

## biography

Canadian composer of Ukrainian descent Marc Sabat (\*1965) has been based in Berlin since 1999. He makes pieces for concerts and installations, drawing inspiration from ongoing research about the sounding and perception of microtonal rational intonation (JI). He relates his practice to various music forms, seeking points of shared exploration and dialogue between different modes of experience and cultural traditions. Largely self-taught as a composer, Sabat studied violin at the University of Toronto, at the Juilliard School in New York, and computer music at McGill University, as well as working privately with Malcolm Goldstein, James Tenney and Walter Zimmermann, among others. With Wolfgang von Schweinitz he developed the Extended Helmholtz-Ellis JI Pitch Notation and is a pioneer of instrumental music written and performed in JI. Sabat's work is presented internationally, available online and in numerous published editions. He teaches composition and the theory and practice of intonation at the Universität der Künste Berlin and is currently a doctoral research fellow at the Sibelius Academy Helsinki. Together with colleagues Catherine Lamb and Rebecca Lane he co-initiated the Harmonic Space Orchestra in 2019.

<https://www.plainsound.org>

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCKz9OLT3yZQpXPsaXEkUMEq>

## language skills

native language is English; good (reading) fluency in German, French; teaching experience in English and German; childhood language spoken Ukrainian

## studies

- 2022– • Doctoral fellow at Sibelius Academy Doc Mus Applied Study (scientific/artistic research), Helsinki, Finland
- 2008–9 • postgraduate fellow of the Graduiertenschule für die Künste und die Wissenschaften, UdK Berlin, Germany
- 1991 • independent studies in computer music and composition at McGill University (Montreal, Canada)
- 1989 • Banff Centre for the Arts, Canada (winter cycle residency, various master classes)
- 1986–88 • Juilliard School of Music, New York, USA (Master of Music; studies in violin, contemporary music)
- 1982–86 • University of Toronto, Canada (Bachelor of Music; studies in violin, composition, mathematics)

## artistic residencies

- 2011 • one-year residency at the German Academy Villa Massimo (Rome)
- 2010 • three months at the Villa Aurora (Los Angeles)
- 2006–7 • five months at the Herrenhaus Edenkoben
- 1999 • Canada Council grant to reside and work in Berlin
- 1997–8 • composer at Akademie Schloss Solitude, Stuttgart (Germany)

## research and teaching

- 2022– • doctoral fellow at Uniarts Helsinki (Doc Mus, Applied Study Program combining scientific and artistic research methods)
- 2017/19/21 • composition faculty (lector), biennial Ostrava Days/Ostrava New Music Center (Czech Republic) performances of large ensemble and orchestral works with Ostravska Banda (2017), ONO (Ostrava New Orchestra, cond. J. Kalitzke) (2019), Sound Plasma Ensemble for New Music Tallinn (2021)
- 2015–23 • künstlerische Mitarbeiter at Universität der Künste (UdK) Berlin (Hauptfach Komposition) mentorship of individual students; seminars on theory and practice of composition; organisation of guest lectures, projects, and workshops through klangzeitort institute for new music; personal research focus (rational intonation and microtonal composition)
- 2012 • moderation of the Ringvorlesung "Intonation" (guest lecture series, workshops, concerts) for klangzeitort
- 2007–15 • Lehrauftrag in Composition at the UdK Berlin (Seminars, Hauptfach)
- 2006–7 • guest professor of composition at the California Institute of the Arts
- 2000– • freelance researcher
- 1992– • freelance composer
- 1984– • freelance violinist

## guest lectures and workshops

- 2023 • Keynote address, microinterval institute, Academy of Performing Arts Prague (CZ)
- Academy of Performing Arts Bratislava; Academy of Performing Arts Banská Bystrica (SK)
- 2022 • FHNW Basel (CH)
- Sibelius Academy (FI)
- 2019 • Liszt Academy Budapest (Hungary)
- 2018 • Columbia University New York, class of Georg Friedrich Haas (USA)
- 2016 • HfMTM Hannover (DE)
- 2014 • Banff Centre School of Fine Arts (Canada); University of Victoria (Canada)
- 2012 • Janáček Academy of Music and Performing Arts Brno (CZ)
- 2010 • University of California Santa Barbara; CNMAT, University of California Berkeley (USA)
- 2008–9 • Conservatoire de Paris (FR)

