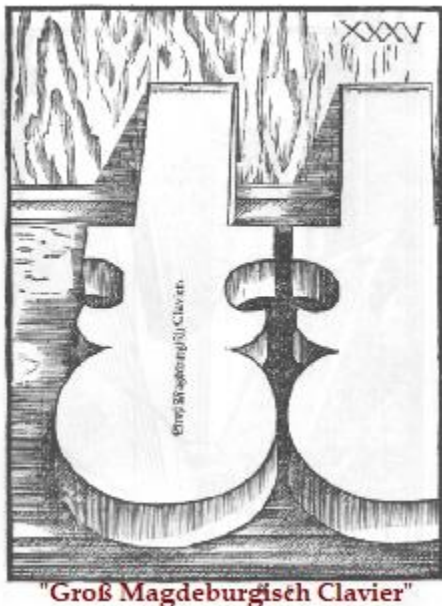


A HISTORY OF ORGANS AND ORGAN BUILDING IN MAGDEBURG CATHEDRAL

The first known mention of an organ in the cathedral is to be found in the contemporaneous *Magdeburger Schöppenchronik*; it is reported there that, during a visit to the city in 1377, Emperor Karl IV heard *de papheit sungen im tedeum und mit den orgelen* – the clergy singing the Te Deum with the organs. Interesting is the use of the plural form. Given the fact that the cathedral had been under construction since 1208 or 1209 and that the consecration of the building, complete except for the towers (which were only finished in 1520) took place in 1363, it is plausible that this imperial cathedral did have a “Positif” – an organ in a fixed position, as opposed to a “Portatif” – long before the completion of what has presumably been an organ gallery in the mid-15th century. But if that is so, we know nothing of it, and there are no architectural indications of where it might have been situated. It would naturally have been a *Blockwerk*.

Michael Praetorius mentions an instrument in instrument in the cathedral a number of times in his “*Syntagma musicum II*”, *De Organographia* (1619) and says it has “recently been removed”. This was presumably done by Heinrich Compenius, who, according to the contract, received at least some of the pipes in part-payment for his new instrument, begun in 1604. From this one could infer that the instrument stood on the west gallery, since its removal was necessary to make space for the new organ. Praetorius tells us a little about the instrument, for example, that it had 24 bellows needing 12 blowers and that the 16 keys of the descant manual were each 3 inches wide. He even provides an engraving of these, seen here.



They were, he says, to be played with the entire fist. However, he also remarks that “people say that” they were *viereckicht*, that is, square or oblong, thus making it clear that he did not actually see the instrument before it was taken down; and of course the keys shown in his illustration do not fit this description. [On page 97 – original edition in facsimile we read: *Zu Magdeburg aber im Thumb sollen die Claves, wie etliche berichten/viereckigt/ und fast 3. Zoll breit und an der Zahl 16 gewesen seyn.*]

Rudolph Palme, a pupil of August Gottfried Ritter in the 19th century (and his successor as “Royal Prussian Organ Consultant for the Province of Saxony”) and author of an influential but in places factually challenged article in the periodical *Zeitschrift für Instrumentenbau*, “Die Orgelwerke Magdeburgs einst und jetzt, nebst kurzen Mitteilungen über die Kirchen”, dates the organ to 1361. Here he is in fact quoting a cathedral guidebook published in 1863, *Der Dom zu Magdeburg. Historische, architektonische und monumentale Beschreibung der Cathedrale. Herausgegeben von C.L. Brandt, erstem Custos an genannter Kirche und Lehrer am Dom-Gymnasium*, who in turn is quoting Praetorius - wrongly, as a careful reading of *De Organographia* reveals, because Praetorius’ recording of the inscription

Anno Domini M. CCC. LXI. Completum in Vigilia Matthæi
Apostoli, per manus Nicolai Fabri Sacerdotis. Anno Domini.
M. CCCC. XCV. renovatum est per manus Gregorij Kleng &c.

in fact plainly refers to the organ in the cathedral in Halberstadt, some 55 kilometers away, which was still extant but no longer playable. The same applies to the attribution of the instrument to the priest Nicolas Faber: it is possible, but we do not know.

The date of 1361 has seemed attractive because the new cathedral, replacing the romanesque building which was destroyed by fire in 1206 and on which construction had begun in 1208 or 1209 reached a state of completion in which it could be consecrated in 1363. However, it should be noted that this meant that only in that year did the construction in the west reach the second story, which in turn means that only then was the organ gallery in a state in which an organ could actually be built upon it.

It should be considered that an organ in the west was not actually usual at the time; Peter Williams writes that this did not become the preferred position for an organ before the 17th century. The organ in Halberstadt was in the south transept, as can still be seen today, and in general the proximity to the usual daily activity of a cathedral or minster church was obviously desirable. Yet the design of the window in the west of the cathedral definitely indicates that it was meant to enliven the appearance of the west facade, and that its appearance from inside the church was considered unimportant - because an organ would stand in front of it?



At any rate, as we have seen, the Emperor heard it, or other organs in the cathedral in 1377. And when in 1498 the Archbishop Ernst gave the orders for the construction and decoration of his burial chapel, he specified that it was to be located *intra Turrem sub Organis maiorem ad occidentem*: between the towers under the larger organ in the west. The use of the word "larger" obviously implies the existence of a second instrument in the cathedral. As to the organs which Praetorius says had been recently removed, he also tells us that this had 24 bellows ("gar kleyn") which were located in the tower, and in fact the construction of the south tower, where a narrow stone spiral

staircase leads as far as the gallery and ends there, does seem to support this. The north tower boasts a quite grand, wide staircase in its lower levels.

In 1536, the organ builder and monk Brother M. Michael built an organ for the cathedral in Halle, which was confiscated by the cathedral chapter in Magdeburg owing to the excessive debt incurred by the subordinate chapter in Halle and brought here in 1541, where it was installed on the upper ambulatory of the Quire, known in Magdeburg as the *Bischofsgang*. Palme records the specification of this instrument, but wrongly equates it with that which Compenius removed from the west gallery, also quoting the date of 1361, which an informed glance will immediately reveal as impossible.

