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HOUSES FOR MUSIC. TRADITION AND MODERNITY

DOMY DLA MUZYKI. TRADYCJA I NOWOCZESNOŚĆ

A b s t r a c t

The subject of the publication are objects which in the functional assumption serve the music, and the perception of the music by listeners is a measure of its quality. The publication focuses on the presentation of two issues: – the evolution of space around and outside the concert hall; – continuation of a tradition in shaping the auditorium. The following examples were selected for the presentation: Two historical examples; La Scala in Milan, the 18th century and the Royal Concertgebouw in Amsterdam in the 19th century. Two buildings that are famous for music that show the beginnings of the principles of forming the concert/opera halls. Two contemporary examples: Opera House in Oslo, Snohetta, 2007 and the Philharmonie de Paris, Jean Nouvel, 2015. In both cases, the new widely understood public space is an integral element of the architectural formation of the building. While the audience is a continuation of a good tradition.

Keywords: music, city, public space, architecture, tradition, modernity, concert hall, La Scala, Royal Concertgebouw, Philharmonie de Paris, Oslo Opera House

S t r e s z c z e n i e

Przedmiotem publikacji są obiekty, które w założeniu funkcjonalnym służą muzyce, a odbiór muzyki przez słuchaczy jest miarą ich jakości. W publikacji skupiono się na ukazaniu dwóch zagadnień: ewolucji przestrzeni wokół i poza salą koncertową, oraz kontynuacji tradycji w kształtowaniu widowni. Do prezentacji wybrano: dwa przykłady historyczne: La Scala w Mediolanie, XVIII w. i Royal Concertgebouw w Amsterdamie XIX w. Dwie słynne dla muzyki budowle, które ukazują początki zasad formowania sal koncertowych/operowych. Dwa przykłady współczesne: budynek opery w Oslo, arch. Snohetta, 2007 r. oraz budynek filharmonii w Paryżu, arch. Jean Nouvel, 2015. W obu przypadkach nowa, szeroko rozumiana przestrzeń publiczna jest integralnym elementem struktury architektonicznej budynku. Podczas gdy widownia jest kontynuacją dobrej tradycji.

Słowa kluczowe: muzyka, miasto, przestrzeń publiczna, architektura, tradycja, nowoczesność, sala koncertowa, La Scala, Royal Concertgebouw, Philharmonie de Paris, Oslo Opera House

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The admiration for the advanced craftsmanship, for the achievements of virtuosity, is a multicultural and universal value. It affects not only art but potentially all human activity…

Denis Dutton[2]

1. INTRODUCTION

Houses for music from the earliest times were an important part of the city and urban development. Today, they transmit to the next generations the historical identity of the place, emphasize the importance of culture in the social perception of the city, they contribute to creating its character. Functional and spatial solutions, location and above all, the artistic events for which the buildings are a background, make the "musical" edifice take on a special significance. Quoting, not directly the contemporary philosopher Hans Georg Gadamer[3], these, as well as other objects connected with culture are related to the quality of the city. With their existence, architectural beauty and the meaning of the place they talk about the inhabitants live.

The subject of the presentation is opera and philharmonic buildings. Both types of the objects in the formal solutions are different, because as in the building of the philharmonic building the main focus is a concert and the main goal is a perfect solution of the acoustics and architecture of the concert hall, then in the opera house there is also important the visual aspect of the spectacle. This difference makes the space of the backstage, technical service of the performance, the space for artists and technical workers increase the scale and complexity of the opera building.

In both cases, **the part intended for the audience**, including the entrance hall, cloakroom, foyer, restaurant, etc., are similar.

It can be said that the space for the audience, around and outside the main hall has features of the **public space**. Additionally, in the realizations from recent years, this space becomes more and more important. In the formal solutions, it becomes an element that distinguishes the architecture of the object. It integrates the space around the auditorium with the urban space that surrounds the building for music.

In contrast to new and innovative solutions in the public space, the concert hall itself and shaping the audience have still connotations with dignity forms from the past.

2. TRADITION

In order to introduce houses for music from the past, existing objects strongly embedded in the urban context were selected; La Scala in Milan (18th century) and Royal Concertgebouw in Amsterdam (19th century). Two buildings famous for music, significant for the shaping of the urban planning, and at the same time are milestones for the creation of rules for the design and construction of concert halls and opera halls.

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[2] Dutton D. (2019), *Instinct of art*. Cracow, p. 17.

[3] Gadamer G. H. (2004), *Truth and method*, London, New York.

