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UDK 929, Weiser, obitelj  
681.817.1(497.5) (091)

Professional paper

Received: 29 September 2016

Accepted: 25 October 2016

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## The Weiser family of Zagreb and the forgotten 'Amati *tambura*' Ivan Weiser

- The work brings hitherto unknown history about the craft-musical family Weiser and her arrival from Silesia in Zagreb at the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Three generations of prominent members are followed from the period of craft guilds related to the oldest representative joiner Antun Weiser Sr., through workshop history of the forgotten instrument and drum builder Ivan Weiser Sr., to the short musical career overview of the violinist Ludmilla Weiser. Along the unpublished biography of the Weiser family, the work brings new cognitions about tamboura as a traditional musical instrument which experienced metamorphosis and complete transformation from manufactured to a valuable craft product.

Key words: Weiser, family  
instruments-builders, tambouras, ethnomusicology, Croatia

### INTRODUCTION

The history of the Zagreb family Weiser, craftsmen and musicians, has not been researched so far. I already briefly mentioned Johann and Ludmila Weiser in my book about the *Tomay & Tkalčić Instrument Shop* (Jeić 2010: 140-141). Since this is a family of utmost importance for the music and business culture of the city of Zagreb, I have decided to study the subject more deeply. I ought to note that no scientific sources could help me because the making of instruments (chordophone instruments in particular) has not been studied sufficiently. There are no extensive written works about Johann Weiser, the first – or at last one of the first - maker of *tamburas* the quality of which out-excelled the workshop-produced instruments until that time. Specifically, the famous

Croatian ethnomusicologist Franjo Ks. Kuhar mentioned Weiser in a as early as in 1877 (Kuhač 1877: 69, 82-83); one hundred years later, in 1974, Ladislav Šaban referred to Weiser even more briefly in his entry on the making of musical instruments (Šaban 1974: 5); the well-known Czech musicologist Karel Jalovec included him under the name Weisser in his major work *Enzyklopädie des Geigenbaues* (Jalovec 1965: 389); finally, Uroš Dojčinović mentioned him under the name Weisner in 1992 (Dojčinović 1965: 37). It was Franjo Kuhar that singled out Weiser as a Croatian maker of *tamburas* whom he greatly appreciated, and even put down a reminder to himself, in the draft of his entry for his still unfinished *Biographical Dictionary: Ask Tkalčić whether Weiser died in Zagreb and when?* Unfortunately, during his life he did not manage to mention any biographical data or chronological information on Weiser's shop. After quite a few years spent searching for the living descendants of the family which left Croatia for good as early as in mid-1884, I was lucky to locate in England the great-granddaughter of violin player Ludmilla Weiser who sent me the few family records that somehow survived the war storms and migrations. Unfortunately, the descendants did not know much about the activity of the early members of the Weiser family in Zagreb but, after a month-long search of the records of the Administration of the Free and Royal City of Zagreb at the State Archives in Zagreb, and the systematic examination of the issues of the *Agramer Zeitung* daily for 1830-1885, and many foreign and local fragmentary sources, I tried to reconstruct, to the best of my knowledge, the lives and activities of this unresearched family of craftsmen and musicians. I was especially pleased to find a piece of information about the origins of the first Weiser in Zagreb, the joiner Anton; that was not an easy task because Anton did not apply for citizenship in Zagreb like his contemporaries. Finally, I was extremely proud when I managed to date, through my research, one of oldest preserved *tamburas* in Croatia, kept in the Franjo Kuhač Collection of Musical Instruments of the Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb.

## SETTLING IN ZAGREB AND WORK IN THE JOINER GUILD

The first member of the family who arrived in Zagreb was Anton Weiser Sr. Anton Franjo Ksaverski<sup>1</sup> Weiser (2 February 1779, Vlčice, Bohemia – 13 April 1884, Zagreb) was born in the farmer's family of Ignaz (son of Tobias) Weiser in Vlčice (then Silesia). Anton probably arrived in Zagreb at the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The first evidence of his stay in Zagreb is the record of his wedding in St. Mary's Parish on 28 November 1804 to Anna Tomuradin (about 1781 - 7

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1 The second name given male children was usually a saint's name (in this case Saint Francisco Javier).

February 1848, Zagreb). Unfortunately, her origin remains unclear. It is not known where Anton learned the joiner's trade, but since he was twenty-five when he arrived in Zagreb, he probably already had a master's certificate. In 1811 Anton Weiser announced, before the Gradec Guild of Joiners, Turners, Glaziers, Organ-Builders and Potters (*Meister Protokoll*, Zagreb City Museum)<sup>2</sup> the start of his joiner's career in Zagreb with the following words (translated from the handwritten document in Gothic script by the author): "On 6 January 1811 Anton Weiser born in Vlčice (Wildschütz) in Silesia (Schlesien) looks forward as a master craftsman to welcoming all the major work orders listed heretofore".<sup>3</sup> With this act Anton Weiser joined the Guild in which he was active until the end of his life. In Zagreb Anton Weiser was first, in 1822,<sup>4</sup> registered as an *opifex* (joiner) resident at No. 60, in the house of Count Janko Drašković, the famous 'Illyrian', and his second wife Franjica née Kulmer. In 1824 the house number was changed to 79 and, finally, in 1826 to 176; Anton Weiser was registered as a master joiner (*arcularius*). According to tax registers, Weiser paid his tax dues regularly. The Drašković house later became Jurjevska 1, and Kipni trg 6 (*Cathastrum Contributionis*; DATZG).<sup>5</sup> As a Guild member and joiner master teacher (*Tischlermeister*), Anton Weiser trained many joiners, including his sons, Anton Jr. and probably Carl as well. The Weiser family lived apparently at the registered trade address. His first son, Anton Jr., was born in S. Mary's parish on 27 February 1805. Anton Jr. learned the joiner's trade from his father Anton and became a master craftsman in 1821. This is described on September 1821 in the Guild Records as follows: "On September 1821 Anton Weiser presented himself to the Joiner Guild as a master craftsman. His teacher was Anton Weiser. Witnessed by citizens Stepan Kogen and Jacob Horacz of Zagreb".