Compenius, berühmter Orgelmacher aus Halle, der 1603 eine neue große Orgel im Dom erbaute, gibt die Disposition der vorhandenen alten Orgel von 1361 nach Namen der Register und deren Stimmung folgendermaßen an*):

- Das Clavir fängt an im F und gehet im \bar{a} hinauß.
- 1. In dem Oberwerke.
- 1. Principal ist nicht Chor Thon.
- 2. Subbas pedaliter und manualiter ist Chor Thon,
- 3. Gedackt ist nicht Chor Thon,
- 4. Octava an voriges Register ist nicht Chor Thon,
- 5. Grobgedackt 8 Fuß ist Chor Thon,
- 6. Mixtur ist nicht Chor Thon,
- 7. Cimbel „ „ „ „
- 8. Octava 4' ist Chor Thon,
- 9.)
- 10.)
- Zwey Stimmen zum Pedal, so nicht Chor Thon,
- 2. In der Brust.
- 11. Ein Regal 8 Fuß,
- 12. Ein Regal 4 „
- 13. Ein Regal Baß,
- 3. Im rück Positiv.
- 14. Principal 8 Fuß Chor Thon,
- 15. Quintadena 8 Fuß „ „
- 16. Gedecktes 4 „ „ „
- 17. Mixtur ist nicht Chor Thon,
- 18. Octava 4 Fuß „ „ „ „
- 19. Klein Octava 4 Fuß „ „ „ „
- 20. Cimbel „ „ „ „
- 21. Regal ist Chor Thon.

Palme's confusion stems from his assumption that the cathedral could not have had three organs during the 17th century, which it definitely did (see below).

It will be seen that this organ, like many others of its time, included stops making up a Plenum, which were not in "Chorton", as well as others which were, making it essentially two instruments in one. But these stops could naturally not be used together. The attribution of the stops of the Rückpositiv to the two tuning systems is possibly not correct. Praetorius tells us that the pitch of the instrument was a fourth higher than "the new organ" (in 1619).

The organ built by Heinrich Compenius the younger from Halle in 1604 / 1605 was considered to be one of the great instruments of its time. The payment of the last instalment to the organ builder is recorded in 1605. A cathedral guidebook by the dean of the cathedral, “*Dom zu Magdeburg, beschrieben von J.F.W. Koch, Domprediger, Superintendenten und Mitglieder ds Königl. Preuss. Magdeb. Consistoriums*” (undated, but Koch held the office of *Domprediger* from 1809 until 1831), describes the organ thus:

20. Ehe man zur Abseite fortgeht, wird man wohl thun, einige Schritte in die Mitte des Schiffs der Kirche zurückzutreten um einen Blick auf die grosse **Orgel** zu werfen, welche über der Capelle in einer Höhe von 50 bis 108 Fuss steht und mit einer Menge von vergoldetem Schnitzwerk und Statuen geziert ist. Diese können durch Ziehtwerke in Bewegung gesetzt werden. So z.B: David und Salomo, welche die Köpfe drehen; zwey Engel mit einer Laute und Zitter, welche sich ganz umwenden; mehrere Trompeter, welche das Instrument ansetzen und abziehen, und ganz oben ein schwarzer Adler, der sich in die Höhe hebt. Auf dem vordern Rück-Positiv steht in der Mitte ein Engel mit dem Notenbuch, der mit einem Stabe den Tact schlägt und zu seinem Füßen und vergoldeter Hahn, der mit den Flügeln schlägt.....

Sie hat 43 klingende Register; ist von 1604 bis 1615 gebauet, und ein Werk des damals berühmten Hallischen Orgelbauers Heinrich Compen. Die Wappen und Namen dieser vier Künstler (Anm.: Bildhauer usw wurden benannt) stehen unter an der Orgel, so wie auch folgende Inschrift:

Laudate Deum in tympano et choro; laudate eum in chordis et organo. Psalm CL

Anno Domini MDCIV die XV. Maji inchoatum est hoc opus organicum et completum est ultima Novembris anno 1615. opera Henrici Compenii civis Hallensis

20. Before one goes off to the side, it would be well to take a few steps into the middle of the nave and look back towards the great organ which stands above the chapel at a height of 50 to 108 feet and which is decorated by a large amount of gilt carving and many figures. These can be made to move by means of wires. So, for example, David and Solomon, who turn their heads, two angels with a lute and a zither, who can turn around completely, a number of trumpeters, who set their instruments to their lips and away again, and, right at the top, a golden eagle, who rises into the air. On the Rückpositiv stands in the middle an angel with a musical score, who beats time with a stick, and at his feet is a golden cock, who flaps his wings.....

It has 43 speaking stops, and was built between 1604 and 1615, being a work of the famous organ builder Heinrich Compen from Halle..... the names and arms of these four artists (*the carpenter, sculptor etc. having been named*) stand below the organ, as well as the following legend:

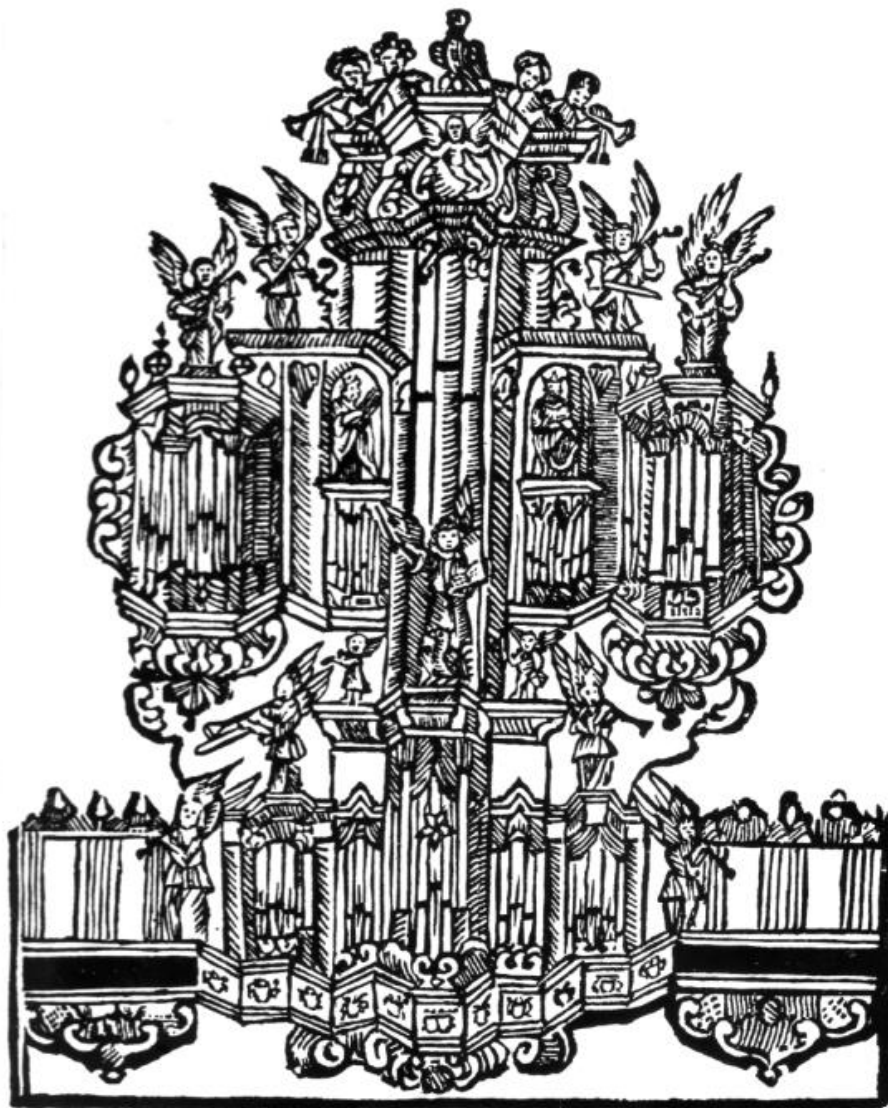
Laudate Deum in tympano et choro; laudate eum in chordis et organo. Psalm CL

