

**WRESTLING WITH THE  
GERMAN DEVIL:  
FIVE CASE STUDIES IN  
FUGUE AFTER  
J. S. BACH**

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‘Every hearer enjoys a clear, melodious thought,—the more seizable the whole to him, the more will he be seized by it;—the composer knows this himself,—he sees by what he makes an effect, and what obtains applause;—in fact it comes much easier to him, for he has only to let himself go; but no! he is plagued by the German devil, and must shew the people his learning too!’

R. Wagner, ‘Die deutsche Oper’ (1834)<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Richard Wagner’s prose works*, tr. W. A. Ellis, 8 vols. (New York: Broude, 1966), vol. VIII, p.57.

## ABSTRACT

‘After’ can be taken both as an indication of chronology (after 1750), and with the meaning ‘in imitation of’. When we compare the fugues of Bach to those of later eighteenth-century epigones such as J. L. Krebs, Albrechtsberger, and Clementi, it is striking how works apparently so similar should be accorded such differing cultural significance. Concepts such as ‘inspiration’ or ‘originality’ (or conversely ‘derivative’, ‘unimaginative’) may be useful critical shortcuts; but how far can we ground this kind of distinction analytically in the musical texts themselves? Chapter 1: ‘Fine Distinctions’ approaches this question from the opposite end, so to speak, through the reception histories of two works attributed to Bach himself—BWV 534 and 565—but now thought to be of doubtful authenticity. The chapter continues with the immediate tradition of the Bach circle, as represented by W. F. Bach and J. L. Krebs.

Chapter 2: ‘Converting the Handelians’ begins with a similar comparison between Handel and his successors, before turning to Samuel Wesley and his response first of all to Handel’s dominating influence, then to the immense impression that J. S. Bach’s music had upon him.

Questions of canonicity emerge in a different way with chapter 3: ‘Classical style, Classical ideology, and the instrumental fugues of Joseph Haydn’. Haydn’s fugues are discussed with a view to their problematic location in the grand narrative of the development of the Viennese Classical style—the strong sense of evolutionary teleology present in the accounts of Sandberger, Rosen, et al is contrasted with the revisionist approach of James Webster.

Chapter 4: ‘Mozart, finished and unfinished’ explores Mozart’s curious inability or unwillingness to complete so many of his fugal fragments. Several

explanations for this, both musical and psychological, are advanced and compared.

Chapter 5: 'Fugue in Beethoven: mundane and transcendental counterpoint' discusses both his early student-fugues and those of his late works, considering his fugal style in relation to the 'difficulty' of much of his music, and comparing it with the similarly challenging counterpoint of Muzio Clementi's later style.

The study concludes with an epilogue pointing toward Mendelssohn and Schumann, tracing their affinity with J. S. Bach and outlining the final decay of the *galant* aesthetic.

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# INTRODUCTION

‘Every hearer enjoys a clear, melodious thought,—the more seizable the whole to him, the more will he be seized by it;—the composer knows this himself,—he sees by what he makes an effect, and what obtains applause;—in fact it comes much easier to him, for he has only to let himself go; but no! he is plagued by the German devil, and must shew the people his learning too!’

R. Wagner, ‘Die deutsche Oper’ (1834)<sup>1</sup>

This is a study of the fortunes and vicissitudes of a Baroque style during the Classical period—an exploration of what happened to fugal writing between the death of Johann Sebastian Bach in 1750 and that of Beethoven in 1827. By the time Richard Wagner wrote the words that head this chapter (and which have supplied the title to this thesis) fugue as a style had been obsolete for nearly a century. It was a hundred years since Leonardo Vinci and his Neapolitan contemporaries had first achieved renown across Europe by ‘simplifying and polishing melody, ... disentangling it from fugue, complication, and laboured contrivance,’<sup>2</sup> and in that time Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven (and many others) had shown the vast possibilities of this new way of writing music.

For this reason it would seem that to begin such a study in the middle of the eighteenth century is, in a sense, to begin it at the point when it ceased to be important. The later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries had seen the creation of a vast and still unparalleled corpus of fugal works: in the music of Bach and Handel, of course,

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<sup>1</sup> *Richard Wagner’s prose works*, tr. W. A. Ellis, 8 vols. (New York: Broude, 1966), vol. VIII, p.57.

<sup>2</sup> C. Burney, *A general history of music from the earliest ages to the present period* (London, 1776-1789), vol. IV, p.547.

but also in that of Buxtehude, Couperin, de Grigny, Fux, Caldara, Corelli, Veracini, Zelenka, and too many others to list. The tradition of writing substantial, closely-worked, monothematic fugues did not date from time immemorial, and was itself largely a product of this period—a golden age of counterpoint, but, like most golden ages, relatively short-lived. The musical development of the mid-eighteenth century would continue along other lines altogether. Thus it is that in the output of most of the important composers of the succeeding generations, fugue came to take a relatively small place. Those for whom fugue retained its significance were, by and large, composers of lesser stature. Bach and Handel, the great fugue-writers of the beginning of the century, were succeeded by—shall we say?—less resonant names: Krebs and Rinck, Gassmann and Albrechtsberger. What had once been part of the main stream of musical style was now relegated to the relative backwaters of ecclesiastical music and compositional pedagogy. Few genres have been stigmatised with mechanical, formalistic dryness to the extent of post-Baroque fugue—‘the art of creating musical skeletons,’ as Beethoven is supposed to have referred to it.<sup>3</sup>

For these reasons the history of the development of fugal writing during this period is almost no *story* at all. It is true that one can trace a very slight development, chiefly a consequence of the gradual spread of Bachian ideals of contrapuntal integrity and expressive intensity through much of Europe. But in comparison to the vast evolution in style between the music of (say) Wagenseil and that of Beethoven over the same period, the development of fugue is virtually negligible. When in 1800 Anton Reicha sought to renovate the genre, bringing it more into line with contemporary styles (and with his own idiosyncratic sensibility), Beethoven’s curt

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<sup>3</sup> The reference is from a letter to Schott (22 Jan, 1825), embedded in a dense, almost Hoffmannesque fantasy; so what exactly he meant and how serious he was is anyone’s guess. See R. Kramer, ‘Gradus ad Parnassum: Beethoven, Schubert, and the romance of counterpoint’, *19th-century Music*, 11/2 (Fall 1987) 109-11.



response was: ‘the fugue is no longer a fugue.’<sup>4</sup> It has to be admitted that I did quail at the prospect of tabulating the details of hundreds of movements whose defining characteristic was their stylistic and structural uniformity.

There is no attempt here, then, at a comprehensive, blanket coverage of the field in the manner of William S. Newman’s three-volume history of the Sonata, or Warren Kirkendale’s *Fugue and fugato in Rococo and Classical chamber music*.<sup>5</sup> This project is instead a series of case-studies, five in number, each focusing upon a specific point of interest within the wider topic. Each chapter concerns the engagement of a particular composer with his own and other fugal traditions. It is not simply a description or summary of the composer’s fugal output—the references and bibliography will make it sufficiently clear that most of this ground has already been covered, often in considerable detail. Instead, each chapter devotes itself to a particular question that is raised by the consideration of this body of work. In every case it is the *question*, rather than the oeuvre in general, that is the focus.

The first chapter, ‘The circle of J. S. Bach’, begins by tackling a problem that is central to this study. The fugues of J. S. Bach are ‘canonical’ works, the focus of scholarship and analysis, in constant performance, and (not least important) passionately admired and loved. The fugues of even his closest followers are not. But when faced with a fugue by (say) Johann Ludwig Krebs or Wilhelm Friedemann Bach that shows many of the same qualities as those of their teacher, the thought comes, unbidden: ‘how would I respond to this piece if it *were* by J. S. Bach? Could I imagine enjoying it in the same way?’ There is no way of answering this question directly, of course: the piece comes to us stamped with its origin, like a Wedgwood

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<sup>4</sup> Letter to Breitkopf und Härtel (26 Dec 1802): W. Thayer rev. E. Forbes, *Thayer’s life of Beethoven* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), p.320.

<sup>5</sup> W. S. Newman, *The sonata in the Baroque era*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Norton, 1983). *The sonata in the Classic era*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Norton, 1983). *The sonata since Beethoven*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Norton, 1983). W. Kirkendale, *Fugue and fugato in Rococo and Classical chamber music*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1979).

plate with ‘made in China’ printed on its underside. There is, however, a group of works that are (in a sense) both ‘Bach’ and ‘not-Bach’: the sizeable quantity of music once thought to be by him but whose authorship is now in doubt. How does consideration of a fugue’s style affect our awareness of its authorship? And how does awareness of its authorship affect our consideration of its style? These fundamental questions of analytical and critical method are addressed in the first part of the chapter: ‘Fine distinctions (1): misattributed works in the Bach circle’, which traces the critical and analytical histories of two important but doubtful organ works: the Prelude and Fugue in F minor BWV 534, and the Toccata and Fugue in D minor BWV 565. The second part: ‘Fine distinctions (2): pupils and imitators,’ compares selected fugues by Wilhelm Friedemann Bach and Johann Ludwig Krebs to those of J. S. Bach, and evaluates the extent to which they could be said to replicate the achievement of their teacher—or, alternatively, to introduce qualities not found in his music.

Chapter two, ‘Converting the Handelians’ begins with an account of the canonisation of Handel (a process which, unlike that of Bach, began within his own lifetime), outlining the extraordinary durability of his influence upon English musical life and making similar comparisons between the style of Handel’s own music and that of his followers to those in the previous chapter. The main section, however, concerns the emergence of Samuel Wesley from this background, his discovery of and attempts to promote the music of J. S. Bach, and the way in which his musical output reflects this impact (against the background of the development in English musical taste from J. C. Bach to Felix Mendelssohn). We see the competing claims of Handel, Bach, and Haydn upon his style, and the way he was able to forge a highly personal idiom out of these diverse influences.

The three remaining chapters take different approaches to the fugal writing of the Viennese Classics. Chapter three: ‘Classical style, Classical ideology, and the

instrumental fugues of Joseph Haydn,' considers the role of indigenous Viennese contrapuntal traditions in the development of his mature style. The significance of this particular development extends well beyond its relevance to Haydn's own oeuvre, for the growth of Haydn's quartet style has tended to serve as a synecdoche for the development of the Classical style as a whole. If the 'new and special manner' of the op.33 quartets really does represent Haydn's first attainment of a 'true quartet style', then they are the first such works ever—the first example perhaps of that perfect integration of the part and the whole, means and ends, that we still call Viennese Classicism. According to this reading, Haydn's use of counterpoint is significant only insofar as it is integrated with and transfigured by sonata procedures. The fugal finales of the op.20 quartets and some of the earlier symphonies and baryton trios, therefore, can only be seen only as intermediate steps on the way to the point de perfection of op.33 ('*Gradus ad Parnassum*' indeed!) To regard Haydn's fugal writing as being significant in its own right—indeed, as a culmination of the Viennese fugal tradition—is thus to raise questions about the entire shape of his achievement. In this chapter the strong sense of evolutionary teleology present in the accounts of Sandberger, Rosen, et al is contrasted with the revisionist approach of James Webster.

Chapter four: 'Mozart, finished and unfinished' reflects upon the nature of musical incompleteness, exploring his curious inability or unwillingness to complete so many of the fugal fragments he began. Mozart's engagement with fugue, more intense and more consistent than Haydn's, was also more problematic. Several explanations for this, both musical and psychological, are advanced and compared. Until Baron van Swieten's soirées of 1782, Mozart's effortless facility had enabled him to imitate—and usually surpass—any music he came across. With the *wohltemperirte Clavier* fugues of J. S. Bach, for the first time he faced the challenge of a style he could emulate with only the greatest difficulty. For the first time he heard

‘the footsteps of the giant’ behind him (as Brahms would later put it). In these works he may have been the first to feel the ‘anxiety of influence’ which was to be such a critical part of nineteenth- and twentieth-century attitudes to making music.<sup>6</sup>

Beethoven—the main source of this anxiety for nineteenth-century musicians (the ‘footsteps of the giant’ that Brahms heard were his)—had his own anxieties, not least the overwhelming proximity of two unquestionable classics, Haydn and Mozart. Indeed, his attitude toward Haydn (who was all the more threatening because he was still alive, whereas Mozart could be safely idolised) would seem to have been characterised by near-Oedipal resentment. Beethoven was also aware of the legacy of Bach and Handel, but he had the strength of character—the chutzpah, if you prefer—to seat himself in this company, not just as a follower or epigone, but as an original genius in his own right. Even more remarkably, many of his contemporaries were prepared to take him at his own valuation.

Chapter five, ‘Fugue in Beethoven: mundane and transcendental counterpoint’ begins by exploring the relationship between Beethoven and J. S. Bach. There are curious parallels between them in their creative ambition and constant self-improvement; both could describe themselves as one ‘who is never satisfied with himself and who strives continually to make even greater progress in his art.’<sup>7</sup> Both seem also to have exhibited a sovereign indifference to contemporary musical fashion—Beethoven’s music, indeed, seems explicitly to challenge the listener, and the chapter continues with an exploration of the aesthetics of ‘difficult’ music. It ends with a comparison between Beethoven and Clementi, whose later works show a similar preoccupation with dissonant, *recherché* counterpoint, existing in a rarefied

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<sup>6</sup> See L. Whitesell, ‘Men with a past: music and the “anxiety of influence”’, *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music* 18/2 (Autumn 1994), 152-67; M. E. Bonds, *After Beethoven: imperatives of originality in the symphony* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996); and of course H. Bloom’s *The anxiety of influence; a theory of poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).

<sup>7</sup> In a letter from Beethoven to George Thomson in Edinburgh, 23 November 1809; *The letters of Beethoven*, tr. and ed. Emily Anderson, 3 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1961), vol. I, p.248.

world of their own.

The study concludes with an epilogue pointing toward Mendelssohn and Schumann, tracing their affinity with J. S. Bach and outlining the final decay of the *galant* aesthetic.

Although each chapter has its own focus, there are a number of common themes that unify this study. It will be seen that attention is directed almost entirely toward ‘canonical’ composers: to Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, and the posthumous influence and reception of Bach and Handel. This is not simply because these musicians were ‘better’ at writing fugues (although, by and large, it is probably true), nor because their engagement with the music and musical styles of the past was, by the standards of their day, unusually rich and interesting (also true). The thing that interests me most about these composers is a consequence of the live significance they retain for us today. Haydn and Beethoven are a part of our musical life in a way that Gassmann and Albrechtsberger are not. If simple clarity of perception is to be desired above all else, then it is in one sense much easier to achieve a sound historical perspective upon the Gassmanns and Albrechtsbergers of the musical world. Products of and dwellers in their own age, they do not insist upon taking up residence in ours. Their lives and achievements are not ‘compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses,’ obscured by the myths and mythologies, the critical debates, the Babel of voices—and the very familiarity—which surround their great contemporaries. And yet it is precisely this difficulty of getting a clear vantage-point, precisely (looked at another way) this richness of identity that I find most fascinating. I am speaking, of course, about reception-history; a term I almost hesitate to use for fear that it might imply that there is a way of seeing the musical work as it really ‘is’, apart from such considerations. Every performance, every critical judgement, every musical response, every scholarly undertaking, is both a consequence of and a contribution to reception-

history. Obscure and conflicted it may be, it is our only organ of perception for these works. In consequence, then, this is as much a study of the patina of sustained attention that has built up on these works as it is of the musical texts themselves.

It *is*, of course, a study of the musical texts, and considerable trouble has been taken to isolate the particular excellences of J. S. Bach's fugal style—for example—and distinguish it from the very near approaches made by his eldest son, Wilhelm Friedemann Bach, and his favourite pupil, Johann Ludwig Krebs. How is the subject answered? To what extent is a fixed number of voices maintained? How contrapuntal is the texture? How dense or thin, how uniform or variegated? Where are the main structural divisions (if any), and how are they articulated? Are there any non-fugal passages? Are any 'scholastic' devices (inversion, stretto, and the like) employed? Up to a point these questions can be satisfactorily answered by attention to the facts of the score. Although there are details upon which opinions may differ (how complete need a presentation of the subject be to constitute a proper 'entry'? How definitive is a given cadential articulation?), there is little here to alarm the innocent logical positivist. An countersubject recurs or it does not. The integrity of each voice is preserved or it is not.

But as soon as we move from describing to evaluating—from 'is' to 'ought', as Hume would put it—even the simplest critical-analytical judgement, can raise troubling questions. Why, for example, are the textural weaknesses identified in relation to Exx.1.19-20 (pp.93-4) so much easier to recognise when we learn that the composer is actually J. L. Krebs rather than J. S. Bach? Are the two progressions quoted in Ex.5.2 (p.316) solecisms, or are they strokes of originality (it is disturbing to reflect that the answer here may depend as much upon the date of the piece—which happens to be in this case teasingly uncertain—as upon anything inherent in the text)?

The teasing out of this relation between the 'hard technology' of the musical

facts and the ‘soft technology’ of our aesthetic and cultural engagement is itself one of the central objects of study here. To what extent is the numinous quality of a great work of art—its ‘aura’, as Walter Benjamin might say—susceptible to analysis? Robert Schumann took it for granted that to ‘apply ladders to the Colossus in order to measure it by ells’ was an absurd undertaking; but absurd or not, it seems to me there is no better way of finding out the capabilities and limitations of analysis.<sup>8</sup>

If these kinds of inquiry could be summarised under the question of what these works mean to us, the other central theme here is the question of what they may have meant to their composers.<sup>9</sup> How did these fugues come to be? Perseverance with an apparently moribund genre such as fugue raises this question in an especially pressing form, as expressed so pungently by Richard Wagner at the head of the chapter. Why did composers seek neither the easy rewards of contemporary popularity, nor the more difficult satisfaction of ‘taking the era by the ears, and honestly trying to cultivate its modern forms.’<sup>10</sup> Why persist with a genre that surely had nothing new to say to their age? Why did composers insist upon ‘shewing their learnedness’, in ‘wrestling with the German devil’?

What (for example) did Haydn hope to achieve by introducing no less than three strict fugues into his op.20 string quartets; and why did he write only one thereafter? Why, conversely, did Mozart undertake so many yet finish so few? What was the significance of fugue to Beethoven in 1794 when he was studying with Albrechtsberger? And how does this compare to its significance twenty years later when he returned to the genre? What was it that made Samuel Wesley gravitate so decisively to the music of J. S. Bach?

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<sup>8</sup> R. Schumann, review of F. Hiller’s *Études*, op.15 (1835), *The musical world of Robert Schumann*, tr. and ed. H. Pleasants (London: Gollancz, 1965), p.36.

<sup>9</sup> This distinction parallels that made by E. D. Hirsch between a text’s meaning (i.e. what the author intended) and its significance (what it has come to mean for us); see *Validity in interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967).

<sup>10</sup> Wagner, ‘Deutsche Oper’, 58.

The documents of musical reception are plentiful and often overwhelmingly explicit (if at times wildly contradictory); documents of musical genesis are comparatively rare and frequently cryptic and mysterious. The individualism and self-consciousness that enable so many of today's composers to speak at length with eloquence about their own sources, procedures, and inspiration, were not a large part of eighteenth-century culture. Bach left little beyond a few entries in parish minute-books and what can be inferred from the title pages of his works. In the case of Haydn we will be assembling a picture from such sketchy materials as the comments of a small group of theorists, a passing remark from the only autobiographical sketch he wrote himself, the two contradictory accounts he gave of his encounter with C. P. E. Bach, and a conversion recollected after his death. Even the letters of Mozart—surely one of the most comprehensive and detailed personal documentations of the age—were written to satisfy the enquiries of his father, not to answer the questions that we might want to ask. The origin and abandonment alike of his 'Great' C minor Mass K. 427, for example, remain deeply enigmatic; and the cryptic references in his letters only compound the confusion (see pp.290-93 below).

In many cases the best—almost the only—evidence of what a piece is 'for' turns out to be the piece itself. Musical structures are human artefacts after all, not inanimate networks of crystals. They come into existence to undertake one or more of a number of different kinds of cultural work, and as with any other artefacts the circumstances of their origin leave marks upon their physical 'surface'. As a result, exploration into what these fugues meant to their authors—how did they come to be?—both arises out of and leads back to enquiry as to what they are.



## DEFINING FUGUE

But what *are* they? What is it that makes a fugue a fugue? One might have expected that a genre that has been subject to the codification of generations of theorists—from Zarlino to Bernard to Fux to Marpurg to Cherubini to Prout—would surely have arrived at some reasonably definitive shape by now.<sup>11</sup> Near the beginning of his *New Grove* article on ‘Fugue’, however, Paul Walker admits that ‘there exists no widespread agreement among present-day scholars on what its defining characteristics should be’<sup>12</sup>—or even, one might add, about what kind of a thing it is. Is it a form, a texture, a style, or a genre? Does it refer to a kind of passage within a piece, or to a movement *in toto*? The answer, of course, is ‘it all depends.’ There are three main reasons for this.

First of all, the word fugue has meant substantially different things at different times. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries it was applied (along with ‘chace’ and ‘caccia’) to pieces involving literal canonic imitation. It could refer either to the piece itself, as in the ‘Fuga’ of Oswald von Wolkenstein (c.1376-1445), or to the technique, as with Josquin’s *Missa ad fugam*. In the sixteenth century, while Zarlino and his followers attempted to preserve this original meaning, northern theorists such as Gallus Dressler (*Praecepta musicae poeticae*, 1563) used the term to describe a point of imitation. Only later did the word come to refer to an entire movement, imitative but not necessarily canonic. Walker cites a collection of twenty small, unpretentious fugues by Simon Lohet (c.1550-1611; published 1617) as the first, but he also mentions Bernhard Schmid’s *Tabulatur Buch* of 1607 which described pieces by

<sup>11</sup> G. Zarlino, *Le institutioni harmoniche* (Venice, 1558); C. Bernhard *Tractatus compositionis augmentatus*, (Dresden, c1657); J. J. Fux, *Gradus ad Parnassum* (Vienna, 1725); F. W. Marpurg, *Abhandlung von der Fuge* (Berlin, 1753–4); L. Cherubini and F. Halévy, *Cours de contrepoint et de fugue* (Paris, 1835); E. Prout, *Fugue* (London, 1891); *Fugal analysis* (London, 1892).

<sup>12</sup> P. M. Walker, ‘Fugue’, *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online*.  
<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/51678> (accessed 14 July 2008).  
The following two paragraphs are condensed largely from Walker’s account.

Italian contemporaries as ‘Fugues or, as the Italians name them, Canzone alla francese’.

And this brings us to the second problem. The early history of fugue surely covers not just the relatively tiny number of pieces transmitted under that designation, but the vast welter of imperfectly distinguishable contrapuntal genres of the period: ricercares, canzonas, fantasias, capriccios and the like; not to mention the vocal masses and motets in which they had their origin. As we have just seen, some pieces were transmitted under more than one title. Even in Bach, movements that are unmistakably fugal occur under the title of Praeludium, Imitatio, Sinfonia, Invention, Duetto, Chorale (what we would call a ‘chorale prelude’), Sonata, Concerto, Toccata, Ouverture, Contrapunctus, as well as the older genres given above. In short, a history of fugue—the *thing*, that is, rather than the name—is likely to both exclude a fair number of pieces so-called, and include many that are not.

If the idea of fugue, as opposed to its verbal denotation, is so clear (and surely such movements as the ‘Duetti’ of *Clavier-Übung* III are self-evidently fugues in all but name) then one might have thought that defining such an idea might pose little problem. Unfortunately, the third problem with our definition is that this is precisely where the most disagreement occurs—disagreement between teachers of composition, music historians, and composers.

To take one small example, the *Oxford dictionary of music* begins its definition thus: ‘Type of contrapuntal comp. for particular no. of parts or “voices” (described thus whether vocal or instr., e.g. fugue in 4 parts, fugue in 3 vv.).’<sup>13</sup> Now this is true enough for most of J. S. Bach’s mature output, and probably (of necessity) for most choral or chamber fugues. But what about the keyboard fugues of (say) Handel, or Mendelssohn? Or the Italian and south German organ traditions (discussed pp.270-73

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<sup>13</sup> ‘Fugue’, *The Oxford Dictionary of Music*, 2nd ed. rev. Ed. Michael Kennedy, *Oxford Music Online* <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t237/e4041> (accessed 14 July 2008).

below). For how many voices or parts is the fugue that concludes Brahms's 'Handel' variations? Are these pieces not fugues, then? Such a definition consigns to a not-quite-fugal limbo large portions of the fugal repertoire. Any comprehensive treatment of the subject must take into account the variety of different fugal traditions, whilst acknowledging the tighter discipline to which some adhered. Marpurg, for example, distinguished between varying degrees of strictness: the *fuga obligata* of J. S. Bach, and the *fuga libera* or *soluta* of Handel.<sup>14</sup>

Marpurg's '*fuga liberata*' would soon to be forgotten by most theorists. As the teaching of fugue departed further and further from ordinary compositional reality, so too did it become stricter and less flexible; so too did the academic requirements proliferate. According to André Gédalge (*Traité de la fugue*, 1901) a proper 'fugue d'école' should include a subject, answer, countersubject(s), counter-exposition, episode(s), stretto, and pedal point. How many of Bach's fugues have all of these elements? 'Of course Bach was a very great composer;' Ebenezer Prout recalled his colleague G. A. Macfarren saying, 'but these things ought not to be imitated. We excuse them because of the writer's genius.' Prout responded, 'I am perfectly sure, professor, that if Bach had sent up his Mass in B minor as an exercise for his degree you would have ploughed him,' at which 'Macfarren only laughed; he did not attempt to deny it, for he knew it was true.'<sup>15</sup>

The reason for this difference in approach lay in the different circumstances they were writing for. Gédalge and Macfarren were quite explicitly in the business of preparing students for exams—crammers, if you will. Within a single movement, written at a single sitting, their students had to demonstrate their competence in every fugal technique. Not for them the luxury of being able to pick and choose, like Bach,

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<sup>14</sup> His *Abhandlung von der Fuge* begins with an extraordinary (and largely hypothetical) taxonomy of every imaginable kind of fugue and imitation, many categories of which are for all practical purposes virtually empty. See A. Mann, *The study of fugue* (New York: Norton, 1965), pp.143–61.

<sup>15</sup> E. Prout, 'Fugal structure', *Proceedings of the Musical Association* 18 (1891–92), 151.

the devices most suitable for their expressive purpose. Not for them, Marpurg's insight that there might be more than one way to write a fugue. Even within J. S. Bach's own mature fugal style (one of the strictest) there is a wide range of possibilities: with or without a counter-subject; with freely evolving counterpoint or with tight thematic economy; with or without 'learned' contrapuntal devices; with a neutral *antico* subject or a strongly characterised and individual one; with a seamless contrapuntal texture throughout, or with distinctive episodes. With all this variety, then, what is essential? What makes a fugue fugal?

One of the odd things about fugue as a genre is the way in which its defining features are concentrated so strongly in the opening bars. In this respect fugue is unique. It is for example impossible to tell for certain whether a movement is in 'sonata form' until relatively near the end (until, that is, a recapitulation in the tonic of material first presented in a foreign key); likewise, to describe a piece as a binary, rondo, ritornello or variation form is to tell us quite a lot about the shape of the piece as a whole. But any textbook or introductory guide to fugue will begin by talking about the subject itself, and then the complex and mysterious business of answer procedure, tonal and real. A codetta may follow, perhaps, and then one or more countersubjects (necessarily in double counterpoint); or perhaps the countersubject entered with the subject, and it is a double fugue. Or did the answer move in the opposite direction to the subject? In that case we have a fugue by inversion. The voices enter one by one: bottom to top, top to bottom, or inside voices to outside; on I, V, I, V (with occasional exceptions in Fux and Bach, but not in Cherubini or Sechter). Once all the voices are engaged there may also be further 'redundant' entries, or

indeed a complete counter-exposition.<sup>16</sup>

A fugal exposition distinguishes itself in a number of obvious ways from typical *galant* or Classical textures. Most striking is the fact that a fugal subject is likely to be presented initially in its naked form, bare of all accompaniment. More than anything else this contradicts the almost universal Classical (and Romantic) dependence upon harmony as a textural *sine qua non*, and emphatically signals the presence of an alien style. As successive voices enter, the texture of course becomes imitative: the voices equal in principle, by comparison with the stratified melody/accompaniment textures of the time. This imitation, furthermore, takes place at the interval of a fifth. The tonic-dominant alternation of orthodox answer procedure, tonal or real, is fundamentally at odds with normal sonata tonal procedures (see pp.27-31 below), and can therefore serve as a useful criterion for distinguishing between mere free imitation—fugato—and a genuine fugal exposition.<sup>17</sup>

But what happens then? One exposition does not make any except the shortest fugue. What else needs to take place? And it is just at this point that most commentators tend to become vague and evasive. As Prout put it: ‘The text-books mostly give very precise, and often clear rules for [the exposition]; but beyond this the learner is thrown very much upon his own resources.’<sup>18</sup> The question of whether there is a sense in which fugue is a *form* instead of just (as Tovey insisted<sup>19</sup>) a texture has exercised many scholars and pedagogues over the last century and a half.

We have already seen Gédalge’s prescription for a fugue d’école, a pattern that derived ultimately from Cherubini’s *Cours de contrepoint et de fugue* of 1835.

<sup>16</sup> As specified by Gédalge above. ‘...two additional entries of the subject, one each in Subject and Answer form and each by a voice that stated the opposite form in the exposition.’ P. M. Walker, ‘Counter-exposition’ *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/06688> (accessed 14 July 2008)

<sup>17</sup> We should probably not be too doctrinaire about even this, however. It is not self-evident to me, for example, that we should draw an absolute line between numbers 1 and 3–14 of J. S. Bach’s three-part keyboard Sinfonias (which answer at the fifth) and numbers 2 and 15 (which answer at the octave).

<sup>18</sup> ‘Fugal structure’, 146.

<sup>19</sup> *Musical textures* (London: Oxford University Press, 1941), p.20–21.

Cherubini specified a strict order of modulation thus: I, V, vi, IV, ii, iii, V, I (in a major key); or i, III, v, VI, iv, i (in the minor).<sup>20</sup> This may have been a godsend to the anxious student wondering where to go next, but as Prout points out: ‘There is not one single fugue, either in the “Forty-Eight” or (what is still more to the point) in the “Art of Fugue” in which the order of modulation prescribed by Cherubini is adhered to.’ One can understand, then, the relief with which he seized upon the ‘discovery’ (at first attributed by him to Hugo Riemann, then to Adolf Marx) that fugue was essentially a *ternary* form, explaining the three sections thus: ‘The first contains the exposition, in the keys of tonic and dominant [and counter-exposition, if present] .... The middle section includes all that part of the fugue which contains modulating episodes, and entries in other keys than tonic and dominant; and the final section is that in which a return is made to the original keys of the exposition.’<sup>21</sup> If Cherubini’s model was too prescriptive, however, Prout’s was so loose as to be virtually beyond falsification. Even he admitted ‘how very elastic’ his conception of fugal form was, and as we see him apply it to a very diverse collection of Bach’s fugues, we have to ask just how much explanatory force such a fluid conception retains.<sup>22</sup>

The fact is, as Roger Bullivant has demonstrated at some length, key (whether the key of successive entries or the key of the texture as a whole) is not a consistently useful way to delineate fugal structure.<sup>23</sup> This partly because in many fugues (nearly all fugues written before the eighteenth century, for example) the subject only appears

<sup>20</sup> L. Cherubini and F. Halévy, *Cours de contrepoint et de fugue* (Paris, 1835), tr. J. A. Hamilton 2 vols. (London: Cocks, 1837) vol. I, p.70. To be fair, it should be noted that Cherubini was not specific about the order of v, VI, and iv within a minor key.

<sup>21</sup> ‘Fugal structure’, 147. In a letter to the *Musical Times*, Walter Carroll ascribed priority to Henry Hiles’s 1879 *Grammar of music* (‘Fugue form’, *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 33/593 (1892), 431), but there are adumbrations of the idea in much earlier literature. Antonio Bertali’s *Sequuntur regulae compositionis* (Vienna, c.1649-1669) proposed a broadly similar arrangement of entries first in the tonic, then in other keys, then back in the tonic again, and Johann Joseph Fux’s *Gradus ad Parnassum* (1725) recommended a structure of three groups of entries to its students—but this last was probably intended more as a model for novice students than an analytical description of actual practice.

<sup>22</sup> ‘Fugal structure’, 147.

<sup>23</sup> *Fugue* (London: Hutchinson, 1971), pp.109-74 and many other passages. Of course, as he points out, to say ‘fugue is not a form’ is not at all the same thing as saying ‘fugues do not have forms’ (p.29).

on two pitches throughout, tonic and dominant, partly because the coincidence of key, theme, and cadential articulation that is so essential to sonata styles is nowhere near as prominent—indeed, often systematically avoided—in fugal writing. Fugue is not a ‘sensitive’ form, with precise requirements of balance and symmetry: it can be extended almost indefinitely as long as interest is maintained (which is exactly what Bach did when revising some of his own fugues).<sup>24</sup> If, then, we accept with Tovey that fugue is a kind of texture, rather than a form, what may we reasonably demand of such a texture?

All we can ask categorically is that the subject be kept sufficiently in mind, and that the texture preserve a certain amount of contrapuntal interest. ‘Sufficiently.’ ‘A certain amount.’ It is clear that these are rather fuzzy criteria: exactly how much textural elaboration is enough? How long before the subject is altogether lost to sight? A couple of practical examples may help bring the problem into focus.

Consider, for example, Mozart’s *Zauberflöte* overture. After an Adagio introduction, the main Allegro movement begins with a perfectly regular exposition of its subject (borrowed, it would seem, from Clementi’s Sonata op.24/2). This subject is brought in on the tonic (alto), dominant (soprano), tonic (tenor), dominant (bass). The answer is quite correctly tonal, and there is a recurring countersubject for both halves of the subject. All the requirements are present and correct. Is this movement, then, a fugue? Or rather, when—and how—does it cease to be a fugue? It begins like a fugue. In fact, the material of the subject is kept in play for nearly the whole movement. It is no answer simply to point to the quantity of non-fugal material. Many—perhaps most—of Handel’s instrumental fugues contain extensive homophonic episodes, as do some of Bach’s (the ‘Wedge’ fugue for organ BWV 548, that in E minor from *WTC* I, those from the unaccompanied violin sonatas). Of even

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p.174.

Beethoven's *Grosse Fuge*, op.133, Warren Kirkendale calculates that not more than 45 percent is actually fugal.<sup>25</sup>

The opening of Mozart's overture could be taken as a model for seamless transition between fugal and non-fugal—anti-fugal, even—material. The bustling orchestral continuation (bb.29-) clearly references the second half of the subject and its countersubject and *ought* to sound contrapuntal, with its dissonances and suspensions. Instead, its self-evident function as an orchestral tutti, and the long-term tonal goal it points toward, overwhelms whatever contrapuntal significance it might have had.

Likewise, the cadential theme that arrives when B flat is finally established (b.44) is undeniably contrapuntal, in principle. A loosely imitative dialogue takes place between flute and oboe, while the subject's head-motive (in thirds) is imitated at the fifth between the bassoons and clarinet. And yet, with its easy swing between tonic and dominant, transparent texture, homophonic 'oom-pah' string accompaniment, and large-scale repetition (bb.49-50/51-52, and 49-58/59-68), nothing could be further from the genuinely fugal style of the opening.

This transformation of the head-motive's affect, structural function, and texture each time it recurs (compare bb.1, 38, 42, 44, 49, 88, 98, 113, 129, and 204) perhaps serves as the best indication of the difference between Classical 'thematic development' and fugal imitation. A sonata movement's very existence is predicated upon contrasts—of texture, affect, rhythmic movement, harmonic change, theme—that fugue cannot possibly absorb while remaining fugal.<sup>26</sup>

It is worth asking just why the presence of later eighteenth-century material such as periodic cantabile melody, or homophonic orchestral tutti, should disrupt the course of a fugue in a way that earlier non-fugal material—*Fortspinnung* concerto-like passagework, for example—does not? Part of the answer lies no doubt in what had

<sup>25</sup> *Fugue and fugato*, p.265

<sup>26</sup> See pp.186-93 below where Samuel Wesley's *Fugue from a Subject of Mr Salomon* attempts to absorb just such contrasts into a generally fugal style.



already become the historicising nature of the genre: Classical homophony is out of place in a fugue in the same way that a digital watch is out of place in a historical costume drama—it simply doesn't fit. This 'dressing-up' element ('*Me voilà perruqué*', as Mendelssohn said upon the publication of his op.35 and 37 preludes and fugues) is an important part of post-Baroque attitudes to fugue. But can we find a structural rationale to underpin this instinct?

The concerto-like material referred to above may not itself be imitative or contrapuntal, nor even bear any particular relation to the subject; but it flows and evolves in much the same non-periodic, non-repeating way as the counterpoint that surrounds it. It is the periodicity of *galant* melody that refuses to co-exist with fugue, cutting across the overlapping, freely evolving contrapuntal lines, systematising and coordinating them toward larger goals. The simplest reason the *Zauberflöte* overture is not a fugue is that it can be better explained in terms of sonata form: in terms, that is, of large-scale repetition coordinated with long-term tonal goals. One of the defining characteristics of fugue thus turns out not to be the presence of certain features, but their absence—it is no wonder theorists have had such difficulty defining the shape of fugue, if part of its *raison d'être* is the lack of just this kind of schematic organisation.<sup>27</sup>

If the *Zauberflöte* overture begins as a fugue but loses its fugal identity as it proceeds, Handel's chorus 'Blessing, and honour, glory and pow'r' (*Messiah*) is an example of the opposite situation. Its 'exposition' is so loose as to scarcely deserve the name at all. By Bachian standards the voices enter in a recklessly higgledy-piggledy fashion: tenor and bass in unison in D (b.1), soprano in D (b.5) unaccompanied until tenor re-enters with the tail-end of the subject in close imitation

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<sup>27</sup> See pp.102-5 where BWV 540 is discussed in terms of Keats's concept of 'negative capability'. I should emphasise that this indifference to symmetry is a property of the *style* itself, not just certain great composers' transformation of it—of Johann Pachelbel and J. C. F. Fischer and J. G. Walther, not just Bach and Handel. It is also (in my view—*pace* the objections cited on p.230-1) a property of later successful imitations of the style: most of the fugues of Haydn and Mozart, for example.

(b.7), alto in A (real answer starting upon E, incomplete) in b.9, bass likewise in A (b.11), and so it continues. The body of the movement, however, is on the whole a faithful and concentrated treatment of its subject matter. It would be too much to expect such a long and diverse subject to maintain its integrity throughout (I count only three more-or-less complete entries). But its constituent elements are worked in a genuinely contrapuntal manner, such as one might find in the body of any respectable fugue (more so than in many). This kind of imitation is very different from the developmental reinterpretation cited in the *Zauberflöte* overture. Likewise, the occasional unison or homophonic passages do not undermine the fugal character of the whole in the way that Mozart's do. Should it 'count,' then, as a fugue? It is at least a border-line case in a way that the *Zauberflöte* overture probably is not. Whatever conclusion one arrives at, the answer is perhaps less important than the question. Cases such as these show that there is no self-evident boundary to the field; and it is far from my intention to erect one.

At times this enquiry will tend to 'leak' into adjacent areas of interest. Most obviously related is the canon, a texture of even greater antiquity and equal durability—like fugue, it was to show a slight resurgence in the nineteenth century. On the whole, canon gets very little attention in this study. The reason for this is that, for all its apparent similarity, its function as a genre was usually quite different. Apart from very occasional appearances in an instrumental context, the vast majority were catches or vocal canons, a genre unto itself which I have no space to explore. The one important exception to this occurs in Chapter 5, where the canons of Muzio Clementi make an interesting comparison with Beethoven's late contrapuntal writing.

Another area that invites digression is the Protestant chorale prelude and its influence upon music outside that tradition. Fux's treatment of cantus firmus techniques (*Gradus ad Parnassum*, 1725) is completely grounded in the southern

Catholic tradition, but Albrechtsberger's *Gründliche Anweisung zur Composition* (1790) shows the distinct influence of J. S. Bach and the Lutheran tradition.<sup>28</sup> The Viennese Classics left a few striking examples: the first movement of Haydn's Symphony no.22 (the 'Philosopher'), the chorus of the armed men in Mozart's *Zauberflöte*, and Beethoven's '*Heiliger Dankgesang ... in der lydischen Tonart*'; but (apart from a brief mention of the latter in relation to Albrechtsberger's instruction), this is another bypath I shall not go down.

On the other hand there are many hybrid semi-fugal movements I shall look at in some detail. To me this is one of the most interesting areas of study. Quite apart from Reicha's eccentric methods there were many ways in which composers might adapt their fugal style to bring it more in line with contemporary tastes (or, conversely, introduce fugal elements into their sonata style.) Some of the most imaginative structures of the period fall into this category. As we shall see, there was no shortage of attempts to bring about this fusion; but to do so was not as easy as it seems. There are fundamental contradictions between fugue and sonata organisation. Most obvious, of course is the (usually) much greater textural complexity of fugal writing, its faster harmonic rhythm, and thematic uniformity. The deepest incompatibility, however, lies in their differing approaches to tonality.

How far is it from tonic to dominant? It all depends on whether one are writing a fugue or a sonata. In one sense of course it is practically no distance at all, as thousands of minuets, songs, and hymn tunes can attest. It is perfectly easy to make a cadence in the dominant half way through a movement, and just as easy to go straight back to the tonic as if nothing had happened. Heinrich Koch may have had a point when he regarded a tiny minuet as a sonata-form in embryo (or, conversely, a sonata

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<sup>28</sup> Mann, *The study of fugue*, pp.213-27.

movement as a minuet writ large)<sup>29</sup> but the same tonal structure becomes something quite different when expanded to sonata dimensions. This is a case where size really does matter.

In a sense, the source of this change in significance is the very closeness of the I-V relationship. Even if approached by way of its dominant, it is surprisingly difficult to hear the dominant as a key in its own right—it always threatens to return to its original role, and point the way back to the tonic. In order to establish the dominant securely as a new tonic, an immense amount of reinforcement and overstatement is required. A shift which occurred as a matter of course in small-scale forms is thus dramatised when expanded to sonata proportions—this shift to the dominant is quite simply the most important thing that happens during a sonata exposition, a process that makes sense of every other event.

While this same modulation usually does occur in a fugal exposition—several times, perhaps—the essential mechanism of a fugal exposition has nothing to do with modulation at all. Instead, it is all about opening up registral space, defining the mode by successively exposing tonic and dominant *itches* (not keys). This is why tonic must be answered with dominant, dominant with tonic, and therefore the reason for the arcane mysteries of the tonal answer.<sup>30</sup> Once this is understood, everything else falls into place—tonality is an entirely secondary consideration. It is quite possible to have a fugal exposition with virtually no modulation at all (Ex.0.1).

To be sure, many expositions do fall into the standard nineteenth-century ‘subject in tonic: answer in dominant’ pattern (Ex.0.2), especially where the subject is lengthy or harmonically oriented; but in general it is unwise to assume that the key of

<sup>29</sup> *Versuch einer Anleitung zur Composition* (Leipzig, 1782-93), tr. N. K. Baker as *Introductory essay on composition: The mechanical rules of melody, Sections 3 and 4* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), p.118 (Pt III: 39).

<sup>30</sup> The clearest exposition of this question I have yet found is in Roger Bullivant’s book *Fugue* (London: Hutchinson, 1971), pp.56-74, which includes a truly virtuosic analysis of the answer to Buxtehude’s ‘Gigue’ Fugue, BuxWV 174. See also P. Walker, ‘Modality, tonality, and theories of fugal answer in the late Renaissance and Baroque’, *Church, stage, and studio: music and its contexts in seventeenth-century Germany* (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1990), pp.361-388.

the texture as a whole coincides in any particularly close way with the I-V interchange of subject and answer (Ex.0.3). So far as I am aware, no theorist has ever specified whether a fugal exposition should end in the tonic or dominant key, simply because the point is immaterial.

When tonic and dominant are brought into close proximity thus, the possibility of dramatic opposition between the two is at once undermined; for between them they effectively form a single composite tonal area. The *Zauberflöte* overture shows how this process can be ‘quarantined’ from the rest of the movement. Its fugal exposition is free to alternate in this way between tonic and dominant, but once the drive to the dominant begins in earnest—around b.35, say—there is no going back and its dominant is given far greater prominence (such as its eleven bar prolongation between bb.38 and 48) than it could ever have in a fugue.

The tonal course of the rest of a fugue has equally little in common with sonata principles. Rather than prioritising this I-V axis as in a sonata movement, is likely to pay a visit to some or all its diatonic relatives (ii, iii, IV, V, and vi in the major; III, iv, v, VI, and VII in the minor).<sup>31</sup> There may be entries on these pitches, analogous to the ritornelli in a contemporary concerto movement—although is no reason to expect that cadential arrival and thematic arrival need coincide in any particularly close manner (also, until quite late in the seventeenth century most fugues had been quite content with entries on I and V; this did not of course mean that these were the only keys employed in the course of the piece.) The only large scale patterning likely to be seen is to be a slight subdominant bias as the end approaches. As Roger Bullivant points out, fugue is not a ‘sensitive’ form, with precise requirements of balance and symmetry: it can be extended almost indefinitely as long as long as interest is maintained (which is exactly what Bach did when revising some of his own fugues).<sup>32</sup>

From this point of view, then, it would seem that the combination of fugal and sonata principles is more problematic than it would appear to be at first sight. It is, all the same, precisely what many composers did as a matter of course. I am not speaking here so much of the sublime fusion of Haydn and Mozart, nor the eccentric, one-of-a-

<sup>31</sup> Cherubini’s tonal scheme, cited on pp.21-2 above, reflects this; but, typically, he turns a range of possible destinations into a fixed itinerary.

<sup>32</sup> Bullivant, *Fugue*, p.174.

kind experimentalism of Samuel Wesley and Anton Reicha. I mean instead the generation of composers who made the transition from the Baroque to the Classical style, equally at home with the old counterpoint and the new homophony—composers like Franz Xaver Richter, Georg Matthias Monn, Carl Heinrich Graun, and the grandfather of the *galant*, Georg Philipp Telemann. For us, fugal composition in the second quarter of the eighteenth century is inextricably bound up with the achievement of J. S. Bach and Handel. For their contemporaries, however, it was Telemann—the phenomenally successful music director at Hamburg, first choice for the post of Thomaskantor, dedicatee of the first volume of Marpurg’s *Abhandlung von der Fuge*—who best represented their attitudes to fugue. Able to combine contrapuntal solidity with *galant* elegance, free of scholastic pedantry, his fugal style was a sign of things to come.

## FUGUE AND THE *GALANT*: G. P. TELEMANN

In the 1730s, while Bach was working on the second part of the *WTC* and the first three volumes of his *Clavier-Übung*, Telemann published his own set of fugues: *XX kleine Fugen, so wohl auf der Orgel, als auf dem Claviere zu spielen, nach besonderen Modis verfasst*, which he dedicated to Benedetto Marcello.<sup>33</sup> In some respects these are very curious pieces; they are indeed modal, and each fugue is preceded by a series of chords that prefigure the tonal course of the movement.<sup>34</sup>

But it is not their unusual features I want to draw attention to, so much as the way in which they are representative of the future of fugue in general. Richard Petzoldt draws a very clear opposition between Telemann’s fugal aesthetic and that of

<sup>33</sup> Nearly the entire corpus of his published keyboard music—these fugues, the three dozen *Fantasias*, six *Fugues légères et petits jeux*, 48 *fugirende und veraendernde Chorale*, and a (lost) ‘*Lustiger Mischmasch*’—dates from this decade.

<sup>34</sup> See R. Rodman, ‘Retrospection and reduction: modal middlegrounds and foreground elaborations in Telemann’s *Zwanzig kleine Fugen*’, *Indiana Theory Review* 15/1 (Spring 1994), 105-37.

J. S. Bach: ‘As a keyboard composer Telemann, with the cosmopolitan seaport of Hamburg as his platform, addressed a far wider audience than did Bach at Leipzig, whose keyboard music found its greatest application as teaching material for nascent professional musicians. Telemann’s music, by contrast, appeals to the amateur musician who plays for himself, and is intended to give him pleasure.’<sup>35</sup> Although Bach did use some of Telemann’s keyboard music in the teaching of his own sons, this is probably true enough. ‘A singular mixture of homophonic and polyphonic elements, such as Bach only employed in toccata-style works in order to generate tension, mirrored the musical mentality of a new kind of audience which preferred to be entertained by quick changes of mood rather than edified by learned discourse.’<sup>36</sup> In actual fact the *galant* flavour of these fugues is distinctly muted. All are in four, strictly maintained voices. The subjects are varied in length and character, but well within the mainstream of early eighteenth-century fugal norms. To be sure, the part-writing is less dense and involved than would be usual for J. S. Bach, and some passages are indeed transparently homophonic (Ex.0.4)—but these are merely consequences of a deeper cause.

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<sup>35</sup> R. Petzoldt, *Georg Philipp Telemann*, tr. H. Fitzpatrick (London: Benn, 1974), p.94.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p.95.



The clearest sign of things to come is the schematic way in which Telemann seems to have approached the composition of these fugues. Each subject, whether accompanied at the outset or not, is part of a three- or four-voice matrix which returns in different keys throughout, with the parts inverted but otherwise unchanged. This procedure is not an infinite distance from Bach's practice in the two-thirds or so of the *WTC* that have regular countersubjects; but Bach is always ready to reinvent his 'Neben-harmonien' (Marpurg) in a way that Telemann seldom does. Telemann is even further from the common seventeenth-century practice of doing without a countersubject at all and letting the counterpoint evolve freely from entry to entry. Although in the *XX Fugen* there is no polarisation between 'melody' and 'accompaniment', one gets the impression that Telemann tended to think of his subject

as part of a given harmonic combination, rather than as a linear entity subject to continual re-interpretation.

This fact means of course that episodes stand out in correspondingly higher relief. Sometimes they are plainly homophonic, obviously ‘episodic’, like Ex.0.4. Sometimes a certain amount of imitative writing is present in the episodes, as in fugues VII and XVII, but even in this case they tend to stand apart from the surrounding texture, being thematically identifiable and usually returning several times. Bullivant argues that ‘the whole concept of an episode is a most unsatisfactory one,’<sup>37</sup> and this may well be true enough for much of Bach and his predecessors. Telemann, however, is quite systematic in the way he alternates the two kinds of material—an efficient and matter-of-fact way of constructing a fugue, if perhaps a little uniform. By no means as perfunctory and fundamentally out of sympathy with the genre as the *Fugirende und veraendernde Choraale* he published soon afterwards, these fugues nevertheless show only a little of the ambition and imaginative scope of J. S. Bach, or indeed of Telemann’s own more progressive music.

There is no reason to doubt that he took the *XX Fugen* seriously. Their dedicatee, Benedetto Marcello, was a composer whom Telemann respected greatly on account of his *Estro poetico-armonico: parafrasi sopra li primi [e secondi] venticinque salmi*. We have seen, however, how they already show subtle traces of the decline which the genre was about to undergo. What was it that thus eroded the significance of fugue?

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<sup>37</sup> Bullivant, *Fugue*, p.93.

Perhaps a clue can be found in the movement excerpted in Ex.0.5. It, too, is a fugue—accompanied, in that there are no entries in the bass part, but a fugue all the same. In the treble voices we have five entries in total, on I, V, ii, IV, and I, separated by episodes developing similar material, with a reasonable amount of (fairly elementary) imitation. For all this, however, it still does not *sound* very much like a fugue. The rather pretty, repetitive subject does not make sense only in the context of its fugal exposition; it is a complete statement in itself—a tune with accompaniment, in fact, and there is nothing about it to suggest that it needs to be answered at the fifth.<sup>38</sup> When this answer does appear, it is with the air of doing so for the sake of appearances, of urbanelly maintaining a rather old-fashioned convention—not because it is imperatively demanded by the musical context (as with the expositions quoted in Exx.0.1-3).<sup>39</sup>

Although he was four years older than J. S. Bach, a subtle change had taken

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<sup>38</sup> Unlike a typical fugue subject, it will also not function as a bass.

<sup>39</sup> One is reminded of Johann Quantz's injunction: 'The opening subject ... must not be too long, since it can easily become tedious when repeated at the fifth, fourth, or unison by the second part.' *Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversiere zu spielen*, tr. E. R. Reilly as *On playing the flute* (London: Faber, 1966), p.327.

place in Telemann's musical sensibility: a new awareness of the musical possibilities of melodic writing for its own sake, not just as part of a contrapuntal combination. Perhaps inevitably, this awareness was accompanied by a loss in sensitivity to the specific virtues of fugal technique. If in the case of Ex.0.5 it only served to dilute the fugal structure (in an attractive, easy-going way) it was this new sensibility that would in time also give rise to the greatest achievements of the Viennese Classics.

To return once more to Richard Wagner:

There was a time in Germany when folk knew Music from no other side than Erudition—it was the age of Sebastian Bach. But it then was the form wherein one looked at things in general, and in his deeply-pondered fugues Bach told a tale as vigorous as Beethoven now tells us in the freest symphony. The difference was this: those people knew no other forms, and the composers of that time were truly learned. To-day both sides have changed. The forms have become freer, kindlier, we have learnt to live,—and our composers no longer are learned.<sup>40</sup>

Much was lost, and much was gained. But it is not true that the composers of the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were entirely unlearned. Virtually all of them had, as part of their basic compositional equipment, a thorough grounding in counterpoint and fugue. And most of them left—for professional, personal, or technical reasons—examples of this archaic genre. It is our task here, in these pages, to explore how their fugues coexisted and interacted with the 'freer, kindlier' forms of their own age.

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<sup>40</sup> Wagner, 'Deutsche Oper', 57.

## CHAPTER 1

# THE CIRCLE OF J. S. BACH

There are, in a sense, two Bachs. One was born in 1685 in Eisenach, died in 1750, and lived as an organist and Kantor, part of the milieu of court, town, and church in eighteenth-century Germany. The product of a tradition that stretched back to the sixteenth-century Reformation, his music has much in common with that of his predecessors such as Kuhnau and Buxtehude, contemporaries like Walther and Vivaldi, and successors like Krebs and Homilius.

The other Bach was born, slowly and painfully, during the first half of the nineteenth century; and he shows no sign of dying any time soon.<sup>1</sup> This is the transcendental Bach, Bach as towering genius in the canon of western music. This Bach is the centre of a rich, diverse tradition of interpretation and criticism, an ongoing cultural conversation which is paralleled only by those concerning Beethoven and Mozart. Bach's presence in the musical canon has tended to sever his connection with his original context, substituting a new, largely ahistorical set of relationships with other figures who have nothing in common beside their towering cultural significance. These figures, larger than life, have been likewise abstracted from their own historical contexts by the process of canonisation, together forming a sort of musical Mount Rushmore. From this perspective, if one of Bach's actual associates—colleagues, predecessors, pupils—should accidentally wander onto the stage, it is indeed, so

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<sup>1</sup> H. Eggebrecht, 'Mythos Bach', in *Texte über Musik: Bach, Beethoven, Schubert, Mahler* (Essen: Blaue Eule, 1997), pp. 9-17. A similar dichotomy has become an important feature of Josquin research; see P. Higgins, 'The apotheosis of Josquin des Prez and other mythologies of musical genius', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 57/3 (Fall 2004), 443-510; and R. C. Wegman's statement of purpose for the 1999 conference 'New directions in Josquin scholarship', <http://www.princeton.edu/~rwegman/statement.html> (accessed 15 October 2006).

Schumann wrote, ‘as if a dwarf were to appear among giants.’<sup>2</sup>

We should note that the ‘historical’ Bach is not the ‘real’ Bach, nor the ‘transcendental’ Bach simply a fabrication or distortion. The *neue Sachlichkeit* of the former emerged partly as a consequence of, partly in reaction to the latter, and is no more free of ideology than the most extravagantly Romantic transcendentalism.<sup>3</sup> Attempts to excavate contemporary ways of hearing the music of the past are fascinating projects; but there is no way of apprehending his music ‘as it really was’, independently of what generations of listeners have thought and said about it.<sup>4</sup> Our only organ of perception for this music is the reception history that mediates between it and us. The cultural significance and weight of his oeuvre is a fact, just as much as its clear indebtedness to his predecessors and contemporaries is a fact. But to bring these two facts into some sort of relation—to introduce Bach (1) to Bach (2), so to speak—is surprisingly difficult. Each represents a different kind of discourse: the disciplines of analysis on the one hand, historical musicology on the other. Sometimes, however, circumstances conspire to bring them into uncomfortable proximity.

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<sup>2</sup> Review of Hummel’s 24 Études, op.125 (1834), *The musical world of Robert Schumann*, tr. and ed. H. Pleasants (London: Gollancz, 1965), p.25. Schumann was quoting Felix Mendelssohn, and speaking of C. P. E. Bach, who had ‘inherited lovely talents’ but ‘never approached his father as a creative musician.’

<sup>3</sup> Friedrich Blume’s re-dating of Bach’s cantatas, for example, (which placed most of the Leipzig cantatas earlier in the period he spent there and therefore implied a growing disenchantment with the Leipzig establishment and church music in general) was not just abstract tinkering with chronology but a deliberate attempt to debunk the idealised portrait of ‘Bach...the church musician, the great cantor, the *jongleur de Dieu*, and even the fifth Evangelist’ that had been presented by Spitta and Schweitzer (‘Outlines of a new picture of Bach’, tr. S. Godman, *Music & Letters*, 44/3 (Jul 1963), 217).

<sup>4</sup> Sanguine assumptions about ‘authentic’ performance practice have come into question in recent years (R. Taruskin, *Text and act: essays on music and performance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), and it is now normal to speak, more humbly, of ‘historically informed’ performance: cf P. Walls, *History, imagination, and the performance of music* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2003). Attempts at what might be called ‘historically informed listening’ include (among many others) M. E. Bonds, *Music as thought: Listening to the symphony in the age of Beethoven* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); S. Eckert, “[...] wherein good taste, order and thoroughness rule”: Hearing Riepel’s op. 1 violin concertos through Riepel’s theories’, *Ad Parnassum* 3/5 (April 2005), 23-44; M. Riley, *Musical listening in the German Enlightenment: Attention, wonder and astonishment* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2004); R. C. Wegman (ed.), ‘Music as heard: Listeners and listening in late-medieval and early modern Europe (1300-1600)’, *Musical Quarterly* 82/3-4 (Fall-Winter 1998), 427-691, and L. G. Ratner, *Classic music: expression, form, and style* (New York: Schirmer, 1980).

## **FINE DISTINCTIONS (1): MISATTRIBUTED WORKS IN THE BACH CIRCLE**

Although the main burden of this chapter (p.60 ff.) is a comparison between the fugal styles of J. S. Bach, W. F. Bach, and J. L. Krebs, we shall approach this topic by something of an oblique route. In many of their works both Krebs and Friedemann Bach modelled their style very closely on that of their teacher—so near is the resemblance at times, so fine the distinctions, that the question often hovers at the back of one's mind: 'would I think differently of this piece if it were by J. S. Bach?' There is no easy answer. It is, however, possible to tackle the problem from the other end, so to speak. With pieces that were once ascribed to J. S. Bach but now regarded as spurious we can have it both ways, comparing critical reception both before and after their 'unmasking'.

It should come as no surprise that works by several of his pupils and associates: C. P. E. and W. F. Bach, J. L. Krebs, Walther, Homilius, Kirnberger, Goldberg, J. G. Wagner, and J. C. Vogler should have been attributed to the teacher himself. And unlike most of (say) Mozart's apocrypha these are not obscure pieces which can be quietly consigned to oblivion. A high proportion are organ works which have been cherished by organists for generations. Some of them have lain near the heart of our perception of Bach's achievement as an organ composer. Alongside many relatively unimportant pieces (the eight short preludes and fugues BWV 553-60, at least twenty chorale preludes, several 'trio' movements, and a variety of miscellaneous fugues and preludes) the authenticity of four major works, in whole or in part, has been called into question: the Prelude and Fugue in A, BWV 536;<sup>5</sup> the Fantasia and Fugue in C minor

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<sup>5</sup> D. Humphreys, 'A Bach polyglot: The A major prelude and fugue BWV 536', *Organ Yearbook* 20 (1989), 72-87, and 'J. S. Bach, J. P. Kellner and the Prelude and Fugue in A major, BWV 536', *Organ Yearbook* 29 (2000): *Bach und die Orgel*, 27-44.

BWV 537;<sup>6</sup> the Prelude and Fugue in F minor, BWV 534;<sup>7</sup> and the Toccata and Fugue in D minor, BWV 565.<sup>8</sup> As an organist, a musicologist, and a critic, I am troubled by the way in which this uncertainty of attribution—a mere historical accident, one might think—renders everything else about these pieces unstable and ambiguous.

When I was younger, I thought that one of the loveliest melodies ever written was the little aria ‘Bist du bei mir’, in J. S. Bach’s notebook for Anna Magdalena (Ex.1.1).

I still do, I think; but I have since learned that the person who wrote it was not Bach himself, but a contemporary of his, the Gotha Kapellmeister Gottfried Heinrich Stölzel (1690-1749). A trivial detail, surely? Not a single note has been altered. As a

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<sup>6</sup> J. O’Donnell, ‘Mattheson, Bach, and the Fantasia and Fugue in C minor BWV 537’, *Organ Yearbook* 20 (1989), 88-95.

<sup>7</sup> D. Humphreys, ‘Did J. S. Bach compose the F-minor prelude and fugue BWV 534?’, in *Bach, Handel, and Scarlatti: tercentenary essays*, ed. P. Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp.173-84.

<sup>8</sup> P. Williams, ‘BWV 565: a toccata in D minor for organ by J. S. Bach?’, *Early music*, 9/3 (July 1981) 330-37; R. D. Claus, *Zur Echtheit von Toccata und Fuge d-moll BWV 565* (Köln: Dohr, 1995). However convincing the arguments of Humphreys, O’Donnell, and Williams may be, it is difficult to evaluate their effect upon our collective knowledge of J. S. Bach’s music. There is no clear process by which works are accepted into or rejected from his oeuvre. The *New Grove* work-list for example raises no question about their authenticity. Even the extremely doubtful eight short preludes and fugues BWV 553-560 are included without comment.



sounding object, nothing has changed. And yet . . .

I have since begun to notice the abruptness of the shift to V/V in bar five. Far from emerging naturally out of the previous bar, it almost sounds as if a phrase of the melody has been omitted. And now that I think about it the literal repetition of this five-bar phrase—beautiful as it is in itself—every nine bars, now strikes me as, perhaps, just a little artificial. The penumbra of melodic sweetness and fond association remains, but starts to flicker around the edges. But I wonder: would I have begun to think this way if the attribution to J. S. Bach had remained unchallenged?

The original source for ‘Bist du bei mir’ (for soprano, strings and continuo) was discovered around 1915 by Max Schneider, in a manuscript in the library of the Berlin Singakademie containing five *Airs divers comp. par M. Stölzel*.<sup>9</sup> Let us, for a moment, put ourselves in Schneider’s position. As diligent musicologists investigating a small, dusty corner of eighteenth-century Lutheran music, we are sorting through the manuscript, enumerating the various stylistic features and making tentative critical evaluative generalisations. All of a sudden, however, we come across a startlingly familiar piece, shining out like a jewel in a cellar. Without warning we have shifted from the domain of historical musicology to that of popular culture. In contrast to its neighbours, ‘Bist du bei mir’ is emphatically public property: the property of Lieder-singers, of wedding music anthologies, of exam syllabi, of ‘Classical favourites’ recordings.<sup>10</sup> Should we re-evaluate our moderate, dispassionate judgement of the rest of the manuscript? How many other ‘Bist du bei mir’s remain to be discovered therein? Or is it just a ‘sport’, a minor composer striking gold on an isolated occasion? Is it really better than its neighbours, or does its significance and

<sup>9</sup> Reported by Georg Dadelsen in *Neue Bach-Ausgabe, Klavier- und Lautenwerke Band 4: Die Klavierbüchlein für Anna Magdalena Bach von 1722 und 1725, Kritische Berichte* (Kassel, Bärenreiter, 1957), p. 124.

<sup>10</sup> If these are all ways of taking a piece out of its original context, it should be noted that ‘Bist du bei mir’ is itself curiously contextless in relation to Bach’s other works. Anna Magdalena’s notebook is far more of an easygoing miscellany than any of Bach’s other collections, and there is virtually no other continuo song in Bach’s output with which to compare it. This in itself might perhaps have cast doubt upon its authenticity.

popularity arise purely from a minor anomaly of reception history?

Unfortunately we will never know, as the manuscript was lost during the second world war. Even if it were found, however, how much faith could we place in our revised evaluation? Although the unfamiliarity of its arrangement and its context might encourage us to see the song in a new, more detached light, it is impossible to separate our personal emotional engagement with this piece from the critical assessment we make. Just as we cannot simply ‘un-know’ our previous experience of the piece, we cannot hear it as just another of the *Airs divers comp. par M. Stölzel*.

In *Das Kantatenschaffen von Gottfried Heinrich Stölzel*,<sup>11</sup> Fritz Hennenberg outlines the difficulties that have stood in the way of the appreciation of Stölzel’s other works. Complete editions have been proposed several times (notably by Max Schneider in 1910 and Armin Fett in 1930), but never undertaken. Editions of nearly all his instrumental works (mostly concertos and trio sonatas) have been published, but his vocal works remain comparatively untouched. The reasons are not hard to find—with 472(!) surviving cantatas to choose from, where does one begin? After all, performances of choral works require larger forces and more organisation than chamber or keyboard works. And yet, for all his considerable historical interest, it has to be admitted that the students of Stölzel and his music have shown none of the urgency, the centrality, the driving cultural imperative with which the nineteenth century undertook the unearthing of J. S. Bach. Even Hennenberg, one of the leading Stölzel experts (and presumably enthusiasts), concludes his tercentenary article thus: ‘Stölzel, today? Now that his anniversary has arrived, he receives honour—but few performances. Yet in comparison to many of his contemporaries he deserves greater justice. Stölzel *redivivus*? Certainly—in moderation.’<sup>12</sup>

There was nothing ‘moderate’ about the Bach revival. Samuel Wesley, Forkel,

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<sup>11</sup> Leipzig: V.E.B. Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1976.

<sup>12</sup> “...ein Bach durchaus ebenbürtiger Instrumentalkomponist”? Zum 300. Geburtstag von Gottfried Heinrich Stölzel’, *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 151/1 (Jan 1990), 13.

Mendelssohn, Schumann, Spitta, Widor, Schweitzer, and dozens of other propagandists and activists felt that they were engaged in a task of crucial importance, and did not rest until Bach's complete works were published (in the most uneconomic manner possible) and his position secure at the heart of the Western canon. The study of Bach 'mattered' (and continues to matter today) in a way that the study of Stölzel never has. Why is this? It is no answer to say that Bach is canonical and Stölzel is not, merely a restatement of the question. We say that Bach's music is 'greater' than Stölzel's; but our ideas of musical greatness are in part shaped by our experience of Bach's music. There is no independent aesthetic criterion according to which we can evaluate the works that make up the musical canon. The canon is its own standard.

This is not to say that the analysis of canonical works is a fruitless exercise; rather, that such analysis is closer to hermeneutics or exegesis than what we usually mean by critical writing. Hermeneutic analysis is not necessarily uncritical in any pejorative sense; Jim Samson speaks of how 'the unified musical work' is 'celebrated by the institution of analysis'.<sup>13</sup> In seeking to unfold the meaning of a work whose value is not, for the moment, in question, we naturally favour accounts that demonstrate both the work's complexity and its coherence; that is to say, accounts that show faith in the composer's competence. Wordsworth put it this way:

If an Author by any single composition has impressed us with his talents, it is useful to consider this as affording a presumption, that, on other occasions where we have been displeased, he nevertheless may not have written ill or absurdly; and, further, to give him so much credit for this one composition as may induce us to review what has displeased us with more care than we should otherwise have bestowed upon it.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> 'Celebrated', rather than 'justified' or 'demonstrated': 'Analysis in context', *Rethinking music*, ed. N. Cook and M. Everist (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p.42.

<sup>14</sup> Preface of 1800, *Lyrical Ballads* (London: Oxford University Press, 1911), ed. H. Littledale, pp.251-52.

When a particular account of a canonical work fails to demonstrate these qualities (complexity and coherence) we tend to assume that the analytical method is at fault rather than the piece itself. This is quite a different kind of undertaking from evaluative criticism, approaching an unfamiliar work from the outside, as it were, and making at least a provisional judgement.

Occasions of uncertainty as to the appropriate mode of criticism are quite rare, for the musicological community has tended to segregate them, or at least to use them in different circumstances. Nevertheless, such occasions do occur. It happened above, where we were forced to admit that a much loved piece by J. S. Bach was actually by G. W. Stölzel, a fact which in turn encouraged us to evaluate it with a more critical ear. A more complex situation occurs when questions of authorship, instead of being resolved by documentary evidence, have to be determined on stylistic grounds alone.

Initially, the work forms part of our understanding of the composer's style (which is itself merely a set of inferences from this and other works). Discrepancy between the style of the piece in question and the supposed composer's typical style places the hermeneutic circle under increasing pressure. As our grasp of this style becomes more and more sophisticated, the work in question is increasingly isolated from its fellows (as an 'early', or 'uncharacteristic' work, perhaps). Eventually, however, the stylistic discrepancies prove too much to sustain. The hermeneutic circle suddenly breaks, our attempts to make sense of its relationship to other works and to find coherence within the work itself are abandoned, and it is ejected from the canon. We are then both free and obliged to evaluate it independently from our understanding of its putative composer. Two examples of this process will be traced here.

J. S. Bach's works for organ are particularly rich in misattributed or doubtful compositions for a number of reasons. Bach never grouped his organ preludes and fugues in sets as he did with most of the other works for clavier, and many important

pieces are known from a single copy, often at several removes from an autograph. Furthermore, since organists have had an incentive to explore the darkest recesses of Bach's output (requiring as they do different music each week), even very doubtful works have not had a chance to gather dust in academic libraries, but have been circulated and recirculated in numerous practical editions. I shall look at two further pieces which, until relatively recently, were accepted as being unquestionably genuine.

BWV 534, the Prelude and Fugue in F minor, has had a long and complex critical history since it entered the canon in 1844 (printed by Peters from a copy in the hand of Johann Andreas Dröbs, a second generation pupil of Bach). Assuming for the moment its authenticity, it is thought to date from the early Weimar years.<sup>15</sup> Along with BWV 545 and 546 it represents an important shift in his style—the preludes are more continuous and less rhapsodic than formerly; the fugues move away from the virtuoso 17th-century *Spielfuge* type towards a slower, *alla breve* manner. BWV 534 is generally held to represent an early stage in this development: early, because the prelude is of modest dimensions and unaffected by the Vivaldian ritornello patterns so important after 1713-14, and because the fugue has a number of peculiarities—as we shall see.

If complacent adulation while its position was secure had been followed by critical disparagement once its authorship had been called into question, we would have had a journalistically satisfying tale of musicological hypocrisy. Its actual critical history is much more complex and interesting. Philipp Spitta set the tone in 1873 with an equivocal critique, finding 'very great beauties' but certain deficiencies also:

It has, so far as was possible with Bach, a somewhat irregular growth; many new figures of counterpoint are brought in, but in a short time seem to lose their vitality, so that the theme is constantly feeling about for new support; in spite, therefore, of very great beauties, something is

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<sup>15</sup> As with nearly all Bach's free organ works, stylistic features are the only means of dating.

lacking to our full enjoyment.<sup>16</sup>

Albert Schweitzer's response (1908) was less inhibited:

[Of the alla breve fugues in general] Their lack of showy effects accounts for these works not being so popular with players and audiences as the A minor and G minor fugues. But one only has to live with them to prize them even more highly than those, even if at first sight they have not the same fascination. They represent the pure sublime, not, as before, the sublime in guise of the pathetic. The C minor fugue [BWV 546] and the F minor fugue are so tremendously tragic precisely because they have divested themselves of every shred of passion, and express only great sorrow and deep longing.<sup>17</sup>

Harvey Grace (1922)

The Fugue is not a complete success. The exposition is very impressive, with a kind of sombre dignity all its own, but the work falls away afterwards, not only in the episodes, but in some of the treatments of the subject, *e.g.*: [musical example showing bb.89-91] and even more at the left hand entry a few bars later. The closing eighteen bars are splendidly sonorous. In spite of its inequalities this fugue gets hold of one in a curious way. Its best parts are so fine that they more than atone for the weaknesses.<sup>18</sup>

Walter Emery (1948)

This was evidently written at Weimar, hardly later than 1712. The pedal part of the Prelude contains the low D flat, which was not available at Arnstadt or Mühlhausen, and there are signs of approaching maturity: in the Prelude, the counterpoint is fairly coherent and concentrated, yet unmistakably instrumental: in the Fugue, the subject is highly significant, moves slowly, and has no repeated notes; furthermore, there are five distinct sections, alternately with or without pedal. On the other hand, bars 51-63 of the Prelude sound irrelevant, and the hint of recapitulation in bars 64-70 is too vague to be convincing; the five-part writing in the Fugue is largely of the vocal type, and not

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<sup>16</sup> P. Spitta, *Johann Sebastian Bach*, tr. C. Bell and J. A. Fuller-Maitland, 3 vols. (New York: Dover, 1951), vol. I, p.592.

<sup>17</sup> *J. S. Bach*, tr. E. Newman, 2 vols. (London: Black, 1923), vol. I, p.274.

<sup>18</sup> *The organ works of Bach* (London: Novello, 1922), p.87.

very good; and the ends of both movements show Bach still unable to wind up without a pause, a flourish, and two or three block chords. Even so, he failed with the Fugue, having manifestly lost his grip at bar 126. But in spite of its defects, the work has real dignity, and deserves more performances than it gets.<sup>19</sup>

Thus far the critical report is mixed. The significance of BWV 534 in Bach's stylistic development is granted; it is not above criticism (although the commentators do not agree on what the faults are), but all respond emotionally to the effect of the piece as a whole.