After the death of his father Anton, Anton Jr. seems to have taken over business relations with the Guild because the name Anton Weiser turned up several times in the Guild Records even after his death in 1844. However, his widow Anna Weiser continued to pay tax for the registered joiner business until her

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2 Records of the Gradec Guild of Joiners, Turners, Glaziers and Organ Builders, 1741-1871. Kept in the Zagreb City Museum.

3 Mrs Danijela Živković and Messrs. Miljenko Majetić and Antun Buklijaš helped me to translate the German text(s).

4 Assumably, he also worked before, but no tax records for that period have been preserved.

5 All the archival records of the Administration of the free and royal City of Zagreb were reported in Latin.

House numbers of Zagreb were changed several times between 1797 and 1878. This matter was covered extensively by Jelja Dobronić in her book *Old House Numbers in Zagreb*. However, since I managed to find different numbers of the same houses and businesses in tax records and the daily press, it would be a pity not to mention them.

A house, according to research of Jelja Dobronić, was probably built by Bartol Felbinger, one of the most famous builders in Zagreb in the first half of the 19th century (Dobronić 1971: 15, 129).

death in 1848. After Anton, Johann Nepomuk Weiser was also born in St. Mary's Parish (15 May 1809, Zagreb – 16 May 1884, Zagreb); he was awarded his master joiner certificate on 19 February 1827. Somewhat later he began to make instruments, a line of activity which will be discussed below. After Johann, Anton's daughter Anna Weiser was born in St. Mark's Parish on 8 June 1811. Her sister Barbara Weiser (6 June 1813, Zagreb - 1879, Zagreb) was born next; she did not marry and continued to live with her brother Carl Weiser, also a joiner (25 October 1815, Zagreb – 20 August 1902, Zagreb), at the address 89 Pivarska (present-day Basaričekova St.) The last child of Anton and Anna Weiser was Katarina Weiser (3 November 1821) who died as a child on 25 November 1830. As active members of the Joiner Guild the Weisers cooperated actively with well-known craftsmen such as the joiner Georg Eisenhut and his son Antun Eisenhut, Johann Kraft, Adam Krebbs, Michael Tkalčić, glaziers Johann Milinović and Josip Papeš, blacksmith Andreas Hammel, Paul Gaal and Paulus Shergo, but also with the renowned contractor Bartol Felbinger (see below). This means that they belonged to the circle of the best known craftsmen who settled in Zagreb in the early 19th century. According to existing information, Anton Weiser did not apply for citizenship but probably worked as an alien. I will refer to the records of the Gradec Guild in which a member of the Weiser family appeared as guarantor (*Bürge*), witness (*Zeuge*), supporter (*Beistand*) or master teacher (*Lehremeister*):

“1816, Martin Petricsa - his guarantors are Anton Weiser and Adam Krach; 1820, Joseph Tukanz – his guarantors are Anton Weiser and Johann Erbel; 1821, Johann Rolesehnert – his witnesses are Johann Rautter and Anton Weiser; 1830, Georg Kerznerich - his guarantor is Anton Weiser; 1831, Stephan Bizek – his guarantors are Anton Weiser and Adam Krebbs; 1834, Joseph Trahuber – his witnesses are Adam Weiser and Ulrich Krach; 1838, Carl Weiser - his father Anton Weiser was probably his master teacher; 1841, Anton Baden – his supporters are Anton Weiser and Andreas Fedeltsag; 1843, Kaitan Geuman – his witnesses are Anton Weiser and Francz Bernazk; 1844, Emerik Hallanish – Anton Weiser [Jr. or Sr.?, I am not sure] is his master teacher; 1844, Carl Mueller – Antun Weiser Jr. is his master teacher; Martin Restag – Georg Eisenhut and Johann Weiser are his witnesses; 1847, Andreas Župančić – his teacher is Johann Weiser, and his witnesses are Ulrich Krach and Michael Tkalčić.<sup>6</sup>

They probably made furniture and everything needed for the citizens of fast growing Zagreb. Considering the lively artisan activity in Zagreb it is no wonder that the Weisers were also mentioned in the records of the City Administration (*Acta Politica Magistratualia*, *DAZG*) in more cases. In the first document,

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6 The father of Lavoslav Tkalčić who bought Johann Weiser's shop together with Franjo and Vili Tomay.

2317/1827, *Ex Actis*, “... Anton Weiser and his partner master blacksmith Andrej Hammel request in court payment from the contractor, the already mentioned Bartol Felbinger...” The document, written in Latin,<sup>7</sup> reads as follows:

“From the official records of the Free and Royal City of Zagreb, 10 July 1827, after the delivery of writs. Having summoned Bartholomeo Felbinger, upon the grievances of Anton Weiser and Andrea Hammel requesting the payment of the debt for the performed finishing works, and having heard the more extensive conclusions related to the request, I had to pass the final ruling. I have ordered the examination of the accounts of the accused Felbinger before the specified date of issue, and ruled that the accounts be stated before those present on the basis of the agreed measurements. This is why I have filed, with today’s date, the grievance of Anton Weiser and Andrea Hammel against Bartol Felbinger, contractor. I have duly delivered the written ruling to the accused Felbinger and apprised him of its contents, and had it duly filed. Joan [Johann] Nepom Vibral”.

