

On Ymagino

The point of departure for the author (violinist Roberto Alonso Trillo) is the lack of “work-concept” in the time of the contemporary Bach. The lack of the (only afterwards emerging) romantic notion of the abstract “sacred” *text*. Through theories of Barthes, Derrida and Goehr a different approach to *authenticity* of the interpretation of the score and notion of the *author* is challenged and questioned. The book shifts between the actual interpretative work on the Bach sonata and a set of case-studies; new commissions for the *doubles* of the original sonata. The originality and imagination of the deconstruction or homages of the composed new works inform and guide Trillo’s emerging idea of transferring the debated relationship of authorship in the literary world to that of music.

Dear Roberto,

some reflections:

How to approach Bach, also knowing your intellectual framework, especially considering Goehr, it has been difficult.

Firstly, I don't consider composing as stepping into tradition, I am already in it. It is everywhere inside of me. Composing is instead a way of emancipation. I don't lose tradition, but I try to view sound as place of discovery. Not of the past (as in finding a passage in a score), but as an archeological ground. A place where I have the possibility of putting together a different genealogy.

*With Bach, I can't enter a work in a vein as Goehr's example in her book. I have already entered, I am "already" Bach (and don't read this wrong...it has nothing to do with quality...the quality of Bach comes only once every...I don't know every 200 years), but of course listening to his music creates a special space. I have to question what I listen for...one thing is actually similar, hearing Bach as well as just thinking about violin and tape...for me emerges Luigi Nono. Always. His late works. For me, he takes on somewhere in between Bach's sounds. He finds the means to attenuate the sound. Stretching it out and through that creating a resonate space. *La lontananza nostalgica utopica futura* has and remains my constant reference for violin and tape (or anything + tape).*

I try always to begin with the instrument. This time, naturally, I had to consider Bach. I tried to play it. I am not a violinist. Instead, I did it on guitar, besides listening. Listening.¹

One of its contribution is my piece for violin and electronics, *Ymagino*. *Ymagino* is discussed and analyzed in the book. *Ymagino* aligns itself within the project as the contribution which rather than re-interpreting the score of Bach, re-imagines its musical properties. The sense of space, sound and the erosion or extended transformation of counterpoint into a unified evolving sound made of four distinct, autonomous parts.

¹ From e-mail correspondence with Roberto Alonso Trillo.

In 2014 Roberto Alonso Trillo first made contact with me, proposing the idea of the project. Trillo's focus on certain notions of Barthes, Derrida and Lydia Goehr paired with my (at the time) current study of the violin music Luigi Nono made me inclined to take up the challenge.

*[excerpt e-mail to Roberto Alonso Trillo from Esaïas Järnegard]:
The key was however hearing a brief rehearsal of Bach cantata when I entered into a church some months ago. For me it became clear how to address not only Bach but the whole project. It is also present in your beautiful recording on YouTube. Suddenly sound does not have specifically located place in space, sound emerges from every possible angle. Bach was a man of the church, for him the church space has to be considered not only a reality, but almost the most common space to be in. For me church is an exception. It is a place I sometimes end up in. Always for "special" reasons. Regardless, the space is wonderful. To work with sound has to be considered as working in an infinite space. The possibility of sound is multiplied in space. To perform in a church is very different from a black box (of course), but when composing, this aspect of creating a "speaking" space regardless of the venue, of trying to create a sound that emerges from "everywhere". To not limit, to just keep the sound open, that is what I want.*

That the sound remains open...in a way the score is the jail. At some point I always seem to close the sound when I write the score. For me, it is not the fault of the score, the score can be considered "open" (regardless of the detail) if one finds the way of creating a sound that - from the point of a listener - seems to contain an infinite of possibilities.

An "open" score does not - I think - represent a way out. Rather it is a way avoiding the sound, of not address the full scope of it.

Anyway, that is technical. Let's just say this: to create something open, but still try to "hear" every possibility of the "sound" and somewhere in all of this create a space for Bach...it has been and remain something really challenging.

But the experience in the church, it gave me a "reason" for how to pursue this. I enter into a resonant space, surrounded by Bach (not only BWV 1002), but the whole idea. From it, what will come is beginning to be clear to me. It is an attenuation of a sound. If this sound is really from Bach or just the violin, I am not sure, I am not sure it is that important. Important is however to follow the sound to the end, or rather as long as I can. Hopefully where I fail, you pick up and create and re-create the hopefully ever-changing "meaning" of the sound. And through that taking the piece into a never-ending present.²

² Ibid.

Final words on the piece

“Each voice [in *Ymagino*] belongs to or begins in Bach. The sound (memory) of Bach in the church, resonating, fading away. The reminiscence of the space, its sounding residue. I zoom in on different moments, magnify maybe only one note, but more often two (a counterpoint), then let them extend their duration through a bow movement, sometimes slow, sometimes extremely slow. Depending on which string, depending on which location (in space...the solo violin or its mirrors in the loudspeakers), depending on crini or legno, depending on pressure (both left-hand and the bow) the two voices drift apart. Before the end of their phrase, another point in Bach (or perhaps...in the space) begin to sound over-layering the already present soundscape. At the work-desk phrase after phrase begin to pile up. The final step becomes almost a jigsaw puzzle. The pieces are placed together, searching for connections and implying new ones. The final step is also a transformation and harmonization. The voices become part of one whole, their counterpoint remains an outstretched autonomy that with each hour of work becomes less and less apparent. Instead it remains a residue and memory in both sound and construction.

How is it possible to remember, commemorate, articulate, celebrate...etc. Bach? I trace an emotion, I trace a physical motion...every hour practicing in my youth...each prelude, each fugue...To learn is to imitate. At this moment (in life), imitating is not part of the solution. Instead I am developing a project of sound, which Bach (unknowingly) essentially canonized. This project of sound is not arbitrary. I am not obliged; it is a choice. Each step belongs to a tradition, although each step will not further its development, but it reveals a relationship.”