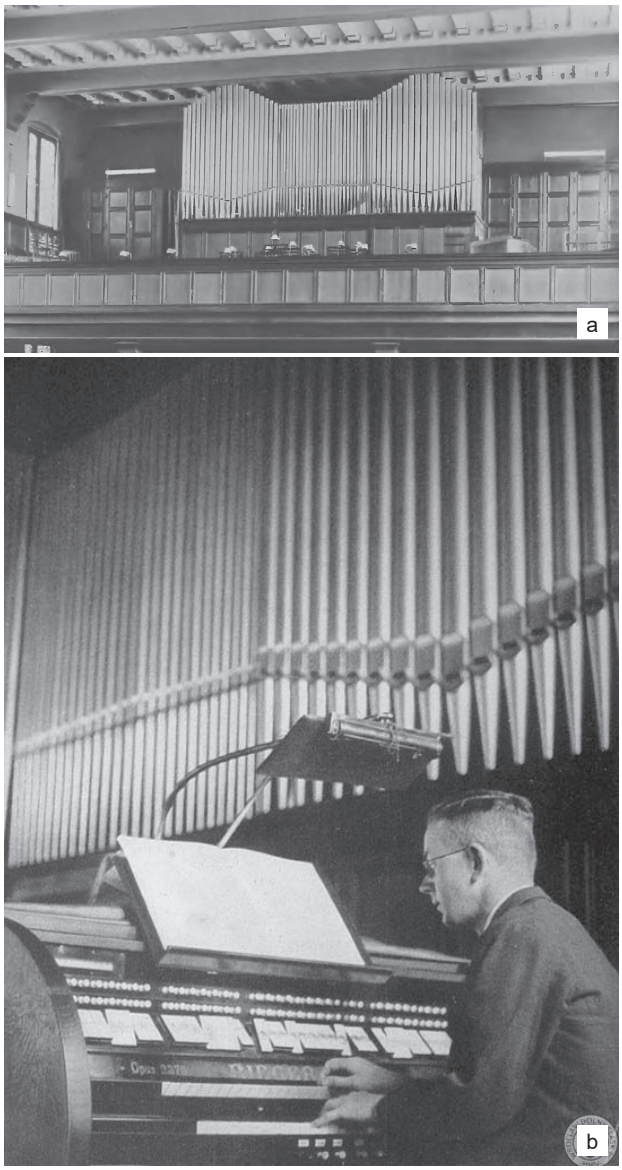

Fig. 3. The Gebrüder Rieger organ in the Technische Hochschule auditorium; a) general view of the balcony in in 1929 (source: Matzke 1929), b) a 1935 concert (source: Wo studiere ich technische Wissenschaften? 1935, 22)

Il. 3. Organy firmy Gebrüder Rieger w auli Technische Hochschule: a) widok ogólny balkonu w 1929 r. (źródło: Matzke 1929) b) koncert w 1935 r. (źródło: Wo studierte ich technische Wissenschaften? 1935, 22)

History of the organ in the auditorium of the WUST in the years 1945–1970

The siege of Festung Breslau turned many districts of the city into ruins. After the German army signed the German Instrument of Surrender, as a result of the Potsdam Conference, Wrocław's state affiliation changed from German to Polish. The university's surviving buildings were renovated and a Polish academic life began forming. The first to begin their operations were the Wrocław University and the WUST. The research and teaching personnel of this university had their roots mostly from the Lviv Polytechnic University and the Jan Kazimierz University in Lviv. The best-preserved part of the Wrocław University was the faculties left over from Technische Hochschule. Fortunately, most of the buildings on this campus had suffered only minor damage, and their furnishings and even some laboratories had survived. The campus housed the engineering faculties operating under the WUST, which soon gained considerable autonomy and, in 1951, the status of a separate university[9].

The main building was preserved almost fully intact. The organ in the auditorium also survived, although it was not fully operational. There are documents in the archives of the WUST that describe the steps taken in 1947 to repair

[7] Biography of Hermann Matzke (Prieberg 2009, 4802–4804).

[8] One occasion to manifest this state of affairs was the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Technische Hochschule in 1935. After 1937, the role and autonomy of the university's technical faculties was significantly strengthened.

