

Bach's Organ Triosonatas

*A Video Presentation for
the Society for Historically Informed Performance
www.sohipboston.org*

Emily O'Brien, Recorder

Triosonata no.1 BWV 525 (Originally E-flat Major)

[1.]

Adagio

Allegro

Triosonata no. 2 BWV 526 (Originally C minor)

Vivace

Largo

Allegro

Triosonata no. 6 BWV 530 (Originally G major)

Vivace

Lento

Allegro

Notes:

The six triosonatas for organ by J.S. Bach (1685-1750) are conceived to be performed by just one organist. But with three richly independent lines, they are frequently transcribed as trios or triosonatas for two treble instruments and continuo. In creating a multi-track recording of them, I think of them a little like chamber music for one person.

I have transcribed these pieces for recorders mostly based on which keys and instrumentation seem like the best fit in terms of range and sound. But the multi-track method also lets me experiment with doublings and change the registration - a bit like an organist changing stops. Of course there are places where I have needed to change octaves to fit the range of the recorder. At times I have chosen to use modern extended-range recorders mixed in with Baroque

recorders in order to avoid quite as many octave alterations. While this may appear unusual, my experience is that these instruments can fit into a standard recorder ensemble quite nicely; and since most larger-sized so-called “Baroque” recorders are modern interpretations and not based on surviving original instruments in any case, I do not consider the addition of extended-range modern recorders to be a huge stretch - particularly if they allow for more fidelity to the original piece.

The Instruments I used:

Von Huene Contrabass

Yamaha Great Bass

Yamaha Bass

Yamaha tenor

Mollenhauer Helder tenor

Bernolin alto

Mollenhauer Helder alto

Moeck Rottenburgh soprano

The full set of six sonatas was too long for this program. But in its entirety, I do find that the whole set does have a wonderful narrative arc. I chose numbers 1, 2, and 6 in hopes of preserving some of that overall story. I do intend to record 3, 4, and 5 in the coming months; I'll be releasing those one movement at a time on my YouTube channel, so please stay tuned!

Emily O'Brien
www.emilysdomain.org