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# Anton Walter, Instrument Maker to Leopold II

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THREE HITHERTO UNPUBLISHED DOCUMENTS provide us with new information about the career of Anton Walter, the great piano maker of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Vienna.<sup>1</sup> The documents reinforce our perception of Walter as Vienna's most important piano maker during the period between 1780 and 1800. They also contain evidence about the changing place of the piano in Viennese musical life and the growing importance of Vienna as a center of piano design and manufacture.

Walter was born on February 5, 1752, in Neuhausen in Swabia.<sup>2</sup> He came to Vienna sometime before January 27, 1780, a date established by a record of his marriage in Vienna to the widow Anna Elisabeth Schöffstoß, *née* Reisinger.<sup>3</sup> Walter quickly won a name for himself in Vienna as a builder and repairer of pianos; he would not have been called to Eszterhaza in February 1781 for a major, twelve-day project to repair the palace's keyboard instruments if he had not already estab-

1. This article is based on research conducted for my doctoral dissertation, *Emperor and Impresario: Leopold II and the Transformation of Viennese Musical Theater, 1790–1792*, completed under the direction of Daniel Hertz at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1987. I should like to thank, for help with problems of transcription and translation, Alfred Buchler (Berkeley), Eric Offenbacher (Seattle) and Eva Badura-Skoda (Vienna); I am most grateful to the latter for encouraging me to publish these documents, sharing with me her expertise on Viennese piano making, and reading a preliminary draft of the paper and making many helpful suggestions for its improvement. I am grateful too to Susanne Wittmayer (Wolfratshausen) for sharing with me her knowledge of the existence and location of surviving Walter pianos. The paper benefitted from the careful reading and incisive comments of John Powell (Tulsa) and George Bozarth (Seattle).

2. Gottfried von Franz, "Mozarts Klavierbauer Anton Walter," *Neues Mozart Jahrbuch* 1 (1941): 211–17, is the main source of biographical information; for further details see Helga Haupt, "Wiener Instrumentenbauer von 1791 bis 1815," *Studien zur Musikwissenschaft* 24 (1960): 120–84, and John Henry van der Meer, "Walter, Gabriel Anton," *Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart* 14 (1968), cols. 189–90.

Walter's date of birth is supplied by Franz, 213–14, citing Neuhausen church registers. Walter was christened Gabriel Anton; but he seems to have completely dropped the name Gabriel early in life.

3. Franz, 214; Van der Meer, col. 189. The document describes Walter as *bürgerl. Orgelmacher*.

lished a solid reputation.<sup>4</sup> By granting Walter the title of Imperial Royal Chamber Organ Builder and Instrument Maker in 1790, the Viennese court formally recognized him as Vienna's leading piano maker.<sup>5</sup>

Walter lived until at least January 1792 outside the walls of Vienna, near the River Wien, at Laimgrube 31, in the "Fokanetisches Haus."<sup>6</sup> On April 28, 1791, Walter obtained Viennese citizenship (*Bürgerrecht*)<sup>7</sup> and soon thereafter, in January 1792, bought a residence within the walls of Vienna, at 523 Rathgasse;<sup>8</sup> but he seems to have continued to occupy the Fokanetisches Haus as well until at least 1796.<sup>9</sup> Shortly after 1800 he brought his stepson Joseph Schöffstoß into a business that, in 1804, employed about 20 workers.<sup>10</sup> Walter died in Vienna on April 11, 1826.<sup>11</sup>

The documents presented here, preserved in the Haus-, Hof-, und Staatsarchiv in Vienna, concern the decision to grant Walter the title of Imperial Royal Chamber Organ Builder and Instrument Maker. The first document is Walter's letter to Emperor Leopold II (1790–1792) requesting the title; the second is a letter from Prince Franz Xaver Rosenberg-Orsini, Leopold's grand chamberlain (*Oberstkämmerer*), to the emperor, passing Walter's letter on with a recommendation that the request be granted. The third is a draft of the decree announcing that Walter has been awarded the title.

The ruler to whom Walter addressed his petition had extensive musical training and extensive experience as a patron of music. As a boy in Vienna Leopold had studied both violin and harpsichord, and had become skillful enough as a harpsichordist to be able, on January 24, 1765, to direct from the keyboard the first performance of Gluck's *Il Parnaso confuso* at Schönbrunn. A few months later Leopold travelled south to

4. A receipt signed by Walter records that he was paid twenty-four Gulden for his services at Eszterhaza; see H. C. Robbins Landon, *Haydn: Chronicle and Works* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976–80) vol. 2, p. 445.

5. Franz (p. 215) was unable to find documents concerning the granting of this title to Walter; Van der Meer (col. 189) gives the correct date, 1790, without reference to any documents.

6. Franz, 214.

7. Franz, 214.

8. Franz, 215.

9. [Johann Ferdinand von Schönfeld], *Jahrbuch der Tonkunst von Wien und Prag* ([Vienna]: Im vom Schönfeldischen Verlag, 1796), 87. The entire passage concerning Walter is quoted in English translation in the important study by Eva Badura-Skoda, "Prolegomena to a History of the Viennese Fortepiano," *Israel Studies in Musicology* 2 (1980): 77–99.

10. Franz, 216; Haupt, 182, following Joseph Rohrer, *Bemerkungen auf einer Reise von der türkischen Gränze . . . nach Wien* (Vienna, 1804).