[9] The Genesis of the WUST and its initial years are extensively documented in (Burak, Dackiewicz and Pregiel 2010, 179–224).

the instrument[10]. The bid for the work was submitted by two students from the Electromechanical Faculty, Edward Popiel and Marian Śliwiński. The cost estimate included: a full cleaning of the organ and pipes, setting up the connecting pipes, gluing together some of the wind chests for the pedal voices, repairing the punctured front pipes, turning on the "Vox humana" voice, tuning the 28 voices, cleaning the organ console, keyboard and inspecting the motor. The entire work was expected to cost 35,000 PLN. The missing pipes were to be made at the University's expense. In December, Vice-Rector Kazimierz Zipser contacted the Central Executive Committee of the Polish Socialist Party asking for funding to repair the organ[11]. The repair process ended on 22 March 1948 with the acceptance of the completed work[12]. It is important to mention that there was also another political theme emerging here, which increased the chances of a rapid renovation of the organ. On 25–28 August 1948, an extremely spectacular event was to take place – the World Congress of Intellectuals in Defence of Peace (Fig. 4a), which was ultimately attended by 400 delegates from 46 countries. It was part of an exhibition presenting the achievements of the reconstruction of the Recovered Territories after the Second World War, which was scheduled to be hosted from 21 July to 31 October 1948. The cost of this gigantic propaganda project was 715 million PLN (Zwierz 2016).

The refurbished instrument was used for various university events over the following years, as well as when the auditorium was made available to external users as a conference or concert hall (Historia jednego zdjęcia 2020) (Fig. 4b, c). In the 1960s, for example, music classes were still held here for students of High School II, located on what is now Parkowa Street. In 1969, Professor Tadeusz Porębski became the next Rector of the WUST, leading the preparation and subsequent implementation of a reform of the educational process and a change in the university's structure. His plans also included a renovation of the auditorium, tied with the idea to remodel the organ gallery, where interpreter booths were proposed in place of the instrument. The organ, which had been renovated 22 years earlier, was declared redundant, and was dismantled and handed over to the State Philharmonic in Wrocław (Fig. 4d).[13] It was ultimately relocated to the Church of St Mary Magdalene in Wrocław.

[10] Archiwum Politechniki Wrocławskiej, 1947, sign. 135.

[11] The Vice-Chancellor justified his request by the fact that only three days earlier, the proceedings of the 27th PSP Congress had taken place in the hall. Archiwum Politechniki Wrocławskiej, 1947, sign. 122.

[12] The commission consisted of pipe organ professor Julian Bidziński (in 1946–1970, director of the Wrocław music school, then named after Fryderyk Chopin), Dionizy Smoleński and Franciszek Pałka. In their opinion, […] *the works listed in the attached cost estimate were executed expertly. On inspection, it was found: correct intonation of all voices, clean tuning, the addition of missing voices was adjusted to the disposition guidelines for organ construction. The entirety of the repairs was done professionally and soundly* (Archiwum Politechniki Wrocławskiej, 1947, sign. 135, document no. 78).

[13] This was based on a decision of the University's Senate Taken on 20 March 1970. Cf. Brandt-Golecka, Burak and Januszewska (2005, 167, footnote 66).

Outline of the history of the organ in the Church of St Mary Magdalene, the rebuilding of the church after the Second World War and the relocation of the organ from the auditorium of the WUST

Insofar as the Wrocław University and University of Technology had a complex of buildings that had survived the war from the very start, the state of preservation religious buildings in Wrocław was marked by heavy losses. The new state regime, which was hostile to all religions, nevertheless took great care of the oldest churches, treating them as testimony to Silesia's historical belonging to the Piast dynasty. For these reasons, the reconstruction and restoration work also included the severely damaged medieval Church of St Mary Magdalene. In May 1945, an explosion tore apart its tower mass, causing part of the south tower and the west gable to collapse, along with the gallery housing its great organ, which was completely destroyed. Thanks to the innovative methods used during the reconstruction, the tower and gable were successfully reconstructed (albeit without the tower domes) in 1952. Work on the interior continued for another ten years, during which the west gallery was also rebuilt and given a spatial form close to the one from the Middle Ages. The immense window in the gable wall above the gallery was also restored (Broniewski 1952).

After the end of the war, the church remained under the management of the Evangelical parish centred on the city's German citizens – services were held in the surviving sacristy in the northern annex. In the 1960s, a Polish-Catholic parish and cathedral were established in the now-rebuilt church.