This document confirms the extraordinary importance of Anton Weiser since he also worked for the then busiest contractor in Zagreb. In his application 1872/1825 Anton Weiser requested that his son Johann be appointed his partner in the joiner trade having learned the joiner trade. The document, *De Ioanne Weiser Arculario in Incolam Cittis huju assumpto*, reads as follows:

“Re: admittance of joiner Johann Weiser to the citizenship of this city. With respect to the application on behalf of Johann Weiser, to be made a partner in the father’s joiner trade and to be admitted to the citizenship of this city, there are no impediments in this regard, and let the above be admitted as a citizen, together with his father Weiser; let him be admitted in accordance with city rules, and let him be admitted to the Joiner Guild.”

The last document relating to Anton Weiser Sr. dates from 1844 and refers to his estate: *De conscriptione substantiae a fatis Antonii Weiszer remansae ordinata*, or, in translation: “On the arrangements for the list of the property of Anton Weiser remaining after his death. After departing from this life, Anton Weiser submits to the City Captain Josip Lukšić the list of his property bequeathed after his death to his remaining descendants, so that he may duly file and report the remaining property”.

With this document Anton Weiser entrusted the distribution of his remaining property to Josepho Lukscish [Josip Lukšić], his neighbour at No. 173, who was the City Captain [*Civitatis Capitaneo*] and *Schießen Commissar* (shooting commissioner) of the City Shooting Range (*Domo Iaculatoria, Schießstatte*) in which

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7 Mrs. Mirjam Lopina and Mr. Ivan Kapec helped me with the translation from Latin.

Anton's son Johann had already worked. Anton Weiser died on 23 April 1844 in St. Mary's Parish and was buried in the old Jurjevo Cemetery. His workshop at No. 175 was inherited by his widow Anna who probably, with the assistance of her sons, managed it until her death in 1848. Anna Weiser died on 7 February 1848 in St. Mark's Parish. She was also buried in the Jurjevo Cemetery.

## **INSTRUMENT MAKER JOHANN WEISER AND HIS IMPORTANCE**

One of the most important members of the Weiser family for the instrument crafting part was the already mentioned Ivan [Johann] Nepomuk Weiser. He was born on 15 May 1809<sup>8</sup> and baptized the next day in St. Mary's Parish in Zagreb. He achieved domiciliary status easily because his parents had lived in Zagreb at least since 1804 and had already been granted domicile. He learned the joiner's trade (*arte arculario*) from his father Anton, and took his master's examination, as attested by his certificate, on 19 February 1827. The certificate issued by the City Council was signed by Mayor Johann Kamauf. It stated that Johann had worked for a period of time with his father Anton. The complete text of the certificate is cited below since it was not preserved in the archives but only in the family records. Of particular importance is the letter of reference of the City Council (*Nos judex...*) which reads:

“We, the Judge, the Captain and the other sworn councillors of the free and Royal City of Zagreb... As of this year, month and day the councillors of the City Council which administers public affairs in accordance with constitutional provisions, have received an application for admittance to the joiner's trade. The applicant Johann Weiser has been taught the joiner's skill by his father. During seven years he has been a partner and excelled in various skills. He worked for five years in the City Shooting Range and displayed due obedience to his superiors, which is a credit to his character. There being on our part no objection considering his moral integrity, we have confirmed this letter with our seal, affixed hereunto, and our signatures, in due recognition of its binding effect. In the Free and Royal City of Zagreb, 22 October A.D. 1839.”

According to the document, Johann Weiser first worked as a partner (probably of his father Anton) from approximately 1832, and the last five years, until 1839, he worked in the City Shooting Range (*Domo Iaculatoria*), the favourite gathering place of eminent citizens, including members of the Illyrian movement.

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8 According to the will of Johann Weiser (in family records), the exact birth date is 15 May 1809.

Johann Weiser married Anna Ritschko (28 May 1807, Ehrenhausen – 26 July 1893, Tartu, Estonia) in St. Peter's Parish in Zagreb on 19 May 1833. Their first son, Johann Nepomuk Jr., was born on 27 April 1834 and baptized in St. Peter's Parish in Zagreb. Although their exact Zagreb address at the time is not known, they probably lived in St. Peter's Parish, the easternmost parish in Zagreb. In 1839 Johann Weiser moved, for unknown reasons, for four years to Ehrenhausen in Austria. His wife Anna Ritschko was born in that place near Leibniz in Styria; her father Josip Ritschko (25 February 1781, Maribor), worked there as a master carpenter (*Zimmermann*). He announced his departure in his letter 1198/1839, *De litteris dimissorialibus Ioanni Veizer*: "Granting of passport to Johann Weiser, son of citizen and master joiner. After due consideration of the request and authenticated statement of Johann Weiser, there are no impediments regarding the granting of the passport." After his return from Ehrenhausen to Zagreb, Anton Weiser Sr. applied for admittance of his son Johann Weiser to the Gradec Joiner Guild, in the document 3820/1843, *De Ioanne Veiser Incolatum et magisterium artis arculariae isthic sollicitante*: "After due consideration, the Commission has found no impediments, with respect to the application of Johann Weiser Jr. for the full practice of the joiner's trade. He has lived for four years in the town of Ehrenhausen, attended the trade school there and acquired the master's title along with the right to practice the joiner's trade."