- 2005
  - HfM Hanns Eisler Berlin (DE)
  - Escola Superior de Música de Catalunya Barcelona (ES)
  - Hochschule für Musik und Theater Hamburg (DE)
- 2004–6
  - Universität der Künste Berlin (DE)
- 2001
  - California Institute of the Arts (USA)
- 2000–1
  - Hochschule der Künste Berlin (DE)
- 1999
  - Musikhochschule Münster (DE)
- 1997
  - University of Victoria (CAN)

### brief artistic chronology

- 2023
  - keynote address presenting new research into *harmonic radius*
- 2022
  - development of *Plainsound Hexatone* webapp ([www.plainsound.org/hex](http://www.plainsound.org/hex))
  - new ensemble work combining Baroque instruments ([Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin](#)) and contemporary instruments ([Zafran Ensemble](#)) in combined 1/6 comma meantone, Vallotti well temperament and J1 tunings
  - began doctoral research at [Uniarts Helsinki](#), Finland (Doc Mus Applied Study scientific/artistic research)
- 2021
  - premieres of new ensemble works including piece for [Alois Haba's Sixth-Tone Harmonium](#)
- 2020
  - HSO release of Sabat's *Gioseffo Zarlino* on **sacred realism**; curation of the festival Harmonic Space 2020: James Tenney (at [KM28](#) and [KINDL – Zentrum für zeitgenössische Kunst](#))
- 2019
  - co-curated festival in Berlin ("Chords, Melodies" at [KM28](#)); portrait concert in Budapest ([Trafo](#))
  - together with Catherine Lamb and Rebecca Lane co-initiated the [Harmonic Space Orchestra](#) research group / ensemble dedicated to exploring the practice of rational intonation
- 2018
  - premiere ([BBC Tectonics festival](#), Glasgow) of *The Luminiferous Aether* for large orchestra in J1
- 2017
  - premiere ([Festival Ultraschall](#), Berlin) by [Sonar Quartett](#) and [Ensemblekollektiv Berlin](#)
  - CD release *Harmony (another timbre)*, concert in [Cafe Oto London](#)
- 2016
  - New York premiere of *Euler Lattice Spirals Scenery* (JACK Quartet, [NY Phil @ 92nd Street Y](#))
  - installation/performance (Sabat/Mareike Lee) at [Kunst-Werke Berlin](#), 30 April 2016
- 2015
  - solo contrabass work commissioned by [musica viva](#), Bayerischer Rundfunk München
  - first collaborations with [JACK Quartet](#)
  - studio recordings of new works in Berlin and ORF Wien
- 2014
  - Double portrait with Alexander Moosbrugger, [IGNM Linz](#)
  - LP release *Les Duresses* (care of editions, Berlin)
- 2012
  - composition/premiere ([Bludener Tage zeitgemäßer Musik](#)) of work for [Ensemble Contrechamps](#); begins series of larger ensemble pieces
- 2011