There was no organ in the interior during the postwar reconstruction period, a departure from a tradition (Seibt 1938; Kmita-Skarsgård 2013) that had continued since the Middle Ages[14], as an organ player of this church had first been mentioned already in 1380, and after the permanent takeover of by the Protestants, the town council commissioned the construction of the great organ to Michael Hirschfeldt of Żary in the late 16th century. The work was completed in 1602, and as early as 1634 a major remodelling project was carried out[15]. The following were preserved: the location on the cantilevered gallery above the pulpit and the case (Fig. 5a) that consisted of a Late Renaissance main case (*Hauptwerk*) and the back positive (*Rückpositiv*). The dismantling of the instrument and the gallery in 1722 was preceded by the construction of a new great organ, which was planned to be located in the western gallery (called *Burgerchor* or *Hellenfeldscher Chor*). The builder was Michael Röder from Berlin[16]. The design was

[14] The year 1380 is seen as the boundary when an organist named Gregor was first mentioned, which attests to the existence of an organ. At the end of the 16th century, the church sported a large organ and a small organ (700 Jahre St. Maria Magdalena 1926).

[15] Michael Hirschfeldt also referred to as Hirschfelder (154?–1602), with the collaboration of Martin Scheufler, completed the construction of this experimental organ in 1602. Despite improvements during the construction phase, the technical solution was not successful and the organ malfunctioned, and a decision was made to rebuild it fully in 1623.

[16] Johann Michael Röder (late 17th century to the early 18th century), was a pupil of eminent organ builder Arp Schnitger (1648–1719)