Unfortunately, I could not find out the specific type of training was involved. It is known that the family of Johann's wife lived in Ehrenhausen and that soon thereafter, in 1884, Johann was admitted as a full member to the Gradec Joiner Guild. While in Ehrenhausen between 1839 and 1843, Johann may have learned instrument making along with joinery. However, that can hardly be explored. In the period under consideration, instrument makers (with the exception of organ builders) did not belong to any guild and were apparently associated with joiner or carpenter guilds. However, it is a reliable fact that Johann, after his return from Austria, became a master joiner by decision (in German) of the Gradec Joiner, Turner, Glazier and Organ Builder Guild: "...on 10 March 1844, when he presented his masterpiece [work of a very high standard produced in order to obtain membership of a guild], and having paid all taxes and dues, he was accepted by the Guild and duly entered in the list of its members as a master joiner." An additional note in pencil was added to the document with the words "instrument maker" (*Instrumentmacher*); he may have been enrolled as an instrument maker already at that time, but the note may have been added later on. There were not many master instrument makers (known in the 19<sup>th</sup> century under German names such as *Instrumentenmacher*, *Geigenbauer* or *Lautenmacher*) in Zagreb at the time; thus, according to existing references,

along with Johann Weiser the names of Franz Fiala and Franz Fink<sup>9</sup> are also mentioned briefly (Šaban 1974: 5). Unfortunately, there are no data on what Johann's *masterpiece* may have been. On 20 October Johann and Anna Weiser had another son, Karlo Alois Weiser, who died after eighteen months. Their daughter Ludmilla was born on 9 August 1847; she was baptized in St. Mark's Parish, and later became a famous violin virtuoso. In 1847/1848, after the death of his mother Anna, Johann Weiser set up for the first time his own shop and paid taxes in his own name. In July 1848 he probably paid, like many other citizens, a voluntary contribution for the defence of the homeland.<sup>10</sup> In the period under consideration he worked, after the events in 1839 and his return from Ehrenhausen, in the City Shooting Range at No. 911 (present-day Tuškanac) as a joiner (*arcularious*) and bartender (*epicollator*). Probably because of his work in the City Shooting Range Johann Weiser enrolled voluntarily in the National Guard of the Free and Royal City of Zagreb, consisting of armed citizens of Zagreb during the revolutionary events in the first trimester of the eventful 1848. On 21 January 1850 a poster advertised "...on Wednesday, 24 January, there will be a masked ball in the hall of the City Shooting Gallery. Host: Johann Weiser." Weiser seems to have engaged in catering even later on. This is confirmed in 1856 by a poster for a summer catering establishment: "Opening of a summer inn. The undersigned hereby wishes to make known that the garden restaurant at Josipovac above the City Shooting Range is open and invites all customers to good wine, beer and food, and especially to good coffee and milk. I look forward to catering for many visitors. Johann Weiser, lease-holder" (Weiser 1856). According to the 1857 Zagreb census, Johann, Anka (Anna), Johann Jr. and Ludmilla lived at Ilica 674 in Šviglin House (present-day No. 158 opposite the French Republic Square). The *Agramer Zeitung* daily published on 5 and 9 March 1858 the earliest so far discovered advertisement for the making and repair of musical instruments: "Recommended: the undersigned makes new string instruments, violins, guitars, cellos<sup>11</sup> and zithers, and

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9 The manuscripts from the estate of Milan Stahuljak in the Library of the Croatian Music Institute include all the manuscripts related to the incomplete research regarding the instrument maker Franjo (Franz) Fink which I recently managed to complete. In it Stahuljak reports a conversation with Ljudevit Lončar, next-to-last owner of *Tomay & Tkalčić*, referring to the existence of the Fink-Weiser workshop. Specifically, he claimed that at one time Franjo Fink teamed up with Johann Weiser as a partner because of the growing instrument demand. Later on, he claimed, the Fink-Weiser workshop was taken over by Tomay, who threw out Fink's canaries and stopped making folk fiddles. I have never come across a confirmation of these claims. I certainly know that Fink advertised his workshop in Duga Ulica in 1854, and Franjo Weiser his workshop in Ilica in 1858. There are orders to Fink-Weiser for instrument repairs from the Music Institute dating from a later period, and in 1867 a J. Weiser memorandum with an invoice. In 1884 the widow Ana Weiser sold the old, renowned Johann Weiser's workshop together with his canary collection. Considering the population of Zagreb at the time, the two instrument makers must have known each other, but I have not found proof of their cooperation.

