Digitally Unpacking Musical Treasures from Archduke Rudolph’s *Musikalien Register Nr. 9* at the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde, Wien

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# ABSTRACT

A newly digitalized catalog of sheet music by Beethoven’s only composition student, Archduke Rudolph, has opened access to musical treasures for musicologists worldwide. Archduke Rudolph spent his entire lifetime assembling a collection representative of music from early 19th century Europe. This collection eventually grew to 18,000 items. He bequeathed the catalog of this collection ( *Musikalien Register Nr 9* ), and all musical scores associated with it to the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde Archiv in Vienna, Austria in 1831 and it became the centerpiece of their collection.

Following a multi-year effort transcribing and correlating the Archduke’s two-volume handwritten catalog with online Archiv note cards, a digital transcription by this author revealed the existence of over seventy-five women composers from among the 18,000 lines in the catalog. One of the most interesting entries is that of Anna Amalia Duchess of Saxen-Weimar, noted for her performance abilities, compositional skills, and support of the arts. Apart from her musical achievements and philanthropic contributions, the Duchess left an uncertain trail of compositions— only a few of which are certifiably authentic. Using the digitalized *Musikalien Register,* manuscript watermark comparisons, and corroboration with Robert Eitner’s *Quellen Lexicon* six original manuscripts of scores by the Duchess have been re-discovered including a possible *Stabat Mater*. Numerous other female composers are also found in the catalog showing the value of the Archduke’s online catalog for the study of under-represented groups in the classical era. This discussion includes problems and methods associated with language transcription, translation of manuscript codes, ciphers and shorthand, and the sorting out of information from the catalog into digital format.

# KEYWORDS

Digital Humanities, *Musikalien Register*, Archduke Rudolph, Duchess Anna Amalia, Beethoven, Women Composers.

# HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In 1799, a musically talented eleven-year-old-boy named Rudolph began to acquire musical scores for his personal library. Rudolph happened to be the brother of the Austrian emperor and became the only composition student of Beethoven. As the brother of the Emperor, Rudolph had the financial means and connections that enabled him to acquire musical pieces representative of music heard in 19th century Vienna. Along with help from secretaries, he carefully handwrote each title, publisher, and plate number of the compositions he acquired with ink and quill pen into two volumes that eventually grew to over 2,400 composers and 18,000 pieces of music.

The scores in Rudolph’s collection were originally located in the Archive of the Hofburg Imperial Palace in Vienna where composers viewed them during the years the Archduke lived there. The collection was consulted often by noted composers such as Ludwig van Beethoven, Josef Haydn, and Joseph Eybler— suggesting its importance as a source for understanding musical trends in Viennese classical music at the time. Even more importantly, Beethoven used it as his second library while teaching the young Archduke.

Upon ascending to the rank of Archbishop in 1819, Rudolph took the collection with him to his palace in Kroměříž (Czech Republic). After his death, the musical scores and final catalog of the collection ( *Musikalien Register Nr. 9* ) were sent to the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Vienna—where they reside today.

Archivists at the Gesellschaft categorized and assigned to each musical score both Roman and Arabic numbers and entered that information into an in-house multi-volume set labeled *Inventarbuch Musikalien*. The Archduke’s original two-volume

handwritten catalog was retired from routine use and replaced by index cards in the card catalog corresponding to entries in the *Inventarbuch Musikalien.* Each index card was marked with an “R” to distinguish it from other works in the collection.

As years went by, the intermixing of the Archduke’s cards (marked with an “R”) with the works of other composers made it difficult to do research into classical music. A clear need thus emerged to liberate the Archduke’s holdings for easier access to his original collection. Recognizing a need, this author converted the *Musikalien Register* into digital form with the expectation that it would contribute to the progress of Beethoven music scholarship online.

Bundled alphabetically in two parts from A - L and M - Z, *Musikalien Register Nr 9* ( Sheet Music Catalog ) consists of over four hundred pages covering approximately 2,400 different composers. It supersedes all earlier catalogs. A finder’s index ( *Alphabetisches Verzeichniss der Musik=Compositoren*) listing the name of all composers accompanies the two-volume set. Using a quill pen and writing on parchment, Rudolph patiently wrote each entry in alphabetical order, A-Z. There are, however, some occasional irregularities in order. For example, the name Beethoven precedes even Bach in the listing of B’s. The titles of compositions are written in languages ranging from German, French, Italian, English and Hungarian.

Each page is divided into six columns annotated with composer’s names with capital letters. Beneath each composer’s name, handwritten in old German (or *Kurrentschrift*) are the titles of their works — operas, masses, and other large-scale works, followed by numbers keyed to an earlier catalog and/or a breakdown of smaller works by a composer and listed by number as they arrived in the Archduke’s collection.