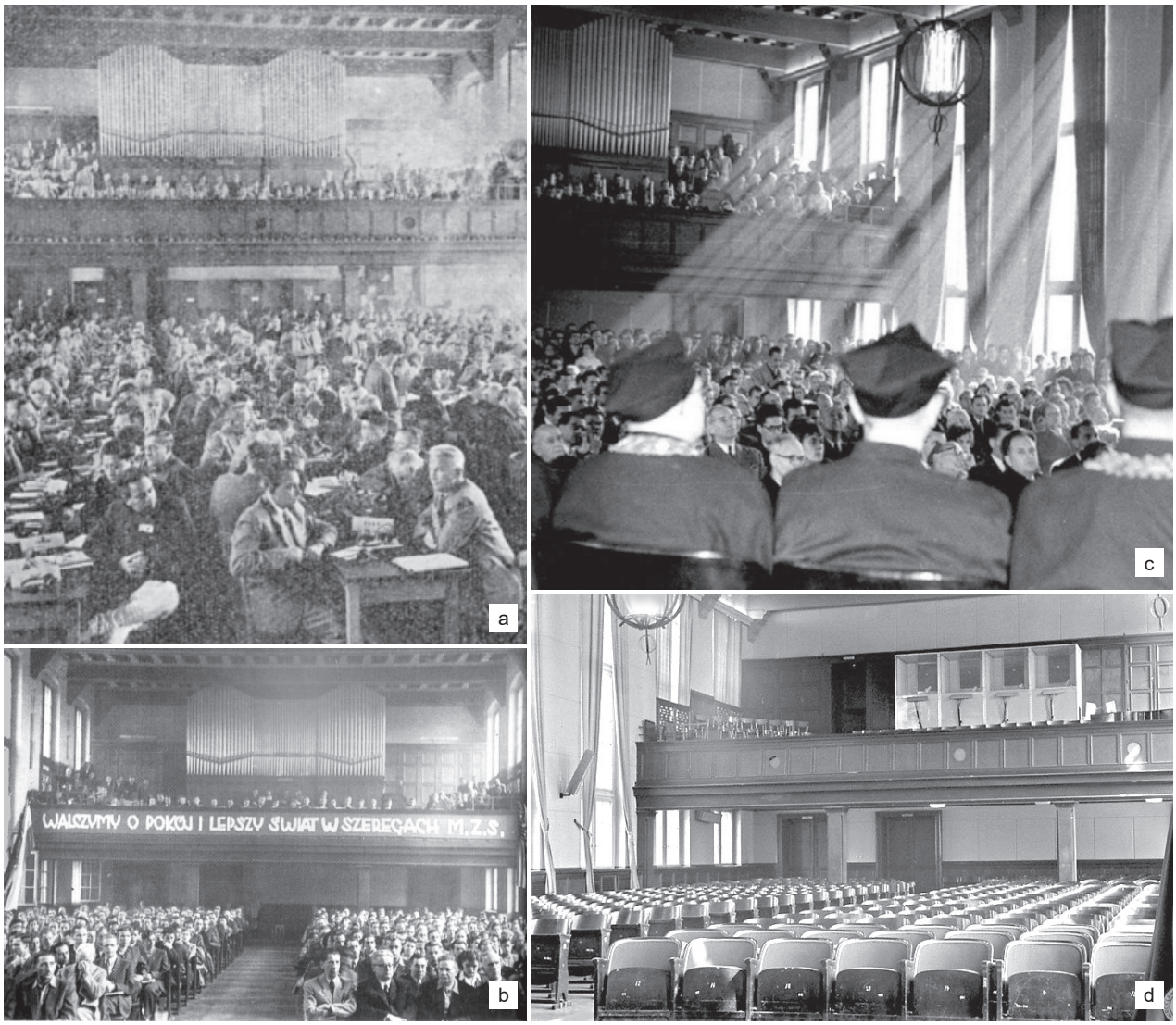

Fig. 4. Interior of the auditorium of the WUST with its organ: a) opening ceremony of the World Congress of Intellectuals in Defence of Peace on 25 August 1948 (source: Słowa prawdy i nadziei 1948, 2), b) proceedings of the Congress of Democratic Unity of Polish Students in Wrocław, July 1948 (source: https://polska-org.pl/672979,foto.html?idEntity=563597), c) view towards the balcony of the remodelled auditorium in 1959 (source: Burak, Dackiewicz, and Pregiel 2010, 287), d) interpreters' booths that took the place of the organ in the gallery in 1970 (source: https://polska-org.pl/863644,foto.html?idEntity=563597)

Il. 4. Wnętrze auli Politechniki Wrocławskiej z organami: a) uroczystość otwarcia 25.08.1948 r. Światowego Kongresu Intelektualistów w Obronie Pokoju (źródło: Słowa prawdy i nadziei 1948, 2), b) obrady Kongresu Jedności Demokratycznej Studentów Polskich we Wrocławiu, lipiec 1948 (źródło: https://polska-org.pl/672979,foto.html?idEntity=563597), c) widok przebudowanej auli w kierunku balkonu w 1959 r. (źródło: Burak, Dackiewicz i Pregiel 2010, 287), d) kabiny tłumaczy, które w 1970 r. zajęły na emporze miejsce organów (źródło: https://polska-org.pl/863644,foto.html?idEntity=563597)

characterised by an innovative approach to the case layout (with a 32' tin principal voice), as well as the organ cabinet (Fig. 5b). The lightness of Johann Georg Urbansky's Baroque woodcarving and the dynamism of the design lines corresponded with the complementary wall paintings that extended up to the nave vault. This organ laid the groundwork in the redefinition of the characteristics of the Silesian organ case, which was based on a concave floor plan line and strong centrifugal tendencies in the composition of its frontal view (Radziewicz-Winnicki 1986)[17].

who had been active in northern Germany. His exceptional technical skills allowed him to animate the movement of the sculptures adorning the organ case, earning him the nickname "Mechanicus". In the years 1721–1726, reusing parts of the earlier organ by Hirschfeld and Scheufler, Röder built a movable great organ in the Church of St Mary Magdalene in Wrocław.

[17] In addition to this organ, the church also had had a small organ on the gallery in the north wall, which was dismantled in the 18th century. There was also a "positive in the singers' gallery" – a dozen-or-so–voice instrument located in the centre of the presbytery's space, directly in front of the great altar. It referenced a tradition of liturgical music unique to Wrocław, based on performing ceremonial pieces in a dozen-or-so–member singing ensemble with the accompaniment of an organ or other cameral instruments. This unusual location had no parallel in either Protestant or Catholic churches in other urban centres. Cf. (Fischer 1821; 700 Jahre St. Maria Magdalena 1926; Burgemeister 1973).