10 Entered as Jovan Weiser.

11 The German text reads *Bassgeigen*, which may mean cello or double bass.

accepts all repairs, completed cheaply and fast. Johann Weiser, 674 Donja Ilica, Šviglin [developer's name] House, Zagreb" (Weiser 1858). It cannot be claimed with certainty that this may have meant the opening of a music-making shop, or whether Johann Weiser crafted instruments even before. There are no trade records in this regard. Franjo Kuhač certainly mentioned Johann Weiser, in his *Description and history of Yugoslav instruments*, as the best *tambura*-maker in Zagreb, and called him "the *tambura* Amati" (Kuhač 1877: 69). In his never completed *Biographical Dictionary* Kuhar notes: "Maker of instruments, especially *tamburas*, Veizer is the father of the famous violin virtuoso Ludmilla Veizer. He crafted his instruments in Zagreb where he also ran a shop with other instruments" (Kuhač, *Biographical Dictionary*, Archives of the Croatian Academy of Science and Arts, XCII-2 108). Kuhač also wrote: "Among the many professional makers of instrument I could call Mr. Johann Veizer the *tambura* Amati, because the sound of his *tamburas* is extraordinarily nice and ringing, and because he takes great pains to retain the original form of the instrument while crafting the various parts gracefully and proportionately. Strangely enough, Veizer's instruments are more known abroad than in his homeland. Thus, during the Vienna World Exhibition in 1873, a professor arrived from the old Russian university town of Dorpat to acquire, among other things, several Veizer *tamburas* for his museum" (Kuhač 1887: 82-83). Unfortunately, Weiser's *tamburas* were not preserved in Dorpat (present-day Tartu in Estonia), but they may have seen them at the recitals of Ludmilla Weiser held in 1868, also attended by her father Johann Weiser (anonym. 1868: 4). It is not known either who was the Dorpat professor, but Franjo Kuhač certainly did exhibit his collection at the Vienna World Exhibition in 1873. Before travelling to Vienna he exhibited it for the interested citizens in his apartment in the Vernić House (anonymous source 1873). Assuming that Kuhač's collection may have included a Weiser *tambura primašica* ('lead' *tambura*), in 2011 I found a *tambura primašica* from the period, with the hot-iron impressed seal *J. Weiser, Agram*, in the Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb.<sup>12</sup> (*Tambura primašica*, Zagreb, Johann Weiser, HS: 321.322, EM-443, Ethnographic Museum). In a paper published in

12 When I personally examined the instrument, I found that its body and neck were made of Polish maple (*Acer campestre*), and the sound board of high quality spruce with fine annulation. The sound board had 15 small resonance holes. The form of the head resembles the present-day Bosnian *bugarija* with four wooden keys (Talam 2007: 193). The bridge is made of plum-tree wood. A piece of harder wood in inserted at the end of the sound board in order to avoid damage when the strings are bent. Unlike later *tambura* specimens, the bridge is made of light sheet metal (possibly tin), bent as an upside down V and 40 cm long. According to Kuhač, this *tambura* was tuned d-f-f-f-s, and the thickest (topmost) string was somewhat thicker than the remaining three string tuned in unison. It was 52 cm long, the neck was 39.2 cm long and the body 9 cm wide at the widest point. The frets are made of wire and from the fourth one down the fields are divided into full and half-steps as in later *tamburas* of the so-called Farkaš system (Jeić 2016: 108-110). Kuhač also published a drawing of Weiser's *tambura* showing, at the end of the sound board, two ribs (German *Zarge*) for fastening the string nooses and holding the pick (*plectrum*) which is no longer extant (Kuhač 1877: 69). The strings were fastened in the same way as in later Farkaš type *tamburas*.

1877 (accepted on 25 April 1876) Kuhač wrote: “The *primašica* in my collection was crafted by our famous Zagreb *tambura*-maker Johann Veizer” (Kuhač 1877: 69). Unfortunately, the instrument is not dated but, since it was made of maple like all *tamburas* of the time, simply and professionally, with wooden tuning keys, I believe it was made in the early phase of transition of the *tambura* from a simple folk instrument into a valuable industrial product which became in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century a symbol of the Croatian national revival. Bearing in mind this consideration and the fact that the *tambura* was preserved in Kuhač’s collection, this specimen was apparently made between the eighteen-fifties and 1876 (when Kuhač wrote about it). Therefore, this is according to current knowledge one of the oldest preserved and generally dated *tamburas* in Croatia along with the well-known *tambura* of Pajo Kolarić kept in the Museum of Slavonia in Osijek (Njikoš 2011: 66-67). Kolarić’s *tambura* is dated approximately in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, although it is often reported as made in 1847 (Vukosavlje 1990: 7).<sup>13</sup> Karel Jakovec, the well-known Czech musicologist and author of many manuals on violin makers, briefly mentions that Johann Weiser Sr. (wrongly written as Weisser) worked in Zagreb and lived some time in Germany, and that his work was of outstanding quality, resembling the Naples masters of the Gagliano family. His violins, he noted, had short and broad holes, he used red polish on a yellow ground, and several of his violins were signed with Gagliano’s name<sup>14</sup> (Jakovec 1965: 389). Nothing confirms the claim that Johann Weiser lived in Germany (unless somebody mistook it for Ehrenhausen in Austria). I managed to find a photograph (in the possession of the family) showing the interior of a Weiser violin made in 1884 (this is the first time it is made public). Since Johann died in 1884, it may easily be possible that this was the last violin he ever made. Through the already mentioned wide *f* hole one can see the handwritten inscription *Johann Weiser in Agram 1884*). It is not known why Weiser did not use the customary paper or parchment labels like other instrument makers. Above the original handwritten inscription there is a paper label with the text *Riga 1891*, probably referring to a later repair. The violin was an instrument of outstanding quality. In addition to this violin,

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13 According to the information received from Ana Wild, curator of the Traditional Music Instruments Collection of the Museum of Slavonia in Osijek, Kolarić’s *tambura* was never dated precisely in 1847; this is often the case with traditional instruments (there is a slight possibility, judging by the relatively large acoustic opening [rosette] on the instrument in question, that some mark may have remained in the interior of the *tambura*, but in order to check that the instrument would have to be taken apart with risk of durable damage). Nevertheless, 1847 is often mentioned in references as the year in which the instrument was made, probably because that was the year in which Kolarić’s *tambura* society was founded in Osijek. It cannot be assumed whether Kolarić’s instrument was made before or after that date. In the official records of the Museum of Slavonia in Osijek there is no information on the exact date, but only an estimate since the famous composer and musician Julije Njikoš Đula handed it to the Museum of Slavonija in Osijek on 29 May 1993. (<http://www.bastina-slavonija.info/Pretraga.asp?id=4833>).