The next two accounts are interesting. Both are ingenious attempts to make sense of its shape, which fits poorly with nineteenth-century ideas about fugal construction, seeking in particular an answer to Spitta's criticisms.

#### Roger Bullivant (1971)

one of the most infuriating fugues to analyse is the early-mature F minor organ BWV 534. This piece has actually been criticised for its lack of structure. Here is what happens: [a step by step account follows]

It will be observed that a definite form emerges, but one which bears no relationship to a ternary design whether by key or anything else. Indeed if any 'stock' form is to be named it would be the rondo ... in the sense that from the time to time the subject does seem to make a 'fresh start' in the tonic. ... It is hoped that this kind of analysis makes sense of a design which happens to be one of the worst from the standard point of view.

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...the Bach 'Albinoni' fugues, although long, can be regarded as an exposition extended so long as to be boring. But the F minor organ fugue cannot be got rid of so easily. Clearly it has form and equally clearly some parts of it are exciting while others express relaxation. [He shows why key and 'learned' devices are not useful for defining this particular form.] Analysis has to learn not only what to include, but what to leave out. Neither key of entry nor stretto are important in this fugue:

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<sup>19</sup> Preface to *The organ works of Bach*, vol. VI [BWV 532, 534, 552, and 565] (London: Novello, 1948), p.iii.

this is not a decision made by the theorists analysing it, but something which the composer tells the listener by the way in which the design unfolds.<sup>20</sup>

### Peter Williams (1980)

The frequency of the tonic and dominant entries is highly original and leads to an unusual fugue in which the subject is constantly accompanied by new countersubjects. Spitta's judgement that the countersubjects soon peter out and that the subject 'must always look around for help' (I p.583) can be accepted only if the composer is not allowed to be creating a specific type of fugue whose subject and answer ... sustain the drive by appearing always on the same three notes but in succession or alternation, in different voices, with different countersubject, in different textures, and spaced at different intervals of time. ... The parts countering the subject vary from one (b.3) to four (b.123), not in the normal way of fugal texture but as a conscious attempt to present the subject—which remains in as few keys as is compatible with a length of nearly 150 bars—in various guises.

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Finally, the fine, idiomatic organ writing of the last twelve bars should not hide what is perhaps the most imaginative element in the whole fugue, namely the paraphrased final entry or entries of the closing bars.<sup>21</sup>

Note that this is the point at which, according to Walter Emery, Bach had 'manifestly lost his grip'. These last two accounts are excellent examples of the sort of work an imaginative analyst can do, transforming an aporia in earlier critical accounts into a richer, more integrated understanding of the movement. Both Bullivant and Williams took a good deal of trouble to find a satisfactory analytical account of the piece—an effort predicated, one presumes, on its secure position in Bach's oeuvre.<sup>22</sup> In another article (ironically enough, the one discussed below) Williams acknowledged the weakness of its source, but asserted 'obviously it *is* Bach's work, for who else,

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<sup>20</sup> Bullivant, *Fugue* (London: Hutchinson, 1971), pp.149-51.

<sup>21</sup> P. Williams: *The organ music of J. S. Bach*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980-1984), vol. I, pp.72-74.

<sup>22</sup> When Bullivant finds it 'infuriating', its design 'one of the worst from the standard point of view'; he is not expressing dissatisfaction with the piece itself but with existing analytical methods.



ever, could have written it?’<sup>23</sup>

David Humphreys was not so sure. In a letter to *Early Music* (not primarily about this piece) he suggested in passing that all might not be what it seemed with BWV 534.<sup>24</sup> Then, in 1985, he formally raised the question: ‘Did J. S. Bach compose the F-minor Prelude and Fugue BWV 534?’<sup>25</sup> By comparison with Bullivant and Williams his analysis is quite ruthless, arguing that ‘the flaws, weaknesses, and stylistically uncharacteristic features of both movements raise grave doubts as to Bach’s authorship’, pointing out ‘the awkward, clogged counterpoint and part-writing, the badly thought-out tonal scheme, the profligate waste of material and the general absence of control.’<sup>26</sup> Freed of the obligation to reconcile the work with Bach’s compositional practice, he has no inhibitions about criticising the composer’s formal grasp (‘The whole exposition gives an inescapable impression of being composed piecemeal; the composer never calculates for more than the immediate needs of the situation and seems incapable of thinking over long spans’) and voice-leading (‘constant thick doublings, awkward melodic movement and textural padding suggest that the composer had difficulty with five-part writing.’<sup>27</sup>)

Humphreys’ critique begins with the fugue’s subject (Ex.1.2).

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<sup>23</sup> ‘BWV 565: a toccata in D minor for organ by J. S. Bach?’ *Early Music*, 9/3 (July 1981), 331.

<sup>24</sup> ‘The D minor toccata BWV 565’, *Early Music* 10/2 (April 1982) 216-17.

<sup>25</sup> In *Bach, Handel and Scarlatti: tercentenary essays*, ed. Peter Williams, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp.173-84.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.173, 175.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.177, 178.

As he says, although subjects outlining the diminished seventh had been common since the time of Frescobaldi, subjects that place this interval between the third and the sharpened fourth degree are much rarer, and otherwise unknown in Bach.

Equally peculiar are two points not mentioned by Humphreys. First of all, this shift to the dominant is rather unusually cancelled by an immediate descent to the tonic; secondly, the final note of the subject is an octave lower than the opening. Although their total range may considerably exceed Mattheson's octave rule of thumb, Bach's fugue themes almost always return to their opening tonic, or the third or the fifth. The precipitate descent of BWV 534's subject contrasts strongly with the centralised, self-contained movement of most Bach fugue subjects.

To an extent these factors tell (if not conclusively) against the work's authenticity. Are these stylistic distinguishing marks also aesthetic considerations? The unexpected leap to the sharp 4th is a little more abrupt than Bach's usual practice, and its immediate cancellation perhaps vaguely unsatisfying, but these aspects are probably better thought of in terms of expectations fulfilled or denied—distinctive characteristics—than as qualities or defects. Of more concern is the subject's rapid octave descent. This does not immediately impair the beauty of the line, but it does have implications for the subject's workability in a fugal texture. Whenever it appears in the tenor, its descent tends to result in a bottom-heavy texture; in an upper voice, it frequently has to cross below the voices underneath. In either case, the fact that the subject ends in a register other than that in which it started tends to obscure thematic and textural clarity.

Once the contrapuntal texture builds up, harmonic infelicities accumulate to a level it is difficult to avoid noticing—if one is looking for them, that is. Examples that are difficult to interpret other than as flaws include the nasty clash in b.11, unexplained second inversion chords in bb.13 and 20, the poorly directed alto line in bb.9-13, the

incorrectly prepared suspended fourth in bb.21-22, and so on—all of which occur within the exposition (Ex.1.3).

Not surprisingly, the soundest passages turn out to be the very plain, literal sequences; *unusually* literal for J. S. Bach. And so Humphreys' argument continues remorselessly to its conclusion, and the world is poorer by one Bach prelude and fugue. Reluctantly we concede that BWV 534 is not so much a stepping-stone on the way up to the mature preludes and fugues of the 1710s (as had been previously assumed), but instead a step down from them, by 'a promising apprentice composer who was, perhaps, attempting a compositional project slightly beyond his technique.'<sup>28</sup>

Not everyone has accepted Humphreys' arguments. Georg Stauffer remained unconvinced in his review, pointing out 'how little we know about the evolution of

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p.184.

Bach's style before the composer's assimilation of Vivaldi's idiom around 1712, and how little we know about the experiments in Bach's initial drafts' and adjuring us: 'It is perplexing, of course, but let's face it: Bach had *some* difficulty writing fugues containing more than four voices.'<sup>29</sup> Likewise, in his revised edition of *The organ music of J. S. Bach*, Peter Williams also resists Humphreys' conclusions, largely preserving his reading of 1980; although he is now more circumspect about the question of authorship. He ascribes BWV 534's contrapuntal infelicities to errors of transmission, and argues that 'so distinctive a harmonic and melodic character make it hard to believe that Bach had no hand in the piece', finding 'a warmth to the harmony and melody hard to attribute to any pupil.'<sup>30</sup> Clearly, as Harvey Grace found: 'this fugue gets hold of one in a curious way.'<sup>31</sup>

Although long assumed to be a part of Bach's output, BWV 534 has not been performed as frequently as other, similar works and is therefore not especially well-known to the general musical public (could we interpret this as an example of 'the invisible hand of the canon' at work?). This is certainly not true of the next work we shall look at: 'the' Toccata and Fugue in D minor, BWV 565.

There is little doubt that this is 'the most famous piece of organ music ever written'.<sup>32</sup> Its fame and long-established position in the Bach canon (in volume IV of the Peters edition, among the 'classical' preludes and fugues) have tended to obscure just how unlike its companions it really is. Its attribution remained unchallenged, however, until Peter Williams opened the discussion in 1981. The doubts he expressed can be grouped under four headings: extra-musical problems; then questions that arise from the beginning, the middle, and the end of the piece.<sup>33</sup> The source itself

<sup>29</sup> Review of *Bach, Handel, Scarlatti: Tercentary Essays*, *Musical Quarterly* 72/2 (1986), 278.

<sup>30</sup> *The organ music of J. S. Bach*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003) pp.50, 51.

<sup>31</sup> See p.46 above. It is worth comparing Williams' indifference to relatively minor works such as BWV 580 (an alla breve fugue in D) or 897 (Prelude and Fugue in A minor; Dretzel), which have been excised from the canon without regret.

<sup>32</sup> Peter Williams, 'BWV 565: a toccata in D minor for organ by J. S. Bach?' *Early Music*, 9/3 (July 1981), 330.

<sup>33</sup> Observations not footnoted are my own.

has a number of doubtful features. The oldest copy is in the hand of Johann Ringk (1717-78), a second-generation student of Bach; there are none in the hand of any of the main copyists, Walther, Krebs, Kirnberger, or Oley.<sup>34</sup> Even the title ('Toccata con Fuga') is not an early eighteenth-century one,<sup>35</sup> and the abundance of tempo indications is equally uncharacteristic.<sup>36</sup>

So far as the music itself is concerned, oddities begin with the very opening. A texture purely in octaves is very rare in organ music of the time (or since), except when emulating 'orchestral' unisons.<sup>37</sup> Clearly, the opening is related to the single-line manual flourishes that open many north German Praeludia (cf BuxWV 141 and 151, BWV 564 and 566); but differences are as clear as the similarities. Quite apart from the octave doubling (which might conceivably have originated with a copyist), there is nothing in Buxtehude to compare both with its terse, rhetorical fragmentation and its literal octave displacements. One is tempted to call it 'recitative-like', except that it is even more unlike actual recitative.

Once the movement gets under way, rhetorical passages alternate with weighty chords, roughly in the manner of a north German Praeludium; but again differences are apparent. With the exception of brief flourishes such those as in bb.11, 18 and 21, the passagework is more figural, less free than would be expected. The '*bariolage*' of bars 12-15 clearly originates in string rather than keyboard techniques, however effective it may be on the organ (Ex.1.4).<sup>38</sup>

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 331. Williams also raises an entirely different question, that of which instrument it was written for. This article was produced in conjunction with an edition of BWV 565 for unaccompanied violin. Mark Argent has since followed Williams' idea of a string original for BWV 565 in a different direction, suggesting the five-string Baroque cello in 'Decoding Bach 3: Stringing along', *Musical Times* 141/1872 (Autumn 2000), 16-23. On the other hand, Bernhard Billeter has suggested a harpsichord original: 'Bachs Toccata und Fuge d-moll für Orgel BWV 565: ein Cembalowerk?', *Die Musikforschung* 50/1 (Jan-Mar 1997) 77-80.

<sup>35</sup> Williams, 'BWV 565', 331.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 337.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 331-32.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 334.

The close integration between keyboard figuration and big chords in bb.16-20 is also uncommon. Furthermore, the tonality fixes itself resolutely on D minor throughout, without the slightest detour even to the nearest of related keys. Traditionally, the chordal passages in such a Praeludium (descended from Frescobaldi's *toccate durezza e ligature*) were opportunities for the composer to display his harmonic imagination, and some extraordinary dissonances and harmonic shifts often resulted. Here, the harmonic imagination of this composer extends as far as the diminished seventh, and no further.<sup>39</sup> A consequence of this, of the genre's expectation of a high level of rhetorical dissonance, and of the extreme tonal stasis, is that the sonority of the dominant minor ninth in D minor itself acquires an almost thematic significance, recurring as it does in bb.2, 10, 19, and 21-27.

If the first section raises doubts about Bach's authorship, the fugue only

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 333, 334.

reinforces them. Its texture is impossibly lax and casual for an authentic work of J. S. Bach. One might argue that Bach's early fugues are much less strict in this respect than later examples (a standard and plausible defence for many doubtful works), and this is true up to a point; but such details as the subdominant answer (the tonal scheme of the whole movement is skewed in that direction), the extended sequential codettas during the exposition, the simple minded tonic-dominant passagework in bb.73-82,<sup>40</sup> and the unaccompanied pedal entry in b.109<sup>41</sup> are highly uncharacteristic of J. S. Bach's music of any period. Comparison with the fugue in D major BWV 532, in many ways quite a similar work, bears this out. A greater textural, harmonic and tonal sophistication is present throughout; however primitive the accompanying counterpoint becomes, it is never reduced to simply following the subject around in thirds and sixths (cf BWV 565 bb.32-34, and just about every other entry)<sup>42</sup> or hovering redundantly on the same note (bb.52-53; doubly redundant because this note is also present in the subject). The subject of BWV 565 is itself uncharacteristic of Bach, in that it lacks the sense of completion and character most of his subjects possess—it sounds like the sort of figuration that might occur during the course of a movement, but lacks a clear thematic profile. There are subjects that seesaw in this violinistic manner (BWV 543 in A minor, BWV 548 in E minor), but never simply between the dominant and a stepwise line of quavers. As this would suggest, the entries are uncharacteristically static harmonically. Significantly, the episodes sound more convincingly like J. S. Bach than any of the entries, especially bb.49-51, 54-57, 95-102 and 111-114, where harmonic interest is much higher. The closing section (b.127 onwards) also sounds a lot more like early Bach, showing much greater harmonic inventiveness than the opening (the progression between bb.132 and 133 is especially effective and original). Only the concluding chords, so effective on a big

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 333.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 333.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 334.

nineteenth-century organ, are atypical—his early fugues end with an elaborate plagal flourish, late ones with a plain perfect cadence.

Strangest of all is the very last chord; for ‘where else in the music of J. S. Bach or his contemporaries is there a minor plagal cadence? ...a final major chord is so very much more likely that one can only wonder at the power familiarity has of blunting our responses. ... But how can one understand or think anew about a piece for which it would need a very bold performer indeed to play that most likely *f* sharp?’<sup>43</sup>

Considered as a fugue, the piece is extraordinarily primitive (not surprisingly, Prout refers to it only once in his fugal textbooks), deficient in basic fugal craftsmanship in just about every respect—and yet, somehow, it remains so appallingly effective. Is it just familiarity that has inured us to its fairly obvious shortcomings? For all its harmonic monotony (perhaps even *because* of its harmonic monotony) there is something strangely compelling about the subject, in the way its recurring inverted pedal maintains a sense of expectation. In a similar fashion, the manner in which musical substance is attenuated to the merest filament during such figuration as bb.74-85 likewise deflects attention forward and away from itself. Any fugue contains passages of greater or lesser intensity—passages of expectation (episodes, figuration, slender textures, dominant pedal-points) prepare for moments of arrival (subject entries, pedal entries, full textures, cadences), and successful mediation between these is the mark of a good fugue composer. One of the general criticisms that can often be levelled at writers of fugues after Bach is that their counterpoint, though unobjectionable in detail, fails to project a convincing sense of shape or direction—they give an impression of feeling their way forward from chord to chord and entry to entry, ‘composed piecemeal’, as Humphreys said of BWV 534; ‘the composer never calculating for more than the immediate needs of the situation’, apparently ‘incapable

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 333.



of thinking over long spans.<sup>744</sup>

BWV 565 by contrast is an example of almost the opposite—in spite of its innumerable contrapuntal deficiencies, it is propelled by an unstoppable sense of formal purpose.<sup>45</sup> Bars 73-91, although quite un-Bachian in their simplicity of means, show a masterly control of pacing. Beginning with an absolute minimum of musical content, tension increases as the bass-line ascends. Deflected by the sudden descent in b.83, intensity begins to build in earnest in b.85 with the introduction of demisemiquavers and the addition of other voices in a kind of scalar descent. Although contrapuntally redundant (the G is already present in the subject) the trilled dominant pedal contributes nicely to this build-up, as does the immediate repetition of this passage with the subject in another voice and the trill transferred to the upper voice. A descending sequential passage brings us down from this peak of excitement.

Consider, further, the unaccompanied pedal entry in b.109 we mentioned above. A flat contradiction of the basic ethos of fugal construction, it is, in its context, strikingly effective. The upper voices do not inexplicably evaporate leaving us to wonder what has happened to the texture, for this passage is well prepared by the repeated imperfect cadences of bb.105-109. The pedal solo itself combines the climactic effect of both an ordinary pedal entry and of the traditional florid pedal solo that occurs in so many north German Praeludia (cf BuxWV 142 and 146, BWV 543, or Vincent Lübeck's Praeludium in E). It is then itself capped as the rest of the voices enter and continue the fugue.

In short, while remaining a distinctly suspect fugue, BWV 565 manages to be a thoroughly exciting piece of music. Nevertheless—however exciting it may—be the looseness of its fugal construction makes it nearly impossible to reconcile with what

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<sup>44</sup> Humphreys, 'BWV 534', p.177.

<sup>45</sup> In this respect it prefigures an aspect of Mendelssohn's fugal style, which was always ready to sacrifice the integrity of his voices for a clear sense of formal and textural direction (although his counterpoint was never quite as minimalist as that of BWV 565.)

we now understand of Bach's stylistic development: *C'est magnifique; mais ce n'est pas Bach?*

This discussion leaves open, then, the question of who did in fact compose BWV 565 and BWV 534. In a response to Peter Williams' article, David Humphreys suggested Johann Peter Kellner (1705-72), an admirer rather than a student of Bach, as a possible composer of the D minor toccata and fugue—reasonably enough, on the evidence of his musical examples.<sup>46</sup>

The identity of the composer of BWV 534 is a much tougher question. There were very few composers of the time—even among Bach's own pupils—capable of writing such a convincing approximation of his style on this sort of scale. The externals of Bach's texture are immensely difficult to copy, much more so than those of Handel, say.<sup>47</sup> Humphreys draws parallels between BWV 534 and the organ music of J. C. Kittel, especially his *16 Grosse Präludien* of c.1809, connections which are plausible so far as the prelude is concerned; but his argument is hindered by the fact that Kittel left not a single full-length fugue among his 300 or so organ works. Whether in this case absence of evidence constitutes evidence of absence remains a matter for conjecture.<sup>48</sup>

More recently, two other names have been associated with BWV 534. In 'Het Auteurschap van Praeludium en Fuga in f-klein BWV 534' Pieter Dirksen responds, like Williams, to its pathos; but finds instead an echo of the legendary improvisations of his eldest son, Wilhelm Friedemann.<sup>49</sup> For entirely different reasons, Peter van Kranenburg has suggested Johann Ludwig Krebs, reaching his conclusion through the computer analysis of statistical pattern-recognition algorithms.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> 'The D minor toccata BWV 565', *Early Music* 10/2 (April 1982), 216-17.

<sup>47</sup> Even Mozart seems to have had difficulty; see pp.273 and 330 below.

<sup>48</sup> It should be pointed out that none of Kittel's works show the structural ambition of BWV 534; even the so-called '*Grosse*' *Präludien* scarcely justify the adjective.

<sup>49</sup> *Het Orgel* 96/5 (2000), 5-14.

<sup>50</sup> 'Composer attribution by quantifying compositional strategies', *Pattern Recognition Letters* 26/3 (February 2005), 299-309.

W. F. Bach and Krebs have always enjoyed a certain pre-eminence as followers of J. S. Bach. Both developed a reputation as organists of genius. In different ways, both could be said to have had difficulty finding their own voice. And of all Bach's students, these two came closest to mastering their teacher's style.

## **FINE DISTINCTIONS (2): PUPILS AND IMITATORS**

### **WILHELM FRIEDEMANN BACH'S FUGUES FOR CLAVIER**

‘By their fruits shall ye know them’ says the gospel of Matthew,<sup>51</sup> and nowhere does the biblical injunction apply better than in the field of musical talent. To be sure, literature is full of thwarted geniuses who produce very little or destroy their gifts or themselves: characters like Kapellmeister Kreisler, Joseph Berglinger, Doktor Faustus, and Erika Kohut. But how do we know that they are geniuses? It is plain: the author tells us. In real life it is much harder to isolate some kind of irreducible, innate quality of ‘musical giftedness’ from its visible (audible?) results. Certainly there have been composers who did not achieve as much as they might have, either through early death (Pergolesi, Reubke), or through varying combinations of personality and circumstances (Dussek, Sterndale-Bennett, Duparc). But speculation about might-have-beens is risky at the best of times, let alone in an area about which as little is known as the relation between artistic creation and biography.

Wilhelm Friedemann Bach is assumed to have been the most gifted of Sebastian’s sons, a widespread perception that seems to go back to a statement by Friedrich Cramer. He claims that Bach ‘was satisfied only with Friedemann, the great organist. Even of Carl Philipp Emanuel he said (unjustly!), “’Tis Berlin Blue! It fades easily!” He always applied to the London Chrétian Bach the verse by Gellert: “the boy progresses by his stupidity.”’<sup>52</sup> Despite a background of malicious gossip like this (and the famous description of the elder Bach as ‘the old peruke’ attributed variously to Emanuel and Johann Christian) the family seems on the whole to have had a relationship of mutual respect and support. The care with which Sebastian educated his sons, the strings he pulled to secure employment for them when they had left home,

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<sup>51</sup> Matthew 7:20.

<sup>52</sup> C. Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach: the learned musician* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.402.

the equitable distribution of his estate, and the connections his sons maintained after his death (Emanuel bringing up his younger siblings, Johann Christian Friedrich visiting Johann Christian in London, Emanuel seeking to publish his father's works, the care shown by Emanuel and Johann Christian Friedrich<sup>53</sup> in their preservation of their father's manuscripts) paint a different picture. Significantly, Cramer's statement came directly from Wilhelm Friedemann Bach. Was he jealous of his brothers; perhaps slightly less gifted, but so much more successful in their musical careers?<sup>54</sup> Whatever the case, there may well have been a grain of truth in his claim. Certainly Wilhelm Friedemann seems to have been his father's favourite. His musical education was the most thorough, including a trip to Merseburg to study the violin with Graun (and, mastering the *WTC* and the trio sonatas while in his teens, his progress was remarkable). If Sebastian Bach went out of his way to secure promising positions for his sons, he certainly went the extra mile for his eldest; to the extent of composing the letter his son sent to Dresden in applying for the post of organist at St Sophia's Church, and even copying out his audition piece. Did he go too far? Can we trace Wilhelm Friedemann's later problems to an overfond, over-protective father? Certainly they had a lot in common. Friedemann was the only son who developed a reputation as an organist;<sup>55</sup> like his father, he was widely held to be the foremost organist in Germany. He was the only one of his siblings to greatly value and produce convincing works in a completely Baroque style. Liturgical works (some of them, admittedly, pastiches) make up a larger proportion of his oeuvre than those of his brothers. Furthermore, the independence and irascibility at times visible in J. S. Bach came to dominate his eldest son's dealing with the world, in contrast to his more

<sup>53</sup> Unfortunately Johann Christian Friedrich's portion was dispersed after his death.

<sup>54</sup> Note how Cramer also distances himself from Friedemann's testimony with the bracketed 'unjustly!', and by continuing: 'Actually this one of the the three Bachs [J. C. Bach] made the greatest progress'—strong evidence as to Cramer's stylistic sympathies.

<sup>55</sup> A partial exception is his half-brother Johann Gottfried Bernhard Bach, who came to an even stickier end, dying in debt at the age of twenty-four. By contrast, Johann Christian's first appearance as an organist in London was a fiasco, and C. P. E. Bach expressed to Charles Burney his regret that he had lost the use of the pedals.

accommodating (and successful) brothers. Emanuel Bach could write both works to satisfy himself and music for the court. Johann Christian made a career out of pleasing the public. Wilhelm Friedemann could no more write pot-boilers than could his father, and was even more intransigent in his personal relations. Unfortunately, while Johann Sebastian rendered himself nearly invulnerable by noble patronage and by his national reputation,<sup>56</sup> his son merely rendered himself unemployable. Was Wilhelm Friedemann simply a J. S. Bach cut adrift from his stable church/state musical environment? The correlation between his unstable personality, his unstable career, and his unstable musical style, draws one irresistibly to the conclusion expressed by Wilfred Mellers:

J. S. Bach's piece [the E flat minor prelude from book I of the *WTC*] sounds like a Passion aria: the suffering is Christ's, which happens to be Bach's and ours because Christ died for us. W. F. Bach's piece [the polonaise in the same key] is a passion<sup>57</sup> aria, which is about his own suffering, because he was an eccentric and a misfit who became, before his time, the typical artist of romanticism.<sup>58</sup>

His situation as a prototypically Romantic 'failure' before his time attracted the attention of nineteenth- and twentieth-century biographers and novelists (Johann Peter Lyser, Albert Emil Brachvogel, Karl Stabenow, Hans Franck), just as the intense personal expressivity of a few of his works (notably the twelve polonaises) endeared him to certain nineteenth- and twentieth-century critics.

Nevertheless, considered as a whole, his oeuvre appears to have certain deficiencies. First of all is its size; Peter Wollny's catalogue of his works is less than a tenth the size of Schneider's Bach catalogue. The complete organ works (and remember that W. F. Bach was perhaps the greatest organist of his time) consist of two

<sup>56</sup> See Wolff, *Learned musician*, p.253.

<sup>57</sup> Note the lower-case 'p'.

<sup>58</sup> A. Harman, A. Milner, and W. Mellers, *Man and his music* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1962), p.592.

slender volumes, including many pieces for clavier and several inauthentic works. A composer may have good reasons for producing a small list of works; but in Friedemann's case other factors lead one strongly to the conclusion that he found composition exceedingly difficult as a consequence of unresolved stylistic problems. His music is often highly expressive; it is seldom comfortable or assured.

There are few composers' styles more susceptible to the vagaries of the critic's mood. At times, (particularly with such pieces as the polonaises, or the *Concerto à duoi cembali concertati*) his music seems very fine indeed: expressive, original, and profound. On other days it seems peculiarly unsatisfying: one moment finicky and bizarre, the next dry and tedious. This is especially true of his *VIII Fugen* (BRA 81-88/F.31), a collection which had a troubled birth. They were written during the later 1770s in an attempt to win the favour of Princess Anna Amalia, a notable patron (and composer) who had conservative tastes and a particular interest in the school of J. S. Bach. Her musical circle centred around Johann Wilhelm Marpurg and Johann Philipp Kirnberger. The fugues themselves were soon lost to view as a bitter personal controversy erupted. When Kirnberger generously recommended Friedemann's case to the Princess, Friedemann responded with almost incredible venality and self-delusion by seeking to discredit his benefactor and depose him as Kapellmeister. The fugues themselves appear to have occasioned no response from their dedicatee beyond mild disappointment at their apparent lack of stature.<sup>59</sup>

Although, as we shall see, there are identifiable differences between the fugues of W. F. Bach and those of his father, on first impressions they come closer to J. S. Bach's style (especially in some of the slighter numbers of the *WTC*) than almost anyone else of his generation. Giuseppe Buonamici used six of them to fill out his

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<sup>59</sup> See W. Braun, 'Wilhelm Friedemann Bach und Johann Philipp Kirnberger: Zur Berliner Bach-Tradition' in *Barockmusik in Berlin: Sophie Charlotte und ihre Favoriten* (Berlin: VDMK, Landesverband Berlin, 1987), 97-104. To be fair, as Peter Wollny points out in his *New Grove* article, the only account of the affair we have comes from Kirnberger himself.

1885 edition of J. S. Bach's 'little' preludes BWV 924-43, in order to create a more substantial preparation for the *WTC*; it is unlikely that anyone noticed the difference.<sup>60</sup> The *VIII Fugen* are not replete with contrapuntal complexities; but then, neither is most of the *WTC*. It is the expressive and individuated nature of their subjects, and their variety, that bring J. S. Bach most to mind.

The set is arranged in order of key, much like the Inventions and Sinfonias: C major, C minor, D major, D minor, E flat major, E minor, B flat major, F minor. The rather unusual number of eight,<sup>61</sup> as well as the foreshortening of the tonal scheme in the last two fugues, suggests that fatigue may have set in toward the end of this (hardly overwhelming) work.

The first fugue, in C, could be regarded as an epitome of Friedemann's fugal style. In many respects it is extremely conservative. The three voices are preserved strictly throughout, until the very last chord. The subject retains its identity, being neither abbreviated or varied, and is presented in a variety of related keys in his father's mature manner (I, V, vi, and ii). The episodes are well-integrated, and often thematic (not a difficult feat perhaps when the head motif consists of an ascending triad).

Although technically orthodox, however, it does not *sound* very much like a Baroque fugue. The most obvious reason is its subject (Ex.1.5):

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<sup>60</sup> *Raccolta di piccoli preludi et fughette di J. S. Bach insieme a 6 fughette di suo figlio Wilh. Friedemann* (Florence and Rome: 1885); republished in 1950 by Schirmer. Buonamici's pairing was quite fitting, as Friedemann may have have a hand in the composition of some of the preludes.

<sup>61</sup> Although both Handel and Arne published sets of eight keyboard works, it was an uncommon number to choose.



In style (there is no particular thematic resemblance) it is clearly related to some of the more delicate, *galant* fugues in the *WTC*: those in C sharp, E flat, and B flat from Book I, and those in C, F minor, F sharp, and B flat from Book II. The development of what might be called the ‘characteristic’ fugue subject is one of the most important legacies J. S. Bach received from Johann Caspar Ferdinand Fischer’s *Ariadne musica* (more important, in my view, than occasional thematic borrowings and the idea of key-progression). Whereas most seventeenth-century fugue subjects could be adequately described with reference to a small number of basic genres (‘canzona fugue’, *Spielfuge*, ‘gigue fugue’, *alla breve*, *fuga pathetica*), J. C. F. Fischer showed the beginnings of a new kind of interest in thematic individuality and variety; hints that Bach took up and vastly expanded in his *WTC*.<sup>62</sup> It may have been the individuality of Bach’s fugal subjects as much as anything that endeared the *WTC* to musicians writing in the Viennese Classical style; a style where distinctive thematic profile was becoming more and more important. His originality of approach in this respect allowed *galant* elements into the very heart of his fugal texture, in contrast to (e.g.) Telemann’s and Graun’s practice of ‘quarantining’ them in subsidiary episodes.<sup>63</sup> Friedemann, however, goes further in this direction than his father. The subject is rhythmically fragmented, and prominently features a long appoggiatura on the third beat; it is, in short, a ‘tune’, rather than a fugal subject. One senses it might be happier with an independent bass against which to define its rhythmic and harmonic structure (Ex.1.6):

<sup>62</sup> Not all of the fugues in the *WTC* have ‘characteristic’ subjects, of course. But there is sense in which even the most conventional thematic material (*alla breve* and dance-metre subjects, for example) become ‘characteristic’ by association, once thematic individuation reaches a certain level of saturation. In the same way, genre types such as the figured chorale, prelude and fugue, march, and *Volklied*, become ‘characteristic’ simply through their inclusion in Robert Schumann’s *Album für die Jugend*. In both cases their very conventionality, their ‘typicality’, in itself becomes the reason for their inclusion.

<sup>63</sup> As in Ex.0.4 on p.30 above.

Roger Bullivant makes a great deal of this shift; of the way in which composers, unless they were dealing with the plainest of neo-Baroque materials (which they increasingly did), seemed to lose the knack of writing ‘self-sufficient’ fugal subjects that defined their own tonality, harmony, and metre.<sup>64</sup> This insistence on hearing every melodic idea against an ‘implied’ harmonic and metrical background became endemic during the nineteenth century. The diverse consequences can be seen in the tortuous analyses of ‘implied harmonies’ that Prout and others felt obliged to do upon fugue subjects (for the purpose of determining the correct answer), in the organ accompaniments that were increasingly provided for plainsong, in the piano accompaniments written by several musicians (including Schumann and Mendelssohn) for Bach’s unaccompanied violin sonatas and partitas, and in the way in which the rare unaccompanied pieces (Karg-Elert’s flute sonata or Reger’s violin sonatas, for example) tend to sound like accompanied works with the piano part missing. Friedemann Bach’s fugal subjects (some others much more clearly than this) represent the beginning of this process.

The acid test takes place, of course, when the subject has to serve as a bass (Ex.1.7). Significantly, this only happens twice, with nearly the same harmonisation,

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<sup>64</sup> Bullivant, *Fugue*, pp.48-49.

and it is the least comfortable bit of harmony in the whole fugue. The upper voices move in parallel sixths; but these are not the easygoing *galant* sixths of a quasi-fugal trio sonata by Quantz or Fasch. Friedemann here shows himself as a composer who ‘thinks through his fingers’: the upper parts make no rhythmic sense by themselves, and only through the composite movement of continued semiquavers does the texture cohere.<sup>65</sup> Its harmonic rhythm is even more elusive. The root movement would appear to be the perfectly normal progression: I-vi-ii-V (-I), but at every point the listener is given barely enough information to make this out. The crucial bass A (vi) appears only at the last moment before ii, which is initially represented only by its seventh in the bass. The V that follows is obscured by the presence of an A in the alto: a suspension? If so, it is introduced with a bare minimum of preparation (insufficient for some ears, perhaps). Or is the chord V9? Or vii7? This ambiguity of harmonic progression gives the passage a curiously unstable sense of being ‘off-balance’, a feeling maintained by the fragmentary exchanges of the following two bars, until relative normalcy returns in bar 8. At times this sort of writing (of which there is plenty in these fugues) seems fidgety and awkward, uncomfortably close to being simply ungrammatical; at times it seems to have a slippery, fragile attractiveness of its own.

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<sup>65</sup> This true of many passages in J. S. Bach as well, of course, but seldom in such an intricate manner.

Formally, the fugue is relatively straightforward and conventional, with two curious exceptions:

- bb.1-5            Exposition (A-S-B), with a longish codetta between the second and third entries (common in W. F. Bach's fugues)
- bb.6-8           Episodic material
- b.9                Entry (over a dominant pedal, which resolves obliquely into:)
- bb.10-18        More episodic material of varying sorts
- bb.19-26        Sequential entries on vi, ii, v, and I, leading to a final entry and cadence.

The exception concerns what I have vaguely referred to as 'episodic material'. Most fugues work in a similar manner to that quintessentially Baroque formal principle, the *Fortspinnungs-Unit*.<sup>66</sup> In almost any suite, sonata, or concerto movement of the late Baroque, a head-motive (usually fairly symmetrical in construction, and with a strong thematic profile) is succeeded by more continuous, often sequential development, which leads away from the tonic to a cadence in another key, and so to the next *Fortspinnungs-Unit*. This sense of the movement 'getting under way' tonally when the *Fortspinnung* begins has an obvious parallel in much fugal writing. Subject entries generally stabilize a given tonal area; episodes move toward the next. That is mostly how this fugue works: tonally static entries occur in bb.1-5, 9, and 24; tonally mobile episodes occur in bb.8 and 10-18, sequential entries in bb.19-22 fill both functions. There remain, however, the passages in bb.6-7 and bb.17-18, which simply oscillate between I and V then repeat themselves with the

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<sup>66</sup> Wilhelm Fischer invented the term in his 1915 study *Zur Entwicklungsgeschichte des Wiener klassischen Stils* (Habilitationsschrift, University of Vienna), distinguishing between the *Fortspinnungstypus* and the *Liedtypus* more typical of the Classical style. The sonata movements of Friedemann and all his brothers show elements of both types.

voices inverted, and serve the purpose neither of entries nor episodes. Nevertheless, if the exact function of these passages remains unclear, they fit well with the light, somewhat nervous *galant* style of the rest.

The next fugue, in C minor, makes clear reference to a well-known work of J. S. Bach, the two-part invention in D minor: one of the pieces Friedemann would have first known in its incarnation as a ‘Preambulum’ in the *Clavier-Büchlein* his father devised for him. Many of the features of the first fugue show themselves: consistent three-part writing, occasional awkward progressions (bb.2, 11, 23, 58), and considerable thematic integrity—the subject is inverted almost as often as it is present in its original form. There are two distinct types of material in use, one being the contrapuntal working around the entries (there is no regular countersubject, though naturally certain procedures tend to recur), and the more homophonic material used in the episodes.

This is one of the larger fugues and its tonal scheme is correspondingly more clearly differentiated, with strong moves toward III after bar 25 and toward iv after bar 41, returning to i after bar 48. In fact the preparation for III, associated with such emphatic homophonic writing as in bb.30-34, begins to suggest a sonata movement. Do the important entries on III in bar 35 (the only stretto in the piece) constitute a ‘second subject’? Not really, for the texture is too continuous, and the music soon veers toward iv. Nevertheless, W. F. Bach may be remembering the gestures toward binary form that occur in (e.g.) both B flat fugues from the *WTC*.

The next two fugues, in D and D minor, return to the lightness and brevity of the first. The D major fugue is perhaps the most immediately appealing of the set, with its subject’s attractive vacillation between the major and the minor seventh (Percy Scholes considered it sufficiently exemplary—and brief—to include it complete in his *Oxford companion to music*). Again, episodic passages (though thematically related)

are distinguished clearly from subject entries, with a fine diminution of harmonic rhythm between bb.15 and 26. Unusually, it is a *fuga reditta*: a fugue where, after a strong imperfect cadence near the end (b.26), the voices re-enter one by one in (illusory) stretto.<sup>67</sup>

Its companion in D minor bears more than a passing resemblance to the fugue in the same key from the second book of the *WTC*. Both slide down chromatically, and both present a systematic alternation between even and triplet semiquavers. If the second fugue was an expanded treatment of the D minor invention's material, this is a slimmed down and abbreviated version of its model. Again, it is a *fuga reditta*, with the important cadence occurring quite early, in bar 24.

The fifth fugue, in E flat, is the most extremely *galant* of them all (Ex.1.8). Not only is the tune laden with prominent appoggiaturas, it actually repeats itself from bar 2 to 3. This internal repetition (amplified by the sequential repetition in bb.4 and 5) weakens the fugal texture considerably, by revealing that the illusion of independent part-writing is in fact an illusion. To an extent this is always the case, of course; while

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<sup>67</sup> *Fuga reditta* was a term first used by Angelo Berardi in his 1687 *Documenti armonici*. It simply means a fugue with a stretto toward the end, but it implies that the stretto is set off by an articulated cadence. Very common in the Italian and south German traditions, it is almost unknown in J. S. Bach.

each line in a polyphonic texture appears to go its own way, they all share the same metre and harmonic structure, and each line is intimately related to its fellows. Paradoxically, the illusion of independence is dependent upon this close relationship: harmonic congruence gives each strand its own function within the chord, which changes from moment to moment, just as the complementary rhythms between the parts enable each voice to move in the others' gaps. The relation between a fugal subject and the rest of the texture operates along similar lines: the subject enters the texture at various times, and, though recognisable as a thematic landmark, it does not determine the texture and the phrase structure of the whole like a theme in a sonata movement; it just happens to 'fit', as if through pure serendipity. This is of course equally an illusion; if the subject does not completely determine the harmonic and tonal course of the entry (as many nineteenth-century theorists thought), it obviously exercises a strong influence, being itself fixed. If there is a regular counter-subject, the subject determines the course of at least one other voice. Nevertheless, the fragile illusion remains intact unless, as here, the subject repeats part of itself. Suddenly (and repeatedly throughout the fugue) the implicit authority of the subject over the texture becomes explicit as the other voices are brought rigidly into step with it. Although it has a certain amount of (complementary) rhythmic independence, the counterpoint to the subject presents no strong idea that might compete with the subject for interest; it is, in short, an accompaniment to a tune. Significantly, apart from a single bass entry during the exposition the subject appears only in the topmost voice—soprano or alto, according on circumstances. It is quite long (there are only six complete entries), and really sounds more like a self-contained melody with accompaniment. As in the other fugues, there is a substantial quantity of homophonic writing, much of it in syncopated parallel thirds and sixths. Taken individually, all of the material would be quite at home in one of Friedemann's or Emanuel's sonata movements (compare, for example,

the first movement of the 'Prussian' sonatas, W.48/1). Nevertheless, it does not sound like a sonata movement as a whole. The reason for this appears to lie in the textural and tonal consistency of the piece. Although prominent cadential preparations and articulations abound (bb.36, 40, 58, 80), there is no cumulative structural pattern, as in a sonata exposition or recapitulation. The tonal shifts are of local significance only, and (as is usual with fugal writing) derive their coherence from their immediate surroundings, rather from any sonata-like tonal 'master-plan'.

This fugue is the furthest any of the set goes in the direction of the *galant*. None of the *VIII Fugen* show any significant influence of sonata procedures upon their form, and the set is best looked upon as a development and extension of the lighter, more characteristic end of his father's fugal style. So far as the preservation of the voices and adherence to the subject are concerned, the elder Bach would find little to complain about. If the counterpoint is, on the whole, a little less convoluted would be normal in the *WTC*, at times J. S. Bach could also simplify his texture, if it suited the subject.

In one sense the subject of the next fugue, in E minor, stands in a tradition that stretches back well into the seventeenth century: that of fugue subjects based upon dance-rhythms. In practice this usually means 'gigue' fugues. Although other dance types do occasionally appear: the fugues in B flat major (minuet) and in F sharp major (gavotte) from *WTC* II, the closing fugue of Vincent Lübeck's Praeludium in E (courante), the gigue is by far the most common, perhaps because in this case the metre is so nearly synonymous with the genre. From Frescobaldi to Buxtehude it was common to end a canzona with a rapid triple-time movement, and gigue-fugues occur frequently among such collections as Pachelbel's *Magnificat* fugues and Fischer's *Ariadne Musica*. Whether as cause or as effect, it should be noted that pronounced fugal tendencies were more common in the gigue than in any other suite movement.



If its general type is old, however, the subject of the E minor fugue shows the same *galant* tendencies as the previous one, the same internal repetition and prominent long appoggiaturas (it can be seen in the bass of Ex.1.9). Any retarding effect these characteristics might have had is counteracted, though, by the activity of the counter-subjects. Whilst those in the E flat fugue were content to discreetly reinforce the outline of the subject, here there is considerable friction between them. The accompanying parts tend to favour suspensions and other rhythmically independent forms of dissonance, and often emphasise the second quaver of each dotted-crotchet group. Together these facts generate a nervous, ‘spiky’ kind of energy. In these respects this fugue is a close relation to J. S. Bach’s G sharp minor fugue from the second part of the *WTC*, beside which it is worthy to stand. Because they are so similar, a comparison between these two fugues gives an illuminating glimpse at the difference between father and son. For all its local dissonance and jagged lines, the older fugue conveys a greater awareness of long-term goals (it is, after all, a longer piece); the movement of the parts is smoother and more predictable, and subject-entries more clearly recognisable. Friedemann’s motivic economy tends to obscure the distinction between entries and episodes; passages such as bars 23-28 and 43-50, for example, sound as if they quote the subject, but do not. Despite the fact that it is in a less eccentric key than his father’s piece, Friedemann’s is slightly more difficult (or awkward) to play. This is a consequence, and perhaps also a cause of what I have described as its nervous, unpredictable energy. The repeated cadences (often but not always necessitated by the subject) intensify rather than diminish this fugue’s momentum, at times achieving an almost Scarlattian persistence (notably at bb.35-38). The strength with which this cadence, just under half way through the movement, is established suggests that some faint binary pattern may have been in the back of W. F. Bach’s mind. A recollection of sonata habits? Perhaps, although there are many

fugues by his father with a more clearly delineated binary structure than this.

Here, any tonic/dominant polarity is undermined by the subdominant bias of the second half. The most exposed, articulated cadence in the whole piece occurs in bar 58, onto V of iv. It sounds like the penultimate articulation in a normal *fuga reditta* (see above). But in how many fugues does this cadence point toward the subdominant, and in how many does the fugue resume with free development of a scrap of countersubject? The tonic is, however, recovered in plenty of time (bb.69-74) for the final entry, where a trochaic pattern comes to dominate the texture, concluding the fugue with a gesture that shows the same rhetorical flair of his father (Ex.1.9). This is one of the most convincing fugues of the set, with a high level of textural and melodic interest throughout.

The next fugue, in B flat, could also be described as a ‘gigue-fugue’; but in most other respects it differs strongly from its predecessor. There is none of the vigorous, unpredictable part-writing, nor the highly individual physiognomy of its

thematic material. The subject could hardly be more primitive: a simple ascending hexachord from 1 to 6. It is possible to parse the movement according to normal fugal procedure, to point out the subject in b.1, the answer in b.2, the inverted subject in bb.12 and 16, and so on—but is there much point? The subject is too neutral to stand out from the accompanying counterpoint,<sup>68</sup> so individual entries are hardly worth noting. Whereas in the E minor fugue the subject was absorbed into the texture through redevelopment of its constituent elements, here there is almost no subject to speak of. With its minimal subject and modest dimensions, the B flat fugue bears a close resemblance to many of J. S. Bach three-part Sinfonias (which, as ‘Fantasias’, had been originally written for Friedemann himself).

This fugue works by developing an idiosyncrasy seen in others of the set into a structural principle. All of the fugues we have looked at have, after the first two

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<sup>68</sup> This is not necessarily a bad thing. A great advantage of neutral material (say, the repeated notes in the first movement of Beethoven’s 5th Symphony or Haydn’s Quartet op.33/3) is that they can fit into almost any situation, thus rendering the most basic elements thematic.

entries, a sizeable codetta before the third. It is always at least as long as the subject, and in Fugues no.2 (C minor) and 3 (D major) it is as long as the subject and answer together. What Friedemann Bach has done here is to extend this idea a little further, and created a peculiar type of hybrid melodic structure. The basic thematic unit is not the subject itself, but a combination of the subject, the answer, a brief sequential passage, and perhaps a cadence (Ex.1.10). Examples occur in bb.1-5, 6-11, 12-15, 16-18, 19-25, and 33-38. The resulting composite falls exactly half way between being a fugal exposition and being a tune. It is a fragile compromise, and a fragile piece. All the ear has to grasp is the sense of movement, the flux of tension and relaxation from moment to moment; but in this case it is enough.<sup>69</sup>

The fugue in F minor is the last in this set, and at 202 bars is more than twice as long as any of the others. This is at least potentially a problem, especially given that the material—‘that last infirmity of the pedagogic mind ... the chromatic scale’<sup>70</sup> set against ordinary contrapuntal boiler-plate—has little more character than that of the preceding fugue (Ex.1.11).

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<sup>69</sup> The elementary subject and its free development recalls some of J. S. Bach’s inventions and sinfonias, particularly the inventions in D and G, and the sinfonias in E and G minor.

<sup>70</sup> H. Grace, *The organ works of Rheinberger* (London: Novello, 1925), p.15.

Karl Geiringer makes an almost embarrassing comparison by quoting the superficially similar F minor sinfonia of Johann Sebastian, the deepest and most searching of them all.<sup>71</sup> If Friedemann's fugue has to succeed on these terms—that is, as a sophisticated combinatorial work, rich in expressive contrapuntal detail and capable of sustaining a very slow tempo—we might as well accept that it is a dismal and unequivocal failure. But is it really the same sort of piece? If we can disregard Fedtke's extraordinarily slow metronome marking of crotchet = 58,<sup>72</sup> think of it and play it as a lighter, more relaxed kind of music, it may make a little more sense.

At first it seems like a piece of *alla breve* counterpoint notated in halved note-values, but as early as b.6, the melodic repetition in the treble raise doubts. The same happens again in b.14, and again in b.18. This sort of writing simply does not make any sense at all in a quasi-*alla breve* context; but as part of a lighter, more harmonically conceived texture it is much more intelligible. In a sense this piece and J. S. Bach's F minor sinfonia are opposites. The sinfonia is intensive, a deep mining operation to see how much can be derived from a small quantity of invertible material. Friedemann's fugue is extensive: the uniform aggregate motion in quavers disguises a surprisingly wide variety of textures: conservative invertible counterpoint (bb.1-5), harmonic writing (bb.6-8), sequential suspensions (bb.29-41), *galant* syncopated thirds and sixths (71-77), melody accompanied by repeated chords (96-99), close imitation (88-93, 129-133, 180-181), and *appoggiaturas* over a moving bass (190-197). However, at more than two hundred bars' length, it really is too much of a (fairly) good thing. As with the previous fugue, the strength and individuality of the subject is less important than the shape of the texture as a whole. For example, the hovering around a minor third that seems so peculiar in b.6 makes much more sense in bb.14-21

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<sup>71</sup> K. and I Geiringer, *The Bach family; seven generations of creative genius* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1954), p.319.

<sup>72</sup> Which makes the piece an unendurable seven minutes long. Has anyone ever actually played it all the way through at that tempo?

when we realise that it is merely part of a symmetrical harmonic/melodic structure: a tune, in short. Nevertheless, it has to be conceded that this material lacks the strong character necessary for a sonata movement; while the counterpoint is insufficiently compelling for a successful fugue. The piece is rather like a compilation of less distinctive (sequential and developmental) passages that might occur in the transitional portions of either genre. Such virtues as this fugue has (and it does have some) are rather diluted over its 202-bar length. Listening to it or playing it through is an experience typical of many later eighteenth-century fugues: interest flickers at a low level from moment to moment, without ever quite disappearing.<sup>73</sup>

In addition to the *VIII Fugen*, three other manualiter fugues have been attributed to W. F. Bach in Traugott Fedtke's edition of the *Orgelwerke*. The first, in B flat, turns out to be a transcription of the overture to Handel's oratorio *Esther*. Even if this were not known to be the case, it would stand apart from the other fugues by virtue of its independent bass and extended figural episodes. Another long fugue in F (F.33) is generally described as a youthful exercise. It is thoroughly in earnest, but has little else to recommend it. In a sense it is almost too 'earnest': the three voices are almost continuously in action, the pervading chromatic counter-subject defeats itself through its omnipresence, and there are neither compelling ideas nor a compelling formal design.

On the other hand, the C minor fugue (F.32) which follows seems to me worthy of much more than Geiringer's cool dismissal: 'not quite on the same level as these clever and inspired compositions' (the *VIII Fugen*) and 'formalistic in its polyphonic treatment',<sup>74</sup> being perhaps the most successful clavier fugue he ever wrote. It is long—111 bars, moving mostly in semiquavers. But unlike the juvenile fugue in F, or the

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<sup>73</sup> It is worth noting, however, that this is the one fugue of W. F. Bach's that Mozart chose to transcribe for string trio (K.404a/6). He may have chosen it as the one furthest away from his normal style—the nature of the most of the other fugues in K.404a would tend to support this.

<sup>74</sup> Geiringer, *Bach family*, p.320.

prolix F minor fugue, the expressive weight of this movement is commensurate with its length.

The subject has a certain kinship with many of the *VIII Fugen* in that it is rhythmically diverse, with prominent rests and appoggiaturas of varying lengths. Unlike these fugues however, which tend to make their effect through *empfindsamer* expressivity and melodic charm, this piece succeeds by means of its thorough command of the subtleties of fugal technique. Technically it is very sound, following his father's mature practice of maintaining the integrity of each voice, not having voices enter with non-thematic material etc., and there are even a few 'scholastic' fugal devices—notably the strict and very successful stretti in bb.48-54 and 90-96. More important, however, is the skill with which Friedemann handles his texture. Here he shows an ability to generate continuous counterpoint and sustain its interest over long periods, something we might not have been able to infer from the *VIII Fugen* alone. This continuity is not absolutely unrelieved. One factor that gives this fugue so much of its life and interest is the subtle flux in intensity from moment to moment. For example, although movement in semiquavers pervades the texture, occasional relaxations (bb.19, 28, 51, 66, and 100) create a sense of ease and confidence out of all proportion to their brevity. The fugue is in 3/4 time, and Friedemann exploits the possibilities for hemiola fully (bb.14-15, 34-35), sometimes extending the hemiola over several bars (bb.44-46, 65-69, 75-77), and at one point displacing the metre by one beat (bb.36-38). These passages of metrical instability are balanced by arrivals at passages of greater stability, articulating the form in a uniquely subtle, flexible way.

If, for some reason, this piece had been transmitted without the Christian names of its composer (not at all an uncommon situation), there would be no incongruity in placing it alongside the other independent preludes and fugues for clavier of J. S.

Bach. Not only is it stylistically indistinguishable from these works, it gives much the same pleasure; both aurally, for the listener, and physically, for the performer.<sup>75</sup> I mention this specifically because it is easy to forget, in our ever-refined examination of stylistic ‘fingerprints’ and patterns of transmission, Bach’s avowed intention of creating music for ‘the glory of God and the refreshment of the spirit’. In thinking of these pieces as puzzles to be solved, as indicators of historical style-shifts, or as texts to be deconstructed, it is possible to forget that they were also intended to be a source of pleasure. As we explore the works of other Bach followers we will find many pieces that are difficult to distinguish from his own on any concrete stylistic grounds; we will find few that give the same sort of musical enjoyment.

## **JOHANN LUDWIG KREBS: ORGAN FUGUES**

If Wilhelm Friedemann Bach never seems to have found his place in the world, Johann Ludwig Krebs had few doubts about his. He was an organist first and last: no Kantor or Kapellmeister, which is why, for all his outstanding gifts, he was not chosen to succeed his teacher at Leipzig. His father Johann Tobias was also an organist and had studied with Bach in Weimar; all three of Ludwig’s sons would follow the same path.

The situation of an organist in the middle the eighteenth century was not what it had been fifty or a hundred years earlier. Church resources were increasingly depleted, and what money there was was seldom spent upon music. Concerted music became rarer. Organs fell into disrepair. Organists found it hard to survive. It is disturbing to read their biographies and discover how many—even the very greatest—died in or near poverty. The list is long, including J. G. Walther, W. F. Bach, J. C.

<sup>75</sup> The invigorating tactile pleasure in getting one’s fingers around J. S. Bach’s textures is an important stylistic characteristic, perhaps liable to be overlooked.



Kittel, and Krebs himself.<sup>76</sup> Inevitably, professional pride and musical standards declined. Near the end of his book *Der angehende praktische Organist*, Krebs's fellow Bach-student Johann Kittel contrasts the content of a fine musical education with the miserable reality of many organists' lives, and makes a plea for the practical recognition of this problem:

Many organists utterly lack this general artistic understanding. Their entire skill is limited to the meagre dispatch of a chorale, or the performance from memory of an easy *Vorspiel* or *Nachspiel* without stumbling or stopping. Of a single man, the organist, the school-teacher, perhaps the sexton as well, who has enjoyed no academic education, no entry in higher circles, where art and fine taste chiefly flourish; whose entire subsistence perhaps for life is through spirit- and heart-demeaning labour, and who is afflicted by wretched domestic poverty—certainly let us not require any more of such a man. ...so long as adequate emoluments fall from the powers that be no more than they have until now, so long especially as public educational institutions for school-teachers and organists, and financial assistance (by which an educated man can live and continue his studies without lowering himself and gradually going to seed) receive no more consideration than previously—then good counsel alone will be of very little assistance.<sup>77</sup>

As the century passed, organists and organ music became increasingly distanced from the mainstream of musical life. Liturgical expectations, together with the limitations of the instrument, and perhaps the innate conservatism of many organists, meant that *galant* idioms were only adopted in a belated and

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<sup>76</sup> A recurring theme of Landon's *Haydn: chronicle and works* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976-80) is how precarious, in the days before social welfare, life was for *any* professional musician; as the example of Bononcini, Porpora, Ordoñez, and Mozart amply show—musicians who didn't die in poverty seem almost to have been in the minority. On the other hand the occupation of organist, during the second half of the century, was unlikely to offer the opportunities for fame and fortune that other kinds of public musical activity did. See F. Scherer, 'Servility, opportunity, and freedom in the choice of music composition as a profession', *Musical Quarterly* 85/4 (Winter 2001), 718-734, and A. Edler, *Der nordelbische Organist: Studien zu Sozialstatus, Funktion und kompositorischer Produktion eines Musikerberufes von der Reformation bis zum 20. Jahrhundert* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1982).

<sup>77</sup> J. C. Kittel, *Der angehende praktische Organist* (Erfurt, 1801-1808), Pt.III, p.95.

tentative way. In certain quarters the organ music of J. S. Bach was early recognised as being a definitive model of permanent authority. Justin Heinrich Knecht, John Stanley, and Claude Balbastre showed that other possibilities existed during the eighteenth century but, interpreted in different ways, the authority of Bach came to dominate the nineteenth, and if anything it only gained in influence during the anti-Romantic twentieth. Nevertheless it is widely accepted that the composer who consistently came closest to emulating the style of J. S. Bach was ‘der einzige Krebs im Bache’: Johann Ludwig Krebs.

In his organ works Krebs often seems to be emulating—paraphrasing, even—particular works of J. S. Bach, rather than his style in general. The Toccata and Fugue in F BWV 540 obviously made quite an impression on Krebs, consequences of which can be seen in his two toccata/fugue pairs, in E major and A minor. His Prelude and Fugue in C is modelled on the outer movements of Bach’s Toccata, Adagio, and Fugue BWV 564; the Prelude and Fugue in F minor on that in B minor BWV 544, and those in C minor and D major upon Bach’s preludes and fugues in the same keys BWV 549 and 532.

During the last decade of Krebs’s life (he died on the first day of 1780) an important change in critical attitudes to music took place. From being primarily concerned with technical correctness, suddenly ‘almost as if cued by the stroke of midnight’<sup>78</sup> in 1770 musical critics began writing as if creative genius and originality were the only things that mattered. Perhaps the most transparently naïve response to this change was that of the Weimar composer Ernst Wilhelm Wolf (1735-1792): ‘I have long believed that there is nothing greater in the world than [Emanuel] Bach, and

<sup>78</sup> M. S. Morrow, *German music criticism in the late eighteenth century: Aesthetic issues in instrumental music* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997), p.100. See in particular ‘The reign of genius’, pp.99-133. G.J. Buelow has traced the sources of these ideas to mid eighteenth-century English thought: ‘Originality, genius, plagiarism in English criticism of the eighteenth century’, *Internation Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 21/2 (December 1990), 117-28; whilst R. Eberlein finds their origin in Kant: ‘Originalitätsstreben und die Fortentwicklung einer musikalischen Syntax’, *Perspektiven und Methoden einer Systemischen Musikwissenschaft: Bericht über das Kolloquium im Musikwissenschaftlichen Institut der Universität zu Köln 1998*, 315-321.

[that] a keyboard composer can and must not even think otherwise than to imitate him. But now since Goethe's arrival everything has become original with us. Therefore thought I, you too must try to be original.'<sup>79</sup> Although this new focus was soon to be moderated by renewed attention to questions of craftsmanship and coherence, the importance of originality as an aesthetic criterion has hardly been challenged ever since. It is this desideratum, of course, which has denied Krebs a place in the canon; the words in which Wolf described his debt to Emanuel Bach could be used to describe that of Krebs to Johann Sebastian.

In part it is simply a question of the economics of time and attention: 'Why', we ask quite reasonably, 'do we need Krebs when we already have J. S. Bach?' It is not just that the position of culmination to the Lutheran Baroque tradition is already filled, not just the fact that Bach supremely represents a particular phase of musical history; what we respond to, rather, is the distinctive and individual sensibility which characterises his music. To what extent is this sensibility J. S. Bach's personal possession? We saw earlier in this chapter how hard it is in certain cases to distinguish between J. S. Bach's authentic works and others which have merely been attributed to him. One of the difficulties of approaching music from this sort of distance in time is the risk of misreading as personal characteristics stylistic elements that were common to the age.

But even during the eighteenth century Bach's originality was recognised; Schubart wrote in 1784: 'His spirit was so original, so vast, that centuries would be needed to measure up to it.'<sup>80</sup> With Krebs, things are different: in his *New Grove* article Hugh McLean admits that 'his fugues are thoroughly worked out but show few touches of originality. He seems to have considered them more as examples of the

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<sup>79</sup> In conversation with J. F. Reichart: W. S. Newman, *The sonata in the Classic era* (New York: Norton, 1983), p.383.

<sup>80</sup> C. Wolff, 'Defining genius: early reflections of J. S. Bach's self image', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 145/4 (December 2001), 475.

craftsman's art than the artist's craft.'<sup>81</sup> In 1737, Lincke (organist at Schneeberg) went so far as to describe Krebs as 'the creation of Bach.'<sup>82</sup> If Lincke probably meant nothing more than that he was one of Bach's pupils, it is tempting for us to read more into his comment, to see Bach, teacher and model, as the *fons et origo* of Krebs's oeuvre, with Krebs himself a mere demiurge.

The cultural valorisation of originality was accompanied by changes in compositional practice. We can see this by comparing the difference in cultural significance between two apparently similar thematic motives. In 1836, Robert Schumann complained of a certain symphony where 'the first and second movements proceed throughout in a familiar rhythm set off by three quavers, to which many other composers have fallen victim. When Beethoven manages this in the symphony in C minor there is no reason why we should not fall at the composer's feet. But here we cannot, in all honesty, overlook the fact that the substance of the idea is so trivial that it vanishes in vacuum and sand.'<sup>83</sup> The theme quoted in Ex.1.12a was exclusively, inescapably Beethoven's personal property. Composers were taking an increasingly proprietral attitude toward their thematic material, more so perhaps than of any other aspect of their music. But this had not always been the case.

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<sup>81</sup> H. J. McLean, 'Krebs', *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/15499pg2> (accessed August 2, 2008).

<sup>82</sup> Spitta, *Bach*, vol. III, p.242. Lincke was, by the way, writing in praise of Krebs.

<sup>83</sup> 'Here' is in the fifth ('Preis-') symphony of Franz Paul Lachner (1803-1890), which had won a competition announced by the Vienna *Concerts Spirituels*: Pleasants, *Schumann*, p.101.

Ex.1.12b shows the start of a fugue subject by Johann Pachelbel (1653 – 1706). In one sense the thematic material is his as much as Ex.1.12a is Beethoven's—we can be very nearly as certain that Pachelbel composed those notes as that Beethoven did Ex.1.12a (the complete subject can be seen in Ex.1.13). In every other respect there is no comparison between the two. The incipit of Ex.1.12b is a standard opening gambit common to thousands upon thousands of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century fugues. Derived from the sixteenth-century canzona, it was common property. Ex.1.13 lists the occurrences to be found in Pachelbel's organ music alone.<sup>84</sup> Further derivatives of this subject can be found in this study: by Krebs himself (Ex.1.22, p.96), John Stanley (Ex.2.8, p.126), Haydn (Exx.3.2, p.204, 3.9, p.223, and 3.15, p.234), Mozart (Ex.4.10, p.284), Beethoven (Ex.5.4c, p.324), Birck (Ex.5.5, p.324), and Clementi (Ex.5.12, p.360). Far from being the exclusive property of Pachelbel alone (or Marco Antonio Cavazzoni,<sup>85</sup> or whoever 'invented' it), it was available to anyone who cared to make use of it. The value of Pachelbel's fugue depends not on the uniqueness or distinctive character of its material, but on its perfect fitness for the treatment it receives, and on subtle touches of imagination in the part-writing.

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<sup>84</sup> If we had included choral-based works as well the list would be even longer, including subjects such as 'Der Tag, der ist so freudenreich' and 'Durch Adams Fall'.

<sup>85</sup> The author of the first published instrumental canzonas, in 1523.



There were good historical reasons for the shift away from this attitude. Today, whenever we require music, we can have it at the flick of a switch (indeed, the problem is sometimes how to escape it!) Before the advent of mechanical reproduction one had to hire musicians for the occasion. Before the trade in printed sheet-music became widespread, not only did one require performers, but also someone to compose or copy the music they were to play. Furthermore, until the eighteenth century the fundamental musical entity had not been not so much the musical work itself as the occasion of the musical performance: the concert, opera, mass, ball, or ceremony. The music director's job was typically to provide (compose, arrange, secure copies of) whatever music was necessary, and to rehearse and oversee the performance from the harpsichord as well. Questions of originality were secondary; fitness for the purpose and adequacy of supply were the essential requirements. Bach was fulfilling his professional obligations equally when he composed the cantata cycles, when he reworked his own concertos from Köthen for the Collegium Musicum, and when he arranged and altered Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater* for performance at Leipzig.<sup>86</sup>

As with any historical distinction it is possible to make too much of it, however, and it is an exaggeration to say that the concept of the musical work and its ownership by the composer had no significance at all before the nineteenth century. Three English examples show the limits of tolerance in this area. For Giovanni Bononcini to pass off a madrigal of Antonio Lotti's as his own (as he did to the Academy of Ancient Music in 1728 or 29) was clearly not acceptable practice, although musical politics also played a part in his subsequent ostracism. By contrast, Handel's borrowing of entire movements to use, substantially unaltered, in his oratorios (such as a canzona by J. C. Kerll for the chorus 'Egypt was Glad' in *Israel in*

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<sup>86</sup> See *The imaginary museum of musical works: an essay in the philosophy of music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), chapter 7: 'Musical production without the work-concept'.

*Egypt*) did not prevent him from being universally recognised as the greatest composer in England—although disquiet was occasionally expressed even during his lifetime. The work of Henry Aldridge, recomposing motets by Carissimi and Palestrina as Anglican anthems for Christ Church, Oxford, was something of an extreme case,<sup>87</sup> at times the subject of satirical comment; but the fact that such a practice was possible at all suggests a somewhat different attitude to the authenticity of the text from that prevalent today.<sup>88</sup>

If the cultural aesthetic within which Krebs worked did not place upon him the obligation to individuate his style, there are however two important aspects of Krebs's organ music which are not contained (and better realised) in that of his teacher. First is his interest in combining the organ with other solo instruments: usually an oboe, sometimes trumpet, flute, or horn. This was a resource that had not been exploited by J. S. Bach. In most cases the solo instrument sustains a cantus firmus against independent counterpoint (often a trio sonata texture) on the organ, but in five non-chorale-based 'Fantasias' a genuine chamber music interplay can be heard. These are a real enrichment to the organ's literature, adding to the very small number of ensemble works for organ and another instrument.<sup>89</sup>

It also happens that many of these works are among his most convincing, their Bachian textural integrity leavened by subtle, smoothly integrated traces of the *galant*. And this, of course, is the other main distinguishing feature of Krebs's music. It is by no means as pronounced as one might have expected from a contemporary of C. P. E. Bach, Gluck, and Pergolesi, but what there is can be seen most clearly in the seventeen trios he wrote for organ (Ex.1.14).

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<sup>87</sup> Although whole passages from Frescobaldi do turn up in voluntaries by John Blow; see J. R. Shannon, *Organ literature of the seventeenth century* (Raleigh: Sunbury, 1978), pp.154-55.

<sup>88</sup> R. Shay, "'Naturalizing' Palestrina and Carissimi in late seventeenth-century Oxford: Henry Aldrich and his recompositions', *Music & Letters* 77/3 (August 1996), 368-400.

<sup>89</sup> Other examples exist by Georg Friedrich Kauffmann, Gottfried August Homilius, and Johann Christoph Kellner, all central German organists with a somewhat more progressive outlook than J. S. Bach.





These pieces are worthy to stand beside the organ trio sonatas of J. S. Bach, which were themselves ‘written in such *galant* style that they still [1788] sound good.’<sup>90</sup> Krebs continued this line of development a little further; in Ex.1.14 we can see finely detailed *empfindsamer* melodic writing and a largely homophonic textural orientation (plenty of suave parallel thirds and sixths), superimposed onto a fugal schema—it is, stylistically, identical to the genuine trio sonata quoted in Ex.0.5 (p.35). Whilst a few of Krebs’s trio movements have more self-consciously fugal material like the ‘allabreve’ of Ex.1.15—as was not uncommon in *galant* chamber music of the time—the opening of Ex.1.14 is more typical. As models, Bach’s organ trios were to have a particularly durable legacy, with composers such as Johann Ernst Rembt (1749-1810) and Christian Heinrich Rinck (1770-1846) producing examples into the nineteenth century. We can see in this genre one of the last survivals of the mid-century *galant* style.

*Galant* elements can also be found in many of the preludes and fantasias Krebs wrote for organ. Perhaps the most advanced (and attractive) example is a *Fantasia à gusto italiano in F* (Ex.1.16). At first it reminds one of J. S. Bach at his most suave and tender (‘Schlafe, mein Liebster’ from the Christmas Oratorio, for example) although no real parallel can be found in his organ music. To be sure, *Allein Gott* BWV 663 has an ornamented solo line in the tenor, and the quite unique *Erbarm dich* BWV 721 has a similar accompaniment of repeated chords. But among his non chorale-based organ works this sort of clear differentiation between melody and accompaniment is very rare indeed; perhaps the nearest approach (although in both cases the melody is in the treble) is in the Adagio of BWV 564, or maybe the Andante which has always been associated with the Pastorale in F, BWV 590.

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<sup>90</sup> ?C. P. E. Bach, ‘Excerpt from a letter of February 27, 1788, written at ---’ [A comparison between Bach and Handel], *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek*, 1788. In H. T. David and A. Mendel, *The Bach Reader* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Dent, 1966), p.285.



The very slow harmonic rhythm, however, limited harmonic range, extreme polarisation between melody and accompaniment, and luxuriant melodic ornament (Ex.1.17) soon make it clear that—as the title suggests—his real model is the Italian operatic style of Hasse, say, or Jomelli.

A Prelude in C (Ex.1.18) sounds at first yet further up to date—Haydnesque, even.<sup>91</sup> But closer examination reveals the limitations of Krebs's handling of the *galant* style. Each phrase falls neatly into balancing two-bar segments in the approved modern manner; but, within the terms of this style, he has no way of building larger structures other than by repetition and accumulation. To escape the primitive alternation of his two-bar phrases he has to resort to *Fortspinnung* and motivic development, which is effective enough in its way but shows little understanding of

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<sup>91</sup> Compare the finales to the Sonatas in F Hob.XVI:23 or in G Hob.XVI:27.

sophisticated periodic construction. The ability to combine simple materials into complex structures by means of elision and carefully proportioned phrase-lengths—an ability so central to the achievement of Haydn and Mozart (or even Sammartini and Stamitz)—remained a closed book to Krebs. It may have been this relative ineptitude with the periodic forms of the Classical style that enabled Krebs to approach the style of J. S. Bach so closely.

What with all the confusion around the edges of Bach's oeuvre, and the close similarity between their styles, it is a little surprising that the number of works by Krebs misattributed to Bach is not larger than it is. A similarity between the opening bars of the Prelude and Fugue in D minor BWV 554 and that of prelude to the chorale *Jesu meine Freude* in Krebs's *Clavier Übung Bestehend in verschiedenen Vorspielen und Veränderungen einiger Kirchen Gesaenge* has led some to attribute this movement, and therefore all of the 'eight short' preludes and fugues (BWV 553-560—almost certainly not by Bach) to him. But the resemblance extends as far as the first two bars only, and is not outside the range of coincidence; apart from this the pieces have little in common with Krebs's style (an alternative ascription, to his father Johann Tobias—also a student of Bach's—has even less foundation.) It has also been argued that the conclusion of the Fantasia and Fugue in C minor BWV 537 was not just copied but composed by Krebs;<sup>92</sup> and it is possible that one or more versions of BWV 740 (*Wir glauben all' an einen Gott*) are by him.<sup>93</sup> The only work in Schneider's catalogue known for certain to be by Krebs, however, is a little Prelude in C, BWV 567 (Ex.1.19).

<sup>92</sup> J. O'Donnell, 'Mattheson, Bach, and the Fantasia and Fugue in C minor BWV 537', *The Organ Yearbook* 20 (1989), 88-95.

<sup>93</sup> K. Tittel, 'Welche unter J. S. Bachs Namen geführten Orgelwerke sind Johann Tobias bzw. Johann Ludwig Krebs zuzuschreiben? Ein Versuch zur Lösung von Autorschaftsproblemen', *Bach-Jahrbuch* 52 (1966), 102-137, and H. Hoshino, 'J. S. Bach's no organ sakuhin no shingi ni kansuru ichikosatsu "Wir glauben all' an einen Gott, Vater" (BWV 740) o megutte' *Organ kenkyu* 23 (1995), 1-17.

If not inimitably characteristic, this Prelude in C proceeds pleasantly enough in a mildly contrapuntal vein like certain other preludes such as BWV 570 and (especially) BWV 943 until, towards the end, we come across this progression (Ex.1.20, b.26):

The augmented-sixth is not a chord that occurs even amid the harmonic splendours of the G minor Fantasia BWV 542 or the Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue BWV 903. A product essentially of the Classical period,<sup>94</sup> it sits oddly in the prevailing diatonic context. This chord is the one unmistakable piece of internal evidence to cast doubt upon the prelude's authenticity, and so it is with no great surprise that we recognise this same movement among Krebs's collected works.

The Prelude in C is not the only work of Krebs distinguishable from the style of his teacher by a single chord. His chorale prelude *O Ewigkeit, du Donnerwort* is thoroughly Baroque in style and texture, with precisely the same exception (Ex.1.21); his fugue in C minor (Weinberger ed., vol.II, p.56) has the briefest augmented-sixth chord, with a different, equally fleeting oddity a few bars later (Ex.1.22).

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<sup>94</sup> Although it had its origin with Paschal de L'Estocart as early as 1582, the augmented-sixth chord was largely neglected until late in the eighteenth century.