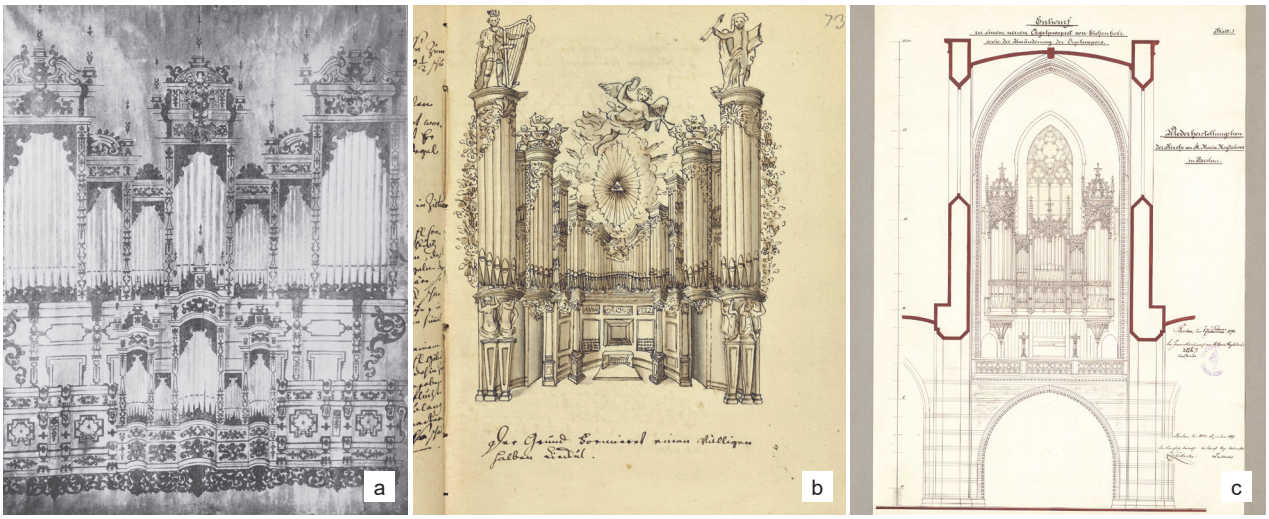

Fig. 5. Drawings that depict the historic organ case in the Church of St Mary Magdalene in Wrocław: a) the instrument by Michael Hirschfeldt from 1602 (source: Burgemeister 1973, 379), b) the Michael Röder organ with woodcarving by Johann Georg Urbansky that existed in the years 1724–1888 (source: Silbermann, 1741), c) case design by Carl Lüdecke in 1889 (fragment) (source: Architekturmuseum TU Berlin, Inv. nr 5999)

Il. 5. Rysunki przedstawiające historyczne prospekty organów w kościele św. Marii Magdaleny we Wrocławiu: a) instrument Michaela Hirschfeldta z 1602 r. (źródło: Burgemeister 1973, 379), b) organy Michaela Rödera ze snycerką Johanna Georga Urbansky'ego istniejące w latach 1724–1888 (źródło: Silbermann 1741), c) projekt prospektu Carla Lüdeckego z 1889 r. (fragment) (źródło: Architekturmuseum TU Berlin, Inv. nr 5999)

The dismantling of the Röder great organ[18] was carried out in 1888, under the pretext of renovating the interior of the church after the north tower had burnt down. The purist Gothic-Revival interior design by Carl Lüdecke was executed in 1887–1891, and the new organ case with Gothic-Revival forms (Figs. 5c, 6a) with organs by Carl and Eduard Wilhelm (3+P instrument, 62 voices) were its key elements. This was a high-quality organ, but with its heavy styling and closed mass composition, it completely contradicted the previous Baroque design. In 1922, the Sauer-Walcker company carried out a modernisation and extension of this organ (3+P instrument, 89 voices, extended in 1938 to 4+P, 100 voices), which greatly enhanced its qualities (Höcker 2020). In this condition the great organ of the Church of St Mary Magdalene survived until 1945 (Burgemeister 1973).

The interior space of the Church of St Mary Magdalene, shaped by its Gothic architecture, has attracted musical circles over the centuries. After the war, this tradition was interrupted as there was no great organ in the church for more than twenty-five years. It was not until the early 1970s that it was decided to relocate the Gebrüder Rieger organ (Fig. 6b), which had been disposed of by the WUST, to the western gallery of the church. A plaque reading "Jarzymowski Fabian, Bruczyno, p-ta Dretyń" informs us of who made the work on the instrument, which can presumably be linked to its relocation. In 1976, after a fire in St Elizabeth's Church, it was decided to move the concerts of the renowned oratorio-cantata festival Wratislavia Cantans to St Mary Magdalene's Church. The interior was still a space suitable for the presentation of chamber music, which was adequately served by the Rieger organ. In 1990, an additional small organ (8 voices, 1+P) constructed by Józef Cynar's company was installed in the south side aisle, in the presbytery area[19] (Konopka 2017). At present, it is the only functioning instrument in the building, as the organ made by Gebrüder Rieger in the western gallery has been worn out by the passage of time and has remained silent for several years.