Large spaces were set aside in the catalog for well-known composers and the Archduke did his best to fit new works into the pre-existing spaces on the pages. Nevertheless, entries for a highly productive composer such as Beethoven might be scattered throughout a particular letter of the alphabet and cross-referenced inconveniently from one column to another. The Archduke used a dotted line to connect related works by the same composer on adjacent columns of the page, but inevitable irregularities resulted in this motley arrangement of composers within each letter of the alphabet.

1. TRANSCRIPTION PROBLEMS AND DATA ENTRY

Linguistic problems pervade transcription of data from the book. For example, the text beneath each composer’s name appears variously in German, French, Italian, English and sometimes even Hungarian by writers with different handwriting, and varying levels of adherence to guidelines for recording entries. The lack of strict standards for recording the sheet music combined with linguistic

Paganini, Nicolo

1. 3 Quartetti a Violin Viola Chitarra, e V[iolin]cello
2. 3 Gran Quartetti come sopra,
3. Variazioni di Bravura per il Violino sopra una tema originale con accompagnare di Piano e Chitarra. Leidesdorf, Vienna.

problems poses difficulties for all who currently use the physical catalog.

The Archduke occasionally wrote in what is known as *Kurrentschrift*—a type of script no longer found in modern German that presents a problem of translation. Translating this unique text is beyond the ability of *Transcribus* A.I. technology. In fact, training the computer program to recognize these various scripts would occupy more time that it takes to transcribe the few hundred isolated entries manually. As a result, a partial translation of *Kurrentschrift* entries in *Musikalien Register* remains as a lingering concern as this transcription moves toward completion.

In his master’s paper on the *Sheet Music Catalog*, Péter Barna identified at least four different handwriting styles in the catalog— including both the early and late versions of the Archduke’s handwriting over a period of twenty years. The contrast between handwriting of the Archduke and his assistants is considerable. The Archduke’s librarian, Josef Baumeister, wrote many of the entries (especially those in French) in his own stylish, but uniquely slanted handwriting. Thus, penmanship presents still another problem of linguistic interpretation. One can see the contrasting styles of two copyists in Figure 1.

Figure 1. *Musikalien Register Nr 9,* Book II, p. 79/ 66 excerpt. By permission. Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde, Wien.



Kurrentschrift presents its own special problems. A lowercase e and n are almost indistinguishable in Kurrent handwriting and the tendency of scribes to switch back and forth between Latein to Kurrentschrift on the same page is also confusing. Idiolectic patterns show that Archduke Rudolph wrote successive entries of the word Berlin sometimes in Latein and others in Kurrent, and no explanation has yet been found for this.

One must be prepared for unexpected spellings, as well. Munich, Germany sometimes appears in an archaic form Monachii. But it might also be written in other ways such as Munich, München, or even its original Roman title, Monachium.

Decoding cyphers presents another challenge. Archduke and his secretaries often substitute the word “detto” for the traditional Latin term *Ibid*, or *Ibidem* (meaning “the same” to indicate a work and/or publisher just referred to in the list). Matters become more complicated when they contract detto into “dto” (which looks more like “atto” to modern eyes). Sometimes they further shorten this into the single lowercase letter “d” that looks like a musical note to an outsider.

Other shorthand figures signify the key of the music. Sometimes capital letters indicate the major mode such as capital “A” to indicate “A major,” or lower case “a” to indicate “a minor.” Sometimes keys are designated by a string of flats or sharps such as “♭♭♭” or “###.” Unfortunately, the mode or tonic of the piece cannot be determined purely from accidentals in a key signature, so these figures are left unchanged in the final digital transcription.

1. DIGITAL METHODS AND SOLUTIONS

Initially, an editorial decision was made to create an exact translation of the Archduke’s catalog—to transcribe all languages as exactly as possible–changing only ancient letters to modern script and leaving abbreviations in the native tongues. The considerable number of scribal misspellings, however, suggested a need for editorial translations placed in parentheses.

Since the Archduke’s catalog was clearly designed to provide him easy access to compositions he had acquired, preserving a digitalized urtext translation of the original document itself was put aside in favor of providing immediate access to the sheet music found online in the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde collection today. The Archive director saw an urgent need to attach modern call numbers (“signatures”) to each entry in the original Archduke’s catalog. Attaching call numbers meant adding another massive column of data. However, the inclusion of this information became crucial to properly identifying compositions from the Archduke’s catalog and distinguishing them from those listed in the giant Gesellschaft online catalog today.

Choice of database was a critical issue. *Excel* was chosen early on because its filename extensions are more dependable than those of *Microsoft Access* whose filename extensions may become extinct

in the not-so-distant future—as happened with Microsoft *Frontpage* in recent years. *Omeka* was chosen as the online delivery vehicle for the transcription because it is freely accessible software.

