

Verzeichnis der
Europäischen Musikinstrumente
im Germanischen Nationalmuseum
Nürnberg

Volume 7

The pianos
of Johann Andreas Stein
and his descendants
and the pianos of the firm of Anton Walter

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»HEINRICHSHOFEN-BÜCHER« · WILHELMSHAVEN

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MIR 1099
***Hammerflügel* with a Viennese action**

Anton Walter (1752–1826)
 Vienna, *circa* 1795

Range: FF–f3
 Sounding length of the longest string for c2: 289mm

I Inscriptions

On a decorated enamelled nameplate, oblong with the short sides semi-circular in shape, surrounded by a gilt brass frame (width 175mm, height 45mm, including the frame), above the keyboard (fig. 2):

Anton Walter in Wien



Fig. 2 *The nameplate above the keyboard*

II Case

The case of the instrument, with sloping front shoulders and a squared-off tail, is of coniferous wood veneered on the outside in plain dark mahogany (fig. 3). The outside case walls, the key well and the legs are decorated with gilt brass-covered beadings. The outer case walls cover the edge of the baseboard.

The lid is in three sections, all veneered on the outside in plain dark mahogany (fig. 4). The outside edge of the lid has a decorative brass strip. The two front lids are veneered inside with light-coloured mahogany, the main lid with a light-coloured wood, possibly birch, with a later finish. The sliding hinges of the main lid are of brass, the small lids have butt hinges of brass. The inside of the spine, the tail and the bentside above the soundboard are veneered in yew. The main lid had two hooks, probably of brass, one screwed inside on the cheek arm of the yoke, the other on the outside of the tail. Both are missing and the main lid now has one sprung catch operated by pressing a brass button that protrudes from the bentside. The lock on the horizontal strip of the baseboard below and in front of the keyboard engages its counterpart in the edge of the section of the lid that covers the keyboard. The decorative escutcheon over the keyhole is lost. The present lid stick is hinged to the inside of the main lid.

The key well is decorated with wooden beadings covered in brass and gilded. The keyboard has white naturals and black accidentals.

The damper house front shows a silk backing to a decorative fence-like pattern cut out of the wood.

The music desk has a central frame, hinged to a long batten with candle tables, one at each end.

A skirting runs round the entire base of the instrument. Along the top of the skirting there is a beading covered in gilt brass. The instrument is raised on five tapered legs that screw into the underside of the instrument in the leg blocks. The blocks are glued to the baseboard under the instrument at the two front corners, at the corner of the cheek and the bentside, halfway along the bentside, and at the middle of the tail. The top of each leg consists in an oblong block, vertically orientated and with a gilded moulding protruding along the bottom edge. The legs are of coniferous wood with a thick veneer. Each of the four



Fig. 3 *General view of the instrument with the main lid open*

standing corners of each leg is decorated with a brass-covered beading. Each of the legs has a gilded, cast-brass foot. The skirting, in fact a thick veneer, also extends down to cover the vertical exterior faces of the leg blocks. Above each leg, the skirting forms an extra mahogany facing; the facings, which are slightly thicker than the skirting veneer, have vertically orientated grain, contrasting with the horizontally orientated grain of the skirting. The facings are also slightly wider than the tops of the legs directly underneath. The two facings at the front of the instrument, the two on the cheek, and the ones in the centres of the bentside and the tail all have finely chased ormolu mounts.



Fig. 4 *General view of the instrument with the lids all closed*

III Internal construction

An iron gap spacer between the wrestplank and the belly rail runs under the strings between the positions of the strings for the notes b and c1 above.

A frame is glued flat onto the perimeter of the underside of the baseboard. At the front, the frame is thicker and accommodates the two sets of knee levers in a double channel. The frame is interrupted for the leg blocks. The inner construction, clad in the outer case, is invisible except through a large rectangular opening in the belly rail. The internal framework includes seven vertical pillars, modern replacements, around the inside of the bentside, to support the bentside liner. The pillars are tenoned through the baseboard and the frame underneath it. The visible ends of the tenons underneath are stained dark brown, blending in with the bottom. The internal framing and bracing is difficult to discern. The following description may be incorrect in some details but is probably incomplete. Some of the details are suggested by MINE 109 which has a similar internal construction to the present one.