Anno Domini MDCIV die XV. Maji inchoatum est hoc opus organicum et completum est ultima Novembris anno 1615. opera Henrici Compenii civis Hallensis

(Koch gives the date of completion as 1615 – presumably not a printing error, since he quotes the inscription on the organ to support the date. But why does the inscription give the date of the beginning of the work in Roman figures and the date of completion in Arabic ones? Was some work done subsequently, and the inscription altered? Or had a painter attempted to restore it?)

Its [specification](#) was recorded by Michael Praetorius, together with those of four other organs in the town's churches. The organ boasted three manual divisions, including a 32' Principal in the Oberwerk, going down to low F (24' length). There were 42 stops, 2 Tremulants, Birdsong and Drum effects. Praetorius records that there were 12 leather bellows but gives no further details. There are some differences between this specification and that contained in the *Dinge Zettel* or contract signed by the parties in 1604, most notably that the latter contains no mention of the 32' Principal of the *Oberwerk*. But it is hard to imagine that Praetorius could have erred in this, especially since he visited the town in 1617 and so presumably noted the specification himself, which was not always the case. In the *Eigene Beschreibung* mentioned above, the edition of 1698 includes amongst the stops of the Oberwerk "Untersatz manual- und pedaliter 32'", whereas in the edition of 1716 it is listed as a pedal stop, now however Principal-Baß 24' with the notice *wovon die größte Pfeife so weit ist / daß sie kaum ein Mann umfassen kann*.

The same work contains a woodcut of the case:



This was extremely richly decorated with its 42 figures, 12 of them were moving. A strange ritual involving the golden rooster on the Rückpositiv, which could flap its wings and even apparently crow (although it is reported that this was actually done by blowing on an oboe reed) was often described; here an account from Koch, op cit:

Mit dieser Orgel wird jährlich am Nachmittage des Michaelisontags, insonderheit den zu Tausenden hereinströmenden Landleuten, ein Volksschauspiel gegeben. Nach Absingen eines Liedes wird nehmlich die Orgel mit vollem Werke gespielt, wobey sich sämmtliche daran befindliche Figuren mit ihren musikalischen Instrumenten bewegen. Nach Beendigung des Orgelspiels schlägt der Hahn drey mal die Flügel und es lässt sich eben so oft ein Hahngeschrey hören, welches man durch eine einzelne Orgelpfeife oder auch durch das Mundstück einer Hoboe bewerkstelligt.

Wann und woher dieser seltsame Gebrauch entstanden sey, ist nicht bekannt, wiewohl er ursprünglich zur Feyer der Verläugnung Petri gedient haben mag. Aber es wäre Pflicht, diesem Unfug ein Ende zu machen. Denn abgesehen auch davon, dass dieses Schauspiel der Würde eines Tempels entgegen ist, und manche Verunreinigungen und selbst Verwüstungen zur Folge hat, so ist es auch nicht ganz ohne gefahr, da in dem ungeheuren Gedränge sowohl, als auch durch das sehr besorgliche Herabstürzen der durch Zeit und Würmer wandelbar gewordenen Figuren von einer so bedeutenden Höhe leicht ein Unglück entstehen kann. Dennoch sind bisher die zuweilen gemachten Versuche, diesen Missbrauch abzuschaffen, vergeblich gewesen, weil der Landmann nun einmal so sehr daran hängt, dass die Messleute durch die Aufhebung dieser Volkslustbarkeit sehr zu verlieren meinen.

Eustachius Zehne, "Die Hochstiftskirche / oder / der Dom in Magdeburg", 1784:

Der Zulauf des Volkes ist an diesem Tage sehr groß, vorzüglich von jungen ledigen Landleuten, welche glauben, daß sie, wenn sie den Hahn haben krähen hören, noch in demselben Jahre sich verheirathen werden.

On the afternoon of the Sunday after Michaelmas this organ is used for an unusual spectacle, especially for the rural population who stream into town in their thousands. That is: after a song a song has been sung, music is played on the full organ, during which all the figures in the case with their instruments are set in motion. After the music is finished, the cock flaps his wings three times and crows as often, which man simulates by using a single organ pipe or by blowing on an oboe reed.

When and how this peculiar ritual became established is unknown, although it perhaps originally had something to do with Peter's denial of Christ. But it is really necessary to put an end to this nonsense. Apart from the fact that this exhibition is not appropriate to the dignity of a temple, and results in sundry defilement and even devastation, it is not without its dangers, because in the tightly packed masses of people, considering the fact that the figures, which have become unstable through age and worms, could easily plummet down from their great heights, there could easily be a misfortune. Nevertheless, all attempts thus far to end this abuse have come to nothing, because the countryman is so attached to it, and because the tradesmen at the market fear that they would lose a good part of their income, if this popular entertainment were to be abolished.

Eustachius Zehne, "The collegiate church / or / the cathedral in Magdeburg", 1784:

The throng of common people on this day is very large, especially of young, unmarried country folk, who believe that, if they have heard the cock crow, they will marry within the year.

This organ was the only one of the five instruments in Magdeburg mentioned by Praetorius which survived the almost total destruction of the city under Tilly's troops in 1631 (when the siege ended, the once flourishing metropolis had a population of just 400). Accounts of the damage incurred vary widely, with Brandt claiming in 1863 that the soldiers had stolen all the metal pipes. By 1632, however, all lost or damaged pipes had apparently been replaced or repaired; by whom is not known. Beginning in about 1650, a series of organ builders visited the instrument following complaints by the organists Meyer and Götten about its condition; finally, a contract was signed with the organ builder Johann Decker of Quedlinburg for a thorough repair. But Jacob Hasse, cathedral organist from 1766 and noted consultant had no very high opinion of Decker's work, and introduced a new figure to the scene in 1699: none other than Arp Schnitger, whom he had encountered while examining the newly completed organ of St. Johannis in 1690. The great builder examined the organ and submitted a report and quotation. Schnitger wrote:

Auf Anforderung des Herrn Hassen, Organiste der Domkirchen, habe ich mit denselben die Orgel alsda genau durchgesehen, und befunden, daß viel und mancherley Fehler darin vorhanden, so sehr nötig, daß sie auff folgende arth außgebessert und in guten Stand gesetzt werden.