14 Many instrument makers ‘copied’ the name of more renowned builders, probably to improve sales.

in his entry on the making of artistic musical instruments Prof. Ladislav Šaban noted: “Two violins crafted by the Zagreb instrument maker Johann Weiser in 1882, made in the style of the Naples school, have been preserved...” (Šaban 1947: 5). The owner of these violins is not mentioned and there is no information on whether they are still extant. The first confirmation of the cooperation between Johann Weiser and the Croatian Music Institute in Zagreb (*Musikverein*) can be found on an invoice, dated 17 October 1869, for the repair of a viola. It was signed *Johann Weiser, Instrumentenmacher*, and the address was No. 609; the payment was authorized by the director Johann Vardian. Later on there appeared some other invoices for instrument repair; particularly interesting was an invoice, issued in 1876, for the repair of a cello grip, written on the memorandum of the workshop with a visible stamp: *J:Weiser AGRAM*. On the basis of these invoices to the Music Institute one can safely claim that Johann Weiser was the only master who repaired string instruments for the Music Institute between 1869 and 1883. They included mainly repairs of violas, cellos and double basses, repairs of bows<sup>15</sup>, and small repairs of instrument keys, bridges and grips. In addition to the abovementioned memorandum from 1876, Weiser also used ink stamps on his invoices bearing the inscription *Johann Weiser, Instrumentmacher, Agram*. In 1863 “Johann Veizer, instrument maker” is reported as a supporting Class II member of the National Music Institute with an annual contribution of “six hundred a year” (anonym. 1863: 20). There are no records reporting the work load or earnings other than those related to the Music Institute, but his importance is unequivocally confirmed by the fact that he exhibited his own instruments at the famous *First Dalmatian-Croatian-Slavonian Exhibition of Agricultural Products, Factories and Works of Art* in Zagreb in 1864. On the occasion he was awarded a diploma, and he exhibited, as reported in the press, “beautiful guitars decorated with mother-of-pearl, good violins, cellos and a viola” in Group X, Subsection 25 (anonym. 1864: 1). These were certainly early romantic guitars particularly appreciated in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century and during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, made under the influence of Viennese and Italian instrument makers (e.g., Staufer in Vienna and *Fabbricatore* in Naples). Unfortunately, I have never seen personally a Weiser guitar. I assume his design was simple and that the instrument was made mainly of maple with a spruce soundboard, like the products of other contemporary artisans I had the opportunity to see (e.g., Fink). One of the exhibitors in the same subsection of the Exhibition was master Mihajlo (Mišo) Reihardt of Sisak, who was only awarded a citation for his *tamburas*. After the Exhibition Johann Weiser accompanied his daughter Ludmilla Weiser, already a renowned violinist, on her European tour in 1867 and 1868. According to newspaper

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15 Probably string (horsehair stretching).

reports<sup>16</sup> and family records he was introduced as *Konzertmeister* at the concerts. It is not known exactly when the Weiser family moved from No. 674 to No. 609/I, Ilica, but they must have been at that address already in 1869 judging by the invoice for the Music Institute and the later 1870 census (census for the City of Zagreb 1857 and 1870, DAZG). In 1897 the last address of the Weisers was changed with the introduction of new street numbers from 609 Ilica to (present-day) Ilica 49. That was also the last address of Johann Weiser's workshop, who worked until 1884, when he died of pneumonia. His widow Anna parted from him with the following words: "On the occasion of his funeral I would like to express my gratitude to all those attending the funeral of my unforgettable husband Johann Weiser. Thank you, Anna Weiser" (Weiser, A 1884). In his 1884 will Johann Weiser bequeathed the whole estate to his wife until her death. After her death the estate was to be shared by his son, Johann Jr., and his daughter Ludmilla, who lived in Russia at the time (Pärnu in present-day Estonia). He had intended to leave the instrument making trade to his son Johann Jr., but he died before his father already in 1882, and Weiser's will could not be executed (documents in the possession of the family). Probably because of this, soon after the death of her husband his widow Anna Weiser advertised the sale of the workshop: "The old and renowned instrument making workshop of the recently deceased Mr. Johann Weiser is on sale immediately under very favourable terms. A great number of canaries (Harzer) is also on sale cheaply. Address: J. Weiser, 49 Ilica" (Weiser, A 1844). The unfinished orders were taken over by Johann's brother Carl who advertised his services on 28 April 1884: "For musicians! I humbly take over all repairs of string instruments carried out so far by my brother Johann Weiser. Readily pleased to satisfy. Carl Weiser, 10 Pivarska ulica" (Weiser, C 1884). Finally, the workshop was bought by the later timber wholesaler Franjo Tuminski from Varaždin and his partner, joiner and city councillor Lavoslav Tkalčić (son of joiner Mihael Tkalčić who was also a member of the Gradec Joiner Guild). They appointed a proxy, Franjo's brother Vilibald Tomay Tuminski who renovated the workshop and continued to produce and sell instruments, and the appropriate accessories, under the name *Tomay & Tkalčić*. There were several owners after that until the nineteen-forties. On 5 July 1884 the papers ran the following advertisement: "Tomay & Tkalčić are hereby privileged to announce to all the respectable friends of music that they have purchased the music business from the widow of the late Johann Weiser, and that they will provide in the new firm all the relevant requisites in order to meet the requirements of this great city. They already accept repairs of all kinds at the lowest cost. In particular they would like to draw the attention of the respectable public to their completely new