As we saw in the first part of this chapter, when questions of authorship hang in the balance, the enormous effect of this sort of ‘fingerprint’ upon the cultural value of the piece would seem to be vastly out of proportion to its intrinsic significance. But what if we consider the piece on its own terms, as a work of J. L. Krebs? Do the augmented chords in Exx.1.20-22 jar simply because they doesn’t fit with what we know of J. S. Bach’s style, or is it inherently ‘wrong’ in relation to the rest of the movement?

In the case of BWV 567 the passage in Ex.1.20 is, arguably, a blemish. The sudden burst of pedal activity and the unexpected harmonic progression clearly seek to create a sense of climactic excitement which is not corroborated by the shape of the movement as a whole, so it falls a little flat. If one felt like being critical, perhaps, one could also draw attention to the manifestly awkward handling of the harmonic rhythm in bb.2-3, and the clotted low-register texture of bb.3-4 (Ex.1.19). In the same way,



Krebs's other preludes and fugues aspire to many of the expressive qualities of J. S. Bach, but are vitiated by these tiny misjudgements.

If not quite so patent as some of the other Bach/Krebs relationships outlined above, the Prelude and Fugue in D nonetheless shows a certain kinship with BWV 532 in the same key. BWV 532 is a fascinatingly transitional work, still showing the influence of Buxtehude but well on the way to a recognisably Bachian style. The prelude is sectional, but its limbs are much longer than was normal in Buxtehude's Praeludia, approaching the continuous forms of Bach's maturity. The fugue begins with one of Bach's nearest approximations to a percussive subject (Ex.1.23):

Although an accepted resource for Pachelbel and Buxtehude, it would appear that Bach thought it old-fashioned—there are very few examples in his oeuvre. In line with this stylistic orientation, the part-writing is much more lax than would have been the case later in his career. On the other hand the fugue has an energy and rhythmic drive that is new in Bach's music. Its harmonic range is also wider than that of the previous generation, with entries as far afield as C sharp minor.

Krebs's fugue shows what happens when the seventeenth-century language of Bach's subject is updated to that of the mid eighteenth century (Ex.1.24). The earlier subject is a typically expansive *Spielfuge*, complete with head-motive, sequential continuation, cadence, and (if it be considered a part of the subject) codetta. Krebs's

subject is also expansive; it too could fit the head-motive/sequence/cadence description, but the effect is here quite different. Instead of Bach's headlong drive to the cadence, it has the periodic tunefulness of a *galant Singspiel* melody; the ascending *Rosalie* in bb.2-3 is quite different in function from Bach's typically descending *Fortspinnung*. The third bar of the subject is conceived harmonically rather than linearly, to the extent that it is surprisingly difficult to sing the transition between these two bars accurately. Even with two voices, the progression takes one by surprise (b.6); only with three voices does its meaning become clear.

Both subjects have a real answer. In Bach's case this makes good sense as the subject never leaves the tonic. Krebs's subject, however, modulates to the dominant, getting there by way of *its* dominant. When his answer does the same, it necessitates a rather graceless recovery in bb.8-9, sliding back down by fifths from the supertonic—almost an object lesson in the value of the tonal answer. If he had answered the a'-a octave leap in b.1 conventionally with d''-d' (rather than e''-e' as he actually did), an early detour to the subdominant would have neutralised the dominant shift, and brought the answer neatly back to the tonic (Ex.1.25):

Is this insensitivity to one of the basic principles of Baroque fugal writing merely a sign of youthful inexperience? Or were some things forgotten as fugue became increasingly separated from the centre of musical experience?

Perhaps the most startling thing about many of Krebs's prelude/fugue pairs is their enormous length. Krebs clearly had an outstanding pedal technique (especially in comparison with the declining standards of his time), and he had no inhibitions about showing it off to the best advantage. Apart from the (inauthentic) 'Pedal-Exercitium' BWV 598, the largest pedal solos in Bach's organ works are those in the Toccata in F, BWV 540, and that near the start of the Toccata in C, BWV 564—large enough, to be sure, but for Krebs this is merely the starting point.

In effect, his Prelude in G is BWV 564 run drastically to seed. Where Bach's Toccata has a relatively concise tripartite arrangement (manual introduction—pedal solo—main body of the movement), Krebs has not one but three lengthy pedal solos, separated by manual passagework and freely contrapuntal sections analogous to those in BWV 564. The effect could perhaps be compared to the way in which Hummel was

to expand and elaborate the surface of Mozart's forms fifty years later. It is all very well done, with commendable thoroughness and skill, but sometimes one is tempted to ask just *why* it was done.

The most extreme case of this rather decadent stylistic exaggeration can be seen in Krebs's Prelude and Fugue in D minor. The Prelude alternates free-wheeling passagework in manuals and pedals with *durezza* chords and dense but mostly homophonic material for 144 bars (generally Bachian in style, rather than based upon a particular model)—and the fugue clocks in at no less than 238 bars! These are not short alla breve bars, either; there is plenty of quaver and semiquaver activity. This immense scale of operations raises two interesting questions: 1) how is it physically possible to sustain a fugal argument over this sort of span, and 2) how does J. S. Bach not only sustain a fugal argument over this sort of span, but make it a compelling musical experience?

The first question is easy enough, if a little tedious, to answer. After his exposition (four voices, ASBT), Krebs begins a series of alternating entries and episodes which takes him to b.53. The entries are mostly on i or v apart from a single exception (III) in b.28; the episodes are not derived in any obvious way from the subject or related to each other, but neither do they jar with their surroundings—there are six in total, mostly straightforwardly sequential. At b.53 a new subject appears, strangely reminiscent of that in 'the' Toccata and Fugue in D minor (BWV 565), but obviously destined to be a countersubject. First of all, however, it is granted its own exposition (BTAS). A cadence in A minor is followed rather unexpectedly by an entry in G minor (b.70), after which there follows the same alternation of tonic or dominant entries and sequential episodes that characterised the first section. It is not until b.102 that we finally get to hear the two subjects in double harness; the combination is taken though an exposition of its own, then there follows another series of entries and

episodes. This brings us to b.143—long enough, one might think, but no, the fugue still has nearly a hundred bars to run. At this point Krebs simply turns his subject upside down and starts again. The subject is one of that large group of melodies that works nearly—if not quite—as well when inverted (the repeated D in bb.144-5 makes the eventual cadence on that note seem a little redundant); like all the others this new development has an exposition to itself, and it too is followed by the usual alternation between episodes and entries. In b.197 he combines both forms of the subject, *recte* and inverted, with each entry separated by yet more freely-generated episodes. A final entry over a tonic pedal brings the fugue to a close at last.

One of the most remarkable things about this movement is the number of organisational strategies Krebs did *not* use. A fugue as big as the largest of J. S. Bach's is organised along the lines of Pachelbel and Buxtehude. There is no attempt to explore the range of available keys (i, iv, v, III, VI, VII) in any systematic way—the vast majority of the entries are on i or v. Neither does Krebs employ any recurring thematic material beside the fugal subjects themselves. While his ability to create endless episodes from scratch could be held to represent at least a sort of imaginative fertility, the ultimate effect is one of diffuseness and irrelevance. The connection from moment to moment—the sense of rhythmic/harmonic propulsion—is always at least adequate; but one doesn't get the feeling that Krebs is thinking in terms of larger musical spans, apart from his schematic layout of expositions, entries, and episodes.<sup>95</sup> In the introduction I described how fugue, not being limited by expectations of formal symmetry and proportion, can be extended almost indefinitely as long as long as interest is maintained—there is nothing to stop the composer from going on as long as he or she wants. But I should have also mentioned that it was possible the listener's interest might wane before that of the composer.

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<sup>95</sup> Note how this echoes David Humphreys' criticism of BWV 534 (p.49 above).

The significance of this sort of structural control becomes apparent if we compare this fugue with that from Bach's Toccata and Fugue in F major, BWV 540. It seems hardly fair to pit a fugue where Krebs is only just in command of his resources against one where Bach is quite clearly at the top of his game, a fitting companion for the toccata which A. E. F. Dickinson describes as quite simply 'the greatest example of the genre by any composer alive or dead.'<sup>96</sup> Furthermore, its length of 170 bars is not really three-quarters of Krebs's 238 but actually much less; his bars are shorter than Krebs's, being alla breve and having no need to deal with semiquaver material. The Bach takes maybe five minutes in performance; at crotchet = 100, the Krebs takes nearly ten. The comparatively modest(!) scope of Bach's ambition shows a sound grasp of what can and cannot successfully be achieved within the limits of his mature fugal style. There were a number of dodges available to the composer who wanted to expand a fugal movement beyond these limits. He could, as in the 'St Anne' fugue BWV 552, join a number of separate but related fugues into a single movement, in the manner of a 'quilt' canzona. Or he could, as in the 'Wedge' fugue BWV 548, introduce lengthy passages of extraneous material, or (as in BWV 548 and 537) large sections of literal recapitulation.

Here Bach avoids either of these devices; this is perhaps the second longest fugue in which he does so, and, structurally, a good comparison to Krebs's movement.<sup>97</sup> It falls into two long arcs, the middle point being marked both by the entry of a secondary subject, the temporary abdication of the pedal, and what is virtually the only clear cadence in the course of the movement, on the dominant.<sup>98</sup>

How does Bach achieve the sense of effortless motion toward his major structural

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<sup>96</sup> *Bach's Fugal Works: with an account of fugue before and after Bach* (London: Pitman, 1956), p.25. This praise is all the more significant, coming as it does from perhaps the most searching and abrasive critique of Bach's fugal style ever written.

<sup>97</sup> The longest, that of the 'Dorian' Toccata in D minor BWV 538 (222 bars) contains extensive canonic writing which has no parallel in Krebs's fugue.

<sup>98</sup> There is in fact one other perfect cadence, in A minor (b.143) but it has no comparable structural significance.

goals? There are two clear respects in which his approach here differs from that of Krebs, thematically and harmonically. In the course of twenty separate episodes, Krebs takes up as many thematic ideas, only to discard them as soon as they have served their turn. Each episode is exclusively occupied with its bit of material, developing it by means of fairly literal sequence and imitation; local sections are tightly organised, but apart from the subject(s) there is no larger thematic coherence. Bach's procedure is almost the opposite. On the one hand, the subject has a consistent countersubject, considerably shorter than the subject and more flexible, that can be introduced to the texture in all sorts of unexpected ways, both with and without the subject. On the other, there is no other distractingly memorable thematic material at all, no local symmetrical groupings to draw attention away from the freely evolving shape of the texture as a whole.

Bach's voice-leading reinforces this sense of continuity. Krebs's texture is full of potential cadences—root position V-I progressions. Continuity is nowhere seriously impaired because the movement of the parts is maintained; but the tour de force which is the first half of Bach's fugue is on a wholly different plane. Between the opening and the cadence at b.70 there is hardly a single uncomplicated root position tonic or dominant chord to be found. Even more impressive is the inventive variety of his harmonic evasions. In Ex.1.26, for example, the first beat of every bar has an unstable sonority; but each is of a different kind, some dissonant, some consonant but inverted, some on secondary scale degrees, some (the relationship between the second bar of the subject and the countersubject, b.7 et seq.) difficult to categorise.

By the time the halfway point is reached, a number of expectations have been set up that must be fulfilled before the end of the piece. The key needs to return to the tonic (no great distance in a fugal context; see pp.27-31 above); the pedals need to re-enter; and the second subject needs to combine with the first, which itself has to appear in the tonic. The Classical sonata style would tend to concentrate these sorts of events together on important 'structural downbeats', such as the beginning of the recapitulation or the return of a 'second subject'. Bach, by contrast, diffuses these



important events throughout the rest of the movement. The tonic, for example returns immediately with the answer to the new subject, but there are two further detours in the direction of the relative minor, one of which moves as far flat-ward as the dominant minor. A final return to F major occurs only fifteen bars from the end, and is not uncontested until halfway through the very final entry. Bach handles the entry of the pedal in a similarly oblique manner. He first of all delays its reappearance for over sixty bars, giving a provisional and temporary air to his development of the new material. The pedal enters relatively discreetly in b.134 with the second subject; it is allowed to present the main subject in b.147, but this entry is on vi—only in b.163 does the pedal finally get the subject in the tonic. In same way, the return of the first subject and its combination with the second manages to avoid schematism. Krebs had a new exposition for his second subject, developing it at some length, before pairing it with the first and developing them together in another separate section. Bach, by contrast, reintroduces the first subject almost inaudibly in the middle of the texture at b.95, so this crucial structural moment is likely to pass unnoticed by all except the most attentive listeners. The thematic combination first appears with the answer to this entry, and from then on they mostly (not quite always) appear together; but the second subject is often truncated to give greater flexibility to the texture.

Like Palestrina (from whom, via the *stile antico*, this music can legitimately claim descent), Bach could here be said to display a high degree of what Keats called ‘negative capability’<sup>99</sup>—the ability to sustain textural flux and instability over, in this case, quite transcendental stretches, continually resisting the temptation to settle into any sort of rhythmic or melodic symmetry.

The purpose of this analysis has been to attempt to demonstrate that the difference between Bach and even his most gifted imitators is not simply a question of

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<sup>99</sup> ‘I mean Negative Capability, that is, when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason’ (letter to his brother, 21 Dec 1817).

‘originality’—of historical priority, that is to say—but his awareness of the aesthetic possibilities of specifically fugal processes; an awareness it proved impossible to communicate fully to the next generation. But analysis of individual works will show only so much. Comparisons between particular works of J. S. Bach and J. L. Krebs have given us an insight into subtle but important differences of approach; but this insistence upon comparing like with like overlooks the most important difference between them. On a case by case basis, Krebs can indeed almost keep up with Bach, for a while at least. Some of his preludes and fugues are comparably well-wrought, his chorale preludes a worthy continuation of their tradition, his trios are delightful, the pieces for organ and obbligato instrument a valuable addition to the repertoire. When we consider their clavier works, however, Bach draws ahead more decisively, and if we factor in his enormous output of cantatas, concertos, chamber music, motets, masses, and passions, there is simply no comparison.

Furthermore, across this entire spectrum, J. S. Bach maintains an extraordinarily high standard of workmanship and musical interest, whereas while some of Krebs’s works are rich and interesting, others are astonishingly jejune, or contain passages that are so. It is hard to believe that the same person who wrote Exx.1.14 and 1.15 was also responsible for Ex.1.27.

Could we not then place him on a level with the best of Bach's organist colleagues and predecessors: Walther, or Böhm; perhaps even Buxtehude? This would seem reasonable, but there is one important difference. The fugal style of the later seventeenth century was not a difficult idiom to master, and dozens of composers, from Pachelbel in the south to Weckmann in the north, created countless fugues which can still be listened to with pleasure and studied with interest. J. S. Bach's own fugal style, as we have said, was exceptionally difficult to handle; perhaps Bach himself was the only one ever able to fully coordinate its densely-layered resources in all their complexity. In the case of Krebs, the attempt to absorb this rather indigestible model resulted in a sort of compositional hubris: the ambition to build on a scale that even Bach never sought.

It is hard to deny that the less ambitious attempts of Wilhelm Friedemann Bach

to follow in his father's footsteps turned out more successfully. Developing the latent *galant* tendencies of J. S. Bach's style one step further, Friedemann imbued his own fugues with a melodic attractiveness and individuality comparable to much of the *WTC*. On at least one occasion he demonstrated a large-scale mastery of contrapuntal resource equal to all but the most expansive of his father's fugues (cf pp.78-80). The fugues of the next generation would have other qualities, but this sort of textural sophistication and thematic distinctiveness became increasingly rare.

If, as seems likely, neither the Prelude and Fugue in F minor BWV 534 nor the Toccata and Fugue BWV 565 are by J. S. Bach but merely from his circle of students and admirers, we can trace in them two kinds of response to his example. BWV 534 is modelled so closely on Bach that its authenticity remained unquestioned for 140 years, and is not yet utterly disproved. The number of those, even among Bach's students, who could have written thus is small indeed; and it is in fact the two composers we have just discussed, J. L. Krebs and W. F. Bach, who head the list. Certainly there are few others who showed both the capacity and the desire to get so close to the heart of their teacher's style.

The D minor Toccata and Fugue is a different kind of creature altogether. It seems likely that the discrepancies between it and Bach's style are the result of technical deficiencies—incompetence, to put it bluntly<sup>100</sup>—but, as the analysis on pp.78-80 has argued, this does not prevent it from being a wonderfully effective piece of musical rhetoric: from becoming, indeed, 'the most famous piece of organ music ever written.'<sup>101</sup>

During the following chapters we shall see many examples of both approaches. All the composers we discuss at length: Wesley, Haydn, Mozart, Clementi, and

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<sup>100</sup> It would be rash to read into these peculiarities a 'conscious attempt' to make a new sort of fugue, as Peter Williams does with regard to BWV 543 (p.48 above), an attempt such as Reicha clearly made with his *36 Fugues* of 1803, or Schumann did in his 'Fughetta', op.32/4.

<sup>101</sup> P. Williams, 'BWV 565', 330.

Beethoven, took great pains to achieve mastery within their own fugal tradition, adhering closely to the example of Bach, Handel, or Fux, as the case may be. On the whole, however, their fugal writing would be at its most memorable and characteristic when, by accident or design, it parted company from these models and was reshaped according to their own creative purposes.

## CHAPTER 2

# J. S. BACH IN LONDON: CONVERTING THE HANDELIANS

‘No references to Bach or to his music are known to have been made in England during his lifetime’ says Michael Kassler in a preliminary note to *The English Bach awakening*.<sup>1</sup> It was more than a century after his death before his name was at all widely known in England, and another fifty years before his music began to achieve the general popularity it has today. This growth was the work of many scholars, performers, and publishers: Muzio Clementi, A. F. C. Kollmann, Vincent Novello, Felix Mendelssohn, Otto Goldschmidt, James Higgs, and Ebenezer Prout, to name only a few. The best known, however, was a ‘most interesting character and a musician of something like genius’,<sup>2</sup> Samuel Wesley (1766-1837), the apostle of J. S. Bach to the Handelians. Although the main body of this chapter is an exploration of Wesley’s music and his attempts to bring J. S. Bach to the attention of English musicians, we shall begin by looking at the immense influence George Frideric Handel exercised over English musical life throughout the eighteenth century. There are two reasons for doing this; first, in order to understand the musical environment into which Samuel Wesley was born (and which he would spend most of his life battling); second, because the widespread influence of Handel’s achievement makes an interesting comparison to the—initially much narrower—sphere of Bachian influence we discussed in the previous chapter.

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<sup>1</sup> Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004, p.xvii. According to Kassler the first known reference dates from 1754.

<sup>2</sup> T. Armstrong, ‘The Wesleys, evangelists and musicians’, in *Organ and choral aspects and prospects* (London: Hinrichsen, 1958), 100.

## HANDEL AND HIS FOLLOWERS

For many years England's geographical and cultural isolation tended to keep it out of step with wider European trends in musical history. On one hand, this resulted in the development of genres (the oratorio, the ballad-opera, the glee, Anglican chant, eighteenth-century and Victorian hymn-tunes) with no very close parallel elsewhere. On the other it caused a tendency to follow stylistic trends at a certain distance, retaining particular stylistic means beyond their use in other places. This situation is not as historically inevitable as it appears. In Handel, in Haydn, in Weber, and in Mendelssohn, the English public were able to make the acquaintance of—indeed to lionise—some of the leading composers of the day. There was a strong public for the music of Beethoven, Berlioz, and Brahms almost as soon as it appeared. Nevertheless, an awareness of the latest stylistic developments is not quite the same as the willingness or ability to participate in those developments. During much of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the English were much more active as consumers than as producers of music.

Traditionally, much of this relative stagnation has been attributed to the overwhelming influence of Handel upon English musical life: 'one of the greatest of German composers, who finally planted his heavy heel on our island music-making'.<sup>3</sup> It seems rather harsh to blame Handel for simply being a very good composer who was able to develop a style that defined English musical taste for generations to come. Erik Routley's diagnosis—that the superficialities of Handel's style were all too easy to imitate, his ability to create large coherent structures almost impossible—may not be too wide

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<sup>3</sup> R. Vaughan Williams, *National music and other essays* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp.166-67; the same idea was expressed by Ernest Walker in *A history of music in England* (Oxford, 1907), pp.235-6, 261. See N. Temperley, 'Xenophilia in British musical history', *Nineteenth-century British music studies*, ed. B. Zon and J. Sampson, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), pp.9-10: 'I did my best to squash it [this idea] as long ago as 1960, but it is still alive and kicking.' The 1960 reference concerns his article 'Handel's influence on English music', *Monthly Musical Record*, 90 (1960), 163-74.

of the mark.<sup>4</sup>

Handel's influence can be seen in the fact that, long after his death, composers continued to favour mid-century genres: the oratorio, the organ concerto, the trio sonata, the fugue, and the keyboard suite. Even genres not exploited by Handel (and for all his centrality, there were many indigenous genres to which he hardly contributed)—the organ voluntary, the Anglican service, the glee, the symphony, the song—were often strongly influenced by his style. Much as Milton's *Paradise Lost* had set a public standard for blank verse and Addison's essays had for prose, the oratorios and instrumental music of Handel provided a universally accepted *lingua franca* for musical composition.

A number of circumstances contributed to his uninterrupted and unstoppable rise in popularity after around 1750. Most important was his invention of the English oratorio, a felicitous harmonising of commercial, artistic, charitable, religious, and nationalist interests.

It is startling, in retrospect, how fortuitous the chain of circumstances that led to its birth in 1732 was. In that year Handel's *Esther*, a work written in Cannons around 1718, was revived for a private, staged performance in celebration of his birthday (23 February) at the Crown and Anchor Tavern. The first—unauthorised—public performance followed on 20 April, and it was to forestall such unauthorised representations that Handel announced his own performance of an enlarged version on 2 May. As is well known, the Bishop of London stepped in to prevent the work from being staged theatrically, and therefore the announcements read: 'There will be no Action on the Stage, but the House will be fitted up in a decent Manner, for the

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<sup>4</sup> E. Routley, *The musical Wesleys* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1968), pp.78-79.



Audience. The Music to be disposed after the Manner of the Coronation Service.’<sup>5</sup>

Although he wrote two oratorios the following year, *Deborah* and *Athaliah*, which were, like *Esther*, well received, at this stage oratorio was merely an occasional diversion from what was still primarily a season of Italian opera. But when in 1737 a pastiche of assorted church music and oratorio movements presented as ‘An Oratorio’ reportedly earned him over £1000, while his latest opera *Serse* (over which he had taken particular care) closed after only five performances, he must have seen which way the wind was blowing. In 1738 Handel returned to oratorio once more, and by 1741 he had definitively abandoned opera. Some intriguing reasons have been suggested for this turn in his career. David Hunter points to a stroke that Handel suffered in 1737 and his poor health thereafter as being instrumental to his decision in favour of oratorio, with its shorter performance season.<sup>6</sup> Henry Burnett has argued that Maurice Greene’s monopolization of virtually all the significant positions in the Anglican musical hierarchy thwarted Handel’s own ambitions as a composer in this field, which had then to find another expression.<sup>7</sup> Certainly he did use many of his earlier oratorios as a way of re-presenting much of the church music he had already written to a wider audience. In the main, however, it was surely commercial considerations that led him in this direction, and it can hardly be denied that his oratorios captured—and held—the ear of his audiences in a way that his operas did not.

There are a number of reasons why this was so. The amateur choral tradition

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<sup>5</sup> From the *Daily Journal* (London, 19 April 1732); quoted in C. Burney, *A general history of music from the earliest ages to the present period*, 4 vols. (London, 1776-1789), vol. IV, p.361; facsimile in H. E. Smither, ‘Oratorio’, *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/20397> (accessed August 2, 2008). See also D. Burrows, *Handel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp.165-71, 199, 205-6.

<sup>6</sup> ‘Miraculous recovery? Handel’s illness, the narrative tradition of heroic strength, and the oratorio turn’, *Eighteenth-century music* 3/2 (September 2006), 253-267. As Hunter points out, this of course contradicts the received view of Handel’s legendary physical resilience.

<sup>7</sup> ‘Greene and Handel: The choral music-problems concerning mutual influence and indebtedness’, *The American Organist* 20/6 (June 1986), 66-74. This could at least partly explain Handel’s curious animus toward Greene.

that would perpetuate his oratorios in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was yet to be born, but a growing middle-class public, suspicious of the theatre (and with no interest in—or comprehension—of its Italian libretti) were ‘happy to find a format in which musical virtuosity could be enjoyed within an aura of respectable piety.’<sup>8</sup> Jonathan Keates has pointed to the moral effect of the Lisbon earthquake in 1755, encouraging a public mood (and hence public entertainments) of a graver, more serious nature.<sup>9</sup> More recently there has been considerable exploration of the political and national context to his oratorios, some of them (the *Occasional Oratorio*, *Judas Maccabaeus*, *Joshua*, *Alexander Balus*) written against the background of the 1745 Jacobite rebellion, and all of them presupposing an identification between contemporary Britain and Old Testament Israel that was a commonplace of eighteenth-century thought.<sup>10</sup> As Ruth Smith has made abundantly clear, Handel’s libretti addressed questions of legitimacy, patriotism, rebellion, and liberty that were very much live issues, and his oratorios were a confluence of the most potent cultural currents of the day: ‘The depiction of history was the noblest form of painting; epic was the highest form of literature; the Old Testament was the greatest repository of the sublime; religious music was music at its best; . . . Oratorio, which combined all these,

<sup>8</sup> A. Hicks, ‘Handel, George Frideric, 22: Oratorio forms’, *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/40060pg22> (accessed August 2, 2008).

<sup>9</sup> J. Keates, *Handel: the man and his music* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1986), p.313.

<sup>10</sup> See William Weber, ‘Handel’s London: Political, social and intellectual contexts’, *The Cambridge companion to Handel*, ed. D. Burrows (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp.45-54; ‘Intellectual bases of the Handelian tradition, 1759-1800’, *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association* 108 (1981), 100-114; *The rise of musical classics in eighteenth-century England: A study in canon, ritual, and ideology*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), pp.103-42; and Thomas McGeary’s response to arguments from this last: ‘Music, meaning, and politics: The 1784 Handel commemoration reconsidered’, *Göttinger Händel-Beiträge* 9 (2002), 205-17. Ruth Smith has done much particularly detailed and valuable work in this area: ‘Intellectual contexts of Handel’s English oratorios’, *Music in eighteenth-century England: essays in memory of Charles Cudworth*, ed. C. Hogwood and R. Luckett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 115-33; ‘The achievements of Charles Jennens (1700-1773)’, *Music & Letters* 70/2 (May, 1989), 161-90; ‘Handel’s Israelite librettos and English politics, 1732-52’, *Händel und die europäische Kirchenmusik seiner Zeit*, *Göttinger Händel-Beiträge* 5 (1993), 195-215; *Handel’s oratorios and eighteenth-century thought* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995); ‘Handel’s English librettists’, *The Cambridge companion to Handel*, ed. D. Burrows (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp.92-110; ‘The meaning of Morell’s libretto of “Judas Maccabaeus”’, *Music & letters* 79/1 (February 1998), 50-71; ‘Comprehending “Theodora”’, *Eighteenth-century music* 2/1 (March 2005), 57-90.

was waiting to happen.’<sup>11</sup>

Significant too was the curious shape Handel’s musical career took toward the end of his life. With the progressive loss of his sight whilst writing *Jephtha* in 1750-51, he seemed also to lose the capacity to plan and create new large-scale works, and this would be the last of his oratorios. His skill as a performer remained unimpaired, however, and he continued to lead performances until less than a week before his death. With the assistance of his amanuensis John Christopher Smith, he revised and reworked his existing works for each performance according to the needs of the moment.<sup>12</sup> While on the one hand this immensely complicated the source-history of his oratorios (who can say what the ‘real’ *Messiah* is?), it also created a clear Handelian canon—a substantial body of works capable of receiving repeated performances. If there was some doubt as to the precise form of each work, there was none as to their identity: *Messiah*, *Samson*, and *Judas Maccabaeus* were becoming permanent fixtures in British musical life. When Handel died in 1759, J. C. Smith and John Stanley were on hand to continue the process without interruption. By the time of the ‘centenary’ celebrations in 1784 (Handel must have been one of the very first composers accorded such anniversary commemoration) his position was secure. The vast performances at Westminster Abbey monumentalised his oeuvre just as Roubiliac’s magnificent statue did his person.

This is not to say of course that Handel was the only important influence on English music during the second half of the century. For British musicians his oeuvre contained a clear hierarchy of relevance. For oratorio-composers (of whom there were many) the example of Handel was definitive. Organ music—concertos and voluntaries

<sup>11</sup> Smith, *Handel’s oratorios*, p.170.

<sup>12</sup> It is interesting to compare the revisions of J. S. Bach, also undertaken late in life, of collections such as ‘the Eighteen’ chorale preludes. Bach seems to have consciously intended to leave a definitive corpus for posterity. Handel probably had no such intention; but his—and J. C. Smith’s—revisions ultimately had a similar effect. See A. Hicks, ‘The late additions to Handel’s oratorios and the role of the younger Smith’, in *Music in eighteenth-century England: essays in memory of Charles Cudworth*, ed. C. Hogwood and R. Luckett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp.147-169.

—also remained strongly Handelian until the end of the century. In the absence of strong local traditions Handel's chamber and orchestral music continued to exert a stronger influence than they would have elsewhere, as can be seen in (among others) important sets of sonatas and concertos by Boyce and Stanley. Although the sonatas of Domenico Scarlatti had provided an alternative—and highly popular—stylistic model since their first appearance in 1738, Handel's harpsichord music had some imitators (notably Thomas Chilcot, J. C. Smith, and Joseph Kelway) and remained popular in anthologies. His operas on the other hand had been progressively superseded by the more up-to-date styles of J. C. Bach, Sacchini, Giordani, Gluck, and eventually Mozart; and his pre-London works were of course completely unknown to the English musical public (except insofar as he exploited this fact himself by re-using various movements in many later pieces).

One effect his music had can be seen by comparing a few Handel originals to the music they inspired. Handel was at the centre of London musical life for the last forty years of his life, and maintained a large circle of friends and admirers. One of these was Thomas Chilcot (c.1700-1766), an organist who lived and worked at Bath. Chilcot hired out harpsichords and music, ran a music shop, and organised concerts, doing much to promote the music of Handel in the process. He published a set of six keyboard suites in 1734 which are heavily dependent on Handel's style, constantly reminding one of similar passages in his suites. The Overture to the first suite in G minor reminds one inescapably of the beginning of Handel's 1720 suite in the same key (HWV 432), just as the Jigg recalls that from one of the suites he wrote in 1739 for Princess Louisa (HWV 452). Even where there is no definite resemblance, the style is always, rather timidly, Handelian. Nowhere does he make as explicit a reference as in the Presto of the second suite, in A major (Ex.2.1)—and nowhere is it possible to see so easily how much was learned, and how much forgotten.





It is quite clearly a homage to the popular Presto that occurs in the third suite of Handel's 1720 collection (and several other places in his oeuvre; Ex.2.2). The similarity of head-motif might have meant nothing more than it generally did to Handel, who often re-used material in order to make something quite new; but here Chilcot follows his model point for point, the only significant difference being an extra ritornello at the beginning of the second half. In the preface to his edition Davitt Moroney suggests that it may have been written as a compositional exercise—which would explain the diligence with which he has followed his model.<sup>13</sup>

One might compare the very skilful but rather flat-footed efforts of Krebs to emulate J. S. Bach we discussed in the previous chapter. The music lacks an elusive 'something'—a 'something' that in the case of Chilcot and Handel can be identified if we compare their use of the apparently similar figuration which connects the ritornelli. Although always purposeful, Handel's figuration never allows itself to fall into excessively literal patterns of repetition and sequence. Between the first two ritornelli Handel uses no less than seven different kinds of semiquaver figuration, shifting from moment to moment and never allowing plain symmetries to emerge for too long.

By contrast, Chilcot's figuration is all too happy to group itself into regular patterns. A comparison between the two demonstrates Handel's instinct for diverting a sequence just before it gets tiresome—something we tend to take for granted until it is no longer present. All this is not intended simply to belittle the music of (the much less experienced) Thomas Chilcot; but rather to illustrate how it was possible to assiduously duplicate the surface idiom of Handel's music, while neglecting important principles of structure.

Much the same happened in relation to Handel's fugal style. A good example of the contrapuntal looseness—and musical energy—of his fugal writing can be seen

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<sup>13</sup> T. Chilcot, *Six suites of lessons for the harpsichord or spinet* (1734), ed. D. Moroney, preface, (Paris: Heugel, 1975).

in the Overture to *Alcina* (1735). As with most of his opera overtures, we can see the fugal writing ‘coalesce into the diddle-diddle of the cat and the fiddle as soon as the third voice has entered with the theme’ (Tovey),<sup>14</sup> but it is none the worse for that.

At first the countersubject seems almost laughable: a row of notes merely doubling the subject at a third’s distance (Ex.2.3); but note how the two distinctive motives of the subject are already combined in the fourth bar, and how the second and third entries overlap. It is not thematic or contrapuntal interest that holds our attention, however, but the almost reckless harmonic inventiveness Handel shows. The stepwise melodic descent of the subject receives a wide variety of harmonic interpretations (see the harmonic reductions in Ex.2.4).

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<sup>14</sup> ‘Christopher Willibald Gluck’, in *Essays and lectures on music* (London: Oxford University Press, 1949), p.73. To be fair, Tovey goes on to say: ‘But the contrapuntist guides Handel’s harmonies and basses as surely as a draughtsman may guide the scene-painter splashing his colours out of a pail.’





Root-movement is quite unpredictable, almost haphazard, tending to avoid the fifth-relations so beloved of most later eighteenth-century theorists and composers. The use of the *minor* dominant as a bridge to unexpected tonal regions occurred in the very first bar of the Larghetto, and is something of a feature in the fugue (bb.16, 20, 24, 34). This sort of harmonic colour is not the tonally-directed, secondary-dominant derived chromaticism which dominated the eighteenth century; it is instead a legacy of Handel's seventeenth-century stylistic roots. So too is the systematic irregularity of the figuration, which never gets the chance to settle down to an orderly plod through the cycle of fifths, generating a curious, fitful brilliance.

Handelian influence had less competition in this field because on his arrival there was almost no native tradition of fugal writing. It is important to remember that large, self-contained, thematically unified and closely-worked fugues only emerged during the last stages of the Baroque, with composers such as Caldara, Veracini, Pepusch, Leclair, de Grigny, Zelenka, and of course Bach and Handel. In chamber, choral, and organ music England had maintained strong contrapuntal traditions

throughout much of the seventeenth century, but not much of this remained by 1700; and Handel's expansive contrapuntal style showed little kinship to the intense, wayward manner of Locke, Purcell, and Blow. In harpsichord music there was no recent contrapuntal tradition at all—the suites of John Blow, of William Croft, and of Jeremiah Clarke show not the faintest anticipation of the fugues in Handel's *Eight Suites*, or of his *Six Grand Fugues*.

Barry Cooper has shown how 1720 was a watershed year for keyboard music in London.<sup>15</sup> Under the overwhelming influence of Handel's *Eight Suites* composers at once forsook the French-influenced style of John Blow, Jeremiah Clarke, and William Croft (*style brisé*, slow courantes, infrequent giges, exclusively dance movements) and began to copy Handel's more Italianate style (flowing two-part counterpoint, semiquaver figuration, variable movement structure, occasional fugues).

Although Handel left very little organ music apart from his organ concertos (which attracted imitators from T. A. Arne in 1751 to the Camidge brothers in 1800),<sup>16</sup> English organists felt Handel's influence equally strongly. The characteristic British genre of the time was the Voluntary—a word that remained a synonym for 'improvisation' through much of the nineteenth century, but in printed form it had achieved a remarkably stable form by the middle of the eighteenth century. It was usually in two movements: the first a 'Corellian' adagio for diapasons or a weighty exordium for full organ, the second a concerto-like allegro for a solo stop or a fugue. There were, of course, exceptions, but as one looks through the publications of Stanley, Greene, Boyce, Bennett, Travers et al (with which the editorial labours of C. H. Trevor have acquainted the vast majority of organists of the English-speaking world) one is struck by their consistency of approach. Handel never contributed to this genre, but his influence can be seen throughout.

<sup>15</sup> *English solo keyboard music of the middle and late Baroque* (New York: Garland, 1989), p.249 ff.

<sup>16</sup> The only works that could be reasonably so-called are the *Six Grand Fugues or Voluntaries* of 1735—not voluntaries in the usual contemporary English sense.



The Adagio of John Stanley's Voluntary in G, op.5/3 (1748) shows an authentic Handelian breadth (Ex.2.5), while Ex.2.6 from John Bennett's Voluntary in F (1757-58) might have come out of one of Handel's organ concertos.

John Stanley and John Bennett were among the leading organists of mid-century London, but there were dozens of other minor composers writing in a similar vein. The following Allegro from a voluntary by Henry Heron is a domesticated and simplified version of Handel's bold orchestral rhetoric, almost comical in its limited imaginative scope (Ex.2.7). On the other hand, this fugue from a manuscript voluntary in G minor by John Stanley (Ex.2.8)<sup>17</sup> makes an interesting comparison with the *Alcina* fugue discussed above.

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<sup>17</sup> Now published as part of *An RCO Miscellany*, ed. H. Diack Johnstone (Eastwood, Leigh-on-Sea: Basil Ramsey, 1980).

Superficially they have much in common. Both form the second part of a ‘French’ overture; in fact, like a number of Handel’s keyboard fugues, Stanley’s fugue also exists as an orchestral movement (it had its origin as the overture to his B.Mus. cantata *The Power of Music*—the arrangement may not even be by him, although some of his later published organ movements also exist in orchestral form). Both sacrifice elaborate contrapuntal working for the excitement of rapid figuration. Both allow structural cadences to show through clearly in preference to obscuring them as J. S. Bach did. There are, however, as many differences. Most obvious is the greater length of Stanley’s subject: four bars of intense semiquaver figuration, spanning a range of an octave and a half. By contrast, Handel’s subject (Ex.2.3) is little more than a perfunctory contrapuntal tag, the sort of thing that started many a seventeenth-century canzona (it is very similar in type, for example, to some of Johann Pachelbel’s *Magnificat* fugues). This distinction between Handel and one of his most gifted followers is seen here in an extreme form, but represents a genuine change that was taking place in fugal style. Handel’s subjects tend to be fairly concise, and may or may not form a complete phrase (that is to say, end with a cadence of some kind). Those of most of his successors are generally somewhat longer, and almost always do.

In this fugue, Stanley derives most of his semiquaver figuration from the subject itself. There are a number of strongly differentiated kinds of material (bb.25, 32, 41, and 48), which both assert their independence from the fugue subject and yet are clearly derived from it. There is even a kind of ‘second subject’ (b.24), which is recapitulated in the tonic (b.51)—a curious anticipation of Classical practice. This is precisely the opposite to Handel’s procedure in the *Alcina* overture. Although he does not ‘develop’ his subject like Stanley, it retains its primacy because no other material achieves a sufficiently strong and regular profile; Handel retained the seventeenth-century knack of writing free, non-thematic, non-periodic figuration. By contrast, nearly all of Stanley’s material falls into regular patterns of sequential repetition. The continuation in b.21 represents one of the most common types of passage in the post-Handelian fugue, 7-6 suspensions over a walking (or in this case running) bass. Although such material sounds vaguely ‘Handelian’, it is surprising how seldom it occurs nakedly in actual fugues by Handel—less than half a dozen brief passages in the *Six Grand Fugues* for example—whereas it became one of the most common means of filling out episodes for his successors. Nowhere in Stanley’s fugue does this sequential writing become excessive; his music merely shows a greater tendency toward smoothness and regularity (and lightness of texture) than that of Handel. But from discreetly simplifying and streamlining Handel’s style it was only a step to watering it down, as Ex.2.7 has shown.<sup>18</sup>

Handel’s influence was equally persistent in the realm of sacred choral music: anthems, services, and oratorios. During the years after Handel’s death, a very large proportion of ‘new’ oratorios were in fact Handel pasticcios—warmed-over extracts from Handel’s less well-known works given new words and made to fit new

<sup>18</sup> It will be seen that the ‘hidden fugal paths’—the evasive and unpredictable voice-leading—that William Renwick (and Heinrich Schenker) traced in Handel’s fugues constitute precisely that aspect of his style that was not transmitted to succeeding generations: W. Renwick, ‘Hidden Fugal Paths: A Schenkerian View of Handel’s F Major Fugue (Suite II)’, *Music Analysis* 14/1 (March 1995), 49-67. This article contains an insightful comparison between Handel’s fugal style and that of J. S. Bach.

situations; but his influence outlasted this practice by at least a century. When, for example, John Goss (1800-1880) was called upon to write an anthem for the wedding of Queen Victoria in 1840, he began thus (Ex.2.9):

To be fair, this is not entirely representative of Goss's usual style, which made the transition from early nineteenth-century church music to the high Victorian style



without displaying the more obvious chromaticism and word-painting of his successors Stainer and Barnby.<sup>19</sup> But quasi-Handelian textures (especially when writing fugally) remained a viable stylistic resource for English composers throughout most of the nineteenth century.

At the opposite end of the cultural spectrum the various Nonconformist denominations (Methodist, Baptist, Congregationalist, etc.) retained a strong Handelian flavour as they developed their own musical traditions.<sup>20</sup> Sunday-schools (which were also singing-schools) in particular became a focus of surprisingly elaborate musical activity. Many 'hymn-tunes' approached the scale of little cantatas, complete with instrumental interludes, solos, duets, and choruses. These composers (Martin Madan, Thomas Jarman, C. W. Banister, and John Leach, among the most prolific) developed a style that might be described as a sort of 'coarse Handel'. Much simpler in texture and harmony—sometimes very crude indeed—their music nevertheless retained something of Handel's florid rhetorical vigour. The influence of this style reached as far as north America; the best-known example of all is probably Ex.2.10, a hymn-tune by Lowell Mason (1792-1872) which is still widely assumed to have been written by Handel himself.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> W. J. Gatens, *Victorian cathedral music in theory and practice* (Cambridge University Press: 1986), pp.115-16.

<sup>20</sup> The Methodists were not of course *literally* a separate denomination until after John Wesley's death in 1791 (although this development became inevitable when he was forced to ordain his own priests in 1784). Their musical traditions, however—largely as a result of the importance of Charles Wesley's hymns and the activities of J. F. Lampe and Martin Madan—were distinct from those of the established church from the very beginning.

<sup>21</sup> Other well known examples include 'Lydia', 'Diadem', 'Helmsley', 'Sagina' and 'Lyngham'. These are still popular, and can be found in most hymnbooks. Longer pieces, however, such as 'Cheshunt New' (S. Arnold), 'The Star of Bethlehem' (C. W. Banister), and 'Denmark' (M. Madan), have fallen out of use.



## ‘AN ENGLISH MOZART’

This was the musical environment into which Samuel Wesley was born in 1766, less than a decade after Handel’s death. ‘I knew him, unfortunately, too well’, recalled the wife of his friend Vincent Novello: ‘pious Catholic, raving atheist, mad, reasonable, drunk, sober—the dread of all wives and regular families, a warm friend, a bitter foe, a satirical talker, a flatterer at times of those he cynically traduced at others—a blasphemer at times, a puleing Methodist at others.’<sup>22</sup> He was eccentric in his faith, eccentric in his family life, eccentric in the course of his career, and—most importantly for us—eccentric in his passionate advocacy for the music of an obscure central German composer by the name of Johann Sebastian Bach.

The success John his uncle and Charles his father had preaching to the poor and dispossessed, and the attraction that Methodism soon came to have for the lower classes, should not unduly colour our picture of the Wesley family itself. Samuel Wesley was no Stephen Duck or John Clare, emerging from a poor, uncultured background. Like his brother John, Charles Wesley was a modestly cultured middle-class gentleman: ‘It is a mistake to think of the Wesley family as being of humble origin’ says Kenneth Hart. ‘Although they addressed much of their Gospel preaching to the poor of England they were not speaking to their own class. They may not have had much money (Church of England priests, for the most part, still do not), but by birth they were “an aristocratic and self-confident stock. Their connections were wholly with the landed gentry and the Anglican clergy, and their sympathies remained to the end with the Established Church.”’<sup>23</sup>

One should equally not assume that Samuel’s initial musical experience was

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<sup>22</sup> Mary Sabilla Novello, letter to Henry Phillips c.1841, BL Add. MS 31764, quoted in P. Olleson, ‘The obituary of Samuel Wesley’, *Nineteenth-century British music studies* ed. J. Sampson and B. Zon (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), p.129, and many other places.

<sup>23</sup> He is quoting Armstrong, ‘Wesleys’, 96. See also P. Olleson, *Samuel Wesley: the man and his music* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2003), pp.1-14.

bounded too closely by early Methodist hymnody; for two reasons. Firstly, John and Charles seem to have had an ambivalent attitude to many trends in contemporary hymn tunes, even among the Methodists: the music selected and composed by Martin Madan or John Frederick Lampe, for example. It seems likely that Charles Wesley intended many of his hymns—those in unusual metres, especially—for the more restrained German chorale melodies he came across through his contact with the Moravians. Secondly, congregational music was not the only kind with which the Wesleys were familiar. Although he was suspicious of secular music, John Wesley's diaries speak in passing of a variety of musical experiences; he was for example much impressed by Handel's *Messiah*; less so by Arne's *Judith*. He had lengthy discussions on music with Johann Christoph Pepusch (by then eccentrically conservative—for him music had been going downhill since the time of William Byrd), and even wrote a short treatise on *The Power of Music*, in 1779.<sup>24</sup> He makes no explicit mention of hymnody (although it is difficult to read his comments without making inferences about his attitude toward church music). Influenced by the ideas of Pepusch and by Avison's 1752 *Expression in Music*, he comes down heavily on the side of the ancients against the moderns in this perennial eighteenth-century debate, and shows a curious resemblance to some of the musical theories of Jean Jacques Rousseau. According to Samuel, his father Charles had a good ear for music and could play the flute but, (ironically for the creator of Methodist hymnody) had no great voice and found it difficult to sing even a simple hymn in tune. His mother Sarah sang and played the harpsichord, but Olleson characterises their interest in music as being 'no more than

<sup>24</sup> Reproduced in Routley, *Wesleys*, pp.15-19. See also Olleson, *Wesley*, p.13. It is not known what prompted this curious tract. Could it have been the growing celebrity of his gifted nephews? If Charles was ambivalent about his sons' musical career (see below), John was emphatically opposed. Rather than publishing a direct personal attack, however, did this issue prompt him to a characteristic examination of first principles? Especially in view of his conversations with Pepusch, it is no great surprise that his treatise comes out strongly in favour of unaccompanied vocal music, against 'those modern overtures, voluntaries, or concertos, which consist altogether of artificial sounds without any words at all'. It should be noted that 'overtures, voluntaries, or concertos' formed the bulk of the programmes at Charles Wesley's house concerts.

commonplace for those of their class and background.’<sup>25</sup>

It is fortunate that it was during the 1760s that his two sons began to show their extraordinary musical precocity. By this time the Methodist movement was well established, having survived the struggles and persecution of the 1730s and 40s. Charles had begun to settle down, establishing a comfortable domestic existence at Bristol. Happily married (a rare achievement for the Wesleys, it seems) and occupied with raising a family, he had by no means retired from leadership of the Methodist movement, but could scarcely attempt to match his brother’s gruelling schedule of travel and preaching. The unexpected appearance of not one but two musical prodigies in their midst was the cause of much heart-searching. On the one hand their father felt obliged, as a Christian, not to waste his sons’ remarkable talent; on the other, he was aware that life as a professional musician would scarcely be congenial to Methodist values.

His decision-making process was exhaustive and protracted, involving a veritable ‘who’s who’ of musical London.<sup>26</sup> Among those who took an interest in Charles’s young sons were John Stanley, John Worgan, William Boyce, Thomas Linley, Samuel Arnold, T. A. Arne, J. Broderip, John Burton, John Keeble, John Beard, Matthias Vento, Felice de Giardini, J. C. Smith, Jonathan Battishill, and Wilhelm Cramer. At length the decision was referred to Joseph Kelway, a minor composer but apparently the final authority on questions of musical education. Charles accepted the advice of the experts and, in Kenneth Hart’s apt phrase, ‘resigned himself to the idea that this was a gift from God’.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Wesley, p.4.

<sup>26</sup> See Olleson, *Wesley*, pp.7-9, 217-18. It is recorded in great detail both in Charles’ *Journal* and, in an expanded form, by the lawyer Daines Barrington (1727-1800) in his *Miscellanies on various Subjects* (London, 1781), pp.291–310, and ‘An account of the very extraordinary musical talents of Messrs Charles and Samuel Wesley’, *Westminster Magazine*, 9 (1789), 233-36, 289-95. These have been excerpted in T. Jackson, *The life of the Rev. Charles Wesley, MA* (London, 1841), pp.330-45, and Routley, *Wesleys*, pp.43-57.

<sup>27</sup> From a presentation to the Perkins Faculty Luncheon, 6 March 1996, concerning his (still unpublished) edition of S. Wesley’s *Reminiscences* (to be found at: [http://www2.smu.edu/theology/faculty/hart/ken\\_hart.htm](http://www2.smu.edu/theology/faculty/hart/ken_hart.htm) ).

At first the real focus of attention was the older child Charles junior, who showed distinct promise before he reached three years of age. His brother Samuel was eight years younger, and started his musical activity at the comparatively advanced age of four or five. According to Charles senior, ‘Mr [Samuel] Arnold was the first who, hearing him at the harpsichord, said, “I set down Sam for one of my family.” But we did not much regard him, coming after Charles.’<sup>28</sup> Samuel continued to educate himself, and his musical ability ‘sprung up like a mushroom’ (his father’s phrase).<sup>29</sup> By the time he was eight, he had written his first oratorio, *Ruth* (written, that is; apparently he had composed much of it in his head two years previously). It was this work that impressed William Boyce when he came visiting in 1774. ‘I hear you have got an English Mozart in your house’ he said as he arrived, and his assessment of *Ruth* was: ‘These airs are some of the prettiest I have seen. This boy writes by nature as true a bass as I can do by rule or study.’<sup>30</sup>

Both of these comments prophesy aspects of Samuel’s later style. His phenomenally quick ear for linear coherence and harmonic function (which is what Boyce means by his second comment) enabled him to achieve competence largely through self-instruction; but there are at times doubtfully successful progressions even in some of his mature works which might have been avoided had he received a more secure academic grounding in thoroughbass and counterpoint. Nevertheless, perhaps it was this very lack of an academic approach to harmony that was to leave him open to the even more original harmonic and contrapuntal style of J. S. Bach. Boyce’s first comment, on the other hand, puts his finger on one of Wesley’s great gifts—the ability to write wonderful (almost excessively attractive) tunes. What *is* a melodic gift? Most attentive listeners will have had the experience of noticing the difference between two

<sup>28</sup> Routley, *Wesleys*, p.53; see also Olleson, *Wesley*, p.9.

<sup>29</sup> Routley, *Wesleys*, p.53.

<sup>30</sup> S. Wesley’s *Reminiscences*, fol.33, quoted in Routley, *Wesleys*, p.54; Olleson, *Wesley*, p.10. By ‘Mozart’ Boyce meant of course not the mature composer of *Don Giovanni* and the ‘Jupiter’ symphony, but the charming boy who had dazzled London ten years previously.

composers, one of whom can make the same kind of material ‘tell’ in the way another cannot. It is this, as much as anything, that accounts for the appeal of Samuel Wesley’s music to us today.

## TEACHING HIMSELF TO COMPOSE

Evidence of this is can already be seen in this early oratorio. Of course, apart from young Samuel’s feat in remembering at least some of the movements for two years until he was able to write them down, the most remarkable thing about *Ruth* is the fact that he finished it at all—for, make no mistake, *Ruth* is a real oratorio in three acts, complete with a Handelian overture, recitatives, arias, and choruses (some of them fugal): ‘an amazing achievement for a child of eight, let alone for one of six.’<sup>31</sup> A comparison might be made with nine year old Daisy Ashford’s novel *The Young Visitors* (1890).<sup>32</sup> Both show much the same naïve charm, the same pleasure in manipulating stock phrases, and the same impressive but short-breathed inventiveness. When Daisy Ashford runs out of ideas she simply stops: ‘Here I will end my chapter’, and Samuel Wesley does much the same. Few of the arias are more than two pages in length. If an accompanying figure bores him or proves unmanageable, he drops it or changes it. He scores for an orchestra during the choruses and when he wants orchestral effects (showing a particular fondness for trumpets), but otherwise the organ does most of the work. Many of the arias are remarkably successful—exploring at the keyboard,<sup>33</sup> he was able to reproduce by ear the most obvious features of his models, just as Mozart had been able to do when he was slightly older.<sup>34</sup> By and large they are

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<sup>31</sup> Olleson, *Wesley*, p.251.

<sup>32</sup> London: Chatto and Windus, 1919.

<sup>33</sup> When he is said to have composed parts of the oratorio some years before writing them down, this presumably means that he worked them out with his fingers rather than in his head.

<sup>34</sup> See p.331 below.

surprisingly grammatical, confirming Boyce's judgement.

This dependence upon 'nature' rather than 'rule or study' was perfectly adequate when fitting a bass to a simple melody. When attempting to write fugues, however, the same course produced much stranger results. There are four fugues (so-titled) in *Ruth*, along with a movement labelled rather curiously 'IMITATION of a FUGE'. In a sense, all are 'imitations' of fugues; and it is often almost comically evident how much Wesley desired to emulate the combined grandeur and excitement of many of Handel's choral fugues, and how much he lacked the technical resources to do so. The subject of the last fugue, 'Hallelujah, Amen' is almost identical to the final chorus of *Messiah*, and this movement shows the same contrast between two-part counterpoint on the violins and the full choral/orchestral forces. At other points the repetition of the word 'Hallelujah' in massive homophony recalls another well-known chorus. It is of course the very similarity of material that emphasises the difference between the seven year old autodidact and his vastly more experienced model. There are three kinds of material in Wesley's fugue: thematic exposition, homophonic peroration, and small amounts of homophonic transitional material. While Handel was able to integrate these materials into a seamless quasi-*antico* texture, Wesley moves abruptly from one to another. In particular (a common problem with musicians not used to thinking contrapuntally), he finds it difficult to make a smooth transition from the slender texture of the first few entries to a full texture when all the voices have entered; a problem not helped by the difficulty he finds in handling four parts at once.

Little is known about compositional pedagogy in England at this time and that little may be of small relevance to Samuel Wesley, for once David Williams (a Bristol organist) had taught him to read music, he seems to have been left to his own devices as a composer.<sup>35</sup> The last tutor of any significance, Henry Purcell's revision of

<sup>35</sup> Olleson, *Wesley*, p.9. Williams taught him for a year, but apart from this and some violin lessons with William Kingsbury and a 'Mr McBean', he seems to have largely been an autodidact as a performer as well.



Playford's *Introduction to the Skill of Musick* (twelfth edition) had been published in 1694, and the next, A. F. C. Kollmann's *Essay on Practical Musical Composition* would not appear until 1799. The early works of Samuel Wesley are thus a rare glimpse of the way in which an unusually precocious and receptive musician taught himself to compose.

He may have been dissatisfied with his first attempts at fugal writing in *Ruth*; at any rate, by November 1774 (the year of Boyce's visit) he had completed a set of '4 Fugues for the Organ' KO 628 in what seems to have been a serious attempt to teach himself the rudiments of fugal technique.<sup>36</sup> The subjects chosen are well suited for the purpose, being simple and commonplace, and lend themselves readily to the more typical fugal procedures. In *Ruth* Wesley had attempted to reproduce the splendour and brilliance of Handel's massive tuttis; here he was forced to come to grips with the problem of handling basic contrapuntal textures. From the start, the appearance of these pieces on the page bears a much closer resemblance to orthodox fugal texture than *Ruth*; but appearances can deceive. The effort, though earnestly undertaken, is not at first very successful. In particular the implied suspension of the first fugue's subject (over the barline between bb.1-2) gives him considerable trouble. He tries a number of odd and ungainly solutions (Ex.2.11) before settling on the more grammatical Ex.2.12 (although he may not have fully understood the harmonic basis of the latter). There is little consistency in the number of voices from chord to chord; it seems that when he confidently understands the progression he fills it out with three or four parts, when he is writing at the limit of his understanding he keeps to two. The texture is often extremely slender, a situation that does not improve some awkward and unexpected register changes.

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<sup>36</sup> BL Add. MS 34996



The next fugue is more consistently successful, largely as a consequence of two factors: its restriction to two parts only, and the secure—if conventional—harmonic direction given by the subject (a variation on the old descending tetrachord). Although the two parts are sometimes rather distant, they sound much less like a harmonic outline Wesley is uncertain how to fill.

The third fugue tentatively reintroduces a little three-part writing; still without conspicuous success, it has to be admitted (the bar before the third entry is particularly awkward: Ex.2.13).

As might be expected, whether in two, three, or four parts, his voice-leading is a lot more secure when presenting standardised cadential patterns (for which he has a good memory) than when evolving free-flowing counterpoint. Most of the episodes are built over a repeated quaver bass, recalling many early *galant* sonatas and symphonies. Derived from the first bar of the subject, the thematic logic is impeccable—but it is rather an easy way out as a means of constructing a contrapuntal texture. He essays a curious formal experiment here: the fugue is followed by a four-bar *pomposo* section in the relative minor, rather like the outline (treble and bass) of a tiny French overture, after which the fugue is to be repeated.

The fourth and last fugue shows some progress, not so much in his handling of

the subject (where again he seems not to have been aware of the implied suspensions on each downbeat), but in the episodes, where he shows a new facility for spinning out contrapuntal lines, and growing skill in preparing and resolving suspensions.

Later in the same manuscript appears a fugue that demonstrates the next stage in his self-education, and marks a serious attempt to manage three consistently independent strands—he actually writes them out upon three staves. It is a very cautious piece: the subject is merely an ascent from 1 to 5 followed by a stepwise descent; the countersubject (it is a double fugue) is hardly more complex. Throughout the piece he is content to present these two bits of material in a variety of simple permutations, in closely related keys (I, V, vi, and iii), while concentrating on keeping his voice-leading correct. Despite occasional strange discontinuities within each voice—bb.14, 20, 23-24, 43-44 (most of which would be less noticeable if the fugue were written out on two staves), and imperfect control over their tessitura and overall melodic direction—he largely succeeds.

By this stage of his education, then, he has acquired a basic fugal vocabulary. He has practised handling such basic material as common cadential patterns, preparation and resolution of suspensions, the descending chromatic tetrachord, ascending scalar progressions, invertible counterpoint at the octave, dominant pedal points—and was now well on the way towards acquiring a usable contrapuntal technique. These first painful steps make an interesting comparison with the contrapuntal studies that Felix Mendelssohn undertook at a similar age.<sup>37</sup> The greater fluency even of Mendelssohn's first fugal attempts is probably not so much a consequence of greater natural gifts as of having a thorough background in figured bass and chorale harmonisation, a sound, authoritative textbook to refer to (Kirnberger's *Die Kunst des reinen Satzes in der Musik*), and an attentive, if strict,

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<sup>37</sup> Documented in R. Larry Todd, *Mendelssohn's musical education: a study and edition of his exercises in composition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

teacher at his elbow. There was one advantage they both shared, however, and that was the frequent opportunity to hear the effect of their experiments.

## SAMUEL WESLEY GROWS UP

Although willing to nurture his sons' musical gifts so far as he might, Charles Wesley was reluctant to see them irrevocably committed to the unstable career of a professional musician. Between 1779 and 1787, therefore, he instituted series of subscription concerts in his own house, where his sons could gain experience accompanied by hired professional musicians.<sup>38</sup> The concert programmes resembled those of the Academy of Ancient Music, with the addition of works composed by the two brothers (organ concertos, symphonies, chamber works). 'They do not presume to rival the *present great masters* who excel in the variety of their accompaniments. All they aim at in their concert music is *exactness*.'<sup>39</sup> This humility in the face of recognised authorities is a precise counterpart to their father's dependence upon expert advice in deciding what to do with his sons. Just as their father accepted unquestioningly the advice of leading musicians, his sons were to accept equally the authority of their compositional models—Corelli, Geminiani, Scarlatti, and above all Handel. As we have already seen in relation to J. L. Krebs, this was a generally accepted precept in eighteenth-century cultural life. The value of originality had already been put forward in Edward Young's *Conjectures on original composition* (1759) but was only beginning to take effect, and emulation as a means of education was a universally accepted principle.<sup>40</sup> Intriguingly, Bernard Granville (a family friend

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<sup>38</sup> The Mendelssohn family organised similar entertainments for the benefit of Felix and Fanny (for which e.g. Felix's opera *Die Hochzeit des Camacho* and the 'string symphonies' were written), for broadly similar reasons.

<sup>39</sup> C. Wesley (sen.), 'Reasons for letting my sons have a concert at home' (1779), *The letters of Samuel Wesley: professional and social correspondence, 1797-1837*, ed. P. Olleson (Oxford: University Press, 2001), p.xxvi.

<sup>40</sup> See p.82-8 for discussion and references concerning originality.

in Bath) recommended that Charles ‘should have nothing to do with any “great master”, who would spoil him and destroy any spark of originality in him. Instead, he should study Handel’s “Lessons”... until he had mastered them.’<sup>41</sup> As might perhaps have been expected, this seems to have had the opposite effect. Charles Wesley’s voluntary in G minor, for example (published 1815) begins with a French *ouverture*; his Voluntary in A minor concludes with a Handel transcription. That Charles could do this at the same time as Beethoven was entering his ‘third period’ shows how unevenly the new ideals of originality percolated through European musical life. One is tempted here to ascribe the cause to English insularity, but the same was true of many German organists at this time (Albrechtsberger, Rinck, Rembt, etc.). In Charles’ case it was no doubt a combination of musical environment and personal temperament.

Samuel, on the other hand, was already exposing himself to other musical experiences not quite as orthodox. His involvement with Roman Catholic church music actually seems to have slightly pre-dated the Wesley house-concerts, apparently beginning when he was as young as twelve years of age in 1778. It is not certain whether his parents were aware of this sort of extracurricular activity, but it shows an independence of mind and conduct that was only to increase over the next few years, and eventually to lead to near-total estrangement from his parents. Two events completed the breakdown in relations: his conversion to Catholicism, and his relationship with Charlotte Maria Martin.

His parents worst fears were realised with his conversion in 1784. Erik Routley has pointed out that converting to Catholicism in the 1780s was a very different affair from doing so, say, seventy years later.<sup>42</sup> The drama, persecution, and party feeling surrounding John Henry Newman and the Anglo-Catholics did not exist then; entirely personal, Wesley’s decision was both less problematic and less

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<sup>41</sup> Olleson, *Wesley*, p.8.

<sup>42</sup> Routley, *Wesleys*, p.65-67.

explicable. He would later deny that his conversion had ever been sincere : ‘if the Roman Doctrines were like the Roman *Music* we should have Heaven upon Earth’, was his often-quoted remark, usually interpreted to mean that his conversion was purely for musical reasons. His letters of the 1790s, however, show a sustained, if critical, engagement these same ‘Roman doctrines’. Unlike his brother, he was too intellectually active not to take an interest the theological content of his new faith—which is an equally possible reading of his statement. However embarrassed he may have been forty years later, he was a thoughtful man and there is no reason to suppose that he was not in earnest at the time.<sup>43</sup>

In 1793 he would marry—disastrously—against his family’s advice, formalising a ten year-old relationship with Charlotte Martin. Though a good friend and companion, he may have been difficult to live with. While still an adolescent he began to show signs of the mental instability that was to plague him throughout his life. Growing increasingly unruly and violent (family letters speak of drunkenness, staying out all night, and the physical assault of servants). At length his father was forced to take the humiliating step of writing to Bishop Talbot, the Roman Catholic Vicar Apostolic of the London district in a desperate appeal to bring his son under control.<sup>44</sup> He seems to have suffered from what we would call manic-depression; at times he was capable of an immense workload (which was necessary in order to support his large family), at others he was subject to prolonged periods of incapacity. Significant episodes occurred in the mid 1780s to early 1790s, around 1801, in 1816, and in 1830 (which marked his effective retirement). Each meant the end of a part of his career, and was followed by a slow recovery and the necessity of rebuilding his career from scratch.

It has been usual to attribute this mental instability, as Wesley himself seems to

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<sup>43</sup> See Olleson, *Wesley*, pp.27-30.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p.30-33.

have, to a head-injury sustained in 1787 when he fell into a street excavation. The first known reference to event, however, comes from his obituary in 1837, and there is no trace of it in the letters or any other documents of the time. Even if it did happen as stated (by Wesley himself, so far as we can tell), his erratic behaviour began well before the accident, and most likely had entirely other causes. A physical injury to the brain was, however, a comprehensible diagnosis in the eighteenth century in a way that a bipolar chemical imbalance was not.<sup>45</sup>

A number of other important events occurred around this time. 1787 saw the last of the house-concerts, and was the year in which he attained majority (thereby coming into a number of valuable bequests). The following year his father died. In short, he was now propelled into the world, dependent on his own resources. Forced to cease being a rebellious adolescent, he had to begin to make his own career.

## **SAMUEL WESLEY COMES OF AGE**

This was also the time of his first maturity as a composer; and although his style continued to develop, he never surpassed some of the ambitious works he wrote during these years. As far as keyboard music went, he had yet to begin his op.6 series of voluntaries, but had written many apprentice pieces for the organ. He had also published a set of clavier sonatas in 1777. None of these can compare, however, with the extraordinary unpublished Andante maestoso and Presto KO 627.<sup>46</sup> The Presto is dated 16 May, 1788. It is not clear whether this should be considered as a kind of

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<sup>45</sup> See the discussion in Olleson, *Wesley*, pp.35-36, and Olleson, 'Obituary', pp.124, 127. Olleson notes (*Wesley*, p.3) that at least one biographer has suggested that his father too had bipolar tendencies: H. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism* (London: Epworth Press, 2002), pp.51, 252.

<sup>46</sup> BL Add. Ms 14340.



sonata, or as an organ voluntary.<sup>47</sup> Certainly he started out writing for organ, as the initial ‘Full’ designation indicates, along with the way in which the dynamics are conveniently arranged for a two-manual organ. Both Robin Langley and Gordon Atkinson point out that he appears to have changed his mind, however, for (or perhaps even during) the Presto, which contains a rich array of dynamic markings, from *pianissimo* to *fortissimo*, including a number of crescendi.<sup>48</sup> The figuration is also highly pianistic at times, and as we shall see it is hard to decide whether to call it a fugue or a sonata movement.

The piece begins, at least, in a solidly fugal style (Ex.2.14). At first it appears to be a kind of triple fugue, with three clearly identifiable subjects; unusually, however, the second subject is more of a variation of the first than a counterpoint, and would produce consecutive octaves if both were present at the same time. The number of voices employed is usually two or three, but (as with many fugues by Handel) there is no sense that they have permanent identities or registers—there is no way in which this movement could be designated ‘*Fuga a3*’ and written out in open score like most of the *WTC*. Nevertheless (as also with Handel) the motivic coherence is strong and the subjects enter frequently. Suddenly in b.53 (after a few bars which sound less and less fugal), proceedings come abruptly to a halt on chord V/V, and we realise that this fugal working has served merely as the first part of a sonata exposition. A cantabile ‘second subject’ duly follows, characterised partly by its contrast with the rest of the texture, partly by a suddenly *fortissimo* two-octave downward swoop halfway through (Ex.2.15; dynamics inferred from later occurrences).

<sup>47</sup> There is no absolute certainty that they were intended to go together; it is only their proximity in the manuscript, the uniformity of hand-writing (not to be taken for granted with Samuel Wesley), unity of key, and contrast of tempo, that suggests this. The movements were never published during his life, either separately or together.

<sup>48</sup> Introduction, *Miscellaneous Short Pieces for Organ* (Organ Works, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., no.10), ed. G. Atkinson (Drumoak: Fagus-music.com, 2003), p.7; *Fourteen Short Pieces for Organ*, ed. R. Langley (London: Oxford University Press, 1981), p.16. The swell organ had been invented in England several decades previously; but at this time was only used for making subtle fluctuations within a *piano* dynamic, rather than effecting a crescendo from *piano* to *forte*.



Although his music is seldom ostentatiously ‘pianistic’ in the manner of Dussek or Clementi, this is the sort of effect that shows Wesley knew how to use the capabilities of the piano when he wanted to. The ‘second subject’ is followed by further development of the second fugal subject; Ex.2.15 returns, followed again by further fugal development, and then comes the third part of this enormous sonata exposition. The first fugal subject appears first below then above a tremolando accompaniment, leading to a third appearance of Ex.2.15 and a surprisingly undemonstrative final cadence.

After the repeat begins the ‘development section’ proper. It opens with a striking passage of octave counterpoint, then settles down to the same sort of sequential development as was prominent in the exposition. The first or second fugal subject is present often enough to ensure relevance to the rest of the piece, but much of the material is devised on the spot. Tonally it ranges as far afield as F sharp minor on the sharp side, F major on the flat (i.e. widely for a fugue, but not for a sonata development).

The recapitulation (b.283) begins with a fugal exposition nearly identical to the opening, but its continuation is quite different. The first section oscillated between I and V (as fugal expositions usually do), ending on V/V (b.358); this section now touches a wider range of keys, including iii, vi, ii, and IV, before settling on V/I. Twice Ex.2.15 is interrupted, first by a development of its sixth bar (b.365-72), then by a development of its fifth bar (399-406), and as previously a development of the second fugal subject then carries us to the third part of the recapitulation. This is recognisably similar enough to its predecessor in the sonata’s exposition to fulfil its structural function, but again the details are worked out quite differently, with an effective detour flatward as far as C minor (bb.452-56). Clearly Samuel Wesley was not tempted to fill out his capacious design with large stretches of literal repetition.

The ending is rather curious: he replaces the exposition's quiet conclusion with a rich passage of chords in three registers (bb.465-72), then twice subverts the expected perfect cadence in unorthodox ways (bb.471-74 and 481-83), preferring to finish instead with a plagal cadence.

The first thing that strikes one about the piece is its sheer size of nearly 500 bars. With its inordinate length and unflagging energy it brings to mind two other similar pieces, written at a similar stage in their composers' careers: the Gigue in G minor from the ninth suite of Handel's 1727 collection (HWV 439) which he would have known, and Haydn's prodigious Capriccio in G (Hob XVII:1) which he almost certainly would not have. All three were written upon their composers' first arriving at maturity (Handel's gigue was written a long time before it was published, and Haydn's Capriccio dates from 1765), and all three display their composers' exultation in newly won powers, at extraordinary length. Samuel Butler described the Handel gigue as being 'very fine but it is perhaps a little long. Probably Handel was in a hurry, for it takes much more time to get a thing short than to leave it a little long.'<sup>49</sup> As with Haydn's Capriccio, the listener's endurance begins to flag a little before the composer's. There comes a point about two-thirds of the way through at which the prospect of yet another inventive sequence, yet another telling modulation, arouses perhaps slightly less interest than it should.<sup>50</sup> Mention has already made of Wesley's manic tendencies (with the intense, if uneven productivity of these years), and the possible influence of his 1787 accident on his mental stability. It is too much to suggest that this piece came about merely as a consequence of Samuel Wesley falling into a hole in the ground; but 'manic' is not a bad way to describe the extraordinary creative energy with which he continues to generate new permutations of his material,

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<sup>49</sup> *An anthology of musical criticism from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century*, ed. N. Demuth (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1947), p.118.

<sup>50</sup> Gordon Atkinson goes far as to dismiss it as 'long, rambling and unsatisfactory Presto' in his edition of the Andante maestoso: Introduction, *Short Pieces*, p.7.

when most of his contemporaries would have fallen back upon a much higher proportion of literal repetition.

We spoke, in the introduction, of the structural contradictions between fugue and sonata writing. There are, of course, many movements which attempt to combine the two in different ways. In the critical literature this procedure is generally regarded as a sort of profoundly unnatural *tour de force*, a collision between fundamentally incompatible musical worlds. Mozart's 'Jupiter' symphony is 'a musical miracle'; something, in other words, which could not have been produced by natural means alone; Beethoven's 'Hammerklavier' sonata is 'a titanic assertion of power. Unity is attained, but after how terrible a struggle. ... He strains to make the ultimate assertion: I will *not* be divided; I *will* be whole.'<sup>51</sup>

With Samuel Wesley there is none of this sense of oxymoron. He writes a fugue that happens to be in 'sonata-form' (or, if you prefer, a sonata movement that happens to have a fugal exposition for its first subject group) as if it were the most natural thing in the world. It seems that the old-fashionedness of English musical taste had its advantages: 'In an era when Continental fugues are often either a purely conventional device (Cherubini) or a struggle against superhuman odds (Beethoven), it is quite refreshing to encounter numerous examples that are inventive without unduly straining the musical language.'<sup>52</sup>

The past remained a living force in England, and Classical norms were only adopted slowly. A composer might write a Handelian organ voluntary on Sunday, a Classical sonata on Monday, a *galant* song for Vauxhall on Tuesday, a glee or a catch on Wednesday, a mock-Renaissance madrigal on Thursday, and (if he was Samuel Wesley) a *stile antico* motet for the Catholic liturgy on Friday. Unwinding after such a

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<sup>51</sup> A. Harman, A. Milner, and W. Mellers, *Man and his music* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1962), p.649.

<sup>52</sup> J. Caldwell, *The Oxford history of English music vol.II: c.1715 to the present day* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p.139.

hectic week, he could choose between going to hear Joseph Haydn and his latest symphony, or the Academy of Ancient Music playing Corelli and Geminiani.