11. Franz, 216.

Florence, where he ruled as grand duke of Tuscany for the next twenty-five years. In Florence, as in Vienna, musical patronage was an important part of a ruler's activities; and Grand Duke Leopold took his responsibilities in this regard seriously.<sup>12</sup>

Since his musical patronage in Florence included the commissioning of musical instruments, Leopold became familiar with an instrument that had been invented in Florence, and that was, by the end of Leopold's grand-ducal reign, rapidly replacing the harpsichord. He purchased at least two pianos from Tuscan instrument makers during the 1780s,<sup>13</sup> and his familiarity with the piano and piano building as well as his training and experience as a keyboard player put him in a good position to judge the merits of Anton Walter's instruments when he returned to Vienna in 1790.

The grand chamberlain, Prince Rosenberg, managed many of the Viennese court's activities, including its musical life. Rosenberg had much experience in administering musical and theatrical affairs, and he had advised and assisted Leopold in such matters long before Leopold became emperor in 1790. During the early years of Leopold's reign as grand duke of Tuscany Rosenberg served him as chief steward (*Maggiordomo maggiore*); in that capacity he helped Leopold with the supervision of Florentine opera.<sup>14</sup> Rosenberg, a violinist, must have found his own musical training useful in such activities.<sup>15</sup>

12. On Leopold's musical training in Vienna and musical patronage in Florence see Rice, 14–45.

13. In an article dated Pisa, August 11, 1784, the *Gazzetta toscana* of Florence praised the *cimbali detti "piani e forti"* (in other words, the pianos) built by the Tuscan instrument maker Giuseppe Zannetti, instruments that "in the sweetness of their harmony and in their good taste, yield nothing to those of England." The article went on to mention that Grand Duke Leopold had bought one of Zannetti's pianos: "Two years ago our most clement sovereign, protector of the noble arts, deigned to acquire one, and it fully satisfied every expectation." A few months later, on November 27, 1784, the *Gazzetta toscana* announced the completion of a fine new *cembalo a piano e forte* that Grand Duke Leopold had commissioned from the Florentine instrument maker Francesco Spighi. After a lengthy description of Spighi's piano, the article reported that both Their Royal Highnesses "have had the clemency to demonstrate their satisfaction and approval."

14. Rice, 25–27.

15. We know that Rosenberg was a violinist, for a letter he wrote from Florence to Empress Maria Theresa in 1766 describes a concert in which both he and Grand Duke Leopold took part. Two ladies-in-waiting sang; Prince Corsini, the grand-ducal equerry, played the flute. "I scratched the fiddle," wrote Rosenberg, "and the archduke [Grand Duke Leopold] accompanied at the harpsichord. That seems to amuse him, and it results in a concert that is bad enough to be continued during Lent." Adam Wandruszka, *Leopold II*, 2 vols. (Vienna: Herold [1963]-1965), vol. 1, p. 160.



Beginning in the mid 1770s Rosenberg served the emperor Joseph II, Leopold's older brother, in Vienna; and here too his responsibilities included music and theater. Joseph II entrusted Rosenberg with the running of the Court theaters, and over the next decade and a half Rosenberg dealt personally with many of Europe's leading singers, instrumentalists and composers. The papers of Rosenberg's *Oberstkämmereramt* (grand chamberlain's office), little explored by music historians, contain much interesting material about music and theater.

Leopold's short reign in Vienna was an important period of change in Viennese musical life. During the month following his decision to grant Walter the title that he requested, Leopold oversaw a reorganization of the management of the court theaters, taking control of the theaters away from Rosenberg and the *Oberstkämmereramt*, where it had been placed by Joseph, and transferring it to the hands of a *Musikgraf* (court music director), Count Wenzel Ugarte, who was nominally under the authority of another branch of the court administration, the *Obersthofmeisteramt* (office of the chief steward of the court), but in fact worked directly under the control of the emperor himself, at least where operatic matters were concerned.<sup>16</sup> Working through Ugarte, Leopold proceeded to make radical changes in the court theaters' personnel and repertory, changes that included the dismissal of the operatic poet Lorenzo Da Ponte and the soprano Adriana Ferrarese (two artists who had helped to shape Viennese musical life during the 1780s), the hiring of new singers, and the reintroduction of ballet and opera seria to the stage of the Burgtheater and the Kärntnertheater.

Thus it was in the face of an impending transformation of Viennese musical life that Walter requested the title of Court Organ Builder and Instrument Maker in December 1790. Periods of transition often provide opportunities for quick advancement for those in a position to take advantage of them, and Walter may well have seen the approach of Leopold's theatrical reorganization as representing this kind of opportunity.

\* \* \*

In his letter to Emperor Leopold dated December 6, 1790 (fig. 1; Appendix, document 1), Walter referred specifically to the title he sought as "Imperial Royal Court Organ and Instrument Builder" (*Kays. Königl. Hof Orgel und Instrumentenbauer*). He pointed out that the title

16. Rice, 57–60.

would carry with it no pay or other specific obligations on Leopold's part; but that the title would be useful to him nevertheless, "to increase his credit among persons both here and abroad . . . , and consequently to increase the prosperity of his family and neighbors." Walter made six claims to support his request. Carefully chosen to show the petitioner in the best possible light, Walter's claims cannot be considered by themselves a balanced assessment of his importance as an instrument maker. Yet since Rosenberg accepted most of them as valid, as we shall see, they do deserve to be taken seriously and studied carefully.