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16 See: Anonym. 1868. "Fremden = Liste". *Dörptsche Zeitung*. 80/100: 4.

depot for strings and horsehair of the highest quality. Tomay & Tkalčić, Instrument Depot in Zagreb, 49 Ilica”. (Tomay & Tkalčić, 1884). The following advertisement about the new shop which inherited Weiser’s business also bears witness to the importance of the new firm:

“Instruments can usually be bought only in large cities, and so far our musicians had to travel to Vienna or to Prague in order to acquire an instrument or a better violin string. But now things are also different and better ever since Tomay & Tkalčić have established their depot of instruments, strings, horsehair, bows etc. at 49 Ilica, where various repairs are also carried out precisely and cheaply. In recent times *tamburicas* are also more appreciated and our academic youth has highlighted them as pleasant folk instruments. The mentioned firm has upgraded the *tamburica* by giving it a more elegant form so that it may enter even the most distinguished homes. Formerly our *tamburica* makers in the Sisak area were the only suppliers of this folk instrument of primitive design, but very nice *tamburicas* are now also made in Zagreb, and quite a selection is available in the Tomay & Tkalčić shop. The price of a *tamburica* is between 8 and 10 forints, and several ladies have ordered them for their parties. Along with these production activities the same firm also sells different instruments such as zithers, violins, cellos, flutes, trumpets etc. Welcoming every progress in our crafts, we also look forward to the greater production of finer *tamburicas*” (anonym. 1835: 3).<sup>17</sup>

In 1939 the old two-storey house was torn down and the present-day Artisans’ House designed by the renowned architect Zvonimir Freudenreich built on the same site. Therefore, it can be claimed that Johann Weiser launched the longest-lasting music making business in Zagreb (and probably in Croatia as well), which existed from 1858 (probably even earlier) until 1943, i.e., until the death of the last owner of Tomay & Tkalčić, the versatile Sisak manufacturer of *tamburas*, editor and dance teacher Janko Stjepušin (he had moved his business to Frankopanska St. in the nineteen-thirties). Thus, the traditional music instrument business was thus sustained on the same location, 49 Ilica, from at least 1869 until the nineteen-thirties. After the death of Johann Weiser and his son Johann Weiser Jr., Anna Weiser moved to Dorpat (present-day Tartu in Estonia), where her daughter Ludmilla lived with her husband, the renowned Estonian architect Reinhold Guleke. She died in Tartu on 26 July 1894 (according to the daily press reports and burial bills). The notice of her death read:

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17 The said advertisement probably does not mention the already late Anton Weiser because he crafted *tamburas* reflecting the transition from instruments made in the workshops of self-taught masters (like present-day *samice*) to ‘new’ orchestral *tamburas* with *Farkaš* tuning which just began to develop.

“Our dear mother Anna Weiser née Ritschko passed away on this day after long suffering. Flowers and letters respectfully declined. Ludmilla Guleke née Weiser and Reinhold Guleke, 26 July 1893” (anonym. 1893: 4).

## OTHER OUTSTANDING MEMBERS OF THE WEISER FAMILY

As already mentioned, in addition to Johann Weiser there were in the family of Anton Weiser Sr. other outstanding joiners and musicians. Along with Anton Weiser Jr., there was Carl Weiser (25 October 1815, Zagreb – 20 August 1902, Zagreb). He was born in St. Mark's Parish. There are no data about his childhood. He seems to have lived with his family at the same address. The first important record about Carl is the confirmation of his presentation to the Gradec Guild: “On 1 April Carl Weiser, the joiner's son, presented himself to the Guild.” His father Anton and elder brother Anton Jr. were already members of the Guild. Before the 1857 census Carl moved to 48 Pivarska Ulica (*Breuerstrasse*), where he lived with his unmarried sister Barbara Weiser. Carl Weiser married, for the first time, Maria Magdalena Rumpler in December 1844. Their two-months old son Carl (born on 20 June 1845) died on 12 August 1845. Carl's wife Maria died on 23 October 1856. After 1857 he lived with his sister at 89 Pivarska. According to the 1870 census he also lived at 168 Starokazališna. Later he had an illegitimate daughter, Rosalia (born 1871) and son Carl Anton (born 1889). While still at the Pivarska address, Carl Weiser registered on 15 June 1875 as inn-keeper at the age of 60 (Commercial Court in Zagreb, DAZG). On February 1894 Carl Weiser married for the second time Aloysia Metličar (born 1859) from Brežice in St. Mark's Parish. He died on 20 August 1902; at the time his address was 36 Jurjevska.