It is probably true to say that Samuel never felt perfectly at ease with the mature Classical sonata. He published more than twenty before the turn of the century, but only those of op.3 (1789?) approach the sophistication of Haydn's maturity.<sup>53</sup> Among the eight movements of this set can be found only one in 'sonata form', the first movement of the first sonata. Here, with all the attractive material at his disposal, he makes some strange miscalculations, such as the drastic slowing in harmonic rhythm at b.17, the static and unimaginative Alberti bass in b.17-31, or the way in which the final cadence in octaves that concludes the exposition and recapitulation somehow fails to release the tension of the four-bar iib preparation (although the way in which this passage is extended into a brief coda at the very end is effective and unexpected). These structural miscalculations would have been avoided by a more experienced composer like J. C. Bach, or even Pleyel or Vanhal; with better control over long term rhythmic shape, they could present much less appealing material with greater effect. While the first movements of the other two sonatas have something of the weight and scope of normal 'sonata-form' first movements, they are in fact highly original and unusual rondo-like pieces and thus avoid the difficulties of charting long-term tonal goals. As we shall see, the two 'sonatas' he published in the nineteenth century also had even less to do with Classical norms (see pp.186-93 below).

Thus it was that Samuel Wesley, by far the most original English composer of his time, found his *métier* in apparently conservative genres that had strong roots in the past: the organ voluntary, the Roman Catholic motet and mass, and the oratorio.

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<sup>53</sup> Op.3 is reprinted in *Samuel Wesley and contemporaries*, vol. VII of Nicholas Temperley's series *The London pianoforte school* (New York: Garland, 1985).

## MAJOR CHORAL WORKS

His most ambitious choral works—the *Missa de Spiritu Sancto* (1784) the *Ode to St Cecilia* (1794), *Confitebor tibi, Domine* (1799), *Exultate Deo* (1800), and *Dixit Dominus* (1800) all date from this time. The genesis of the *Missa de Spiritu Sancto* makes an interesting comparison with that of the *Confitebor*. Very unusually (for the eighteenth century) the mass appears to have been conceived entirely apart from any immediate question of performance. The actual liturgical music he wrote for the embassy chapels in London shows clearly enough that there would have been no prospect of any performance there, and he took no steps to secure a concert performance (this was before the arrival of Haydn's late masses could have set a precedent).<sup>54</sup> It was instead 'the first fruits of his conversion', 'with the greatest of humility dedicated to our Holy Father Pius VI by his most unworthy son and most obedient servant, Samuel Wesley.'<sup>55</sup>

His longest choral work (around ninety minutes in performance) it is a 'cantata mass' on the most generous scale, consisting of no fewer than twenty-one separate movements. It includes all the elements one might expect: elaborate solos, choral homophony, solo ensembles, sizeable orchestral ritornelli, and—of course—weighty fugues. For a mass of its period it shows an usually large proportion of fugal writing. There are the conventional (and in this case enormous) fugues for 'cum Sancto Spiritu' and 'et vitam venturi'. But substantial fugues also serve for the Kyrie (the second Kyrie is an expansion of the first), the 'Osanna', and the 'dona nobis pacem'—there is also a fair amount of freer imitation at other points. On the other hand, the fugal texture is not always very closely wrought—not very *fugal*, one might say. This is not necessarily a bad thing.

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<sup>54</sup> It had to wait until 1997 for its first—nearly—complete performance: Olleson, 'Spirit voices', *Musical Times* 138/1855 (September 1997), 4.

<sup>55</sup> From the presentation copy he sent to the Pope: Olleson, *Wesley*, p.30.





The ‘cum Sancto Spiritu’ fugue moves smoothly between strict *antico* counterpoint and periodic homophonic material, with—if not quite Handelian inevitability—at least an appropriate kind of orchestral brilliance. More peculiar is the way the ‘et vitam venturi’ fugue separates each entrances of the subject from its neighbours with a monotone, unison ‘Amen’, whilst the orchestra carries on the textural activity. The most extraordinary movement, however, is the ‘Dona nobis pacem’. It, too, is fugal; but instead of having a subject of its own, it combines the subjects of all the other main fugal movements (Ex.2.16). The idea of re-using the material of a mass’s first movement in its last was of course nothing new, for reasons both of convenience and coherence;<sup>56</sup> but the *Missa de Spiritu Sancto* takes the principle to an entirely new level. This thematic summation of the whole work is surely one of the most remarkable multi-movement contrapuntal tours de force outside of *Die Kunst der Fuge*.

Wesley’s mass was written with no thought of practical performance, and largely forgotten thereafter—not least, perhaps, because in later life he found the whole episode an embarrassment. Neither of these two facts are true of what Lightwood calls the ‘mournful history’ of his setting of Psalm 111, the *Confitebor*.<sup>57</sup> During the late 1790s Wesley was taking an increasingly important role in the Lenten oratorio concerts at Covent Garden. His role was usually as organist: playing continuo for the main choral works, and a concerto during the interval, but in February 1799 his *Ode to St Cecilia* achieved performance at one of these concerts. Although we know almost nothing about this concert, according to Wesley’s *Reminiscences* the house was ‘crammed’ and the *Ode* was ‘universally approved and applauded.’<sup>58</sup>

It seems at least likely that the *Confitebor* was written in the hope of following up this success during the following year’s series—Olleson suggests that Wesley may

<sup>56</sup> See, for example, Haydn’s *Missa Sancti Nicolai* Hob.XXII/6, or Mozart’s ‘Coronation’ Mass K.317.

<sup>57</sup> J. Lightwood, *Samuel Wesley, musician: the story of his life* (London: Epworth, 1937), p.105.

<sup>58</sup> Olleson, *Wesley*, pp.58-9.

even have had an informal agreement with John Ashley, the manager at Covent Garden.<sup>59</sup> Unfortunately 1800 was the year in which Haydn's *Creation* swept all before it, and no performance of the *Confitebor* eventuated. 'The Confitebor shall be ready, & I am sorry to say that Voices and instruments appropriate, cannot be ready also' he remarked at the time.<sup>60</sup> The first performance had to wait more than twenty years, until May 1826. But if in 1800 it had been trumped by Haydn's *Creation*, in 1826 it was overshadowed by Weber's *Oberon*.<sup>61</sup> The concert was reported briefly in that month's *Harmonicon*, but made no further impression, and the work disappeared again from sight. Efforts by Samuel and (after his death) by his daughter Eliza to have it published came to nothing. His son, Samuel Sebastian, managed to bring about a partial performance in 1868, and Nicholas Temperley refers to another in 1892.<sup>62</sup> But it was not until 1972 that Samuel Wesley's *Confitebor* received its second performance. If the obscurity of his *Missa de Spiritu Sancto* is the consequence of a uniquely personal set of circumstances, in the case of his *Confitebor* Samuel Wesley's experience is prophetically all too typical of the ambitious but thwarted composer of today, writing major works that receive only the most occasional performance.

Like the *Missa*, the *Confitebor* has its roots in the Neapolitan concerted church music of the middle of century (Temperley provides a list of composers he would probably have been familiar with through the embassy chapels who could have supplied models),<sup>63</sup> though perhaps more of the influence of Handel and Haydn can be seen here. The quantity of fugue is significantly less than in the mass. While the

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<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.* p.59.

<sup>60</sup> Letter to Christian Ignatius Latrobe, 2 Feb 1800, in M. Kassler and P. Olleson, 'New Samuel Wesleyana', *Musical Times* 144/1883 (Summer 2003), 49.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p.188-9.

<sup>62</sup> Review of John Marsh's edition, *Notes*, Second Series 31/1 (September 1980), 129. A fascinating review of the 1868 performance by Henry C. Lunn can be found in *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 13/308 (October 1, 1868), 535. He found the choral sections 'excellent examples of a school founded upon the grandest models', but was less impressed with the solo movements, hearing the air 'Fidelia omina mandata ejus' for example as 'a mere florid display for a soprano voice, without a particle of religious feeling throughout'.

<sup>63</sup> Temperley, *Confitebor* review, 129-30.

‘Magna opera Domini’ (no.2) continually threatens to become a fugue, and the ‘Virtutem operum suorum’ (no.6) contains a good deal of incidental imitation, the only movement properly so-called is ‘Mandavit in aeternum’ (no.10). The archaism of its *colla voce* orchestration and *antico* texture is in keeping with the text (‘He has commanded his covenant for ever’), but—unexpectedly perhaps—this turns out to be one of the most original movements of the work.

The exposition is unusual, consisting as it does of a three-voice combination from the very beginning (Ex.2.17). The core of this combination is a kind of ‘cantus firmus’, initially a monotone (a stylised echo of Gregorian psalmody?), that descends an entire octave step by step when the two other voices enter. The two accompanying voices descend sequentially, passing the same motive back and forth before cadencing as the next entry begins. Since three voices are present in even the first entry, we might expect the movement as a whole to have a relatively massive, dense texture. Instead, like Handel in ‘Lift up your heads’ (*Messiah*), Wesley exploits his five-part SSATB texture chiefly for contrasts between higher and lower groups of voices.

Unlike Handel, however, there no tutti passages to set this procedure into relief—the texture, in fact, is decidedly thin, with most entries being presented in three or even two voices. This is a problem, because there are no episodes, nor really any independent counterpoint. The entries of this combination cover an exceptionally wide range of keys: from the tonic, G minor to the very distant region of F sharp minor (b.192). There are no abrupt tonal juxtapositions; the journey is accomplished in gradual steps (B flat in b.118 – D minor – A minor – C – G – D – B minor – F sharp minor), and the return in a similar manner.

This extensive tonal range has attracted the attention of previous commentators,<sup>64</sup> but it alone is not sufficient to give interest to a texture which consists almost entirely of repetitions of the subject-combination (itself repetitious), with no other material to give it variety. One sympathises with H. Diack Johnstone when he finds the fugue ‘unduly protracted’.<sup>65</sup> Once we have reached this distant point, however, things get more exciting and the movement more than redeems itself. In b.208 the orchestra, which has hitherto docilely followed the voices *alla capella*, suddenly takes up an independent role, and from then on the piece is effectively a double-choir motet for voices and orchestra. Whether recalling the polychoral writing of Gabrieli (which he just possibly may have known) or the more immediate example of Handel’s *Israel in Egypt*, the rest of the movement exploits this opposition to full dramatic effect (Ex.2.18). In the fourth system of Ex.2.18 we see Wesley find Sullivan’s ‘lost chord’ 78 years before Sullivan did.

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<sup>64</sup> J. Marsh, ‘Samuel Wesley’s “Confitebor”’, *Musical Times* 113/1552 (June 1972), 610; Olleson, *Wesley*, p.256.

<sup>65</sup> Review of John Marsh’s edition of the *Confitebor*, *Music & Letters* 60/4 (October 1979), 485.



Throughout the nineteenth century this chord (flat VII) would serve as a symbol for the ‘antique’; to find it here in 1799 is a remarkably prescient anticipation of Romantic archaism.<sup>66</sup> Equally striking in a different way is the entry of the timpani in b.279, and with the thunder of Mount Sinai (‘Sanctum et terribile nomen ejus’, impressively—and uniquely—stated just once) the movement closes. What began as a contrapuntal exercise ends in an apocalyptic vision.

Most commentators second Wesley’s verdict that the *Confitebor* was his masterpiece. Olleson finds it ‘worthy companion to Haydn’s *Creation* and *The Seasons* as an outstanding oratorio of the period’;<sup>67</sup> which leads us to ask: if its first performances had been more propitious, might the *Confitebor* have taken its place alongside the oratorios of Handel, Haydn, and Mendelssohn, performed and loved, hackneyed and abused as fixtures of the choral repertory? Any doubt upon that score arises from the text, rather than the music. Whatever the deficiencies of Haydn’s libretti (third-hand Milton or Thompson), at even their most egregious they have a vernacular immediacy that the *Confitebor* lacks. So too with Handel and Mendelssohn. Although the Latin is always set appropriately and expressively, one

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<sup>66</sup> It was not, of course, unusual in the context of Wesley’s own oeuvre, for he often adopted this style in his Catholic liturgical music. It was rare for it to appear on the concert stage, however. See pp.363-5 below for another early example of Romantic archaism and further discussion on this point.

<sup>67</sup> Olleson, *Wesley*, p.260.

gets the impression that projecting the text itself was not one of Wesley's especial priorities. As a result, in performance the *Confitebor* comes across essentially as an enormous symphony for voices and orchestra—a purely musical work, rather than the fusion of music and text which is so much a part of the English choral tradition. It is a impressive achievement and a fine piece of music, but its roots lay outside this tradition and so it is no surprise perhaps that it never found a home there.

A fugue for string quartet, KO 526, that he wrote around this time<sup>68</sup> reflects his engagement with the Covent Garden oratorios in a very different way. This remarkable movement is based upon the two subjects of the fugue that concludes the second part of Haydn's *Creation*.<sup>69</sup> Haydn's fugue is a fine piece of post-Handelian rhetoric, fully exploiting the massiveness of the choral ensemble and the brilliance of the orchestra to supply a resounding conclusion to the second part of the oratorio. Preceded by eight bars of thematically unrelated homophonic introduction, it shows a nice balance between contrapuntal interplay and homophonic peroration, with enough learned device to generate interest and excitement (brief, mostly free stretti in bb.18-20, 27-28, 30-33, 38-39, 51-52) but no more than is necessary.

Wesley's movement—his '*Grosse Fuge*', if you will—is nearly four times as long as its model (264 bars compared to 68), and exploits the contrapuntal possibilities of its subjects to a vastly greater extent. In no sense is this a re-writing of the Haydn; from the very first it is a totally different fugue built upon the same subject. Even Wesley's version of the theme differs somewhat from Haydn's (Ex.2.19). After Haydn's theme reaches the B flat in its second bar, it descends a fourth but returns to cadence upon this note. Wesley, in contrast, extends this descent all the way to the lower B flat, with the sequential countersubject following it down. It is, in fact, remarkably similar in outline to the 'Mandavit in aeternum' fugue discussed above.

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<sup>68</sup> The autograph parts (BL Add 35007) are dated 31 August 1800.

<sup>69</sup> No.27c, 'Achieved in the glorious work'; the text to the fugue itself is 'Glory to his name forever. He sole on high exalted reigns. Hallelujah.'

Here, however (especially once the first group of entries is past), the counterpoint is more fluid and less predictable, and there is greater variety in the number of voices employed at any given moment. There is no approach to the enormous tonal range of the earlier fugue; instead he uses other means of achieving variety. Unlike the *Creation* fugue, which in typical Baroque fashion maintains a consistent aggregate motion of quavers and semiquavers throughout, Wesley's includes several different kinds of rhythmic movement. However desirable this may be from the point of view of sustaining interest over the fugue's ten-minute length, it is in merely a sense a by-product of Wesley's exhaustive treatment of his thematic material.

The first two groups of entries, in the tonic then in the relative minor (bb.1-30 and 29-71) treat the subjects in their original form. In this increasingly inventive



texture there is a certain amount of stretto and a good deal of free imitation, and while one or other of the subjects occasionally appears *per arsin et thesin* (with accents reversed: bb.43, 58-61, 66-70) their shape remains the same. At b.71, however, they undergo their first transformation: both are inverted, and the first subject has to be altered rhythmically to allow for the fact that appoggiaturas cannot resolve upwards in the same way they do downwards (Ex.2.20).

After this combination (which does not, perhaps, work quite as well as the original) has been presented in all the voices, the subjects enter *recte* again (b.92), and both forms interact freely during the next section of the fugue although there are few complete entries. In b.150 both subjects enter in augmentation, accompanied by fragments of themselves. For the first time the aggregate motion of crotchets and quavers is largely abandoned, giving a welcome (though stylistically unusual) sense of rhythmic relaxation. The subjects appear twice more in augmentation (b.159, 168) then, after a brief episode in the tonic minor, the head motive of the subject appears in *double* augmentation at b.197. Although the tail of the subject never appears thus, the second subject is likewise doubly augmented—in stretto—at b.208 (Ex.2.21).



The difficulty of this contrapuntal procedure results in a few unusual progressions, recalling those that arise under similar circumstances in the D sharp minor fugue from *WTC II* (which Wesley at this stage could not have known). The clearly articulated half-close that follows ushers in a final section in which the two subjects appear once again, this time rather abruptly and unexpectedly in diminution (b.226). Although, after an obsessive—even manic—concentration upon the diminished head motive in bb.237-51, the more relaxed movement of the opening returns, this motive is diminished yet further in the last three bars of the piece. In other words, this six-note motive is presented at no fewer than five rhythmic levels (the countersubject is present at four). In its learning and its scale—if not, perhaps, its musical significance—this fugue dwarfs the one it took its subject from. Olleson ascribes its genesis in a general way to Wesley’s ‘intense interest in fugue at this time’; but perhaps we could suggest a more specific reason for its existence?<sup>70</sup> If, as we have speculated, the advent of Haydn’s *Creation* was part of the reason that Wesley’s *Confitebor* never got a hearing, the composition of such a fugue on a subject from this work may have been a gesture not just of homage, but of creative self-assertion as well: plumbing the depths of contrapuntal artifice where the greater composer had merely scratched the surface.

## ORGAN MUSIC

It was soon after this that he began to publish the series of voluntaries, op.6, that probably remain his best-known works. Although together they make up a round dozen (a typical number for such a set) and share the same opus number, they were

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<sup>70</sup> Olleson, *Wesley*, 292.

published separately over the next two decades.<sup>71</sup> It is remarkable how little stylistic change there is between the first and the last.

We have seen how stable a form the English voluntary had become in the middle of the eighteenth century. Early in the nineteenth century a new generation of organists—William Russell (1777-1813), Thomas Adams (1785-1858), and Samuel Wesley himself—expanded the genre considerably. Three or four movements were now common, and they tended to be longer and more elaborate in texture. Pedal parts—absent in the eighteenth century—began to appear with greater frequency. Although actual sonata- or symphony-like movements were rare, the melodic phraseology of these voluntaries was more up to date; and we can find marches, airs, variations, and even (in Russell's First Set of 1804) a 'Cornet a la Polacca' alongside the older movement types.<sup>72</sup> On the other hand, there was a resurgence in the popularity of dotted, French overture-like opening movements and a noticeable increase in the quantity of fugal writing. In Wesley's op.6, for example, eleven out of the twelve contain a substantial, extended fugue, usually as a finale.

Wesley's counterpoint here is not quite as obsessive as in the works discussed above; which is probably a good thing. Although it is seldom very interesting in and of itself, all the fugues in the op.6 voluntaries are worth playing for one reason or another. The subject of the fugue in the first voluntary for example has an extraordinary melodic energy, ascending an octave and a third in the first two bars (Ex.2.22). The climax of the fugue, though hardly elaborate counterpoint, is a fine realisation of the subject's potential (Ex.2.23). The subject of the fugue in the sixth voluntary is highly original in its implied cross-rhythms (Ex.2.24), and the fugue itself is leavened by recurrences of the attractively proto-Mendelssohnian air that introduced

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<sup>71</sup> Olleson's partly conjectural publication dates (*Wesley*, pp.298-99) are as follows: no.1: 1802, nos.2-4: 1803, no.5: 1804, no.6: 1805, nos.7-8: 1806, no.9: unknown, no.10: 1814, no.11: 1817 or earlier, no.12: ?1823.

<sup>72</sup> The 'cornet' was a solo stop, much used in eighteenth-century voluntaries.

it.<sup>73</sup> That of the fourth voluntary is based on the ‘Non nobis domine’ attributed to William Byrd (making full use of the possibilities for stretto in its canonic subject), and that of number eight ends with a striking unison passage (Ex.2.25). The subject of number seven’s fugue is trenchant in its chromaticism, but at the same time retains a clear sense of tonic (the moment in b.5 where the sequence is unexpectedly shifted up a sixth is an imaginative touch, too: Ex.2.26). In fact, a table of all the fugal subjects contained in op.6 would show an exceptionally wide variety of strongly characterised themes. It is little wonder that he responded so strongly to the even greater individuality of the *WTC* fugues he was about to encounter.

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<sup>73</sup> You can see also in Ex.2.24 something of Wesley’s casual way of building up an exposition; where did the third voice in b.6 come from?



When he chooses to depend upon the contrapuntal texture alone, as in the *antico* fugues from voluntaries three and four, his fugal technique is well up to the job. More fun, however, are the vigorous, spontaneous fugues like those of the first and eighth voluntaries, where he is able to give his wayward imagination free reign. Throughout the set there is a surprisingly large proportion of two-part writing, much of the counterpoint is built up from easily transposable modules, and there are very few entries in inner voices; but one notices these marks of the born improviser only in retrospect, so to speak, as one examines the score. They do not thrust themselves upon our attention; and when performing these voluntaries one is carried away (as were those who heard him extemporise) by Wesley's effortless volubility, and the fine, rhetorical strokes he is able to produce time and time again.

It was during the publication of this set that Samuel Wesley first encountered of the music of Johann Sebastian Bach (according to the chronology on p.164 it would probably have occurred around the time he was publishing nos.7 and 8; certainly before number 10). The question that immediately comes to mind is of course: how did this cataclysmic event affect the style of these voluntaries? Rather surprisingly, the answer appears to be: hardly at all. There is no stylistic chasm between (say) no.8 and no.10. If we did not know that the set had been published over twenty years, we would not have guessed.

There are occasional points in the later voluntaries where we might see traces of Bach's influence. If the passage in Ex.2.23—so strongly reminiscent of certain kinds of Bachian orchestral texture—and the searching chromaticism of the third voluntary cannot be so attributed (having been written too early), certain passages of intricate two-part counterpoint in the first movement of number ten (Ex.2.27) do remind one of some of the *WTC* preludes.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Peter Williams has cited the first movement of op.6/11 for the same reason: 'J. S. Bach and English organ music', *Music & Letters* 44/2 (April 1963), 147.

Likewise does the fugue subject of number ten suggest some of the ‘characteristic’ fugues, notably the D minor fugue of *WTC I* (Ex.2.28); although, as we have noted, the presence of original and imaginative subjects in Wesley’s output was no novelty).





A little more Bach can be seen, perhaps, in some of Wesley's later organ music. The sensitive two- and three-part writing of some of his 'Twelve [*recte* thirteen] short pieces for the organ with a full voluntary added' (1816) may have Bachian roots; and there is an even clearer reference to the *WTC* fugue cited above in the 'full voluntary' which closes the set. The most striking evidence of Bach's influence, however, occurs at the end of a voluntary in C minor from 1826 dedicated to Thomas Adams (KO 606). The fugue in question is densely contrapuntal, its first hundred or so bars replete with inversion and stretto (all carefully annotated with the same symbols Wesley used in his edition of the *WTC*); but the resemblance becomes unmistakable in b.114 when, for the first time, the pedals enter with the subject in augmentation (Ex.2.29). There follows an extended dominant pedal underneath a doubly augmented treble entry, after which the fugue concludes. Olleson cites Bach's *pedaliter* Fugue in C BWV 547 in this connection, which likewise withholds the pedal until an entry in augmentation near the end;<sup>75</sup> a more accessible model might have been the C minor fugue from *WTC* II.

KO 606 is exceptional, however, in its indebtedness. The voluntary in B flat KO 622 he wrote three years later for Thomas Attwood returns to—and is perhaps the crowning example of—his free-wheeling, improvisatory fugal style, its wide ranging and energetic subject strongly reminiscent of that in Handel's Concerto Grosso in F op.6/2 (Ex.2.30).

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<sup>75</sup> *Wesley*, p.308.

The fugues of the other major late voluntaries—for Thomas Adams in G (KO 607, c.1826-30) and William Drummer (KO 623 1828), are equally far from the dense Bachian counterpoint of KO 606. This is even truer of the large quantity of music for ‘young organists’ he wrote in later life—*6 introducing voluntaries and a loud voluntary* KO 610 (1831), *6 organ voluntaries composed for the use of young organists* KO 613 (c.1831) *6 fugues with introduction for young organists* KO 612 (c.1834), preludes and fugues for Eliza KO 634 and KO 635 (c.1833), etc.—which tend to have the defects we ascribed to his improvisatory approach without its virtues. Even here, there are few movements show no trace whatsoever of his gift for melody, no stroke of originality; but evidence of J. S. Bach’s influence remains hard to see. To find clearer evidence of his effect upon Wesley’s compositional style, we will have to look elsewhere—in some rather unexpected places, perhaps.

## WESLEY THE EVANGELIST

Before we do so, it might be wise to retrace our steps and recount the kindling of Wesley’s enthusiasm for the music of J. S. Bach. According to his own account, it was the young George Frederick Pinto (1785-1806) who introduced him to this music by lending him his copy of the *WTC*, probably around 1804; certainly by 1807 he was fully convinced, as the very well known ‘Bach letters’ (published by his daughter Eliza in 1875), testify.<sup>76</sup> These letters give a striking picture of the ‘Bach movement’ at its very inception. Peter Williams has pointed out in the preface to his facsimile edition that the English Bach movement cannot be simply equated with the activities of Samuel Wesley himself—a number of other people were and had been actively engaged in propagating J. S. Bach’s music.<sup>77</sup> It would be rash to assume that Wesley’s

<sup>76</sup> See the discussion in Olleson, *Wesley*, pp.71-72 and 301.

<sup>77</sup> *The Wesley Bach letters*, ed. P. Williams (London: Novello, 1988), pp.viii-xiii.

attitudes were representative, or even very influential. The music of J. S. Bach remained a minority taste for much of the nineteenth century. Most of his admirers—many of them expatriate Germans—came from outside the musical establishment (could Bach have appealed so much to Samuel Wesley otherwise?) Nevertheless, for Wesley at least, what the Bach movement lacked in size and influence it made up in passion and cohesion. At one point he proposed ‘the Formation of a junto among ourselves, composed of Characters who sincerely and conscientiously admit and adhere to the superior excellence of the great Musical High Priest; and who will bend their Minds to a Zealous Promotion of advancing the Cause of Truth and Perfection’, this ‘In order to ascertain who are verily and indeed “The Israelites in whom is no guile”’;<sup>78</sup> a *Dauidsbund* before Schumann, so to speak. As with the *Dauidsbund*, it is doubtful whether Wesley’s ‘junto’ had a very concrete existence outside its creator’s mind. He goes on to compare the state of music in England to that of the Roman church before the activities of Martin Luther, and advocates a form of musical Reformation: ‘It is high Time that *some* Amendment should take place in the Republic of Musick, and I know of no engine equally powerful with the immortal and adamantine Pillars of Sebastian’s Harmony. I really think that our constant and unremitted question to *all* who call themselves Friends to excellence should be “Who is on our side—who?”’

The theological underpinning of Samuel Wesley’s rhetoric goes much further than the occasional religious metaphor. Unlike that of many other nineteenth-century musical theorists and critics it is in no way submerged, but fairly leaps off the page. The first of his ‘Bach’ letters begins by referring to ‘*Saint* Sebastian’, his works ‘a musical Bible’, speaking of ‘our Demi-God’, and Wesley’s own ‘profound admiration (and Adoration if you like it as well)’—all this on the very first page.

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<sup>78</sup> Letter to Benjamin Jacob, 13 August 1808, Olleson, *Letters*, p.71.

Peter Williams has pointed out that the Surrey Chapel (where the letters' recipient, Benjamin Jacob, was organist) was a centre of musical as well as ecclesiastical Nonconformity; the same people who were interested in J. S. Bach in 1800 had been interested in J. G. Vogler ten years earlier. Williams speaks of this as 'backing the wrong horse', but at the time there was no sign that the music of J. S. Bach (unlike that of Vogler) was one day to become the 'immortal and adamant Pillars' of a new musical establishment. One might get a feel for their position around 1800 by comparing the situation today of advocates for a composer like, say, Havergal Brian: 'the last great undiscovered twentieth century English composer', in the words of the Havergal Brian Society (website: <http://www.havergalbrian.org/>).<sup>79</sup>

Few probably shared Samuel Wesley's potentially heretical theological presuppositions; yet it is perhaps hardly surprising that the son and nephew of two of England's greatest evangelists should come to think of the music of Bach in evangelical terms. Although we do not know the details of Wesley's own conversion, he describes how '[Bach's] Compositions had opened to me an entirely new musical World, which was to me at least as surprizing as (when a Child) I was thunderstruck by the opening of the Dettington Te-Deum in the Bristol Cathedral, with about an hundred Performers (a great Band in those Days.)'<sup>80</sup> From this point onward he devoted himself to '...the solid & permanent Establishment of truth, & overthrow of Ignorance, Prejudice, & Puppyism with regard to our mighty Master.'<sup>81</sup>

It is difficult—perhaps impossible—to be sure how much he meant by his religious language. The discourses of conversion, of temptation, of evangelism, have their own integrity, and in a sense sustain themselves. Was he sincere in his quasi-deification of J. S. Bach; or did he have his tongue in his cheek, at least half-

<sup>79</sup> (Accessed 10 December 2006.) The works of Havergal Brian today: vast, unmanageable, gothic, old-fashioned—and unperformed—are a good analogue for the way in which J. S. Bach's oeuvre was generally seen in the later eighteenth century.

<sup>80</sup> Letter to Jacob, 17 September 1808, Olleson, *Letters*, p.75.

<sup>81</sup> Letter to ?C. F. Horn, ?c.30 September 1809, *ibid.*, p. 126.

consciously parodying his Methodist origins? Or was he in some highly post-modern intermediate state, letting the language create the reality without too much concern about what it all might ‘mean’?

Samuel Wesley’s ‘star’ convert was, of course, Charles Burney.<sup>82</sup> Burney had been a family friend in Samuel’s youth, and around 1799 he renewed the acquaintance. By the time Wesley became interested in J. S. Bach, Burney had effectively retired from public musical life. The friendship had much to offer both. For Burney, Wesley was a way of maintaining contact with London’s burgeoning musical life (and, if his letters are any indication, Wesley must have been an engagingly forthright companion). To Wesley, Burney represented the kind of cultivated, educated society from which he was himself excluded for social, temperamental, and financial reasons.

When writing about Burney to others (not so much when writing to Burney himself), Wesley continually interprets his new-found interest in J. S. Bach according to this schema: ‘I have however much Satisfaction in being able to assure you *from my own personal Experience* that his present judgement of our Demi-God is of a very different Nature from that at the Time he imprudently, incautiously, and we may add, *ignorantly* pronounced so rash & false a verdict.’<sup>83</sup> ‘The Triumph of Burney over his own Ignorance & Prejudice is such a glorious Event that surely we ought to make *some* Sacrifice to enjoy it. . . . Think of what we shall have to announce to the Public; that Dr Burney (who has heard almost all the Music of other Folks) should be listening with Delight at almost 90 years old, to an Author whom he so unknowingly & rashly had condemned!’<sup>84</sup>

In order to do this he had to distort two aspects of Burney’s attitude. First of

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<sup>82</sup> See S. J. Rogal, ‘For the love of Bach: The Charles Burney-Samuel Wesley correspondence’, *Bach: The journal of the Riemenschneider Bach Institute* 23/1 (Spring-Summer 1992), 31-37, and P. Olleson, ‘Dr. Burney, Samuel Wesley, and J. S. Bach’s “Goldberg variations”’ in *The Rosaleen Moldenhauer memorial: Music history from primary sources—A guide to the Moldenhauer Archives* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 2000), 169-175; at <http://rs6.loc.gov/ammem/collections/moldenhauer/2428120.pdf> (accessed 10 December 2006).

<sup>83</sup> Letter to Jacob, 17 September 1808, Olleson, *Letters*, p.75.

<sup>84</sup> Letter to ?Jacob, ?30 September 1809, *ibid.*, p.124.

all, he had to present the unregenerate Burney as an idolatrous Handelian. Posterity has tended to see him this way, but even a moderately careful reading of his works shows that this is simply not true. A sincere admirer of Handel at what he considered his best, he did not hesitate to criticise him where (in Burney's view) he fell below this standard, or had been superseded by later composers. At least, this was true in private; Roger Lonsdale and Kerry Grant have documented the tortuous process by which, when drafting his publications, he would sometimes alter or even reverse critical judgements, presumably with his intended readership in mind.<sup>85</sup> Burney may not have been a single-minded Handelian, but many potential patrons were, and unlike Hawkins (who had an independent income) Burney was dependent upon noble patronage for much of his livelihood.

Secondly, he had to emphasise Burney's former distaste for J. S. Bach. The attitude displayed in the *History and Present State of Music in Germany, the Netherlands, and United Provinces*, however, is by no means as negative as often thought. While hardly granting Bach the pre-eminence he is usually accorded today, Burney speaks of him with the tone of qualified approval he used for most of the composers he admired. In fact, he felt (with some justice) that *he* deserved the credit for introducing the name of J. S. Bach to the English musical public, and—in private—complained that Samuel Wesley had stolen his thunder: 'I can boast of being the first to make my country acquainted with J. Seb. Bach, for when my *German tour* was first published, there were perhaps not above four professors in the Kingdom who had ever heard his name.'<sup>86</sup>

The reason that Burney was not exclusively a Handelian was that it was not in

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<sup>85</sup> K. Grant, *Dr Burney as critic and historian of music* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1983), pp.287-90. R. Lonsdale, *Dr Charles Burney: a literary biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), pp.296-314 in particular tells of the agonising process of drafting his account of the 1784 Handel Commemoration, and the intense editorial pressure he was under from the Handelian bloc—one of whom was the King himself.

<sup>86</sup> Annotation to a draft of a letter to Wesley, 17 October 1808, quoted in Grant, *Dr Burney*, p.194.

his nature to be exclusive about anything musical. His career had begun in the 1740s, with a musical world dominated by Handel, Geminiani, and Domenico Scarlatti. He lacked, however, the antiquarian cast of mind possessed by his contemporary Hawkins,<sup>87</sup> and had no desire to reflect longingly upon the glories of the past. Instead, as generation succeeded generation: Arne, Boyce, Abel, J. C. Bach, Sacchini, Giordani, Gluck, and eventually Haydn and Mozart, he continued to expand his horizons and keep up with the latest developments. Indeed, this colleague of Handel even remarked favourably on certain pieces of ‘that gigantic youth Beethoven, Whose feet, beyond a doubt are cloven’<sup>88</sup> when he came across them in 1803. In the light of this, his late development of a taste for J. S. Bach could be seen partly as a continuation of this diversifying process, partly as an example of his willingness to keep abreast of contemporary developments in musical taste. For Samuel Wesley, Bach was ‘the greatest Master of Harmony in any Age or Country,’<sup>89</sup> ‘the very Quintessence of all musical Excellence’,<sup>90</sup> ‘the great Musical High Priest’,<sup>91</sup> and, when all epithets failed, simply: ‘*the MAN*’.<sup>92</sup> By contrast: ‘Bach was not the greatest of all musicians in Burney’s estimation, but he never assigned that honor to anyone because in his view music was in the process of continuous refinement.’<sup>93</sup> There was simply no room for such a concept in Burney’s capacious mind.

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that, if Burney did not quite fulfil Wesley’s hopes by abjuring his former ways, his attitude does seem to have altered by his

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<sup>87</sup> This would seem to be a strange qualification for a historian, but there is no doubt about the relief with which he concludes his treatment of Medieval and Renaissance music, and his growing ease and enjoyment as he approaches the music of his own time. It is in fact precisely this sympathy with his contemporaries that makes him such a valuable commentator.

<sup>88</sup> From a poem Burney wrote in 1804, quoted in Lonsdale, *Burney*, p.478.

<sup>89</sup> Letter to Jacob, 17 October 1808, Olleson, *Letters*, p.75.

<sup>90</sup> Letter to Jacob, 2 March 1809, *ibid.*, p.99.

<sup>91</sup> Letter to Benjamin Jacob, 13 August 1808, *ibid.*, p.71.

<sup>92</sup> ‘...(which expression I now prefer to any Epithet of ‘*great*’ or ‘*wonderful*’, &c, which are not only common, but *weak*, as is every other Epithet applied to one whom none can sufficiently praise)’; in letters to Jacob: 4 September 1809, 5 November 1809, and 24 November 1809 (*ibid.*, pp.117, 128, and 130)—although earlier he had his doubts, speaking of ‘our matchless Man (if Man he may be called)’ (19 October 1808, p.81).

<sup>93</sup> Grant, *Burney*, p.197.



friend's advocacy; certainly he was content to be regarded as one of Wesley's 'junto', a situation difficult to imagine forty years previously.

Samuel Wesley spent an extraordinary amount of time and effort forwarding this cause. Along with his close friends Charles Frederick Horn, Benjamin Jacob, and Vincent Novello, he argued with acquaintances, performed Bach's music wherever he found opportunity, delivered lecture series, and prepared first editions and arrangements of Bach works. Sometimes, as with Burney, he was successful in winning converts; sometimes, as ultimately with his brother, he was not. The letters are highly optimistic in tone: 'I made a Point of playing him (even at their Glee Parties, upon the Piano Forte) wherever an Evening Meeting took place.—Magna est Veritas, et prævalebit:—In the present Case I may say *præveluit*, for it surprized me to witness how they drank in every note.'<sup>94</sup> 'Chappel at Birchall's tells me that the People tease his Soul out for the *Fugues*: that the eternal Question is, "when does Mr Wesley intend to bring forward the Fugues in all the 24 Keys?"'<sup>95</sup> Only occasionally does doubt creep in: 'The Subscribers in general have been exceedingly remiss in their Applications for the 3d Number [of the *WTC*], which has been one Reason (& the chief one) for the remaining Book being so long delayed.'<sup>96</sup>

In all this activity, neither Samuel Wesley nor any of his contemporaries were especially concerned with 'authenticity' (or 'historical awareness') of performance practice. It never occurred to anyone to seek out a harpsichord or clavichord to play the *WTC*; throughout Europe, it came to be—indeed, still is—regarded as the foundation of the piano repertoire. In England, too, another possibility emerged at this time. Samuel Wesley writes: 'Bach composed the 48 Preludes & Fugues expressly for the Purpose of making Proficients on the Clavier in all the 24 Keys, & he calls it (I

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<sup>94</sup> Letter to Burney, 7 August 1808, *ibid.*, p.67, describing a trip to Cambridge in June and July; his audience was composed of Cambridge academics and other worthies. See Olleson, *Wesley*, pp.78-79

<sup>95</sup> Letter to ?Horn (originally thought to be addressed to Jacob), ?30 September 1809, *ibid.*, p.125.

<sup>96</sup> Letter to Jacob, 10 May 1813, *ibid.*, p.201.

believe) in German, *the compleatly well tempered Clavier*, which you know is alike applicable to Clavichord, Harpsichord, Piano Forte, or Organ but there is no Question that it is only on the Organ their sublime & beautiful Effects can be truly heard'.<sup>97</sup> For the English organists of this time: William Russell, Thomas Adams, and Wesley himself, a performance on the organ of a Bach prelude and fugue almost always refers to one from the *WTC*. W. T. Best, the first of the modern recital organists, spoke of how Thomas Adams 'would regale us with one of the "48", supplying a droning pedal when his bunions were propitious.'<sup>98</sup> Wesley may have been correct about their non keyboard-specific nature; J. S. Bach kept these pieces within the standard range of the organ of his time (*C-c'''*), at times recomposing material in order to do so. The main reason for this English practice, however, was the difficulty involved in performing his *pedaliter* works. The English organ had very little in common with its Germanic counterpart, lacking both a full secondary manual<sup>99</sup> and a pedal division. Samuel Wesley and his associates solved the latter problem by treating these pieces as duets. One of the impressive aspects of Wesley's devotion to Bach was his refusal to limit himself to the relative convenience of the *WTC*—he was not about to let a mere technical difficulty prevent him from making the organ works known. Wesley's instruments and performance opportunities were very different from those of J. S. Bach, and he had no inhibitions about presenting Bach's music in what he felt was the best possible light: 'we are to have some Sebastian [twelve fugues, all except two from the *WTC*], arranged by Horn for 2 Violins, Tenor & Bass, & a glorious Effect they

<sup>97</sup> Letter to William Crotch, 25 November 1808, *ibid.*, p.89. This firm association in Wesley's mind between J. S. Bach and the organ makes it all the more more curious that, as we have seen, there is so little sign of Bach's style in his own organ music.

<sup>98</sup> Letter from Best to the (anonymous) author, quoted in: 'The organ recital: A contribution towards its history', *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 40/679 (September 1, 1899), 603. On the other hand Samuel Wesley spoke very highly of Adams' pedal technique (Olleson, *Wesley*, p.306). Is this a case of how expectations had changed between the beginning and the end of the century? Or had Adams' technique declined by the time Best heard him (perhaps when he was living in London between 1852 and 1855)?

<sup>99</sup> The contemporary English swell often had only a partial compass, and lacked the assertive character of the German *Rückpositiv* or *Oberwerk*.

produce, as you may guess.—What must they do in a full Orchestra!’<sup>100</sup> This was indeed to happen; among the pieces he arranged for orchestra were the ‘St Anne’ Prelude and Fugue BWV 552 (with obbligato organ part), the D major fugue from the first book of the *WTC*, and the F major fugue from the second. The general attitude is best communicated when Vincent Novello describes how, in performing the ‘St Ann’ arrangement, he and Wesley ‘played the obbligato organ part as a Duett on that occasion, each filling in the harmonies according to the feeling of the moment, and endeavouring to enrich the effect to the utmost, for the sake of Master Sebastian.’<sup>101</sup> A continuum can be traced from their activities as copyists of Bach sources, to the near-*Urtext* of the *WTC* and trio sonata editions, to Horn’s transcriptions for string quartet, to the more elaborate arrangements for orchestra, to introductions newly written for a few of these arrangements, to entirely new works modelled on those of J. S. Bach.

## BACH MEETS FOLK

Given the strong association in Wesley’s mind between Bach’s music (even the *WTC*) and the organ, it is surprising how little impact the style of J. S. Bach had upon his own organ music, as we have seen. By contrast, some of the most striking evidence of this influence can be seen in—of all places—the piano music Wesley wrote for popular consumption.

The nineteenth century was the first to fully realise the commercial possibilities of music publishing. The most popular genres (as has perhaps always been the case) were those that re-used already familiar tunes: variations, rondos, and transcriptions. Throughout the nineteenth century transcriptions formed an important part of the average music lover’s life. In the absence of recording technology, there was literally

<sup>100</sup> Letter to Jacob, 19 October 1808, Olleson, *Letters*, p.81.

<sup>101</sup> Note to the score, quoted by F. G. E[dwards], ‘Bach’s music in England (continued)’, *Musical Times* 37/644 (October 1896), 655.

no other way one could hear operas, symphonies, and oratorios outside the opera house or concert room (Wesley himself made many arrangements of Handel oratorio movements). However, once transcribed, there was no reason not to exploit the tune further and make it the occasion for whatever virtuosity the purchaser was capable of.<sup>102</sup> Composers soon became adept at getting the greatest brilliance from the meanest technique. Very few variation sets of Wesley's time broke the mould completely, although many succeeded through the skill and melodic instinct with which they exploited common materials. A standard procedure was to begin with a slow or rhapsodic introduction; then the theme would be followed by a series of variations, arithmetically decreasing the note-value each time and increasing the virtuosity. The penultimate variation was usually slower and highly decorated, while the last was often an extended fantasia on the tune, sometimes in a different time-signature.

In England the practice was the same as on the continent, with one difference. The success of numerous publications from Playford's *Dancing Master* to the *Beggars Opera* to Moore's *Irish Melodies* had ensured a continuing vogue for folk (or folk-like) melodies, and these formed an important part of the stock in trade of the English variation-manufacturers. Haydn, Beethoven, Clementi, Pleyel, and Kozeluch all produced arrangements of or variations on British folk tunes for this market. This influence was also perceptible in the sonatas (and especially the sonatinas)<sup>103</sup> of native British composers: John Burton, James Hook, Matthew Camidge, and indeed Samuel Wesley himself. Whether based upon actual folk themes or not, many of these pieces irresistibly suggest the jigs and hornpipes of English country dancing, or song tunes from the ballad operas.

Next to the variation-set, the rondo was the most congenial home for these

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<sup>102</sup> It is worth remembering that in doing so they were only following the practice of the first keyboard intabulations of vocal music: the idea of faithfully arranging a piece without recomposing it in the process is a relatively recent one.

<sup>103</sup> English composers were quick to imitate Clementi's idea of calling light commercial/educational sonatas 'sonatinas'.

popular melodies. Different tunes could easily be set beside each other with a minimum of connecting material or development. Against this background of attractive, if elementary entertainment music Samuel Wesley's rondos demonstrate a wholly unexpected complexity of texture and structural sophistication. Among all his piano music the influence of J. S. Bach is nowhere more apparent than here.

'The Christmas Carol, varied as a Rondo' KO 718 (1814-15) will illustrate these points.<sup>104</sup> The carol in question is still well known: 'God rest ye merry, Gentlemen'—Wesley's version is largely the same as ours, with the exception of the third line. The rondo begins by presenting the tune in a relatively unadorned manner, though even here the part-writing is not devoid of subtlety; it is in fact much more sensitive than the often rather crude harmonisations of Beethoven. Note the telling independence of the bass in bb.11-13, the contrast of the harmonic stasis in bb.9-10 with the rest of the harmonic rhythm, and the way in which the (identical) first two lines are harmonised differently. This is the first and last time it will occur in such a fashion—the movement as a whole lacks the clearly defined sectional divisions common to most rondos, and even the most important returns of the theme (bb.46-63, 79-93, and 164-178) emerge seamlessly from the texture. It is after the opening statement that the piece gets properly under way, digressing at once into a freely evolving *Fortspinnung* continuation. Proceeding by means of close imitation and sequence, it clearly recalls J. S. Bach; but on the other hand, neither the melodic style of bb.18-23 nor the off-beat *sforzandi* of bb.40-43 are at all Baroque in style. The first return of the theme occurs at b.46, slightly extended and in B minor, after which there is further imitation and free development as previously. For all its completeness, this thematic statement obtrudes itself so little that it might be better to regard it as merely part of the first episode. The theme does return in the tonic at b.79, to be followed by

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<sup>104</sup> Published along with five other rondos by Nicholas Temperley in *Samuel Wesley and his Contemporaries*.

a stretto treatment (at one minim's distance) of the first line. Already Wesley has shown admirable contrapuntal facility, both in the scholastic disciplines of close imitation and stretto, and in the even more important skill of inventing seamless, flowing lines—but there is more to come.

The next event is a *maggiore* section which presents a curious variant of the theme, leaping not from 1 to 5, but from (lower) 5 to 3. After this highly recognisable head-motive the *maggiore* tune follows its own course; it is a miniature rondo form in itself, thus:

A :|| B A' C A"

The last cadence in E major is not quite allowed to arrive, however, and the music is unceremoniously whisked back to E minor and its environs (b.139). Further imitation and free development soon announce the contrapuntal climax of the piece: the first part of the tune is presented as a cantus firmus in minims, against which the melody proceeds at twice the speed (there is an additional canonic entry in b.168). This will not work for the second half of the tune, so Wesley contents himself with a canon at half a bar's distance (Ex.2.31).

This leaves him with something of a problem at this point. Strict canonic writing does not (as Clementi also found) lend itself to 'effective' keyboard writing. Wesley has arrived with a pause at the end of the melody, and at his tonic, in the most undemonstrative manner possible (b.178). It can't be the end of the piece, but how is he going to get from here to the usual *brillante* conclusion? He doesn't, of course. Instead he gently reanimates the music with a reflective coda, *piu lento* rather than *piu mosso*. Without actually making much reference to the tune it seems to round the movement off perfectly. The last line enters twice, and the piece finishes like a chorale prelude with a *tierce de Picardie*.

A treatment for piano of this melody in strict neo-Baroque counterpoint throughout would have been nothing more than a historical curiosity. What makes this piece special—as with the D major Presto described above—is its skilful negotiation between Baroque and Classical idioms, and the way in which Wesley’s technical skill is leavened by his engaging melodic sensibility.

There was no recent precedent in England for such elaborate contrapuntal treatment of popular melodies. Far more typical of its age is the so-called ‘Swiss Air’ in Clementi’s sonatina op.36/3, moving from a ‘murky’ pedal point to Alberti bass and back again (one example of many thousands, but one of the very few to be still readily available). Ten years later, Samuel Wesley was to be granted permission to explore and copy manuscripts from the Fitzwilliam Library with a view to publication: ‘P.S. I

have had a rich Treat in chewing the Cud of old Byrde's Minims: they are full of my own Errors & Heresies according to his Holiness Pope Horsley.<sup>105</sup> Although he attempted to publish only some of Byrd's choral works, might he also have come across some of his keyboard music, and there found a kindred spirit? Perhaps, but when this rondo was written, in 1814 or 1815, the only influence could have been Bach's *Clavier-Übung* III.<sup>106</sup>

We have already observed how wide-ranging Wesley's awareness of the music of J. S. Bach was. It is worth emphasising how unusual this interest in the choral preludes was. RCM. MS 4021 contains (among other things) a series of figured bass harmonisations of the *Clavier-Übung* chorales by Wesley himself, which can be taken as an indication of the very serious attempt he made to understand the inner workings of Bach's preludes. Percy Scholes has pointed out how in 1889, Walter Parratt ended his article on the Voluntary for the Grove *Dictionary of Music* by saying: 'Some day we may hope to hear the best of all—John Sebastian Bach's wonderful settings of all the Chorales.' In the 1910 edition this was amended to: 'It is even possible occasionally to hear John Sebastian Bach's wonderful settings of the Chorales.' Scholes continues: 'In the edition of 1928 no mention of the chorale prelude appears in this connexion, the need for propaganda-suggestion being apparently considered no longer to exist.'<sup>107</sup> This shows just how far ahead of his time Samuel Wesley's interest in the Bach chorale preludes was.

It is difficult to know how commercially successful these pieces were. 'The Christmas Carol' is perhaps a little unrepresentative in the ostentation of its

<sup>105</sup> Letter to Vincent Novello, 14 September 1825, Olleson, *Letters* p.394. 'Pope Horsley' is William Horsley (1774-1858), composer and 'Fifth and Eight Catcher in ordinary and extraordinary to the Society of Musicians' (Wesley's description in BL, Add. MS 3123), who had recently criticised Wesley's Service in F for harmonic irregularities.

<sup>106</sup> It is true that, as a child, he had been faced with passages from the Fitzwilliam Virginal Book as a test of his sight-reading ability. He was critical of its departures from the eighteenth-century rules of musical composition: 'when such excellent rules are broken, the composer should take care that these licenses produce a good effect; whereas these passages have a very bad one' (Olleson, *Wesley*, p.16).

<sup>107</sup> P. Scholes, *Oxford companion to music*, 10<sup>th</sup> ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), p.182.



contrapuntal writing, but most of his mature rondos show a complexity of texture and originality of structure that must have deterred many an amateur looking for ‘easy, fast music’. When he does adopt a lighter, easier manner (as in sets of variations on ‘The Lass of Richmond Hill’ or the College Hornpipe), the basis of his pianoforte style reveals itself to be clearly derived from the *galant* generation of Abel and J. C. Bach—somewhat old-fashioned for the time of Haydn and Clementi, let alone that of Beethoven and Weber. Nevertheless, he could win the applause of the groundlings if he chose. At one point he describes with glee how in ‘the Fantazia I played on the Piano Forte I concluded with “Roly Poly Gammon & Spinach,” [“The frog he would a-wooing go”] which tickled the Tobies<sup>108</sup> of the Button Makers<sup>109</sup> at such a rate, that I thought I never should have gotten off the Stage, at least till I had broken my Back with Bowing.’<sup>110</sup> The ‘Fantazia’ in question was most likely improvised (although an unpublished rondo on this tune survives); if not quite in the class of Clementi and Cramer as a pianist, he was quite capable of playing to the gallery when necessary.

The most striking aspect of his attempts to woo the public, however, was his deeply-rooted belief in the commercial potential of J. S. Bach. Johann Peter Salomon (Haydn’s impresario) advised him thus: ‘What a Shame it is that such Music should not be known in this Country where every Body pretends to be musical! I will tell you what strikes me: if you were to have a Morning Party in some large Room capable of containing a good Organ, & to play some of these Fugues of Bach, interspersed with Voluntaries of your own, & make the tickets 7 shillings a Piece, I am persuaded that you would make Money by it.’<sup>111</sup> Burney seems to have made a similar suggestion—Wesley writes to him: ‘Here is a Proof of the Truth of your Prophecy, that this

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<sup>108</sup> Buttocks

<sup>109</sup> The concert was in Birmingham, where the manufacture of buttons was an important industry.

<sup>110</sup> Letter to Benjamin Jacob, 25 October 1809, Olleson, *Letters*, p.121. In the same letter he describes Salomon as having ‘more Zeal in planning, than Steadiness in the Execution of his Schemes’; strangely, in view of the success of his Haydn concert series.

<sup>111</sup> Letter to Burney, April or May 1808, *ibid.*, p.63.

admirable Musick might be *played into Fashion*: you see I have only risked one modest Experiment, & it has electrified the Town just in the way we wanted.’<sup>112</sup> His attitude has been amply vindicated by history (if this means anything more than that it happens to correspond with our own), but it is unlikely that he profited much himself.

## THE ‘SALOMON’ SONATA

The domains of ‘artistic’ and ‘commercial’ music were in the process of polarising throughout Samuel Wesley’s career. This was perhaps an inevitable consequence of the growing awareness of music’s commercial possibilities (equally a consequence, maybe, of the growing autonomy of instrumental music), but it is remarkable how well and for how long the composers of the late eighteenth century held the two domains in suspension; this may be one reason we call their style ‘Classical’.<sup>113</sup> The sonatas of Haydn (for example) were outstandingly popular, as the number of piracies testifies, yet there is little evidence of pandering to the ‘lowest common denominator’. Those sonatas Wesley published in the eighteenth century (opp.1, 3, 4, and 5) show much the same balance, attractive without being overtly commercial (one might equally say artistic without being obscure). By contrast, the two he published in the nineteenth century show the breakdown of this Classical equilibrium, one falling neatly on each side of this cultural divide. His *Siege of Badajoz* sonata KO 706 (c.1812, no opus number) was a typical battle piece, no better or worse than the dozens of others that had begun to flood the market, as up-to-date as a current affairs programme and as quickly dated. On the other hand, the *Sonata for the Piano Forte, in which is introduced a Fugue from a Subject of Mr Salomon* KO 705 (1808; also without opus number) was perhaps the most serious, ambitious,

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<sup>112</sup> Letter to Burney, 23 June 1808, *ibid.*, p.65.

<sup>113</sup> This is, I think, as true of Pleyel and Dittersdorf and Vanhal as it is of Haydn and Mozart, being a consequence of common stylistic practices rather than individual genius.

deliberately challenging piece for the piano that he ever wrote.

This extraordinary piece was dedicated to Johann Peter Salomon (Haydn's impresario), a long-standing friend and fellow Bach-enthusiast. It was probably written in early 1808, and with it Wesley's fugal style decisively enters the nineteenth century.<sup>114</sup> If correct, the date is significant. 1808 marked the height of his enthusiasm for J. S. Bach; which makes it all the more striking that Olleson should find that 'the writing is not even remotely tinged by Bach, and the fugue is in the austere, gritty manner that characterizes so many fugues by composers of the late Classical period.'<sup>115</sup> It is possible that the two halves of this sentence are not quite as contradictory as Olleson thinks. As we shall see, one of the effects that Bach had upon composers who were demonstrably writing under his influence—Mozart, Clementi, and Beethoven—was indeed just such an 'austere, gritty manner' as Olleson describes. If the fluidity of Bach's style had been lost beyond recall, composers could still emulate his rigorous contrapuntal logic, his tolerance for incidental dissonance, and his thematic economy; with results much like those seen here.

The sonata begins with a grandiloquent *Lento* introduction. At once it recalls both the post-Handelian French overture style still current in contemporary organ voluntaries (as in his own op.6/4, 9, 11, and 12) and the slow introductions of some of Haydn's late symphonies. It is closest of all, however, to certain sonatas of the London pianoforte school which recreate the symphonic slow introduction in keyboard terms; notably Clementi's opp.34/2, 40/3, and 50/3. The sophisticated dynamics, biting dissonance, and rich texture show that Wesley is engaging with the keyboard language of his pianist contemporaries—Clementi, Dussek, Field and Cramer—and pointing the way forward to the next generation of Romantics (compare the slow introduction to Mendelssohn's Caprice op.33/3 of 1835).

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<sup>114</sup> It was reviewed in May of that year by the *Monthly Magazine*, having presumably been published shortly before this time.

<sup>115</sup> Olleson, *Wesley*, p.317.

At this point one might have expected the fugue that follows to return to the comforting orthodoxy of the Handelian style in which he was brought up (as do those in contemporary sonatas by Pinto, Philip Cogan, and G. A. Kollmann), or perhaps an exercise in strict Bachian counterpoint. Instead it represents one of his most ambitious attempts to employ the rapidly growing range of early-Romantic devices and textures. To be sure, there is little sign of this during the first quarter of the movement which, if not quite preserving the integrity of the voices in an authentically Bachian manner (neither was Handel usually overly concerned with this in his keyboard fugues), is consistently and earnestly contrapuntal. A few strange dissonances (bb.22-23, 26-28, 34) suggest not so much J. S. Bach himself as Muzio Clementi's attempts to imitate him,<sup>116</sup> as does the unrelenting busyness of the counterpoint (see the comments above). But these are only details, and the fugue sticks admirably to the point through seven entries of the subject, going no further afield than the mediant (b.30) and the subdominant (b.38). Things begin to take an unexpected turn around b.47 as preparation is made for a sizeable cadence in the slightly unusual key of C major. Everything is disrupted in b.50 by an entry in *C minor*, in octaves, completely interrupting both normal tonal and contrapuntal procedures (Ex.2.32): Normality returns as the music moves through F minor back to the more familiar regions of F and B flat major (although F major predominates, there is no sense of 'second subject' or secondary tonal area being established). Once interrupted, the contrapuntal texture is harder to restore. Fragmentary entries in fairly consistent three- or four-part counterpoint (bb.62-68, 76-82) alternate with sonata-like passage work (bb.69-75, 90-95). At times, octave doubling reinforces important motives in a very un-Baroque

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<sup>116</sup> For more on Clementi's fugues, see pp.367-72 below. Although he was an acquaintance of Clementi, it is unlikely that Wesley had come across any of them before writing this piece. Some had been published many years earlier in France (opp.5 and 6, 1781), but Clementi's next publication to include fugues was the first part of his *Gradus ad Parnassum* which did not appear until 1827. There are a number of similarities in details of part-writing, but this is presumably merely a consequence of both starting from a similar point and trying to achieve a similar end.

manner (bb.77-78, 84-86). Travelling through the cycle of fifths the music arrives at E flat major (b.96) then continues even further flatward, to A flat and F minor. Unexpectedly F major reasserts itself (b.112) in a sweet little passage that might have come out of one of Mendelssohn's *Lieder ohne Worte* and quickly takes us back to the tonic, where we have another entry in octaves (Ex.2.33).

This is soon accompanied by quaver counterpoint as before, but it is not long before there is another interruption: a tonic *major* entry in the bass, underneath a new, rather tuneful, countersubject. Tonic major entries are unusual enough in a minor-key fugue—what is really disconcerting is that the change in mode occurs two bars *before* the cadence (b.128), another curious and rather incongruous anticipation of Mendelssohn. The *Maggiore* episode turns out to be quite lengthy, introducing a variety of sequential passagework. Increasingly the emphasis is on pianistic effect rather than counterpoint, and eventually the left hand begins a passage of broken octaves in Clementi's best manner. The tonic minor reached, another unison entry ensues (b.166), but this time it turns out to be an exact stretto, in octaves. It recalls

similar passages of octave counterpoint in several of Clementi's sonatas (finales to opp.33/1, 40/2, and 40/3)—thus might the demands both of virtuosity and of counterpoint be said to have been met equally. A pause on the dominant-seventh ushers in what appears to be another stretto, but becomes simply a highly pianistic approach to the final cadence, which is reinforced both by a plagal tonic pedal (bb.187-190) and another perfect cadence (bb.190-192). The sonata concludes with an Allegretto finale, prophetic of Schubert at his most placid and bucolic.

At the cost of perhaps slightly excessive length and monotony of material, the D major Presto discussed on pp.144-9 integrated the norms of both fugal procedure and sonata form with impressive ease. Samuel Wesley may not have even been aware that there was anything in particular to reconcile. Here, in the fugue of the Salomon sonata, he chose to use a much broader stylistic palette. J. S. Bach (bb.1-49) jostles shoulders with Clementi (bb.69-96, 135-175) and Mendelssohn (bb.112-115, 128-134), each of these styles being present in its most distinctive and unassimilable form. There are consequently a number of perceptible breaks in continuity during this movement, notably at bb.50, 96, 112, 128, and 166—places where Wesley slips from one style into another. In evaluating the fugue's relative success or failure, phrases like 'stylistic contradiction' and 'insufficiently integrated materials' come all too readily to hand. These sorts of prefabricated judgements tend to hinder us from listening to particular cases in order to decide whether a given 'contradiction' is apparent or real. They arise from critical habits that unconsciously privilege unity over variety and integration over contrast, seeking only the first and taking the latter for granted. The movement's 'discontinuities' are all strikingly effective rhetorical moments. Slightly better questions to explore might be 1) are these moments prepared and exploited for their maximum value?, and 2) do they contribute to or detract from the movement's total effect?

The C minor entry in b.50 destabilises the tonal centre of gravity and interrupts the prevailing rhythm and texture. One might expect it to herald quite a new style or stage in the formal design. Instead it is smoothly reintegrated into the fugue, which continues, tonally and texturally, as if nothing had happened. In short, this event sounds odd because its highly disruptive effect is not reinforced at any deeper level of the structure. One could argue that this judgement is merely a case of applying Classical standards (where coincidence of surface detail and deep structure is important) to a Baroque genre (where it is not).<sup>117</sup> The problem with such a defence is that Wesley himself invites this sort of criticism by the introduction of foreign elements to his fugal writing.

Later shifts in style are also open to similar criticism. The passage beginning at b.112 sounds as if it comes from another world—a brief fragment of Mendelssohn<sup>118</sup> before Wesley returns to his contrapuntal labours. Grammatically it is nothing more than a brief transition from F minor (the key reached in b.106) back to D minor, the tonic. F minor is almost as distant as C minor, but unlike b.50 it has been reached in a series of easy stages, mostly through descending fifths and thirds, from the not very distant region of F major (F, B flat, E flat, C minor, A flat, F minor); a good example of how the traditional range of related keys could be discreetly widened. If the shift to F minor is done gradually, the return (F minor to F major) is a strongly affective moment. The sudden shift in mood is not obscured by the high degree of rhythmic unity (quavers in an inner voice, minims in the treble) over the transition. That Wesley was aware of this affective shift is suggested by his marking ‘*Mezzo*’ (–*forte*? –*piano*?) over the relevant passage. Unfortunately the effect is undercut by an immediate return to the tonic, and to more fugal working. Again a striking (and

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<sup>117</sup> Or perhaps to a Baroque/Romantic hybrid genre.

<sup>118</sup> Many similar passages occur in the works of (e.g.) Wesley, Moscheles, Ries, Kalkbrenner, Spohr, and others. If we knew more early nineteenth-century music would be so quick to label this style as ‘Mendelssohnian’?



promising) departure from the prevailing contrapuntal style turns out to be nothing more than a passing moment.

On the other hand, a similar minor/major shift fourteen bars later does have far-reaching structural consequences; here the key-change is dignified with its own key signature and '*Maggiore*' indication. Although it begins with an entry (in the bass) this is the least fugal section of the piece. It slackens in intensity for a brief *Lento* passage then builds up to a considerable pianistic climax. It is almost as if, unable to produce a sufficient sense of culmination for his ambitious scheme by contrapuntal means alone, Wesley decides to employ a quite different kind of texture, reserving the contrapuntal climax for later. The largely sequential material in question is typical of a sonata's development section, thus giving the return of the subject when it arrives in b.166 something of the rhetorical weight of a recapitulation.

Although the strong tonic major/minor polarity of the last two pages is rather unusual for a fugue, it could be described as a rational structural principle. Nevertheless, for all the energy of its conclusion, the piece leaves a slightly incoherent impression. At times the unprepared stylistic shifts sound as if Wesley was working from entry to entry—even chord to chord—without being fully aware of the potential of his material. However, the fugue contains such interest, such a chaotic wealth of material, that it is one of the most characteristic and original of his later pieces. The effect is only heightened by its position in the sonata, between the impressive introduction and the quiet, almost Schubertian finale. On the whole Samuel Wesley was ambivalent, to say the least, about most musical trends of the early nineteenth century. This sonata is one of the rare occasions when he sought to exploit these new compositional resources and combine them with the influence of J. S. Bach, and it is one of the few pieces by him that can reasonably be called 'early-Romantic'.

## WESLEY'S LAST YEARS

During this part of his career Samuel Wesley seems to have been able to sustain the momentum of his many activities—as composer, performer, organiser, lecturer, and teacher—for several years. But in August 1816 he was kept from an appointment with Novello by the serious illness of one of his children: ‘Our little Boy is in so precarious a State that I much fear I must sacrifice the Pleasure I anticipated of meeting you at Surrey Chapel To-morrow at one o’Clock.—However, should any favourable Change take Place, I will be with you.—I *must* attend two Pupils in the Neighbourhood of Cheapside, whatever may occur at Home; but still I should feel ill disposed, or more properly totally disqualified for any musical Exertion of Energy, if Death should happen.’<sup>119</sup>

Death did happen (nothing else, not even his name, is known of this son). It is easy to assume that the high level of infant mortality must have inured parents against such a common source of grief. Perhaps it did, much of the time. In this case, however, the death precipitated the most prolonged and catastrophic mental breakdown of Wesley’s life. It has recently been discovered that he was actually committed to a private asylum for nearly a year in 1817-18.<sup>120</sup> Only after his recovery in June 1818 was he able to begin picking up the scattered threads of his career once again. Partly because the times were starting to pass him by, partly because his network of professional connections had to be rebuilt almost from scratch, he was never to rise again to the eminence he had reached around 1815. Nevertheless, he was able to make a fair living picking up what work he could teaching, lecturing, composing, and performing. An unexpectedly profitable windfall during these years was his discovery in the Fitzwilliam Library of three tunes Handel had written for

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<sup>119</sup> Olleson, *Letters*, p.281.

<sup>120</sup> M. Kassler and P. Olleson, *Samuel Wesley (1766-1837): a sourcebook* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), pp.52-53, 77; Olleson, *Wesley*, pp.149-57; M. Kassler, ‘Samuel Wesley’s “madness” of 1817-18’, *History of psychiatry* 14/4:56 (December 2003), 459-474.

hymns by his father. At the age of sixty he was therefore able to re-establish connections with his Methodist roots that he had rejected so vigorously as a youth. Another breakdown in 1830 may have put him out of action for a while; but he continued to support his young family, as his powers declined, until the end.

One of the most significant events of his life, a meeting of great symbolic resonance, occurred less than a month before his death. Felix Mendelssohn, feted as a composer and organist, was in London. Samuel attended a recital in Christ Church, Newgate, and was persuaded to introduce himself to the younger musician, and to improvise for him (this was the last time he would play in public). He had been vastly impressed by Mendelssohn's playing; Mendelssohn was complimentary about Wesley's. 'You should have heard me forty years ago' was his reply.<sup>121</sup>

Why did he Wesley admire Mendelssohn? The fact is more remarkable than it seems, in that generally his taste extended as far as Haydn and Mozart and no further. His letters and *Reminiscences* are full of ironic or derogatory references, not just to commercial variation-manufacturers, but to the leading musicians of the day: Beethoven, Weber, Rossini, Ries, and Kalkbrenner. Presumably it was their shared love of Bach which drew them together. Perhaps he had heard of Mendelssohn's revival of the St Matthew Passion? He too had attempted to perform and publish vocal works by J. S. Bach (*Jesu meine Freude* and the Credo from the B minor Mass). But it was Mendelssohn and not Wesley who had the charm, the social position, the influence, and the money to achieve his dream.

According to his daughter Eliza, Wesley returned from the concert, hung up his hat in the hall, and said: 'I shall never leave this house alive.'<sup>122</sup> Nor did he. Samuel Wesley died on 11 October 1837.

It is tempting to compare him with another great misfit, J. S. Bach's eldest son

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<sup>121</sup> Olleson, *Wesley*, p.215.

<sup>122</sup> Armstrong, 'Wesleys', 100.

Wilhelm Friedemann (see chapter 1). Both were great organists, both the sons of illustrious and strong-minded fathers, both strongly under the influence of J. S. Bach. Both were subject to inexplicable fits of *accidie*, both were temperamentally unstable. Though extremely gifted neither could be said to have realised their full creative potential; to the end, neither thought they had been given the opportunities they deserved. There is one notable difference, nevertheless. W. F. Bach's personality seems to have stifled his compositional activity. Fine as many of them are, his works amount to scarcely more than a handful. The fact that Wesley seldom had the capital to publish his larger works and the chaotic state of his manuscripts meant that this was once thought to be the case with him, too. In recent years however, scholars have come to realise the full extent of his oeuvre—organ music, large-scale choral works, Latin motets, orchestral music, glees, songs, chamber music, concertos, and piano music of all kinds—and his significance is finally coming to be appreciated.

It has been suggested that Mendelssohn's organ sonatas (intended for the English market and originally entitled 'Voluntaries') show the influence of Samuel Wesley.<sup>123</sup> This seems unlikely: it is hard to see why Mendelssohn would be particularly interested in English organ music when there were plenty of good models much closer to home.<sup>124</sup> Nevertheless, if he had come across some of the music Samuel Wesley had written at the height of his powers it is likely that he would have recognised a kindred spirit; not just through the influence of J. S. Bach, but because of the determination with which they maintained high standards of craftsmanship and inspiration at a time when there was little incentive or encouragement for either.

<sup>123</sup> O. A. Mansfield, 'Some characteristics and peculiarities of Mendelssohn's organ sonatas', *Musical Quarterly* 3/4 (October 1917), 563, H. Diack Johnstone, review of S. Wesley, *Six voluntaries and fugues for organ, Fourteen short pieces*, ed. R. Langley, *Music & Letters* 64/3/4 (July-October, 1983), 309.

<sup>124</sup> Important German organists who may have influenced Mendelssohn include his teacher August Wilhelm Bach (Berlin; no relation to Johann Sebastian), August Gottfried Ritter (Berlin), Michael Gotthart Fischer (Erfurt), Christian Heinrich Rinck (Darmstadt), and Adolph Hesse (Breslau). If somewhat in decline from the glories of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Germany was still the home of organ music.

## CHAPTER 3

# CLASSICAL STYLE, CLASSICAL IDEOLOGY, AND THE INSTRUMENTAL FUGUES OF JOSEPH HAYDN

### THE VIENNESE TRADITION

Throughout the first half of the eighteenth century, St Leopold's day (14 November) was celebrated by the imperial court at Klosterneuburg, just outside Vienna. Always performed during this celebration was a setting of the Vespers that had been composed by the Emperor Leopold I (1640-1705).<sup>1</sup> This tradition may serve as a symbol of the integration of music and court life at Vienna: the way in which a particular piece, for a particular place and a particular time, existed by virtue of its *de tempore* function in the yearly cycle of minutely prescribed feasts and observances according to which court time was regulated. Two crucial ideas would soon shatter this dense network of relationships: the capitalist development of music as a transferable commodity, and the cultured bourgeois notion of absolute music for its own sake. Joseph Haydn would be at the forefront of both developments; but when he first came to Vienna in 1740, the centrality of court and cathedral could be taken for granted.<sup>2</sup>

There was little about Vienna's musical establishment at this time to suggest that the city was about to become one of the leading centres of stylistic innovation. Even by contemporary European standards the ritual of the imperial court was unusually dazzling, heavy, and inflexible, and this was well expressed by Fux's rich but conservative style. J. J. Quantz's description of his *Constanza e Fortezza* (1723)

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<sup>1</sup> S. Wollenberg, 'Vienna under Joseph I and Charles VI', *Music and society: the late Baroque era*, ed. G. Buelow (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1994), p.331-2; H. V. F. Somerset, 'The Habsburg emperors as musicians', *Music & Letters* 30 (1949), 204-215.

<sup>2</sup> Court and church were to retain their status in Vienna longer than anywhere else in Europe. Significantly, however, the musicians we now regard as being most important (Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven) operated around the periphery of these institutions.

describes it well: ‘The concertante effects and interweaving of the violins with one another, which occurred in the ritornellos, although it consisted for the most part of passages which on paper may here and there have looked quite stiff and dry, nevertheless had, in the open air and with such lavish resources, a very good effect, indeed perhaps better than a more ‘galant’ [style of] melody ornamented with many decorative figures and quick notes would have had in such circumstances...’<sup>3</sup>

Containing as it does a veiled critique of Fux’s conservatism, Quantz’s account readily acknowledges the suitability of this style for such an occasion.

The music of Fux’s colleague Caldara had been equally dense and contrapuntal. The versetti and toccatas of court organist Gottlieb Muffat were essentially in the style of Frescobaldi,<sup>4</sup> his clavier suites in that of his teacher Fux; although Muffat lived until 1770, he seems to have stopped composing nearly thirty years earlier.

Any discussion of Haydn’s fugal writing has to begin by acknowledging that, compared to the previous generation, fugue takes up a relatively small part of his oeuvre. When Joseph Haydn came to Vienna Johann Joseph Fux, the last great representative of the Austrian Baroque, was still *Hofkapellmeister* to the Imperial court (he died the following year). By the time Haydn was expelled from St Stephen’s Cathedral not quite ten years later most of Vienna’s official musical life was in the hands of the next generation of musicians: Reutter, Wagenseil, and Monn. It was these composers (many of them students of Fux) who made the decisive transition to the *galant* style.

This fact is less paradoxical than it might appear. Fux was no hide-bound pedant: ‘What fixed advice would I give about an arbitrary kind of music which is subject to constantly changing taste? I by no means disapprove of the cult of novelty,

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p.340.