Conservation analysis of the Gebrüder Rieger organ and a proposal for its relocation

The organ of the Gebrüder Rieger company in the west gallery of the St Mary Magdalene Church is now in such poor condition that it is impossible to play it without extensive repairs and numerous treatments involving basic work, including the reassembly of the entire *werk* (Figs. 7, 8). Some of the finer metal pipes have been destroyed by being crushed, which indicates insufficient protection against tampering. An on-site inspection carried out in March 2025 found the instrument to be authentic, many of the original parts, largely complete choir pipes, the original tongue voices, or entire technological solutions, e.g., swell boxes with louvres, were preserved. The north tower room also houses the original Rieger bellows, which used a Soviet-made engine to power it. The organ console is also largely original, featuring register switches characteristic of the workshop from which it originated, together with enamelled stained plates with descriptions of the voices. The organ case is also complete, but,

[18] Röder's Baroque case, created in collaboration with Urbansky, was dismantled and deposited in the warehouses of the Museum of Arts and Crafts, thus avoiding destruction in 1945. At present, its surviving elements are exhibited in the National Museum in Wrocław.

[19] The rich body of work of organ builder Józef Cynar is described in: (Kmita-Skarsgård 2020).

like the organ itself, it is in need of restoration. The current display inside the church further detracts from the technical and visual qualities of the instrument. As a result of its positioning in front of the large west window illuminating the nave, it found itself in indoor climatic and temperature conditions that are not stable and a number of case pipes are exposed, which was not the case at its original location, and the bass pipes deeper in the *werk* have been obscured. A full assessment of the state of preservation of all the organ's components: wind chests, vents, relays, conductors or the air supply system, including bellows and the authentic blower, should be the subject of a separate thorough survey prior to drafting a restoration work programme for the instrument.

The instrument in question should be renovated and effectively revalorised, restoring its sound quality and technical effectiveness in a suitable interior in terms of size and decor. The organ's current condition brings disrepute to one of Wrocław's most important architectural monuments, the Church of St Mary Magdalene. The continuation of this state of affairs may soon translate into the complete and irreversible devastation of the preserved substance of unquestionable historic value. This threat is all the more serious as this organ is not under statutory conservation under law.

When deciding on the further fate of the Rieger organ, we should consider how much of Lower Silesia's organ stock had been lost during the Second World War and due to the post-war exploitation of that which survived. In this state, all remaining examples of old organ building works should be maintained at all costs. Examples of untransformed and authentic works, such as the instrument discussed here, which comes from the auditorium of the Technische Hochschule Breslau, should be subject to this demand first and foremost. The instrument's historical ties to the university in question is its completely unique value. This organ's very construction is the result of the operation of this school, the effect of the academic interest in the complicated technology behind organ building, which combines technical and artistic crafts, and has its result in the form of a work of architecture. This interest continued for several decades at the WUST, where the organ graced the ceremonies in the auditorium of the main building.

The first matter that should be resolved in revalorisation is to find a suitable place for relocating the instrument. Given the size of the *werk* and the size of the sound layout, the current volume of the church interior appears excessively large. The shortcomings of the organ's placement near a windowed wall should also be eliminated via the relocation. The stylistic consistency of the organ case with the interior design is also desirable. One of the main alternatives is to return the organ to its former location in the gallery of the Wrocław University of Science and Technology's auditorium. We can also consider changing its placement by positioning it in the front part of the hall. Such a solution was considered in the auditorium modernisation design developed in 2004 by architect Andrzej Grudziński and Izabela Ertel-Kuś[20]. This design planned

Fig. 6. Church of St Mary Magdalene: a) after restoration under the direction of Carl Lüdecke, on the gallery is the Gothic-Revival organ by Carl and Eduard Wilhelm (source: AP Wrocław: Ref. 82/1868/0/7/856), b) in 2025, on the rebuilt emporium we can see the Modernist Rieger organ relocated from the auditorium of the WUST (photo by K. Kirschke)

Il. 6. Kościół św. Marii Magdaleny: a) wnętrze w 1891 r. po konserwacji przeprowadzonej pod kierunkiem C. Lüdeckego – na emporze neogotyckie organy wykonane przez Carla i Eduarda Wilhelmów (źródło: AP Wrocław, sygn. 82/1868/0/7/856), b) nawa w 2025 r. – na odbudowanej emporze modernistyczne organy Riegera translokowane z auli Politechniki Wrocławskiej (fot. K. Kirschke)