1. Müßte aus dem Manual die Windlade herausgenommen werden, von Neuem abgerichtet und durchgehents nue gefüttert, die Ventile Schmäler gemacht und mit neuen Federn und angehenge versehen. So müßten auch neue pompeten durch die ganze Lade und durchgehents mit Mennig und Leim woll auß geleimtränket werden.
2. Alles Pfeiffwerk herausgenommen, gerenovieret und auff den neuen Wind woll eingerichtet, geintoniert und rein gestimmt.
3. Vor das Klein Gedackt, so nichts nützet, könnte füglich eine Vos humana 8 Fuß thon kommen.

Im Rückpositiv

1. wird die Windlade wie im Manual vorgenommen und in Guthen Standt gesetzt, im gleichen daß Pfeiffwerk.
2. vor den alten Dulzian würde ein Neuer gemacht.
3. Die Trommet 8' ist unrichtig in der Mensur, darzu müßten die Großen Pfeiffen Neu gemacht werden und werden dazu durchgehents neue Hosen und Köpfe mit den Stim Krucken erfordert.
4. vor die alte Flöte 4 fuß ein neuer Nazard 3 fuß.
5. vor der einen 2füßigen Floite, so nichts taucht, ein Siffflöt 1 fuß.

Im Brustwerk

1. eine neue Windlade
2. Gedackt 8' lieblich von Holz, neu.
3. Spitzflöte 4' bleibet.

Having been requested to do so by Mr. Hasse, organist of the Cathedral, I have carefully examined the organ to be found there and established that there are many diverse problems to be found in it, so that it must be improved in the following ways:

1. The windchest of the (main) manual must be taken out and made true, everything newly lined, the pallets made narrower and equipped with new springs and attachments. New purses (Pulpeten) must be made for the whole chest and everything flooded with size and red lead.
2. All the pipework must be taken out and restored and then adapted to the new wind, voiced and tuned.
3. A Vox (sic: vos) humana could replace the Klein Gedackt, which is useless.

In the Chair organ

1. the chest will be put into good order just like that of the manual, the pipework in the same way.
2. A new Dulzian will be made to replace the old one.
3. The 8' Trommet (Trumpet) is wrongly scaled, the large pipes will have to be remade, this means they need new boots and blocks with tuning wires.
4. Instead of the old 4' flute, a new nazard 2 2/3'
5. Instead of the 2' flute, which is useless, a Sifflet 1'.

In the Brustwerk:

1. a new chest
2. a sweet toned Gedackt 8' of wood, new.
3. Spitzflute 4' can stay.

4. Octave 2' bleibt auch:
5. Waldflöte 2 Fuß neu.
6. Sexquialter 2fach oder Scharf 4fach neu.
7. Hautbois 8 Fuß oder Schalmey 4 Fuß neu.

Im Pedal

1. werden die Windladen wie die andern Tractirt.
 2. vor den Gedact 16 fuß ein offener Baß 16 fuß von Holtz.
 3. die Rohrwerker als Posaunen 16 fuß, Trommet 8 fuß, Trommet 4 fuß, Cornet 2 fuß sein alle unrichtig in der Mensur, darzu müssen alle die größten Pfeiffen neu gemacht werden, und werden darzu nach der itzigen arth neue mundtstücke, Hosen, Köpfe und Stimmkrucken erfordert.
 4. vor die Cymbel eine offene Floite 2 fuß.
- Ferner müsten die 6 alte Bälge voneinander genommen und mit Leder und Pargament Neu bezogen werden. Darzu würden noch drey Neue Bälgen gemacht von guten Eichenholtze, sampt noch einige neue Canele, mit einen sonderlichen Tremulant, so zum Pedal allein soll gesondert werden, und würde das Pedal von dem Werk gesepariret.

4. Octave 2' can stay too.
5. Waldflöte 2' new.
6. Sesquialtera II or Scharf IV new.
7. Oboe 8' or Schalmey 4' new.

In the Pedal:

1. the chests will be handled in the same way.
 2. An open bass 16' of wood replaces the Gedact 16'
 3. The reeds, to wit the Posaune 16', Trommet 8', Trommet 4', and Cornet 2' are all incorrect in scale, so that all the larger pipes must be newly made and require new boots, shallots, blocks and tuning wires in the modern way.
 4. Instead of the Cymbel, an open flute 2'.
- Furthermore, the 6 old bellows must be taken apart and newly covered with leather and parchment. In addition, three new bellows will be made from good oak, as well as some new wind canals, with a separate tremulant, especially for the pedal, so that this is separate from the rest of the organ.

Schnitger's quote for 997 Rtl. was turned down, and no significant work was done on the organ for another 70 years. It was during the tenure of the organist Johann Christian Burgmüller, organist from 1766 – 1776, that the organ was to be rebuilt, then by Christoph Treutmann the younger.

For well over a century until the completion of Compenius' instrument at the beginning of the 17th century the Michael organ on the *Bischofsgang* had been the more modern of the cathedral instruments. It may be imagined that the closure of the cathedral from 1540 and its reopening in 1567 as a protestant church played an important part in the decision to replace the *Blockwerk* organ with something rather more progressive. From that point on, however, it was the Michael organ which began to seem antiquated, and it seems to have begun to fall into disrepair. It was probably also no longer as necessary as it had been, since the daily offices would presumably have been discontinued after the reformation and the public masses moved to the nave. However, it was not removed from the cathedral. It is Palme's misreading of an important document that has led to confusion on this point.

In 1618, Michael Praetorius und Heinrich Schütz (and possibly also Samuel Scheidt, though this is disputed) visited the cathedral to advise the chapter on the institution of a new "Figuralmusik" – concerted choral music in the new style, possibly with instruments, certainly with *basso continuo*. The primary problem was where to put it; the west end offered no possibility, since the gallery was already filled with the organ and is extremely high up, and the erection of a new and lower gallery would have meant the obstruction of the so-called *Ernstgitter*. The solution was the construction of the *Schülerchor*, a wooden gallery extending westwards of the screen or *Lettner*. Today, the screen is merely a wall, with the exception of the central pulpitum, although its properties before 1618 can only be guessed at. On this gallery, an organ was erected.

In the *Eigentliche Beschreibung*, edition of 1716, is to be read:

16. *Über diß ist auch ein Positiv auf einem sonderlichen Chor von lauter hölzernen Pfeifen, mit 6 Stimmen, und 1. Tremulant, so Anno 1619. zu Cassel von Georg Weißlanden, aus Amberg bürtig gemacht, einen sehr lieblichen und anmuthigen Resonanz giebet, und vor der Reparation der vorhergehenden Orgel zur Music gebraucht worden.*

16. Additionally, there is a positive on a special gallery with only wooden pipes, with 6 stops and a tremulant, made in 1619 by Georg Weissland from Cassel, which makes a sweet and pleasing sound and which was used to accompany the choral music before the repair of the previous organ.