Walter's first claim is that "he was the first to make pianofortes here as they are now in general use [*er Pianoforte wie sie izt allgemein gebraucht werden hier zu erst gemacht hat*]." The meaning of this claim is not entirely clear. Was Walter maintaining that he was the first to make pianos (as opposed to harpsichords and clavichords) in Vienna, and that the piano had completely superceded the older instruments? If this is his claim, it seems to be unjustified on both counts: first, Walter was probably not the first maker of pianos in Vienna; and second, harpsichords and clavichords were still being built and played in Vienna after 1790.

No surviving Viennese pianos can be dated with certainty to the period before 1780. Yet, as Eva Badura-Skoda has pointed out, the fact that pianos were being played in Viennese concerts as early as 1763 makes it very likely that at least some pianos were built in Vienna during the 1760s and 1770s, and that these fragile instruments have simply not survived.<sup>17</sup> If we assume that Walter began manufacturing pianos in Vienna around the time of his marriage in 1780 (an assumption supported by one of Walter's later claims, as we shall see), then his earliest pianos were probably not the first pianos built in Vienna.

The fragility of early pianos was no doubt one reason why the piano did not completely supercede the harpsichord and clavichord until sometime after 1790. Both harpsichords and clavichords were still being built in Vienna at the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>18</sup> Enough keyboard music was still being published with inscriptions such as *per cembalo o pianoforte* in the 1790s and even later, in Vienna as in the rest of Europe,

17. Badura-Skoda, 78, 85–91.

18. Haydn owned a clavichord built (probably in Vienna) in 1794; see Horst Walter, "Haydns Klaviere," *Haydn-Studien* 2 (1969–70): 256–88. Another clavichord, dating from around 1800 and signed "Joseph Klein Wien," is today in Nymphenburg Palace, Munich; see Donald H. Boalch, *Makers of the Harpsichord and Clavichord 1440–1840*, 2d ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 95. Boalch (p. 16) also mentions a late Viennese spinet, built by Christoph Bock and dated 1804.

to suggest that the harpsichord was still in use at the end of the eighteenth century, even if most of these works were in fact written for the piano.<sup>19</sup>

In claiming that “he was the first to make pianofortes here as they are now in general use,” Walter may have meant that he was the first to make pianos of a particular type that was then in general use. Yet even if this was his meaning, Walter was still not completely correct in saying that his kind of piano was in general use in Vienna in 1790. Walter dominated in the manufacture of the biggest, heaviest Viennese pianos, strong in sound and rich in timbre, instruments particularly suitable for concert performance (Mozart would probably not have bought a Walter instrument had this not been the case). Johann Ferdinand von Schönfeld, in his *Jahrbuch der Tonkunst* of 1796, called Walter “more or less the foremost builder of this instrument.”<sup>20</sup> But that does not mean that Walter lacked serious rivals; we only have to look at Haydn’s well-known letter to his patron and friend Marianne von Genzinger of July 4, 1790 (only five months before Walter wrote to Leopold), to see that Walter’s type of piano was by no means in general use in Vienna. Haydn appreciated, even preferred, another type of piano:

I am simply delighted that my Prince intends to give Your Grace a new fortepiano. . . . It is quite true that my friend Herr Walther is very celebrated, and that every year I receive the greatest civility from that gentleman, but between ourselves, and speaking frankly, sometimes there is not more than one instrument in ten which you could really describe as good, and apart from that they are very expensive. I know Herr von Nickl’s fortepiano [built by Walter]: it’s excellent, but too heavy for Your Grace’s hand, and one can’t play everything on it with the necessary delicacy. Therefore I should like Your Grace to try one made by Herr Schanz, his fortepianos are particularly light in touch and the mechanism very agreeable. . . . I consider Herr Schanz at present to be the best pianoforte maker. . . .<sup>21</sup>

Schönfeld also approved of Johann Schantz’s pianos, and his opinion of them corresponded closely to Haydn’s:

19. For a good discussion of this point see William S. Newman, *The Sonata in the Classic Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963) 83–89.

20. Schönfeld, 88, quoted in translation by Badura-Skoda, 94.

21. Dénes Bartha, ed., *Joseph Haydn: Gesammelte Briefe und Aufzeichnungen* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1965), 15; quoted in translation by Landon, vol. 2, p. 745; cited by Badura-Skoda, 93, with an important phrase critical of Walter omitted.

They are not as strong in tone as those built by Walter, but are equally distinct and usually more agreeable to the ear: his instruments are easier to handle than Walter's because the keys do not fall as deep and are not so wide. They are actually a replica-like imitation of the fortepianos built by the artist Stein of Augsburg. . . .<sup>22</sup>

According to Badura-Skoda, Schönfeld's statement that Schantz imitated Johann Andreas Stein of Augsburg in the construction of his pianos is misleading; she argues that in many aspects of construction Schantz's instruments were closer to Walter's than to Stein's:

. . . the wooden construction of Schantz's instruments is similar to that of Walter and nearly all the other Viennese instrument makers, but quite different from Stein's. Though Johann Schantz was the first (only?) Viennese piano maker of the period who constructed a divided bridge the way English makers like Broadwood built it around 1790, and also differed in this respect from Walter, this kind of bridge is found neither in J. A. Stein's nor in Nannette Stein's instruments. Apart from the bridge the instruments of Schantz correspond more to Walter's than to anybody else's with regard, e.g., to the construction of the soundboard and the support pegs in the wooden case. Furthermore, the choice of those important points where the hammers hit the strings are similar in Schantz's and Walter's fortepianos, but differ from Stein's instruments. The fact that the soundboard is considerably thinner in Stein's pianos causes them to have a more specific tone colour, to be richer in overtones; but around 1796 they were certainly less modern than the already louder and more romantic instruments by Anton Walter and Schantz.<sup>23</sup>

It may well be to these aspects of construction shared by Walter and Schantz, features that distinguish their pianos from Stein's, that Walter referred when he claimed that "he was the first to make pianos here as they are now in general use."