<sup>4</sup> Some have in fact been taken for Frescobaldi’s own; cf S. Wollenberg, ‘A note on three fugues attributed to Frescobaldi’, *Musical Times* 106/1584 (February 1975), 133-35.

but give it the greatest praise. For if a middle-aged man were to enter today in dress worn fifty or sixty years ago, he would certainly expose himself to the risk of being laughed at.’<sup>5</sup> One wonders, however, what he would have had to say about the systematic textural and harmonic primitivism of many of his pupils.

The early music of Haydn is likewise almost entirely innocent of contrapuntal intrigue. At times it is quite elementary in texture; perhaps because he was (at least initially) unable to manage anything more sophisticated, perhaps because, even at this stage, he was beginning to realise the strength of this direct mode of utterance. So little is known about the circumstances of these early works that it is unwise to assume too much about his intentions. All we know is that it was not long before Haydn began to wrestle with contrapuntal problems in earnest.

## HAYDN’S MUSICAL EDUCATION

It is not clear how and when Haydn first came across Fux’s *Gradus ad Parnassum*. His early training at St Stephen’s had been of the sketchiest. Not unnaturally, the main focus was on vocal instruction, along with a certain amount of instrumental tuition; though he confessed himself to be ‘no wizard’ on any instrument, he could play many of them at least adequately. As far as theory and composition went, however, he had to make do with ‘only two such lessons from the worthy Reutter’ (Griesinger).<sup>6</sup> Many of the sources retell a story in this connection: Haydn had apparently written an ambitious composition variously described as ‘in sixteen parts’ (Griesinger), ‘a *Salve Regina* in twelve parts’ (Dies), or ‘a mass for four voices

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<sup>5</sup> In clothes of the time *before* he was born, Fux most likely means: ‘*Gradus ad Parnassum* (1725): concluding chapters’, tr. S. Wollenberg, *Music analysis* 11:2-3 (1992), 241.

<sup>6</sup> H. C. Robbins Landon, *Joseph Haydn, Chronicle and Works*, 5 vols. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976-80), vol. I, p.38.

with sixteen-part orchestra' (Carpani).<sup>7</sup> Dies continues: 'Reutern [sic] looked over the long sheet, laughed heartily at the copious repetitions of the word 'Salve', and still more at the preposterous notion that he could compose in twelve parts. He added: 'you silly boy, aren't two parts enough for you?' It is nothing more than an offhand remark from an indifferent choirmaster; but it resonates curiously with a particular aspect of Haydn's future instrumental style. From the minuet of his first string quartet through to the Andante of his last (op.72/2) he repeatedly demonstrates his ability to construct a perfectly full and self-sufficient texture using only two parts (often amplified at the octave)—almost as if intentionally to demonstrate the superiority of two excellent voices over four mediocre ones. As Dies observes 'From such comments, lightly tossed off, Joseph knew how to profit.'<sup>8</sup>

He was, therefore, very largely self-taught. Although the music of Fux's pupils was his daily bread at St Stephen's, it seems that he came to the *Gradus ad Parnassum* rather late in his studies. Far from species counterpoint being the foundation of his musical education (as one might have assumed), five out of his six early sources of instruction were concerned chiefly with thoroughbass. In today's compartmentalised musical world, where theory, performance, and composition are quite separate activities, it may seem strange that Haydn should learn to compose from what is essentially a performance technique. But Haydn was not alone here—virtually every competent musician of the time (i.e. not just composers and keyboardists) acquired a working knowledge of thoroughbass as part of their basic musical education. Given this near-universal understanding of harmonic progression and bass-oriented counterpoint, it is not surprising that even the most sophisticated theorists took it at least as their starting point.

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.38, 42, 49. It is tempting to identify this mysterious work with one of the early masses in F or G (Hob XXII:1 or 3), or the *Salve Regina* (Hob XXIIIb:1), but they are all too late, besides being even at this stage too competent for Reutter's strictures.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p.42.



Haydn's first teacher was the Italian composer Nicola Porpora, who hired him to accompany the singing lessons he was giving in Vienna. Haydn had reason to be doubly grateful to Porpora, both for what he learned musically, and for the fact that this job was his first step up out of the poverty which had afflicted him since he left St Stephen's. It is not clear whether Porpora actually sat down with Haydn and gave him anything resembling what we would call lessons in theory or composition. Carpani may have been guessing (or fabricating), but he was probably correct when he said: 'That he was not Porpora's pupil can be seen from Haydn's recitatives, much inferior to those of the father of recitative. But he learned the good Italian school of singing and accompanying on the harpsichord from Porpora, and this is much more difficult than one would think.... Porpora boxed his ears but also gave him good advice, not least on how to play P's difficult works with their learned modulations and bass lines difficult to follow...' <sup>9</sup> From this school of hard knocks, Haydn no doubt had the wit to pick up a good deal of musical grammar.

We know also that he was also familiar with the writings of Mattheson, Kirnberger, and David Kellner upon thoroughbass; but according to Dies, his first textbook, arrived at after some deliberation, was C. P. E. Bach's *Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen*. After this he acquired Mattheson's *Vollkommene Capellmeister*, and only then (according to Dies) Fux's *Gradus*, which there is no doubt he esteemed highly for the rest of his life. <sup>10</sup> With a rich accumulation of circumstantial detail, Dies situates Haydn's exposure to C. P. E. Bach at the time he was with Porpora—around 1753, that is—but this can't be true. To be sure, the first part of Bach's *Versuch* was published in that year; but this only contains information on embellishment and fingering. The material on thoroughbass—the only part which

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p.70.

<sup>10</sup> See A. Mann, 'Haydn as student and critic of Fux', in *Studies in eighteenth-century music: a tribute to Karl Geiringer on his seventieth birthday*, ed. H. C. Robbins Landon with R. E. Chapman (London: Allen and Unwin, 1970), 323–32.

would be of interest to a budding composer—is contained in part two, and this did not appear until 1762. Griesinger places Haydn’s study of Mattheson and Fux immediately after his expulsion from the choir-school, at the same time he was apparently grappling with C. P. E. Bach’s sonatas—he makes no mention of the *Versuch*. Yet there is no trace of the influence of C. P. E. Bach on Haydn’s music until the later 1760s. It would seem that the chronology of Haydn’s early musical education has become confused almost beyond hope of recovery.

## SYMPHONIC FUGUES

The first work of his to show any serious preoccupation with contrapuntal problems is the Symphony no.3 in G.<sup>11</sup> As was to be the case with his op.20 string quartets ten years later, a sudden interest in contrapuntal procedures is accompanied by a significant step forward in stylistic maturity—moving back in order to advance, so to speak. If it were were not for a manuscript in Göttweig Abbey dated 1762 it would be tempting to put it later. Knowing as little as we do about Haydn’s student exercises (none survive) it seems rash to say that they ‘are to be found to some extent in movements of his symphonies and chamber works’,<sup>12</sup> as is demonstrably true of some of Schumann’s piano works for example.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless contrapuntal processes help shape three out of the four movements. The opening theme of the first movement suggests a Fuxian cantus firmus/third species texture (later joined by a voice in fourth species, and still later with the positions of the voices inverted), the minuet is canonic,

<sup>11</sup> Probably not actually the third in order of composition. Haydn may have numbered it ‘21’ at Morzin; Landon places it eighteenth.

<sup>12</sup> Denis Arnold, in ‘Haydn’s Counterpoint and Fux’s “Gradus”’, *Monthly Musical Record* 88 (March-April 1957), 52.

<sup>13</sup> The op.5 ‘Impromptus sur une romance de Clara Wieck’ concluded with a movement based upon earlier fugal experiments, and the fugues and canons he later published emerged out of his and Clara’s private contrapuntal studies.

and the finale is—more or less—fugal. Is it possible that Haydn first seriously engaged with the *Gradus* around the time he was writing this symphony?

The finale shows how far Austrian contrapuntal norms were from the style of J. S. Bach. Both in thematic material and fugal technique it betrays a clear debt to Fux's *Gradus ad Parnassum*, with a subject in first species against voices in fifth species. So much so, in fact, that it is also a long way from the late-Baroque instrumental style of Caldara, Werner, Tuma, Monn,<sup>14</sup> and Fux himself. The *Gradus* is a manual of unaccompanied vocal counterpoint (notionally in the style of Palestrina), and it was only in the second half of the eighteenth century that composers began to import this style literally into instrumental music.

The closing movement—the first instrumental fugue Haydn is known to have written—is a powerfully integrated movement, an unexpectedly coherent fusion of fugal and sonata principles. Neither the subject (Ex.3.1) nor the counterpoint shows any trace of Haydn's usual melodic style. This almost ostentatious impersonality is offset by two factors. Firstly, the dynamic marking ('*pp*') contrasts strongly with the usual contemporary practice of performing strict counterpoint in a uniform *forte*, a sort of debased Baroque 'historical performance practice'.<sup>15</sup> Secondly, Haydn begins

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<sup>14</sup> Monn's fame as author of the first known four-movement symphony in the later Viennese manner has obscured the fact that much of his work is in an extremely competent but conservative late Baroque style.

<sup>15</sup> See W. Kirkendale, *Fugue and fugato in rococo and classical chamber music* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1979), pp.75-76. The string quartet fugues op.20 are likewise marked '*sempre sotto voce*'.

wrestling with the problem of integrating wind instruments into the texture. The string quartet is a relatively homogeneous ensemble, equally at home with Baroque polyphony as with *galant* homophony. Not so the Classical orchestra with its highly specialised components, which presents real problems for the would-be fugue writer. Haydn could fall back on neither the fully independent part-writing of J. S. Bach nor the ‘oboes with everything’ orchestration of Handel. Classical horns and trumpets were much more limited in range and agility than the high trumpet parts of the late Baroque, and Haydn seems at first to have had a very low opinion of the capabilities of his oboists, confining them to a timid, slow-moving *Harmonie* role. And this is indeed what the horns and then the oboes supply towards the end of the exposition. It isn’t much, but it is a sign that Haydn is still thinking as a symphonist, and not just a contrapuntist.

The exposition concludes in b.26 with a weak cadence on V, and the movement continues with a pair of apparently unrelated ideas (Ex.3.2):

It would seem that Haydn is proceeding in the easy-going manner of Florian Leopold Gassmann or Karl von Kohaut, dissolving his counterpoint into amiable homophony before it has a chance to become tedious, and this would appear to be confirmed by the definitively Classical cadential articulation in bb.34-38. The secondary theme which

duly follows in the dominant suddenly revises our expectations, however, for it is nothing other than the material of the lower stave of Ex.3.2 (slightly altered), with the first subject discreetly but unmistakably present in the bass (Ex.3.3):

At once Haydn's plan becomes clear; this is to be a triple fugue, of sorts—every thematic event has its origin as part of a single contrapuntal combination. Sure enough, the upper voice of Ex.3.2 reappears in b.51—now accompanied by the first subject—and all three are worked together in the ensuing imbroglia. At this point one might reasonably expect the usual clear cadence on the dominant. Instead, the passage in bb.53-54 is repeated a tone lower to land us in C major, after which we travel through A minor and E minor, then back to G major in quite a lengthy preparation for the recapitulation.

If the line between (sonata) exposition and development is so blurred as to be non-existent, the beginning of the recapitulation (Ex.3.4) is also curiously equivocal. The preparation and articulated cadence in bb.89-91 is quite unmistakable. But the entry in b.91 smooths over the break, and the sense of tonal arrival is obscured by the frequent presence of C-sharps, and the fact that no root-position tonic chord appears until seven bars later.

Clearly, Haydn is letting fugal thinking shape his practice, even at this, the most sensitive point of the sonata process. A brief stretto of the four-note theme serves here for a recapitulation of bb.1-25, followed by the orchestral tremolandi of bb.34-38 and the ‘second subject’, now in the tonic. This ‘second subject’ is repeated over a dominant pedal, and then the movement concludes with an orchestral unison passage derived from Ex.3.2. Much has been made of Haydn’s apparent monothematicism; perhaps too much, in that his remarkable melodic fertility has been somewhat overshadowed. But here it is nothing less than a literally accurate description of his procedure. The material is utterly commonplace—anything more individualised could hardly submit to such treatment—but it is worked into a scheme of unexpected originality, a genuine fusion of fugue and sonata.

There are two other complete fugues among Haydn’s symphonies, both finales. Unlike that of no.3, the fugues which conclude symphonies no.40 and 70 are completely fugal in structure, showing no binary tendency and none of the hybridisation we have just seen.

That of no.40 (1763) has a rather long, straggling sequential subject (Ex.3.5), reflecting perhaps one of the less appealing aspects of the Viennese fugal tradition.<sup>16</sup> It

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<sup>16</sup> Kirkendale, *Fugue and fugato*, pp.129-30.

is clearly divided into four-bar segments, but Haydn makes no attempt to establish a larger periodicity: the sense of movement remains comfortable rather than compelling. It is not surprising that, with such an unwieldy subject constructed of such pregnant materials (the opening drop of a fourth, and the upbeat entry in b.3), the subject tends to fall to pieces during the working that follows. As in all of Haydn's fugues, the material is fully developed, but the subject appears in a reasonably complete form only three times after the exposition, although false entries abound. There are attractive details in the counterpoint; the way the countersubject fills in the gaps of the subject, appearing to imitate without actually doing so, or the way a perfect cadence onto V is converted into a plagal cadence onto I by an unexpected B flat (b.28). But the movement as a whole, though never less than impeccably professional and competent, seems not to have absorbed a great deal of Haydn's creative energy.

By contrast, the fugue which closes his 70<sup>th</sup> symphony (1779)—one of his very few minor-key fugues—is disturbingly powerful. Even more than that of Symphony no.3 the counterpoint is perfectly conventional, with the most minimal thematic profile; indeed, the sinister power of this movement is out of all proportion to the conventionality of its material. Perhaps this is the wrong way of looking at it, however. Musical conventions become conventional precisely *because* they are effective; and when the composer is, like Haydn, alert to the dramatic possibilities of even the simplest material, they can retain their effectiveness after any amount of hackneying.

Perhaps the most imaginative stroke in this movement is the way in which it begins: five high Ds from the first violins answered by low chords from all the strings. This is surely one of the most unusual openings to any symphonic movement of the period. It is uncanny in the way the extreme contrasts of register and texture, the ambiguity of pace (although entitled ‘Allegro con brio’ from the start the first 26 bars really function like a slow introduction), and the absence of thematic content refuse to explain themselves away and settle into a more typical texture. The first two subjects of the fugue proper (‘a 3 Soggetti in Contrapunto doppio’) consist of little more than an ascending then descending sequence of decorated 7-6 suspensions. The third introduces a certain amount of contrary motion but, if anything, reinforces the sequential nature of the subject. From this point until b.105 the subjects are almost always presented together, as part of a single combination. There are no episodes to speak of (the sequential tail of Haydn’s subject enables him to arrive at the key of his next entry without introducing additional material). If the designation ‘in Contrapunto doppio’ means anything (any normal fugal style is heavily dependent upon invertible counterpoint) it probably refers to the way in which the main body of the fugue depends so entirely on thematic permutation. This endless recycling of the same



material in different keys, with little in the way of textural or thematic relief, hardly sounds like a recipe for an exciting fugue; but the whole texture is energised by the omnipresence of the introduction's enigmatic repeated crotchets.

The movement is further enlivened by Haydn's enterprising orchestration. His orchestra is significantly bigger than that of Symphonies no.3 and 40, now including flute, bassoon, trumpets, and timpani; tonic entries are doubled with striking effect by the brass and timpani. There are also a number of imaginative, unusual doublings involving the woodwind (bb.53-60, 64-69, 120-24); and occasionally the woodwind are entrusted with a contrapuntal line of their own (bb.44-49 and 68-71). Haydn's procedure is never predictable for long—the synthesis of orchestral and fugal thought here is of a very high order.

An exciting stretto begins at b.105, first subject only, at half a bar's distance. This compression of the entries, *per arsin et thesin*, destabilises the metre's strong-weak pattern; and soon in bb.115-119 there is an almost Beethovenian rhythmic diminution as the thematic unit is reduced from two bars to one bar to half a bar. This is followed by further development of the three subjects over a lengthy dominant pedal, after which there is a sense of recapitulation in b.135 (tonic entry in the bass, initially doubled by brass as at bb.37 and 67).

Fugal activity appears to end with an abrupt cadence in b.143, and the introductory material returns. Haydn hasn't yet run out of ideas, however. There is a sudden Neapolitan irruption on E flat from the whole orchestra, *forte*, then a return to the fugal texture for one last entry. Unexpectedly, this entry occurs in D *major* (the key of the symphony as a whole). The movement then concludes as it began, with a major-key reprise of the opening. After a prolonged, teasing diminuendo, the *forte* entry by the whole orchestra that disrupted the texture so much in bb.15 and 152 serves to conclude the piece. This triumphant major ending to a minor-key fugue is

unknown in any other Haydn fugue (although, to be sure, there are few enough minor-key fugues in Haydn's oeuvre). One might conceivably regard it as an extended *tierce de Picardie*, but it probably has more in common with the tendency of minor-key Classical sonata form movements to finish in the major than it does with any orthodox fugal technique.

This enigmatic and original movement concludes one of the finest symphonies of what was, on the whole, a relatively fallow period for Haydn. It was written for the reopening of the Esterházy court theatre which had (along with much of Haydn's music) been destroyed by fire the previous year. Landon hears the kindling of the conflagration and its gradual spread in the sinister opening of the movement, and a reference to the auspicious occasion in its triumphant conclusion.<sup>17</sup> There is no way of knowing what was in Haydn's mind, of course, when he wrote this movement; but this interpretation is a measure of how much more emotionally compelling it is than the relatively timid Fuxian essays of Symphony no.40 and the baryton trios that this movement should suggest a programmatic interpretation so vividly.

It is the last complete fugue to be found among Haydn's symphonies. By this time, however, a certain amount of fugal elaboration was more the rule than the exception in his symphonies (during first and especially last movements at least). E. Lary Grosmann identifies two of the London symphonic finales as having especially prominent fugal sections: the symphonies no.95 and 101 (the 'Clock'). Haydn's late rondos are very different to the well-known examples in his Esterházy clavier sonatas. Although they usually begin with a regular 4 x 4 rondo 'tune', they seldom continue in this manner, showing much greater fluidity and a tendency to build up impressive sonata-related structures.

As if to demonstrate Haydn's habitual flexibility of approach, the fugato passages serve entirely different functions in the two movements in question. The

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<sup>17</sup> Landon, *Chronicle and works*, II, p.421.

Vivace finale of Symphony no.95 has two episodes sandwiched between recurrences of the rondo-theme, both of which begin with contrapuntal treatment of the same material. This is developed, in the first episode at least, into quite a substantial fugato. Both episodes emerge seamlessly from the final cadence of the rondo theme, developing a motive from the opening two bars of the movement (Ex.3.6):

During the first episode there are three entries of the resulting combination: tonic, dominant, and dominant again,<sup>18</sup> and quaver countersubjects accumulate until,

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<sup>18</sup> In fact the 'answer' only *sounds* as if it responds in an orthodox manner to the subject (a correct answer should properly start on B, as the subject began on E). The ear is easily fooled, however, perhaps because of the shift to the dominant which occurs at this point, perhaps because the beginning of the fugato is obscured by the way it emerges unexpectedly from the final cadence of the rondo theme.

around b.54, homophonic quaver figuration takes over entirely. Twenty five bars later, the fugato texture resumes with a close stretto—not difficult to manage with a scalar subject like this one—which leads to a vigorous, emphatic cadence on V/vi, and thence to the first return of the theme.

The second episode begins with a brief stretto passage, substantially the same as bb.87-92, but any pretence at serious contrapuntal working disappears after b.146. This is followed by some fine *minore* blustering (b.152), after which we hear the ghost of a recapitulation (b.186),<sup>19</sup> and the movement ends in typical fashion with the orchestra banging away on I and V. Clearly Haydn has been taking advantage of fugue's capacity to generate a continuously evolving texture, suitable for episodes between recurrences of the very four-square rondo theme.

More unexpected is the use Haydn makes of a fugal texture in the finale to his Symphony no.101. For most of its length, this movement is a typical sonata/rondo finale in his late manner. The clearly demarcated rondo theme is followed by a powerful, sonata-like shift to the dominant, complete with a 'second subject' (derived from, but not the same as the first) and a big cadence in the new key, at which point the rondo theme returns. There is now a substantial *minore* episode, which prepares us for the final return of the rondo theme.

Instead, however, we have a substantial fugato based on the rondo theme—probably the most comprehensive since that of Symphony no.70. Accompanied by a new countersubject, there are no fewer than five complete entries and many partial ones, mostly on I and V, but also iii and IV. The elegantly transparent counterpoint is mostly given to the strings, although an attractive detail of the orchestration is the series of false entries (first three notes of the subject) given to pairs of wind instruments in bb.218-225. Superficially it recalls the elementary woodwind writing

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<sup>19</sup> A 'ghost' because only the first four bars of the theme recur, harmonised in a tonally ambiguous manner.

of Symphonies no.3 and 40, but the way in which the winds bear the entire thematic burden against independent figuration from the first violins has an almost crystalline clarity. The tutti entry at b.233 has a curious combination of orchestral opulence and textural asceticism: the entire orchestra is playing, fortissimo, but the texture consists of only two voices, doubled throughout the ensemble. The most remarkable thing about this passage is the extent to which, referencing only the first three bars of the rondo theme and developing it in an utterly different manner, it serves as a perfectly adequate recapitulation of this theme. Clearly, a rhetorical preparation for the return, arrival on the tonic, and thematic incipit are in this case all that are required for a satisfactory recapitulation. One can test this by comparing the final quotation of the theme in bb.250-57 to the apparently similar passage in bb.186-89 of the finale of Symphony no.95. Both are quiet reharmonisations of the first few bars of the theme, occurring near the end of the movement. But while that of Symphony no.101 is merely the recollection of a recapitulation which has already occurred, the passage from Symphony no.95 has to do the entire thematic work of the recapitulation all by itself—even though it actually starts in the wrong key. In Symphony no.101, Haydn's ability to generate an entirely new and original development, precisely at the point where most composers (including perhaps Haydn himself in some of the symphonies of the 1780s) would be getting tired and be satisfied with a further repetition of the rondo theme, gives an extraordinary sense of his reserves of creative strength. It is not for nothing that Landon speaks of this movement's 'excellent claim to being the greatest symphonic last movement of Haydn's career'.<sup>20</sup>

For thoroughgoing contrapuntal integration, however, it is hard to overlook the finale of no.103 ('Drumroll'). What appears at first to be the theme is only an accompaniment in the horns to the real theme which appears in b.5. A repeated-note anacrusis, an appoggiatura, then an ascending scale from B flat to G—there is really

<sup>20</sup> Landon, *Chronicle and works*, III, p.575.

very little to it, which is of course the reason Haydn can put it to so many different uses. We have here an extreme example of Haydn's monothematicism; all the material in this movement except for the most conventional cadential passages (e.g. bb.99-107) is derived from the opening theme. We see this clearly in the main rondo theme. The opening subject appears first of all against a homophonic accompaniment, then in close imitation at the upper third/lower sixth (b.12), then against an accompaniment of repeated chords which turn out to be entries in the bass (b.19), then in canon at the second (b.28), and then a development of the subject's first bar leads back to the start of the theme again. There is a repetition of bb.5-23 (with the direction of the appoggiaturas reversed in bb.57-60) and a definitive cadence in the tonic, reinforced by yet further use of the same material. At this point (b.73) a sonata-like transition to the dominant begins, with yet more close imitation and a distinct new development at b.91, which leads through a big cadence to an unmistakable 'second subject' in b.107. For many years Haydn had exploited the use of repeated-note material when it came to constructing discreet but thematic accompaniments. Here the repeated chords are impeccably relevant, but of almost Rossinian simplicity; an excellent foil to the close working of the rest of the movement. The melody is of course the main tune again, this time with its metrical stress reversed so the anacrusis leads to the strong beat rather than away from it. An effective turn to the (dominant) minor leads to more generic cadential material in the dominant, and thence to the beginning of the rondo theme again. This time it deposits us in the relative minor. Analytically it makes sense to orient the next section around this key (in which it begins and ends), but the local tonal instability makes the densely imitative texture seem more like a fugal working-out than ever. Eventually the 'second subject' returns in full, in the very distant key of D flat, and a Neapolitan approach to V/vi leads back to the main theme. By the standards of Haydn's later style the recapitulation is

unusually regular, if slightly compressed, with some attractive changes of detail (note b.338, for example). The same dense chain of material is recapitulated, until a beautiful sliding chromatic sequence (b.351) leads to a final combination: close imitation at the fourth over horn fifths that obviously recall the opening of the movement. Nowhere else did Haydn generate an entire movement so completely from such a tiny melodic fragment; this sort of analytical description can hardly convey the breathless momentum with which he welds these thematic atoms into a continuous whole, nor the variety of textures (and, equally important, of phrase lengths) he achieves in doing so. This is in no sense a hybrid movement; the effortless counterpoint he had been practising all his professional life is integrated into a piece that shows no hint of archaism. An example of monothematicism as densely worked as the finale to his third symphony (though on a much larger scale), the influence of Fux has here been completely sublimated in this thoroughly modern orchestral texture.

## **BARYTON TRIOS**

We tend to think of the symphony as a ‘public’ genre, the string quartet a ‘private’ one; but there is a sense in which this polarity was reversed during much of Haydn’s career. The task of providing music for Prince Nicholas’ private orchestra was central to his role as *Kapellmeister*, and this remained so throughout the term of his employment. Although Haydn’s symphonies did find their way into the outside world almost from the start of his career, they were always written with an immediate set of circumstances in mind: specific performers, a familiar audience, a particular occasion. By contrast, string quartet performances seem not to have been a very important part of musical life at Esterháza; chamber music was not common in concerts at this time, and Prince Nicholas played none of the relevant instruments.

When Haydn wrote string quartets, therefore, he needed to take into account neither his employer nor anyone else at Esterháza. Instead he wrote chiefly for an anonymous, generic public: those who performed and enjoyed chamber music (or at least the publishers who supplied them). While the possession of an international musical celebrity must have given Prince Nicholas a great deal of satisfaction, from time to time the question of Haydn's musical priorities caused a certain amount of friction.

In November 1765, the prince drafted an unusually peremptory letter to Haydn. Incorporating a list of Werner's grievances, it concluded with the following instruction: 'Finally, said *Capellmeister* Haydn is urgently enjoined to apply himself to composition more diligently than heretofore, and especially to write such pieces as can be performed on the gamba [baryton], of which pieces we have seen very few up to now.'<sup>21</sup> This letter had two important consequences. First of all it prompted Haydn to begin his *Entwurf-Katalog* ('draft catalogue'), to demonstrate to his prince that he had not after all been inactive as a composer. The catalogue contains the incipits of all the works which remained in his possession, and he continued to add to it throughout his working life. Secondly, he began in earnest the series of baryton trios which was to occupy him over the next ten years. At the time of Prince Nicholas' letter he had probably composed only the first dozen (a fact which gives some justification to the complaint); in total he was eventually to write at least 125 trios, along with several works for gamba and larger ensembles. It is clear that when he started the *Entwurf-Katalog* he had no idea that he would soon produce so many—having made room for the first twelve, he went on to other categories and thereafter had to fit them in wherever there was room. At this rate of production, Haydn might easily have run to seed and ended up with a copious but meaningless oeuvre like the endless stream of flute concertos and sonatas that J. J. Quantz wrote for his employer; but during the mid 1770s Prince Nicholas seemed to lose interest in the baryton as his attention turned

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p.420.



increasingly to the Esterházy opera house.

At no other time in his life was Haydn called to write music of such intimacy as this; music, quite literally, for an audience of one. In theory, this was the case with all the music Haydn produced whilst at Esterháza. According to his contract he was ‘under permanent obligation to compose such pieces as his Serene Princely Highness may command, and neither to communicate such new compositions to anyone, nor to allow them to be copied, but to retain them wholly for the exclusive use of his Highness; nor shall he compose for any other person without the knowledge and gracious permission [of his Highness].’<sup>22</sup> There is nothing remarkable about this, nor about any other aspect of Haydn’s thoroughly conventional contract. It would have been within Prince Nicholas’ power to enforce this restriction, as August the Strong (tragically) did with Jan Dismas Zelenka, and Frederick II did with Quantz. It seems to us manifestly unjust that the music of a gifted composer should be the private property of a single individual; this is the point where twenty-first-century attitudes and assumptions (nineteenth- and twentieth-century ones as well) are farthest from those of the eighteenth century. The palace, the estates, the opera house, the orchestra, really were the personal possessions of Prince Nicholas Esterházy (an exceedingly wealthy prince, even by eighteenth-century standards), and the laws, administration, and taxation were very largely in his hands. However, precisely because so much property and power was concentrated in the hands of one person, his private actions and decisions formed the centre of the principedom’s public life; looking at it another way, one could say that the private decisions he made were so freighted with their consequences for his subjects, that he had no ‘private’ life at all. This completely different understanding of the relationship between public and private spheres is what makes it so hard for us to imagine what court life was like.

Of course, during this period a major re-negotiation of these spheres was taking

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p.351.

place, socially and musically; and Joseph Haydn was both an agent and a beneficiary of this shift. The institutions of a public, commercial musical culture had been developing for some time: music publishing, journalism, impresarios, concert societies, and freelance musical professionalism had begun to reach something like their modern form in late seventeenth-century England. These developments spread to northern Germany and France through the work of pioneers like Telemann, Philidor, and Breitkopf. At the beginning of Haydn's career, Vienna had no local music publishers and no indigenous musical criticism. Although music printed elsewhere was sold there, the chief means of dissemination was through handwritten copies; professional copying was quite an industry in Vienna—contemporary catalogues show that was possible to acquire copies of music from all over Europe. Only in 1777 did the first Viennese music publisher, Artaria, open for business. It is not surprising therefore that the first publications of Haydn's music emerged in Paris and Leipzig.

As was usual at the time, these prints were made at no profit to the composer, and probably without his knowledge. At first Haydn's response seems to have been a naïve delight that his name was becoming known: according to Griesinger 'he gave [his autographs] away and considered it an honour when they were accepted; he was not aware of the fact that the music dealers were doing a good business with them, and he loitered with pleasure in front of the shops where the one or the other of his works in print was displayed.'<sup>23</sup> Eventually, his attitude toward publishers became canny to the point of sharp practice. His opp.1 and 2 were instantaneously successful, provoking pirated editions and imitations (including 'op.3') all over Europe. The sets of string quartets and clavier trios that followed, opp.9, 17, and 20, received almost universal praise; better still, they provided a further source of income (after his youthful poverty, Haydn retained a keen sense of the value of money).

It unlikely that any amount of celebrity and prosperity would have persuaded

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p.62.

him to leave Esterháza while his prince was alive (as we know, once prince Nicholas died it was a different story); and with all the petty irritations and the overwork, he seems to have been genuinely fond of his employer. Nevertheless, with his growing fame as the composer of music admired all over Europe, did he never feel a pang of regret for the music he was forced to lock away in the obscurity of his baryton trios, and the precious time he had to spend writing them?

In general these trios are more conservative than the symphonies and string quartets of the same period; mild and equable rather than brilliant and challenging. Apart from the trios of the minuets, almost all of them are in major keys. Landon has pointed out the higher concentration of old-fashioned *sonata da chiesa* structures here than in any other group of works (by which he presumably means the fact that many begin with a complete slow movement—the vast majority have only three movements). Although an easy-going *galant* style predominates, a fair number of fugues can also be found among these trios; again, more than in any other single grouping of his works. In *Fugue and fugato in Rococo and Classical chamber music*, Kirkendale distinguishes between fugue proper (through-composed) and what he calls fugato: binary forms, with or without repeats, in which each section begins with a fugal exposition.<sup>24</sup> All told there are three of the former and nine of the latter; so nearly ten percent of the trios contain a fugal movement. All are finales, and all are in an unmistakably Fuxian style. Susan Wollenberg has identified examples of his influence in the trios; mostly, but not entirely, in the fugues. Such include long note ‘canti firmi’ (often scalar), recurring patterns of suspensions (fourth species), counterpoint at the tenth, and of course fugal imitation.<sup>25</sup>

For some reason a *locus classicus* for long-note scalar passages was in the trio

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<sup>24</sup> 2nd ed. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1979), pp.79-88. This differs from the usual rather vague meaning of this term (it normally describes a passage which resembles a fugal exposition in some way but is not sustained), but Kirkendale’s distinction is a useful one.

<sup>25</sup> ‘Haydn’s baryton trios and the “Gradus”’, *Music & Letters* 54/2 (April 1973), 170-78.

of the minuet, both here and in many of his other works. One of the most attractive uses of this device occurs, however, in the opening Adagio of Trio no.39 in D (Ex.3.7):

Although it begins with a proper dux/comes pair (rare at any time in Haydn's music), Kirkendale does not include it in his list of fugatos; it really is a borderline case, and it has little in common with the explicitly *alla capella* material of most of the fugues/fugatos. Nevertheless, apart from this there are other archaic features, such as the *chiesa* walking bass, and the hexachordal theme (in this respect it contrasts strongly with the resolutely up-to-date symphonic style described above). Composers had been writing contrapuntal movements on the ascending and descending hexachord since the time of Sweelink; in Vienna, Froberger had written a particularly famous example which was published in Kircher's *Musurgia Universalis* and copied out (twice) by Mozart. Part of the charm of Haydn's movement lies in the fact that, despite its archaism, the subject happens to outline the contour of a very well known children's song.<sup>26</sup> After this 'exposition' the counterpoint evaporates and a succession

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<sup>26</sup> By accident? Mozart was later to write a set of variations on the same theme, and Haydn did include thematic quotations in other Baryton trios.

of three different homophonic textures leads to the dominant and the repeat. After the double bar there is one more reference to the subject (in the dominant); the rest of the movement is built entirely of the homophonic material of the first half. It would obviously be stretching a point to call this a fugue, but most of the binary fugues (Kirkendale's 'fugatos') likewise tend to lose sight of the subject toward the end of each section. The counterpoint also tends to simplify itself, and all of these fugatos conclude both sections in a completely homophonic manner. There is no sense of juxtaposing two quite different kinds of material such as we saw in Trio no.39, however. The counterpoint is not elaborate, with one pair of voices often moving in parallel thirds and sixths against the remaining voice; when the third voice enters one of the others frequently drops out. These movements progress by easy stages between genuine (if simple) Fuxian counterpoint, pseudo-polyphony, and pure homophony (Ex.3.8).

The distinction that Kirkendale drew between fugue and fugato seems also to have been held by Haydn. At least, the only baryton fugues to which he himself gave the title are all through-composed: three examples, occurring rather late in the series, belonging to the Trios no.97, 101, and 114. The first one (Trio no.97) is particularly engaging—its bouncing sequences of descending thirds should not disguise the fact that it is quite a thorough exploration of the possibilities of its subject. Haydn even works it in stretto (hardly a difficult task, given the subject, but effective all the same), and all the episodes are thematically related. In common with many other Viennese fugues (indeed with the whole southern European fugal tradition) the precise extent of the subject is ambiguous at first; but once one accepts that it really only consists of three two-bar sequences, the rest being codetta, then it all makes sense. A peculiarity of the counterpoint is the unexpected absence of the downbeat during a recurring sequential passage (Ex.3.9); is this an intentional Haydnesque ‘joke’, or merely a by-product of the texture?

Haydn may have been especially proud of the fugue in Trio no.101, dignifying it as he does with the subtitle ‘Fuga a 3 soggetti in contrapunto doppio’. The subject and first countersubject (Ex.3.10) show how far Fuxian counterpoint had been divorced from its modal origins and locked into the tonal system, complete with modulatory sequences and secondary dominants.

The answer is probably the most eccentric Haydn ever devised, converting the descending sequence of the subject into an ascending one, perhaps in a misguided attempt to generate a tonal answer. The only ‘correct’ answer is probably a real one (Ex.3.11)—quite workable, as it happens—and certainly succeeding answers tend to take this form. Not surprisingly, given the nature of the subject, the counterpoint is a little more chromatic than the other baryton fugues, and entries occur in a greater

variety of keys as well: not just I and V (as with the other fugues) but also IV, vi, and iii.



The last fugue for baryton trio, from no.114, is not especially remarkable except in the manner of its closing. As we have noted, the Classical norm for the instrumental chamber performance of fugues was a uniform *forte* throughout (contrasting with the dynamic flexibility of the *galant* style). Here, however, Haydn writes out a concluding diminuendo. After pausing on a strong, widely-spaced dominant seventh chord, the effect of the sudden *piano* combined with the cessation of polyphonic activity is, in its own small way, surprisingly dramatic. The reverse procedure—a *forte* close after playing *sempre sotto voce* occurs in all the op.20 fugues, which had probably been written by this stage.

Haydn was far too much of a courtier, both musically and personally, to divulge any hint of what he might have felt about the time he spent writing *Gebrauchsmusik* for his prince when he could have been extending his style in new and challenging ways, making a name for himself in the wider world. Given this discretion, it is difficult to weigh up the extent to which these trios were shaped by Prince Nicholas' personal taste, by Haydn's attitude to their composition, and by the character of the instrument itself. In particular (for our purposes) we need to ask why, relatively speaking, fugal writing should have been so predominant in these works.

Taking the last point first, the baryton trio was a timbrally homogeneous ensemble for private amusement rather than public display. It is hardly surprising therefore that the equal division of interest among the parts which fugue offered should have been an obvious textural solution—especially when we remember that at this time he was reasoning very much along these lines in his op.20 quartets.<sup>27</sup> While on the subject of instrumentation it is worth pointing out the way in which the baryton's sympathetic strings are sometimes given important thematic material in the fugues (another reason for slow, first species subjects). Thus an utterly conventional passage such as Ex.3.8b is given a whole new life and interest by this unexpected timbral

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<sup>27</sup> This trio and op.20 were both written in 1772 (op.20 was published in 1774).

detail.

As far as the tastes of Prince Nicholas are concerned, he seems, like many of the Viennese nobility, to have enjoyed fugues—in moderation (one is reminded of Count Moritz Dietrichstein’s devastating comment about Francis II: ‘His Majesty loves fugues, properly worked out, but not too long.’)<sup>28</sup> Judging by the works Haydn dedicated to him, his taste was for *galant* music of a slightly old-fashioned cast; if he was not an enthusiast for ‘early music’ in the way that van Swieten was, he did have time for a little counterpoint, in its place.

And what do the baryton fugues reveal about Haydn’s own development? It is tempting to seek correlations with the op.20 fugues. Perhaps they were a sort of ‘dry run’, in his workshop as it were, before he went public with the string quartets. This may well be true, and the chronology fits; although, as we shall see, there are important differences between the two groups of fugues. A simpler explanation may exist, however. There is little doubt that, for much of his time at Esterháza, he was appallingly overworked. The autograph score of a horn concerto, written in 1762, bears the remark ‘written in my sleep’; according to Carpani, ‘he could not remember a day passing when he did not work sixteen hours, and sometimes eighteen.’<sup>29</sup> Although the standard of craftsmanship remains very high throughout the baryton trios, the level of creative commitment is not perhaps so unquestionable. This economy of effort can be seen chiefly in the textures used. In no other group of Haydn’s works do we see so many easy textural solutions as here: parts doubling each other; parallel thirds and sixths; *Trommelbass*, melody over repeated chords or Alberti figuration. Was Fuxian counterpoint just another convenient textural resource, a quick means of fabricating a movement when time was short? If this is so, then fugal writing

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<sup>28</sup> Kirkendale, *Fugue and fugato*, p.4. This is in strong contrast to Frederick II, who detested everything in music that ‘smelled of the church’. Frederick seems to have enjoyed the visit of J. S. Bach nevertheless; perhaps (as Burney observed when comparing his attitude toward Hasse and Graun) he was more tolerant of musicians who were not in his own service.

<sup>29</sup> Landon, *Chronicle and works*, I, p.48, 49.

had a dual significance for Haydn. On the one hand, it was an important means for the development of his style and technique, allowing him to explore the consequences of the extreme democratisation of part-writing it implied. On the other hand, it may also have been a stop-gap, allowing him to fulfil his compositional commitments when inspiration or energy flagged.

## STRING QUARTETS

As we have observed, it was Haydn's string quartets that broadcast his name the furthest. Although Prince Nicholas seems to have received a command performance of each set as it was composed, string quartet-writing was largely tangential to Haydn's official duties as *Kapellmeister*. A gap of about a decade separates the early sets (*c.*1757-*c.*1762) from opp.9, 17, and 20 (*c.*1770-72), and there was a similar gap between this group and op.33 (1781). Given the stylistic advance each new group showed, it is tempting to infer some conscious mustering of resources, the same sense of screwing up courage to tackle this demanding genre which is demonstrably true of Mozart and Beethoven. The explanation is probably much simpler—a musician as busy as Haydn had little enough time to spare for music which was quite outside his job-description. Nevertheless, by 1768 or 69 he had probably consolidated his relationship with the prince sufficiently to enable him to cultivate his reputation outside Esterháza.

The Haydn of op.9 was now a very different, and much more earnest, composer from the Haydn of opp.1 and 2.<sup>30</sup> As Landon observes, perhaps deliberately echoing Haydn's much debated letter of recommendation for his op.33 quartets: 'op.9 was

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<sup>30</sup> He was of course *literally* a different composer from that of op.3—Roman Hofstetter, whose works found their way into the Haydn oeuvre more or less by accident. It is curious that, superficially at least, Hofstetter's quartets show precisely the level of stylistic development we would expect to find if they had been in fact by Haydn, neatly straddling the gulf between op.2 and op.9.

constructed in an entirely new manner.<sup>31</sup> Whatever the merit of Haydn's claims for op.33 (see below), there can be no doubt of the crucial change signalled by opp.9-20. Here he definitively left behind the early *galant* style of Wagenseil and Gassmann for a recognisably sophisticated Viennese Classicism.

The most striking development is the emergence of a new sort of opening movement, in a very leisurely 4/4 metre, rather lengthy, with plenty of room for elaborate melodic and textural detail. Closing movements tended to gain in weight and significance, coming to balance the opening movements more nearly. Instead of the straightforward homophony of the early quartets, a greater independence of the four instruments can be seen. These lines of development culminated in the fugal finales of op.20/2, 5 and 6.

The three op.20 fugues are all lengthy (95, 162, and 184 bars) and densely worked, with none of the various evasions we have noted in the baryton trios. The subjects are not dispensed with after the first few entries, nor are there long stretches of unrelated material. Apart from a brief digression in the F minor fugue (op.20/5), these movements keep within the orbit of diatonically-related keys established since the time of Corelli. There is no approach to a binary design, indeed hardly any literal repetition at all. That Haydn could dispense with so many of the essentials of his usual style and still write convincingly is a curiously impressive achievement.<sup>32</sup> That he chose to do so suggests a strong, possibly external, motive.

Instead of the anonymous Fuxian tags seen in the baryton fugues he has here chosen strongly profiled neo-Baroque subjects, each in a different metre, each with a different character. In a sense these fugues are all 'hyper-baroque', developing the subject matter more rigorously, prolonging the pedal-points more insistently,

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<sup>31</sup> Landon, *Chronicle and works*, II, p.317.

<sup>32</sup> In this respect the fugues are not alone. One might draw comparisons with his renunciation of clear thematic profile in the 'Chaos' movement from the *Creation*, or the evasive tonality of this and other 'fantasia' or capriccio movements (op.20/2, op.76/6), or the absence of normal contrasts in tempo during the *Seven Last Words*.

introducing fugal devices (stretto and inversion, appropriately docketed in Latin) somewhat more consistently than was normally the case in actual Baroque fugal writing.

Haydn's Latinate superscriptions and the systematic working through 'due soggetti', 'tre soggetti', and 'IV soggetti' remind one of some of J. S. Bach's later demonstrations of contrapuntal artifice: *Die Kunst der Fuge*, perhaps, or the 'Von Himmel hoch' canonic variations. A parallel can indeed be drawn with Bach's similar determination to expand the scope of his style and demonstrate his mastery. Whether at this stage Haydn knew anything of J. S. Bach or not (it seems very unlikely), there can be little doubt that here he was demonstrating to any doubters that he could write a rigorous, orthodox fugue as well as anyone.<sup>33</sup>

The subject of the first fugue, in C major (finale, op.20/2) has a number of points of interest. Its ornamental chromatic descent (G-F#-F-E) is one of the very few recognisably classical fingerprints to be found in these fugues, sounding more like Mozart than Bach or Fux. The answer is also worthy of note; at first it appears to be heading in a subdominant direction, as those of Scheidemann and Buxtehude sometimes did in the seventeenth century (not to mention BWV 565, discussed p.52-8). Soon it veers toward the dominant, as an orthodox tonal answer—hardly remarkable, perhaps, but in an age where composers were often content to repeat their fugal subjects verbatim in the dominant Haydn's mastery of answer technique is worth mentioning.<sup>34</sup>

The subject may be light-hearted, but Haydn is thoroughly in earnest when he sets to work developing the material. His essential combination (the 'IV soggetti') are as follows, although they never appear together in precisely this manner (Ex.3.12):

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<sup>33</sup> The direct influence of J. S. Bach upon Haydn's op.20 has been advanced in A. Gürsching, 'Johann Sebastian Bach: 1747-1826—Anmerkungen zu Zeit, Stilwandel, Kompositionstechnik und Wirkung', *Musica* 50/1 (Jan-Feb 1996), 9-19; but the works of Bach Haydn possessed at his death were all nineteenth-century editions.

<sup>34</sup> Kirkendale, *Fugue and fugato*, pp.63-64.

Note the extent to which Haydn's subjects are all of different lengths, and enter at different points; this is essential to avoid a block-like uniformity of texture, and helps integrate the subject with the surrounding counterpoint. It will be seen that this combination conveniently incorporates a descending sequence—indeed, bb.2-3 are little more than a decorated series of 2-3 suspensions—and this proves useful when it comes to building episodes.

The op.20 fugues, indeed, Classical fugues in general, have been criticised on account of a tendency for the voices to cadence together, rather than showing real independence. Although this highly valued 'independence of voices' is in a sense an illusion (cf pp.70-1 above; *real* independence of voices is a much more alarming affair), it is perhaps reasonable to expect that this illusion be a convincing one—as reasonable to expect the cadences of a fugue to be subtle and elided as it is to expect those of a Classical sonata movement to be clear and well-articulated.

In his *Guidelines for style analysis* Jan LaRue identifies this as a defect in many Classical fugues or fugue-like passages: 'here the coordination of articulations approximately every two or four bars undermines the contrapuntal effect: ... the most striking reason that fugal finales in the Classic period do not sound like Baroque fugues may be traced to the overly frequent use of coordinated rather than overlapping

articulations,' and he quotes bb.99-119 of this fugue to illustrate his point.<sup>35</sup>

LaRue is talking here about two separate but related textural desiderata: 1) the irregular occurrence of cadential articulations, thus avoiding symmetrical phrase-lengths; and 2) a tendency for these articulations not to appear simultaneously in all the different voices simultaneously. The former had been a part of Haydn's style from the very beginning; not so the latter. When he turns to fugue, therefore, we shouldn't be surprised to see the musical style that still dominated ninety-five percent of his working life exercising a covert influence.

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<sup>35</sup> J. LaRue, *Guidelines for style analysis* (New York: Norton, 1970), pp.46-7.

A clear example of this can be seen during the exposition of this very fugue. There is something very symmetrical and conclusive about the diminished fifth—major third cadence of the first two subjects, a symmetry emphasised by the slenderness of the texture (Ex.3.13). Although the fugue is in four parts, the proportion of its length when all four instruments are playing at once is small. Where Bach would have papered over the cracks with another voice, or by increasing the rhythmic activity of his existing voices, Haydn leaves the beginning and ending of each entry unobscured.

The plainest example occurs at the start of the A major fugue (finale, op.20/6). Each voice is uncommonly punctual as it starts precisely four bars after its predecessor, and although there is no embarrassing hiatus between phrases (as with the fugue of Mozart's Musical Joke), each is neatly set off from the following entry. This is particularly odd as the subject with its three anticipatory quavers—a very old type, going back to the sixteenth-century canzona—can start equally well after a strong beat or leading up to one. In actual fact, the 'overlapping articulation' that LaRue speaks of is not as difficult a thing to achieve as it might appear. One of the simplest means of achieving this result is by bringing the subject in during a cadence, rather than afterwards—a device for which this subject is tailor-made. It is therefore curious how consistently Haydn does not avail himself of this resource during the exposition. Once the exposition is over, however, the fugue is much less predictable in phrase rhythm, with 'real' (complete) entries showing a disconcerting tendency to emerge unexpectedly from dense thickets of incomplete ones.

The F minor fugue (op.20/5) makes a point of systematically reducing the distance between entries. At first they occur at regular six-bar intervals, but even during the exposition this is reduced by half. For most of the piece entries tend to follow each other at two- or three-bar intervals (cf bb.36, 61, 103). Then, in b.112, a



pause is followed by the first stretto, at one bar's distance; a little later there occurs another stretto 'in canone', at only half a bar's distance. A combination of musical compression with the fortissimo dynamic at this point create a genuinely Beethovenian sense that the density of musical thought is about to overwhelm the musical medium, but normalcy returns with a series of perfect cadences built chiefly around the countersubject, followed by a final tonic entry.

Even more remarkable is the tonal scope of the movement: Haydn gets as far afield as A flat minor (b.60); a long way for an F minor fugue. The journey there and back, however, is managed in easy steps (Ex.3.14). Coherence is assured by making the thematic combination shown in Ex.3.15, and its associated 4/2—6/3 progression, the chief agent of modulation (cf bb.68, 71, 74, 77, and 80). Ordinarily Haydn was quite happy to shock by juxtaposing unrelated keys; here he smooths over the transitions so there is no sense of stepping outside the usual tonal orbit.

Haydn would write only one more fugue for string quartet, the finale to op.50/4, in 1787. Separated from its cousins by fifteen years, it shows a number of significant differences. The subject—perhaps the only one by Haydn to approach J. S. Bach in melodic individuality—is a gigue-fugue like that of op.20/2, but there is very little levity to be found here. Much of the subject's distinctiveness in fact derives from the combination of its dance-like metre with the 'pathetic' diminished-seventh (Ex.3.16). Tovey responded strongly to this pathos: 'quietest and deepest of all the ... instrumental fugues since Bach, [it] strikes a note so tragic that Beethoven's C sharp minor quartet is the first thing one can connect it with.'<sup>36</sup>

Although any similarity to Gassmann's (or indeed Haydn's own) easy-going sonata/fugues is only superficial, thematically, an unmistakable sonata element has

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<sup>36</sup> 'Haydn's chamber music', in *Essays and lectures on music* (London: Oxford University Press, 1949), p.61.

entered. The material of Ex.3.16 serves both as an orthodox fugue subject and as the melody of a homophonic ‘second subject’, which is recapitulated in the tonic. Tonally, the design has almost nothing to do with sonata form. It is, rather, authentically ‘Baroque’ in the sense that it moves coherently from point to point without attempting to set up any long term goals. The exposition, for example, shifts neatly between F sharp minor and A (b.11), E (b.14), A (b.16), B minor (b.20), C sharp minor (b.24), F sharp minor (b.26), A (b.29), C sharp minor (b.31), and E major, in which very odd key (established only the bar before) the ‘second subject’ is set. Anything less like a normal sonata key scheme would be difficult to imagine. There is a little more fugal working, including a stretto, and then the second subject reappears in the tonic and the fugue ends with an eerily spare coda. As a unique fugue/sonata hybrid it is *sui generis*.

On the whole Kirkendale appears to feel something of LaRue’s ambivalence about the Classical fugal style. Throughout his discussion of the general characteristics of the later eighteenth-century chamber fugue the example of Bach is present implicitly in the background, and with a few exceptions, the repertoire as a whole comes across as rather thin and conventional. At one point, however, he makes an abrupt *volte face*: ‘This, however [lack of contrapuntal device and independent voice-leading], should not lead to a generally negative judgement, as might easily result from the one-sided orientation to J. S. Bach. Rather, it preserves the music from labored turgidity, makes it more fluent and euphonious, and gives it the lightness and elegance characteristic of southern Germany and Italy.’<sup>37</sup> When we criticise Classical fugues for their clarity and simplicity, is this another example of what Tovey called: ‘discovering the fundamental hypothesis of an art-form and calling it a fatal defect’?<sup>38</sup> The answer depends on the legitimacy and significance of the eighteenth-century Viennese chamber fugue as a genre in its own right.

<sup>37</sup> Kirkendale, *Fugue and fugato*, p.75.

<sup>38</sup> *A companion to Beethoven’s pianoforte sonatas* (London: ABRSM, 1931), p.4, and many other places.

At any rate, the effect of later eighteenth-century norms of phrasing and texture are present here in only the most attenuated fashion. Haydn's rather four-square expositions probably result from a deliberate aesthetic choice to present his material in the clearest manner possible; certainly the independent voice-leading and obscuring of cadences as the fugues proceed is very difficult to distinguish from actual Baroque practice. The one criticism that could be made concerns the way Haydn relies perhaps excessively on descending sequences to build his episodes (partly a consequence of sequential subjects in the cases of op.20/2 and 6). Nevertheless, both as effective, integrated movements in their own right, and as solutions to Haydn's 'last movement' problem, these fugues succeed admirably.

The problem comes when we try to situate them in the context of Haydn's oeuvre as a whole. Alan Walker was perhaps the first musical critic to openly admit that the identity of the composer might legitimately affect our aesthetic response to a given piece of music.<sup>39</sup> Just as the same utterance can have a different significance in different contexts, our understanding of a given work is shaped not just by its own internal relationships, but by its relation to the composer's musical language and stylistic development as a whole. What, then, is the significance of the string quartet fugues in the story of Haydn's musical growth? It is hard not to see these fugues as 'foreign bodies' in Haydn's output. They are quite different in manner from all his other chamber music, being if anything determinedly antithetical to his usual style. Three of them are concentrated in a single opus—then after a further isolated example in op.50 he seems not to have repeated the experiment.

There are three possible ways of approaching this enigma. The first, as advanced by Kirkendale's *Fugue and Fugato in Rococo and Classical Chamber Music* (indeed, it almost seems to have been one of his primary motivations for writing the book), is to deny that the existence of these works—given a sufficient understanding

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<sup>39</sup> *An anatomy of musical criticism* (London : Barrie and Rockliff, 1966).

of the historical context—is especially mysterious in itself. If our awareness of instrumental fugal writing is confined to the works of Bach and Handel, then, yes, the presence of three strict fugues in Haydn’s op.20 does seem a little curious. We have already seen, however, that these movements are not entirely isolated, even within Haydn’s own oeuvre. So when we realise that there was a flourishing Viennese school of composers writing chamber fugues throughout much of Haydn’s life: Tuma, Wagenseil, Birck, Monn, Gassmann, Ordoñez, Kohaut, Sonnleithner, Albrechtsberger, and many others—indeed, that Vienna was probably the most prolific centre of fugal writing during the later eighteenth century—the mystery seems a lot less impenetrable.

There is an analogy here with the impression that Haydn’s ‘*Sturm und Drang*’ symphonies made upon Théodore de Wyzewa early last century. Familiar chiefly with the cheerfulness and optimism of the ‘London’ symphonies, he was stunned to come across the challenging, dangerous music Haydn had written around 1772, and posited a ‘*crise romantique*’ in Haydn’s life at this time. Time passed, research progressed, and the outline of Wyzewa’s musical crisis began to seem less clear. No biographical trace was ever unearthed of Haydn’s hypothetical ‘*crise romantique*’ or of the unknown ‘immortal beloved’ that Wyzewa had inferred. The ‘*Sturm und Drang*’ works were found to have been written over a longer period than he realised, and interspersed with other, lighter pieces. Furthermore, Haydn was not the only Viennese composer writing dark, passionate music at this time: Boccherini, Vanhal, Vogler, Mozart, and even Pleyel all produced works in a similar vein, a fact which has led to Charles Rosen’s paradoxical observation that ‘The [expressionistic] qualities of Haydn’s music that we often find most astonishing today are oddly his least personal.’<sup>40</sup>

In the case of the op.20 fugues, will we find that their strangeness likewise evaporates on closer acquaintance with the fugues that other contemporaries of Haydn were also writing? Perhaps; and yet this account is not entirely satisfying—indeed, it

<sup>40</sup> *The Classical style*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Faber, 1976), p.111.

appears not wholly to satisfy Kirkendale himself. In one sense, of course, all the composers that he has unearthed were apparently doing the same thing—writing fugues for string ensemble. Yet the explanatory force of this fact is weakened by several factors. First of all, many of these composers (Albrechtsberger, Ordoñez, Mozart) appear to have written their fugues under Haydn’s influence. The vast quantity of Albrechtsberger’s fugal output is a remarkable testimony to the strength and durability of Vienna’s fugal tradition; but it is no explanation as to why Haydn was writing fugues in 1772. Secondly, most of the earlier quartet fugues that Kirkendale cites (Tuma, Monn, Werner) were late developments of the *sonata da chiesa* of Fux and Caldara, intended primarily for liturgical use, and thus outside the history of the string quartet proper. Some (Birck, Gassmann, and Kohaut) were written specifically to meet the particular, specialised tastes of the Viennese royal family, with which Haydn had only the most tenuous connection. Beyond Haydn’s immediate Viennese historical context, then, we may have to seek the explanation both further afield, in the reception of his music in north Germany, and nearer at hand—in his own artistic development.

The op.1 and 2 quartets had been the making of Haydn’s name—not just in Vienna, but as far afield as Paris, Spain, and even North America. Landon has identified four distinct schools of Haydn *seguaci* (imitators), the first of which emerged in the wake of these very works, including Roman Hoffstetter and J. G. Albrechtsberger. It seems likely the publishers’ agents sought out and even commissioned works that might be sold under Haydn’s name. In short, by the time he was twenty-five his style was already something of an institution.

There was one exception, however, to this universal adulation. A group of critics located in northern Germany, chiefly Berlin, found themselves entirely able to resist Haydn’s charms. Musically, there were few areas more out of sympathy than

## Vienna and north Germany:

It is difficult to reconcile it with the present religious tranquillity of Germany, and progress of human reason; but there seems an unwillingness in the inhabitants of the Protestant states of Germany to allow due praise, even to the musical works and opinions of the Catholics. And, on the contrary, the Catholics appear equally unwilling to listen to the strains of the Protestants. . . . Messrs. Mattheson and Marpurg, who have written so much and so well on the Music of most other parts of Germany, hardly seem to have remembered that there is such a place as Vienna.<sup>41</sup>

Unfortunately for Haydn, a disproportionately high number of critics and theorists were centred in the north; Viennese musical criticism was by comparison in its infancy. During the middle decades of the century many of these Berlin critics were fighting a fierce rearguard action against the avalanche of *galant*, Neapolitan opera that threatened to sweep away all that was sound and dignified in German music. The immense popularity of Haydn's thoroughly irresponsible quartets and symphonies may have made him a particularly attractive target to certain writers, whose memorably expressed criticisms have become notorious: 'Viennese music .... [since] the dignity it enjoyed under Wagenseil, ... has [under Haydn] sunk into too much triviality ... Hayden [*sic*] is eccentric and bizarre; .... just name me one single, solitary product of Hayden, in which caprice is not at the bottom of it all!'<sup>42</sup> The hostility of these critics forms something of a refrain throughout the 'Esterházy' volume of Landon's *Chronicle and Works*.

In actual fact, Mary Sue Morrow has demonstrated that on the whole even north German critics were enthusiastic about Haydn's music, and that the polemics of

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<sup>41</sup> C. Burney, *A general history of music from the earliest ages to the present period*, 4 vols. (London, 1776-1789), vol. IV., pp.589-90; facsimile at <http://ace.acadiau.ca/score/facsim3/index/chap10/589.htm> (accessed 8 December 2006).

<sup>42</sup> C. L. Junker (1776), in Landon, *Chronicle and works*, II, p.401.

Junker and others were neither particularly representative nor influential.<sup>43</sup> There was one exception to this: north German critics could never get used to his predilection for two-part counterpoint in octaves: ‘Whether, however, his minuets in octaves are to every man’s taste is something I will leave undecided. They are good for amusement; but one easily gets the idea that one is hearing father and son begging by singing octaves: and that is a bad object for musical imitation’<sup>44</sup>

Nevertheless, we also know that Haydn was distinctly sensitive to such negative criticism as there was—perhaps because of its proximity to his admired C. P. E. Bach? The earliest of his autobiographical accounts, a letter dating from 1776, contains the following revealingly defensive paragraph: ‘In the chamber-music style I have been fortunate enough to please almost all nations except the Berliners; this is shown by the public newspapers and letters. I only wonder that the Berlin gentlemen, who are otherwise so reasonable, preserve no medium in their criticism of my music, for in one weekly paper they praise me to the skies, whilst in another they dash me sixty fathoms deep into the earth.’<sup>45</sup>

As we have noted, Berlin was not itself a hotbed of fugal chamber music. Nevertheless, Haydn will have been aware of the contrapuntal bent of much north-German theory (notably Marpurg’s *Abhandlung von der Fuge* and Kirnberger’s *Die Kunst des reinen Satzes*), and perhaps could see no better way of definitively asserting the seriousness of his intent. If this was indeed so, it is hardly surprising that this set should, exceptionally, contain two minor-key works. Even apart from the fugues it was the most densely contrapuntal set he had written.

But he may have been proving something to himself, as well. During the mid to late 1760s a noticeable expansion can be seen throughout Haydn’s music, first of all

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<sup>43</sup> *German music criticism in the late eighteenth century: aesthetic issues in instrumental music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), especially ch. 3 ‘Answering with a German voice’ and ch. 6 ‘The reign of genius’.

<sup>44</sup> *Hamburger Unterhaltungen*, 1766; in Landon, *Chronicle and works*, II, p.132.

<sup>45</sup> Landon: *Chronicle and works*, II, p.398.



among his clavier sonatas. With the Sonata in E, no.19 in Christa Landon's edition (written before 1766; no Hoboken number, though related to Hob.XVI:47 in F) his style definitively outgrew that of Wagenseil, Galuppi, and Sammartini, and in richness and scale he did not surpass some of the sonatas that followed (Hob.XVI:20, 33, 46) for nearly twenty years.

Although in later life Haydn would recollect the overpowering influence of C. P. E. Bach's sonatas at the very start of his career, it has for some time been recognised that his earliest works show not the slightest trace of Emanuel's distinctive style. Either the influence took some time to germinate or, more likely, the aged Haydn had displaced this incident by about fifteen years when conversing with Griesinger. At any rate, it is these sonatas of c.1766-1772 which are now generally associated with Emanuel's influence. At first sight they seem to bristle with Bachian mannerisms, although particular points of influence have a disconcerting tendency to fade under closer scrutiny.<sup>46</sup> Rather than particular mannerisms, however, the most important effect of Bach's music upon Haydn may well have been an enlarged conception of what the clavier sonata might be, far transcending the disposable *Unterhaltungsmusik* of Wagenseil and Hofmann. When C. P. E. Bach wrote his sonatas he was aware of the monumentality of his father's keyboard works, and despite the stylistic gulf between them maintained the same thorough technique and seriousness of intent.<sup>47</sup> It is possible to argue that these were the qualities transmitted to his Viennese admirer, although even at this stage the means to that end were largely Haydn's own. A similar transformation began to take place in Haydn's chamber music very soon afterwards.

Evidence for a fundamental shift in attitude about this time has turned up in an unexpected place. In an unpublished treatise 'Sur la musique comme art purement

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<sup>46</sup> See A. Peter Brown, *Joseph Haydn's keyboard music: sources and style* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), pp.203-29. It is worth pointing out that the music of Haydn's gifted contemporary Johann Anton Steffan (1726-1797) showed much the same development over the same period, in his case with no apparent connection to C. P. E. Bach.

<sup>47</sup> His *Versuch* is by far the most obsessively correct thoroughbass textbook ever written, probably surpassing the practice even of his own father in this respect.

sentimental' (c.1814?), Haydn's acquaintance Anton Reicha quotes a conversation in which Haydn is supposed to have said that 'after having written many works, he began again, at the age of forty [i.e. around the time op.20 was being written], a complete course in composition, to strengthen himself in his art and to learn its secrets better.'<sup>48</sup> This remark is the basis of Mark Evan Bonds' 'Haydn's "Cours complet de la composition" and the *Sturm und Drang*', which reinterprets the apparent disruption of Haydn's '*Sturm und Drang*' works as 'a period of intense, quasi-systematic exploration.'<sup>49</sup> An obscure anecdote from Reicha, recorded after Haydn's death, would seem to be a flimsy foundation for much conjecture; but it does square with what we know about Haydn's personality. More of a problem with Bonds' argument is the way in which just about any feature of interest in the music of this time can be taken to be part of this 'cours complet'; he himself refers to passages of harmonic experiment, unusual choices of keys, canon and cancrizans, variation and varied reprise, thematic elaboration and monothematicism, cyclical forms, and a 'heightened awareness of the audience'—it is hard to imagine a characteristic that might *not* be eligible. If Reicha's account is at all accurate, however, the most obvious interpretation of Haydn's decision to 'strengthen himself in his art and to learn its secrets better' would be just such an engagement with strict counterpoint as we find here in op.20.

Joseph Haydn left no diaries, no essays or manifestos, and few letters—only some recollections from very late in his life. All in all we have very little in the way of statements about his musical intentions, and even that little is cryptic or ambiguous. A uniquely opaque creative personality, most of what we gather about his artistic purposes has to be inferred from the works themselves. As we have seen, there are a number of ways in which we might account for the genesis of the op.20 fugues. Were

<sup>48</sup> M. E. Bonds, 'Haydn's "Cours complet de la composition" and the *Sturm und Drang*', *Haydn Studies* 1998, 162.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

they part of a self-imposed ‘cours complet de la composition’? A rejoinder to north German criticism of his ‘triviality’ and ‘caprice’? Perhaps they were written in the light of the imperial court’s well-known taste for fugue? Did Haydn remember J. G. Werner’s harsh words, describing him as a ‘Modehansl’ and a ‘G’sänglmacher’?<sup>50</sup> Or was there some other impetus: a conversation, a request, a performance, now lost to us forever? Very likely there was no single ‘cause’, but a number of factors acting in combination. We simply don’t know enough to determine what exactly fugal writing meant to Haydn during this stage of his career.

## **HAYDN’S FUGUES AND THE IDEA OF ‘CLASSICAL STYLE’**

Attempts to situate these fugues in the context of Haydn’s total achievement are complicated by the peculiar historical and cultural significance his quartets have. It was the German musicologist Adolf Sandberger who first drew attention to Haydn’s claim that his op.33 quartets were written in ‘an entirely new and special manner.’<sup>51</sup> Since his article of 1899 a flood of ink has been spilled, hotly debating whether this was nothing more than a mere sales ploy or whether Haydn actually meant something by his statement. Leading scholars have been divided on the issue, Sandberger, Blume, Finscher, and Barrett-Ayres agreeing that op.33 marks the important watershed in Haydn’s development, Larsen, Landon, Kirkendale, Tovey and Somfai arguing for the significance of op.20 (Orin Moe, on the other hand, has put forward op.50 as the defining set).<sup>52</sup> If only as a red herring, Haydn’s claim is inescapable, forcing one into an opinion whether one wishes to or not. But why does it matter so much? Why the

<sup>50</sup> ‘Fashion-monger’ and ‘cheap tunester’: Landon, *Chronicle and works*, II, p.347. Haydn, on the other hand, had a high regard for Werner, editing and publishing six of his fugues in 1804 (see p.399 below).

<sup>51</sup> ‘Zur Geschichte des Haydn’schen Streichquartetts’, *Alt-bayerische Monatsschrift* 2 (1900), 41-64.

<sup>52</sup> ‘Texture in the string quartets of Haydn to 1787’, (PhD diss.: University of California, 1970).

intensity of the debate?

This is how Tovey put it: ‘With op.20 the historical development of Haydn’s quartets reaches its goal; and further progress is not progress in any historical sense, but simply the difference between one masterpiece and the next.’<sup>53</sup> The essential point here is not which particular opus is ‘the one’ (substitute ‘op.33’, or ‘op.50’, if you prefer), but rather that, at a particular moment, Haydn’s oeuvre was hoisted out of contingent musical history into a transcendent realm of permanent canonical relevance. This is why the history of Haydn’s stylistic development (and the difficulty of integrating the op.20 fugues) is such a crucial issue: the development of the string quartet in Haydn’s hands serves as a synecdoche for the development of the Classical style in toto.

Part of the problem here is that Haydn’s mature style is a specifically *Classical* style. Its very existence as such depends upon the perfect integration and coordination of all its constituent elements. The Baroque style developed by means of enrichment, through both melodic elaboration and textural complexity. Bach was able to extend his forms as long as he was able to generate sufficiently interesting permutations of his material (indeed, one might say considerably beyond that point in a few of his earlier works). As a consequence, Baroque forms are not ‘sensitive’ in the way that Classical forms are. The addition of a few bars here and there—even quite a few bars—in an existing movement (as Bach often did when revising his own and others’ music) will not unbalance the structure.<sup>54</sup> The continuous, prose-like forms of Baroque music, both fugal technique and *Fortspinnung*, tend to focus the listener’s attention upon the richness or brilliance of the immediate present. By contrast, the transparent simplicity

<sup>53</sup> ‘Haydn’s chamber music’, in *Essays and lectures on music* (London: Oxford University Press, 1949), p.49; originally the ‘Haydn’ article in *Cobbett’s Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music* (London: Oxford, 1930). Where Landon reproduces this comment in his *Chronicle and works*, II, p.325, the copy from which I have been working (in the Wellington Public Library) has this note pencilled into the margin: ‘Quote! (and then prove wrong!)’ And so the debate continues...

<sup>54</sup> See for example the little fughetto in F (BWV 901) that was later to become *WTC II* in A flat, or the different versions of the *Fantasia super Komm heiliger Geist* BWV 651 and 651a (from the ‘Eighteen’).

—indeed, conventionality—of much of the material in a Classical movement deflects the listener’s attention away from this, toward an awareness of larger structural processes. The relationship between the parts and the whole became much more sophisticated, a sophistication brought about, paradoxically, by a radical simplification of the musical material, taken in itself. In a sense, this shift in emphasis is as true of (say) Sammartini and Vanhal as it is of Haydn and Mozart. Such a correlation between musical material and structural function was a part of the basic technical equipment of every competent composer. But, from our point of view, the ability of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven to control and exploit these relationships—their sense of timing, in short—was as far ahead of their contemporaries as J. S. Bach’s textural and harmonic sophistication was ahead of his.

How then do we deal with the many impressive and attractive works of the 1760s and 70s which nevertheless resist such integration; which might appear to be ‘false starts’, lines of experiment that were not followed up—the ‘*Sturm und Drang*’ symphonies, the clavier sonatas of 1765-70, and of course the op.20 fugues? Is there a critique implicit in the fact that Haydn wrote only one further fugue for string quartet; did they (like the ‘aria’ slow movements in many of the earlier quartets) represent a form of textural eclecticism that was not fully compatible with his mature style?

Charles Rosen, attracted by this music as he clearly is, bites the bullet: ‘Taken on their own terms the works of the late 60s and early 70s inspire admiration: they are defective only when measured by the standards of Haydn’s later works. Why then do we impose these standards? Why do we refuse the same tolerance to an early work of an artist that we grant—indeed, insist upon granting—to an earlier style?’<sup>55</sup> He answers his own question: ‘There is ... a genuine progress in style between early and late Haydn: the younger Haydn is a great master of a style that only imperfectly realises what the language of his time had to offer, the later is the creator of a style that

<sup>55</sup> Rosen, *Classical style*, p.146.

is an almost perfect instrument for exploiting the resources of that language.<sup>56</sup> Rosen has a very ‘strong’ conception of the nature and limitations of a given musical language; for him the Classical style was not infinitely flexible, infinitely capacious; it ‘exacted a price for each expansion of the language.’<sup>57</sup>

Arguing vehemently against precisely this approach is James Webster’s book *Haydn’s ‘Farewell’ symphony and idea of Classical style: through-composition and cyclic integration in his instrumental music*.<sup>58</sup> The book is built around a deep and thorough analysis of the ‘Farewell’ symphony intended to support his contention that ‘there has never been a more stunning triumph of long-range musical planning’; in other words, he is prepared to accept it as ‘great work’ without qualification, without Rosen’s relativising category as a ‘transitional’ work.<sup>59</sup> According to Webster, ‘all of Haydn’s music, including that from his earliest years, is masterly, and completely adequate to its purposes both generically and aesthetically’.<sup>60</sup>

For Rosen there was a point, in the early 1780s, when Haydn’s musical style began to cohere in a new and extraordinarily powerful way; a cohesion and power that alone merits the designation ‘Classical’.<sup>61</sup> For Webster, questions of chronology are quite distinct from questions of musical value; Haydn wrote exciting and challenging music throughout his career. To be sure, his style certainly evolved and changed, but there was no magical *point de perfection* at which it was raised to the *n*th power. It is clear that Rosen’s enjoyment of Haydn’s earlier works is inhibited by what he sees as their provisional nature. Is there, correspondingly, something that Rosen can hear in

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p.147.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p.350.

<sup>58</sup> Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

<sup>59</sup> Rosen had indeed criticised elements of this particular symphony when outlining the limitations he saw in Haydn’s ‘*Sturm und Drang*’ style: *Classical style*, p.147. Nevertheless his response to Webster (‘Music à la mode’, *New York Review of Books* 41/12 (1994), 55) is exceptionally generous and irenic, qualities not always conspicuous in Webster’s writing.

<sup>60</sup> Webster, *Farewell symphony*, p.10.

<sup>61</sup> While his book *Sonata forms* is impressively eclectic, drawing especially upon Italian operatic models that are still not well enough known, he confines his discussion of *The Classical style* almost exclusively to Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, genuinely regarding them as its only authentic representatives.

the later works that Webster is missing? It is difficult to imagine how such a question might be decided on an empirical basis. In either case it is impossible to ignore the significance of the op.20 and op.50 fugues. Either they represent the terminus of one particular line of Haydn's development, testifying to the impressive breadth of his style (and standing with the best of any instrumental fugues of the period); or they represent a crucial milestone in the growth of Haydn's style.