This passage contains the key to disentangling the history of the eastern organs in the 17th and 18th centuries. Obviously, the Michael organ remained in the cathedral, but was no longer used much, or even at all, and consequently became unusable.

Georg (sometimes: Jürgen) Tegetmeyer became cathedral organist in 1715. In addition to being an organist of reputation, he was a composer and knowledgeable in the field of organ building, as well as being a clergyman. It seems that one of his first, possibly self-imposed tasks was the restoration of the Michael organ, which was no longer playable at all. Exactly why he felt this necessary is a matter of conjecture; were there now services in the Quire requiring more organ tone than could be gained from a 6 stop positive? Or was this instrument, now 110 years old, no longer functioning properly? August Christoph Meinecke's guidebook "*Beschreibung der vorzüglichsten Merkwürdigkeiten und Kunstsachen der Stadt Magdeburg*" of 1786 explains the matter thus (also incidentally providing evidence that the organ really was dismantled sometime in the middle of the century):

Oben über demselben, wo noch die langen Oeffnungen mit Staketenthüren zu sehen sind, war vorzeiten auch noch eine Orgel befindlich, die der Satan eine Zeit besessen und verstimmt haben soll, bis endlich der Organist, Tegtmeier, 1715 den schwarzen Gast wieder austrieb, so, daß er in Staub und in Gestalt von Eulen und Fledermäusen ausfahren und der Orgel ihre Stimmen wieder hergeben mußte. Sie ist nach der Zeit noch lange ohne alle Anfechtung gebraucht und gespielt worden, bis man endlich, als überflüssig, abgebrochen und einer auswärtigen Kirche zum Gebrauche überlassen hat.

Above this [a madonna], where the long openings with the fence doors can still be seen, there used to be an organ, which for a time was possessed by Satan, who put it out of tune until the organist Tegtmeier exorcised the black spirit in 1715, so that he flew out in the form of owls and bats and the organ had to reveal its voices again. After that it was used and played again for many years until it finally became superfluous, was broken up and given to another church for use there.

In 1776, the chapter sold "an organ" to the council of Burg, about 25 km distant, for 155 Rtl. Presumably, this was it. A few years previously, in 1763, Tegtmeier who had retired as organist in 1755 but, as canon of the cathedral, was possibly still involved in its affairs, had written to the chapter (presumably supporting his successor, August Bernhard Valentin Herbing):

...meine pflicht erfordern, daß Ew Hochwüird...den baufälligen Zustand der Orgeln in dero Dom Kirche unterthänigst berichten muß. ... Bisher habe Zeit meines 48 jährigen dienstes, diese alten Wercke Mensch möglicher weise geflicket und gestützt, nunmehr scheint das nicht mehr helfen zu wollen, und wird jährlich wandelbarer, und viele Stimmen absonderlich in der kleinen Orgel gar

...it is my duty humbly to inform you, reverend sirs, of the dilapidated state of the cathedral organs. Up to now, throughout my 48 years of service, I have done everything humanly possible to patch and mend these old things, but now nothing seems to help anymore, and everything becomes more changeable every year, especially in the small organ, where some

nicht mehr gangbar zu machen sind...so warden zu
Abhelfung dieses Verfalls zwey wege seyn, entweder die
vollständige reparatur der beyden alten Orgeln, oder die
Anlegung eines neuen werckes ...

stops can no longer be made playable at all...so there
are two things that could be done to remedy the
situation: either a complete repair of both
instruments, or the construction of a new one...

Tegetmeyer was to die in the following year and Herbing in 1766.

Palme writes, quoting archival material destroyed in WW II (he is writing, wrongly, about the Michael organ):

Über diese Orgel erfahren wir ferner 1767 durch den da-
maligen Domorganisten Burgmüller, der bei dem Domkapitel
beantragt, eine neue kleine Orgel mit einem Klavier und Pedal
auf dem Schülerchor erbauen zu lassen und dabei äußert: „Die
jetzt bestehende kleine Orgel hat nun 232 Jahre bestanden“ (***)
mithin Erbauungsjahr 1535. Burgmüller gibt auch die Dis-
position dieser kleinen Orgel an:

1. Principal 4 Fuß Probe Zinn,
2. Gedact 8' „ Holtz,
3. Nachthorn 8' „ Metall,
4. Flöte 4' „ Holtz,
5. Quinte 3' „ Metall,
6. Octave 2' „ „
7. Mixtur 3fach „
8. Trommel 8 Fuß „
9. Glockenspiel auf 3 Octaven
Pedal,
10. Subbass 16' Holtz,
11. Octavbaß 8' Holtz.

(1535 eine solche Disposition!?)

Diese Orgel wurde zum Verkauf ausbezogen 1767 und an
den Magistrat in Burg als Meistbietenden für 155 Taler ver-
kauft. An deren Stelle kaufte man von dem Kaufmann Chuston
eine andere Orgel, die 500 Taler gekostet hatte, für 340 Taler
an. Burgmüller dringt auf den Ankauf dieser Orgel, weil man
in einem halben Jahre, bis zu den bevorstehenden Passions-
musiken, keine neue Orgel würde erlangen können.

Nun berichtet zwar Brandt in seinem Werke: „Der Dom
zu Magdeburg“ ohne Angabe der Quelle: „Die kleine Orgel,
also von 1535, wurde im Jahre 1619 durch eine neue, von Georg
Weiland erbaute, ersetzt, welche 1788 als unbrauchbar abge-
brochen wurde, worauf man dann über dem Lettner eine andere
für den Chordienst aufstellte.“ — Diese Angabe widerspricht
geradezu der vom Domorganisten Burgmüller, oder es müssen
gar drei Orgeln bestanden haben, was kaum wahrscheinlich ist.

“In a letter written in 1767 by the cathedral organist Burgmüller to the cathedral chapter he asks for a new small organ with one manual and pedal to be built on the *Schülerchor* and remarks, “The present small organ has been in existence for 232 years” – dating, therefore, from 1535. Burgmüller gives the specification of this little organ [see above]. (A specification like this in 1535!)

This organ was offered for sale in 1767 and sold to the city council in Burg for 155 Taler. In its place a different instrument was acquired from the tradesman Chuston, which had cost 500 Taler, for 340 Taler. Burgmüller insists on this purchase, because one would not be able procure a new instrument within the half a year before the next Lent concerts.