The internal rim to which the soundboard is glued consists of the belly rail, the spine liner, the tail liner, the bentside liner and the cheek liner. All of these except for the bentside liner are glued to the baseboard. The bentside liner is mounted on the pillars along the curve of the bentside. The spine liner and the cheek liner are both of solid wood and extend from the baseboard up to the underside of the soundboard. The solid belly rail, let into the spine liner and finger-jointed at the cheek liner, runs at an angle to the spine such that it is positioned further (30mm) from the front edge of the instrument in the bass than in the treble. The tail liner, a solid block rising from the baseboard to the soundboard, probably butts against the spine liner and against a last pillar, not laminate, at the end of the bentside.

Two bottom braces are glued to the bottom at somewhat less than a right angle to the spine such that their ends at the spine are closer to the player than the ends at the bentside. At both their extremities these two braces end in knees, that is, at the spine and at one of the vertical pillars, possibly the second and the

fourth counting from the front of the instrument. Diagonal struts support the bentside liner: one strut certainly runs from the corner of the baseboard and the belly rail in the bass and up to one of the pillars, probably the third; another strut runs from the corner of the spine and the first brace, up to one of the pillars, probably the fifth; and another from the corner of the spine and the second brace and probably up to the sixth pillar. There may be two more struts. Some of the struts start on the baseboard and others may start a little way up the spine wall.

IV Wrestplank and soundboard

The oak wrestplank, with mahogany veneer on the top surface, is jointed to the internal case sides either side, probably with two tenons. The top surface is at a higher horizontal plane than that of the soundboard. The wrestplank is wider in the bass than the treble. The wrestplank veneer is marked out for two extra sets of tuning pins in the treble beyond the tuning pins for f3. The markings would have been for tuning pins for f#3 and g3 if the instrument had extended up to g3.

The strengthening yoke comprises two side arms and a front section (fig. 5). Of the side arms, the one in the treble extends back over the gap between the wrestplank and the soundboard to the corner of the cheek at the bentside and the other, in the bass, for about the same distance along the spine. The front section, along the front on top of the wrestplank, is narrower in the bass than in the treble but is not tapered bottom to top.

The deciduous nut, stained black, is let into the yoke arms on either side. It curves away from the player from the bass to the treble; in the extreme treble, from c3 to the end, it curves back towards the player.

The coniferous soundboard and its ribs are of the twentieth century. The soundboard overhangs the belly rail. The gap between the wrestplank and the soundboard front edge is tapered, wider in the bass. From the bass to about the position of the strings for the note a#1 above, the soundboard is glued to the top surface of the belly rail. For the remaining treble section the soundboard is unattached. The soundboard is supported underneath its front edge by an apron, a flat strip of wood glued underneath where the soundboard overhangs the belly rail. The apron covers the full width of the overhang where the soundboard is glued to the belly rail but tapers in width towards the treble. Towards the treble, the apron is undercut, that is, there is air between the upper surface of the apron and the soundboard; the soundboard in the area around the treble end of the bridge is thus not directly stiffened by the apron.

The single bridge (apparently the original one re-used on the new soundboard) is blackened and probably of beech; it appears to have been bent to shape in the treble and possibly sawn in the bass. At the treble end, beyond the bridge pins, the bridge reduces suddenly to about a third of its height and disappears into the treble arm of the yoke (fig. 7). At the bass end a vertical cut ends the bridge except for a last flat section, about two millimetres in thickness, which stops, squared off, well short of the spine (fig. 8). The hitch pin rail is twentieth century. The spine moulding is stained black.