[20] In 2003, an architectural competition was held to modernise the furnishings and decoration and improve the acoustics and the Auditorium of the WUST. In 2004, the commission to prepare the technical

Fig. 7. The Rieger organ in the space of the west gallery of the church of St Mary Magdalene: a) the organ case and console, b) the mechanically damaged smallest pipes of the first manual section (photos by K. Czajka-Giełdon, 2025)

Il. 7. Organy Riegera w przestrzeni empory zachodniej kościoła św. Marii Magdaleny: a) prospekt i kontuar, b) uszkodzone mechanicznie najmniejsze piszczałki sekcji pierwszego manuału (fot. K. Czajka-Giełdon, 2025)

Fig. 8. Devastated playing console of the Gebrüder Rieger organ located in the west emporium of the Church of St Mary Magdalene (photos by K. Czajka-Giełdon, 2025)

Il. 8. Zdewastowany stół gry organów Gebrüder Rieger znajdujących się na emporze zachodniej kościoła św. Marii Magdaleny (fot. K. Czajka-Giełdon, 2025)

the second phase of the remodel to include a new pipe organ near the western wall, above the backstage passage (2.2 m above the stage), whose case would have had external dimensions of around 6 × 6 m. The argument for this solution cited "elevating the prestige of the main interior of the University" (Grudziński, Ertel-Kuś and Armałowicz 2007, 27). Both possible proposals would have been associated with additional arrangement measures as the space of the auditorium had already been modified. In the event of a return to the gallery, there would be a need to remodel or relocate the rooms housing the sound and lighting controls. Another alternative is to choose a completely different location, which may very well be a medium-sized church with Modernist decor features.

Conclusions

The identification of the history and state of preservation of the Gebrüder Rieger organ from the Technische Hoschule Breslau auditorium allows us to conclude that they possess all the values that qualify it as a heritage object. It is therefore necessary to include it in the register of monuments, which would guarantee its protection from further degradation[21]. We should direct further revalorisation measures, which, due to fact that entire instrument has survived in a relatively complete form, should take into account the restoration of the original sound disposition and performing a reconstruction following what we know of the characteristics of Gebrüder Rieger. The measures, thus planned, should act as a form of protecting and revalorising the Wrocław University of Science and Technology's tangible and intangible heritage. The tangible aspect consists of an organ that has survived in a highly original form, adapted to a Modernist interior style, that follows a concert instrument's characteristics, and is equipped with unique and outstanding technical solutions. The intangible aspect is linked to the fact that the organ was created in close connection with the establishment of the only academic Institute of Music Technology in the whole of the Weimar Republic, operating within the Wrocław-based university. In addition, the instrument is a testament to the high musical culture and a vehicle of the organ building traditions represented by the local academic community. The organ continued to serve the people of Wrocław after the Second World War, giving them an opportunity for live contact with music performed at the highest level during the renowned Wratislavia Cantans festivals.

The proposed project can also be a step towards the effective revalorisation of the organ instrumentarium of the Church of St Mary Magdalene in Wrocław. An in-depth analysis of the rich musical and organ tradition of this church and the proposals for further measures to restore its great organ go beyond the scope of this text. However, even a cursory assessment would lead one to conclude that there was a significant regression in this sphere after the Second World War. On the basis of an assessment of the architectural and acoustic parameters that characterise the Gebrüder Rieger organ that currently exists in the west gallery, it can be concluded that this non-original location should not be considered as a target placement. It is an organ that is too small for the spacious naves and demanding acoustics of the church. Its architectural qualities, which draw on an early Modernist style, are matched by their original location in the auditorium of the Technische Hochschule, while in the church space, just below the immense Gothic window, they completely lose their original elegance and aesthetic harmony. In this situation, there is a need to replace the organ with another, more suitable instrument whose scale would match the former great organ that had existed in this church. In view of the outstanding artistic value and the preserved elements of the Baroque organ case, a reconstruction of the organ by Johann Michael Röder would seem to be the most feasible option[22].

Well-planned revalorisation measures may provide an opportunity to avoid mistakes made in other, similar cases. The organ from the Church of St Mary Magdalene in Wrocław is by no means the only relocated organ instrument from Lower Silesia[23]. It has survived as a largely complete work, while many organs have been destroyed or permanently altered as a result of relocation or inappropriate repair work. Right now, organ building is facing another challenge: the oversupply of instruments from the desacralised churches of Western Europe. Treated as a bargain purchase, they are often not as valuable from a musicological point of view as the often historic organs from our churches and concert halls that they displace.