Teatro Alla Scala in Milan, built in 1778, based on the design of Giuseppe Piermarini is located in the city center, next to the fourteenth-century church of Santa Maria Delle Scala. Nearby, there is the second equally important for Milan Piazza del Duomo with the famous cathedral. Both places are unique due to the gallery of Wiktor Emanuel, one of the first shopping malls (1865–1867), in which cast iron and glass were used to create a large, roofed public space[4]. Trying to determine the meaning of the described place, Teatro Alla Scala is probably the most famous opera theater in the world, compared only with the Metropolitan Opera in New York, the same distinctive reference point on the cultural map of Europe. For the inhabitants of Milan, the la Scala has great importance. The building was built from the initiative and funds of wealthy burghers when in 1776 the building of the former opera Teatro Regio Ducale has burned down. Since then, the popularity of this place has begun.

What is significant, is that the building itself has not been introduced in the city plan, as show the archival drawings. Only with time, the place takes on a more sophisticated character. The architecture of the building kept in the classical forms of that period also can be said that is modest.

At the beginning of the 19th century, the opera theater in Milan was considered the most important place in the musical world. The greatest composers wrote pieces especially for the La Scala scene. Opera has become an integral element that built the identity of the city and its residents[5].

The influence of Teatro Alla Scala on the life of the city of Milan can also be seen in the evolution of the square, which with the time has been created in front of the main entrance. Piazza Della Scala lives and is constantly changing. It is interesting how great meaning has an opera building in the structure of the square. In the eighteenth century, Gianbattista Nolli (1701–1756) drew a plan of Rome, in which the public buildings were marked as open with the courtyard in the middle, which made their interiors as an extension of the public space. At the same time the remaining buildings – the private ones, were drawn as closed. The interior of the Milan Opera House was such a continuation of the external public space. This is how the inhabitants of Milan perceive their opera, which can be seen in the call for competition projects[6].

The classical style of the building was preceded by an arcade so that the rich burghers could comfortably enter the interior[7]. From the arcade through the foyer and the banquet room the spectators reach the main hall. There is a clear and impassable boundary in the building between the part intended for the public and a part intended for the artists. The divisions also take place within the audience. G. Piermarini designed it in the shape of a horseshoe, with four floors separated from each other, above which there are two more levels of open galleries. The remaining parts of the functional layout of the interior were typical of the opera. Thanks to leaving the lowest level for the standing audience, in 18th century the opera could accommodate 2,800 listeners. Currently, it has almost 2,100 seats.

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[4] Basista A., Nowakowski A. (2012), *How to read architecture,* pp. 292–293.

[5] Fontana C., *La Scala in Its Institutional Gusie* [in] Francesco C. (2005). *Teatro alla Scala. The Magnificent Factory*, Milano, pp. 22–25.

[6] Oh, E. (2015) *A Bold Proposal for Revitalization Wins Third Place in Milan's Piazza della Scala Competition.* [online] Archdaily. www.archdaily.com/771329/a-bold-proposal-for-revitalization-wins-third-place-in-milans-piazza-della-scala-competition (access: 01.2019).

[7] Newhouse, V. (2012) *Site and Sound. The Architecture of New Opera Houses and Concert Halls.* New York. page.25, *The façade of Teatro alla Scala.* [online] www.turismo.milano.it/wps/portal/tur/en/arteecultura/capolavorieopere/pittura/facciata_teatro_scala (access: 01.2019).

The outstanding acoustic conditions of la Scala were thanks to placing a concave channel under the floor of the orchestra pit, which has a great influence on the unique sound of the orchestra. The solution was later repeated with great success in the old Metropolitan Opera House in New York[8].

The interior of la Scala has survived until today in an almost unchanged condition. At the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, a decision was made about the expansion of the opera house. The task was entrusted in 2000 to the famous Italian architect Mario Botta.

Mario Botta has modernized the stage and its technical facilities. As a result, the space above the stage in the form of a technical tower is 38 meters high. Technical and warehouse solutions enable unlimited shaping of the scenography. The interior was demolished besides the main hall and the part under the museum part of La Scala. Due to the guidelines, the historical part of the building and the theater hall were not affected. The arrangement of the building that Mario Botta made in 2001–2004 enabled the introduction of La Scala into a new era. At the same time, it is a perfect example of interference in the historical system, with full respect for its values and traditions.

The Royal Concertgebouw in Amsterdam is the second, extremely important house for music, not only because of its age. It is located at the Museumplein. It is a unique space that has preserved the form of a giant lawn in the city center. In 1999, the square has been modernized according to the design of the Scandinavian landscape architect Sven-Ingvar Andersson. A car park and a supermarket were located under the grass. However, all the traditional functions of the square have been preserved, which is still a place of outdoor cultural and entertainment events, such as concerts or festivals, and in the winter the fountain turns into an ice rink. Opposite the Concertgebouw, there is the Rijksmuseum, and to the left, there is the Van Gogh Museum and the Stedelijk Museum. A peculiar "zone of culture" has been created between them.