Now Brandt says in his work: “Der Dom zu Magdeburg” without naming a source: “The little organ, from 1535, was replaced in in 1619 by a new one, built by Georg Weiland, which was dismantled in 1788 because it was not usable, after which a new one was built on the screen”. – This statement directly contradicts that of the cathedral organist Burgmüller, or there must have been three organs, which seems hardly likely”.

One should of course bear in mind that Brandt, writing in 1863, knew the cathedral and its organs in a condition which had seen, since the beginning of the 16th century, the Reformation, the Thirty Years War (including the Sack of Magdeburg), the Napoleonic occupation and the restoration by Karl Friedrich Schinkel, which had radically altered the appearance of the building. Palme, for his part, makes several errors. He has already falsely equated the Michael organ with the instrument which Compenius removed in 1604, and therefore fails to realise that is this instrument which Burgmüller is writing of when he refers to the organ of 1535, and he takes Brandt at face value when he maintains that this instrument was “replaced” in 1619. Furthermore, since he regards it as “unlikely” that there were three organs, he cannot make sense of the information at his disposal, although he obviously knows that the specification given by Burgmüller cannot really be dated to the early 16th century (incidentally, “Trommel” should almost certainly be “Trommet”).

It is likely that Burgmüller’s specification is that of the organ which he wants the chapter to buy; it does not correspond either to that of the Michael organ nor that of the Weißland positive, which had only 6 stops and no pedal. Since he writes that he has “no organ” for the Lent music, one must assume that the Weißland positive was either considered inadequate or was unplayable, which was presumably also true of the now hopelessly antiquated Michael organ. It seems that his wish was granted, and the organ from Chuston installed. In 1784, there was definitely an organ on the screen, because in Zehne’s guidebook he writes

Gegenüber auf dem Schülerchor eine kleine Orgel, welche bei Aufführung der Musiken und Haltung des heil. Abendmahls gebraucht wird.

Opposite, on the *Schülerchor*, there is a small organ, which is used at the performance of the music and at the eucharist.

In 1778, Burgmüller’s successor Johann Friedrich Ludwig Sievers writes that there are *rudera einer alten Orgel*, remnants of an old organ, lying on the *Bischofsgang*. Since the Michael organ has been taken to Burg, presumably complete, these are probably parts of the Weißland positive.

It is during Burgmüller’s tenure, too, that there is some attention paid to the Compenius organ again. It is now also nearly 175 years old; there are some reports of tunings and cleanings, but no mention of any major rebuilds during all this time. In 1769, however, Christoph Treutmann the younger inspected the instrument and wrote a report, repeating most of Arp Schnitger’s criticisms of it, such as that the pallets did not open far enough. The reeds, too, did not meet with his approval:

Es seynd die Rohrwerke insonderheit sehr kurz mensuriret, also daß an der Posaunen 16’ Fuß sechs Fuß, an der Trommet 8’ drei Fuß und an der Schalmey 4’ zwei Fuß an der Länge fehlet, da es dann einen jungen Thon angiebet, keine Stimmung hält, auch keine gravität hat, welches doch der Baß haben sollte.

The reeds in general are measured much too short, the Posaune 16’ by six feet, the Trommet 8’ by three feet and the Schalmey 4’ by two feet, so that they have a feeble tone, do not stay in tune and have no fundament, which the bass should have.

Treutmann was contracted to do the work, which he carried out between 1769 and 1762. In Meinecke’s “*Beschreibung*” of 1786, mentioned above, he writes:

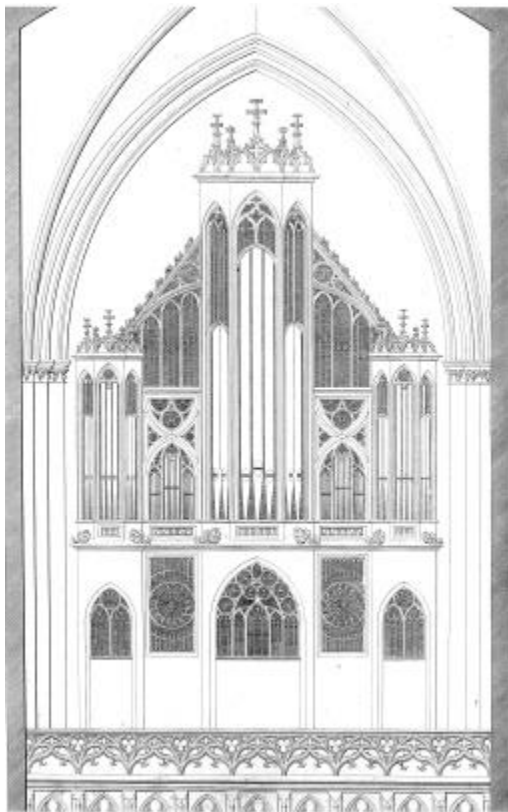
Ehe ich weiter gehe, will ich die große Orgel oben über dem großen Gitter in meiner Beschreibung hier auch gleich mitnehmen, weil das ohnedieß mein Leitfaden schon verlangt. Diese große Orgel hatte in den ersten und ältern Zeiten 43 Register oder Stimmen. Sie ist aber vor einigen Jahren ganz neu reparirt und so zu sagen umgearbeitet worden, daß sie nunmehr erst recht vorzüglich schön in ihren Stimmen geworden ist, die ich also, den Organisten und Sachverständigen zu Gefallen, etwas umständlicher im Folgenden beschreiben will.

Before I continue, I would like to include the large organ over the big screen, because my method seems to require this. This large organ had, originally and in its first years, 43 stops or voices. But it was repaired and, so to speak, reworked a few years ago, so that it has now become really beautiful in its voices, which I will now attempt to describe rather more fully, in order to please the organists and the connoisseurs.

The [specification](#) follows. If this is correct, the pedal has gained a 32' Posaune (a stop for which the Treutmann family was famous), but the 32' flue is gone, if it ever really existed, and there is no Posaune 16', which seems unlikely.

Burgmüller's successor Sievers, already mentioned above, was now unsatisfied, once again, with the choir organ. A new one, with two manuals and a [specification](#) which implies that the playing of continuo parts was no longer a priority, was commissioned from David Hamann from Groß Ottersleben, then a village just south of the city (and now part of it). The instrument was completed in 1807 – too late for Sievers, who died a year earlier.

The town had already been besieged by Napoleon in 1806, and it was occupied by Napoleon's forces until 1814. The cathedral became a barn and stable, but services continued in the Quire. The building decayed more and more until 1825, when the Prussian king Friedrich Wilhelm III visited it, saw its condition, and donated 60 000 Talers of his own money for its restoration, which was entrusted to Karl Friedrich Schinkel and lasted until 1834.