## CHAPTER 4

# MOZART, FINISHED AND UNFINISHED

In 1803 Joseph Haydn effectively announced his retirement by publishing the two movements now known as ‘op.103’. This final publication consisted of an Andante grazioso and a minuet, the inner movements only of a projected string quartet (itself presumably intended as a continuation of op.77). This is almost the only unfinished work to be found in Haydn’s entire oeuvre. Mozart by contrast left pages and pages of sketches, experiments, and unfinished movements.

There are several reasons for this disparity. Haydn had nearly a decade at the end of his career to put his oeuvre in order, revisiting and occasionally revising works whose composition he had long forgotten about. It is quite likely that he had begun to see himself as a classic in his own right, and he was well aware of the various attempts to collect and preserve Handel’s works in England. Mozart, of course, had very little time to prepare for his death: he did not intend to die at the age of thirty-five. His life had been spent in less settled circumstances of employment than Haydn’s, and in general his manner of living was less neat and orderly. In addition, Mozart appears to have shown a greater interest in contrapuntal experiment on paper for its own sake, without reference to a particular publication or performance. Mozart was the first composer in history of the musical canon to leave a substantial body of unfinished works and sketches.

This is no doubt partly a consequence of the celebrity that began to surround his name almost immediately after his death—for the first time there was a strong incentive, both cultural and commercial, to preserve every fragment of a composer’s output after his death:



Fragments by classical authors, whatever their species, are priceless. Among musical fragments, those by Mozart certainly deserve full attention and admiration. Had this great master not left behind so many completed works in every species, these magnificent relics alone would constitute an adequate monument to his inexhaustible *Geist*.<sup>1</sup>

In this remarkable letter, Constanze Mozart shows her grasp of two of the most important cultural developments of her time—the tendency to view the present from the standpoint of posterity, and the Romantic enjoyment of fragments for their own sake—together with an impressively shrewd eye to the main chance.

Following the both the precept and the example of Friedrich Schlegel,<sup>2</sup> composers of the next century would indeed come to exploit the expressive and formal potential of apparently fragmented structures.<sup>3</sup> It is, however, hard to disagree with Ulrich Konrad when he argues that ‘with all this, and with the discourse on praxis and theory of the “non finito” conducted since the end of the seventeenth century in the visual arts, the Mozart fragments cannot be connected in any meaningful sense. As aesthetic commodity the unfinished musical work simply did not exist.’<sup>4</sup>

What, then, was to be done with them? Incomplete musical works present a problem that is not shared by the other arts. Although seventeenth-century connoisseurs did in fact attach arms to the Venus de Milo and other damaged Classical sculpture,<sup>5</sup> later centuries have had no difficulty accepting torsos, fragments, and ruins

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<sup>1</sup> Letter to Breitkopf & Härtel, March 1800, quoted in R. Kramer, review of *Neue Mozart-Ausgabe X* (supplement) 30/4: *Fragmente*, ed. U. Konrad, *Notes* 61/1 (September 2004), 231.

<sup>2</sup> *Kritische Fragmente*, 1797, and *Athenäums-Fragmente*, 1800.

<sup>3</sup> See (for example) C. Rosen, *The Romantic generation*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), chapter 2, ‘Fragments’; M. Deppermann, “‘Epideixis der Unendlichkeit’: Das Fragment in der “ästhetischen Revolution” der Frühromantik’, *Das Fragment im (Musik-)Theater: Zufall und/oder Notwendigkeit?* (Salzburg, 2002), ed. P. Csobádi, 56-80; J. Daverio, ‘Schumann’s systems of musical fragments and *Witz*’, *Nineteenth-century music and the German Romantic ideology* (New York: Schirmer, 1993), pp.49-88; and R. Satyendra, ‘Liszt’s open structures and the Romantic fragment’, *Music Theory Spectrum* 19/2 (Fall 1997), 184-205.

<sup>4</sup> Konrad, *Fragmente*, p.xv, quoted in Kramer’s review, 232.

<sup>5</sup> R. S. Winter, ‘Of realizations, completions, restorations and reconstructions: from Bach’s “The Art of Fugue” to Beethoven’s Tenth Symphony’, *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 116/1 (1991), 97. Perhaps they felt the same discomfort in regard to the incomplete human body that we do with incomplete musical works.

as such—at times even creating their own from scratch. There exists no ‘conjectural completion’ to Coleridge’s ‘Khubla Khan’. Da Vinci’s sketch of the Virgin and Child with the infant John the Baptist and St. Anne remains a sketch. The self-evident incompleteness of these examples has not prevented them from becoming iconic works of art. Within the visual and literary arts a torso (literal or metaphorical) can be accepted as it stands. Half a picture is still a picture, a literary fragment can be enjoyed as such; but an incomplete musical movement is no piece at all.<sup>6</sup> It is possible to conclude a performance of (say) *die Kunst der Fuge* at the point Bach reached before he died—devastatingly effective, even—but to do so is to radically subvert the ethos of the concert room.<sup>7</sup> The intrusion of a biographical fact (for such it is, however pertinent) into the hermetic world of the musical structure is nothing less than a catastrophe within the context of that world and the conventions of musical performance. To thus ‘play safe’ in relation to the composer’s presumed intentions is, paradoxically, the surest way to frustrate them. Whatever Bach may have planned for the rest of the movement, he certainly didn’t intend for it to stop dead at bar 239:<sup>8</sup>

Johann Sebastian Bach once came into a large company while a musical amateur was sitting and improvising at a harpsichord. The moment the latter became aware of the presence of the great master, he sprang up and left off with a dissonant chord. Bach, who heard it, was so offended by this musical unpleasantness that he passed right by his host, who was coming to meet him, rushed to the harpsichord, resolved the dissonant chord, and made an appropriate cadence. Only then did he approach his host and make him his bow of greeting.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Cf Konrad, *Fragmente*, p.xv.

<sup>7</sup> One might compare the way that Toscanini halted the première of *Turandot* at the point Puccini had reached before he died: ‘Qui finisce l’opera, perché a questo punto il maestro è morto.’ Alfano’s completion was only used from the second performance onward.

<sup>8</sup> Although Walter Corten has argued just this in ‘La dernière fugue: Pièce inachevée ou ouverture sur l’infini?’ (*Analyse musicale* 11 (April 1988) 61-65), and ‘Clefs numériques dans L’art de la fugue de J. S. Bach?’ (*Belgisch tijdschrift voor muzikwetenschap/Revue belge de musicologie* 42 (1988) 199-221, on numerological grounds. Such an argument is surely anachronistic, transplanting twentieth-century ideas of the musical work as text (see below) into the eighteenth century.

<sup>9</sup> Anecdote from J. F. Reichardt’s *Musikalischer Almanach*; in *The Bach reader*, p.290.

It was quick-witted of Bach to identify the chord, resolve it correctly, and supply a suitable cadence—but whether we ourselves could do this or not, we all know the itch Bach insisted upon scratching.

Why this overwhelming, almost instinctive drive toward grammatical completion? It is tempting to invoke a Schenkerian kind of quasi-organic transmission of musical energy—there *is* a sense in which a movement as a whole could be said to come into focus with its conclusion. If awareness of long-term tonal closure exists in only the most attenuated manner, and is better thought of as a function of compositional ideology and practice than of direct perception,<sup>10</sup> there can be little doubt of the visceral dissatisfaction felt when a movement trails off into thin air.<sup>11</sup>

In order to be performable at all, therefore, unfinished movements need to be completed; and so posterity remains dubiously grateful to the composers and scholars who have rendered them thus playable. Completions raise knotty problems of artistic ‘ethics’. The single regulative principle Lydia Goehr advanced as governing musical practice over the last two hundred years, the ‘work-concept’, is actually a double principle, privileging both the work itself and the composer.<sup>12</sup> This dual locus of authority has meant that what W. K. Wimsatt and M. C. Beardsley called the ‘fallacy’ of authorial intention has been the hallmark of intellectual respectability in musical

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<sup>10</sup> See N. Cook, ‘The perception of large-scale tonal closure’, *Music Perception* 5/2 (Winter 1987), 197-206, and B. Edlund, ‘Tonal closure: Fact and/or fiction’, *Third triennial ESCOM conference: Proceedings*, 140-144.

<sup>11</sup> Psychological studies concerning the perception of musical closure include K. Swartz, K. Kreilick, E. Hantz, and W. Kananen, ‘Neural responses to melodic and harmonic closure: An event-related-potential study’, *Music Perception* 15/1 (Fall 1997), 69-98; E. Marvin, ‘Research on tonal perception and memory: what implications for music theory pedagogy?’ *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy* 9 (1995), 31-70; A. Sadek, ‘The nature of flexibility of musical closure’, *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education* 119 (Winter 1993-1994), 122-126; and B. Rosner and E. Narmour, ‘Harmonic closure: music theory and perception’, *Music Perception* 9/3 (Spring 1992), 383-411. R. Eberlein and J. Fricke’s *Kadenzwahrnehmung und Kadenzgeschichte: Ein Beitrag zu einer Grammatik der Musik* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1992) combines experiments in music perception with a historical approach to cadential morphology. P. McCreless, ‘The hermeneutic sentence and other literary models for tonal closure’, *Indiana Theory Review* 12 (Spring-Fall 1991), 35-73, explores parallels between the semiotic approaches of Barthes and Schenker.

<sup>12</sup> *The imaginary museum of musical works* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992). It would be possible to conceive of a musical culture that was oriented purely towards the works themselves, while taking little account of the composers thereof. Something like this is true of Irish traditional music, built around a stable corpus of tunes, where (in some circles) awareness of individual authorship is actively discouraged.

thought and practice until very recently.<sup>13</sup> The situation is more complicated for music than it is for poetry. Not only are questions of authorial intention relevant to hermeneutic interpretation of what a given work ‘means’ (an inquiry roughly equivalent to that of Wimsatt and Beardsley), but they are equally relevant to issues of performance, editions, realisations, and arrangement. In no case is this knowledge of intention both more desirable and more definitively irrecoverable than in the case of unfinished works. This being so, there is always a sense in which any given completion is going to be ‘unsatisfactory’, the best of a bad job—as expressed, for example, by Toscanini’s bad temper toward Alfano’s completion of *Turandot* (‘I saw Puccini coming in and slapping my face!’) and Richard Swift’s argument that the sketches of Mahler’s 10<sup>th</sup> symphony are too incomplete to permit completion of the piece by anyone other than the composer himself—by anyone at all, that is.<sup>14</sup> The advocacy of this last position testifies to the extent that, in our culture today, a musical work can exist purely as text without even the possibility of performance.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> ‘The intentional fallacy’, *Sewanee Review* (1946), 466-88; reprinted in *On literary intention*, ed. D. Newton-de-Molina (Edinburgh, 1976), pp.1-13. This assumption has been problematised in relation to music by R. Taruskin, *Text and act: essays on music and performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) and many other articles: I. Anhalt, ‘Text, context, music’, *Canadian University Music Review/Revue de musique des universités canadiennes* 9/2 (1989), 1-21; V. Rantala, ‘The work of art: Identity and interpretation’, *Semiotica* 87/3-4 (1991), 271-292; C. Dahlhaus, ‘Textgeschichte und Rezeptionsgeschichte’, in *Rezeptionsästhetik und Rezeptionsgeschichte in der Musikwissenschaft* ed. F. Krummacher and H. Danuser (Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 1991), pp. 105-114.

<sup>14</sup> ‘Mahler’s Ninth and Cooke’s Tenth’, *19th-century Music* 2/2 (November 1978) 165-72.

<sup>15</sup> Nicholas Cook is hostile to this way of thinking about music: ‘Between process and product: Music and/as performance’, *Music Theory Online* 7/2 (April 2001), <http://www.societymusictheory.org/mto/issues/mto.01.7.2/mto.01.7.2.cook.html> (accessed 30 September 2006), and Nelson Goodman attempted to do without reference to the work as an abstract concept, defining it simply as the set of its accurate performances (*Languages of art; an approach to a theory of symbols* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp.112-22, 177-92; while Jerrold Levinson was less reluctant to accept the existence of the musical work as a quasi-Platonic entity, he saw the means of performance as an essential part of the work (‘What a musical work is?’ and ‘What a musical work is, again’, *Music, art, and metaphysics: Essays in philosophical aesthetics* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1990). In *The imaginary museum of musical works: an essay in the philosophy of music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), Lydia Goehr sought to supplant the essentialist definitions of Goodman and Levinson with the emergent, socially negotiated idea of the ‘work concept’, which she identified as having arisen around 1800. Swift’s argument in relation to the completion of Mahler’s 10<sup>th</sup> can be seen as an extreme consequence of this *Werktreue* ethic, in which the performance most in accord with the composer’s intentions is—none at all. See also J. Anderson, ‘Musical identity’, *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 40/3 (Spring 1982), 285-91; K. Stierle, ‘Der Text als Werk und als Vollzug’, *Der Hörer als Interpret*, ed. H. de La Motte-Haber and R. Kopiez (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1995), 11-28; and B. Edlund, ‘On scores and works of music: interpretation and identity’, *British Journal of Aesthetics* 36/4 (October 1996), 367-380.

This was not the case two hundred years ago, when Mozart's oeuvre was being collected and published (most of it for the first time), and from then onward numerous publishers, composers, and editors have taken a hand in the project of rescuing Mozart's fragments: Simon Sechter, A. E. Müller, Anton André, J. F. Eck, August Klengel, Rainer Bischof, Richard Maunder, and others. Like *Die Kunst der Fuge*, the 'great' C minor mass K.427/417a and the Requiem have received a number of attempted completions, from F. X. Süssmayr (Requiem, 1791) to Alois Schmitt (Mass, 1901) to Richard Maunder (Requiem, 1990) and Robert Levin (Requiem, 1994, and Mass, 2004).

### **MAXIMILIAN STADLER AND K.401/375E**

The most indefatigable completer of Mozart's unfinished movements, however, was the Abbé Maximilian Stadler (1748-1833). As well being a musician he was a music historian (his unpublished *Materialien zur Geschichte der Musik unter den österreichischen Regenten* was the first history of music to be produced in Austria) and a priest (prior of Melk, 1784; abbot of Lilienfeld, 1786; abbot of Kremsmünster, 1789). He befriended Mozart in Vienna, and catalogued Mozart's musical estate with Constanze during 1798-99, advising her in dealing with publishers. He was a composer of some significance, but his own oeuvre has been far overshadowed by the work he undertook to render Mozart's fragments publishable. Almost literally a 'ghost writer' for Mozart, the industrious Stadler completed no fewer than seventeen fragments, some requiring a very considerable amount of composition. There are four Kyries, a cantata, five sonata movements for clavier (with or without violin), three fugues, and a few other miscellaneous items.

There are two distinct types of completion involved here. The exposition of a

sonata movement sets up certain expectations for the recapitulation; there is a sense in which the completion of an unfinished sonata movement is as much a business of copying as composing. To be sure, twentieth-century analysts have made much of the irregularity of actual Classical practice; but even in Haydn (who is normally much less regular than Mozart) the amount of literal or near-literal repetition is large compared to the *Fortspinnung*-generated forms of the previous generation. In Stadler's completion of the Allegro in B flat K.400/372a, where he needs to supply a recapitulation to an existing exposition and development, all he has to do is tweak bb.10-11 of the transition to the dominant, and the sonata will conclude itself perfectly satisfactorily. In other cases Stadler had to supply more than a recapitulation with suitable transpositions. The Larghetto and Allegro for two pianos in E flat (K.deest) was 108 bars, much of it only for one piano, before he expanded it to 226 bars. In the violin/piano sonata movement K.403/385c, twenty bars of Mozart gave him the cue for a 144-bar movement.

More enigmatic is the question of what Mozart had in mind with his 'Fantasia' in C minor K.396/385f. The autograph appears to be an unfinished sonata movement for violin and clavier, perhaps one of the several that Mozart began writing for 'ma très chère Epouse' in 1782. But the violin writing is a long way from the sophisticated interplay of Mozart's mature sonatas, recalling the most primitive 'accompanied sonatas' of the 1770s. It is silent for more than three-quarters of the exposition, entering only in b.26 with a subsidiary alto part. Was the violin an afterthought? This seems unlikely, given what we know about Mozart's usual compositional procedure. It is hard to see what the violin could have added to the rich texture of the first twenty-five bars, and quite understandable why Stadler decided to present it to the public as a piano piece (the few violin notes are easily incorporated into the texture). The title is Stadler's own; if indeed the original was intended to be one of Constanze's violin

sonatas, there is a certain fitness in that Stadler also dedicated his completion to her.

The autograph breaks off after b.28, at the end of the exposition, and Stadler is composer rather than arranger from this point onward, supplying both development and recapitulation. If his recapitulation is nearly as ‘regular’ as that of K.400/372a, the development is a bold, richly pianistic expansion of the opening theme. It is, perhaps, more characteristic of its own time (1802) than Mozart’s (?1782). Taken on its own terms it is an effective, harmonically inventive piece of writing, but, for Richard Kramer, Stadler’s completion ‘plays against the grain of Mozart’s voice at every turn’; ‘it is tempting to imagine that Stadler was hearing Mozart through the filter of Beethoven’s recent music’.<sup>16</sup> How should we characterise Stadler’s contribution? Did he transform Mozart’s abortive violin sonata into a romantic *Charakterstück* against its will, so to speak? Or did he merely reinforce and develop the proto-romanticism inherent in the original fragment? Stadler’s work may well be at odds with what we guess to have been Mozart’s intentions—not least because Mozart appears to have given the piece up as a bad job; but should we not then be grateful to Stadler for transforming Mozart’s insoluble problem into a magnificent piece of keyboard rhetoric?

Because of the way a sonata movement sets up expectations for large-scale repetition, even a relatively short fragment can provide a fair amount of assistance to the would-be completer. This is not true of fugal fragments, which give little indication of their eventual course.<sup>17</sup> Attempting the completion of a fugal fragment is a very different matter; scissors and paste are no help here. Stadler himself completed three of Mozart’s fugues. Very little of Stadler’s music is available in print; but the gritty chromatic D minor fugue published in Robin Langley’s anthology *Classical*

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<sup>16</sup> ‘Fragmente’ (review), 233.

<sup>17</sup> There are of course fugues that make use of large-scale repetition; the ‘Wedge’ fugue in E minor BWV 548 or the fugue in B flat major from *WTC* II, but on the whole this is as true of the somewhat more relaxed southern German and Italian traditions as of central and north Germany. It has been suggested the clear ternary design of BWV 537 stems from just such an attempt at completion, possibly by J. L. Krebs (see p.40, fn.6).

*organ music: from the death of J. S. Bach to the advent of Mendelssohn*<sup>18</sup> shows that he was no amateur when it came to fugal writing.

The smallest contribution he had to make was eight bars at the end of Mozart's ninety-five bar fugue in G minor, K.401/375e. This fugue, perhaps the earliest of Mozart's surviving fugues for keyboard, was once thought to have been written in 1782, the year Baron van Swieten first introduced him to the music of Bach and Handel.<sup>19</sup> The texture is almost aggressively fugal, without the slightest relapse into pretty *galant* ear-tickling; Mozart is thoroughly in earnest here. The integrity of the four voices is preserved carefully throughout; when a voice leaves the texture, it only re-enters with the subject, in accordance with the strictest practice of J. S. Bach and Fux. Even more archaic is the way the fugue falls into two sections at bb.45-6: an imperfect cadence leads to a new exposition of the subject, now inverted, for all the world like a seventeenth-century *ricercar*. The subject itself is worthy of J. S. Bach. Lithe and flexible, yet perfectly balanced, it is one of the best Mozart ever chose for a keyboard fugue (Ex.4.1):

There is no regular countersubject, but the counterpoint is built almost entirely out of two kinds of material: smooth conjunct quaver lines derived from the last four notes of the subject, and dactylic semiquaver motives derived from the end of the first

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<sup>18</sup> Vol. I (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

<sup>19</sup> Other (lost) fugues are mentioned in Leopold's catalogue of his son's works. There is also a seven bar fragment of a fugue in D, K.73w; originally thought to have been written in Bologna (1770); according to W. Plath the handwriting indicates a date of 1772-3.



bar. This material is used both separately and together, achieving sufficient balance between variety and coherence (Ex.4.2):

In ‘The role of counterpoint in the formation of Mozart’s late style’,<sup>20</sup> Isabelle Emerson is distinctly critical of this fugue (and much of Mozart’s fugal writing in general), faulting the spacing of the voices and inconsistencies of rhythmic movement. She makes the valuable stylistic observation that, while in Bach’s *WTC* the rhythmic movement is very regular, the harmonic movement less so, in this piece the situation is reversed: a symptom, perhaps, of a harmonic rather than contrapuntal orientation?<sup>21</sup> There are, to be sure, occasional solecisms in the part-writing, such as the unprepared 6/4 chord in b.53 in which it might be said that thematicism triumphs over grammar. But K.401/375e is also, on the whole, a curiously impressive movement; the more so for being so far from Mozart’s usual style.

It is not surprising that such a dense, closely integrated idiom should suggest

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<sup>20</sup> PhD diss., Columbia University (1977).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p.176.

(to us) the direct influence of J. S. Bach. Nevertheless, according to Wolfgang Plath, the handwriting of the autograph dates quite clearly from around 1773 in Salzburg, well before he came into the orbit of Baron van Swieten.<sup>22</sup> Who else, then, could have inspired such a radical departure from his usual way of writing? Two possible models come to mind.

In 1770-71, Leopold took the family on their first and longest journey to Italy. Such a journey had been considered an essential part of the German composer's musical education since the sixteenth century (as the examples of Lassus, Schütz, Heinichen, Quantz, Hasse, Handel, J. C. Bach, Gassmann, Holzbauer, Vanhal, Gyrowetz, and Pleyel—to name only a few—show). The Mozarts' journey was unusual, however, both in the honours and adulation Wolfgang was given, and in the breadth and thoroughness of the education he received. In particular, he spent part of 1770 in Bologna with Padre Giovanni Battista Martini. Then as now Martini's reputation as a superlatively erudite musical authority and teacher tended to overshadow his reputation as a composer, most of his works remaining unpublished. His best known works are his twelve *Sonate d'intavolatura per l'organo e 'l cembalo* (Amsterdam, 1742), and what is remarkable about these pieces is the way in which they resolutely turn their back upon the traditionally casual Italian attitude to contrapuntal elaboration. In the more attractive movements (the Siciliano from the sonata in F minor, for example, or the Corrente from that in D), suave Italianate melody is enriched by sophisticated part-writing;<sup>23</sup> the result is not different, in principle, from much of Handel's or Bach's mature style. Unfortunately, most of the

<sup>22</sup> 'Beiträge zur Mozart-Autographie II. Schriftchronologie 1770-1780', *Mozart-Jahrbuch* (1977-78), 161. One is reminded of Stanley Sadie's description of the finale to the string quartet K.173 (written around the same time) as 'arguably his most Bachian fugue, though probably he had never heard a note of Bach when he wrote it': 'Mozart, Bach, and counterpoint', *Musical Times* 105/1451 (January 1964), 24. Robert Marshall goes further, arguing that Mozart had already been exposed the influence of J. S. Bach by this stage, probably through the agency of Padre Martini: 'Bach and Mozart's artistic maturity', *Bach perspectives* III (1998): *Creative responses to Bach from Mozart to Hindemith*, ed. M. Marissen, 47-79.

<sup>23</sup> The canonic gavotte from his F major sonata became something of a *pièce de célèbre* during the nineteenth century.

fugues cannot be counted among the more successful numbers. The subjects are often reasonably promising, but the texture is too unrelievedly thick, and the counterpoint too unrelenting; they are mostly very difficult to play, and ultimately rather unrewarding.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, they are examples of strict fugal writing that might have served as models for Mozart.

Another possible model could be sought, much closer to home, in the nine *Toccate e fughe* of Johann Ernst Eberlin (1702-1762). A contemporary of Leopold Mozart in Salzburg, *Kapellmeister* to Count Sigismund Schrattenbach, his output consisted chiefly of church music (seventy masses!), mostly in a very competent late-Baroque style. It is no great surprise that a fugue of his should have once been attributed to J. S. Bach (BWV Anh.208).<sup>25</sup> Several pieces once thought to have been written by Mozart have turned out to be copies of Eberlin works; dozens of Eberlin movements survive in Mozart's handwriting. Some of Eberlin's fugues show the rather archaic bipartite arrangement that can also be seen in K.401/375e. Eberlin's regard for the integrity of his voices is nearly as strict as Mozart's; and there is yet another, more distinctive kinship between the two composers.

Mozart's fugue differs from normal Baroque practice in one important respect: in its tonal range. Entries can be found not just in the usual keys (i, v, iv, III, VI), but also F minor (b.24), E minor (b.40), and A flat major (b.65)—unusual choices for a fugue in G minor. Other keys touched upon include B flat minor (b.67) and A minor (b.75). Mozart does not exploit these distant keys to disrupt the fugal texture, as Samuel Wesley did in the 'Salomon' fugue discussed on pages 162-68, where frequent sonata-like tonal juxtapositions occur. A closer parallel is Haydn's F minor quartet fugue, op.20/5 (pp.233-4) where a cycle of fifths takes him as far afield as A flat minor

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<sup>24</sup> To be sure, much of Bach's fugal writing could hardly be said to lie naturally under the fingers; but he had a much sounder instinct for variety in texture and tessitura than Martini.

<sup>25</sup> The ninth fugue of his *IX toccate e fughe* (Augsburg, 1747), transposed from E minor to E flat minor; see A. E. F. Dickinson, 'A Bach Fugue', *Musical Times* 95/1339 (Sept 1954), 489.

and back without a sign that anything out of the ordinary has happened. It is not, however, fifth-related movement that here gets Mozart from one key to the next. Instead, this movement shows an extraordinary predilection for stepwise sequences, both ascending and descending. Why such a dependence on rosalia?

A possible answer can be seen in the fugues of Eberlin. Like virtually every late-Baroque composer, Eberlin's style was heavily dependent upon sequential writing. If his use of this device was seldom as perfectly judged as that of Bach or Handel, neither was it as tedious and mechanical as that of the lesser *Kleinmeister*. Unusual, however, is the way his fugues depend so much on stepwise sequential transpositions. In the G major fugue (eighth out of the *IX toccate e fughe*), for example, bb.27-29 present the same cadence first in E minor, then in D major, then in C. The three succeeding bars show the same procedure in reverse; taking a new cadential figure from C to D back up to E minor. None of this takes us out of the normal tonal orbit; but in bb.36-38 a similar procedure is used to engineer a more interesting shift (Ex.4.3):

This time the transposed module is one and a half bars long. Emerging out of an interrupted cadence (V-VI) in E minor, it travels by means of G major to a cadence in D. Unexpectedly, however, this cadence is in the minor, and this enables Eberlin to repeat the whole passage a tone lower, cadencing on C by way of F major—an

unorthodox means, though very effective, of approaching the subdominant entry in b.38. This is the only point at which the fugue steps outside the usual range of keys (there are no actual entries outside this range); but Mozart was to use this technique to achieve much more curious tonal results.

His fugue begins in a straightforward enough manner, oscillating between tonic and dominant. The end of the exposition is followed by a cadence in F (VII), then a group of entries on B flat (III), E flat (VI), and C minor (iv)—nothing out of the ordinary. An unexpected G sharp in the bass at b.19 then raises the key a whole tone to D minor (where there is another entry) before sinking back immediately to C minor, after which the next entry is in F *minor* (b.24). From this very distant key Mozart has to hoist the music back up bodily by a rosalia which lands first on G minor, then on A (major: dominant of D minor), at which point tonal equilibrium returns for the moment. There is more ‘bootstrapping’ in store, however, as an entry in C minor (b.32) is pushed up to D minor (b.36), and then yet further to E minor (b.40)! Only the most precipitate descent (E minor, D minor, C minor; bb.42-44) can restore some semblance of tonal coherence, and this concludes the first part of the fugue. The second part begins with a new exposition of an inverted form of the subject, so the exigencies of subject/answer relationships keep matters on an even keel for a while. A B flat major entry in b.61, however, is soon followed by one in A flat, and another hasty sequential ascent is required (A flat, b.66; B flat minor, b.67; C minor, b.68). Still more rosalias occur in bb.75-77 (A minor to G minor), and bb.87-88 (D minor to C minor). This propensity for tonal movement by step, rather than fifths or thirds, is unique within Mozart’s output, and can probably be attributed to the influence of J. E. Eberlin.

A related issue concerns the phrase-structure of the fugue. The subject is two bars long, and entries continue at this distance throughout the exposition. This in itself

is not necessarily at variance with traditional practice: some expositions were regular, some were not. Here the exposition is followed by an attractively fluid episode (bb.9-13), with the next entry authentically displaced by half a bar. Soon, however, the fugue begins to fall into a disconcertingly regular pattern, with two bar entries followed by two bar episodes, thus: bb.24-27, 28-31, 32-35, 36-39, 42-45; then 57-60, 61-64, 65-68. The voices are genuinely independent most of the time, and yet this fugue is even more vulnerable than Haydn's op.20/2 fugue to the criticism voiced by J. LaRue above about 'the coordination of articulations approximately every two or four bars' (pp.230-1). The real trouble is Mozart's dependence upon transposable modules of one or two bar's length. It is an unusual style, which would have stood him in good stead had he ever decided to write a fugue on a 'B-A-C-H' subject, which (as the fugues of Robert Schumann show) tends to encourage such stepwise modulations. He did not, however, and the rest of his fugues were in a more conventional—perhaps more sustainable—style.

Mozart continued the fugue until its ninety-fifth bar, at which point Maximilian Stadler took over, supplying a further eight bars to complete the movement. Just as his completion of the C minor 'Fantasia' has been criticised for showing too much Beethoven, so has this passage suffered (now that we know how far it pre-dates 1782) for sounding too much like Bach.<sup>26</sup> Consisting of little more than a brief dominant pedal point followed by a tonic pedal with two incomplete subdominant entries, it is hard to see how it would have room to develop a stylistic identity of its own. It even makes use of the distinctive dotted crotchet/two semiquavers idea which dominates so much of the fugue; and yet there is a difference. When Mozart uses this motive, the melodic line moves in a single direction, up or down as the case may be. In Stadler's completion, it turns back on itself, (Ex.4.4) recalling the dactylic pattern which we recognise as a Bachian fingerprint from the third Brandenburg concerto, the fugue of *WTC I* in C minor and countless other pieces. The chains of suspensions in bb.96-98 are another new element, but are sufficiently generic not to seem irrelevant. Even if the

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<sup>26</sup> W. Plath, *Neue Mozart-Ausgabe*, IX 27/2: *Einzelstücke für Klavier*, Vorwort, pp.xviii-xix.

conclusion is not perfectly in accord with the rest of the fugue, it does render playable a piece that, while not from the core of Mozart's oeuvre, is still worth listening to on its own rather ambiguous terms.

We have no clear idea of what exactly in 1773 Salzburg gave the impulse for this very deliberate essay in fugal writing, although it should be pointed out that the string quartet fugues K.168 and 173 were also written about this time. We do know what inspired the next group of fugal compositions because he wrote to his father about it. The most crucial transition of Mozart's life occurred during 1781 and 1782. During these years he left Salzburg for Vienna, quit what was to be his last regular post with the Archbishop Colloredo, married Constanze Weber, set himself up as a musical freelance, and (on account of these actions) became estranged from his father. In Vienna, one of the most important people he met was Baron van Swieten.

## **VAN SWIETEN, CONSTANZE, AND J. S. BACH**

Patronage is as old as musical history; but Baron van Swieten was a new kind of patron. Of course there had always been musically literate and active patrons: Prince Leopold of Cöthen, Nicholas of Esterházy, Frederick II of Prussia, to mention only the best known. *Noblesse oblige*, and music was a official part of court life just as much as hunting, say, or court ceremonial. Some lords, like Frederick I of Prussia, were enthusiastic hunters; others, like his son, were enthusiastic musicians. But Swieten is the first patron we can really call a musical philanthropist, the first to consciously exercise his patronage for the benefit of music itself. When, in commissioning the symphonies H.657–62 (Wq.182), he instructed C. P. E. Bach to 'give himself free rein without regard to the difficulties of execution which were bound to arise', he was treating the composer as an autonomous agent rather than than



a servant or an employee. His Bach/Handel soirées were journeys of musical exploration for its own sake. The music was the focus of attention, not a background for polite conversation: ‘He exerted all his influence in the cause of music, even so subordinate an end as to enforce silence and attention during musical performances. Whenever a whispered conversation arose among the audience, his excellency would rise up from his seat in the first row, draw himself up to his full majestic height, measure the offenders with a long, serious look, and then very slowly resume his seat.’ As one might imagine: ‘The proceeding never failed of its effect.’<sup>27</sup> Although chiefly known today as a pioneer of ‘early music’ Swieten cannot be accurately characterised simply as a traditionalist or conservative (like, say, J. C. Pepusch, or Kirnberger, or Leopold II).<sup>28</sup> Rather, he was one of the first to see that the music of the past was part of the same story as that of the present, and that each had excellences of its own. This historicising view of the present meant that he was prepared to accept the possibility that certain contemporary composers might well be the classics of the future: ‘I have gone back to the times when it was thought necessary before practising an art to study it thoroughly and systematically. In such study I find nourishment for my mind and heart, and support when any fresh proof of the degeneracy of the art threatens to cast me down. My chief comforters are Handel and the Bachs, and with them the few masters of our own day who tread firmly in the footsteps of the truly great and good, and either give promise of reaching the same goal, or have already attained to it. In this

<sup>27</sup> Otto Jahn, *The life of Mozart*, tr. P. Townsend (London: Novello, Ewer & Co., 1891) vol. II, pp.384-5. Any history of the concert as an institution will show how far ahead of his time in this respect the Baron was. See also E. Olleson, ‘Gottfried van Swieten: Patron of Haydn and Mozart’, *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association* 89 (1962-63), 63-74. Olleson’s article, together with some additional material, can be found online at [http://www.mozartforum.com/Contemporary%20Pages/Van\\_Swieiten\\_Contemp.htm](http://www.mozartforum.com/Contemporary%20Pages/Van_Swieiten_Contemp.htm) (accessed 30 September 2006).

<sup>28</sup> Preoccupation with the past can be the consequence of a conservative temperament, looking back to a golden age in preference to the dismal present; but it may also be a form of radicalism (a word which, appropriately enough in this context, comes from ‘radix’: root). In this case the past thus apostrophised is always at some remove from the present and its immediate antecedents. Thus the twentieth-century pioneers of the ‘early music’ movement began by flying in the face of contemporary assumptions about performance practice and reaching back beyond the nineteenth century for new approaches and techniques. In Swieten’s case, the requisite distance was achieved by bypassing the native Viennese contrapuntal tradition (Fux, Monn, Gassmann, etc) in favour of a specifically North German orientation (J. S. Bach, C. P. E. Bach, Handel).

there can be no doubt that Mozart, had he been spared to us, would have succeeded; Joseph Haydn stands actually at the goal.’<sup>29</sup> Without this understanding of the interrelation between past and present, the musical canon as we know it could not have come into existence. As Edward Olleson points out ‘One could scarcely quarrel with his choice: of composers of the past, Sebastian Bach and Handel; and of those of his own time, Gluck, Emanuel Bach, Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven.’<sup>30</sup> The remarkable selectivity of his patronage demonstrates an ability to ‘pick winners’ far in advance of any other critic of the time.

There is no reason to suppose that Constanze and the Baron ever met. Nevertheless, if Mozart’s account is to be believed, it would seem that she had as much to do with the fugal works of this period as van Swieten:

My dear Constanze is really the cause of this fugue’s coming into the world. Baron van Swieten, to whom I go every Sunday, gave me all the works of Handel and Sebastian Bach to take home with me (after I had played them to him). When Constanze heard the fugues, she absolutely fell in love with them. Now she will listen to nothing but fugues, and particularly (in this kind of composition) the works of Handel and Bach. Well, as she had often heard me play fugues out of my head, she asked me if I had ever written any down, and when I said I had not, she scolded me roundly for not recording some of my compositions in this most artistic and beautiful of all musical forms, and never ceased to entreat me until I wrote down a fugue for her. So this is its origin. ... In time, and when I have a favourable opportunity, I intend to compose five more and then present them to Baron van Swieten...<sup>31</sup>

The fugue in question was the C major fugue (with fantasia), K.394/383a; its fellows were never completed.

How much of a musician was Constanze? A musical year-book published in

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<sup>29</sup> *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* I, p.252, quoted in Jahn, *Mozart*, III, p.384.

<sup>30</sup> Olleson, ‘Van Swieten’, 73.

<sup>31</sup> Letter to his sister, 20 April 1782, *The letters of Mozart and his family*, tr. and ed. Emily Anderson, 3 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1938), vol. III, p.1194.

1796 had a substantial article on her sister Aloysia: ‘Woe the good reputation of our taste and knowledge that such a great virtuoso should live among us as an amateur! And woe if she has finally to seek her bread abroad! ...Vienna searches all of Italy for singers and keeps such a paragon idle within its walls. Any composer whose work she performs will gain immeasurably...’<sup>32</sup> and so on for several more paragraphs. Of Constanze, it says: ‘Plays the piano and sings quite nicely.’<sup>33</sup> That is the entire entry. Constanze herself had no great pretensions about her gifts as a performer. She must have had some merit as a singer—no amateur could possibly have managed passages such as the ‘Laudamus te’ from the C minor mass Mozart wrote for her (were expectations different in the eighteenth century? Anyone who could handle these passages would today be regarded as a very considerable singer indeed). But there is nothing about her background to suggest a particularly cultivated musical education, which is why her sudden enthusiasm for fugal writing is so unexpected. We want to read sociological or demographic significance into her response, to infer general conclusions from a particular, idiosyncratic response. All we know is ‘suddenly she wanted to hear only fugues, thought them the “most artistic and beautiful” music—indeed, she craved them the way a pregnant woman craves certain foods.’<sup>34</sup>

Leopold and Nannerl had always been suspicious of Constanze. They had never approved of the rather dubious Weber family, and Wolfgang’s hairbrained scheme of eloping to Italy with Aloysia and establishing her there as a operatic star would not have helped matters. At the start of the letter, therefore, Mozart is rather anxiously acting as intermediary: ‘My dear Constanze has at last summoned up courage to follow the impulse of her kind heart—that is, to write to you, my dear sister! Should you be willing to favour her with a reply (and indeed I hope you will do, so that I may see the sweet creature’s delight reflected on her face), may I beg you

<sup>32</sup> E. Sisman, *Haydn and his world* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), p.306.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p.308.

<sup>34</sup> W. Hildesheimer, *Mozart*, tr. M. Faber (London: Dent, 1983), p.246.

to enclose your letter to me?’<sup>35</sup> It is quite likely that this piece was written and sent with much the same intention. Clavier sonatas were general-purpose music, of use to amateurs at home, professionals in public,<sup>36</sup> and teachers in the studio. Preludes and fugues on the other hand were specifically the province of clavier virtuosi, a means of showing off both their facility in improvisation (or at least an improvisatory manner) and their contrapuntal learning. It seems Nannerl lacked the training or the knack for improvisation, and on several occasions her brother supplied her with written-out preludes intended to sound improvised (cf letters, 11 October 1777, 20 July 1778; K.15g, K.284a, K.395/300g, K.626aII/I).<sup>37</sup> Next to the great C minor fantasia K.475 it is the largest and most ambitious of Mozart’s free preludes. It may be that the gift of this piece is a quite specific reference to the lost intimacy of their days as child virtuosi. Into the recollection of this shared experience, which no one else—not even Leopold—could really share, Wolfgang introduces the person of Constanze, as the real origin of the piece in question.

To what extent was Constanze her husband’s muse? The year of their marriage saw a flood of projects initiated in her name: the fugues mentioned in this letter, a series of violin/clavier sonatas for ‘ma très chère Epouse’, movements for two clavier, assorted vocal pieces, and of course the great mass in C minor.<sup>38</sup> Yet of all these intended works, only this prelude and fugue was ever completed—by Mozart himself, at least: ‘One after another, he wrote a quarter, half, three quarters of a fugue; all of them break off, as if he was reluctant to satisfy Constanze fully.’<sup>39</sup> It is all too

<sup>35</sup> Anderson, *Mozart letters*, vol. III, p.1193.

<sup>36</sup> Unlike concertos, solo sonatas seem to have played a relatively small part in commercial public concerts (Salomon’s series, for example), but they had a significant role in the semi-public soirées at the houses of the nobility which formed such a large part of Mozart’s professional life.

<sup>37</sup> The extent to which deceit was intended is not clear; as late as 1823 Adolph Marx was surprised to come across the ‘improvisation’ with which Friedrich Kalkbrenner had recently impressed him in print as a *Grande fantasia* ‘*Effusio musica*’, op.68; see H. C. Schonberg, *The great pianists* (London: Gollancz, 1963), p.111.

<sup>38</sup> The B flat Allegro K.400 could also be numbered with these, as Constanze and her sister Sophie are named on the autograph.

<sup>39</sup> Hildesheimer, *Mozart*, p.246.

tempting to make inferences from this sort of artistic *coitus interruptus* to the nature of their married life. Since the marriage appears to have been generally happy and affectionate, biographers have been forced to posit the absence of a ‘deeper’ connection: ‘that there was limitless comprehension between these two it is impossible to imagine. Mozart—there is no getting away from it—can never have known a love that was commensurate with his infinite capacity for it—the capacity of a supreme artist.’<sup>40</sup> Constanze has had to endure an extraordinary amount of opprobrium from Mozart’s biographers on account of not being another Clara Schumann.<sup>41</sup> And yet the incompleteness of these works does not *have* to be taken as a reflection upon their marriage.

## BETWEEN TWO FUGAL CULTURES

Matthew Dirst has advanced another—very plausible—explanation in chapter 2 of his study ‘Bach’s “Well-tempered Clavier” in musical thought and practice, 1750-1850’,<sup>42</sup> outlining Mozart’s shift between two fugal cultures. Almost from the start of his travels, Mozart had impressed listeners by his ability to improvise fugues:

Some of those present whispered to the Dean [of Augsburg Cathedral] that he ought to hear me play in the organ style. I asked him to give me a theme, which he declined, but one of the monks did so. I handled it quite leisurely, and all at once (the fugue being in G minor) I brought in a lively movement in the major key, but in the same tempo, and then at the end the original subject, only reversed. At last it occurred to me to employ the lively movement for the subject of the fugue also, I did not hesitate long, but did so at once, and it went as accurately as if Daser<sup>43</sup> had taken its measure.

<sup>40</sup> E. Blom, *Mozart* (London: Dent, 1935), p.120; what supreme artistic capacity has to do with an ‘infinite capacity for love’ is not clear.

<sup>41</sup> Arthur Schurig’s assertion that ‘the marriage robbed his artistic fertility of its intensity’ is bizarre in the extent to which it flies in the face of the usual view of Mozart’s creative trajectory.

<sup>42</sup> PhD diss., Stanford University (1996).

<sup>43</sup> A Salzburg tailor.

The Dean was in a state of great excitement. ‘It is over,’ said he, ‘and it’s no use talking about it, but I could scarcely have believed what I have just heard; you are indeed an able man. My prelate told me beforehand that in his life he never heard any one play the organ in a more finished and solid style’ (he having heard me some days previously when the Dean was not here). At last some one brought me a fugued sonata, and asked me to play it. But I said, ‘Gentlemen, I really must say this is asking rather too much, for it is not likely I shall be able to play such a sonata at sight.’ ‘Indeed, I think so too; it is too much; no one could do it,’ said the Dean eagerly, being all in my favor. ‘At all events,’ said I, ‘I can but try.’ I heard the Dean muttering all the time behind me, ‘Oh, you rogue! oh, you knave!’ I played till 11 o’clock, bombarded and besieged, as it were, by fugue themes.<sup>44</sup>

The most remarkable thing about this extract is its spontaneity and exuberance. Mozart is playing in every sense: teasing his listeners (‘not likely I shall be able to play such a sonata at sight’ indeed!), pulling and twisting his material, and testing the limits of his own skill. One might easily compare him with a brilliant young jazz musician in top form.<sup>45</sup>

The skill Mozart demonstrated may have been prodigious, but it was not supernatural. We can see that the fugue in question was not a particularly strict one, combined as it is with material in quite another style. Mozart was not improvising *Die Kunst der Fuge*. Instead he was working within a style which lent itself much more readily to improvisation than J. S. Bach’s strict fugal conscience (and even Bach admitted there were some fugal genres more suited to improvisation than others, as when Frederick II asked for a six-part ricercar off the top of his head). The advantage of composition *a mente* is that first impressions are everything—there is no opportunity to subject the texture to closer analytical scrutiny because no trace remains behind afterwards.

The Italian/south German fugal tradition lent itself naturally to extemporisation

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<sup>44</sup> Letter to his father, 23 October 1777, Anderson, *Mozart letters*, pp.495-6.

<sup>45</sup> Himself an improviser, Robert Levin has made similar comparisons in ‘Improvised embellishments in Mozart’s keyboard music’, *Early Music* 20/2 (May 1992), 221-22, and, more emphatically, in recent lectures and interviews.

because of its less exacting approach to the integrity of the part-writing. Perhaps the greatest representative of this tradition was G. F. Handel, with his massive but loose fugues (although the richness of texture—one of the reasons for his pre-eminence—may be the product of his north German training), but many other composers also followed in the footsteps of Pasquini and Pachelbel. An early but representative example of this style can be seen in Pasquini's *Sonata 7 a primo tuono* (Ex.4.5):<sup>46</sup>

The exposition suggests a fugue in four voices, and very occasionally all four voices are actually present (bb.9, 15, 42-4); but the number and identity of the voices is not an important aspect of this movement. What keeps the piece going is continuous motivic activity, mostly but not always derived from the subject, passing freely from voice to voice. A clear distinction can be made between what might be called 'active' and

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<sup>46</sup> Full text online at: <http://icking-music-archive.org/ByComposer/Pasquini.html> (accessed 30 September 2006). I have chosen this example partly because of its ready availability, partly to demonstrate that such a relaxed approach to counterpoint is not a sign of post-Baroque decadence but a long-standing part of the tradition (a contemporary of Corelli, Bernardo Pasquini lived from 1637 to 1710). There is no suggestion here that Mozart was directly influenced by Pasquini himself, merely that he was part of the same tradition.

‘passive’ voices; Ex.4.5 shows how simple the counterpoint to the entries can be. Even when the motivic interplay is quite rapid, only one voice is active at a time (Ex.4.6):

The resemblance to continuo realisation may not be coincidental, as Pasquini was a leading exponent of the partimento-fugue. Partimenti were exercises in figured (or unfigured) bass performance notated on a single staff. Though obviously pedagogic in function, some examples show considerable sophistication and musical interest; and, as many examples by Pasquini and others show it is quite possible to notate complete fugues in this manner.<sup>47</sup> The very existence of this possibility says quite a lot about their attitude toward fugal texture. Perhaps significantly, J. S. Bach did not leave a single example of this genre.<sup>48</sup>

No absolute distinction can be drawn between fully written-out textures and those originating from thoroughbass realisation. Both are governed by common principles of musical grammar; if anything, an improvised realisation is likely to be the more orthodox and conventional. Well-trained fingers will produce a texture which does preserve a certain amount of vocal integrity, simply in getting from one chord to

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<sup>47</sup> See W. Renwick (ed.), *The Langloz manuscript: fugal improvisation through figured bass* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), and ‘Monuments of Partimenti’, ed. R. O. Gjerdingen, <http://faculty-web.at.northwestern.edu/music/gjerdingen/partimenti/> (accessed 4 October 2006).

<sup>48</sup> The two examples attributed to him (BWV 907 and 908) appear to be by G. Kirchoff. Handel, on the other hand, wrote an expertly graded series of partimenti for Princess Anne, taking her in easy steps from the simplest exercises through to quite complex fugues.



the next. But it is easy to tell by feel the difference between a texture conceived (like Pasquini's) through the fingers and one in which the fingers are merely tools, presenting as best as they can a texture conceived independently of their convenience. Very seldom in the Italian/south German fugal tradition do we find a motive or subject-entry that has to be divided between the hands. The textural norm is one voice in one hand, two (or less) in the other, with changes in this configuration happening only at convenient intervals. Anyone who has played the simplest piece of J. S. Bach's will attest that he has not the slightest interest in these considerations, with even the three-part Sinfonias continually shifting the middle voice from one hand to the other. Looked at in this light, a passing remark from an account of Mozart's playing comes into focus: 'He gave each voice its due when it repeated the theme in another key; this was particularly admirable in the tenor. When the bass was too low and the tenor couldn't be played with the left hand, the right hand had to help out with a few notes and fingers.'<sup>49</sup>

From his earliest youth Mozart's profound musical gifts had enabled him to achieve with relative ease feats that other musicians could manage only with great labour and effort. He had been able to emulate his models and then surpass them without difficulty. According to Dirst it was the fugues of Bach that first challenged this comfortable sense of mastery. 'Here is indeed something from which one can learn!' he is supposed to have said upon hearing a motet of Bach's in Leipzig. K.401/375e has shown us that even in 1773 he was no stranger to strict counterpoint in a keyboard context. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that his exposure to the *WTC* in 1782 unleashed a flood of fugal experiments.

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<sup>49</sup> Letter of N. Lehmann to F. X. Niemetschek, May 1, 1818, describing a performance in Autumn 1787. Quoted in W. Kirkendale, *Fugue and fugato in rococo and classical chamber music* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1979), p.160.



Emerson interprets these fragments as a series of false starts: ‘a quantitative and qualitative measure of Mozart’s struggles with the discipline.’<sup>50</sup> Certainly the style he was now attempting was much more demanding than that of the contrapuntally relaxed fugues he could improvise as easily as write. Here was a challenge worth meeting, and the awkwardness of some of the fragments suggests that he found some difficulty adapting to its limitations.

Ex.4.7, for instance, contains the whole of the fugal fragment K.Anh.41/375g, and what an odd piece it is! Presumably intended to be in G major, the subject emphasises the pitches B and E so strongly that it is only with the very last note that this intention becomes clear. The part-writing is strangely awkward—often downright ungrammatical—throughout. One might point to the melodic tritone in the countersubject (b.5 etc), the very odd partial neighbour note figures in bb.10, 16, and 22, the false relation between bb.19 and 20; and these are only the most obvious eccentricities. The subject’s and countersubject’s trills come to dominate the texture, obscuring the pitch of important notes and giving an effect not unlike that of certain passages in late Beethoven. The texture and tonality begin to settle down with the repeated notes of bb.23-25, but it is at this point that Mozart abandons the piece. It is hard to see what else he could have done.

Other fragments are more promising. The best known can be found in the two-movement violin sonata K.402/385e in A/A minor. The autograph is supposed to have contained both movements together under the heading ‘Sonata II’, but is now lost. Such a grouping has no parallel in any of Mozart’s other sonatas, but it is possible if this is one of the abortive sonatas for Constanze, knowing her fondness for fugue.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> *Role of counterpoint*, p.167.

<sup>51</sup> On the other hand, Robin Langley suggests with some plausibility that Mozart may have originally conceived the fugue for organ (*Classical organ music*, preface).



Again the fugue is incomplete, finished by Stadler; we have no documentary evidence as to how far Mozart got, but it seems likely that the Stadler took up his pen around b.50. In Ex.4.8 we can see how Mozart's steady, perhaps rather predictable quaver counterpoint is abruptly succeeded by awkward, fidgety semiquaver material. Diminution is a difficult technique to handle at the best of times, but this is a singularly graceless example. Its unarguable thematic logic does not, unfortunately, help the abruptness of this transition.

The situation is different with two other fugues from around this time which reached completion through the hand of Simon Sechter (1788-1867), doyen of Viennese contrapuntists, teacher of fugue to Schubert and Bruckner.<sup>52</sup> K.154/385k (30 bars Mozart, 24 Sechter) is perhaps the less immediately appealing. An unusual ascending version of the normally descending chromatic tetrachord, the subject is rather dour, lacking the shapeliness and fluidity of K.401/375e; there is a strange redundancy in the way the first bar is identical to the third. Furthermore, most of the entries are separated by lengthy, bare, rather pointless sequences. Mozart's torso does have redeeming qualities: the syncopated cadence that emerges unexpectedly in bb.17-19, then again in 24-26, has a peculiarly Mozartian pathos, and the texture gains in interest as Mozart moves toward the subdominant which he reaches in b.31; but this is the point at which Mozart left off and Sechter took over. It is perhaps no surprise that Sechter, who is reputed to have written at least one fugue each day of his working life, should prove to be a more fluent contrapuntist than Mozart was at this stage of his career. Gone are the barren sequences, as Sechter's counterpoint is much less dependent upon the development of particular motives. Mozart's one false stretto (bb.28-29) is greatly surpassed by Sechter's real stretto (second entry inverted) at bb.41-44, and even more by bb.47-52 where the subject occurs twice (once inverted)

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<sup>52</sup> He also taught Vieuxtemps, Thalberg, Lachner, Nottbohm, and Marxsen.

against itself, augmented and inverted, in the bass. The one question one could raise about Sechter's completion is whether Mozart might have planned to exploit the thematic significance of the cadence in bb.17-19 and 24-26 later in the piece—although as we have noted questions of intent in fugal writing are often problematic. The main trouble with divining Mozart's intentions for the future direction of this piece may well be that he didn't have any. Did Mozart see the latent possibilities of the subject which Sechter was to uncover? Perhaps not. The work that Stadler did on the sonata movements that we discussed above had a certain element of 'clairvoyance' about it, decoding the implications of an exposition so as to supply a recapitulation and perhaps a development. Fugal forms are not predictive in this way. Simon Sechter took a fresh look at where Mozart had ground to a halt, found perhaps more potential in the material than Mozart had, and finished the fugue by seamlessly extending Mozart's texture in his own fashion.

The fugue in E flat, K.153/375f, also completed by Sechter, is the only one with a noticeably 'tuneful' subject, characterised by a descending scale of nearly two octaves. It might be thought that this would be difficult to manage in a fugal texture, but it fits in well with the fluid, scalar motion of the other voices. As in K.154/385k, Mozart abandoned the movement after the exposition, just at the point of the first entry in another key. Sechter continued along Mozart's lines, using the same subsidiary material, finding opportunity for one—not quite exact—stretto, and finishing with an unexpectedly *galant* cadence.

Although both fugues stopped at the same point, it is not clear why this is so; whether Mozart ran into difficulties or lost interest. The question occurs even more acutely with the G minor fugue K.401(375e). Why, having written ninety-five bars and surely taken the fugue as far as he intended, did Mozart not spend the few minutes it would have taken to bring the movement to a satisfactory conclusion? He may of

course have been distracted or interrupted—we will never know—but he never returned to it as he certainly would have if it had been an important commission.

Today, a composer will often start with an idea (thematic, textural, timbral, or whatever) and work outward from this point to the finished piece, much in the manner of the Scotsman who found a button and had a suit made to match. With the completed work, then, he or she has to find a performer, an occasion, and a public.<sup>53</sup> It has to be admitted that the supply of modern ‘composed’ or ‘classical’ music now considerably exceeds the demand. Eighteenth-century composers began at the other end, with the occasion, whether it be a private evening *musicale*, a public concert, a court opera, or a church service (or at least, especially toward the end of the century, with a commercial musical public). This naturally included an awareness of who the performers would be, not to mention the particular tastes of a given patron or public. Before a single note had been written, therefore, many of the most important parameters of the piece had already been laid down. This sort of external determination might well be intolerable to many composers today; to Mozart, and Haydn, and virtually all of their contemporaries, it was the core of their vocation.<sup>54</sup> In Paris, for example, (and we know what a low opinion he had of the French public) we see Mozart revelling in his ability to negotiate with their tastes, alternately frustrating and gratifying their expectations:

—the symphony began. Raaff was standing beside me, and just in the middle of the first Allegro there was passage which I felt sure must please. The audience were quite carried away—and there was a tremendous burst of applause. But as I knew, when I wrote it, what effect it would surely produce, I had introduced the passage again at the close—when there were shouts of ‘Da capo’. The

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<sup>53</sup> This is overstating the case a little. New works continue to be commissioned by ensembles and artistic organisations; but the creative process is usually much the same.

<sup>54</sup> There are a few eighteenth-century musicians who composed only in response to the dictates of inspiration: notably J. G. Mithel (1728-1788), and perhaps W. F. Bach; but however prophetic they may have been of nineteenth-century attitudes, they remain thoroughly marginal figures within the eighteenth century.

Andante also found favour, but particularly the last Allegro, because, having observed that all last as well as all first Allegros begin here with all the instruments playing together and generally unisono, I began mine with two violins only, piano for the first eight bars—followed instantly by a forte; the audience, as I expected, said ‘hush’ at the soft beginning, and when they had heard the forte, began at once to clap their hands.<sup>55</sup>

The precision with which he calculates his effects is remarkable. For this symphony he actually composed two slow movements, leaving the choice to the director of the *Concert spirituel* with his experience of Parisian audiences.

Like that of most of his contemporaries, Mozart’s creative personality was fundamentally extroverted. There was no ‘verdict of posterity’ to appeal to—a work which didn’t succeed upon the first hearing would be lost to sight. It is true that Mozart had a personal interest in fugal writing and in the works of Bach and Handel (Kirkendale has assembled an impressive collection of anecdotes and citations from his letters in evidence of this). But Mozart did not live in an age when the pursuit of these private inclinations was seen as the central task of the composer. Toward the end of his life especially he had many obligations: commissions to fulfill, concerts to organise, pupils to teach, patrons to impress, a family to support, doctors to pay for—to Vincent and Mary Novello it was ‘quite evident that Mozart killed himself with over-exertion: “He could never entirely abstract himself from his musical thoughts. ... Necessity and the duties of his situation induced this habit ... He frequently sat up composing until 2 and rose at 4, an exertion which assisted to destroy him.”’<sup>56</sup>

Kirkendale’s extensive catalogue should not be allowed to obscure the fact that the vast majority of his creative attention was given over to the theatre and the concert room. Is it not possible that Mozart’s fugal essays interest us more than they did him?

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<sup>55</sup> Letter to his father, Paris, 3 July 1778, Anderson, *Mozart letters*, vol. II, pp.825-26. The work in question was the ‘Paris’ symphony no.31 in D, K.297/300a.

<sup>56</sup> V. and M. Novello, ed. N. Medici and R. Hughes, *A Mozart pilgrimage: the travel diaries of Vincent and Mary Novello in the year 1829* (London: Novello, 1955), p.95-96.



Stray experiments of an idle hour (of which, goodness knows, he had few enough), it is hardly surprising that they were dropped when difficulties arose or distractions came up. There was, on the other hand, one highly public arena in which there was a steady and constant demand for fugal writing: the church.

## CHURCH MUSIC

H. C. Robbins Landon's brilliant reinterpretation of Haydn's late masses as a continuation of his symphonic achievement gave significant impetus to their rehabilitation during the twentieth century.<sup>57</sup> No one has taken up the cause of Mozart's masses with quite the same effect, although they are frequently performed and have many admirers. Landon was able to argue that Haydn's masses were central to his achievement; perhaps even its culmination; but such an argument is harder to sustain in relation to Mozart's liturgical output. Chiefly confined to the first half of his life—and it is of course the works of his maturity that excite us the most—his masses are inextricably associated with conditions of servitude in Salzburg that we know he detested.<sup>58</sup> Certainly, after he arrived in Vienna, he undertook only two more sizeable liturgical works—neither of them finished, both of them significantly different in approach from his Salzburg masses.

We should not of course view Mozart's entire career in Salzburg through the lenses of his later disillusionment. During the first years of Colloredo's reign Mozart was very active in the composition of church music, and the years 1779-80 show a

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<sup>57</sup> "'Epilogue': Haydn's symphonic legacy (the six masses of 1796-1802)", *The symphonies of Joseph Haydn* (London: Universal Edition & Rockliff, 1955), pp.594-604. Martin Chusid has developed this idea further in 'Some observations on liturgy, text and structure in Haydn's late masses' in *Studies in eighteenth-century music: a tribute to Karl Geiringer on his seventieth birthday* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1970), dividing the late masses into so-called 'vocal symphonies'.

<sup>58</sup> By eighteenth-century standards the Mozarts' conditions of employment were perfectly comfortable, if not especially inspiring—but our habit of seeing everything from Wolfgang's perspective prevents us from regarding Archbishop Colloredo as anything other than as an inflexible tyrant.

renewed application to this task. Whilst ambivalent about musical life in Salzburg as a whole, the letter Mozart wrote to Padre Martini on 4 September 1776 expresses pleasure in the fact that, as the son of the *Kapellmeister*, he has ‘an opportunity of writing as much church music as I like’, and regards the particular limitations of the forty-five minute Salzburg service as a challenge to be met as much as a burden to be borne.<sup>59</sup>

Leaving aside the doubtful question of how much a composer’s attitude toward their works should determine our own, there is also the ambiguity of Mozart’s own faith. Few have questioned Joseph Haydn’s patent devotion, and the sincerity of its expression in his music. Mozart, too, when it suited him, sought to give a devout impression to his father; but not even his strongest protestations (which may, perhaps, have been quite sincere) can entirely allay the suspicion that his church music is a kind of impeccably professional equivocation. Thus Tovey: ‘Under mundane conditions, art may attain three heavens: one, the highest, which is above all conflicts; the second, where an artist enjoys accommodating himself to his world and is above consciousness of his irony; and the lowest; but still a heaven, in which he writes with his tongue in his cheek. Below this lies hell, into which Mozart did not descend even in his church music.’<sup>60</sup> The question of how far Mozart’s tongue was in his cheek remains open; but there is still much pleasure and interest to be found in the masses he wrote before he came to Vienna.

Curiously, most of his earliest church music appears to have originated outside Salzburg: a Kyrie, K.33 (Paris, 1766), a lost Stabat Mater (between Paris and Salzburg, 1766), an Offertorium ‘Scande coeli limina’, K.34 (Seeon, 1767), and the first two masses, K.49/47d and 139/47a (Vienna, 1768). K.49/47d is probably Mozart’s first complete mass, and contrasts strongly with Haydn’s Hob.XXII:1. If Haydn followed

<sup>59</sup> Anderson, *Mozart letters*, vol. I, pp.385-88.

<sup>60</sup> Analysis CCXXVIII: Mozart, Symphony in D major (Paris Symphony) K.297, *Essays in musical analysis*, 6 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), vol. VI, p.20.

the light, homophonic example of Reutter and Wagenseil, here Mozart emulates the rather grave, late-Baroque style of Eberlin. While not quite fugal, the Kyrie strikes a serious tone with its free contrapuntal writing—at no point do we find the vocal pyrotechnics of Haydn’s earliest masses (Ex.4.9).

Later in the Gloria and Sanctus there are perfect examples of the ‘*rauschende Violinen à la Reutter*’ (not a specifically Viennese texture, but ubiquitous in Italianate church music of the period),<sup>61</sup> but the voices’ contrapuntal independence frequently emerges despite this. Two sections could be described as fugues in their own right, predictably enough the ‘cum sancto Spiritu’ (Gloria) and ‘et vitam venturi’ (Credo); both consist of a single exposition and conclusion.

The vast expansion of scale in the ‘*Waisenhaus-Messe*’ (K.139/47a), a generously proportioned cantata-mass composed only a month or two later, is thus quite remarkable. Again there are fugues upon the ‘cum sancto Spiritu’ and ‘et vitam venturi’; but instead of being content with a single exposition, Mozart now extends these sections to ninety-six and seventy-six bars respectively—no mean achievement

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<sup>61</sup> It is C. F. Pohl’s phrase—see B. C. MacIntyre, *The Viennese concerted mass of the early classic period* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1986), p.104, fn. 37.

for a child of twelve. The subject of the first fugue is particularly striking, presenting an exposed tritone as its first interval, and then oscillating between F sharp and F natural (Ex.4.10): unfortunately both of these elements disappear with the—perfectly correct—tonal answer):

Apart from two rather square episodes and a loose stretto toward the end, entries occur every three bars throughout the fugue with almost maddening consistency. Although certainly open to J. LaRue's criticism of excessive regularity (pp.230-1 above), the cause is probably less to do with the influence of Classical habits of phrase-rhythm than the fact that it has simply not occurred to Mozart to do anything else with the subject. Fortunately the 'et vitam venturi' fugue is less regular in this respect; its five bar distance of imitation would have made such repetition less obvious in any case. It, too, shows unusual tonal features. A double fugue, the two subjects engineer a modulation to the supertonic in the third bar (to the submediant in the answer); repetition of this a tone lower brings it back into the usual tonic/dominant orbit (Ex.4.11):

This harmonic combination determines the texture a little more than would normally be the case in most Baroque polyphony; although there is a small amount of free counterpoint, the subject is never very far away. This fugue is integrated with the rest of the Credo by a device as simple as it is effective. After the conventional adagio at 'mortuorum', a return to the allegro is announced by a few bars of the ubiquitous bustling orchestral material that accompanied so much of the earlier parts of the movement. Once the fugue begins of course the orchestra plays *colla parte* until near the end, where a return of this same orchestral material rounds the whole off nicely.

These masses mark the two poles of Mozart's liturgical output during the Salzburg years: *Missae breves* for ordinary services at the Cathedral, *Missae solemnes* for special occasions, usually outside Salzburg. It is hardly surprising that we should find the more substantial fugues in the *Missae solemnes* (notably the 'Missa longa' K.262/246a); shorter fugues or none at all in the *Missae breves*. Fugue may be useful for many things, but setting text quickly and economically is not one of them. Equally predictable is the tendency to favour the ends of the Gloria and Credo in this way. And yet, like Haydn, Mozart never reduced these conventions to a formula. At different times he also set parts of the Kyrie (K.262/246a in C), the 'et incarnatus' (same mass), 'crucifixus' (K.192/186f in F), 'et resurrexit' (K.194/186h in D), Sanctus (K.275/272b in B flat), Benedictus (K.337 in C), and 'Osanna' (K.192/186f) with at least a complete fugal exposition, if not much more. On the other hand there are substantial and impressive masses (the 'Credo' mass K.257, or the 'Coronation' mass K.317) with no fugal pretensions at all.

More appealing than undiluted homophony or the rather conventional fugal style of his Salzburg works are the many occasions where the two interrelate in imaginative ways. His Missa Brevis in F K.192/186f is a particularly good example of this sort of fusion. The introduction to the Kyrie contains three distinct kinds of material: a tunefully *galant* theme over a walking bass, followed by a prolongation over a dominant pedal, and lastly a cadential phrase. The dominant prolongation (bb.6-8) is almost dreamily static, repeating the same idea three times in different registers and never leaving its dominant/tonic alternation. It is therefore with some surprise that we see the same melody reveal its active contrapuntal potential as a fugue subject, which each of the voices takes up in turn (Ex.4.12):



After this exposition the cadential phrase returns, ‘accompanied’ by the choir, and then further development of the fugue subject—with bb.4-5 of the opening theme unexpectedly present in the orchestra—brings us to the dominant. At this point the dominant pedal of bb.6-8 appears (in the new key) out of which the soprano soloist’s line flowers in bb.27-31. A brief double canon at the octave (S-T/B-A) and a repeat of bb.9-12’s cadential phrase bring the first part of this binary movement to a close.

The opening theme now reappears in the dominant (b.39), this time with the voices present as well, and is at once subjected to a freely imitative development which prepares us for a recapitulation (starting at the beginning of the fugal exposition) at b.46. This recapitulation adheres fairly closely to the first part of the movement, giving the soprano solo to the alto to allow for transposition; the most significant difference is that the choir are allowed to finish the movement, singing a simpler version of the orchestra’s closing material in bb.70-73. This movement is clearly not a fugue, plain and simple, although the choir does enter with a fugal exposition. But imitative writing is never absent for long, and (equally to the point) the subject—in one or other of its forms—is frequently present. Contrapuntal elements are present in other movements as well. Although the rest of the mass is even more concise than this movement, Mozart does find room for several brief fugues: the ‘Crucifixus’ (telescoped) and ‘Osanna’, as well as the more usual ‘cum sancto Spiritu’ and ‘et vitam venturi’. The last two depart considerably from Mozart’s usual *colla voce* orchestration: the orchestra accompanies the ‘cum sancto Spiritu’ fugue with thoroughly Classical broken chords, while that of the ‘et vitam venturi’ has a more traditional independent counterpoint.

These fugues are not the only signs of Mozart’s contrapuntal learning: the Gloria is held together by two distinctive thematic elements: a melody in long dotted minims, suggestive of a Fuxian cantus firmus, and a simple canon at the octave that



returns several times. The Credo is based upon a four-note tag later to become famous in the ‘Jupiter’ symphony; although hardly matching the splendour of its later occurrence, it is here treated with considerable technical resource, alongside passages of *galant* homophony. This sort of combination is hardly specific to this mass—only the most perfunctory *Missae Brevae* are quite devoid of counterpoint, while those attributed to Mozart which contain little else have turned out to be copies of works by Eberlin or Leopold. Nor is it specific to Mozart alone: Michael and Joseph Haydn, Leopold Hofmann, and Albrechtsberger—with greater or lesser imagination, just about every church composer of the time, showed the same stylistic eclecticism. In other words, the fusion of Baroque and Classical textures, such an important part of the development of instrumental music during the 1790s, was already a *fait accompli* in the church music of the 1770s.

Does this mean that we should accord Mozart’s Salzburg masses (and those of his contemporaries) the same epochal significance we do to his and Haydn’s later symphonies and string quartets? It would be possible to argue along these lines; and equally possible to dispute such a conclusion, on analytical and aesthetic grounds. But such arguments are fundamentally irrelevant if they ignore the very different cultural terrain these two bodies of work inhabit. They are part of two quite different stories, one—the development of Classical instrumental music—of central cultural importance (part of what Tovey called ‘the main stream of music’), the other—mid eighteenth-century church music—of much more limited significance. The first has a narrative dialectic of almost Hegelian sweep; tracing how the textural density and complexity of the late Baroque was swept away by the homophony of the early *galant* composers,<sup>62</sup> until the later works of Haydn and Mozart were able to create a new synthesis of Baroque sophistication with *galant* clarity (Kirkendale’s ‘*terza prattica*’). The second

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<sup>62</sup> We have seen, of course, how this was not entirely true; but these exceptions do not invalidate it as a generalisation.

is a much less dramatic tale, of cautious (if often pleasing and interesting) accommodation between liturgical conventions and musical innovation. We have seen Landon's bold attempt to lift Haydn's late masses out of one story and place them in the other, by interpreting them as the final stage of Haydn's symphonic development—an attempt that seems to have been at least partly successful. I am not about to try anything similar here with Mozart's Salzburg church music. Nevertheless, it would be worth exploring further, establishing differences and similarities of procedure, and asking whether the earlier church music of Haydn and Mozart has any bearing upon the instrumental music they were to write ten or twenty years later.

## THE 'GREAT' C MINOR MASS, K. 427

The circumstances that led to this remarkable mass remaining incomplete are mysterious enough; even more so is the question of what called it into existence in the first place. As we have already pointed out, eighteenth-century composers did not go around producing major works 'on spec', in the hope of finding a performer or a publisher. What was it that set Mozart to work on a mass which, if completed, would have been so very much larger than any of his others, equivalent in scope to Haydn's 'St Cecilia' mass, Bach's B minor mass, or Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*? Einstein could write: 'This work is his entirely personal coming to terms with God and with his art, with what he conceived to be "true church music"', thus dissociating it from any specific context whatsoever.<sup>63</sup> This would be entirely believable if it had been written about Beethoven; but so far as we can tell, Mozart was not in the habit of regarding his music as a 'personal coming to terms' with anything except particular musical problems, nor did he have much in the way of strong opinions about 'true church

<sup>63</sup> *Mozart, his character, his work*, tr. A. Mendel and N. Broder (New York: Oxford University Press, 1945), p.348.

music' beyond a general sense of propriety—his attitude was a long way from the reforming zeal of the nineteenth-century Caecilians. It has been suggested that the mass was written in connection with the visit of Pope Pius VI to Vienna in April-May 1782, but no music appears to have been commissioned for this occasion (which was a fruitless attempt to persuade Joseph II to moderate his ecclesiastical policies).<sup>64</sup> 1782 was, after all, the year of Joseph's edict reforming the liturgy—and this, at least, may be one of the reasons the mass remained unfinished.

The enigma is compounded rather than illuminated by a letter to his father of 4 January 1783: 'It is quite true about my moral obligation and indeed I let the word flow from my pen on purpose. I made the promise in my heart of hearts and hope to be able to keep it. When I made it, my wife was not yet married; yet, as I was absolutely determined to marry her after her recovery, it was easy for me to make it—but, as you yourself are aware, time and other circumstances made our journey impossible. The score of half a mass, which is still lying here waiting to be finished, is the best proof that I really made the promise...' <sup>65</sup> Of what 'moral obligation', which 'promise', is Mozart speaking? Dennis Pajot has explored the different possibilities with admirable thoroughness and logic in an article on the *Mozart Forum* website.<sup>66</sup> The least unlikely scenario that he can extrapolate from this letter (no other surviving documents cast any light on the matter) is that Mozart had promised (to Leopold? to Constanze?) that he would visit Salzburg with his new bride, and write a mass in which she would sing and impress the family.<sup>67</sup> We know from Nannerl's diary that this is indeed what

<sup>64</sup> See M. Schmid, 'Bildintentionen in Mozarts c-Moll-Messe', *Acta Mozartiana* 42/1 (Mar 1995) 2-12, and V. Braunbehrens *Mozart in Vienna, 1781-1791*, tr. T. Bell (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1990), p.178.

<sup>65</sup> Anderson, *Mozart letters*, vol. III, pp.1243-44.