The Concertgebouw building, similar to la Scala, is not an example of exceptional significance for the history of architecture. The building was erected between 1883 and 1888. It was designed by Adolf Leonard van Gendt (1835–1901), who based his design on the Gewandhaus in Leipzig in 1886. The building was created on the boggy ground of the former peat bog, therefore it was necessary to use untypical construction solutions. Nearly 2,200 long piles were driven into the ground, thanks to which the foundation was supported.

The central place of the building is Grote Zaal – a big concert hall capable to accommodate almost 2,000 people. It is intended to perform and listen to symphonic music. It allows the performances of a 120-person orchestra, and together with the choirs, the stage can hold up to 500 artists. The hall has a length 44 m, width 27.5, height 17.5 m, it was designed on a rectangular plan. It is a characteristic example of a "shoebox". At the back of the building, a small oval concert hall has been designed. Kleine Zaal, for 400 seats, which serves recitals and chamber music concerts.

The uniqueness of Grote Zaal is not only due to the excellent acoustics of the interior. This is probably the first case in the history of the concert hall in which the audience can also sit on the stage, behind the back of the orchestra. Thanks to this, it was possible not only to listen to the concert in perfect conditions but also to be in the center of events and to become almost a part of the orchestra.

[8] Stolfi G. Fabbri E. (2006) *Teatro Alla Scala: The Magnificent Factory*, Milan, pp. 28–52.

The audience is surrounded from three sides by a very simple, shallow balcony, supported by columns. Both the balcony, the coffered ceiling, and all of the decorations have great importance for the acoustics of the interior. The perfect sound is the result of "cooperation" of the individual elements, which captures the symmetry and balance of the entire system[9]. The main hall at Concertgebouw became the reference point for the architects of other houses for music, not only at the time of its creation but also today.

3. MODERNITY

Nowadays, urban planning is more than ever trying to find an answer to the diversity of contemporary social and economic needs. Diversity is also reflected in the concepts of contemporary architecture.

This architectural diversity is also a feature of both examples, which were chosen to show "modernity" in the architecture of houses for music. Two contemporary objects were selected to characterize the topic; Opera House in Oslo, 2007, Snohetta and Philharmonic in Paris, 2015, Jean Nouvel.

The objects are presented in two ways, following Bernard Tschumi[10]: how the form responds to the functional conditions of the object and how the shape corresponds to the context of the location. Bernard Tschumi introduces to the discussion three relations that can occur between the context and architectural concept: conflict, mutual indifference, mutual mutuality. In each case, the architectural concept of the building remains the basic value of the work.

The Opera House in Oslo, located on the border of the fjord and the old town, in the suburbs, was supposed to become the beginning of a new life in the revitalized district, it was also to become a new symbol of the cultural interests of the city.

There are three elements of the architectural composition in the described opera house:

- the wavy wall is the border between the public part of the Opera and the parts that require the purchase of a ticket,
- the factory is a very extensive production part, there are; workshops, rehearsal rooms, offices, etc.,
- the carpet is a sculptural shaped floor, arranged around and above the building – a generally accessible public space.

The building, both in its structure and in its form, is divided into two parts: the first one, intended for the public and the second one, containing facilities for artists and technology. From the north, there are loud rooms and rooms with functions for dancers and singers. From the south side, there are changing rooms and offices located. Public spaces with a square and foyer, as well as the most important interiors for opera performances are located on the west side. The building has two rooms: the main one for 1,370 seats and a small multipurpose hall for 400 seats in the audience. The most important place, the grand hall is located in the middle of the entrance hall. In contrast to the bright foyer that fits in with the environment, the interior of the grand hall is a closed space thanks to dark oak claddings.

The auditorium in the shape of a classic horseshoe is surrounded by three levels of balconies. The idea of the designers was to obtain short distances between the audience and the

[9] Long M. (2005). *Architectural Acoustics.* San Diego.
[10] Tschumi B. (2010). *Event Cities 4.* The MIT Press.

artists, thus ensuring good visibility and optimal acoustics. The reverberation time can be adjusted by movable curtains and control devices located along the rear walls. The balcony geometry also optimizes the acoustics.

Regardless of the music events that take place in the building, the public roof – the carpet – is an attractive, frequently visited meeting place. Literary descriptions do not fully reflect the uniqueness of architecture created by the Snohetta studio. It is worth to quote the phrase of the designer Kjetil T. Thorsen: "The Oslo Opera is both landscape and architecture. Its form is an urban link, not "dividing the expressive sculpture[11]. Public spaces inside and outside the building make it meet the social task extremely well. It is an attractive place to spend time for the inhabitants, although music is its basic purpose.