Walter's second claim is that "his claviers have been admitted to possess such superiority that more than 350 instruments have been purchased from him over the last ten years, probably more than from any other organ and instrument maker, and at a price averaging 15 to 20 ducats higher." That Walter, writing in December 1790, specified ten years of piano making in Vienna confirms the supposition that he began making pianos there in or around 1780. His statement that his prices averaged fifteen or twenty ducats higher than those of his competitors confirms Haydn's claim, in the letter quoted above, that Walter's instruments "are very expensive." An output of over 350 instruments during the decade means that he produced

22. Schönfeld, 88; quoted in translation by Badura-Skoda, 94.

23. Badura-Skoda, 96, citing the authority of Alfred Watzek.

an average of thirty-five instruments a year, almost three a month. We will see below that Walter needed many assistants to maintain this rate of production. It is sad to note that of all the keyboard instruments built by Walter during his entire career in Vienna, probably more than a thousand in all (if we assume that he maintained his rate of over 350 instruments per decade until 1810), only thirty-three are known to survive.<sup>24</sup>

Walter addressed the issue of prices again in his third claim, that “he sells pianofortes to Poland, Saxony, Prussia, to the [Holy Roman] Empire, and to France and Italy, for 80 and 100 ducats, while before him, only ten years ago, claviers from abroad were sent here and to the imperial royal hereditary lands.” The prices that Walter quoted differ somewhat from those provided six years later by Schönfeld, who wrote in his *Jahrbuch der Tonkunst* that Walter “fixes the price of his instruments between 50 and 120 ducats and dispatches them to all places.” But Schönfeld agreed with Walter concerning the difference between some of his prices and those of his competitors. According to Schönfeld, the piano maker Schantz “sells his instruments for 40 ducats up to 100 ducats.” Walter’s highest price, as quoted by Schönfeld, was thus twenty ducats higher than Schantz’s highest price, exactly the same as the maximum difference in price cited by Walter in his second claim. Schönfeld quoted only the lowest price for pianos by Nanette Streicher, another Viennese maker: sixty-six ducats. That is fourteen ducats lower than the minimum price cited by Walter, a difference in price very close to the fifteen-ducat figure mentioned by Walter. Walter’s pianos were very expensive: on this Haydn, Schönfeld, and Walter himself all agreed.

Schönfeld confirmed that Viennese pianos were sold abroad, although he did not single out Walter as a particularly successful exporter: “quite a number of these instruments [Viennese pianos] are sent to Bohemia, Hungary, Poland, Russia, Germany, and even Turkey.” Bohemia and Hungary were within Leopold’s hereditary realms (he was king of both these countries). Walter did not even mention them, emphasizing instead countries that were completely independent of Vienna (such as Prussia) or partially independent (such as Italy). The only country that both Walter and Schönfeld included in their lists is Poland; and as it is at or near the top of both lists, it is possible that Walter had important business there.

24. Twenty-two surviving pianos are listed by Van der Meer, col. 189. Since the publication of that article in 1968, a further eleven pianos known or believed to have been built by Walter have come to light, according to Susanne Wittmayer (personal communication).

Some evidence of Walter's international sales survives. Although about two-thirds of his surviving instruments are in Germany and Austria, most of the others are widely scattered throughout Europe: there are Walter pianos in Rome, Florence, Paris, Bern, Basle, Prague and Dubrovnik.<sup>25</sup>

Walter suggested that his instruments transformed Vienna during the 1780s from a net importer of pianos to a net exporter. This may well be true if Mozart's piano buying is any indication of Viennese trends. The pianos that Stein built so painstakingly in Augsburg were popular in Vienna; Mozart reported in a letter of 1781 that the Countess Thun owned one;<sup>26</sup> and later the same year he ordered a Stein piano for another of his patrons.<sup>27</sup> Mozart himself admired Stein's pianos, and Stein's name appears several times in Mozart's correspondence during the years 1777–1781.<sup>28</sup> But after 1781 Stein's name no longer appears. When it came time to order a piano for himself (ca. 1783), Mozart went not to Stein but to Walter.<sup>29</sup> Mozart's choice of a Walter instrument may have encouraged other performers to switch to Walter pianos, and perhaps to patronize Viennese piano makers in general instead of ordering pianos from Stein or other foreign makers.

Walter's fourth claim, that "he has already for several years employed many craftsmen—14 at present—with good success," explains how he was able to produce an average of thirty-five pianos a year (although we must assume, of course, that Walter started the decade with fewer employees and a smaller output of instruments than he achieved by 1790). Walter's workshop must have been one of the biggest workshops of any kind in pre-industrial Vienna; but with each worker producing the equivalent of roughly two and a half pianos a year, this can hardly be called mass production.

25. Van der Meer, col. 189, supplemented with information kindly supplied by Susanne Wittmayer.

26. Letter to Leopold Mozart, March 24, 1781. Wilhelm A. Bauer, Otto Erich Deutsch, Joseph Heinz Eibl, eds., *Mozart: Briefe und Aufzeichnungen* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1962–1975), vol. 3, p. 99.