Fig. 5 *Plan view of the instrument seen from above*



Fig. 6 *The treble end of the bridge*



Fig. 7 *The back-pinning in the bridge*

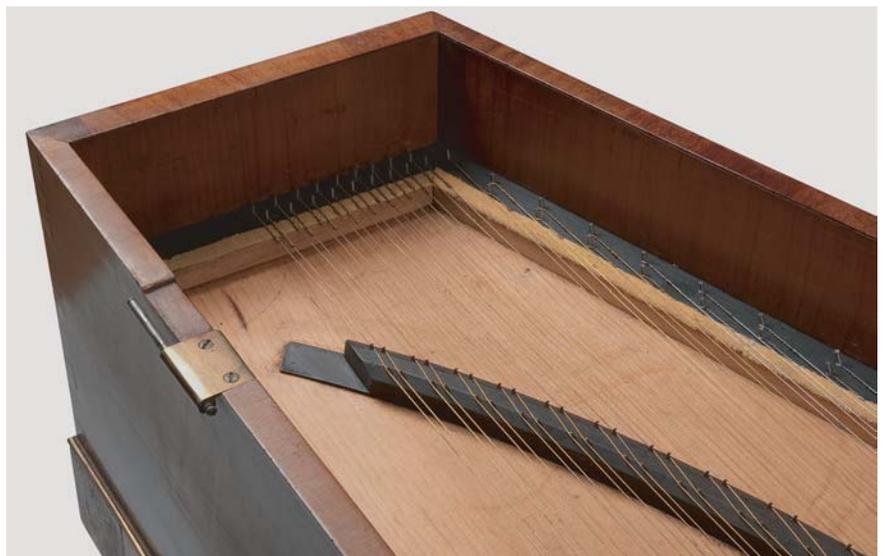


Fig. 8 *The bass end of the bridge*

V Keyboard

The key levers are of coniferous wood, mostly with standing grain (fig. 9). The naturals have bone key plates and key fronts, the accidentals are of stained fruitwood surmounted by ebony slips. The two knobs for extracting the action, one on either side of the keyboard on the end blocks, are unusual for Walter.

The key levers, guided at the front on pins that enter slots in the undersides of the keys, are not splayed but all run straight back. The D key levers are wider than all the others.

Fig. 9 *The keyboard, hammer action and dampers*



VI Action

The Viennese *Prellzungenmechanik*, with metal *Kapseln* and a hammer back check, slides in under the wrestplank (fig. 10). The back edge of the key frame slides up onto two ramps glued to the baseboard at the belly rail; at the front a broad vertical strip, veneered in mahogany and glued to the front edge of the key frame, raises the front of the action. The single hammer check, serving all the hammers, is sprung at the treble end and runs across and above the key levers from one of the side arms of the action to the other. The hammers rest on cloths on the keys. A rail above the far ends of the key levers runs across the action. Layers of cloth attached underneath this rail limit the upward motion of the key levers at the back and thus also the depth of touch at the front. Above the touch rail is another rail that limits the forward motion of the escapement hoppers. This latter rail is fixed to the touch rail by means of five dovetailed blocks glued to the upper rail and fitting in appropriate grooves in the touch rail below (fig. 11). The rail can be moved backwards or forwards by tapping the dovetail blocks. The position of the escapement hoppers is thus adjustable; if an escapement hopper leans more towards the player, the moment of escapement is retarded, that is, the relevant hammer escapes closer to the string; if the hopper stands more towards the vertical, the moment of escapement occurs earlier, that is, the hammer escapes further away from the string. The forward-leaning escapement hoppers rest against the upright rear surface of the movable rail and have upright brass wire springs mounted at the rear of the action.

The wooden hammerheads are tall (fig. 12). Seen from the player's position, the hammerheads in the treble are narrow at their bases and splay out to the top



Fig. 10 *Detail of the hammer action seen from behind*



Fig. 11 *The adjustable escapement*

such that they are about twice as wide at the top as at the bottom. Progressing towards the bass, this narrowing diminishes until the extreme bass where the hammers have almost the same width at the bottom as at the top. The front face of each hammerhead is chamfered on the two upright corners although decreasingly towards the bass. At the top, the part that is leathered protrudes from the front face (although increasingly less towards the bass), thus forming a club-like shape. Each wooden shank is round in cross section where it enters a hole towards the lower end of the respective hammerhead.