<sup>66</sup> 'K.427: Mozart's promise and the C minor mass' <http://www.mozartforum.com/Lore/article.php?id=026> (accessed 30 September 06). Illuminating comments upon this article by Agnes Selby can be found here: <http://www.mozartforum.com/Discussion%20Archive/2004April.htm#562> (accessed 30 September 06).

<sup>67</sup> One is tempted to say: 'in which she would take a starring role'; and to be sure, the Mozarts' attitude to the music they heard in church differed very little from that to any other concerts or operas.

happened, on October 26 1783 at Benedictine Abbey of St. Peter, but alas almost nothing else is known about the occasion. Parts must once have existed for the version that was performed, presumably supplemented with parts of another mass (K.262/246a or K.317, perhaps?); it is a great shame that they appear not to have survived.

If we know very little about the biographical circumstances which led to its composition, we can at least make a reasonable guess as to the musical impetus behind it. Under the influence of the Baron van Swieten Mozart had just discovered the riches of the north German contrapuntal tradition. For the first time in his life he had come across a way of writing music which, as we have seen, he could not immediately and effortlessly replicate. He may have come across J. S. Bach's B minor mass—the size of the work he wrote would tend to suggest this, although there were a number of Viennese precedents for work on this scale. In particular, a useful comparison could be made to Haydn's *Missa Sanctae Ceciliae* (*Missa Cellensis*) Hob.XXII:5. Both works communicate a sense of liberation and expansion: Haydn's because the death of Werner meant that he was now able to write liturgical music for the Esterházy court; Mozart's because he had just escaped from the restrictions of Salzburg into the wider musical world of Vienna. A curiosity of this mass is the number of extended passages that consist of almost nothing but an arpeggiation of the tonic chord (cf Kyrie bb.6-9; Gloria bb.12-15, 34-37; Credo bb.1-4, 14-19 etc., and the immensely slow harmonic rhythm thereafter). Far from being barren and tautological, these passages give a sense of immense space and confidence; one can almost hear the young Mozart flexing his wings after the limitations of Salzburg: 'Forty-five minutes for an entire mass indeed! I'll need most of that for the Gloria alone, thank you very much!' The division of movements within the Gloria and the Credo (at least so much as was completed in Mozart's case) is identical, although this may simply represent the point of maximum possible expansion, rather than any specific influence. The scale of the mass allows

for great stretches of vocal as well as contrapuntal virtuosity; with Mozart, as with Haydn, these movements remind us more perhaps of Hasse and Porpora than his own mature style. Also common to both is the fact that, unlike Haydn's late masses, neither of them exploit the sophisticated sonata forms of the mature Classical style to any great extent; both depend largely on relatively simple binary and ritornello structures. In the case of Haydn this was probably because his mass was a direct, unreflective continuation of the grand Viennese tradition of Fux, Reutter, and Gassmann (it had been written in 1766, near the beginning of the evolution of Haydn's mature instrumental style). With Mozart, by contrast, it may have been a consequence of the attempt to integrate the essentially foreign idiom of Bach and Handel into his own style—which could be said to have been almost swamped by the effort.

Nevertheless, far as it might seem from Mozart's normal style, the Kyrie (for example) has a sinuous expressiveness that is all Mozart's own. Is it a fugue? No more so than the Kyrie of K.192/186f. Is it fugal? More, I think, than any other Kyrie of Mozart's; but as with many movements by Handel, the high density of imitative writing is obscured by the way in which the (quite orthodox) groups of fugal entries are integrated into the surrounding texture. No indication is given at first of the contrapuntal possibilities of the opening theme, presented homophonically by the orchestra. The choir then enters with something of a fugal red-herring: what appears to be a canon at the octave turns out to be simply an arpeggiation of the tonic, each voice taking in as much of the chord as its range allows. This magnificently sonorous exordium introduces the real business of the movement, which gets under way in bar 9 with the exposition of a double fugue. One subject, a variant of the old chromatic tetrachord (much more fluid than that of K.154/385k or the string quartet K.173) appears in the soprano; the countersubject is a close variant of the opening theme (the direction of the sequence reversed), present first in the orchestra and then taken up by

the voices. There is a single exposition—four entries—of this combination, a brief continuation, and then a clear imperfect cadence on the dominant reminds us this is not a fugue *per se*, but part of a larger structure. A ‘second subject’ follows in this key: the opening ritornello ‘accompanied’ by the choir, homophonically this time, and thus the first part of the movement concludes. There follows, not a development, but a quite new ‘B’ section. Constanze (one imagines) takes centre stage with a meltingly beautiful cantilena, to which the chorus replies in hushed tones. Thematically, tonally, texturally, and stylistically, it has nothing whatsoever in common with the first part of the movement. While the other movements tend to present one aspect of Mozart’s liturgical style at a time, in the Kyrie he sets out to demonstrate the breadth of his stylistic and expressive range all at once. The ‘Christe’ is tonally stable throughout, with hardly a suggestion of modulation, and it duly cadences on E flat in b.71. At this point the fugal texture recommences; a distinctively Baroque stylistic element is the way that the thematic recapitulation and the return to the tonic do not occur together (cf, for example, b.175 of the ‘St Anne’ prelude BWV 552).<sup>68</sup> The fugal exposition then moves from E flat back to C minor in preparation for a return of the ‘second subject’ in b.86 which, with its cadence slightly extended, brings the Kyrie to a close.

If the Kyrie is marked by unexpected concentration of fugal writing, the same is true of the rest of the mass too. Far from restricting fugue to the close of the Gloria and the Credo, Mozart introduces it on many other occasion: for ‘in excelsis’, ‘quoniam’, ‘cum Sancto Spiritu’ (all from the Gloria), and the ‘Osanna’ (Sanctus). Non-fugal imitation can be found at the ‘et in terra’, ‘Domine Deus’ (Gloria), ‘et invisibilium’, ‘ante omnia’, ‘per quem omnia’ (Credo), and the Benedictus. It should

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<sup>68</sup> This is not to deny the existence of ‘false’ or ‘premature’ recapitulations in contemporary practice; but the expectation that tonal and thematic arrivals should coincide was such a basic formal assumption that dissociation of the two has a ‘point’ and significance in the context of sonata style that it lacks in Bach’s music and in the style Mozart has adopted here. Leon Plantinga has suggested in relation to Muzio Clementi that this may have been a specifically Viennese attitude; see *Clementi: his life and music*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp.77-78.

come as no surprise, however, that the ‘cum Sancto Spiritu’ fugue is unusually long and ambitious—perhaps the largest choral fugue he had yet written. For all the supposed influence of van Swieten’s circle, however, there is very little of either Bach or Handel to be found in it. The subject appears to be taken straight from Fux (the *Gradus ad Parnassum* that is, rather than his actual choral works), but even he did not as a rule use such lengthy, undifferentiated subjects as this (Ex.4.13):

As if made almost on purpose to invite Marpurg’s censure: ‘A long series of plain, unaccompanied tones in a slow tempo [as a fugue subject] becomes unbearable for the ear’,<sup>69</sup> it was not typical of the church music Mozart had written in Salzburg. Now, however, with the space to expand into a really generously proportioned movement, this sort of subject provides an excellent underpinning for the much quicker counterpoint in crotchets and quavers that is to follow. There is perhaps a reminder of Eberlin’s style in the rosalias in bb.67-73, 100-106, 134-38, and 178-184. Unlike those in K.401/375e, however, these do not draw attention to themselves by venturing outside the normal range of keys, and they are surrounded by other, freer kinds of sequence and motivic development. In contrast to J. S. Bach’s usual practice there is no regular countersubject. Instead Mozart employs a motive consisting of three upbeat crotchets followed by a turn in quavers to serve a similar purpose. The turn remains the same, but the three crotchets appear in a variety of configurations:

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<sup>69</sup> A. Mann, *The study of fugue* (New York: Norton, 1965), p.162.

ascending, descending (or both), stepwise or arpeggiated (Ex.4.14); this gives his counterpoint both flexibility and motivic coherence.

The most impressive aspect of this fugue, however, lies in the way the structure as a whole has been carefully thought out. The exposition ascends in his usual manner from bass to soprano; each new voice enters on the same note or one note higher than the previous voice, forming a cumulative series of ascending fourths from c to e". Once all the voices are present and the registral space has been opened up, Mozart keeps a very successful balance between three different kinds of material: 1) the subject entries, mostly in stretto, four-part texture with freely developing counterpoint, 2) episodes, usually lighter in texture and more regularly sequential (bb.57-59, 68-72, 77-80, 91-95, 100-105, 134-137), and 3) a related texture which comes to have thematic significance in its own right, where the 'turn' figure, shared by two voices, decorates a slowly moving scalar progression in the other two voices (bb.53-55, 73-75,



85-89, 156-63; compare the first part of Ex.4.15 below; Mozart further distinguishes this texture by giving it a *piano* dynamic indication each time it occurs). After b.106 there is a series of (stretto) entries accompanied by dizzying quaver counterpoint in one voice at a time; first tenor, then alto, soprano, and bass. This takes us to b.138, where the subject is inverted (again in two-part stretto) and the quaver counterpoint is left to the orchestra. Hitherto Mozart's tonal range and harmonic language have been well within Baroque norms (if his dependence upon the dominant seventh is a little more thorough-going than would be perfectly orthodox). The A flat in b.155 suggests that this is about to change, and indeed the passage that follows is one of extraordinary harmonic imagination (Ex.4.15). It leads us to the one definitively Classical articulated cadence in the whole piece, which is immediately followed by a close stretto that appears (on paper) to be of almost Palestrinian purity. Looks can deceive, however, and the unprepared sevenths and ninths, not to mention the chromaticism of bb.171-174, give the passage an unmistakeably Viennese accent. A little further development leads to the final entry—with the choir in octaves, this time—and the conclusion of the Gloria. As a specimen of fugal writing it is in most respects wholly unlike that of J. S. Bach. But it is not impossible to see it as a highly successful attempt by Mozart to create a movement of similar contrapuntal integrity and motivic density—and musical excitement—within the terms of his own south German fugal tradition.



Equally notable are passages which, while not fugal or imitative, have a weight and monumentality clearly derived from the example of Bach and Handel; notably the ‘gratias agimus’ and ‘Jesu Christe’ from the Gloria. Most impressive, however, is the ‘qui tollis’. The other two passages are episodes, twelve and six bars long respectively; the ‘qui tollis’ continues, Largo, without a break, for no fewer than fifty-six bars. The orchestra maintains a double-dotted accompanimental pattern throughout, while two four-part choirs alternate and combine over this background. As with many of the Bach preludes from the *WTC* (which Mozart would have come to know at van Swieten’s) the chief mode of musical progression is harmonic rather than thematic.

What inspired the eight-part texture? One thinks immediately of Bach’s motet ‘Singet dem Herrn’, which we know Mozart came across in Leipzig; but this was in 1789, seven years later. Did Mozart know of the double choruses to be found in certain oratorios of Handel, notably *Israel in Egypt* and *Solomon*? There was also a native Viennese tradition of polychoral liturgical music, going back to the time of Johann Heinrich Schmelzer. Mozart’s Salzburg predecessors, Eberlin, Adlgasser, and Michael Haydn, all produced occasional works for double choir. Perhaps there is no single source, but a generalised awareness of expanded choral textures as being a part of the style of the ‘old masters’ he was seeking to emulate, coupled with a desire for textural weight and density. Along with the ‘qui tollis’, the ‘Sanctus’ and ‘Osanna’ are in eight parts, the ‘gratias agimus’ and first part of the Credo in five (SSATB). Mozart shows no more concern for consistency in the division of voices than did J. S. Bach in his B minor mass.

With the Sanctus and Benedictus we come across a new problem. Not only did Mozart leave the mass incomplete, but even some of what he did finish has been preserved in a very imperfect form. Missing from what is left of Mozart’s autograph

(apart from *particella* for wind and drums for the ‘Sanctus’ and ‘Osanna’) these movements survive only in a copy made by Pater Matthäus Fischer (1763-1840). Unfortunately, Fischer—not a particularly accurate copyist at the best of times—allowed only four staves for the choral parts, so only four parts out of the eight (not necessarily the same four parts throughout) are preserved in his manuscript. Every edition of the C minor mass is therefore, almost by definition, a restoration; quite apart from any question of completing what Mozart left unfinished.

## THE REQUIEM, K.626

Mozart’s Requiem, by contrast, existed in a complete performing edition for quite some time before doubts arose about its authenticity. Once Georg Nissen had explained the situation to him, Count Walsegg generously accepted the patched-up Requiem as a fulfilment of the terms of the contract, and Süssmayr’s contribution was quietly forgotten. It was the theorist and musical journalist Gottfried Weber (a friend, but no relation to Carl Maria) who first in 1825 raised the question of the Requiem’s real author with an article in no.11 of his periodical *Cäcilia*. Radically out of sympathy with Mozart’s traditionalist understanding of the Requiem mass (for example he saw the ‘Dies Irae’ text as ‘a superb vision of elemental terror marred by Monkish servility’; he set only the first six strophes in the Requiem he wrote himself), Weber was, of course right—and quite wrong as well, for he attributed to Süssmayr parts we know to have been written by Mozart, and vice versa.<sup>70</sup> In particular he had a low opinion of the more contrapuntal movements, damning the ‘tortuousness’ and ‘pedantry’ of the Kyrie fugue, and criticising what he assumed to be its dependence upon a Handelian model (presumably ‘And with his stripes’). Weber’s crusade is a

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<sup>70</sup> Novello, *Mozart pilgrimage*, p.123.

terrible warning for those who undertake judgements of authenticity in stylistic criteria alone (he died having just discovered the existence of the original score, but—perhaps fortunately—not aware of its actual contents).

A critic hostile to the Requiem's counterpoint would find a good deal to complain about: the proportion of imitative or fugal writing is at least as high as that in the C minor mass—by this stage it almost seems to be Mozart's preferred way of organising a choral texture, as in the 'Domine Deus', where there no fewer than three thematically independent fugal sections. Hardly a trace can be found of the '*rauschende Violinen à la Reutter*' so common in his earlier church music. Sometimes fugue is used with considerable dramatic effect, as in the 'Confutatis', where brusque imitative exchanges between the tenor and bass are countered by gentler, pleading passages from the sopranos and altos. Sometimes it is not quite clear how intentional this dramatic effect is, as in the 'quam olim Abrahae' fugue, where Mozart's knack for working up a fine fugal imbroglio, together with the activity of the orchestra, give a quite unexpected sense of urgency to what is after all a relatively matter-of-fact part of the text ('as you once promised to Abraham and his seed.')

It is, paradoxically, the movements we know to have been written by Süssmayr (the Sanctus, the Benedictus, and the Agnus Dei) which come closest to the style of Mozart's Salzburg church music. The Agnus Dei may have been modelled on that in the F major Missa Brevis, K.192/186f, while the Sanctus shows a certain affinity with that in the 'Waisenhaus' mass K.139/47a. A brief fugato serving for the 'Osanna' can be found in a number of masses: K.49, K.192/186f, and K.258 ('Spaur'), for example; although the third-shift, from D to B flat, is unusual. The Benedictus is a very attractive facsimile of Mozart's Salzburg style; if the part-writing is at times not quite

up to Mozart's standard, the melodic content is not far off at all.<sup>71</sup>

Most intriguing—disturbing, even—is the situation of the *Lacrymosa*. Mozart was able to draft eight bars before he died: they may have been the last bars he wrote. Süßmayr completed the remaining twenty two. And it is, I think, very difficult to tell the difference. One might compare Sechter's completion of the fugues K.153/375f and 154/385k (discussed pp.277-8), where the joins are equally hard to detect and where the completion is at least comparable to the torso. But there Mozart was working at fairly low creative pressure, within a restricted style, at which Sechter was arguably more competent than Mozart (at that stage in his career at least). The *Lacrymosa* on the other hand is an intensely expressive movement, showing a high degree of melodic inspiration and harmonic imagination—neither of which flag in any detectable manner after the point at which Süßmayr, otherwise a nonentity as far as musical history is concerned, took up the pen. This ability to mimic Mozart's style (just as he was, it seems, able to mimic his handwriting) is almost uncanny. Did he step into Mozart's shoes in other respects as well? One is reminded of a scurrilous rumour—almost certainly baseless—that Süßmayr was the real father of Franz Xaver Wolfgang Mozart *filis* (1791-1844). Probably not, but there is no doubt that he was, to an extent, the father of Mozart's *Requiem*.

One explanation, advanced by Constanze among others, is that Süßmayr had the advantage of personal instructions from Mozart, or even fragmentary sketches—now lost—from which to work. There is however one important respect in which he

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<sup>71</sup> Süßmayr's contribution to the *Requiem* is discussed (and generally damned) in F. Beyer, 'Mozarts Komposition zum Requiem. Zur Frage der Ergänzung' *Acta Mozartiana* 18/2 (1971), 27-33; R. Maunders, *Mozart's Requiem: on preparing a new edition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988); P. Moseley, 'Mozart's Requiem: a revaluation of the evidence', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 114/2 (1989), 203-37. R. Levin 'Zu den von Süßmayr komponierten Sätzen des Requiems KV 626', *Mozart-Jahrbuch* 1991, 475-493; R. Fuhrmann, 'War Franz Xaver Süßmayr Mozarts Schüler und Assistent?' *Kongreßbericht zum VII. Internationalen Gewandhaus-Symposium: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart-Forschung und Praxis im Dienst von Leben, Werk, Interpretation und Rezeption anlässlich der Gewandhaus-Festtage in Leipzig vom 3. bis 6. Oktober 1991* (Leipzig: Peters, 1993); and W. Gloede, 'Süßmayrs Requiem-Ergänzungen und das Wort-Ton-Problem', *Mozart-Jahrbuch* 1999, 81-103.

may have disregarded Mozart's explicit intentions, and it concerns precisely this movement. In 1960 Wolfgang Plath discovered just such a group of sketches for the Requiem, which included seven bars of a hitherto unknown 'Amen' fugue in D minor, presumably intended to conclude the Lacrymosa (Ex.4.16):

How tastes have changed! In 1825 Gottfried Weber was so critical of the Requiem's fugal movements that he doubted their very authenticity. Today, we are so enthusiastic about them that we feel the need to fabricate yet more: seventy-nine bars of eminently professional counterpoint and orchestration in Richard Maunder's completion; eighty-eight in Robert Levin's. All in the name of obedience to the unquestionable authority of the composer's intention. Yet is the situation really so clear? To be sure, hard textual evidence—dots on paper—will always bear more

weight than Süßmayr's say-so. But Thomas Bauman sounds a valuable note of caution in his article 'Requiem, but no piece': 'Mozart's attempt at a fugal Amen makes more sense if we think of it not as a *recovered* sketch but as an *abandoned* sketch. Its underlying parallel motion in imperfect intervals is monotonous, and equally so its relentless accentuation of the downbeat. The E on the second eighth beat of m.7 would be judged inexcusable if Süßmayr had written it, and so would the constricted criss-crossing of the voices as they slowly slide in a huddled clump from one plodding half-note to the next, always in the lowest part.'<sup>72</sup> One needn't be as impolite as Bauman to recognise that, for all its indubitable textual authenticity, the fragment itself is something less than a model of good contrapuntal writing. On these grounds, it seems at least as likely that Mozart put it aside to think of a better way of finishing the Lacrymosa as it is that it represents his long obscured 'real' intention. We simply don't know.

### **'DEATH BY COUNTERPOINT'**

If this recovered autograph is for Bauman a mere footnote to Mozart's oeuvre, Anselm Gerhard makes it the very centrepiece of his interpretation of the relationship between Mozart's works and his life—and his death. He died, it seems, while writing this movement; and, for all the immense wealth of his oeuvre, it is hard to disagree with Landon when he describes Mozart's early death as 'surely the greatest tragedy in the history of music.'<sup>73</sup> As with any tragedy, there is a strong urge to find meaning in it—to seek a more satisfying explanation than the simple fact that sometimes people die young, sometimes they don't. The early rumours about poisoning have a number of distinct advantages over the tantalisingly imprecise accounts of the actual medical

<sup>72</sup> *19th-century Music* 15/2 (1991), 160.

<sup>73</sup> *1791: Mozart's last year* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1989), p.147.



circumstances. In them we have the satisfaction of a clear villain (Salieri), whose position in the Viennese musical establishment gives us a warm glow of moral superiority, enabling us: ‘to heap blame on Mozart’s contemporaries while, at the same time, reinforcing our own conviction that we, we enlightened people of today, whose love for him and his music knows no bounds, *we* assuredly would not have failed him.’<sup>74</sup> It is yet another chapter in the endless tale of Italian intrigue and duplicity that forms such an important *Leitmotif* in German operatic history.<sup>75</sup> For all its dramatic effectiveness, from Rimsky Korsakov to Peter Shaffer, this story has never achieved the slightest scholarly credence. But Gerhardt has an alternative theory for Mozart’s death, seeking its origin in psychological rather than physical causes: ‘Not poison’ he says, ‘but counterpoint’.<sup>76</sup> Counterpoint?

Gerhardt is interested in the relationship between the mind and the body, observing that ‘often illness follows mental excitement [“seelische Erregung”],’<sup>77</sup> then advancing Eric Berne’s striking assertion that ‘many die because they [unknowingly] wish to.’<sup>78</sup> There is, it would appear, no wide consensus about the connection between mental crisis and physical health: but it is perhaps reasonably safe to assert that the human will is a complex and contradictory thing. Whether or not one accepts Gerhardt’s framework as a whole, he does pose one important question that seems not to have been asked before: ‘Why did the commissioning of a Requiem from the thirty five year old composer unleash such existential anxiety, and precipitate him into a life-

<sup>74</sup> V. Braunbehrens, ‘Väterlicher Freund, “gehorsamster Sohn”’. Leopold und Wolfgang A. Mozart’, *Väter und Söhne: Zwölf biographische Porträts* (Berlin: Rowohlt, 1996), p.7; pre-publication text at <http://www.aproposmozart.com/Braunbehrens%20-%20Fatherly%20Friend.pdf> (accessed 7 December 2006).

<sup>75</sup> This *Leitmotif* recurs in the biographies of Handel, Gluck, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Weber, Mendelssohn, and Wagner (and no doubt others); it is partly a consequence of the fact that, then as now, show-business was largely dominated by ambitious, rather unscrupulous ‘fixers’, partly a consequence of the slow and painful growth in international stature of German music during this time.

<sup>76</sup> ‘Nicht Gift, sondern Kontrapunkt: Mozarts Requiem und sein Ende’, *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 150/9 (Sept 1989), 6-12.

<sup>77</sup> F. Langegger, *Mozart, Vater und Sohn, Eine psychologische Untersuchung* (Zürich/Fribourg im Breisgau: Atlantis 1978), p.33.

<sup>78</sup> In *What do you say after you say hello?* (New York: Grove Press, 1972).

crisis [*Lebenskrise*] from which, in the end, only death could provide release?’

Gerhardt’s answer is bound up in Mozart’s ambivalent attitude towards fugue and counterpoint: ‘Die Fuge—ein Trauma.’ We have already seen something of this, perhaps, in the fragments of the early 1780s; Gerhardt traces it back further, to the 1770 visit to Bologna and Mozart’s application to join the *Accademia Filarmonica*. This is the traditional account, as told by Eric Blom: ‘The *Accademia* then decided that Wolfgang should be elected a member, and although that honour was by statute reserved for composers over the age of twenty, it was agreed to make an exception in the case of this boy of genius, provided that he took the usual very stiff examination satisfactorily. ... He solved a task of the most hair-raising difficulty in a surprisingly short time and was unanimously elected.’<sup>79</sup> What Blom does not relate (and may not have known) is that Martini critiqued Mozart’s attempt in the most devastating way possible: by writing a greatly improved version of his own.<sup>80</sup> It has even been suggested that this was the piece that was submitted for Mozart; did Martini help him ‘cheat’? Or was the first version accepted ‘with regard for the circumstances’<sup>81</sup> and Martini’s rewrite produced later for Mozart’s pedagogical benefit? In either case, it is clear that Mozart’s apparently miraculous musical facility had for the first time met with a significant check (was the G minor fugue K.401/375e a belated response to this challenge?) Although Gerhardt may be overstating a little when he speaks of ‘these traumatic experiences’, there may be a connection between Bologna in 1770 and both his determination to come to grips with the style of Bach and Handel, and his curious inability to finish the pieces conceived under their influence. In particular Gerhardt sees the C minor mass as weighed down with an impossibly heavy load of associations: ‘the marriage to Constanze without his father’s consent, a belated attempt at reconciliation with his father, an unfulfilled promise, and finally the last visit to his

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<sup>79</sup> Blom, *Mozart*, p.55.

<sup>80</sup> Discussed in Mann, *Study of fugue*, pp.264-68.

<sup>81</sup> Gerhardt, ‘Nicht Gift’, 10.

hated Salzburg . . . the last surviving impression of the place of his childhood’ (Wolfgang left for Vienna, never to return, the day after the mass’s one performance).<sup>82</sup>

Gerhardt argues that this complex of emotions was reawakened when he came to work on the Requiem:

In the requirement of a fugue for a mass [by which he means the Lacrymosa’s ‘Amen’ fugue] the recollection of his own authoritarian father combined with his self-chosen musical substitute-fathers, Bach and Handel. In this extreme confrontation between two parental authorities it must have become clear to the thirty-five year old composer that his childhood was gone beyond the possibility of return. Now that he was independent of these authorities, however, the former *Wunderkind* seems to have found it difficult—if indeed it were possible at all—to define himself; and not only in an artistic sense.<sup>83</sup>

This intense probing of Mozart’s Oedipal impulses would seem to be more appropriate for a character living in the Vienna of 1891 than that of 1791. After all, most of the best-known composers of the eighteenth century—Bach, Handel, Gluck, Haydn—had famously robust (and opaque) psyches. But then, as now, people were complex beings, and we should not dismiss psychological investigations as being anachronistic by definition. We should also remember the eccentrics, misfits, and depressives of eighteenth-century music: Francesco Geminiani, W. F. Bach, Samuel Wesley, J. G. Mützel, and perhaps Mozart’s Salzburg contemporary Michael Haydn. Is it part of Mozart’s strange appeal that he is on the boundary between the two, fitting clearly into neither category? If his music at times appears to give strange glimpses of his interior life, he was as we have seen a product of his time, a creative personality turned resolutely outward. According to one’s taste, this may be a perfectly adequate explanation for the incompleteness of so many of his fugal sketches—he could, after

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<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 12. Gerhardt does not mention that the Mozarts’ first child died in Vienna while Mozart and Constanze were on this journey: yet another unhappy association.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

all, please few with counterpoint alone, and fewer still who could pay well. And yet—if only for the sake of contrast—it is refreshing to turn to an imaginative researcher like Anselm Gerhard as he attempts to piece together a somewhat richer narrative from the biographical fragments at his disposal. Tendentious and beyond all hope of falsification, Gerhard's hypothesis is not presented here so much as a serious answer to the question, as a striking example of the mythic power Mozart's death retains even today.

## CHAPTER 5

# FUGUE IN BEETHOVEN: MUNDANE AND TRANSCENDENTAL COUNTERPOINT

## BACH AND BEETHOVEN

From time to time Providence sends into the world heroes who seize in a mighty grasp the artistic tradition that has passed comfortably from master to pupil, from one generation to the next; purify and transform it; and thus shape something novel. This new art continues for many years to serve as a model without losing its taste of novelty or its ability to shock contemporaries by its sheer power, while the heroic originator becomes the bright focal point of his age and its taste.<sup>1</sup>

The writer is Carl Maria von Weber, in 1821, supplying an article to J. S. Ersch and J. G. Gruber's *Allgemeine Enzyklopädie der Wissenschaften und Kunst*. His subject is not Ludwig van Beethoven, but the very different composer Johann Sebastian Bach.<sup>2</sup> There are a number of points we can draw from Weber's pioneering (and remarkably perceptive) essay.

It is a good example of 'the artist as Frankenstein' rhetoric, in which Bach is seen to animate and transform a passive, static tradition; although we should also note that Weber's continuation anticipates the main tendency of late nineteenth- and twentieth-century Bach scholarship as well: 'It is generally forgotten in such cases, though quite unjustly, that these great men were at the same time also children of the age in which they lived, and that their great achievements argue the previous existence

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<sup>1</sup> C. M. Weber, *Writings on music*, tr. M. Cooper, ed. J. Warrack (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p.297.

<sup>2</sup> As befits a highly original composer with a very different approach to music-making, Weber's attitude to Beethoven was complex and ambivalent. It was not however as negative as has been thought (due to a series of misunderstandings and Schindler's misrepresentation); see Weber, *Writings*, pp.14-17, and R. Wallace, *Beethoven's critics: aesthetic dilemmas and resolutions during the composer's lifetime*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp.110-4.

of much that was excellent'.<sup>3</sup> In addition, we see the contemporary appetite for musical heroism.<sup>4</sup> Divided, defeated, and humiliated, the German nation's search for identity had turned inward, toward culture, literature, and, especially, music:

The works which John Sebastian Bach has left us are an invaluable patrimony, with which no other nation has anything to be compared. ... The preservation of the memory of this great man ... is an object in which not merely the interest of the art but the honor of the nation itself is deeply involved.<sup>5</sup>

J. N. Forkel's appeal to the German nation is only the best known example of this. Stephen Rumph has drawn out the nationalistic implications of E. T. A. Hoffmann's musical writings,<sup>6</sup> while Sanna Pederson has interpreted the entire concept of 'absolute music' as a nationalist project.<sup>7</sup> But Weber's amalgam of Bach-biography and what sounds to us like the rhetoric of Beethoven reception serves as a unique invitation to compare the two musicians, and draw out some curious parallels that transcend the usual categories of historical influence and imitation.

From the very first, Beethoven's name was linked with that of J. S. Bach: 'He plays keyboard skilfully and powerfully, sight-reads very well, and to sum it up, he mostly plays *Das Wohltemperirte Clavier* of Sebastian Bach, which Mr Neefe placed in his hands. Whoever knows this collection of preludes and fugues in all keys (which

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<sup>3</sup> This remark curiously echoes one made by Beethoven: 'the older composers render us double service, since there is generally real artistic value in their works (among them, of course, only the *German Händel* and *Sebastian Bach* possessed genius)', letter to Archduke Rudolph, 29 July 1819, *The letters of Beethoven*, tr. and ed. Emily Anderson, 3 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1961), vol. II, p.822.

<sup>4</sup> For a discussion of Scott Burnham's *Beethoven Hero*, see pp.377-8 below.

<sup>5</sup> H. T. David and A. Mendel, *The Bach Reader* 2nd ed. (London: Dent, 1945, 1966), p.296.

<sup>6</sup> 'A kingdom not of this world', *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music* 19/1 (Summer 1995), 50-67.

<sup>7</sup> 'A. B. Marx, Berlin concert life, and German national identity', *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music* 18/2 (Autumn 1994), 87-107. Both Rumph and Pederson have been critiqued by Celia Applegate in 'How German is it? Nationalism and the idea of serious music in the early nineteenth century', *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music* 21/3 (Spring 1998), 274-296, who seeks a more nuanced approach to early nineteenth-century German nationalism. See also E. Reimer, 'Nationalbewusstsein und Musikgeschichtsschreibung in Deutschland 1800-1850', *Die Musikforschung* 46/1 (1993), 17-31.

one could call the *non plus ultra*) will know what that means.’<sup>8</sup>

Unlike Haydn and Mozart, Beethoven was brought up in north Germany, where the conservative influence of Bach and his pupils remained strong. ‘Mr Neefe’ (Christian Gottlob Neefe, 1748-1798) wrote moderately important sonatas in the manner of C. P. E. Bach, and had been taught by Johann Adam Hiller (1728-1804), a successor of Bach’s at Leipzig.<sup>9</sup> As he did with Haydn and Mozart, Warren Kirkendale has documented with remarkable thoroughness everything that is known about Beethoven’s contact with and attitude towards earlier music, especially that of Bach and Handel.<sup>10</sup> His participation in Baron van Swieten’s soirées,<sup>11</sup> his attempts to secure a copy of the B minor Mass from Breitkopf and Härtel (1810) and Nägeli (1824), his sketches for a ‘B-A-C-H’ overture (1822-25; perhaps as a companion for the ‘Handelian’ overture *Die Weihe des Hauses*, op.124); his enthusiasm for a project to raise money for Bach’s last surviving daughter, now in poverty—all these are well enough known and need not be recounted here.

Less explicable than the way in which Beethoven came under the influence of Bach is the way that Bach seems to have anticipated certain elements of Beethoven’s creative personality. Throughout Bach’s *oeuvre* we come across a sense of artistic ambition, of architectural scale and expressive range that we seek in vain among his contemporaries and immediate predecessors. In particular his determination to

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<sup>8</sup> K. F. Cramer, ‘Louis van Betthoven’[sic], *Magazin der Musik* I (Hamburg, 1783; rpt. Hildesheim, 1971): 394-95; in A. W. Thayer, *Life of Beethoven*, rev. E. Forbes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), pp.65-66, and many other places.

<sup>9</sup> His teacher was Gottfried August Homilius (1714-1785), one of Bach’s more gifted pupils.

<sup>10</sup> Kirkendale, *Fugue and fugato in rococo and classical chamber music* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1979), pp.206-24. See also D. MacArdle, ‘Beethoven and the Bach family’, *Music & Letters* 38/4 (October 1957), 353-58; M. Zenck, *Die Bach-Rezeption des späten Beethoven: Zum Verhältnis von Musikhistoriographie und Rezeptionsgeschichtsschreibung der Klassik* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1986); W. Kinderman, ‘Bach und Beethoven’, tr. T. Bösche, *Bach und die Nachwelt. I: 1750-1850*, ed. M. Heinemann and H.-J. Hinrichsen (Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 1997), pp.351-377; and H.-W. Küthen, *Beethoven und die Rezeption der Alten Musik: Die hohe Schule der Überlieferung* (Bonn: Beethoven-Haus; 2002).

<sup>11</sup> Van Swieten was also the dedicatee of his first symphony, and it has been suggested that the opening bars contain a deliberate allusion to this fact in the form of a hidden ‘B-A-C-H’ quotation (E. Schenk, ‘Beethovens ‘Erste’—eine B-A-C-H-Symphonie’, *Neues Beethoven-Jahrbuch* 8 (1938), 162-72).

continually surpass his own creative achievements, to fully explore and recombine existing genres, to write at the very limits of technical possibility, are curiously nineteenth-century qualities for an eighteenth-century Lutheran cantor to display. The only serious competitor was of course George Frideric Handel, whose very different manner showed a similar creative unrest—it is no accident that he was the other Baroque composer for whom Beethoven expressed unbounded admiration. By the standards of his era Bach seemed to have an unusual awareness of the claims of posterity (arrived at no doubt through his own study of earlier music), and spent much time toward the end of his life collecting and editing the part of his music he felt worth preserving. Like Beethoven, his tremendous gifts were widely recognised, but, also like Beethoven, he found himself out of step with contemporary taste, especially toward the end of his life—in both cases their personal and musical intransigence led to a certain amount of cultural isolation. When all these factors are taken into account, the tremendous success-story that was nineteenth-century Bach-reception becomes much easier to understand. Even after all the musicological efforts of the last hundred years, there is still a sense in which the Bach we know is a creation of the nineteenth century (see the discussion of the ‘two Bachs’ at the start of chapter 1).

Why should the music of a nearly-forgotten *Kapellmeister* have awoken such resonance fifty years after his death? ‘The fact that Bach’s works could become the paradigm of a concept of art that they did not originally partake of is an historiologically baffling, almost monstrous occurrence.’<sup>12</sup> We could of course refer the explanation ahistorically to his ‘innate genius’, his access to an undifferentiated stratum of musical greatness entirely free of cultural and musical specificity,<sup>13</sup> thereby effectively denying that any explanation is necessary: ‘deep calls unto deep’. But can

<sup>12</sup> C. Dahlhaus, *Foundations of music history*, tr. J. B. Robinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 157.

<sup>13</sup> Something, that is, akin to Matthew Arnold’s ‘the best that is known and thought in the world, irrespectively of practice, politics, and everything of the kind’ (from ‘The function of criticism in the present time’, in his 1865 *Essays in criticism*).



we not do better than this? Is it possible to find parallels between Bach's conservative Lutheran aesthetics and the apparently very different aesthetic climate of early Romanticism?

Christoph Wolff has argued a consciousness of his genius on the part of J. S. Bach; that 'Bach himself, in a self-aware and self-assured manner, laid the foundation for the image of genius that emerged after his lifetime and reached full bloom by the 1770s and 1780s.'<sup>14</sup> He does so chiefly by drawing out the implications of the obituary (written by C. P. E. Bach and J. F. Agricola, partly on the basis of material originating with Bach himself) and relating it to mid-century ideas about genius. Even he has to admit, however, that 'in line with the conventions of his time, Bach left virtually no direct documents transmitting his own view of himself, a kind of self-assessment.'<sup>15</sup> It is hardly possible, furthermore, that he could have imagined the canonical significance his music would come to have a century after his death (although no doubt he hoped it would serve as a model for future composers in the way that the music of Böhmer, Froberger, and Frescobaldi had for him).

Another link to the nineteenth century might be found in Dietrich Bartel's article about Baroque rhetoric, significantly entitled 'Ethical Gestures':

Music and rhetoric were ultimately ethical, that is ethos-oriented disciplines. When Rudolf Agricola writes in 1479 that 'the first and proper objective of speech is to teach', when Wolfgang Caspar Printz writes that 'the ultimate and final purpose of music is the moving of the human affections', or when Mattheson proclaims: 'In summary, everything that occurs without affections means nothing, does nothing, and is worth nothing', they share a common sentiment: whether in the art of speech or music, the goal is to effect change in the heart of the listener. Baroque music is an exercise in ethics more than in entertainment.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> 'Defining genius: early reflections of J. S. Bach's self-image', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 145/4 (Dec 2001), 475.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 481.

<sup>16</sup> *Musical Times* 144/1885 (Winter 2003), 15.

This ethical approach to music, so different from the easy-going *galant* attitude ('Music is an innocent luxury, unnecessary, indeed, to our existence, but a great improvement and gratification of the sense of hearing'<sup>17</sup>), has certain affinities with the Romantic ethos which emerged in the nineteenth century. The Romantics took artistic creation very seriously indeed, elevating art (and especially music) to the level of a new kind of morality of its own. For Baroque thinkers the ethical significance of music derived from its social function on the stage, in the chamber, and (most particularly) in the church; by contrast, the Romantic doctrine of artistic integrity was, if anything, almost *anti*-social. Questions of musical emotion, however, were central in both cases. While the Baroque age thought chiefly in terms of effects upon the listener ('*Affekt*'; rhetoric), the Romantics saw music as expressing the emotion of the creator; but, even allowing for the great difference between seventeenth- and nineteenth-century understandings of the emotions, these complementary approaches came to much the same thing as far as questions of actual composition were concerned.<sup>18</sup> Both generations were acutely aware of the musical traditions in which they had been educated. Bach's unshakeable belief in the intrinsic value of musical elaboration for its own sake as a part of God's creation, the affective traditions of generations of musicians setting devotional texts that moved from sentimental intimacy to intense suffering to exalted jubilation, the high standard of contrapuntal and formal craftsmanship he inherited from his predecessors, and surpassed—all these have analogues in the attitudes of the musicians who were at once trying to make sense of the overwhelming legacy of Haydn and Mozart, and seeking to develop new

<sup>17</sup> Charles Burney, *A general history of music from the earliest ages to the present period*, 4 vols. (London, 1776-1789), vol.1, p.xiii.

<sup>18</sup> Just to confuse matters, the *galant* aesthetic also had its own approach to musical expression: 'sensitivity', as embodied pre-eminently in the *empfindsamer Stil*. From generation to generation the same concepts seem to recur, perhaps in different relations to each other—a fact which gives a curious recyclability to musical discourse. For example, Albert Schweitzer's *J. S. Bach* is full of the excitement of his discovery of the kinship between Wagner's concrete representationalism (then—in 1899—the last word in musical aesthetics) and Baroque musical symbolism.

expressive resources for a new century.<sup>19</sup>

Beethoven's knowledge of J. S. Bach may have borne early fruit in his *Praeludium* in F minor, WoO 55 (Ex.5.1; see pp.320-1 below on the question of its date). Showing an especially close affinity to the F major prelude in *WTC* II, its earnest tone and occasional sarabande rhythms at times suggest the E flat minor prelude of *WTC* I. The real model however is not a particular movement but a generalised style—the figural texture which dominates so many of Bach's clavier preludes, and which Beethoven sustains with impressive consistency and harmonic imagination for a substantial forty-eight bars.

Occasionally abrasive part-writing can be read equally as a sign of inexperience or, paradoxically, as a foretaste of his later works (Ex.5.2):

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<sup>19</sup> Quite apart from the fact that, as Forkel's biography and Weber's article make clear, growing nationalist awareness sought a specifically *German* hero after centuries of Italian and French musical domination.

Like Mozart, Beethoven was a great improviser; like Mozart, his portfolio of techniques included fugal extemporisation (although this seems not to have been demanded of him as often as it had been from Mozart.) In 1796, for example, he visited C. F. C. Fasch and Zelter at the Berlin Singakademie: ‘A chorale, the first three numbers of a mass [by Fasch] and the first six of the 119<sup>th</sup> Psalm were sung for him. Hereupon he seated himself at the pianoforte and played an improvisation on the theme of the final fugue: “Meine Zunge rühmt im Wettgesang dein Lob”... the performance must have pleased, for Beethoven repeated it at the next meeting on June 28th.’<sup>20</sup> It is worth noting that there are no extravagant attestations to the strictness or contrapuntal ingenuity of his improvisation—it is not even absolutely certain that what he improvised was actually a fugue. Likewise, Ries’s account of an improvisation upon a theme from Graun’s *Tod Jesu* makes no mention of any transcendent learning, although he does describe Beethoven’s transcendent indifference to physical discomfort: ‘I still find it incredible that he managed to endure

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<sup>20</sup> Thayer-Forbes, *Beethoven*, p.186; in the *Geschichte der Singakademie* (Berlin, 1843).

so long [‘quite half an hour’] in such an exceedingly uncomfortable position [sitting to one side of Ries at the piano]. His rapt involvement made him totally oblivious to external sensations.’<sup>21</sup> Only a dubious account by Ignaz von Seyfried emphasises Beethoven’s contrapuntal wizardry, describing how Mozart set him ‘a chromatic fugue motive, in which the countersubject of a double fugue lay concealed, *al rovescio*.’ Needless to say, ‘Beethoven was not one to be deceived . . . having instantly divined its secret meaning.’<sup>22</sup> This seems unlikely, not just because the story has a number of demonstrable inaccuracies,<sup>23</sup> but because the few surviving examples of Beethoven’s early fugal writing tell a different tale.

## BEETHOVEN’S CONTRAPUNTAL EDUCATION

Seyfried’s anecdote has to be ascribed to 1787, the only year in which Beethoven could possibly have met Mozart (by the time he returned to Vienna in 1792, Mozart was dead); but the contrapuntal work of this period shows no trace of this sort of contrapuntal wizardry. In the Fugue in C, Hess 64 (?1794), for example, his intuitive sense of harmony<sup>24</sup> enables him to write a reasonably effective (and fugal-*sounding*) piece of music, but the imitative structure is distinctly loose. The rather odd answer is real where one would expect it to be tonal (b.3), and idiosyncratically altered where we might have expected to be literal (b.4; see Ex.5.3).

<sup>21</sup> Kirkendale, *Fugue and fugato*, p.223.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p.222.

<sup>23</sup> Beethoven’s trip to Vienna was in 1787, not 1790, as Seyfried states, and he came not just to hear Mozart, but to study with him.

<sup>24</sup> ‘So far as mistakes are concerned it was never necessary for me to learn thorough-bass; my feelings were so sensitive from childhood that I practiced counterpoint without knowing that it must be so or could be otherwise.’ (Note on a sheet containing directions for the use of fourths in suspensions—probably intended for the instruction of Archduke Rudolph): *Beethoven: the man and the artist, as revealed in his own words* ed. F. Kerst and H. E. Krebs (New York: Dover, 1964), p.27.

There are a few reasonably complete entries, but for the most part the subject is dissolved in a vaguely contrapuntal motivic ‘soup’. This counterpoint pays little attention to any supposed integrity of the voices, and is occasionally (bb.6, 14) simply ungrammatical. It would seem that Beethoven is here seeking to emulate something of the sound of J. S. Bach’s fugal writing without having yet grasped its basic structural principles. One might compare it to some of Samuel Wesley’s early attempts at fugal writing (see pp.136-40).

As he was well aware, he could not teach himself counterpoint and fugue—if he received ‘the spirit of Mozart from the hands of Haydn’, he received the technique of Bach from the hands of Albrechtsberger. The extreme conservatism at certain levels of Viennese musical culture meant that Vienna (in particular Viennese organists) had become an important centre for Bach-reception.<sup>25</sup> Albrechtsberger’s pedagogical methods may have been based upon those of Fux, but he was equally

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<sup>25</sup> See Y. Tomita, ‘Bach reception in pre-Classical Vienna: Baron von Swieten’s circle edits the “Well-tempered Clavier II”’ *Music & Letters* 81/3 (Aug. 2000), 364-391; Y. Kobayashi, ‘Frühe Bach-Quellen im altösterreichischen Raum’, *Johann Sebastian Bach: Beiträge zur Wirkungsgeschichte* (Vienna: Verband der Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaften Österreichs, 1992), 35-46; L. Finscher, ‘Bach and the Viennese classics’, *Miscellanea musicologica* 10 (1979), 47-58; E. Badura-Skoda, ‘“Clavier”-Musik Die in Wien zwischen 1750 und 1770’, *Studien zur Musikwissenschaft* 35 (1984) 65-88; and O. Biba, ‘Adolph Friedrich Hesse und Wien’, *Organa Austriaca* 2 (1979), 37-62.

familiar with Marpurg and well versed in Bach's style.

Much has been written about the 'difficulty' Beethoven had writing smooth counterpoint and the roughness of his harmony:

Beethoven also mystified his passages by a new treatment of the resolution of discords, which can only be described in words by the term, 'resolution by ellipsis', or the omission of the chord upon which the discordant notes should descend. ...Many of his passages also appear confused and unintelligible, by a singular freedom in the use of diatonic discords or discords of transition; many instances appear of passages by contrary motion, each carrying their harmonies with them. In the obstinate manner in which he drives one passage through and against another, he has no equal, except Sebastian Bach and our own illustrious countryman Samuel Wesley.<sup>26</sup>

This judgement shows considerable critical insight. One of the ways in which the music of J. S. Bach is most clearly distinguishable from that of his contemporaries is the extraordinary freedom with which he handles his diatonic voice-leading—a freedom that had its effect upon Wesley too. There is also no doubt that Beethoven's treatment of dissonance—the matter of keeping a suspension, say, out of the way of its resolution—often shows less finesse and attention to detail than we normally find in Haydn and Mozart. Partly this was a development which can be seen in early nineteenth-century music as a whole (in Weber and Rossini as well, for example) partly it is a consequence of Beethoven's own stubbornness, his determination to bend the voices to his will. The line between an original turn of phrase and an ungrammatical solecism is not always a clear one—questions of musical grammar, like those of verbal grammar, can be complex and negotiable. As with any attempt to convince us of a doubtful proposition, much depends upon force of utterance and strength of personality.

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<sup>26</sup> *Musical World*, March 1836, as quoted in *An anthology of musical criticism from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century*, ed. N. Demuth (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1947), pp. 156-57. Samuel Wesley (who was still alive at the time) would no doubt have been flattered by this comparison to his idol.

It is, in part, a question of authority: ‘Well, and who has forbidden them?’ asked Beethoven about a pair of parallel fifths in his string quartet op.18/4. The hapless Ferdinand Ries replied: ‘Marburg [sic], Kirnberger, Fuchs, etc., etc., all the theoreticians!’ ‘And *so I allow them!*’ was Beethoven’s answer.<sup>27</sup>

Of course we permit greater latitude to a musician of demonstrated achievement like Beethoven than to a student of little experience and doubtful competence; but what if that student happens to be Beethoven himself? The excerpts from his F minor Praeludium in Ex.5.2 are particularly difficult to evaluate in this respect. Do their occasional peculiarities represent incompetence, or individuality —‘just accident, or something characteristic?’, as C. H. H. Parry would say.<sup>28</sup> This is why the dual dating of WoO 55 is such a teasing uncertainty. The piece was first published in 1805; but, according to a note in an unknown hand, had been composed ‘à l’âge de 15 ans’ (1785 or 86).<sup>29</sup> It has been assumed that Beethoven would have revised his Praeludium at this time for publication (as a whole the texture shows exceptional skill for the earlier date);<sup>30</sup> but this is difficult to square with the total absence of indications of tempo, dynamics, phrasing, and articulation. On no other occasion did Beethoven send his music into the world in such a naked state. Was it, like the early sonatas now known as op.49 (which also appeared in 1805), published without Beethoven’s knowledge or consent? The question only matters because (whether we should or not) we will naturally tend to permit more creative license to the composer of the ‘Eroica’ than to the inexperienced composer of the

<sup>27</sup> *Beethoven: impressions by his contemporaries*, ed. O. G. Sonneck (New York: Schirmer, 1926), pp.49-50. It is worth noting that Ries was not criticising these fifths but pointing out how beautiful they were. Cf J. Dubiel, ‘When you are Beethoven: kinds of rules in Schenker’s “Counterpoint”’, *Journal of Music Theory* 34/2 (Fall 1990), 291-340.

<sup>28</sup> R. Vaughan Williams and G. Holst, *Heirs and rebels: letters written to each other and occasional writings on music*, ed. U. Vaughan Williams and I. Holst (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), pp.95-96.

<sup>29</sup> See M. Solomon, ‘Beethoven’s productivity at Bonn’, *Music & Letters* 53/2 (April 1972), 167. Solomon has pointed out how, after the relatively fruitful years 1782-85, virtually nothing can be attributed with certainty and only a little conjecturally (including this piece) to the second half of the decade; and he raises the possibility—extraordinary as it seems to us—that Beethoven had actually given up on the idea of being a composer at this time.

<sup>30</sup> O. von Irmer, preface to *Beethoven: Klavierstücke* (Munich: Henle, 1975), p.6.



*Kurfürstensonaten* (WoO 47); and in this case it is impossible to establish with certainty which of these we are dealing with. The problem is analogous to that which we met in our discussion of the Prelude and Fugue in F minor BWV 534 (pp.45-52), where we saw how the fugue's atypical form and the asperities of its counterpoint had one meaning so long as the piece was assumed to be by J. S. Bach, quite another if it was merely by an ambitious follower of his.

Even in Beethoven's case, however, the desire to push the limits of musical grammar was counterbalanced by an equally strong desire for a secure grounding in orthodox counterpoint. He therefore travelled to Vienna in 1792 with the intention of studying with Joseph Haydn. Hundreds of exercises survive from this course of tuition, and yet it is still not quite clear what happened between the two. Three years after Beethoven's death Johann Schenk, a popular Viennese composer of *Singspiel*, filled the gap with a convincing memoir of his own, speaking of Beethoven's dissatisfaction with Haydn as a teacher, and outlining a complicated ruse whereby Schenk had supplemented Haydn's tuition without making his involvement known. It is all very plausible: Haydn was busy preparing for his second journey to London, and he may well have been preoccupied—only a small proportion of these exercises have been corrected. But it has recently been suggested that Schenk's account was a complete fabrication, or at least substantially inaccurate.<sup>31</sup> The surviving manuscripts do not appear to bear out Schenk's story.

Relations between Haydn and Beethoven appear to have been cordial at this stage. Haydn was impressed with the progress of his student and in November 1793 wrote to the Elector in Bonn:

I am taking the liberty of sending to your Reverence . . . a few pieces of music—a quintet, an eight-

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<sup>31</sup> B. Cooper, *Beethoven* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp.43-4. See also A. Mann, 'Beethoven's contrapuntal studies with Haydn', *Musical Quarterly* 54/4 (October 1970), 711-26.

voice 'Parthie', an oboe concerto, a set of variations for the piano and a fugue, composed by my dear pupil Beethoven who was so graciously entrusted to me. They will, I flatter myself, be graciously accepted by your Reverence as evidence of his diligence beyond the scope of his own studies. On the basis of these pieces, expert and amateur alike cannot but admit that Beethoven will in time become one of the greatest musical artists in Europe, and I shall be proud to call myself his teacher.<sup>32</sup>

One wonders: did Haydn teach Beethoven *just* elementary counterpoint, or did he also advise him upon these other works? The Elector replied:

the music of young Beethoven which you sent me I received with your letter. Since, however, the music, with the exception of the fugue, was composed and performed here in Bonn before he departed on his second journey to Vienna, I cannot regard it as progress made in Vienna. . . . I very much doubt that he has made any important progress in composition and in the development of his musical taste during his present stay, and I fear that, as in the case of his first journey to Vienna, he will bring back nothing but debts.<sup>33</sup>

The obvious conclusion—that Beethoven had misled Haydn about the extent of his productivity in Vienna—may not necessarily be the case. Haydn's descriptions are vague, but it seems that most of the works he describes are thought to have been written (or at least completed) in Vienna, and that for some reason the Elector was mistaken.<sup>34</sup> The real mystery concerns the fugue—the only one of these pieces not known to survive in some form. With Haydn, Beethoven studied only species counterpoint—his first fugal exercises date from the following year. The fugato Hess 64, discussed above, would appear to have pre-dated these studies; was this the piece that Haydn sent? The only other surviving possibility is a two-voice organ fugue written in Bonn, WoO 31, ten years old by then. Yet the fugue was the only piece the

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<sup>32</sup> Cooper, *Beethoven*, p.47.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p.48.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p.48.

Elector *didn't* recognise. Most likely it is now lost; but it is interesting to note that Beethoven appears to have been already experimenting with fugal writing even before his formal studies had reached this point.

When Haydn left for England in 1794, Albrechtsberger took on his pupil and saw Beethoven's education through with admirable thoroughness and attention to detail. He based the course of instruction upon his recently published *Gründliche Anweisung zur Composition* (1790), starting again virtually at the beginning with simple counterpoint in two parts, then three and four; strict (vocal/Renaissance) and free (instrumental/Baroque); then imitative writing, fugues, chorale fugues, double counterpoint at the octave, tenth, and twelfth, double fugue, and canon.<sup>35</sup> This series was concluded with a group of three prelude/fugue pairs, very much in the Viennese fugal *sonata da chiesa* tradition (to which Albrechtsberger himself contributed so many). Two, in F and C major (Hess 30 and 31), are for string quartet; the other, in E minor (Hess 29), for string trio. Like all the other fugal and contrapuntal exercises he produced at this time, the two quartet fugues are built on subjects supplied by Albrechtsberger. All derive unmistakably from Baroque instrumental writing.

The subject to the fugue in F has a strong subdominant bias (Ex.5.4a), interesting in view of the fact that much of Albrechtsberger's correction of Beethoven's work involved preventing the exposition from drifting too far flatward. The C major subject, with its angular metrically displaced octave leaps, exemplifies a certain rather barren kind of experimentalism which can sometimes be found in Albrechtsberger's fugues (Ex.5.4b). The E minor fugue appears to use a subject of Beethoven's own (Ex.5.4c), but this makes little difference as it too is equally a product of the Viennese fugal tradition. Kirkendale compares it to a very similar subject by Wenzel Birck (1718-1763) which uses almost the same notes (Ex.5.5),

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<sup>35</sup> See Kirkendale, *Fugue and fugato*, pp.203-6, 224-8; Thayer-Forbes, *Beethoven*, pp.138-150; Cooper, *Beethoven*, pp.49-52.

although it is in a different key; but the combination of a ‘canzona’ head motive and descending chromatic tetrachord was a very common one.

As is sometimes the case with J. S. Bach<sup>36</sup> and usually the case with Albrechtsberger, the preludes are almost as imitative as the fugues themselves, examples of what Albrechtsberger called a *Nachahmungssatz*: ‘It is no merit of mine

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<sup>36</sup> Cf the preludes *WTC* I in A, *WTC* II in A minor, etc.

that I make good fugues,' he said with a curious sort of humility, 'because I never have an idea that cannot be used in double counterpoint.'<sup>37</sup> Both preludes and fugues are all rather lengthy, systematically distributing the material around the usual range of keys, with the neo-Baroque pretence expertly maintained throughout. Looking at the E minor fugue, for example—apart from questions of melodic distinction—we can find subtle differences between the style Beethoven/Albrechtsberger are using here and that of J. S. Bach in his maturity. There are a few prominent non-thematic entries (bb.17, 37, and 44), for example, and the counterpoint is generally simpler and uses a little more parallel motion than would be normal for Bach (bb.32-33 sound disarmingly like the sort of passage one might find in an early Baroque trio sonata). These are both characteristics of south German/Italian fugal traditions; the fact that there is perhaps not quite enough textural relief from the full three-part texture is, I suspect, a characteristic of earnest students of fugue the world over. If the subject does not retain its integrity throughout to quite the same extent as with J. S. Bach, there are enough complete statements throughout to prevent it from dissolving completely. Certainly the movement is thematically self-consistent: the little semiquaver motive at the beginning of the third bar appears in nearly every bar of the piece. No Classical turn of phrase can possibly make its way through this dense web of counterpoint—not a trace of Beethoven's own musical character can be seen.

And, in a way, this gives these fugues an odd sort of fascination. They are, of course, pleasant enough to listen to—'mere fugality'<sup>38</sup> will always keep a texture going with a certain minimum of interest and activity. But in this case our interest is unashamedly biographical. The fact that we know it is Beethoven, the mighty thunderer of the *Eroica*, sitting here, knitting quietly away at his counterpoint and producing an object that is, aurally, virtually indistinguishable from the Birck sonata

<sup>37</sup> A. E. F. Dickinson, *Bach's Fugal Works* (London: Pitman, 1956), p.229.

<sup>38</sup> Harvey Grace's phrase: 'Rheinberger's organ sonatas (concluded)', *Musical Times* 65/975 (May 1924), 414.

which had such a similar subject (Ex.5.5), imbues the work with a compelling sense at once of potentiality and restraint. At any moment we expect him to burst out of the strait-jacket and reveal himself; when he does not, we are both disappointed and curiously impressed.

The only audible link between these pieces and the music of the ‘real’ Beethoven is a similarity between the prelude in C, Hess 31, and the trio to an Allegretto in C minor, WoO 53, written perhaps a year or two later (Exx.5.6 and 5.7). The Allegretto is a genuine example of Beethoven’s famous ‘C minor’ mood, and reminiscent of the C minor sonatas opp.10/1 and 13 which originated around the same time.<sup>39</sup>

The rather bland material of his early *Nachahmungssatz* is a perfect foil for the bristling outer sections. The way in which he uses it, however, indicates the great gulf between the exercises he wrote for Albrechtsberger and the individual style he was fast developing. The string quartet develops its subject in conjunction with a variety of loosely maintained semiquaver countersubjects. Although (like much later eighteenth-century contrapuntal writing) it does tend to fall into two- or four-bar segments, any joins are smoothly woven together and the first significant cadence does not occur until thirty two bars into the piece. By contrast the counterpoint in Ex.5.7 is purely ornamental, and in no way obscures the fact that the first strain consists of two balanced eight-bar clauses. The second strain is less obvious in this respect—Beethoven develops his ‘subject’ sequentially with the aid of a new, chromatic ‘countersubject’ in a lean, bitingly chromatic invertible counterpoint that is a long way from the mellifluous part writing of the quartet. Most imaginative however, in my view, is the way he varies the brief return to the opening theme. Instead of following the contour of the bass as it did at the beginning, the treble starts high and step by step

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<sup>39</sup> However, apart from questions of key, the Allegretto has at least as much in common with other minor-key 3/4 movements in the sonatas opp.10/2 and 14/1.

draws nearer to the ascending bass, reducing a gap of over four octaves in b.34 to just a third in b.37. This imaginative handling of register is very much a characteristic of his piano style; it was a long time before anything similar would happen in his 'strict' contrapuntal writing—before he returned to fugal writing at all, in fact.





Beethoven's course of study with Albrechtsberger concluded in May 1795—the same month his op.1, three piano trios dedicated to Prince Lichnowsky, appeared. In other words, his contrapuntal training was completed before he officially entered the public arena as a composer. This (and the years he had spent revising them) go some way toward explaining the immensely confident and 'finished' impression that even these first works make.

It is not, of course, fair to compare Beethoven's opp.1-5 with the first works of Haydn or Mozart. Beethoven entered upon his op.1 with the same care and preparation he showed in every new venture, even giving thought to the eventual shape of his oeuvre (he had already published a number of sets of variations, none of which he had dignified with an opus number). Haydn came by publication almost accidentally (see p.218), and many of Mozart's most important works remained in manuscript until after his death, as discussed in the previous chapter. Furthermore, the musical language which Haydn and Mozart came upon was much less clearly formed than that which Beethoven found, the expectations of size and musical weight less demanding—a sonata or trio was a very different thing in 1795 from what it had been in 1760. Like most of their contemporaries, Haydn and Mozart were necessarily less single-minded in their contrapuntal studies than Beethoven was able to be. From Griesinger and Dies we have vivid images of the young Haydn, near starvation, struggling to master Fuxian counterpoint at the same time as the rudiments of composition, writing his first sonatas and serenades, and teaching to keep body and soul together.<sup>40</sup> As for Mozart, when and how did he study counterpoint? We know how he *taught*, in considerable detail, but nowhere in the extensive documentation of

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<sup>40</sup> Later in life he was to become an expert in Fuxian counterpoint, at times even improving on Fux's *Gradus*: see A. Mann, 'Haydn as student and critic of Fux' in *Studies in eighteenth-century music. A tribute to Karl Geiringer on his seventieth birthday*, ed. H. C. R. Landon (London: Allen and Unwin, 1970), 323-32.

his early life is there a single reference to regular contrapuntal training or practice.<sup>41</sup>

Leopold must have given him a certain amount of basic compositional training, but his real strength was the teaching of instrument technique; to a large extent Wolfgang seems to have been left to pick up his technique where he could, emulating the music he met in their travels.

It is interesting to compare the state of Beethoven's contrapuntal studies with those Mozart wrote late in his life, which we discussed in the previous chapter. Of Mozart's many contrapuntal beginnings only a small proportion were completed, in contrast to the more than two hundred pages of Beethoven's exercises for Albrechtsberger. There are a number of reasons for this. Most fundamental is the fact that Beethoven was working in a somewhat artificial style especially designed for pedagogical purposes—it takes no exceptional musical intelligence to ascend the conveniently graded levels, the 'steps to Parnassus' of Fux/Albrechtsberger's method—while Mozart was seeking to emulate a style of matchless sophistication and individuality. Beethoven had a teacher—the best in Vienna—to advise and encourage him; Mozart had none. Mozart was a professional musician, (over-)engaged in a continual round of concerts, lessons, and commissions, supporting a family and struggling to make ends meet; private experiments with unfashionable styles had to be fitted in around these obligations. Beethoven, on the other hand, had been sent to Vienna for the express purpose of studying with Haydn. While his situation was not exactly luxurious, his salary was still being paid by the Bonn Elector and he was from the start able to find generous patrons to support him in a way that Mozart never had.

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<sup>41</sup> See, however, B. Kohlschütter, 'Die musikalische Ausbildung auf Salzburger Boden im 18. Jahrhundert', *Mozart und seine Umwelt: Bericht über die Tagung des Zentralinstituts für Mozartforschung der Internationalen Stiftung Mozarteum Salzburg* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1979), 200-02, which traces the Salzburg tradition of music theory (Samber, Muffat, Gugl, Eberlin, Adlgasser, etc). H. Federhofer, 'Mozart als Schuler und Lehrer in der Musiktheorie', *Mozart-Jahrbuch* (1973), 89-106, and A. Mann, 'Leopold Mozart als Lehrer seines Sohnes', *Mozart-Jahrbuch* (1989-1990), 31-35, emphasise the practical, contemporary orientation of Mozart's education; this is no doubt the reason for his less than glorious showing before the Accademia Filarmonica in Bologna.

For all the harshness of his family circumstances, there is a sense in which he was now in a distinctly privileged position, able to concentrate upon developing his art without the necessity of currying popular or imperial favour.

This insulation between Beethoven and the world around him represents a fundamental difference between his creative personality and Mozart's. It is not just that Mozart was economically dependent upon refractory patrons and fickle audiences; the raw material of his music itself emerged from his relationship to these. We can see in many different ways—his early ability to mimic standard operatic clichés on the keyboard,<sup>42</sup> his masterly toying with audiences,<sup>43</sup> his care in tailoring arias for singers so they fitted 'as accurately as a well-made coat',<sup>44</sup> his portrait of Rosa Cannabich in K.309/284b<sup>45</sup>—how supremely receptive Mozart was to the musical and social situations around him. It is possible to trace his musical development by listing the musicians he came across: his father, J. C. Bach, Schobert, Padre Martini, Hasse, Piccini, Le Gros, Joseph and Michael Haydn, van Swieten (and therefore Bach and Handel), Schikaneder, Anton Stadler and many others. 'As you know' he pointed out to his father 'I can more or less adopt or imitate any kind and any style of composition.'<sup>46</sup>

Beethoven was far less receptive to his immediate surroundings:

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<sup>42</sup> Daines Barrington's account: 'I said to the boy, that I should be glad to hear an extemporary Love Song, such as his friend Manzoli might choose in an opera. The boy ... looked back with much archness, and immediately began five or six lines of a jargon recitative proper to introduce a love song. He then played a symphony which might correspond with an air composed to the single word, *Affetto*. It had a first and second part, which, together with the symphonies, was of the length that opera songs generally last: if this extemporary composition was not amazingly capital, yet it was really above mediocrity, and shewed most extraordinary readiness of invention. Finding that he was in humour, and as it were inspired, I then desired him to compose a Song of Rage, such as might be proper for the opera stage. The boy again looked back with much archness, and began five or six lines of a jargon recitative proper to precede a Song of Anger. This lasted also about the same time as the Song of Love; and in the middle of it, he had worked himself up to such a pitch, that he beat his harpsichord like a person possessed, rising sometimes in his chair. The word he pitched upon for this second extemporary composition was, *Perfido*.' O. Deutsch, *Mozart: a documentary biography*, tr. E. Blom, P. Branscombe, and J. Noble (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1965), p.98.

<sup>43</sup> Letter to his father, 3 July 1778, *The letters of Mozart and his family*, tr. and ed. Emily Anderson, 3 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1938), vol. II, pp.825-26; discussed on p.253-4 above.

<sup>44</sup> Letter to his father, 28 Feb 1778, *ibid.*, vol. II, pp.735-37.

<sup>45</sup> Letter to his father, 6 Dec 1777, *ibid.*, vol. II, p.602.

<sup>46</sup> Letter to his father, 7 Feb 1778, *ibid.*, vol. II, p.694.

‘Metaphorically, Beethoven was already on many occasions deaf to the music of others before his physical hearing became impaired.’<sup>47</sup> The few (very few) musicians for whom Beethoven expressed admiration were distanced from him by geography (Cherubini, Clementi, Cramer, Kreutzer) or even more insuperable barriers (Bach, Handel, Mozart).<sup>48</sup> To be sure, his earlier sonatas show the unmistakable influence of the London pianoforte school, and there are traces of contemporary French opera in *Fidelio*; but on the whole one gets the impression that Beethoven was simply not particularly interested in other people’s music. His style would appear to have developed according its own laws, rather than in response to particular commissions. From the ‘new path’ of 1802 to the scribbled notes of intention in his later sketchbooks, he seems to have been very much aware of this process. At the same time, he shows a curious ambivalence about making these declarations public: ‘Instead of making a fuss about a new method of v[ariations] such as would be made by our neighbours the Gallo-Franks, such as, for instance, when a certain French composer presented fugues to me *après une nouvelle Méthode*, which resulted in this, that the *fugue is no longer a fugue*, etc.—I nevertheless want to bring to the attention of the non-connoisseur the fact that these V.[ariations] [opp.34 and 35] are at any rate different from any others.’<sup>49</sup>

It is in the second of these two sets that we come across Beethoven’s first significant published fugue. Already it is a long way from the Albrechtsberger exercises—there is nothing smooth or conventional about the texture; nor, for that matter about the variations as a whole. The opening of the set is humorous on a number of levels. Apart from the cryptic absurdity of the naked bass itself, the introduction is a poker-faced parody of contrapuntal exercise, complete with Latinate

<sup>47</sup> E. Blom, ‘The minor composers’, *Music & Letters* 8/3 (July 1927), 311.

<sup>48</sup> Seen in this light, his ambivalent relationship with Haydn—the one towering figure in disturbing proximity—makes a certain amount of sense.

<sup>49</sup> Letter to Breitkopf und Härtel, 26 Dec, 1802; in Thayer-Forbes, *Beethoven*, p.320. The prefatory note he wanted was never published; did he change his mind?

tags and pseudo- species counterpoint. The real joke for contemporary listeners, however, would have been the way in which the popular tune from Beethoven's ballet *The Creatures of Prometheus* is at first withheld and only gradually allowed to come to the fore (with programmatic implications, perhaps?) And, to be sure, in this set of variations and its companion op.34, Beethoven was indeed reshaping the genre in a truly Promethean manner.

Apart from the canonic first half of variation VII and some effective if loose invertible counterpoint in the minor variation XIV the texture could hardly be described as contrapuntal until we reach the 'Finale. Alla Fuga', which is the most substantial piece of fugal writing since Beethoven's studies. His sense of fugal tonality remains highly orthodox. As perhaps befits a variation set where everything has remained in E flat throughout, entries occur on I, V, ii, vi, iii, and IV in the approved Baroque manner, and this describes the entire tonal ambit. The one brief exception occurs in b.62, where the reference to the Prometheus theme *per arsin et thesin*<sup>50</sup> appears on VI, before it is reinterpreted as V/ii. This tonal conservatism makes an interesting contrast to his previous publication, the op.34 variations in F, which had a highly original tonal scheme of descending thirds with no two successive variations sharing the same key.

Beethoven's op.35 fugue is remarkable for two things. By comparison with the rather conservative keyboard fugues of the previous fifty years, its free and easy keyboard style makes full use of the growing resources of nineteenth-century pianism. Octave doubling, sforzandi, and strong dynamic contrasts abound, and the full range of the piano (as it stood at the time) is exploited. The counterpoint is rough but effective, and seems tailor made for the instrument's percussive quality (Ex.5.8):

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<sup>50</sup> With the position of strong and weak beats reversed, a permutation also seen in the *Eroica* symphony.

On the other hand, whilst there is a small amount of non-fugal keyboard ‘filler’ to emphasise this (bb.81-88, and most of b.111 onward), on the whole Beethoven scrupulously preserves the integrity of his three voices; a tour de force given the effectiveness of the keyboard writing. This is perhaps the first serious attempt at a *rapprochement* between fugal writing and nineteenth-century pianism. It is also something of a sport, however, for although Beethoven’s music continued to develop greater textural sophistication, it is the music of his last period that we particularly associate with fugal activity.

## LATE BEETHOVEN

The land of the *last five Sonatas!* As often as we have entered it we have been awed by its gigantic rocks and gloomy chasms or made happy by its flower-strewn heaths, true Elysian fields, its secret springs; the night of his fugues, the eased sorrow of his *adagios*, the defiant conflicts of op.106 and 111 have passed before us, till in the highest, loveliest pastures all is bathed in the strange, gleaming light of chains of trills. Who will ever take in the whole of this land, quite comprehend it, who will solve the enigmas that lie between, above and beneath these notes and sonorities, beyond the playable and the perceptible....?<sup>51</sup>

The later works of Beethoven have traditionally been surrounded with a superstitious awe. No other music of his—perhaps no other music at all—has the reputation of being so profound, so obscure, so difficult, so rarefied; in short, so far above ordinary human experience. Piano students practice the earlier sonatas; the middle period works are the staple of the concert hall; the last works remain fenced off, inviolate.

George Bernard Shaw made a valiant attempt at demythologisation:

why should I be asked to listen to the intentional intellectualities, profundities, theatrical fits and starts, and wayward caprices of self-conscious genius which make up the features of the middle period Beethovenism of which we all have to speak so very seriously, when I much prefer these beautiful, simple, straightforward, unpretentious, perfectly intelligible posthumous quartets .... the difficulties of these later works of Beethoven are superstitiously exaggerated. As a matter of fact, they fail much seldomer in performance nowadays than the works of his middle age.<sup>52</sup>

And yet the prestige these works possess is (with the exception of the ninth symphony)

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<sup>51</sup> R. Kastner, *Beethoven's Piano Sonatas*, tr. G. Abraham (Berlin: AFA-Verlag Hans Dünnebeil, 1935) p.28; italics and ellipses in original.

<sup>52</sup> *Music in London 1890-94*, 3 vols. (London: Constable, 1932), vol. III, p.157.

of a sort that has if anything tended to inhibit performance and remove them from the public sphere.

This consecration of Beethoven's later music—and of 'late-style' in general—was a paradoxical consequence of the organic model of artistic development that emerged from Johann Joachim Winckelmann's *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums* (1756-62). For Winckelmann, 'as every action or event has five parts, as it were stages—namely, beginning, progress, state of rest, decrease, and end, in which lies the foundation of the five scenes or acts in dramatic pieces—so it is with the succession of time in art; but since the close of art is beyond art's bounds, so there are properly only four periods in it for consideration here.' Winckelmann's *Geschichte* ushered in an age where virtually every German thinker of consequence, from Herder to Spengler, conceived the narrative trajectories of cultural history in terms of organic development, seeking to bring each and every artistic phenomenon—particular works, artist biographies, historical periods and styles, the cultural history of humanity itself, under the tyranny of the bell-curve. For Winckelmann this meant an inflexible conflation of lateness with decadence.