27. Letter to Leopold Mozart, October 24, 1781. *Mozart: Briefe und Aufzeichnungen*, vol. 3, p. 170.

28. See especially the well-known passage in which Mozart writes from Augsburg in praise of Stein's pianos: letter to Leopold Mozart, October 17, 1777. *Mozart: Briefe und Aufzeichnungen*, vol. 2, pp. 68–71.

29. Rudolf Steglich, "Studien an Mozarts Hammerflügel," *Neues Mozart-Jahrbuch* 1 (1941): 181–210, and Ulrich Rück, "Mozarts Hammerflügel erbaute Anton Walter, Wien," *Mozart-Jahrbuch* (1955), 246–62.

Walter's fifth claim, that "four of his pianofortes have been sold to the imperial royal court, and were, he believes, preferred to all others," is of interest in view of indications that the piano as an instrument had earlier been out of favor at court. Badura-Skoda points to evidence that Maria Theresa had preferred the harpsichord to the piano. She notes that when Mozart and Clementi played together at court in early 1782, two years after Maria Theresa's death, the court provided only one of the two pianos needed; and that piano, Mozart reported, "was out of tune and three of the keys were stuck."<sup>30</sup> Whether this means that there was only one piano in the Imperial palace is unclear, but certainly it suggests that the piano was not in great favor with the imperial family at the time. During the next eight years the court bought four of Walter's instruments (or three, in the unlikely case that the defective instrument mentioned by Mozart was one of Walter's). Were these instruments used in the Burgtheater or for the private music making of the imperial family? In either case, it seems clear that Walter's rise to prominence coincided with an important change in musical taste at court, involving a shift from the harpsichord to the piano as the keyboard instrument of choice. It is likely that Walter's success and the change of taste reinforced one another.

His sixth and last claim, that "he built an organ that received nothing but praise from connoisseurs," Walter seems to have slipped in almost as an afterthought. His most important product, and the one he took most pride in, was clearly the piano. But a long-standing tradition required that German piano makers define themselves as organ and instrument makers, even if they did not specialize in organ building. Badura-Skoda points out that as late as 1791 Stein signed his pianos "Jean André Stein, Faiseur d'Orgues, des Clavecins . . ." and that Schönfeld entitled his discussion of Viennese piano makers "Instrument und Orgelmacher."<sup>31</sup> Walter described himself as *bürgerlicher Orgelmacher* at the time of his marriage in 1780. Of Walter's organ we know nothing; he probably mentioned it here mainly to justify his claim to the traditional title of organ builder and instrument maker.

This may not have been the only organ that Walter built, however. The Viennese music lover Joseph Carl Rosenbaum, in a diary entry dated July 30, 1801, refers to "the new organ and pianoforte instrument

30. Badura-Skoda, 91; letter to Leopold Mozart, January 16, 1782. *Mozart: Briefe und Aufzeichnungen*, vol. 3, p. 193.

31. Badura-Skoda, 81.

by Walther.”<sup>32</sup> The instrument to which Rosenbaum refers may have been one in which the features of an organ and a piano were combined, although the meaning of the German is not completely clear. Another translation renders the passage differently: “the new organ and the Walther pianoforte.”<sup>33</sup>

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Prince Rosenberg took responsibility for evaluating Walter’s petition and for recommending that it be granted. On December 15, 1790, he sent Walter’s letter to the sovereign together with his recommendation (fig. 2; Appendix, document 2). In summarizing Walter’s claims Rosenberg omitted any reference to Walter’s first, somewhat ambiguous claim (that “he was the first to make pianofortes here as they are now in general use”), and his last claim concerning the organ, which Rosenberg may have considered irrelevant. Instead he focused on the large number of instruments that Walter had built over the previous ten years, quoting Walter’s figure of 350; and he added a point not explicitly made by Walter in his letter, that most of these instruments were sold abroad. Rosenberg repeated, in language more courtly than Walter’s, the instrument maker’s point that he had sold four instruments to the imperial court, and that these instruments had been well received. In recommending that Walter’s petition be granted, Rosenberg praised Walter as “a good and diligent worker,” and emphasized, as Walter had, that the title carried with it no monetary expense for the court. Rosenberg made a strong case, and Leopold must have agreed; the emperor signaled his approval by writing *Placet* in the margin.

Rosenberg’s *Oberstkämmereramt*, having received the emperor’s approval, quickly issued a decree; the document announcing that the title of Imperial Royal Chamber Organ Builder and Instrument Maker was being granted to Walter is dated December 17, 1790. The actual wording of the title may have caused some confusion, to judge from the extant draft of the decree (fig. 3; Appendix, document 3). The title seems originally to have been referred to as *der Titel eines K. K. Hoforgelbauers, und Instrumentmachers*; but *Hof* (court) was crossed out, and *Kammer* (chamber) added instead. The implications of this change are not completely clear, but it is most likely that the prefix *Kammer* was used for

32. Landon, vol. 5, p. 72.

33. Else Radant, “The Diaries of Joseph Carl Rosenbaum 1770–1829,” *Haydn Yearbook* 5 (1968): 97.



persons under the supervision of Rosenberg's *Oberstkämmereramt*, while the prefix *Hof* was used for those under the supervision of the *Obersthofmeisteramt*. Having supported Walter's petition, Rosenberg saw to it that Walter would remain under his protection and authority. Walter himself did not pay much attention to the exact wording of his title. He identified himself in papers concerning his purchase of a house in Vienna in 1792 as *K. K. Hof- und bürgerlicher Orgel- und Instrumentenmacher*.<sup>34</sup>

Summarizing the previous correspondence still further, the decree states succinctly that the reasons for granting the petition to Walter are "the special skill that he has demonstrated in his art, and . . . his well-performed labors over the last ten years." The decree also outlines the benefits that Walter will enjoy as a result of his title: he "will be able to make use of it in all places where he may find it necessary, and also to enjoy each and every privilege, right, and prerogative that other employees of the imperial royal chamber can exercise."