The wooden damper jacks are guided above in their own damper house and below in a guide screwed to the front edge of the soundboard. The damper jacks rest directly on felt on the left hand side of each key lever. A small block of wood is glued on the side of each jack. In the bass (double stringing) the dampers glued to the undersides of the blocks consist of leather-covered wedges that rest between the pairs of strings; in the treble (triple stringing) the dampers consist of pads of soft leather glued directly on the undersides of the blocks; the pads rest on top of the strings.

There are two knee levers, the left one for disengaging all the dampers, the right one for engaging the moderator. The moderator is of woven (and possibly felted) white cloth, the tabs cut out of four strips glued to the batten. The cloth is now about 1.0mm thick at FF and about 0.7mm thick at f3, measured with the cloth compressed by a vernier caliper.

As in inv. no. MIR 1098 by Walter, all the action parts and the strings for the D's take up more space than do the same parts and the strings for all other notes.



Fig. 12 *The key levers and hammers for the notes FF, c1 and f3*



Fig. 13 *The damper house with the dampers*

VII Stringing

There are no gauge markings for the string thicknesses and none of the strings looks original.

The instrument is double strung from FF to a1, triple strung from a#1 to f3.

Neither the bridge pins nor the nut pins are arranged to equalize the sounding lengths of the strings of each choir.

The bridge has back pins from FF to a1, that is, for the double-strung section. For the rest the strings are angled back to the hitch-pin rail, that is, for the triple-strung section.

Little or no disturbance to the scaling is caused by the presence of the gap spacer.

VIII Condition

The instrument appears at first to be in exceptionally fine original condition. A closer inspection shows however that the soundboard is new. This is confirmed by the Rück archives. Considerable work appears to have been undertaken when the soundboard was taken out. Evidence for this is provided by the pillars of the inner construction, probably of sycamore and twentieth century in appearance. To make new pillars would have required disassembling the inner construction and taking out the bentside liner.

Another change may have occurred much earlier in the history of this instrument. The frame under the baseboard appears to have been cut into when accommodating new leg blocks. The use of yew for the inside of the spine, the tail and the bentside above the soundboard is unusual. MINE 109 has yew in the same places as MIR 1099 but also a plain yew exterior rather than the mahogany veneer with gilt brass decoration of MIR 1099. The lid of MIR 1099 may be completely new. The lid has none of the eyes for the hooks that the Walter firm usually used at this period but instead an old, if not original, substitute for lid hooks comprising a sprung catch operated by a button from the outside of the case in the manner of instruments of a later date, for instance the piano by the firm Walter & Sohn presented in this catalogue (MIR 1108) and later instruments made in Vienna. The lid stick of MIR 1099 is like the lid sticks of the early instruments of Nannette Streicher (for instance MIR 1107), both in appearance and in the way in which it is hinged, but is nonetheless an unexpected feature in a piano by the Walter firm of this period and could date from a later period. The inside of the lid of MIR 1099 is of yet another wood, possibly birch but not yew. These facts could all be explained by the suggestion that the instrument originally had yew veneer on the outside as well as above the soundboard (as in MINE 109) and that the legs were also veneered in yew. Making a new lid with a mahogany veneer outside and birch inside would have been faster than re-veneering an old one and making new legs with mahogany

veneer would have been easier than stripping the veneer off the old lids and re-veneering them in mahogany. The new lid explains the old but later lid catch and the lid stick. If the lid catch dates from between about 1805 and 1810, perhaps the case was re-veneered and the lid and the legs renewed at some time during that period.

The action of this instrument is remarkably well preserved; the three layers of leather on the hammers, old in appearance, are carefully cut and pared. However, three layers would be unusual as early as 1795 suggesting that these hammer coverings may also derive from work done in about 1810 when multiple layers of hammer leather became steadily more usual.

