

An Archive of the musical compositions by Herb Bielawa

Composition: **Toccata/Toccata** – harpsichord and piano

Date: 1973

Duration: 9:05

Recording: Sandra Soderlund, harpsichord; Herb Bielawa, piano

Program Note:

Toccata/Toccata is a musical “overlay” of Bach’s famous Toccata in D Major. Why anyone would want to spend composition time on such an enterprise is a good question. As a professor teaching counterpoint at my institution it often became desirable to show, by example, how contrapuntal lines behaved inside of harmonic designs and how harmony generated lines. This had become a kind of hobby for me, like doing crossword puzzles. Creating the “Overlay” just seemed like a good thing to do, so I did it. It was a fascinating project for which I can really barely take one quarter credit because Bach supplied me with a superb harmonic structure, preset phrase lengths, moods, rhythms, and durations. I simply had to try to fit in. My task was essentially to embellish even though Bach’s work surely needed no embellishment. The piece (overlay) was premiered in the 70s and then featured as part of a special concert for Bach’s 300th birthday in 1985 called “Tinkering with Bach” in which many other playful “experiments” were also tried.