Amongst other measures, Schinkel removed the *Schülerchor* and its organ. The famed case of the west organ, too, was anathema, since his goal was not much restoration as the achievement of a “pure gothic” style which had never actually existed. A local carpenter named Schumann was tasked with the design of a new case, and his drawings were approved by Schinkel. The work of fitting the organ, or some if it, into the case, was carried out by Theodor Hamann, son of the builder of the ill-fated choir organ, who had set up shop in the Goldschmiedebrücke, just a few hundred meters from the cathedral. There is no record of the specification of the organ in this state; it has lost its Rückpositif, as can be seen, and it is at least possible that some of the removed choir organ was used in its construction.

The Compenius case was dismantled and stored in the south tower until 1945, when it was discovered and used as heating material. Only the famous “[golden cock](#)” survived and now has a place in the case of the present organ.

The appointment of August Gottfried Ritter (1811-1885) as cathedral organist in 1847 made Magdeburg a centre of activity in the organ world. Ritter, who was born in Erfurt and was organist of the cathedral in Merseburg for a short time before coming to Magdeburg, was one of the most well-known organ virtuosi of his time, a noted composer and improviser, and also organ consultant to the king of Prussia (Magdeburg was at that time capital of the Prussian province of Saxony.) Liszt, whom he knew well, admired him greatly, or at least implied that he did. (In a letter dated 30. October 1852 Liszt writes *Die Propheten Fuge ist gestern von einem meiner Schüler, Herrn Winterberger, in der Stadtkirche ganz befriedigend vorgetragen worden. Unter Ihren Händen müßte sie gigantisch effectuieren; jedoch möchte ich Sie weder mit dieser noch andern je behelligen --*)

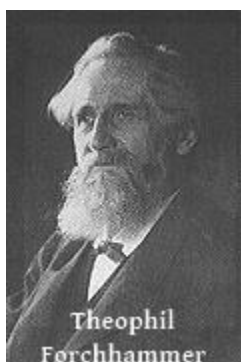


August Gottfried Ritter

Under these circumstances it was no wonder that plans for a new instrument using the reworked 1830 case (some some filials and some ornamental grid work in the base of the case were added, and it was painted dark green) were soon under way. (See picture below).

The builder chosen for this prestigious project was Adolph Reubke, father of the composer Julius (a member of Franz Liszt's Weimar circle), who had his workshop in Hausneindorf in the Harz mountains about 60 kilometres away. He planned and built a four-manual instrument with 81 stops between 1856 and 1861. A fifth manual division without its own keyboard but playable from the third manual was added somewhat later. A peculiarity of the instrument was that the console was located inside the case, behind the front pipes, facing east. The organ had mechanical action and Barker machines. Ritter seems to have been very satisfied with it, although Palme reports that it never worked very well (Reubke was indeed self-taught as an organ-builder; by profession and training he was a piano maker) : *"One sat at this organ as though on a stubborn horse, and was glad to escape without accident"*.

The recognisably classical principle of the instrument was still acceptable, even desirable, to an organist of Ritter's generation, although even during his lifetime he was forced to fight many battles with organ builders who were unwilling to build the repeating mixtures on which he, as a an influential consultant, still insisted. Palme, who succeeded Ritter as Royal organ consultant for the province of Saxony, criticised a number of issues, including the fact that Reubke had recycled Compenius pipework, as he did in other instruments as well; Palme regarded these as too small scaled, and remarked that the organ lacked not only "unity of scale" but also was in fact generally underscaled for the large building.



Theophil Forchhammer

Ritter's successor Theophil Forchhammer's ideas of good contemporary organ-building were quite different from Ritter's own, and seem to have corresponded well with those of Palme. In 1906 he was able to commission an entirely new organ from Ernst Röver, who had taken over Reubke's firm in Hausneindorf. This organ had only 3 manuals, but exactly 100 stops. Palme praised its quick and precise pneumatic action and wrote ,*"The majesty of the full organ, with its full basses (including three 32' stops) is truly overwhelming in its power, fullness and nobility, and fills the immense spaces to the furthest corner."* It was housed in the Reubke case, which was however moved slightly higher and backwards on the gallery in order to leave more space for the cathedral choir. That the picture below shows the Röver organ is evident from the fact that the console is visible.



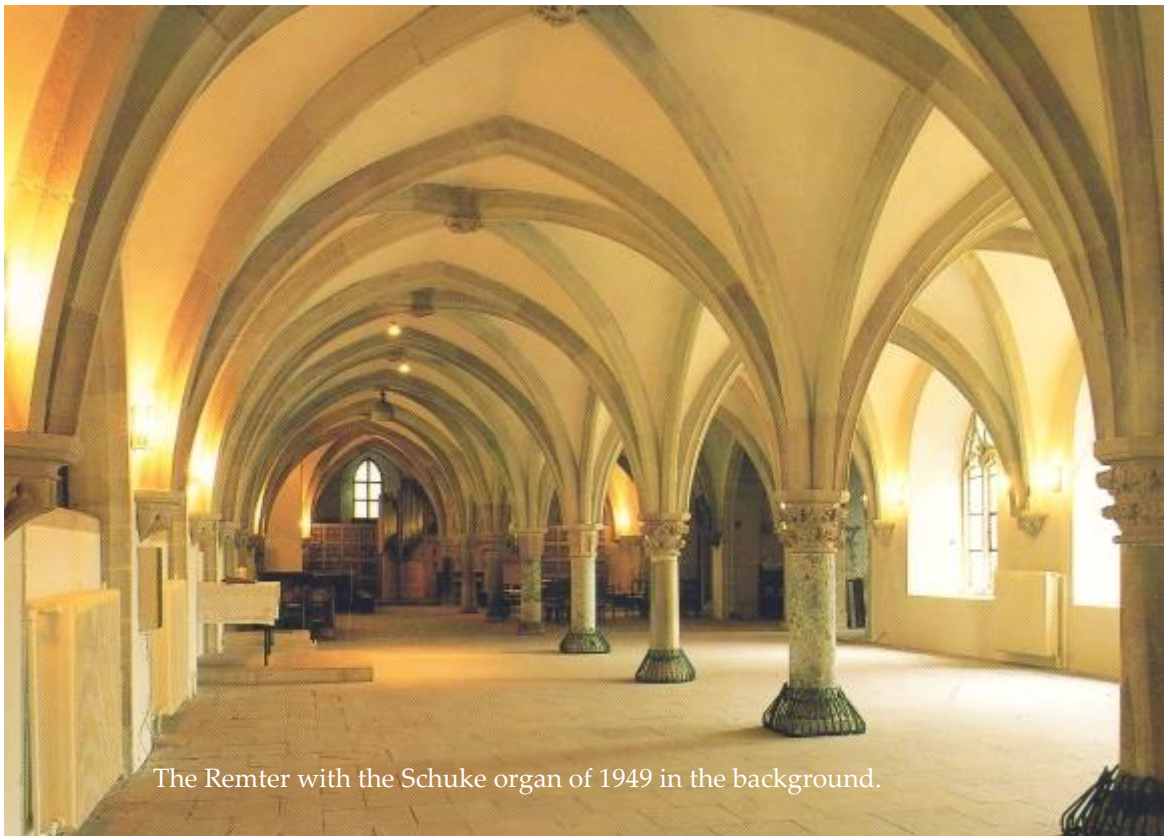
32 years later *Reichsorgelrevisor* and musical director of the university of Erlangen, Georg Kempff, brother of the pianist Wilhelm, wrote in a report on the organ that it was “capable of nothing but roaring and whispering”. His conclusion: since an organ “gains its power from high-pitched mixtures”, there was nothing to be done except to demolish it. It proved to be unnecessary, however; the bombings of January 1945, which destroyed 80% of the city, spared the west front of the cathedral and the organ, but an apparently deliberately targeted bomb placed between the towers by a low-flying pilot on 17th February of the same year ripped a large hole in the west facade and caused the collapse of the vaulting directly above the organ (supporting the so-called “carpenters’ level”. Tons of masonry collapsed and destroyed Rövers’ huge patent windchests (“Kastenladen”). Photos of a few years later show the largely intact case still standing, but it is clearly empty. Remaining material was collected and the organ removed by the local organ builder Felix Brandt. Plans to use some pipe metal for the the organ which Karl Schuke was to build in the undamaged