  - residency in Rome at the Accademia Tedesca [Villa Massimo](#); various projects including concert at Museo Casa Scelsi, composer portrait at Villa Massimo, and concert with [Ensemble Modern](#)
  - Portrait concert, [ISCM Basel](#) (complete works for piano solo played by Daan Vandewalle)
  - Pompa/Sabat performances at [The Stone, New York](#); LP dubplate edition *Loss / Gain*
- 2010
  - CD release *wave piano scenery player (World Edition)*
  - Pompa/Sabat sculpture/edition exhibited at the [Akademie der Künste](#) Hanseatenweg, Berlin
- 2009
  - video ballet (Pompa/Sabat) presented at the [KlankKleurFestival Amsterdam](#)
  - collaboration with text performer Wolfgang Betke, premiered at [Festival Mouvement](#), Saarbrücken
- 2008–9
  - began development of software instrument (Micromælodeon)
- 2007
  - sculpture/music work (Pompa/Sabat) commissioned to open the [Donaueschinger Musiktage](#)
  - video/music work (Peter Sabat/Marc Sabat) presented at [Carnegie Hall](#), New York
- 2006
  - residency at [Herrenhaus Edenkoben](#), first collaborations with visual artist Lorenzo Pompa
  - performances and recordings for **mode records** with Aki Takahashi (piano) and Rohan de Saram (cello)
- 2004–6
  - research into valve tunings of brass instruments; collaborations with Robin Hayward
- 2003
  - Plainsound Orchestra: portrait concert of music by Marc Sabat ([Reihe 0](#), Schwarzenberg, Austria)
- 2002
  - video/music collaboration with Peter Sabat presented as installation at [MaerzMusik](#) (2004)
  - established [Plainsound Orchestra](#) (Berlin), ensemble for intonation research and new music
- 2000–
  - collaboration with Wolfgang von Schweinitz: founding of PLAINSOUND MUSIC EDITION, development of the Helmholtz-Ellis J1 Pitch Notation, ongoing research into Just Intonation
  - co-organised the Festival Neue Stimmungen 'One does not find free vibrating air just anyplace' (Musikinstrumenten-Museum, [Philharmonie Berlin](#))
- 1999–
  - moved to [Berlin](#)
- 1997–8
  - [Stuttgart](#): residency at [Akademie Schloss Solitude](#), (juror: Christian Wolff)
  - collaborations and performances with Matteo Fargion, Chiyoko Szlavnic, Stephen Clarke; performances at major festivals including [Eclat](#), [Darmstadt](#), [June in Buffalo](#)
- 1992–7
  - [Toronto](#): developed a version of Partch's adapted viola
  - co-founded microtonal ensemble [Critical Band](#), performances of American experimental music
  - first compositions working with intonation (see Worklist); collaboration with John Oswald
  - various ensemble projects, concerts, and tours: [ARRAYMUSIC](#); [Sabat/Clarke](#); [Modern Quartet](#)