The published *Excel* database is sorted by default into the following column headings that can be re-sorted: computer number, database number, alphabet column, surname (alphabetical), first name (alphabetical), birth date, death date, Musikallien Register page number number, column number, series number, title, publisher, place of publication, plate number, opus number, Gesellscaft call number, manuscript format, four-hand music, dedication, woman composer.

Figure 2. *Musikalien Register Nr 9,* Book I, p. 32. By permission. Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde, Wien.



Figure 2 shows the motley arrangement of composer’s names on a page of *Musikalien Register Nr 9,* with works by one composer distributed across unrelated columns. The occasional duplication of names within each letter heading demonstrated a need to identify all composers. Thus, an early step in digitizing was to number all 2,400 names and remove duplicates. This was important because the number of composers contained in the letter “K,” for example,

grew so large that one of the scribes unwittingly duplicated the name “Kelz” and began to number that composer’s works all over again. Along with similar duplications on other composer’s names, the two lists were consolidated under one name and number.

While most composer’s names were correctly identified in *Musikalien Register*, an exception occurred on page 188, column 96 where the names of two Kaysers have been historically mis- identified as the same person. A composition by the first of these two Kaysers occurs in the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde catalog as F. Kaiser, but the other composer’s work is missing. Thus, a *Christmas Cantata* by Phillip K. Kaÿser was once a part of the Archduke’s collection—even though the score is no longer available in the collection. Our database has cleared up these anomalies.

Matching modern call numbers to each composition in the catalog has become one of the challenging aspects of this project. Unfortunately, the Archduke’s estate underwent an extended period of settlement after his passing, and many scores were added to the catalog of his collection that he never saw. ( A separate list of these compositions is near publication.) This in-house inventory ( *Inventarbuch Musikalien* ) consists not only of the author and title of a particular work, but a characteristic bit of musical notation from each piece. It holds promise for future transcriptions when

A.I. programs operate at a sufficient level to accurately translate musical notation.

Except for the column of titles, both books of the *Musikalien Register Nr 9* catalog have been fully transcribed, numbered, matched with call numbers, and double-checked for accuracy using a crowd-sourcing technique involving hundreds of university students. The Association for Documentary Editing symbol //… // is attached to those titles currently untranslatable due to poor penmanship. The online address is:

<https://uafslibrary.com/Husarik2>

1. UNPACKING MUSICAL TREASURES FROM *MUSIKALIEN REGISTER NR 9*

This transcription has already proven its value. The works of over seventy-five women composers surfaced during transcription. One person in particular, Anna Amalia, Duchess of Saxen-Weimar gained great notoriety in her time. Born in 1739, and educated in the Brunswick court, Duchess Anna Amalia showed talent from an early age as a keyboardist, harpist, flutist, and composer. She financed a large library of her family materials in Weimar—today located near the Liszt Music Academy. Converted to a library in the early 1700s, it holds more than one million volumes of literature and art, and a thirteen thousand volume music collection. A bundle of music manuscripts found in the library may or may not be ascribed to her because scholars argue about their attributions.

RISM currently attributes ten different works to Anna Amalia. However, Anna Gross, curator for the Archive reports that only about five are confirmed. Students from the University of Arkansas

- Fort Smith presented a PowerPoint presentation on six newly- discovered works of Anna Amalia found in the Archduke’s Sheet Music Catalog to the Southwest Chapter of the American Musicological Society in March 2022. The authentications were based upon call numbers corresponding to the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde index cards, musical scores, Robert Eitner’s *Quellen Lexicon*, listings in RISM and other databases.

Pursuing this discovery further, a seventh manuscript in the Archduke’s catalog—a *Stabat Mater,* entered in the hand of Archduke Rudolph himself——had no corresponding call number in the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde card catalog. There is only one unattributed “Stabat Mater” in the “Unknown” drawer at the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde Archive—all other scores and call numbers for *Stabat Mater* in the collection have matching call numbers. The authorship of this composition has been under question since its initial inventory at the Archive. Shown to Mozart’s good friend and best student Johann von Eybler in the early 1830s, he identified the compositional style as typical of a Johann Hasse student from northern Germany. Hasse was the teacher of Anna’s composition instructors.

Despite damage to manuscripts by the great fire of 2004, an examination four surviving Anna Amalia musical compositions at the Anna Amalia Archiv, Weimar, Germany ( June 2023) showed a watermark match with one manuscript attributed to her at the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde Archiv in Vienna. The crown-like coat-of-arms watermarks on manuscripts in both Weimar and Vienna strongly suggest that at least a half dozen more—and a seventh—previously lost documents by this incredible woman composer have been recovered.

Thus, even at this preliminary stage, the Archduke’s Sheet Music Catalog has raised the state of research in classical music history by potentially uncovering compositions by early women musicians and other under-represented groups from the classical era who would have otherwise remained forgotten. Little doubt Digital Humanities will advance through future uses of the *Musikalien Register* Nr 9.

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