Marc Sabat

Sei Bach-Intonazioni per Violino Solo Ia IIa IIIa

version in just intonation
for violin solo with violin bordun counterpoint

PLAIN SOUND MUSIC EDITION
Sei Bach-Intonazioni per Violino Solo Ia IIa IIIa (2010/19)
version in just intonation for violin solo with violin bordun counterpoint
for Sara Cubarsi-Fernandez

Contemplation of composing just intonation interpretations from Johann Sebastian Bach's Sei Solo a Violino senza Basso accompagnato has fascinated me ever since the inception of the Extended Helmholtz-Ellis JI Pitch Notation, devised in collaboration with Wolfgang von Schweinitz in the years 2000-2004.

In 2001, I prepared a demonstration of the Adagio from BWV 1001 in three different versions: Pythagorean, Ptolemaic, and 19-limit extended JI; in the same year Wolfgang and I co-composed an intonation of the 3-part Ricercar from Musikalisches Opfer. Over the following years, from time to time I returned to the Sei Solo, pencilling in possible tunings of a movement here and there, without pursuing the project to completion. By 2010, I was sketching a sustaining second violin part for some of the movements, primarily made from open strings and harmonics, providing a subtle framework to more accurately tune the just intonation harmonies by ear.

It was finally an encounter with violinist Sara Cubarsi-Fernandez at Catherine Lamb's flat in Berlin, during which we sight-read my two-part sketches, that inspired this version of the three Sonatas, completed in 2019. Sara's keen interest in researching precise intonations and her ability to fully realise the detailed colours of different harmonic intervals motivated me to compose an intonation of Bach's music which establishes some of the implied Pythagorean, Ptolemaic and Septimal harmonies suggested to me by his tonal contexts, and which may be accurately, exactly tuned by ear.

The necessary second violin bordun part has been elaborated, evolving from its original role as a minimal drone-accompaniment into an experimental, slow-motion counterpoint in its own right, sometimes suggesting a bass line, at other times a discant or inner voice. I hope that its gentle tracery might be appreciated in the context of enabling a very special realisation of some of Bach's harmonic explorations, which to my ears are suggestive of a future music only now coming into being, created with conscious awareness and explicit notation of microtonal just intonation.

For her invaluable advice, musical experience and patient, relentless criticisms guiding my often unorthodox exploration of voice-leading in a Baroque context I am indebted with warmest thanks to Natalie Pfeiffer.

Berlin, 26 December 2017 / 17 March 2019
E natural (not Eb) in MS
Sonata Seconda a Violino Solo senza Basso
Sei Bach-Intonazioni per Violino Solo, IIa

Johann Sebastian Bach
intonation and 2nd voice composed by Marc Sabat

The rhythm follows the beaming in Bach's MS:
the last 2 beats are divided respectively
in 9 and 7 32nd notes.
Sonata Terza a Violino Solo senza Basso

Sei Bach-Intonazioni per Violino Solo, IIIa

Johann Sebastian Bach

intonation and 2nd voice composed by Marc Sabat