

J.S. Bach

In Colour

The Well - Tempered Clavier

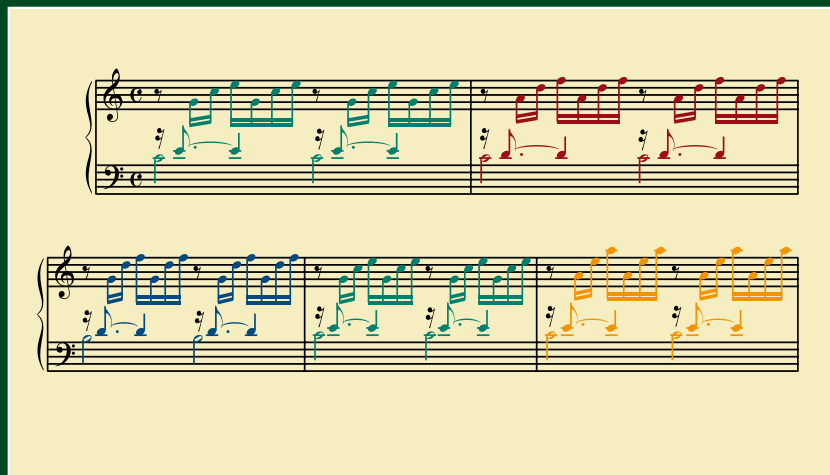
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PREFACE

Praeludium & Fuga

C Major BWV 846

Part 1



Structural analysis by Claude Charlier

J.- S. Bach

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Praeludium & Fuga C Major BWV 846

A coloured edition, analysed and defended according
to the criteria that were in use during the eighteenth century

Structural analysis by Claude Charlier

Part 1

Previously published

The Inventiones.

The Sinfoniae. The book: "For an alternative reading of the Well-Tempered Clavier".

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Foreword

This new edition of the Well-Tempered Clavier, produced using eighteenth century analysis criteria and more specifically those of *l'adhandlung von der fuge* by Friedrich Wilhelm Marpurg, is the third part of the Bach in Colour collection. It has been designed independently and is preceded by a short reminder of the theoretical concepts which were in common use during the Baroque period. This edition will comprise all of the two volumes but will be split into 48 books that will contain one prelude and one fugue each. Our Bach in Colour collection is mainly educational and the 48 different books of the Well-Tempered Clavier will allow students to purchase one after the other the works they will have selected during their curriculum. I hope these books will give them a deep insight of J.S. Bach's music and that it will have a direct impact on their interpretation.

Each work is accompanied by a technical factsheet comprising a commentary and a colour key. The preludes are more accessible and come with a brief note underlining some aspect of the composition. On the other hand the fugues are far more complex and there is genuine discussion about them, where applicable highlighting the various different approaches to the work. These short extracts from commentaries by the most reputable exegetes in the field of the analysis of J.S. Bach's fugues are taken from writings about the Well-Tempered Clavier, such as those by Donald Francis Tovey, Hermann Keller and Amy Dommel Diény, books for students of the fugue such as those by André Gedalge, Marcel Dupré and also editions of the Well-Tempered Clavier, annotated by Ferruccio Busoni or Bruno Mugellini. The criteria used to analyse the fugue *d'école* are the background to all of these analyses. Even so, because of the very fact that every fugue is an exception, they all show that monothematic analysis cannot truly get to the bottom of the art of J.S. Bach. They thus implicitly acknowledge that there can be other readings and to some extent they support the idea of multi-subject analysis. My analysis upholds the idea not only of a polythematic approach of a historical type, but also an analysis technique which evolves at the same time as the process of composition. J.S. Bach is a coherent creative artist and any attempt to explain his art without a knowledge of its genesis and evolution is doomed to failure. Indeed, although each fugue is a work of art in its own right, it can only genuinely be understood through the other works as it is a stage in their progression.

This is where my approach differs from traditional, selective, anachronistic analysis techniques which fail to make any allowance for historical reality. Polythematic analysis leads to a genuinely fresh reading of J.S. Bach's fugues. Admittedly the discussion is still open on certain detailed points and, to be more precise, on the sections in which the themes are not stated in full. However the scheme for each work is clearly shown. This type of analysis allows us to bring a new, more complex, more open and denser philosophy to understanding the work of J.S. Bach, one which makes sense of the bliss we feel when we listen to his music.

The simple fugue

The simple fugue only brings a single subject into play. This is done using what we call simple or ordinary counterpoint. The subject's various entries or its response are called the repercussions.

The whole of the rest of the composition is written in simple counterpoint, also known as filling counterpoint, free counterpoint or linking counterpoint. This is a kind of counterpoint which changes, which varies and which is used to structure the composition outside of the thematic statements. Even so it still has some points in common with the subject : rhythm, melodic units, etc. so that it will retain its sense of unity throughout the work. The subject is usually introduced on its own: this is what we call an independent exposition.

This type of fugue involves some very specific composition techniques: The contrary motion: this is the inverted playing of the subject.

The canon, which is no more than a staggered imitation of the subject, presented at a certain degree of interval, usually the octave and the fifth. The augmentation, which consists of writing the subject in values which are double those of its exposition. The stretto, which comes at the end of the work. In this last section of the fugue, the subject comes in at increasingly short intervals.