The decree does not further define the privileges, rights and prerogatives that come with Walter's title, and the nature of these rewards is not clear. But one area in which they must have been particularly useful was in Walter's relations with the city of Vienna. Walter was not Viennese, and although Joseph II had abolished many of the legal barriers that had previously discouraged craftsmen from coming to Vienna from abroad, Walter may still have felt constricted by his lack of Viennese citizenship. It cannot be merely a coincidence that Walter finally attained this prize shortly after receiving his title from the court. Within little more than a year Walter had taken his oath of Viennese citizenship (*Bürgerleid*) and had bought a house within the walls of Vienna.

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Walter's business must have thrived during the years following 1790, to judge from the fact that the number of his employees grew from fourteen in 1790 to about twenty in 1804; his new title must have helped. But Walter also had to face new challenges and new competitors. The piano evolved quickly in the first years of the nineteenth century, in Vienna as in the rest of Europe.<sup>35</sup> Pianos imported to Vienna from London and Paris brought with them important innovations: range expanded to six octaves from the previously normal five, triple stringing

34. Franz, 215.

35. Landon, vol. 5, p. 55–56; Owen Jander, "Orpheus in Hades: the *Andante con moto* of the Fourth Piano Concerto," *Nineteenth Century Music* 8 (1985), 195–212, esp. 204–5.

throughout, a vast increase in the weight of the instruments, increase in dynamic range, and the *una corda* pedal. Viennese musicians responded with music that surpassed the capabilities of the instruments built by Walter in the 1780s. Walter and other Viennese makers took note of the new developments in piano design and incorporated some of them into their pianos, a process alluded to by the Swedish chargé d'affaires in Vienna, Frederik Silverstolpe, who bought a piano from Walter in 1802 and commented in a letter on its *una corda* device: "The invention was made in England a long time ago, but it has only now been imitated here."<sup>36</sup>

Viennese piano making evolved, but at the same time it preserved many of its most distinctive characteristics. Beethoven, who valued some of the features of his Erard and Broadwood pianos, preferred Viennese pianos in general for their comparatively light, responsive action.<sup>37</sup> Beethoven's taste in pianos, and that of many of his contemporaries, ensured that the Viennese piano industry continued to thrive during the nineteenth century. A new generation of Viennese piano makers arose, most notable among them Conrad Graf, whose pianos were still very much in the Walter tradition.<sup>38</sup> Graf and his contemporaries maintained and enhanced Vienna's reputation as one of Europe's centers of fine piano building, a reputation that Walter, more than anyone else, had earned for his adopted city.

### *Colby College*

36. Letter of June 5, 1802, quoted by Landon, vol. 4, p. 40.

37. William S. Newman, "Beethoven's Pianos versus His Piano Ideals," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 23 (1970): 484–504.

38. According to Maribel Meisel and Philip R. Belt, "Conrad Graf," in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* 7 (London: Macmillan, 1980): 611, "a typical Graf piano . . . has a slightly heavier version of the Viennese action in the style of . . . Walter."

## APPENDIX

**Documents relating to Anton Walter's Petition for the Title  
Of Imperial Royal Court Organ and Instrument Builder**

1. Letter dated December 6, 1790, from Anton Walter to the emperor Leopold II, asking to be named Imperial Royal Court Organ and Instrument Maker. Vienna, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv (HHStA), Oberstkämmereramt (OKäA), 1790, no. 490.

Eure Majestät

Unterzeichneter bittet Euere Majestät um den Titel oder Character—*Kays. Königl. Hof Orgel und Instrumentenbauer*—auch ohne Gehalt, oder bestimmte Obliegenheit, um seinen Credit bei Inn- und Ausländer durch diese Eigenschaft zu vermehren, und folglich seiner familie, und seiner Mitbürger Wohlstand dadurch zu vermehren. Daß aber Unterzeichneter dieses Characters nicht unwerth [inserted:] sei, [then:] und den vorgesezten Entzwek dadurch erreichen möge, soll aus folgenden Gründen erhellen.

1<sup>l</sup> Weil er Pianoforte wie sie izt allgemein gebraucht werden hier zu erst gemacht hat.

2<sup>l</sup> Weil man seinen Clavieren so viel Vorzug eingestanden hat, daß man ihm seit 10 Jahren mehr als 350 Stüke, und wahrscheinlich mehr als allen übrigen Orgel und Instrumentmachern abgekauft, auch für jedes Stük im Durchschnitt 15 oder 20 dugaten mehr bezahlt hat.

3<sup>l</sup> Weil er Pianoforte nach Pohlen, Sachsen, Preussen, ins Reich, nach Frankreich und Italien für 80, und 100 dugaten verkauft, dagegen vor ihm noch erst vor 10 Jahren Clavierinstrumenten von Ausländern hieher, und in K. K. Erblande geschickt worden sind.

Your Majesty

The undersigned asks that Your Majesty grant him the title or distinction of *Imperial Royal Court Organ and Instrument maker*, even without pay or other obligation, in order to increase his credit among persons both here and abroad through this distinction, and consequently to increase the prosperity of his family and neighbors. That the undersigned is not unworthy of this distinction and that he may be able thereby to attain the above-mentioned goal should become evident on the following grounds:

1) Because he was the first to make pianofortes here as they are now in general use.

