

Johann Andreas Steins's 1781 Claviorganum
and the Construction of Art
in Eighteenth-Century Augsburg

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Abstract

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The latter half of the eighteenth century saw the piano's rise in popularity in Europe, and alongside it many one-of-a-kind keyboard instruments that used the new technology of the hammer action in innovative ways. Recent scholarship revises the older view of these inventions as bizarre "dead ends," suggesting that like the piano, they filled contemporary musical needs. The conditions that shaped keyboard innovation during this period, however, have not been completely explored.

Johann Andreas Stein of Augsburg (1728-1792) invented a number of instruments that his contemporaries called "works of art." These included an organ-piano (claviorganum) from 1781, first owned by Patrick Alströmer of Gothenburg and now held by the Gothenburg City Museum. This dissertation explores how Stein's claviorganum functioned in its role as a "work of art." It juxtaposes the physical material of the claviorganum with descriptions of Stein's other inventions, and places instrument and texts in the context of the conversations and institutions that defined "art" in Augsburg during Stein's lifetime.

Writings by Stein's contemporary, the Augsburg historian Paul von Stetten the Younger, evidence an ideologically charged concept of art that preserved the word's older meaning of skilled craft, while encompassing newer ideas about the nature and privileged position of the recently described group of the fine arts. That idea of art, and the local political and social structures that supported it, conditioned both the form and the reception of Stein's claviorganum.

Like Stein's other inventions, the claviorganum was probably conceived and understood as a rationally worked-out, useful improvement. Its utility, however, consisted in an aesthetic affordance: it was designed, by supporting *empfindsam* musical behaviors, to allow musicians and listeners to practice music as a fine art. Many of Stein's inventions were publicly exhibited in Augsburg; like them, the claviorganum provided an object for the critical gaze of the newly emerging public, the most important arbiter of art. These results situate the invention of Stein's claviorganum in a historically specific set of economic, cultural, and social circumstances. In doing so they also suggest new ways to understand both unusual and mainstream musical instrument technologies during this period.

Keywords: art, Patrick Alströmer, Augsburg, Carl Philip Emanuel Bach, claviorgan, *Empfindsamkeit*, Enlightenment, fine arts, fortepiano, Gothenburg, mechanical arts, music aesthetics, *Prellzungenmechanik*, public sphere, Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart, Johann Andreas Stein, Paul von Stetten the Younger, 18th century