IX Provenance

According to the Rück archives, this instrument was bought from the firm Steinway & Sons when the Rück brothers visited Steinway's storage in Berlin. According to the correspondence between Ulrich Rück and Otto Marx, the purchase must have taken place before December 1932. Ulrich Rück's notes also mention that some years later he met an antique dealer in Dresden who had sold the instrument to Steinway & Sons. The antique dealer confirmed that he had bought the instrument from a castle in Saxony where it had been the property of Herzogin Dorothea von Kurland (1761–1821).

In 1779 Dorothea von Kurland married Peter von Biron, *Herzog von Kurland* and Semgallen. Among those with whom she was acquainted were Czar Alexander I of Russia, King Friedrich Wilhelm III of Prussia, Napoleon, Talleyrand, Metternich, Goethe and Schiller. As part of the Rück Collection, the instrument was acquired by the *Germanisches Nationalmuseum* in 1962.

X Comments

The exterior and the legs of this instrument appear to have been renewed in mahogany. This could have taken place between about 1805 and 1810. The revamping may have included making a new lid, a lid stick and re-leathering the hammers. Later, in the twentieth century, some internal parts of the instrument seem to have been replaced and the soundboard was renewed using the old bridge.

XI Literature

Elfrid Gleim, *Hammerflügel bis ca. 1825 im Germanischen Nationalmuseum Nürnberg, Beschreibender Katalog*, Wilhelmshaven 2012
 Michael Latcham, *Pianos for Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven; change and contrast*, Munich and Salzburg 2016
 Victor Luithlen, ›Der Eisenstädter Walterflügel‹, *Mozart-Jahrbuch 1954*, 206–8
 Ulrich Rück, ›Mozarts Hammerflügel erbaute Anton Walter, Wien‹, *Mozart-Jahrbuch 1955*, 246–62

XI Measurements

Case:	Total length excl. mouldings etc., (inc.)	2163 (2193)
	Length cheek	557 (589)
	Width	984 (1002)
	Length tail	243 (251)
	Height of case without lid at the front	261
	Height of case without lid at tail	259
	Height without lid from the floor	845
	Case side thicknesses including veneer(all veneered both sides)	
	Spine	18
	Cheek	16
	Bentside	16
	Tail	22

Internal construction:	Baseboard thickness(es)	27 (frame 16 but 20 at the front)			
	Belly rail thickness	45			
	Bentside liner thickness	<i>circa</i> 40			
Wrestplank and soundboard:	Wrestplank	43 thick, 188 wide in the bass, 173 in the treble			
	Yoke height	50			
	Soundboard thicknesses	Twentieth century			
	Ribs	Twentieth century			
	Bridge dimensions (height x width)	FF	f3		
			17 x 22	15 x 18	
	Hitch pin rail height	Twentieth century			
	Nut dimensions (height x width)		4½ x 9	4½ x 8	
		Tuning pins	4.5	4.1	
	Keyboard naturals:	<i>Stichmaß</i> : 478			
Playing length head		40			
Playing length tail		91			
Tail widths		12½, 15½, 12½, 12½, 12½, 12½, 13			
Total length of natural key lever		FF	f3		
			471	443	
Front of natural key lever					
to balance point		200	190		
Balance point to <i>Kapsel</i>		251	230		
Action:		Total width: front, 872; back, 875			
	Hammerhead width (core)	FF	f3		
			103		
			32½	34½	
	Hammerhead height (core)				
	Hammerhead covering	3 brown layers,		Idem, 2mm	
		total 2½ mm thick			
	Shank length	106	116		
	Beak length	21	20		
	Hammer to string	34	30		
Stringing:	Sounding string length (longest string)		Strike point		
	FF	1753	140		
	C	1574	118		
	F	1388	103		
	c	1080	84		
	f	828	61		
	c1	558	51		
	f1	417	41		
	c2	289	29		
	f2	215	21		
	c3	145	10		
	f3	115	11		

There are no string gauge markings.