- 1991–2 • **Montreal:** work with violinist-composer Malcolm Goldstein on experimental improvisation  
 • music/film collaborations co-produced with Peter Sabat
- 1990– • **Newfoundland:** discovered Harry Partch's *Genesis of a Music* and Helmholtz' *On the Sensations of Tone as a Physiological Basis for the Theory of Music* and began autodidactic research into microtonally extended JI / rational intonation

### publications

- upcoming • *Chords, melodies: a look at harmony by numbers* (Živá hudba)  
 • *Bob Gilmore* (MGG Online, Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart)
- 2021 • *A Compact Enharmonically Viable Subset of Harmonic Space: The Stern-Brocot Tree and Some Thoughts About Lattices and Spirals* by Thomas Nicholson and Marc Sabat (Živá hudba 2020/11 published 7.6.2021)
- 2019 • *Well temperament revisited: two tunings for two keyboards a quartertone apart in extended JI* (Xenharmonikon, 27 June 2019)  
 • *Farey Sequences Map Playable Nodes on a String* by Thomas Nicholson and Marc Sabat (Tempo, Volume 74)  
 • *Relative Dissonance / Relative Dissonanz* by Marc Sabat (trans. Konstantin Heuer) (MusikTexte 163, November 2019)  
 • *Walter Zimmermann's Modified Chant Transcriptions* by Marc Sabat (trans. Nicolas Lemau de Talancé) in "Les Jeux Subtils", Collections du GREAM/Création contemporaine, dirigée par Pierre Michel, Éditions Hermann, 2021
- 2018 • *Fundamental Principles of Just Intonation and Microtonal Composition* by Thomas Nicholson and Marc Sabat (Studio für Intonationsforschung und mikrotonale Komposition, Universität der Künste Berlin)
- 2017 • *Aufzeichnungen zur Evolution der Harmonie / Sketching the Evolution of Harmony* (Positionen 110)
- 2016 • *Three Tables for Bob* (Tempo, Volume 70, Issue 278, 10.2016)
- 2015 • *Musik, die wir wirklich brauchen. Ben Johnstons Pantonalität am Beispiel seiner Streichquartette* (MusikTexte 144, February 2015)  
 • *Pantonicity generalized: Ben Johnston's artistic researches in extended just intonation* (Tempo, Volume 69, Issue 272, April 2015)
- 2014 • KunstMusik 16/17 (Maria de Alvear World Edition, Köln) "INTONATION"  
 • EAR WAVE EVENT Issue Two: <https://earwaveevent.org/article/the-subaudio-wholetone-scale-789101112-at-120-bpm/>
- 2012 • *Färbungen im chromatischen Feld—Intonationen nach Morton Feldman* (Musiktexte 133, May 2012)  
 • *Shadings in the Chromatic Field: Intonations after Morton Feldman* (Search Journal for New Music and Culture, Issue 9, Fall 2012)
- 2011 • *Stay Still / Still Stehn* (Positionen 89, November 2011)
- 2010 • *Some Reflections about Sound, Music and Art* (Positionen—Texte zur aktuellen Musik 84, Mühlenbeck)
- 2009 • *On the Notation and Performance Practice of Extended Just Intonation* (Smith Publications, Baltimore)
- 2008 • *An algorithm for real-time harmonic microtuning* (5th Sound and Music Computing Conference, Berlin)
- 2007 • *Three Crystal Growth Algorithms in 23-limit Constrained Harmonic Space* (Contemporary Music Review, Volume 27 Part I, 2008, "The Music of James Tenney"; also published in a German-language version in Musiktexte 112, February 2007, Köln)
- 2006 • *Towards an Expanded Definition of Consonance: Tuneable Intervals on Horn, Tuba and Trombone* (with Robin Hayward)
- 2005 • *The Extended Helmholtz-Ellis JI Pitch Notation: eine Notationsmethode für die natürlichen Intervalle* (in "Mikrotöne und Mehr: Auf György Ligeti's Hamburger Pfaden", herausgegeben von Manfred Stahnke, von Bockel Verlag, Hamburg)

### interviews / features

- 2017 • *Across The Great Divide: New Experimental Music from Canada* by Timothy Rutherford-Johnson (The WIRE 397, March 2017)  
 • *The strangeness of nature* by Paul Griffiths (CD booklet text, mode records, 2017)
- 2016 • *Marc Sabat: music beyond music* by Nick Storrington (Musicworks #125, Summer 2016)
- 2015 • *Marc Sabat* by Friederike Kenneweg, 60' (DeutschlandRadio Berlin, Redaktion: Carolin Naujocks)
- 2013 • *Plainsound Music Edition* by Friederike Kenneweg, 60' (SWR)
- 2012 • *Intonation ist Komposition* by Thomas Groetz, 60' (Bayrischer Rundfunk)
- 2010 • *Lautstrom 1: with Marc Sabat* by Anna Bromley and Jeremy Woodruff, 60' (reboot.fm)
- 2009 • *An Interview with Marc Sabat* by Daniel Veza
- 2008 • *Marc Sabat's Musik für Menschen und Maschinen* by Matthias Entress, 60' (DeutschlandRadio Berlin)