Just as in the field of construction, the Modernist style developed in organ building with the advent of the 20th century, which produced organ cases devoid of added architectural or figurative decoration. The straight line of the pipes was intended to impact with its monumental, linear outline. This was the vision of the modern organ case presented by the architects of the Modernist period in Wrocław in their designs: Max Berg (the organ in the Centennial Hall – unbuilt), Hans Poelzig (organ in the Evangelical Church in Malczyce) or Richard Konwiarz (organ extension in the Centennial Hall in 1937). This line continued with works by Polish architects who rebuilt Wrocław, such as the new case for the organ acquired from the Centennial Hall and intended for the Wrocław Cathedral, designed by Aleksander Krzywobłocki. The trend set architects and art historians was also picked up with varying degrees of success by the instrument builders themselves. The following organ builders stood out in terms of their perfect sense for Modernist forms: Paul Berschdorff, a German builder from Nysa,

and execution documentation was given to a team of architects from the Faculty of Architecture of the Wrocław University of Science and Technology, which included: Andrzej Grudziński, Izabela Ertel-Kuś and Paweł Amałowicz (2007).

[21] In the absence of statutory conservation, the defunct Rieger organ is in danger of outright disposal as waste. This would run counter to heritage preservation principles and violate the standards of handling cultural heritage assets.

[22] Their dismantling was criticised as early as the 1920s, and the recomposition of the case was demanded by the conservation officer of the Silesian Province at the time, Ludwig Burgemeister.

[23] Cf. on the relocations of Lower Silesian organ instruments after the Second World War (Pasternak 2020).

or Józef Cynar, an organ builder from post-war Wrocław. The instrument from the Wrocław University of Science and Technology is a part of this stylistic trend, which is still so undervalued and in many cases not covered by statutory conservation. It would therefore be desirable for it to once again visually and acoustically complement the interior of the historic auditorium of this university[24].

Translated by
Krzysztof Barnaś

[24] Pipe organs, although no longer central to university life and music education today, is present at many universities in the USA. They are located in chapels, concert halls or dedicated music buildings. Some universities, such as Berkeley and Harvard, in recognition of their historical and cultural significance, even have collections of such instruments dating from different eras (Ochse 1975).

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Streszczenie

Organy piszczałkowe auli Technische Hochschule Breslau (Politechniki Wrocławskiej)

W niniejszym tekście zarysowana została historia organów wybudowanych przez firmę Gebrüder Rieger w 1929 r. dla auli Technische Hochschule Breslau. Instrument ten stanowił istotną część oryginalnego wystroju sali, służąc uświetnianiu uroczystości akademickich oraz prowadzeniu zajęć muzycznych i dydaktycznych w ramach Instytutu Technologii Muzycznej – jedynej tego typu jednostki w strukturze uczelni technicznej na terenie Republiki Weimarskiej. Na skutek zniszczeń, jakie objęły cały Wrocław w schyłkowej fazie II wojny światowej, ocalałe organy stanowiły cenny dobytek nowo otwartej uczelni w polskim Wrocławiu. Zostały naprawione i służyły przez wiele lat działalności koncertowej, wpisując się w krajobraz kulturowy miasta. W trakcie przebudowy auli w latach 70. XX w. jako zbędne zostały przeniesione do odbudowanego ze zniszczeń wrocławskiego kościoła św. Marii Magdaleny, pozbawionego na skutek wojny organów. Po krótkim okresie użytkowania w nowej lokalizacji zostały zdewastowane i pozostają nieczynne. Sposób usytuowania instrumentu w kościele zdradza doraźność i prowizoryczność tego rozwiązania, a obecny stan domaga się podjęcia szybkich i zdecydowanych działań naprawczych. Organy mają dziś wartość zabytkową i nadal zachowują potencjał dla ewentualnej rewaloryzacji i przywrócenia im podstawowej funkcji muzycznej. Tekst stanowi próbę dokonania analizy konserwatorskiej tego obiektu i możliwości jego godnego wyeksponowania zgodnie z obecnymi standardami konserwatorskimi w pierwotnej lokalizacji, w auli Politechniki Wrocławskiej.

Słowa kluczowe: organy, relokacja, rewaloryzacja, architektura, Politechnika Wrocławska, Technische Hochschule Breslau