We can also find what we call a divertimento: this consists of leaving the theme for a certain period of time, so that the subject is more effectively underlined when it comes back in. However this term was not yet in use in the eighteenth century.

Finally, there is also a type of simple fugue which we call a counterfugue. Here the response offers an inversion of the subject. In Germany, the simple fugue was already starting to become obsolete when J.S. Bach started composing.

The double fugue

The double fugue is a fugue with two subjects. We talk about a second subject when the free counterpoint is replaced by an invariable counterpoint, i.e. one which always remains the same. This invariable counterpoint is known as a countertheme or a countersubject. The words subject, theme, countertheme and countersubject were all synonymous in the eighteenth century. The countersubject is written in such a way that it can be combined and inverted with the first theme. This composition technique is called the reversible or invertible double counterpoint. There are only two ways of inverting subjects :

Subject 1 A B
Subject 2 B or A

The two subjects are introduced either simultaneously or at slightly staggered intervals, making it easier to identify them. In this type of fugue, we do not find any of the composition techniques which are specific to the simple fugue. There is never any augmentation, canon or stretto.

At the end of the Baroque era in Germany, the double fugue was already starting to take over from the simple fugue. We find numerous examples of this in the works of Muffat, Haendel and Telemann.

The triple fugue

The triple fugue features three subjects. It is written using the reversible triple counterpoint. There are already six possible ways of writing an inversion in this type of fugue :

Subject 1 = A
Subject 2 = B
Subject 3 = C

A A B C B C
B C C A A B
B C C or B C A

The exposition of the subjects uses the same method as the double fugue but it adds a third subject just after one of the first two :

A + C or A
B B + C

F.W. Marpurg quotes just one example – which is actually by J.S. Bach – of a fugue with three subjects, merely mentioning that it follows the same rules as the double fugue. This clearly proves that at this period (1754), the fugue with three subjects was still undervalued and considered something of a rarity.

Another area of which we need to be aware in order to put the works of J.S. Bach into context and understand them is that of the fugues of Dietrich Buxtehude. So what exactly did Bach learn during all the weeks he spent in the company of the Lübeck Master? A number of essential things. Towards the end of his life, Buxtehude did actually write a fugue with two subjects, and even at this early stage the first theme is introduced on its own. Is it not, in fact, more logical to make the two ideas heard in succession to make them easier to identify? This is the fugue in F major for organ, which is no. 157 in the catalogue of Buxtehude's works.

Bux WV 157



But that is not all! There is also a lot we can learn from the end of the work. It finishes with a stretto on the countersubject : the second subject.

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Bux WV 157



We will have plenty of opportunities to follow the development of this composition technique in the Well-Tempered Clavier. Buxtehude was also the first composer to try his hand at the triple fugue. It happened in the first decade of the 18th century and obviously it was the very last word in modernity, so much so that we can count examples of it on the fingers of one hand. As a reminder I would like to quote an extract from the Choralphantasien: the Tu Devicto in which manuscript is written out in full “Cum 3 Subjectis” and from which Bach took the type of exposition used in the Inventiones and the Sinfoniae.

H.J. Pauly published *Die Fuge in den Orgelwerken D. Buxtehudes* in Regensburg in 1964. This was an interesting study in which he only notes a single fugue with two countersubjects (p.116). It appears as no. 140 in the catalogue of Buxtehude's Works. It takes place over twenty or so bars, which clearly proves that the technique was still in its infancy. In addition to the modernism of the three themes, J.S. Bach inherited a new type of exposition of subjects from Buxtehude. The three subjects are introduced one after another in the same voice: A + B + C

The image shows a musical score for a piece by Buxtehude, identified as WV 140. The score is written on three staves. The top staff is a treble clef with a common time signature (C). It contains a single melodic line with various rhythmic values, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. The notes are color-coded: some are red, some are green, and some are blue. The middle and bottom staves are bass clefs and are currently empty, indicating that the piece is a single-staff work or that the other parts are not shown.

Here again I would like to underline how short the themes are, their lack of melodic interest and the unusual fact that only the first subject is given an independent exposition.

This means we can now clearly understand that even outside of the specific context of the Works of Bach, the fugue was evolving towards an increase in the number of themes. In this respect it is no different from the *ricercar* or the sonata, and it developed historically in much the same way. Indeed, this increase in the number of themes was confirmed later on by A.F.C. Kollmann, a German musician who had emigrated to England, in *An Essay on Practical Musical Composition* (1799). This book, which is still part of the Baroque tradition, was inspired by F.W. Marpurg's treatise. Kollmann added and clarified a few technical points, with the advantage of a historical hindsight not available to the theoretician Marpurg. For instance he mentions an "A 6 Soggetti" fugue by C.C. Hachmeister. However, I would particularly like to quote this extract from chapter VII on "Quadruple fugues, or fugues of four subjects":

"A quadruple fugue may consist of one principal and three occasional Subjects; or of two principal Subjects, and their double counterpoints; or of four independent and equally interested Subjects."

This description unambiguously shows that a fugue can have a number of subjects of variable importance. So J.S. Bach's genius could only truly blossom, in a totally logical way, within a context of modernity, based upon these two elements it had inherited from History: firstly a development of the linear exposition of themes and secondly an increase in the number of subjects.

Claude Charlier