“Remter” in 1949 came to nothing for the seemingly absurd reason that no boxes were available for packing the pipes in, in preparation for the transport to Potsdam. But the legend that the organ was directly hit and was burned is plainly untrue: the gaping hole in the west front is in fact one story too high.

After the war, the cathedral was closed until 1957. The gallery remained empty for over 70 years.

The Remter of the cathedral, once the refectory in the east wing of the cloisters, was pressed into service by the congregation as a temporary measure - a temporary measure which is still in force today, as the cathedral has never regained a heating system. This very attractive, long but low gothic hall is not ideal for the needs of a worshipping congregation, but in the bombed-out city there was little alternative.

In 1946 a small two-manual romantic period instrument (Furtwängler und Hammer) from the hall of the cathedral was acquired on loan and moved into the Remter by Felix Brandt. For the first postwar cathedral organist Gerhard Bremsteller this could not be more than a temporary measure, and he began negotiations in the same year with the aim of securing a larger organ for this room. The Schuke firm from Potsdam was chosen to carry out the work; of the two sons of the firm's founder Alexander, Hans-Joachim was still in Russian captivity, so that the planning fell to Karl Schuke, who later left the family firm in the hands of his brother and set up his own company, "Berliner Orgelbauwerkstatt Karl Schuke", in West Berlin.



The Remter with the Schuke organ of 1949 in the background.

Schuke wished at first to build a 22-stop, 2 manual instrument with Rückpositiv, using the height offered by building directly under the highest point of the vaulting. In the end, however, he agreed to fulfill Bremsteller's wishes and construct a 3-manual organ with 29 stops against the north wall. This meant that the most interesting part of the facade, the little "Oberwerk", was directly behind a pillar and not visible in its entirety from anywhere in the room. The specification of the organ, which was completed in 1949, would seem typical of a neo-baroque instrument, but the narrow mouths and flues and very high cut-ups of its principals gave it a fluty, slightly woolly and imprecise sound, far removed from the exaggerated brightness favoured by other builders of the period. Some found the lack of hardness in the tone pleasant, but the quite narrow scales did not provide any great carrying

power in the difficult room, and the lack of harmonic development in the tone of the foundations made it difficult to bind the large mixtures into the tonal concept. [Another picture.](#)

The organ was beset with tonal and mechanical problems from the start; a major rebuild of the Hauptwerk action became necessary as early as 1959, although it was only carried out in 1964. Subsequent cleanings, restorations and maintenance attempts, the last in 1992, could not prevent the organ, which had been declared an historical monument in 1987, from becoming unusable in 1995; a new heating system had dried out the atmosphere in the room to an extent which had caused extensive splitting in the chests, so that runnings and cyphers were a constant problem. A decision was taken by the cathedral council not to repair the organ but to replace it temporarily with an electronic instrument, pending agreement with the *Landesamt für Denkmalpflege* as to the future of the instrument. In 2007, permission to remove the organ from the Remter, which was about to be renovated, was finally granted after a reshuffle of competencies by the newly responsible lower authority, and the instrument was removed to an organ museum in Bavaria in July of that year. It has since gone to Trzebinia in Poland, where its case has been widened and has received new front pipes. [Picture.](#) The installation there was carried out by the firm of Jakubowski.

An account of the history of the instrument and the long squabbles with the monuments authority (in German) can be read [here](#).

After the repairs to the cathedral had been more or less completed in 1955, Gerhard Bremsteller began negotiations for the building of a large, electric action organ on the west gallery, with a smallish "Gegenorgel" on the "Bischofsgang", the triforium of the choir. This was to have mechanical action, but also to be electrically playable from the console of the main organ, nearly 120 metres away. Tenders were called for from a number of firms, including Schuke, Jehmlich and Eule. A number of problems arose, however; amongst them the following:

- the commission for historic buildings was not prepared to allow the building of an organ in either of these positions, even though historically organs had stood there for at least most of the 750 years of the cathedral's history.

- the cathedral has been the property of the state since the Prussian secularisation of 1830. This meant that the state was responsible for the organ and for the financial aspects of the project. Obviously the communist government was not especially interested, but did in fact provide a certain amount of money annually for some years, with the proviso that the money had to be spent within the year. Since there was never enough to complete the organ, and since the necessary materials could not be acquired within the allocated time span, the contract was never awarded.

- the official diocesan organ consultant at the time, Willi Strube, warned (mistakenly) that acoustic considerations made it inadvisable ever to build another instrument on the west gallery.

In the meantime the cathedral obtained the use of an undistinguished electro-pneumatic organ by the Schuster firm from Zittau. This organ had been constructed for the Heilig-Geist-Kirche, the first of Magdeburg's five inner-city gothic parish churches to be reconstructed after the war. The Heilig-Geist-Kirche was, however, imploded in the fifties, together with the ruins of the Katharinen-, Ulrichs- and Jakobskirchen, so that the organ was redundant. It was set up in the south aisle, where it remained until 1970, when it was removed, without its case, its 16' Pedal

open, or the pipes of the 8' principal or 4' octave which had been in the case front, to the Nikolaikirche in the "Neue Neustadt". There it will soon make way for a new instrument.

In 1970, "VEB Potsdamer Orgelbau Alexander Schuke" constructed an instrument in the north transept of the cathedral. More about this organ, still being played and appreciated today, and the two other newer instruments in the cathedral and the Remter, can be found on the main web-site of the Dommusik.

Barry Jordan

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