**selected artist editions and released recordings**

- upcoming • Marc Sabat: *Nature* (mode) / Bach/Sabat/Schweinitz/Cubarsi (another timbre)
- 2021 • Marc Sabat: *maybe here* (Julia Holter/Marc Sabat, online release, careof.co)
- 2020 • Marc Sabat: *Gioseffo Zarlino* (Harmonic Space Orchestra, sacred realism sr010)
- 2017 • Marc Sabat: *Harmony* (JACK Quartet, another timbre 109)
- 2014 • Marc Sabat: *Les Duresses* (LP/Download, Andrew McIntosh, care of editions)
- Marc Sabat: *Modernes Kaufhaus* (Gnarwhallaby, Populist Records)
- 2013 • Lorenzo Pompa/Marc Sabat: *Hand Me Down* (CDR multiple, Plainsound Edition)
- 2012 • Lorenzo Pompa/Marc Sabat: *Zap Pole Moron* (Plainsound Edition/Villa Massimo)
- 2011 • Marc Sabat: *Erbesen*—part of the compilation *electronic counterpoint* by Lucia Mense (satelita 004)
- Lorenzo Pompa/Marc Sabat: *Loss & Gain* (double LP, edition of 3, Plainsound Edition)
- 2010 • Lorenzo Pompa/Marc Sabat: *Epistolae Cucumeris* (300 signed copies, Plainsound Edition)
- Lorenzo Pompa/Marc Sabat: *wave piano scenery player* (World Edition 0016)
- Morton Feldman: *Trio* (mode records 216)
- 2008 • Marc Sabat: *Artificial Music for Machines* (compilation CDR, Plainsound Edition)
- 2006 • Lorenzo Pompa/Marc Sabat: *Father's suit and watch* – video-ballet (Plainsound Edition)
- 2005 • Marc Sabat: *YOU MAY NOT WANT TO BE HERE (after Bruce Nauman)* (compilation CDR, Plainsound Edition)
- 2004 • Marc Sabat/Peter Sabat: *Three For Magister Zacharias* – 5-ch audio (Plainsound Edition)
- 2003 • Nicolas Fernandez/Marc Sabat/Peter Sabat: *Change in your pocket* – (Plainsound Edition)
- Maria de Alvear: *Thinking* – Sabat/Clarke (World Edition)
- Christian Wolff: *Complete music for violin and piano* – Sabat/Clarke (mode records 126)
- 2000 • Morton Feldman: *Complete music for violin and piano* – Sabat/Clarke (mode records 82/3)
- 1999 • Marc Sabat: *Chamber Music* (compilation CDR, Plainsound Edition)
- James Tenney: *Music for violin & piano* – Sabat/Clarke (hat [now] ART 120)
- 1998 • Marc Sabat: *Field Recordings* (compilation CDR, Plainsound Edition)

**selected recent works — see also complete list of compositions 1993–present (separate document)**

- upcoming • *Harmonium for Charles Ives* for three string quartets (commission Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, Jack Quartet)
- *New Work* for Ensemble Proton, Bern
- 2022 • *To walk in this what came to pass* for small orchestra of mixed baroque and contemporary instruments (commission Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin and Zafraan Ensemble)
- 2021 • *Inner voice* for string quartet, electric guitar, electronics (commission Seth Josel / Bozzini Quartet)
- *Fleeting flight sleeping woke* for Hába 1/6-tone harmonium and 8 instruments (commission Tallinn Ensemble for New Music)
- *Streams barely in winter* for string orchestra (commission Initiative Musik und Informatik Köln – GIMIK e.V.)
- 2019 • *Partite Requiem* for cello solo (commission Jay Campbell and the Los Angeles Philharmonic)
- *Divide* for any four instruments (premiered by Harmonic Space Orchestra / Jack Quartet)
- 2018 • *HANDS to MOUTHS* fixed media audio-video installation for female Dhruvad voice (collaboration with artist Mareike Lee, commissioned by the Kunstmuseum Kloster Unser Lieben Frauen Magdeburg)
- *The Luminiferous Aether* for symphony orchestra (commissioned by BBC Radio 4)
- 2016 • *Asking Ocean* for solo string quartet and 18 instruments (commission Ensemblekollektiv Berlin)
- 2015 • *Gioseffo Zarlino* for 9 instruments (performed by Harmonic Space Orchestra, released on sacred realism)