The building of the Philharmonie de Paris, designed by Jean Nouvel, is not an unambiguous object in its architectural diversity. A high building with a distinctive shape, complex geometry, is located in the vicinity of equally expressive buildings: the deconstructive Parc de la Villette by Bernard Tschumi (1982–1998) and the postmodern Cite de la Musique by Christian de Portzamparc (1984–1990). Nouvel's building fits in, having similar assumptions; it is not the context of the surrounding but the manifestation of dissimilarity and modernity. The shape of the building was influenced by Maestro Pierre Boulez, a composer, and conductor, who strongly influenced designs of a number of musical objects in France at the turn of the 20th and 21st century. He dreamed of creating a room adapted to new music: concerts with electronic sound, able to change the shape and layout of the audience, integrating musicians and music lovers around the unique event which is a concert, for the performance of great contemporary music works.

The Philharmonie de Paris is a building with complex geometry and unique materiality. The building is a shiny, spirally formed block that contrasts with the matt, angular housing. Its skin is a mosaic of aluminum tiles that resembles bird silhouettes. With this form, Nouvel finds a continuum for the environment. *The Philharmonie de Paris is a prestigious event that maintains a harmonious relationship with the Parc de la Villette, La Cite de la Musique and the Paris ring road*[12].

Nouvel designed the Philharmonic building as a hill that invites to the peak, from which you can enjoy a panoramic view of north-east Paris. The roof level can be reached by elevators in front of the main lobby. An independent route is a zigzag path up to the lawn to the la Villette Park. In the architect's intention, the building is an extension of the park, a special public place open to everyone[13]. The interiors of the building provide comfort to the users and the entire building emphasizes the uniqueness of the event which is participation in the concert with light, the variability of matte and mirror surfaces[14]. In spite of the author's assurances about the harmonious incorporation into the urban context, the large dimensions, the very expressive form of the object do not allow its neutral perception. *The Guardian* compared the building to a cracked alien spacecraft[15].

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[11] Architecture is the Music of Space, (2016) Architektura – Murator. no 8, p. 43.

[12] Marquez, C. F. Richard, L. (2016) *Jean Nouvel 2007–2016 Contemporary reflection*. *El Croquis*. number 183, p. 242.

[13] *La Philharmonie* [online] https://decouvrir.philharmoniedeparis.fr/en/philharmonie#. (access: 04.2019).

[14] Marquez C. F., Richard L., Nouvel J. (2016), *2007–2016 Contemporary reflection*. *El Croquis*, no. 183.

[15] Wainwright O., *Philharmonie de Paris* [online] https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2015/jan/15/philharmonie-de-paris-jean-nouvels-390m-spaceship-crash-lands-in-france (access: 03.2019).

The controversies about the architecture of the Philharmonic do not change the fact that even the opponents of the building pay attention to the perfection of the concert hall. **Grande Salle Pierre Boulez**, with 2,400 seats, was designed primarily for acoustic symphonic concerts. The modular layout of the room allows for the variation of the layout of the stage and the audience. The number of seats for the public can be increased up to 3,500. Modern solutions allow the room to be adapted to various types of music, including contemporary music and film projection with live music, for concert productions of the opera pieces. In the symphonic configuration, the audience surrounds the orchestra. Despite the extremely large audience, the original approach to the Vineyard room creates a sense of closeness and intimacy during the concert for both musicians and the public.

4. SUMMARY

The importance of excellent music perception indicates the servant role of architecture for music. The architectural diversity of the presented examples shows that there is no one universal solution, one approach to the project, which guarantees the creation of a perfect building.

In architecture, despite the clearly imposed requirements that arise from the function, the designer can express his personality, visions, and talent in the design of a house for music.

The architectural concept of the building clearly distinguishes the public space, which is widely available and integrated with the interior of the building. Visitors can freely enter and stay indoors. The only access to the auditorium in a concert or opera hall is connected with the purchase of a ticket.

In the mentioned contemporary examples, an important element of the architectural concept is the expanded public space that connects the city with the building for music. This applies to both the Oslo Opera House and the Philharmonie de Paris. Thanks to the publicly accessible roof surfaces, the public space[16] acquires a three-dimensional character. As Denise Scott Brown said: “the architecture cannot force people to close relations, it can only remove barriers and make meeting spaces useful and attractive”.

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[3] Brown D. S. (2009), *The talk led by Andrea Tamas* [online] Archdaily. https://www.archdaily.com/130389/interview-robert-venturi-denise-scott-brown-by-andrea-tamas (access: 04.2019).

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