The third Weiser generation also left a mark in the history of old Zagreb. The son of Johann Nepomuk Weiser Sr. was also called Johann Nepomuk. He was born in St. Peter's Parish on 27 April 1834. He also learned the joiner trade and presented himself to the Guild on 2 March 1851. On 24 October 1861 he married Maria Hočevar from Carniola (born about 1837) in St. Mark's Parish. On 7 February 1880 he applied for an inn-keeping licence at 86 Nova Ves. The inn was called “Francis Joseph Garden” and it was located in the garden of the summer house of Aleksandar Alagović, Bishop of Zagreb; the contractor was also Bartol Felbinger (Dobronić11971: 73-74). He was granted the licence and advertised the opening in the press: “The best prizes! The undersigned has the privilege to announce to the respectable public that a newly appointed bowling alley will open in Joseph Francis' Garden on 24 April and will award the best prizes, the best being: one silver watch, one cigarette holder, and three silver coins. The best drinks will be served. Let me humbly recommend myself,

Johann Weiser Jr., inn-keeper.” There had been a bowling alley and inn before on the site, however run by other inn-keepers (such as, in 1873, Vilim Novotny). Unfortunately, already on 2 October 1884 Johann Nepomuk Jr. died of pneumonia. His last address was 54 Ilica. His parents Johann and Anna published an acknowledgement: “We would like to thank all our friends and acquaintances, especially the members of the Theatre Choir and orchestra, for attending the funeral of Johann Weiser Jr. and thereby offering us comfort. Grieving parents” (Weiser 1882: 2). Judging by the acknowledgement, Johann Weiser Jr. played an instrument and was a member of the theatre choir and orchestra.

The best known representative of the third generation of the Weiser family was certainly Ludmilla Weiser. Antun Goglia, Croatian musicologist and long-standing director of the Croatian Music Institute wrote a brief entry about Ludmilla Weiser, but his work contains certain errors (Goglia 1940).<sup>18</sup> Ludmilla Aloysia Weiser was born in St. Mark’s Parish in Zagreb on 9 August 1847. Since her father was a master music maker, and her older brother Johann was also a musician, it is no wonder that she followed in their footsteps. Her talent is also confirmed by a composition written by her teacher Schwartz, *Fantasia pour Violon avec accompagnement de piano sur la Walser de Schubert*,<sup>19</sup> and the dedication: *Questa composition fato per la Ludmilla Weiser sonava in concerto. August 1852*) [both quotations transcribed from the original score]. Ludmilla was only 5 at the time. In 1856 she enrolled in the music class of the Croatian Music Institute (*Musikverein*) where she excelled as a violin student under teacher Anton Schwartz. Already in her school appearances Ludmilla displayed great skill which later made her an internationally renowned musician. Because of her excellence and low-income family in 1862 the Management of the Zagreb Music Institute granted her a 120 forint scholarship and sent her to the Vienna Conservatory to study under the renowned music pedagogue and violin teacher Georg Helmesberger Sr. (born 1800). The report of 1861/1862 reads: “Ludmilla Vaizerova, student of this Institute and violin player, has left for the Vienna Conservatory to improve her playing. Since her parents lack the resources for her stay in Vienna, and since the support promised by friends does not cover the cost, the Management has decided to support her from the fund of the Institute for a period of one year with the amount of 10 forints a months starting from 1 October” (Library of the Croatian Music Institute; Annual Report

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18 Antun Goglia erroneously reports that Ludmilla Weiser was born in 1838 and married in 1877. In my paper on the *Tomay & Tkalčić* workshop I made a mistake and wrote that Ludmilla was born on 9 August 1847 in St. Mary’s Parish. However, having again consulted the parish register from the family records, I can now claim that the Parish was St. Mark’s in Zagreb. According to available biographical sources, the year of marriage was certainly 1869.

19 I assume that even before reaching the age eligible for enrolment in the Music Society (*Musikverein*) Ludmilla Weiser must have attended classes of her future ‘formal’ teacher Anton Schwartz who replaced Anton Kirschofer as her violin teacher in 1851.

for 1861/1862). At the recommendation of the Music Institute, the Regency Council approved support for another two years: “Taking due account of the recommendation of the Music Institute, the Regency Council has approved a two-year support of 180 forints to Ludmilla Vaizerova, student at the Vienna Conservatory. They have been paid to the Music Institute from the local funds of the foundation in monthly instalments starting from 1 May of the current year, on the understanding that that the foregoing is obliged to show progress every half-year” (Library of the Music Institute; letter of the Regency Council of 12 May 1863). The support granted Ludmilla was rather high for the period under consideration, meaning that she must have been an extraordinarily talented student. At the age of 15 Ludmilla enrolled in the Vienna Conservatory (*Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Wien*). Of particular importance for Ludmilla’s career was the tour organized in 1868 by the publisher Abel Lukšić from Karlovac. In early 1868 he took a number of Croatian musicians on a tour. Ludmilla was accompanied by her father. Along with Ludmilla, the singer Irma Terputec-Teree from Zagreb also went on the tour. Ludmilla returned to Zagreb with her father Johann on 2 May 1869. In Vienna she married the renowned Estonian architect Reinhold Ludwig Ernst Guleke (30 April 1834, Past Salisburg, Livland – 16 December 1927, Jena). Ludmilla Weiser died in Jena on 25 December 1933 and was buried in the old city cemetery Nordfriedhof next to her husband Reinhold. The Weiser family has been almost unknown so far although it was exceptionally important for the music and crafts of the city of Zagreb. On particular importance for the development of the *tambura* as a national instrument was Anton Weiser, one of the best instrument makers, as stressed by Franjo Kuhač, at a time when the *tambura* slowly began to push out the guitar and assumed, under the influence of the members of the Illyrian movement, a place of honour in the homes of all social classes. This paper endeavours to throw light on the significance of the pioneer maker of the favourite Croatian folk instrument, which confidently developed – during the Illyrian National Revival and under the influence of the nationally aware public - from the workshop production of self-taught masters into a valuable craft product made by schooled instrument makers. By the beginning of the 20th century, and especially after the publication, in 1887, of the first *tambura* manual, Milutin Farkaš’s *Short Instruction for Playing the Tambura From Sheet Music*, the production of *tamburas* has reached a level never attained by any other instrument in Croatia.

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