2) Because his claviers have been admitted to possess such superiority that more than 350 instruments have been purchased from him over the last 10 years, probably more than from any other organ and instrument maker, and at a price averaging 15 or 20 ducats higher.

3) Because he sells pianofortes to Poland, Saxony, Prussia, to the Empire, and to France and Italy, for 80 and 100 ducats, while before him, only 10 years ago, claviers from abroad were sent here and to the imperial royal hereditary lands.

*Seiner Majestät*

Unbegreiflicher Bittet Seiner  
Majestät um den Titel oder  
Benedict — Königlicher Organist  
und Hofinstrumentmacher — und  
um einen Gehalt, oder Lohndienst, allhier  
nachfolgendermaßen: Mein Verlangen  
ist, daß ich einjährlich ein  
mal ein Kistenlohn von  
sechszehn bis zu zwey und  
zwanzig Gulden jährlich zu bekommen  
denk, oder wenigstens daß ich  
darauf mit dem Hofe ein  
Verständniß abthun mag, mich  
zu demjenigen Gehalte zu erheben,  
den ich verlohnen würde.

1<sup>o</sup> Bittet er, daß er ein Hoforganist  
zu sein, und eine Hofinstrument  
macher zu werden, zu werden  
möge.

2<sup>o</sup> Bittet er, daß er ein Hoforganist  
zu sein, und eine Hofinstrument  
macher zu werden, zu werden  
möge.

3<sup>o</sup> Bittet er, daß er ein Hoforganist  
zu sein, und eine Hofinstrument  
macher zu werden, zu werden  
möge.

*Seyn an allen Orten, wo es d. f. in*  
*den k. k. k. k. k. k. k. k. k. k. k. k.*

Seiner Majestät um den Titel oder  
Benedict — Königlicher Organist  
und Hofinstrumentmacher — und  
um einen Gehalt, oder Lohndienst, allhier  
nachfolgendermaßen: Mein Verlangen  
ist, daß ich einjährlich ein  
mal ein Kistenlohn von  
sechszehn bis zu zwey und  
zwanzig Gulden jährlich zu bekommen  
denk, oder wenigstens daß ich  
darauf mit dem Hofe ein  
Verständniß abthun mag, mich  
zu demjenigen Gehalte zu erheben,  
den ich verlohnen würde.

1<sup>o</sup> Bittet er, daß er ein Hoforganist  
zu sein, und eine Hofinstrument  
macher zu werden, zu werden  
möge.

2<sup>o</sup> Bittet er, daß er ein Hoforganist  
zu sein, und eine Hofinstrument  
macher zu werden, zu werden  
möge.

3<sup>o</sup> Bittet er, daß er ein Hoforganist  
zu sein, und eine Hofinstrument  
macher zu werden, zu werden  
möge.

Wien den 6<sup>ten</sup> Decemb<sup>er</sup>  
1790.

Anton Walter  
Organist

FIGURE 1. Letter dated December 6, 1790, from Anton Walter to the emperor Leopold II, asking to be named Imperial Royal Court Organ and Instrument Maker. Vienna, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Oberstkämmereram 1790 no. 490.

4<sup>t</sup> Weil er schon durch mehr Jahre viele, und izt namentlich 14 Gesellen mit gutem Fortgang beschäftigt, eine Zahl die noch kein Orgel und Instrumentenbauer in Deutschland gebraucht hat.

5<sup>t</sup> Weil vier von seinen Pianoforte selbst an K. K. Hof gekauft und wie er glaubt allen anderen vorgezogen worden sind.

6<sup>t</sup> Weil er auch eine Orgel gebaut die allen Beyfall der Kenner erhalten hat.

Wien den 6<sup>t</sup> December 1790

[signed] Anton Walter m.p.  
Orgel und Instrumentenbauer

4) Because he has already for several years employed many craftsmen—14 at present—with good success, a number that no organ and instrument maker in Germany has used.

5) Because four of his pianofortes have been sold to the imperial royal court, and were, he believes, preferred to all others.

6) Because he built an organ which received nothing but praise from connoisseurs.

Vienna, the sixth of December 1790

[signed] Anton Walter m[anu]

p[ropria]

Organ and Instrument Maker



2. Letter dated December 15, 1790, from Oberstkämmerer Prince Franz Xaver Rosenberg-Orsini to Leopold, recommending that Walter's petition be granted. Leopold adds his *placet*. HHStA, OKäA 1790, no. 490.

Eure Majestät!

Der Orgelbauer und Instrumentenmacher Anton Walter bittet um den Titel eines K. K. Hoforgelbauers und Instrumentenmakers und glaubt seine Bitte hiedurch unterstützen zu können.

Daß er durch 10 Jahre über 350 Pianoforte verfertigt, von welchen die meisten in Ausland verkauft worden, und dadurch 14 Gesellen einen Nahrungs-Zweig verschaffet habe, wie er dann auch für den allernächsten Hof vier derlei Pianoforte mit gnädigster Zufriedenheit zu machen das Glück gehabt.

Da dieser Titel mit keiner Besoldung verbunden ist, mithin dem Aerrario hiedurch keine Ausgabe zuwächst, dem Supplikanten aber, so ein guter und fleißiger Arbeiter ist, im Ausland einen großen Nutzen verschaffen kann; So bin ich der allerunterthänigsten Meinung, daß Euer Majestät ihm solchen zu bewilligen aus allerhöchsten Gnaden sich geneigt finden könnten.

