



Preface

The Fifteen Two Part Inventions (BWV 772-786)

This well-known work cycle represents a collection of short pieces of music written by Johann Sebastian Bach between 1717 and 1723 for his piano students. To date, these compositions are among the best studies ever written for keyboard instruments and they have not lost their popularity after almost three hundred years. Each Invention consists of two equal voices, the leadership of which changes blithely between both hands. The works are characterized by a variety of catchy melodies and harmonious twists. Their magic is not least due to the fact that curiosity and joy of play are preserved even after many (exercise-related) repetitions.

Bach asked his students, *"...gute Inventiones nicht alleine zu bekommen, sondern auch selbige wohl durchzuführen, am allermeisten aber eine cantable Art im Spielen zu erlangen, und darneben einen starcken Vorschmack von der Composition zu überkommen..."*¹ (that means: "...not only to play the Inventions properly, but also to interpret them nicely. But most of all to reach a vocal manner in playing and to get a taste of the composition").

In addition to the consideration of all aspects of playing technique, he was particularly interested in working out the varied motifs and contrasting variations in a vocal manner. The etudes should also serve the students as inspiration for their own works and improvisations. This was in the beginning of the eighteenth century of general practice: Composing as well as improvising ("fantasizing") were regarded as obligatory components of every music education. The separation of the composer and the interpreter, which is dominant today, was not yet customary during his lifetime.

Bach's influence on the tonal art of the present has been unbroken. This is true not only of so-called "serious music". Even in jazz / pop / rock or in film music, current artists still use musical elements and compositional techniques, which the world-famous Kapellmeister established already three centuries ago. This is also evident in the case of the Inventions, for example if they are removed from the historical baroque context (harpsichord with rich ornamentation) and interpreted in a contemporary manner using modern instruments. An excellent example of this is the guitar.

Edition for Two Guitars in Standard Tuning

Ambitious guitarists are always looking for new ideas to develop themselves artistically. The Fifteen Inventions are a real treasure trove, because all the criteria of sophisticated musical art can be found in the ensemble: playing melody, chord divisions, scale studies, modulations, sequences, sound formation, phrasing, timing, dynamics and much more.

However, because of the high scale of the piano, it is very difficult to realize these sound creations as solo arrangements for the guitar.

¹ J.S. Bach Anno 1723 in his preface on the inventions

Thus the solo presentation is only possible for a limited selection of guitar virtuosos. Bach would presumably be critical – he had deliberately applied his studies to a simple to moderate level of difficulty.

The present book offers the best compromise in the form of duo editing. This solution leaves the source text untouched except for a few exceptions – apart from an instrument specific change of the keys. The two independent voices, formerly the left and right piano hands, are now distributed over the two guitars, whereby the too many baroque ornaments of the original have been reduced to a guitaristic sense. The parts are presented in standard guitar scores with tablature.

The "Right" Fingering

The "vocal manner in playing" demanded by the maestro can only be achieved with a suitable fingering. For this purpose, the book contains detailed, practice-proven information. However, these can also be regarded as suggestions for their own attempts at solving the problem – finally, there are always several targeted solutions. The most important criterion, however, is always the vocal manner of the interpretation.

Guitar Types

The arrangements in this volume are by no means exclusively reserved for classical guitar. The duets also sound very charming on steelstring, jazz and electric guitars. Since the picking technique depends on the particular type of guitar (for example, using a pick), the right hand fingerings have been omitted. For each of the first parts a guitar with cutaway is recommended.

54 Playalong Tracks

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