Placet [Leopold]

[signed] Rosenberg

Wien den 15ten Dezember 1790

Your Majesty!

The organ builder and instrument maker Anton Walter requests the title of an Imperial Royal Court Organ Builder and Instrument Maker and believes he can support his request by the following:

That he has during 10 years made over 350 pianofortes, most of which were sold abroad, and has thereby secured a livelihood for 14 craftsmen; he has also had the good fortune of making four of these pianofortes for the imperial royal court, to its most gracious satisfaction.

Since this title brings with it no salary, and consequently involves no expense to the treasury, but can be of great use abroad for the supplicant, who is such a good and diligent worker, it is my most humble opinion that Your Majesty could find himself inclined to grant him, out of most high grace, the aforementioned title.

Placet [Leopold]

[signed] Rosenberg

Vienna, the fifteenth of  
December, 1790

182  
301  
*Secret*

Im R<sup>o</sup>g<sup>r</sup>  
 Als Kaiserliche Kammerorganbau- und  
 Instrumentmacherei, welche dem  
 k. k. Hoforgelbau- und Instrumentmacherei  
 in Wien anvertraut ist, die  
 k. k. Hoforgelbau- und Instrumentmacherei  
 in Wien, welche dem k. k. Hoforgelbau- und  
 Instrumentmacherei in Wien anvertraut ist,  
 dem k. k. Hoforgelbau- und Instrumentmacherei  
 in Wien, welche dem k. k. Hoforgelbau- und  
 Instrumentmacherei in Wien anvertraut ist,  
 dem k. k. Hoforgelbau- und Instrumentmacherei  
 in Wien, welche dem k. k. Hoforgelbau- und  
 Instrumentmacherei in Wien anvertraut ist,  
 dem k. k. Hoforgelbau- und Instrumentmacherei  
 in Wien, welche dem k. k. Hoforgelbau- und  
 Instrumentmacherei in Wien anvertraut ist,

1790

Wegen an allen Orten, wo es die  
 k. k. Hoforgelbau- und Instrumentmacherei,  
 welche dem k. k. Hoforgelbau- und  
 Instrumentmacherei in Wien anvertraut ist,  
 dem k. k. Hoforgelbau- und Instrumentmacherei  
 in Wien, welche dem k. k. Hoforgelbau- und  
 Instrumentmacherei in Wien anvertraut ist,  
 dem k. k. Hoforgelbau- und Instrumentmacherei  
 in Wien, welche dem k. k. Hoforgelbau- und  
 Instrumentmacherei in Wien anvertraut ist,

Exped. Wien den 17. d. 1790

*[Signature]*

FIGURE 3. Draft of the decree announcing the appointment of Walter as Imperial Royal Chamber Organ Builder and Instrument Maker. Vienna, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Oberstkämmereramt 1790 no. 493.



3. Draft of the decree announcing the appointment of Walter as Imperial Royal Chamber Organ Builder and Instrument Maker. HHStA, OKäA, 1790, no. 493.

Decret.

Von S<sup>r</sup>. K. K.

Oberstkämmereramts wegen, dem Orgelbauer, und Instrumentmacher Anton Walter hiemit in Gnaden anzusagen. Es haben allerhöchstgedacht S. K. K. apost. Majestät auf seine allerunterthänigst eingereichte Bittschrift, und hierüber erstatteten Vortrag allergnädigst zu [deleted:] erlauben [changed to:] befehlen geruhet, daß ihm in Rücksicht der in seiner Kunst erprobten besondern Geschicklichkeit, und [added:] der [then:] bereits durch 10 Jahre gut gelieferten Arbeiten, der Titel eines K. K. [deleted:] Hof [then:] Kammerorgelbauers, und Instrumentmachers durch gegenwärtiges Oberstkämmereramts Decret ertheilt werden solle.

Zu folge dieser verliehenen K. K. Gnade wird er Anton Walter, sich dessen an allen Orten, wo er es für nöthig finden wird, zu gebrauchen, auch all- und jede Privilegen, Rechte, und Gerechtigkeiten deren andre K. K. Kammerarbeiter fähig sind, zu erfreuen haben.

Und es verbleiben übrigens allerhöchstgedacht S. K. K. Majestät, dem selben mit K. K. Gnaden, und Erzherzoglichen Hulden wohlgeuogen.

Wien den 17. X.

1790

... [illegible abbreviation] K. K.  
Oberstkämmereramt

Decree

Graciously to be announced on behalf of His Imperial Royal grand chamberlain's office to the organ builder and instrument maker Anton Walter: His Imperial Royal Apostolic Majesty has deigned to command, on his [Walter's] most humbly submitted petition, and on the report concerning it, that the title of an Imperial Royal Chamber Organ Builder and Instrument Maker should be granted him by means of the present decree, in view of the special skill that he has demonstrated in his art, and in view of his well-performed labors over the last 10 years.

In accordance with the conferring of this imperial royal grace, he, Anton Walter, will be able to make use of it in all places where he may find it necessary, and also to enjoy each and every privilege, right, and prerogative that other employees of the imperial royal chamber can exercise.

And, in addition, His Most Highly Respected Imperial Royal Majesty, with imperial royal graciousness and archducal favors, remains well disposed towards the petitioner.

Vienna, the seventeenth of  
December, 1790

... [illegible abbreviation] Imperial  
Royal Grand Chamberlain's Office