With the potent example of Goethe and Beethoven, however, it became possible to interpret the final phase of certain artists' careers in a new way, transcendent spiritual resonance and authority emerging precisely as a result of this organic decline: 'In artists of the highest calibre, old age sometimes manifests a development permitted to emerge most purely and essentially precisely on account of ageing's natural process of decay: in light of a decline in the formative powers, the appeal of sensation, the self-abandonment to the world as it is, there remain, so to speak, only the broad outlines, the most profoundly characteristic of one's creativity.'<sup>53</sup>

The writer in question, Georg Simmel, was writing about Da Vinci, but in his

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<sup>53</sup> G. Simmel, 'Das Abendmahl Leonardo da Vincis', *Zur Philosophie der Kunst. Philosophische und Kunstphilosophische Aufsätze* (Potsdam, 1922), 55, quoted in A. E. Barone, 'Richard Wagner's *Parsifal* and the theory of late style', *Cambridge Opera Journal* 7/1 (Mar 1995), 44.



reflections upon lateness he roams freely, making comparisons with many other artists: Rembrandt, Hals, Titian, Michaelangelo, Wagner, and of course Beethoven himself—in Simmel’s transcendent metaphysic the concept of ‘lateness’ is cut adrift from any kind of biographical particularity: ‘The subject, indifferent to all that is determined and fixed in time or space, has, so to speak, stripped himself of his subjectivity—the gradual withdrawal from appearances, Goethe’s definition of old age.’<sup>54</sup> ‘The close of art’ was indeed ‘beyond art’s bounds’, but in a sense entirely different from Winckelmann’s.

Not every work written toward the end of a composer’s life counts as a ‘late’ work, of course. Significant as they are, it is hard to see the sonatas of Domenico Scarlatti qualifying, for example (although most of them appear to have been written in his sixties and seventies), or Rossini’s *Péchés de vieillesse*.<sup>55</sup> Likewise (while such a designation has been attempted) it is a little counter-intuitive to see the final works of Mozart or Schubert as ‘late’. On the other hand—besides Beethoven—the category seems to have been made for composers such as J. S. Bach (Dahlhaus, Zenck) and Liszt (Strabolski, Gruber), Wagner (Barone), Schoenberg (Adorno), and Busoni (Ficarella), as well as authors like Goethe (Llewellyn), and Tomasi and Cavafy (Said), and artists like Da Vinci (Simmel).<sup>56</sup>

<sup>54</sup> G. Simmel, *Goethe* (Leipzig, 1913), pp.252-3; in Barone, ‘Parsifal’, 45-6.

<sup>55</sup> Or could they? With their reflective, often satirical attitude towards Rossini’s earlier music, the difficulty with which we can place them in relation to contemporary musical trends, and their anticipation of certain characteristics in twentieth-century French music, perhaps a case could be made for these pieces, too. This sort of category is highly negotiable.

<sup>56</sup> C. Dahlhaus, ‘Bei der Popularität der Spätwerke Bachs’, *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, 131/1 (January 1970), 20-21; M. Zenck, ‘1740-1750 und das ästhetische Bewusstsein einer Epochenschwelle? Zum Text und Kontext von Bachs Spätwerk’, *Johann Sebastian Bachs Spätwerk und dessen Umfeld: Perspektiven und Probleme* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1988), pp.109-16; B. Szabolcsi, *The twilight of F. Liszt*, (New York: Crescendo, 1973); G. Gruber, ‘Franz Liszts letzte Symphonische Dichtung “Von der Wiege bis zum Grabe”’, *Bruckner, Liszt, Mahler und die Moderne: Im Rahmen des Internationalen Brucknerfestes Linz 1986*, 73-78; A. E. Barone, ‘Richard Wagner’s Parsifal and the theory of late style’, *Cambridge opera journal* 7/1 (March 1995), 37-54; T. Adorno, *Philosophy of modern music*, tr. A. Mitchell and W. Blomster (New York: Seabury Press, 1973); ‘Arnold Schoenberg: 1874-1951’, *Prisms*, tr. S. and S. Weber (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981), pp. 147-172; A. Ficarella, ‘Die Kategorie des Spätstils in der Klaviermusik des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts: Studien zur “Klavierübung” von Ferruccio Busoni’, (PhD diss.: Hochschule für Musik, Köln. 1999); R. T. Llewellyn, ‘Parallel attitudes to form in late Beethoven and late Goethe: throwing aside the appearance of art’, *Modern Language Review* 63 (April 1968), 407-16; E. Said, ‘Thoughts on late style’, *London Review of Books* 26/15 (5 Aug. 2004); at [http://www.lrb.co.uk/v26/n15/said01\\_.html](http://www.lrb.co.uk/v26/n15/said01_.html)

To thus posit ‘lateness’ about a particular body of work is to say more than the bare fact that it was created toward the end of the composer’s life, but to invoke a very rich set of associations: ‘Concepts by their very nature come preformed, hence less than completely customized to the particulars they map (and less than unmarked by the ideology of their previous applications).’<sup>57</sup> This is from David Clarke’s exploration of ‘lateness’ in relation to the music of Michael Tippett. The ‘preformation’ he refers to, ‘less than unmarked by the ideology of their previous applications’, is of course precisely the reason he and others have used this particular concept.

T. S. Eliot was clearly seeking to access this mystique when he entitled his last major cycle *Four Quartets*,<sup>58</sup> as perhaps was Richard Strauss when he pointed out to the listener that his op.296 consisted of his ‘Vier *letzte* Gesänge’. Hans Pfitzner (probably unknowingly) reordered the events of Palestrina’s life in his eponymous opera, shifting the Missa Papae Marcelli to after his wife’s death and presenting him as a spent old man at the end of his career. Tippett’s own third symphony is a troubled response to Beethoven’s ninth; and he spoke of his Piano Sonata no.3 as his ‘late Beethoven sonata’.

At one point David Clarke asks if Tippett’s later music could be described as post-modern. Is there any sense in which the same question could be asked of Beethoven? With Tippett, of course, (as with Boulez, Messiaen, Ligeti, Penderecki,

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(accessed 26 October 2006); G. Simmel, ‘Das Abendmahl Leonardo da Vincis’, *Zur Philosophie der Kunst. Philosophische und Kunstphilosophische Aufsätze* (Potsdam, 1922). See also H. de La Motte-Haber, ‘Abstraktion und Archaisk: Die Kategorie des Spätwerks’, *‘In rebus musicis’: Zur Musik in Geschichte, Erziehung und Kulturpolitik. Richard Jakoby zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. A. Eckhardt and R. Stephan (Mainz: Schott, 1990), pp. 39-44.

<sup>57</sup> ‘The meaning of “lateness”: mediations of work, self and society in Tippett’s “Triple concerto”’, *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 125/1 (2000), 62.

<sup>58</sup> According to Michael Tippett: ‘When I asked T. S. Eliot once why he had called his late poems *Four Quartets*, he told me the title arose from his passionate love and admiration for Beethoven’s late quartets’ (programme note to ‘Water out of Sunlight’; <http://www.michael-tippett.com/iocwatereng.htm>; accessed 26 October 06). In a lecture in 1933, Eliot said that he sought ‘to get beyond poetry, as Beethoven, in his later works, strove to get *beyond* music’ (quoted in R. Nicolosi, T. S. Eliot and music: an introduction’, *Musical Quarterly* 66/2 (Apr 1980), 203). See also D. Barndollar, ‘Movements in time: “Four quartets” and the late string quartets of Beethoven’, *T. S. Eliot’s orchestra: Critical essays on poetry and music* (New York: General Music Publishing Co., 2000), pp. 179-194; and K. Alldritt, *Eliot’s ‘Four quartets’: poetry as chamber music* (London; Totowa, N.J.: Woburn Press, 1978).

and Maxwell Davies—other modernist composers Clarke instances in this connection) the issue of post modernism is partly one of period, analogous to the question of how far the later works of Beethoven can be said to participate in musical Romanticism. When, however, Clarke defines post-modernism as ‘a retraction from some of modernism’s previous extremes amounting to a measured assimilation of previously outlawed codes and channels of meaning from the past,’<sup>59</sup> it does suggest a wider application. If ‘outlawed’ is a rather strong way of describing the *galant* attitude to counterpoint (although, on reflection, the pronouncements of J. J. Rousseau are scarcely less doctrinaire than those of the high priests of modernism such as Boulez or Adorno), this reversal or deflection of apparently inexorable historical processes is an important aspect of Beethoven’s later style.

It is not just a question of Beethoven’s preoccupation with fugue. Adorno has pointed out the way in which many different kinds of musical conventions lie exposed on the surface of the music instead of being fully digested by its subjective expressivity: ‘Everywhere ... one finds formulas and phrases of convention scattered about. The works are full of decorative trill sequences, cadences, and fiorituras. Often convention appears in a form that is bald, undisguised, untransformed: the first theme of the Sonata op.110 has an unabashedly primitive accompaniment in sixteenths that would scarcely have been tolerated in the middle style; the last of the Bagatelles contains introductory and concluding measures that resemble the distracted prelude to an operatic aria—and all of this mixed in among some of the flintiest strata of the polyphonic landscape, the most restrained stirrings of solitary lyricism.’<sup>60</sup> The self-regard of these works, the way in which Beethoven refuses to mediate between stylistic discontinuities, the fact that they step away from the grand narrative of

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<sup>59</sup> Clark, ‘Tippett’, 80.

<sup>60</sup> ‘Late style in Beethoven’, *Raritan* 13/1 (Summer 1993), 102-7, at <http://helicon.vuw.ac.nz:4879/login.aspx?direct=true&db=f5h&AN=9312271222&site=ehost-live> (accessed 26 October 06).

historical development;<sup>61</sup> all these are characteristics that might be called ‘post-modern’.

The emergence of Beethoven’s late style was for Adorno perhaps the single most important event in his cultural schema: ‘in the geography of Adorno’s music history, the essential discontinuity [between the present and the past] is located not in the twentieth century but somewhere between Beethoven’s second and third periods.’<sup>62</sup> Subotnik continues: ‘the whole history of music from Beethoven’s late period to Schoenberg’s represents at once the winding down of human history and a prolegomenon to the music of a post-historical world, which since it continues to exist physically, Adorno considers to have entered into a meaningless, ahistorical stasis. Such post-historical music, the music of our own time, must be considered essentially the art of a post-human species.’<sup>63</sup>

One does not need to subscribe to Adorno’s apocalyptic despair about the situation of Western culture to agree that a very significant transition was taking place.

## **‘A NEW KIND OF FAILURE’**

The maturity of the late works of significant artists does not resemble the kind one finds in fruit. They are, for the most part, not round, but furrowed, even ravaged. Devoid of sweetness, bitter and spiny, they do not surrender themselves to mere delectation. They lack all the harmony that the classicist esthetic is in the habit of demanding from works of art, and they show more traces of history than of growth.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> At this point much better represented by (e.g.) Hummel, Weber, Kalkbrenner and Spohr. See C. Rosen, *The Classical style*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Faber, 1976), pp.379-387; L. Plantinga, *Clementi* (London: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp.312-13.

<sup>62</sup> R. Subotnik, ‘Adorno’s diagnosis of Beethoven’s late style: early symptom of a fatal condition’, *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 29/2 (Summer 1976), 246.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*; quoting Adorno, ‘Cultural criticism and society,’ *Prisms*, p.34.

<sup>64</sup> Adorno, ‘Late style’.

As is well known, these works had a problematic reception from the very first—it may not be so well known that the very notion of a ‘third’ or ‘late’ period was initially an attempt to quarantine these bizarre aberrations from the rest of his output.<sup>65</sup> Beethoven’s reception in the press had been more complex, and on the whole much more positive, than the polemics of Wagner or the selective anthologising of Slonimsky’s *Lexicon of Musical Invective* would suggest. From the first he was almost universally regarded as being a highly gifted and original musician. His judgement, however, was not always held to equal his gifts. Many early reviews rather condescendingly advise him to consider the capacity of his hearers (and performers) with a little more care:

Mr v. B. must be on guard against his occasionally too liberal style of composing, entrances of unprepared intervals and the frequent harshness of transition notes...; and from time to time he ought to remind us less of the organ style.<sup>66</sup>

After having arduously worked his way through these quite peculiar sonatas, overladen with strange difficulties, he must admit that while playing them with real diligence and exertion he felt like a man who had thought he was going to promenade with an ingenious friend through an inviting forest, was detained every moment by hostile entanglements, and finally emerged, weary, exhausted, and without enjoyment .... If Mr v.B. would only deny himself more and follow the path of nature, he could, with his talent and industry, certainly provide us with quite a few good things for an instrument over which he seems to have extraordinary control.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>65</sup> See G. Stanley, ‘Some thoughts on biography and a chronology of Beethoven’s life and music’, *The Cambridge companion to Beethoven* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp.3-13; K. M. Knittel, ‘Imitation, individuality, and illness: behind Beethoven’s three styles’, *Beethoven Forum* 4 (1995), 17-36; A. von Lenz, excerpt from ‘Beethoven et ses trois styles’, ed. and tr. I. Bent, *Music analysis in the nineteenth century*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), vol. I, *Fugue, form, and style*, pp. 316-327; Knittel, ‘Divining the enigmas of the Sphinx: Alexander Oulibicheff as a critic of Beethoven’s late style’, *Beethoven Newsletter* 8/2 (Summer 1993), 34-37.

<sup>66</sup> Review of the Piano Sonatas, op.10, *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 2 (9 October 1799), 570-71; *The critical reception of Beethoven’s compositions by his German contemporaries*, ed. W. M. Senner, R. Wallace, and W. Meredith (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), p.143.

<sup>67</sup> Review of the Violin Sonatas, op.12, *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 1 (5 June 1799); *ibid.*, pp.145-46.

These critics were not necessarily stultified Beckmessers; their aesthetic was perfectly defensible and self-consistent, and against these comments we must set the far more numerous expressions of admiration and approval for this exciting young talent. The mid-eighteenth century had a very well thought out theory of musical aesthetics and communication. If seventeenth-century musicians thought in terms of rhetoric and affect, eighteenth-century musicians favoured clarity and naturalness. The pioneer here was Johann Mattheson (1681-1764), who developed his theories—prefiguring those of Jean Jacques Rousseau—as early as the 1730s. For Mattheson (or at least Mattheson the theorist), melody was everything:

there are a thousand more reasons why the lower voice has to be governed by the higher melody, as the servant by the master, or the maid by her mistress. My advice has been given above . . . on initially completely omitting the accompanying bass if one wants to do an exercise on this; since I well know how one generally is very eager to give it something to do and thereby sometimes neglects that which is more essential. Besides, what does the bass have to do with melody? it pertains to harmony. One must not mix these two things that way.<sup>68</sup>

In other words, Mattheson presupposed an absolute functional polarisation between melody and bass. The four characteristics Mattheson required of melody were that it be facile, clear, flowing, and charming; and he drew up a list of rules for each. The rules for ‘facility’ give a fair account of his aesthetic approach:

1. There must be something in all melodies with which almost everyone is familiar
2. Everything of a forced, far-fetched, and difficult nature must be avoided.
3. One must follow nature for the most part, practice to some degree.
4. One should avoid great artifice, or hide it well.

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<sup>68</sup> Mattheson, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister*, tr. E. C. Harriss (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1981), p.311 [Pt.II, ch.5:48].

5. In this the French are more to be imitated than the Italians.
6. Melody must have certain [vocal] limits which everyone can obtain.
7. Brevity is to be preferred to prolixity.<sup>69</sup>

On the whole this is a good summary of the *galant* aesthetic. One reason for these principles was that a piece of music had to make its impression on the first performance, because it was unlikely to get another chance. This explains the massive redundancy of Haydn and Mozart's structures, the clarity of their texture, and the conventional nature of much of their material. Both Haydn and Mozart had a remarkable instinct for the extent to which they could momentarily obscure this clarity without seriously endangering the connection with their audience. Although the Classical style of the 1790s was a vastly enriched idiom compared to that of mid-century, Haydn and Mozart could mostly be said to have upheld Mattheson's principles; at least in spirit.

Beethoven, by contrast, was a musician who from the first sought out obscurity and difficulty for its own sake—nor was he one to take much notice of journalistic criticism. It is quite clear that he never saw himself as anything other than a great composer—a view soon shared by many of his contemporaries.<sup>70</sup> The peak of his fame and celebrity came during what we now call his 'second period'. Romantic attitudes to the arts had begun to percolate through all levels of society and the extrovert, grandiose, emotionally frank music Beethoven was writing at this time quickly achieved the popularity it has never really lost since. A group of powerful critics including Rochlitz, Hoffmann, and Marx wrote influential articles in his praise. How

<sup>69</sup> Mattheson, *Vollkommene Capellmeister*, p.426 [Pt.II, ch.12:37].

<sup>70</sup> As early as 1798 Beethoven expressed the desire that a publisher might grant him an income for life, in return for the right to publish all he wrote, an arrangement he believed Goethe and Handel benefitted from late in their careers. When a guest of Prince Lobkowitz showed amusement at his presumption, Lobkowitz attempted to smooth the waters, and Beethoven responded hotly: 'with men who will not believe and trust in me because I am as yet unknown to universal fame, I cannot hold intercourse!' (Thayer-Forbes, *Beethoven*, p.241). Something very like this arrangement became a reality with the agreement he signed in 1809 with Archduke Rudolph and the Princes Lobkowitz and Kinsky.

could anyone have expected that Beethoven was about to turn away from this style, successful and widely admired as it was?

‘The present-day chaos of Mr B. has again convinced me that this good man must have fallen into a state of mental disturbance, or at least must be suffering from an attack of high fever when he composes. There is such confusion in his ideas that it is just as impossible to derive a healthy total concept from them as from the confused speech of someone sick with delirium.’<sup>71</sup>

Critics began to express their disquiet at this new turn of events. No longer proffering advice to a gifted upstart, the tone was almost always one of sepulchral respect (the quotation above came from an exceptionally critical article). Some publications may have sidestepped the issue: the *Allgemeine musicalische Zeitung* did not review any of Beethoven’s major publications between 1820 and his death.

Clearly this was not the whole story. Publishers were paying for—indeed, competing for—his music. The quartets and the ninth symphony received performances, and some listeners responded powerfully to the music; whether or not they felt they understood it. A change was taking place in the way people listened to music: a new element of trust, of submission, entered into the relationship between composer and listener.

The oratorios of Handel, the symphonies of Haydn, and the operas of Mozart had achieved classical status almost by accident: people enjoyed listening to them, sought to repeat the experience (not something to be taken for granted in eighteenth-century concert life), and so, de facto, they became institutions. With Beethoven by contrast, (especially late Beethoven) repeated hearings were necessary in order to understand the music at all. The idea of a music that did not interpret itself, that did not meet the listener halfway as Mattheson insisted, was quite a new one.

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<sup>71</sup> *Minerva als Beilage zum Allgemeinen musickalischen Anzeiger, Allgemeiner musikalischer Anzeiger* (Frankfurt) 1 (24 January 1827), 240; Senner et al, *Critical reception*, p.97.



This kind of listening is described in intimate detail by an anonymous article from 1827 in the *Berliner musikalische Zeitung*:

In regard to the most recent works of this great composer, one has to become accustomed to being cautious with one's opinion after listening to them for the first three to six times. . . . The reason is. . . that thereafter one usually becomes not a little embarrassed when the work begins to become accessible to a mind that initially was so ready to pass judgement against it...

For all that, one is strangely disposed to exactly such works by Beethoven. Just as soon as one knows that a new Beethoven work has drawn near to the simple threshold of one's home, one pushes aside all of one's favourite inclinations, indeed even all professional business, just to hear whether the wind, which is to propel the willing ship of the soul and its sails, our feelings, is going to blow northeast or southwest. And behold! after playing it through once, one stands up exasperated and has heard nothing even though one has seen everything, and has felt nothing even though there was no elasticity of feeling lacking. I prefer to go for a walk, up on the high lake shore. There I will know what I am seeing and feeling when I am feeling and that I am hearing something when I am hearing. Indeed what good are the echoing sounds to me up on the high mountains: (here there follows a short passage from a quartet), how did it go after that? It wouldn't have come to mind if the highest branches of the beech trees weren't always swaying so gregariously and friendly in the evening breeze. And I have nothing further from my two-hour effort in order to enjoy something suitable. Is it worth the effort; is that the thanks that Beethoven gives his performers for their effort? Why does this man write just this way and not otherwise? How many ugly passages have I had to work out, against my entire sense of hearing, against all beauty? The man makes a useless effort; he is finished and knows nothing more. He is deaf and can't hear anything anymore. I wonder whether he can play the violin. I can hardly believe that. How oppressive all of that is, so sublime; how awkward it sounds. He ought to learn to play the violin, etc.

One returns home. Nevertheless, the passage is indeed beautiful, that has to be true, and from that one knows that he wrote it, something like that someone else could—how was the ending, quite strangely vivacious.—So gigantically grand. And a strange finale—the theme: it seems to be ably worked out. How obligato the parts develop, as if they had no concern for themselves, but they do have that. And the striking contrast: the thing does seem to be worth the effort. One has to

hear it more often. Well, once more...<sup>72</sup>

I have quoted this article *in extenso* because, as a stream-of-consciousness account of what might be called synthetic listening it could hardly be bettered. The unknown author describes how the subconscious mind assembles a clear and coherent impression of the piece between and during repeated hearings. Nature plays a different role here than in Mattheson's theory. For most eighteenth-century writers on music, nature was essentially a sociable concept: the natural was that which was acceptable to the taste of the listening community as a whole.

For this nineteenth-century Berliner, listening is almost a solipsistic process. The work in question appears to be one of the late string quartets: he must have been at a performance, or maybe participated in a play-through (the article is ambiguous as to whether he has been listening to or playing the music), but there is no mention of these other people—the musical experience takes place entirely within his own head. The clue to the music's meaning comes, extraordinarily enough, from 'the highest branches of the beech trees ... swaying so gregariously and friendly in the evening breeze.' Beethoven's habit of drawing his inspiration from walks in the countryside surrounding Vienna was well known; if one wanted to understand his difficult and strange music, then, why not go directly to its source? The music is presented as an elemental force: one drops everything to hear a new work of Beethoven's, 'to hear whether the wind, which is to propel the willing ship of the soul and its sails, our feelings, is going to blow northeast or southwest.' This is a telling metaphor, indicating the complete submission of the listener in relation to the composer,

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<sup>72</sup> 'An opinion on a piece of music by Beethoven from no.4, 1827 of the *Berliner musikalische Zeitung*, which deserves greater dissemination', *Allgemeine Musikzeitung zur Beförderung der theoretischen und praktischen Tonkunst, für Musiker und Freunde der Musik überhaupt* 1 (8 August 1827), 101-02; in *The critical reception of Beethoven's compositions by his German contemporaries*, ed. W. M. Senner, R. Wallace, and W. Meredith (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), pp.111-12. The trajectory delineated here was replicated almost exactly in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung's* Beethoven reviews between 1798 and 1810 (Thayer-Forbes, *Beethoven*, pp.276-279).

intentionally or not recalling the sovereign unpredictability of the Holy Spirit which ‘bloweth where it listeth.’

Dahlhaus describes the situation thus: ‘One of the oddest facts in the early reception of Beethoven is a type of failure that was apparently new in the history of music....Audiences were astonished, believing themselves at times to be victims of a weird or raucous joke....But even those who were disappointed felt basically that the acoustic phenomenon whose sense they were unable to grasp nevertheless harboured a meaning which, with sufficient effort, could be made intelligible. The emotions that Beethoven’s works engendered...were mingled with a challenge to decipher, in patient exertion, the meaning of what had taken place in the music.’<sup>73</sup>

‘Effort...challenge...patient exertion’: it’s quite clear that what we are talking about here is work. This conjunction of the categories of leisure (no one is *obliged* to listen Beethoven) and work is not as paradoxical as it seems; any musical amateur will attest to this. What could be more laborious than the hours spent practising one’s instrument in order to acquire sufficient technique even to entertain oneself?<sup>74</sup> What was new in the nineteenth century was the idea that the ability to listen to music, hitherto a faculty taken for granted (given a certain level of general cultivation), was in fact a skill that could be developed and honed in much the same way that one learned an instrument. For some commentators the priority was reversed: one learned an instrument *in order to* understand music better: ‘Through activity in music, through first-hand experience, comes a deeper penetration in listening .... Whoever has tried to interpret a piece will get the most from hearing it performed. The one act amplifies the other. That is why amateur musicians make the keenest concert-goers.’<sup>75</sup> From this

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<sup>73</sup> *Nineteenth-century music*, tr. J. Bradford Robinson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p.10.

<sup>74</sup> This intensity of labour is of course characteristic of many recreational activities, from chess to sudoku to mountaineering.

<sup>75</sup> E. T. Clarke, *Music in everyday life* (New York: Norton, 1935), quoted in V. Griffiths, *An experiment in school music making* (Christchurch/London: Whitcombe and Tombs/Cambridge University Press, 1941), p.2.

development came the flood of ‘music appreciation’ literature, the concert guides and programme notes, for every level of sophistication from *Classical music for dummies* to textbooks on ‘structural hearing’.<sup>76</sup> Musical analysis (for its own sake, rather than as an aid to the teaching of composition) became an academic discipline in its own right.

It is possible to feel a certain disquiet about this development. Surely, one might ask, part of music’s potency is the direct, visceral way in which it can affect us? Do our ears really need to be recalibrated before we can approach the masterpieces of Western music? Schenker, Adorno, Keller, and Berio (who dismissed Schenker’s theory as ‘a crutch for relative-pitch invalids’<sup>77</sup>) were uncompromising in their expectations. Others, such as Shaw, Tovey and Rosen, allayed their doubts by writing for a hypothetical ‘naïve listener’—one, that is, free from nineteenth-century academic assumptions. In principle, even their most profound analytical insights were accessible to anyone who could simply listen with open ears. But this democratisation also has its problems. Most academics perhaps feel at least a vague distaste for the inescapably bourgeois, *nouveau riche* culture of musical appreciation.<sup>78</sup> Yet without this culture it is very unlikely that another, much more intellectually respectable aspect of the transition Dahlhaus speaks of would have had anything like the influence it did.

Beethoven’s music issued a challenge: for the first time, listeners were forced to enter into an agonistic relationship with the musical work, wresting understanding from it much as Jacob wrested a blessing from the angel. There is an extraordinary amount of ‘noise’ in much of Beethoven’s later music. By ‘noise’ I don’t mean simply volume, or harsh dissonance—there is plenty of this throughout his music of all

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<sup>76</sup> D. Pogue, S. Speck, and G. Dicterow, *Classical music for dummies* (Hoboken, N. J.: John Wiley and sons, 1997); F. Salzer, *Structural hearing: tonal coherence in music*, (New York: Dover, 1962).

<sup>77</sup> W. Benjamin, post on SMT-talk, ‘Pitch-class dogmas’, <http://societymusictheory.org/pipermail/smt-talk/2005-August/002612.html> (accessed 30 September 2006).

<sup>78</sup> See J. Fisk, ‘Classical music and the tourist factor’, *Hudson Review* 51/1 (Spring 1998), 206-212, or J. Horowitz, ‘Mozart as midcult: mass snob appeal’, *Musical Quarterly* 76/1 (Spring 1991), 1-16.

periods. I mean anything that disrupts the surface of the music and interferes with the clarity of the communication.

Sometimes, it *is* just noise, in the obvious sense: one thinks of the ‘Schreckensfanfare’ at the start of the finale to his ninth symphony, or his obsession with sustained trills. There’s an irony here in that traditionally, in both Classical and Baroque styles, trills were used to emphasise tonal function by making the important cadences even more self-evident. Here, however, when the texture reaches a certain level of saturation, they become the harmonic equivalent of white noise (Ex.5.9)—notice how this point of maximum acoustic chaos is succeeded by a passage of absolute clarity.

But not all this noise is ‘noisy’. Consider the following passage for example—apparently one of the purest and most straightforward in his entire oeuvre (Ex.5.10). But the voicing of the texture, with its wide separation of the hands and closely spaced chords near the bottom of the keyboard, is anything but Classical, introducing an element of resistance into this most pellucid of themes:

At other times it is a sort of information overload which creates the noise. Ex.5.11 is, of course, from the movement which even his greatest admirers found hard to take. It is a fugue—exceptionally logical, considered from a linear point of view. But each line appears to be elbowing the other for space, as they cross and recross each

other, the subject enveloped by its much more assertive countersubject, the metre rendered ambiguous by the subject's confinement to weak beats and the harmonic rhythm's lack of clarity. This contrapuntal jostling is preserved literally in Beethoven's piano duet version op.134—he rejected Anton Halm's arrangement because it 'divided the parts too much between *prim* and second'<sup>79</sup> and made his own where the players' hands follow the contrapuntal lines to their logical conclusion, at the cost of considerable physical inconvenience.

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<sup>79</sup> Thayer-Forbes, *Beethoven*, p.975.

At times, so eccentric are his textural solutions, the thought of Beethoven's deafness crosses one's mind. William Newman raises the 'gnawing, ever-present question of how well Beethoven could actually hear the sonority of what he was writing', arguing that 'no one who has practised the last five sonatas extensively can fail to be almost painfully aware of continuing problems of balance, projection, and clear sonority [musical examples showing the end of the Sonata op.101 and bb.118-19 of the Diabelli variations].'<sup>80</sup>

Of course, the pieces are what they are, and short of desperate expedients like Weingartner's arrangement of the 'Hammerklavier' sonata for orchestra, these 'problems' are not easy to fix. With this music there is no real alternative to taking the rough with the smooth. But what happens, listening carefully over time, is that one comes to realise that the noise is an essential part of the music: at times the sheer difficulty of following the musical argument compels attention as nothing else can.

A classical aesthetic might be defined as one in which means (orchestration, say, or instrumental technique or textural complication) submit themselves humbly to artistic ends; and would-be classical works are vulnerable to criticism insofar as this perfect submission is lacking. As we move further away from this aesthetic, however, means—even apparently unsatisfactory ones—force themselves on our attention as ends in their own right. Thus John Daverio can speak of the 'incomprehensibility' of Schumann's music as a 'constitutive aesthetic quality' in its own right,<sup>81</sup> and Charles Ives defends Brahms's orchestration thus:

To think hard and deeply and to say what is thought, regardless of consequences, may produce a first impression either of great translucence or of great muddiness, but in the latter there may be hidden

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<sup>80</sup> *Performance practices in Beethoven's piano sonatas* (London: Dent, 1971), p.46.

<sup>81</sup> 'Schumann's systems of musical fragments and *Witz*', *Nineteenth-century music and the German Romantic ideology* (New York: Schirmer, 1993), pp.50, 53; see also D. Ferris, "'Was will dieses Grau'n bedeuten?'" Schumann's "Zwielicht" and Daverio's "incomprehensibility topos", *Journal of Musicology* 22/1 (Winter 2005), 131-153.



possibilities. Some accuse Brahms's orchestration of being muddy. This may be a good name for a first impression of it. But if it should seem less so, he might not be saying what he thought. The mud may be a form of sincerity which demands that the heart be translated, rather than handed around through the pit. A clearer scoring might have lowered the thought.<sup>82</sup>

Like that of work and leisure, the antinomy of pain and pleasure is complex and sometimes hard to disentangle. In musical terms this antinomy can be represented by that between music (i.e. that which can be comprehended) and noise (that which resists comprehension.) From the time of Beethoven onward, noise, in this sense of resistance to the listener's appropriation of the music, became an increasingly essential part of composer's task. Composers who lacked that particular sort of aural grit—Hummel, Meyerbeer, Mendelssohn, Bruch—tended to be marginalised. As Richard Taruskin has famously said: 'the history of music in the nineteenth century could be written in terms of the encroachment of the sublime upon the domain of the beautiful.'<sup>83</sup> As we know, this process did not cease in the twentieth century. Rather, it intensified, acquiring a dogmatic, historicising inevitability; emblematic is the title of a recent book about this repertoire: *Hard complexities: the pleasure of modernist music*.<sup>84</sup>

There was another composer of Beethoven's time who also specialised in 'hard complexities'. Like the later Beethoven, his music showed an extraordinary predilection for 'learned' counterpoint, for extreme contrasts of textural density, and for startlingly dissonant voice leading. Like Beethoven, his roots were in the

<sup>82</sup> *Essays before a sonata*, in *Three classics in the aesthetics of music* (New York, Dover, 1962), p.119.

<sup>83</sup> 'Resisting the ninth', *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music*, 12/3 (Spring 1989), 249. Nor did it begin in the nineteenth; see, for example, J. Webster, 'The "Creation", Haydn's late vocal music, and the musical sublime', *Haydn and his world*, ed. E. Sisman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), H. D. Wyatt, 'Aspects of sublime rhetoric in eighteenth-century music', PhD diss., Rutgers University (2000), and K. B. Wurth, 'The grand style and the aesthetics of terror in eighteenth-century musical performance practices', *Tijdschrift voor muziektheorie* 9/1 (Feb 2004), 44-55.

<sup>84</sup> Arved Ashby, ed. (University of Rochester Press, 2004). Reinhold Friedl has gone even further in this line of thought with his article 'Some sadomasochistic aspects of musical pleasure', *Leonardo Music Journal* 12 (2002), 29-30, reflecting on the passive, submissive role of the performer and the listener in much 'new' music.

eighteenth century; and however much he might seem to prefigure Field or Thalberg his material and formal approach were fundamentally Classical. There has been a considerable revival of interest in his music during the twentieth century, promoted by many distinguished admirers. No one, however, has made the metaphysical claims for his music that seem to be inseparable from Beethoven's. No one has yet made him the key to their music-historical narrative, or erected an analytical system around his music. And this is why the music of Muzio Clementi, with its relatively sparse critical tradition, make such an interesting comparison to the rich reception history of Beethoven's. Clementi was the only one of Beethoven's contemporaries to share his interest in combining the strictest of counterpoint with a uniquely personal and forward-looking style, and showed a comparably long-standing engagement with the music of J. S. Bach.

## MUZIO CLEMENTI

When he died in 1832, Muzio Clementi was indisputably one of the elder statesmen of European music. One of the very few musicians whom Beethoven admired, his eminence in the field of keyboard music—as performer, teacher, publisher, piano manufacturer, and composer—could not be denied. Even more than Beethoven, he had devoted himself to the sonata, publishing no fewer than 125 in all (accompanied and solo) during the fifty years between 1771 and 1822—the same year as Beethoven's last sonata op.112. Within this field his range was actually considerably wider than Beethoven's, both historically (along with Haydn and Mozart, he was one of the chief architects of the mature Viennese Classical style)<sup>85</sup> and stylistically. Like Dr Johnson he could 'descend to a language intelligible to the

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<sup>85</sup> The designation 'Viennese' is not just a courtesy; he published twelve of his most historically significant sonatas—opp.7-10—during his first sojourn in Vienna (1780-81).

meanest capacity’—some of his commercially-oriented publications are as elementary as anything printed during the eighteenth century—but at other times (even within the same opus) he could strike a note of high seriousness comparable to Beethoven himself. In later life he seems to have become more selective about what he published, and followed Beethoven’s example by working and reworking his music—sometimes for decades.

His name had also been associated with J. S. Bach from quite early in his career. Born in Rome in 1752, he was something of a prodigy who wrote an oratorio *Martirio de’ gloriosi Santi Giuliani, e Celso* (now lost, unfortunately, apart from its published libretto) at around the age of twelve. Two or three years later occurred the major disjunction in Clementi’s life; he was ‘bought’<sup>86</sup> by an English gentleman named Peter Beckford who sequestered him at his estate in rural Dorset, where he spent the next seven years practising the harpsichord eight hours a day and providing occasional musical entertainment for his master.

As a patron, Beckford was no musical philanthropist like Baron van Swieten. He appears to have acquired Clementi as a relatively inexpensive source of domestic music: today one might import high-end stereo equipment from Germany; before the age of mechanical reproduction one imported musicians from Italy for much the same purpose. There is nothing in Beckford’s writings to indicate an especially profound or passionate interest in music (and enough to suggest a more-than-typical suspicion of the licentious proclivities of professional musicians; the fruit of his experience with Clementi?)<sup>87</sup> He made no attempt to further Clementi’s musical education, leaving him much to his own devices. In Rome, Clementi had benefited from a thorough and well-established pedagogical tradition, receiving instruction in counterpoint and thoroughbass from Antonio Buroni, Cordicelli, Giuseppe Santarelli, and Gaetano

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<sup>86</sup> Beckford’s own description: Plantinga, *Clementi*, p.3.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.35-6.

Carpani; from the time he entered England he was essentially an autodidact.

And yet, paradoxically, the move from the flourishing musical centre of Rome to the cultural wilderness of Dorset turned out in the end to be a move from the periphery to somewhere near the centre of the ‘main stream’ of musical history. If he had remained in Rome, he would no doubt have followed his predecessors and continued to write vocal music: oratorios, cantatas, masses, and (of course) opera. He might well have achieved great success and celebrity: become another Paisiello, another Cimarosa; but it is a little disturbing to reflect that, had he done so, there is almost no conceivable level of artistic attainment he might have reached that would have enabled him to escape the historiographical black hole that is eighteenth-century Italian opera.<sup>88</sup> Instead, his enforced concentration upon keyboard music brought him into contact with Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven; the Viennese classics that history was soon to consecrate as such. This may not have been his first engagement with Germanic musical traditions, however.

According to J. Amadée le Froid de Méreaux, while he was at Beckford’s: ‘It was the works of Sebastian and Emanuel Bach, of Handel and Scarlatti that he practised and studied continually; he did this from two different standpoints; that of finger technique, and that of instrumental composition.’<sup>89</sup> Méreaux’s account was published in 1867; he had apparently received this information from Clementi himself during a lengthy lesson in 1820, but it bears a suspicious resemblance to an account of Clementi’s life published in 1831, in *The Harmonicon*.<sup>90</sup> In this article the

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<sup>88</sup> A parallel could be drawn with the Irish harper Turlough O’Carolan (1670-1738), the Irish harpist who imitated the music of Geminiani and aspired to travel to Italy and study opera. Had he been able to do so he would almost certainly have disappeared from history, except as a name. There are distinct advantages in being a large fish in a small pond.

<sup>89</sup> Plantinga, *Clementi*, p.7.

<sup>90</sup> There is no reason to doubt the authenticity of Méreaux’s conversation; but there are other demonstrable instances of Clementi misremembering chronological details of his early life (*ibid.*, pp.34-35). We are dealing here, after all, with fifty year-old recollections of fifty year-old recollections. S. Daw, ‘Muzio Clementi as an original advocate, collector, and performer, in particular of J. S. Bach and D. Scarlatti’, *Bach Handel Scarlatti: tercentenary essays*, ed. Peter Williams (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985), 70, suggests that the association between Bach and the Dorset years may have resulted from Méreaux conflating two separate utterances.

compositional models are Corelli, Alessandro Scarlatti, Domenico Paradies, and Handel.<sup>91</sup> *The Harmonicon*'s list (especially if we accept Plantinga's suggestion that 'Alessandro' was a mistake for 'Domenico' Scarlatti) raises no eyebrows, accurately reflecting as it does English musical taste of the 1760s. On the other hand, if Méreaux is correct in dating Clementi's interest in the Bachs to this period of his life, then—as we saw in chapter two—he was in the tiniest of tiny minorities. It seems almost incredible that Clementi should have encountered the music of J. S. Bach around 1767, in the library of Beckford's isolated estate at Stepleton; but this may—just possibly—have been the case. The 'London autograph' of *WTC* II is known to have been in Clementi's possession later in his life, and he 'is said to have come across this copy in the library of his patron.'<sup>92</sup> Benjamin Cooke's roughly contemporaneous copy of BWV 545 (transposed to B flat, supplemented with a movement adapted from BWV 1029 and another of unknown provenance, and attributed to John Robinson (c.1682-1762, organist at Westminster Abbey) remains utterly mysterious, both as to the means of transmission and the question of how it might have been performed on English organs, but shows that such a thing could happen.<sup>93</sup> Likewise, substantial works by Pachelbel and Georg Muffat are also known to have made their way into English libraries.<sup>94</sup> William Beckford was after all a fairly omnivorous collector of European curiosities, who (like many collectors) was often perhaps unaware of the significance of what he had collected—as in the case, probably, of Clementi himself.

On the other hand, the development of his music tells a slightly different story. No trace can be seen of J. S. Bach's influence in Clementi's opp.1-4 (?1771-1780).

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p.5.

<sup>92</sup> C. Richardson, 'The London autograph of "The 48"', *Music & Letters* 34/1 (Jan 1953), 39; for more detail see W. Emery, 'The London autograph of "The Forty-Eight"', *Music & Letters* 34/2 (Apr 1953), 106-23. Both Charles Burney and Lord Fitzwilliam acquired partial copies of the *WTC* in the early 1770s.

<sup>93</sup> See W. Emery, 'A neglected Bach manuscript', *Music Review*, August 1950, 169-74, and the preface to his edition of this piece (Novello, 1959).

<sup>94</sup> Pachelbel: St Michael's College Tenbury MSS 1208-9 (formerly in the possession of William Boyce); Muffat: complete copy of *Apparatus Musico-organisticus*, R.C.M. MS. 820.

His opp.1*bis*, 5, and 6, however, (published during his stay in Paris, 1780-81) between them contain no fewer than seven emphatically Bachian fugues, and this influence can be detected in a new harmonic intensity and involvement, seen even in some of the accompanied sonatas (usually of the lightest and flimsiest nature). Is there a possibility that Clementi first happened upon the *WTC* in Paris? This would seem to be almost as unlikely as that of encountering it in rural Dorset. Most likely, perhaps, he acquired the ‘London autograph’ in London, during the period after leaving Beckford’s employment, perhaps in 1779 or 1780, on the eve of his departure for the continent. At any rate it is hard to over-estimate the impression it made upon his music at this time, causing him to load his Paris publications with what one assumes to have been commercially indigestible fugal writing.

He would publish no more fugues until near the end of his career, but continued increasingly to integrate contrapuntal writing into his music. The Sonata in G minor op.34/2 (1795), for example, begins with a very striking fugato (Ex.5.12). For the first five bars it is in fact a canon at the seventh below (‘tonal’ rather than ‘real’)—the harmonic richness suggest more than the two voices which are actually present. The melodic outline of the first five bars of the introduction provide the material for the first phrase of the Allegro. The theme then goes its own way, but this is not the end of the introduction’s relevance to the movement as a whole. The original, perhaps, of Beethoven’s ‘fate knocking at the door’ motif,<sup>95</sup> Clementi’s assertive triple upbeat is present, implicitly or explicitly, in every phase of the movement—this is monothematicism at its most concentrated.

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<sup>95</sup> See p.84. For what it’s worth, Beethoven’s C minor symphony dates from 1807; Clementi’s sonata from 1795. Connections have also been made with the subject of the D major fugue from *WTC* II, but this seems to me to be a less significant relationship as the defining feature of Bach’s subject is its descent from I to IV, rather than V to I as here.







Multiple transformations of this motive generate material to serve every thematic function, although—oddly enough, given the character of the introduction—there is very little actual imitative writing to be found, apart from some very effective close imitation that intensifies the recapitulation of the opening subject (bb.192-198).

The most imaginative thematic transformation, however, occurs during the development (Ex.5.13). In bar 110 a semiquaver run (emerging out of the preceding figuration) deposits us on a low F, after which a mysterious chord, low in register and ambiguous in significance is reiterated. This chord eventually proves to be ii of A minor; but a clear arrival on V of this key is at once undermined by a return of the Largo introduction, this time in C major. This time there is no fugato, however. Instead, the opening material is presented as a grand operatic aria, with the early nineteenth-century rhetoric of Weber's piano writing at its most grandiloquent (this, in 1795!) Even more unexpectedly, the semiquaver figuration, which looks as if it is about to settle down over a dominant pedal, undergoes a sophisticated 'metric modulation', and before we quite know it the Allegro tempo has resumed. The exact point at which this modulation occurs is a little obscure. There is a sense in which the low G in b. 135 is both on the beat and off the beat; it occurs on the second beat of the bar, to be sure, but at the same time the 3/4 tempo primo could be construed as beginning with this note as well. On the other hand, for the 'naïve listener' without a score, the transition would probably not become clear until the start of b.139 or b.141.

To Plantinga this C major return of the opening in b.126 sounds 'very bland' and exemplifies a difficulty Clementi has with major-key passages in minor-key movements, where 'he tends to spoil his work'; he compares it to another 'conspicuously weak point' in the second movement of op.13/6.<sup>96</sup> It is clear that Plantinga has little taste for the rather old fashioned '*brillante*' pianism of the early

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<sup>96</sup> Plantinga, *Clementi*, p.176.

nineteenth century—the style of Hummel, Weber, and Kalkbrenner, say, as opposed to Beethoven and Schumann; and there is a sense in which the twentieth-century rehabilitation of Clementi’s reputation has been achieved by purging his oeuvre of those works that most prefigure this style. Mozart’s criticisms bit deep into the public consciousness—for many, ‘passages in thirds’ with ‘not a Kreuzer’s worth of taste or feeling’ were all they knew about Clementi.<sup>97</sup> His reputation has been much better served by emphasising the intense, pre-Romantic works that remind us of Beethoven, and the imaginative Classical works that took their cue from Haydn (much as the recent revival of interest in Mendelssohn has tended to bypass those features of his music we identify as ‘Victorian’.) This juxtaposition, however, of nineteenth-century pianism with elements of strict counterpoint—the ancient with the modern—was to become an increasingly important part of Clementi’s later music.

If one is looking for such a thing, a ‘late style’ could be dated from the publication of his op.40 sonatas in 1802. In 1800 Clementi’s contemporary and rival J. L. Dussek had published three sonatas, his opp.43-45. The first two especially, in A major and E flat major, show a significant advance on his earlier music—a new kind of sonata for a new century? For the first time the form is expanded definitively beyond Classical possibilities, with great swathes of doubtfully relevant keyboard figuration, lengthy harmonic digressions, and massive preparation and reinforcement of important tonal and thematic arrivals. The second, in E flat op.44, was dedicated to Clementi himself; a gesture of homage? Or a challenge? If so, it was a challenge that Clementi was quick to take up. The three sonatas he published soon afterward take a comparably leisurely approach to the form; even movements marked ‘Allegro molto vivace’ or ‘Presto’ (op.40/1) seem, structurally, to be in no particular hurry. These sonatas also show an enhanced interest in canonic imitation when compared with his

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<sup>97</sup> Mozart, letters to his father, 16 January 1782 and 7 June 1783, Anderson, *Mozart Letters*, vol.III, pp. 1181 and 1267-8.

earlier works. The first, in G (the only sonata of Clementi's with four independent movements), has a pair of canons in place of a minuet and trio. The Allegro con fuoco of the second in B minor reduces its texture to a two-part canon toward the end of its development, while the finale consistently exploits invertible counterpoint, with close canonic writing that almost plagiarises that in Mozart's D major sonata K.576. The last, in D, has a lengthy canonic episode in the rondo finale.

Most unusual, however, and unprecedented in Clementi's oeuvre, is the fugato that occurs during the development of the opening movement (Ex.5.14). It is remarkable, not for so much for any contrapuntal qualities it has in itself, but for the effect it has in the context of the rest of the movement. After a leisurely exposition with many digressions, the development begins in a typical way, taking various bits of material through A minor and F major to an emphatic pause on the dominant of E minor (Ex.5.14, b.121). Then, in C major, a fugato based on the opening theme rises slowly out of the depths. It is not really a fugue—the 'entries' are all at the unison or octave; having to answer at the fifth would have disturbed the mysterious stasis Clementi achieves here. The tail end of the subject is then developed in close imitation for a few bars until the 'subject' returns, first in A minor, then an octave lower (thus retracing the registral ascent of bb.122-31), then in C, D minor, and E minor. Over these bass entries a new figure (b.133, derived from bb.44-48 in the exposition) effectively functions as a countersubject—but not in an orthodox neo-Baroque manner. Its three constituent motives are at once separated and recombined in genuine Classical development. While this happens the tessitura is widening (from a sixth in b.132 to four octaves in b.147), the dynamic level is getting louder, the chords are getting thicker and more percussive (note especially the bouncing left hand octaves in bb.145-47).



Clementi's impressive control of the texture is shown in the perfectly graduated crescendo of rhythmical activity and pianistic density between bb.122 and 147.

Canon and imitative writing had been a part of Clementi's style for decades, chiefly for technical reasons—parsimonious both in his life and in his music, he naturally sought to get the most out of his thematic material. Here, however, Clementi sees the poetic as well as the structural possibilities of counterpoint. The episode is distanced from the rest of the movement; by the articulated cadence and pause at each end, by the sudden change of texture, register, and rhythmic activity, and—equally important—by the semitonal shift from the dominant of E minor to C major (it is an interesting experiment in tonal relationships to try beginning the fugato in a variety of different keys—there are only twelve possibilities, after all.) C major (VI) has the coherence of a clear relation to the previous key, but also a sense of great emotional distance. Published in 1802, this is perhaps one of the first examples to be found in music of the poetry of archaism, a very early awareness of the Romantic possibilities of the past.

Equally historicist in character is the slow movement of his Sonata in A, op.50/1 (1822), perhaps the outstanding example of Clementi's use of canon in a sonata context. The movement has a ternary plan. In the outer sections, 'Adagio sostenuto e patetico' Plantinga finds a foretaste of César Franck,<sup>98</sup> but there is also a certain kinship with the Sarabande of the A minor 'English' suite, or perhaps that of the D minor 'French' suite; Philip Radcliffe may equally be right in finding a connection with the sarabande-like slow movement of Haydn's D major sonata Hob.XVI:37.<sup>99</sup> The canonic episode, in two slender voices, andante rather than adagio, major rather than minor, forms a perfect foil to the weighty pathos of the rest of the

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<sup>98</sup> Plantinga, *Clementi*, p.262; even more 'Franckian' is the *Introduzione* to *Gradus ad Parnassum* no.45.

<sup>99</sup> *New Oxford history of music*, 10 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), vol. VIII: *The Age of Beethoven*, 1790-1830, p.330.

movement. There is no danger of irrelevance, because the canon is built out of a little three-note upbeat figure which had gradually come into significance during the first section. The way in which this figure emerges from the cadence to initiate the canon is one of the most beautifully negotiated transitions in all of Clementi.

For a proper understanding of Clementi's fugal style, however, we must look beyond the sonatas, to his *Gradus ad Parnassum* (1817-26). Like Fux's work of the same name, it has suffered from a reputation for barren scholasticism<sup>100</sup>—not least because Carl Tausig's edition of twenty-nine of the most mechanical of the études is the form in which it has chiefly been known. The purpose and nature of the work was thereby totally misrepresented. Clementi may have intended the *Gradus* to be his magnum opus, a comprehensive summary of his total keyboard achievement—in which it largely succeeds. Ultimately, the only reason it has not the cultural weight of, say, the *Clavier-Übung*, is that the creative achievement it summarises is that of Muzio Clementi rather than J. S. Bach. Unlike J. B. Cramer's *Studio* of 1809 or Chopin's opp.10 and 25, it does not consist entirely of what we would now call 'études': that is, single-movement pieces exploiting one kind of texture or figure throughout for the purpose of technical development. Instead (in the spirit of Bach's *Clavier-Übung*, which means simply 'keyboard exercise[s]') Clementi's *Gradus* includes sonata-like movements, fantasies, proto-Romantic *Charakterstücke*, fugues, and canons, as well as obvious technical exercises. A clear line is not drawn between these genres; some of the 'sonata' movements (no.38 and 49, for example) have more extensive passage-work than would be typical in his sonatas even of this period,<sup>101</sup> and many of the études are in sonata form. Likewise, as Moscheles and Chopin were soon to show, there is nothing to prevent an étude from being a *Charakterstück* if it has sufficient

<sup>100</sup> In recent years the reputation of Fux has been rehabilitated by A. Mann, H. Schenker, S. Wollenberg, H. Federhofer, R. Flotzinger, and many others, just as interest in Clementi has been revived by J. Shedlock, G. de Saint-Foix, L. Plantinga, and W. S. Newman.

<sup>101</sup> Nicholas Temperley ascribes this to the influence of Dussek (Introduction, p.xvii), but it is hard not to associate it with the obviously 'technical' nature of so many of the other movements.

musical interest. None of Clementi's are as musically barren as most of Czerny's, say, and many are well worth playing for their own sake. The general style of these pieces is heavily indebted to the preludes of the *WTC*: no.93 shows a distinct kinship with the A flat major prelude from book II; no.96, with the C minor prelude from the same book. This does not mean that style is in any way archaic; this texture is the most forward-looking of the whole collection, but it would not have been possible without the example of J. S. Bach.

A movement such as no.58 is therefore difficult to categorise. It is in sonata form, and would have made a perfectly good finale to one of Clementi's mature sonatas. On the other hand its rhythm is more continuous than is normal in a sonata movement, and it is clearly a technical study working out the possibilities of a particular turn figure. Yet again, as an exercise in hand-crossing it must, almost necessarily, be also an exercise in invertible counterpoint—and even apart from this the concentration of imitation and canon is very high. In short, Clementi refuses to segregate the musical from the technical (considered either in terms of manual or contrapuntal dexterity). In this respect at least he is following the spirit of J. S. Bach.

There are eleven fugues or fugatos in the *Gradus ad Parnassum*, and eight canons. This concentration of fugal writing in the *Gradus* gives a slightly misleading impression of its significance in Clementi's output as a whole. As we have already noted—in contrast to Beethoven's later practice—no independent fugues are to be found in the sonatas. Clementi's entire fugal output is contained in the *Gradus*, and of these eleven, seven were already in existence by 1781—inspired, we have suggested, by an awareness of J. S. Bach's music which may have begun around this time. These were published in that year, three each in opp.5 and 6 and one in op.1*bis*, and they stand out sharply against his style at the time: 'They are (so to speak) *too* Baroque. In his zeal for polyphonic integrity, Clementi keeps all the voices going too much of the

time, whereas the glory of many a Bach fugue lies partly in the relief afforded by light-textured episodes.<sup>102</sup> At first glance Clementi's fugues appear to be somewhat homogeneous. All except one are in common time; there are no examples of either *antico* or *Spielfuge* subjects. Nevertheless, if they have not the prodigious expressive range of the *WTC*, closer examination reveals that neither are they all cast from the same mould. Looking at the systematic textural primitivism of Clementi's op.2 sonatas it is surprising how readily he took to the discipline of fugue writing; looking at their rather neutral thematic material, it is equally surprising how cogent and well-characterised were the subjects he came up with—neither completely outside the tradition like those of Reicha (see pp.8-9), nor utterly conventional like those of Albrechtsberger.

It is a measure both of the effect J. S. Bach had upon his music and of the way in which Clementi's idiosyncratic way of handling the keyboard permeated everything he wrote, how much of his normal keyboard style he was able to integrate into his fugal writing. For example, his fondness for chromatic semitonal appoggiaturas can be seen in the countersubject to the C minor fugue no.45 (Ex.5.15), and his tolerance for incidental dissonance in this passage from the B flat major fugue no.57 (Ex.5.16).

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<sup>102</sup> Plantinga, *Clementi*, p.82.



In this respect he comes closer to J. S. Bach than most of his other imitators—the zig-zagging instrumental lines in the exposition to the B minor fugue no. 25 are authentically Bachian (Ex.5.17). The prominent double thirds in the following passage from the F major fugue no.40 (Ex.5.18) could derive their parentage equally from the virtuosity of op.2 or from the thickened counterpoint of the G minor and B flat minor fugues of *WTC* II. Even cross-hand passages find their way into Clementi's fugal writing, as in this entry from no.25 (Ex.5.19).

On the other hand, the tonal range of some of the fugues considerably exceeds Bach's usual practice. The C major fugue (no.13), for example, gets as far afield as B flat, E flat minor, B minor, and even F sharp minor, in its lengthy peregrinations. Like the Mozart fugue K.401/375e, and unlike Samuel Wesley's 'Sonata with a Fugue' (cf pp.256-64 and 186-93 respectively) these modulations are organised so as to minimise disruption to our tonal expectations, rather than for the sake of strong contrasts. And like K.401/375e, a certain amount of *Rosalia* is employed when tonal balance needs to be quickly restored.

Of the four newly-published fugues, two are designated 'Fugato', indicating a somewhat freer treatment of contrapuntal resources. This might have indicated a general loosening of contrapuntal rigour, were it not for the fact that they are

essentially in the same style as the fugues of 1781. In the case of the ‘Fugato’ in F, *Gradus* no.18, Clementi seems to have been unnecessarily scrupulous. The subject is relatively short, and of a kind that will obviously lend itself to inversion—but there is little to prepare us for the immense amount of work this little motive will do during the course of the movement. The first three notes in particular are turned on their head, shortened, lengthened, and made to accompany themselves in a motivically saturated texture that is almost pointillist in its fragmentation (Ex.5.20):

It is with some surprise that we hear the texture suddenly resolve itself into a clear Ic – V – I cadence such as one might find in any of his sonatas, all without any loss of thematic relevance for even a moment. This cadence on the dominant is answered by a similar one in the tonic later on; this and a strongly articulated dominant seventh chord in b.57-60 create a welcome sense of structural orientation and prevent us from feeling totally adrift upon a sea of continuous development. Much of the figuration is dissonant even by Clementi's standards—bb.123-39 especially—and the persistent semitone ostinato near the end has an unnerving quality not unlike the obsessive trills of late Beethoven. It may have been this structural and textural originality which prevented Clementi from describing the piece as a fugue without further qualification.

If his fugues have earned a certain amount of qualified esteem, Clementi's canons have had a much harder critical reception. To be sure, Nägeli spoke of 'elegant two-voice canons that pleasantly recall the period of the strict style,'<sup>103</sup> but this appears to have remained a minority opinion. They 'elicit more admiration than pleasure'<sup>104</sup> according to Nicholas Temperley; in Leon Plantinga's view they 'remained for Clementi an Achilles heel. Throughout his late period he wrote them compulsively; they always sound "academic", and usually they are downright tiresome.'<sup>105</sup> Plantinga is admirably precise in analysing just why he finds Clementi's canonic writing so unsatisfactory: 'A consistent problem with these pieces is their unfulfilled harmonic ambitions; single voices effect or imply modulations that simply do not work out very well in combination with the other voice(s). The result is an unclear harmonic syntax—a kind of lurching and sliding from one indeterminate tonality to the next.'<sup>106</sup> Presumably the sort of thing he is talking about can be seen in Ex.15.21. What,

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<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p.301

<sup>104</sup> Temperley, Introduction, p.xvii

<sup>105</sup> Plantinga, *Clementi*, p.274

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p.274

exactly, is the true identity of the accidental in bb.17-20? Is it a B sharp (leading note of C sharp minor) or a C natural (flat VI of E major)? This is not just a question of orthography: the two voices really seem to be in two different keys at this point.

In this case the ambiguity is a direct result of the strictness of the canon; of Clementi's insistence on writing 'per intervalli giusti.' He was not, however, the first to write apparently bitonal canons. J. S. Bach wrote a well known example, in the middle section of the Duetto in F, BWV 803 from *Clavier-Übung* III (Ex.5.22).

A canon at the fourth below, ‘we have a case of polytonality, but Bach has so adjusted his progressions (by the choice at the critical moment of notes common to two keys) that while the right hand is doubtless quite under the impression that the piece is in D minor ... and the left hand that it is in A minor ... the listener feels that it is homogeneous in key, though rather fluctuating from moment to moment’;<sup>107</sup> later on this Duetto becomes a canon by inversion, which leads Bach into the vicinity of F minor with results as strange as anything in Clementi. One might well ask: if Bach can get away with it, why not Clementi? And so again we come back to the question of creative license and authority: Clementi’s contrapuntal textures are evaluated against our existing aesthetic criteria—while J. S. Bach’s music had a large hand in shaping these criteria.

The strangest point about these canons lies not in their harmony, however, but in the melody. Temperley makes an important observation in this connection, speaking of ‘Clementi’s ingenuity in bending the severe restrictions of canonic writing to accommodate the melodic and harmonic expectations of the nineteenth-century listener.’<sup>108</sup> In other words, unlike his fugues, the canons are not neo-Baroque pastiches plain and simple (there was in any case hardly a comparable tradition of canonic writing for keyboard). They show a surprisingly wide range of mood and tempi; the material is often—at least potentially—‘tuneful’; but there is something odd about the melodic writing all the same. An attempt to hum through the line reveals the source of the peculiarity at once: there is nowhere to breathe—the caesurae and cadences which give definition to a normal melodic line are almost completely absent. This really is a kind of ‘endless melody’, although no doubt it was not quite what Wagner had in mind.

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<sup>107</sup> P. Scholes, *Oxford Companion to Music*, p.449. This piece was famously referenced by Darius Milhaud as one of the origins of his polytonality. It is likely that Clementi knew it as well; Daw, ‘Clementi’, 73, shows a copy by Clementi of the last of these Duetti.

<sup>108</sup> Temperley, Introduction, p.xvii.

As a texture it is not, perhaps, entirely satisfactory for other reasons as well. In confining the music to two mid-range contrapuntal lines, the composer deliberately refuses to avail himself of most of the resources of the piano (later nineteenth-century canons—those of Schumann, for example—got around this problem by swathing the canonic lines in a rich accompaniment). Canonic writing likewise refuses to cater to normal contemporary assumptions about the polarity between melody and accompaniment. Nevertheless, there is something strangely impressive about Clementi's resolute self-abnegation. There is a sense in which the canon in the slow movement of op.50/1 explains itself, by means of the contrast with its surrounding material, and most of the other canons in the late sonatas are likewise integrated into their surroundings. Those in the *Gradus*, however, have a curiously disembodied existence, lacking a context against which to define themselves. Like much of the later music of Beethoven, they too eschew obvious 'effect', at times to the point of being almost deliberately 'ineffective'. Is there any sense in which we could regard their withdrawnness, their aloofness as aesthetic qualities in its own right? Can we not recast these qualities in terms of Simmel/Goethe's description of the late artist having 'stripped himself of his subjectivity—the gradual withdrawal from appearances.'<sup>109</sup>

Given the way in which the music of both composers can be described in similar terms, it would be quite possible at this point to argue that the later sonatas of Clementi are unjustly neglected peers of Beethoven's. One can indeed prove nearly anything with the Fluellin method of comparative analysis,<sup>110</sup> although any mischief done by this sort of critical sharp practice is largely neutralised by the fact that in the long run no one pays any attention—Beethoven remains Beethoven; Clementi,

<sup>109</sup> Barone, 'Parsifal', 46. A sustained defence of Clementi's canonic writing can be found in R. Stewart-Macdonald, 'Canonic passages in the later piano sonatas of Muzio Clementi: their structural and expressive roles', *Ad Parnassum* 1/1 (April 2003), 51-107.

<sup>110</sup> 'I warrant you sall finde in the comparisons betweene Macedon & Monmouth, that the situations looke you, is both alike. There is a Riuer in Macedon, & there is also moreouer a Riuer at Monmouth, it is call'd Wye at Monmouth: but it is out of my praines, what is the name of the other Riuer: but 'tis all one, tis alike as my fingers is to my fingers, and there is Salmons in both.' (Henry V, IV.viii.24-30)—a method all too common in Clementi/Beethoven comparisons.

Clementi.

In this respect the issue is different from the relationship between Bach and ‘nearly-Bach’ we discussed in chapter one.<sup>111</sup> The question we are asking is not whether Clementi created works that could actually be mistaken for late Beethoven—the conscious originality and uniqueness of Beethoven’s mature works means that such a production would be a contradiction in terms. Rather, the question is: from a standpoint within Clementi’s own style, is there a sense in which his late music, like Beethoven’s, alternately grandiose, intimate, and rebarbative, could attain a significance equivalent to Beethoven’s? And if not, why not?

Walter Georgii does in fact make a claim of this sort in relation to the op.50/1 slow movement discussed above: ‘in the opus 50 sonatas, his last, Clementi reveals, as no other contemporary, his spiritual relationship with Beethoven....How powerfully [this movement] expresses the moral character and high pathos of the composer!’<sup>112</sup> and there is an explicitly Promethean reference in Cuthbert Girdlestone’s appreciation of the opening bars of op.8/1: ‘Their passion is of some exiled fire-god, seeking far and wide readmittance to the skies. Nothing more personal could be imagined, nothing that was less of an inferior version of another composer.’<sup>113</sup>

And yet, for all this, Clementi’s music does not matter to us in quite the same way as Beethoven’s, it is not public property to the same extent. We do not make our home in it, nor find our own preoccupations reflected in it. It is unlikely that many find his oeuvre can ‘command a lifetime of devotion, can be entered into so thoroughly that every note becomes engraved on the deepest tissue of the mind.’<sup>114</sup> William

Newman puts it more sympathetically: ‘perhaps because the delicate subtleties of his

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<sup>111</sup> Bach saw his works as participants in a tradition that was not just his own personal property. In principle his style was teachable: ‘anyone who works as hard as I have will go as far.’ For Beethoven on the other hand, the essentials of his style could almost be said to consist in its departures from tradition.

<sup>112</sup> W. Georgii, *Four hundred years of European keyboard music; Anthology of music*, ed. K. G. Fellerer, vol. I (Cologne: Arno Volk Verlag, 1959), p.6.

<sup>113</sup> *Music & Letters* 13/3 (July 1932), 289.

<sup>114</sup> P. Barford, ‘Beethoven’s last sonata’, *Music & Letters* 35/4 (October 1954), 320.



late works presuppose a specially cultivated taste, the relatively few ardent enthusiasts who have been trying all along to win greater interest in his music are still far from getting a universal response.’<sup>115</sup>

Despite the many forward-looking elements in his music, Clementi’s attitude remained essentially that of the eighteenth century: craftsman and entrepreneur, rather than visionary *Tondichter*. It is instead with his great contemporary we associate that indissoluble nexus of biography, creative achievement, critical, analytical, and performing traditions, and institutional practices which Lydia Goehr has called ‘the Beethoven paradigm’.<sup>116</sup> One thing it meant was a new kind of relation between the self and the art-work:

Beethoven was the first man who used music with absolute integrity as the expression of his own emotional life. Others had shown how it could be done—had done it themselves as a curiosity of their art in rare, self-indulgent, *unprofessional* moments—but Beethoven made this, and nothing else, his business....In thus fearlessly expressing himself, he has, by his common humanity, expressed us as well, and shown us how beautifully, how strongly, how trustworthily we can build with our own real selves.<sup>117</sup>

It is not just that Beethoven found a way of expressing *himself*; the point is that we also are implicated in this mode of expression: ‘The phenomenon of listener engagement entails...a marked sense of identification with the music’ because ‘the music is ultimately about us, but not in the banal sense of of a portrayal: rather, it is about our susceptibility to, and understanding of, processes that model the merger of individual and universal.’<sup>118</sup> In a sense, the hero of Scott Burnham’s *Beethoven Hero*

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<sup>115</sup> *The sonata in the Classic era* (New York: Norton, 1983), p.757.

<sup>116</sup> *The imaginary museum of musical works: an essay in the philosophy of music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), title of chapter 8.

<sup>117</sup> G. B. Shaw, ‘George Grove and Beethoven’, in *Pleasures of music*, ed. J. Barzun, (London: Michael Joseph, 1952), p.249.

<sup>118</sup> S. Burnham, *Beethoven hero*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp.29, 31.

turns out to be none other than ourselves.

The 'Beethoven myth' is a standard trope of nineteenth- (and twentieth-) century musical historiography, and has received a good deal of sceptical attention in recent years.<sup>119</sup> However, there is, I think, a tendency to conflate two different sense of the word 'myth'. To be sure, many Beethoven anecdotes and assumptions are mythical in the sense of being false, or unsubstantiated, or indeed faked. But the mythic power of his presence as creator and cultural exemplar, whether baleful or benign (Burnham is ambivalent on this question) remains largely unimpaired. One of the most impressive things about Burnham's book is the way in which he continually seeks—with considerable success—to ground this 'mythic' quality in the works themselves, rather than just reception history and cultural politics. Is it possible to imagine a musical world in which the musical style of Clementi (or Dussek, or Hummel), rather than Beethoven, had achieved the same cultural resonance and authority? A thesis on fugue is not, unfortunately, the place for an extensive comparison between the sonata style of Beethoven and those of his contemporaries.<sup>120</sup> We can, however, compare their exploitation of contrapuntal procedures.

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<sup>119</sup> K. M. Knittel, 'Pilgrimages to Beethoven: reminiscences by his contemporaries', *Music & Letters* 84/1 (Feb 2003), 19-54; Knittel, 'The construction of Beethoven', in *The Cambridge history of nineteenth-century music*, ed. J. Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp.118-150; E. Pichler, *Beethoven: Mythos und Wirklichkeit: Dokumente, Chronologie, Register* (Vienna: Amalthea, 1994); E. E. Bauer, *Wie Beethoven auf den Sockel kam: Die Entstehung eines musikalischen Mythos* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1992); W. S. Newman, 'The Beethoven mystique in Romantic art, literature, and music', *Musical Quarterly* 69/3 (Summer 1983), 354-87.

<sup>120</sup> A. B. Marx, for example, made this sort of comparison between J. L. Dussek's Sonata in E flat op.75 and Beethoven's Op.2/3; see *Musical form in the age of Beethoven: selected writings on theory and method*, ed. and tr. S. Burnham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp.105-7, 110, 124-27, and 129.

## BEETHOVEN AGAIN

In their sonatas the chief difference between Clementi's and Beethoven's use of counterpoint is that, where Clementi employs canon, Beethoven tends to use fugue. Nowhere in Clementi's output do we find a fugue as part of a sonata—even fugatos are rare (the fugues of the *Gradus* belong to loose, suite-like collections of movements, while those in opp.5-6 have no connection with the sonatas they abut). The inclusion of a fugue in a sonata seems to have been relatively rare throughout this period. Haydn and Mozart completely eschewed fugal movements in their sonatas, although, in Mozart especially, contrapuntal textures are not infrequent. Most English examples (J. C. Bach's op.5/6, Philip Cogan's op.2/6) follow in the tradition of T. A. Arne and James Nares, itself a reflection of Handel's practice in his 1720 suites. Occasional Italian and Viennese examples (Monn, Wagenseil, Galuppi, Rutini) are likewise throwbacks to local contrapuntal traditions. Among later composers, the most ambitious and imaginative contributions examples seem to have come from England. Samuel Wesley's 'Sonata with a Fugue' (pp.186-93 above) is a highly personal, idiosyncratic response to the music of J. S. Bach. Frederick Pinto's 'Fantasia and Sonata in C minor' (completed by Wölfl, edited by Wesley) extends the fantasia/sonata pairing of Mozart's K.475 and 457 in a recognised direction, concluding the fantasia with a well above average fugue. George Augustus Kollmann's Sonata in A flat, op.1/3 (1808) is a curious anticipation of Beethoven's later practice, grafting a fugal conclusion onto an exceptionally convincing imitation of his 'middle period'.<sup>121</sup> The fugue, however, although well enough executed, serves merely to prolong the design rather than to bring it to a structural culmination.

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<sup>121</sup> Unexpectedly Kollmann's impressive sonatas appear to have escaped William S. Newman's comprehensive net, receiving mention neither in *The sonata in the Classic era* nor *The sonata since Beethoven*. The only information to be found occurs in the volume *Samuel Wesley and contemporaries* of Nicholas Temperley's series *The London pianoforte school* (New York: Garland, 1985), which includes this sonata and a set of variations by Kollmann.

None of these, in any case, remotely match the ambition and expressive scope of Beethoven's late fugues. From his middle period onward the structural centre of gravity of his works shifted increasingly toward the end, away from the first movement—for the first time the finale became a problem.<sup>122</sup> Until the time of Haydn and Mozart, it had been enough to round off a cycle with a lighter movement: a rondo or set of variations perhaps, or (in a sonata) a minuet. For Beethoven, however (and, even more problematically, for Beethoven's successors), the finale increasingly had to sum up, to transcend—indeed, to apotheosise—the emotional content of the rest of the piece. Fugue, with its thematic and motivic density, not to mention its archaic resonances, was one possible answer to the problem. This solution, however, created problems of its own. Fugue, especially in the hands of J. S. Bach, was a concentrated rather than expansive genre. In his autographs, most of the *WTC* fugues fit on a single page. The longer organ fugues are generally achieved either through sectional structures (BWV 552—several fugues in one), or the introduction of concerto elements. Likewise, the fugues which conclude Haydn's op.20/2, 5, and 6 are considerably shorter than an equivalent rondo or sonata movement would have been. How, then, to construct a fugue large enough to serve as a finale sufficiently weighty for one of Beethoven's late cycles?

In part this was a question of tonality. The usual Baroque cycle of related keys had been enough to sustain fugues up to normal eighteenth-century length; but was there any way of expanding this range to accommodate the expanded tonal vocabulary of the sonata style? We have seen a number of experiments in this line. Clementi's Fugue in C (*Gradus* no.13; discussed p.370 above) covers a good deal of tonal ground—Hans Georg Nägeli commented that 'the relationships between the keys are so

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<sup>122</sup> W. S. Newman, *The sonata since Beethoven* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1983), pp.145-48, 162-64. About the problematic histories of nearly all of Beethoven's late finales see also M. Solomon's 'Beethoven's ninth symphony: the sense of an ending', *Critical Inquiry* 17/2 (Winter 1991), 289-305 (also in *Late Beethoven: music, thought, imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), pp.213-28.

violated that the fugue ceases, thus, to be a work of art',<sup>123</sup> but in actual fact Clementi has extended the tonal language with considerable tact. On the other hand, Wesley's 'Sonata with a Fugue' (pp.186-93) ranges in a quite uninhibited manner over a similarly wide range of keys without the slightest concern for fugal orthodoxy—or, indeed, for tonal coherence (what would Nāgeli have thought of *this* movement?) As we have seen, Beethoven had considerable respect for the normal limitations of fugal writing, but he now sought to work on a scale that required a wider range of possible tonal relationships, a scale, moreover, that would need something of the long-range tonal objectives and contrasts of his sonata style.

This was not so much an issue where, as in the finale of op.101 or the first movement of op.106, the fugue served as a development section. The thematic argument in op.101 is sufficiently dense and involving for us not to notice that we have remained in the orbit of C major/A minor throughout.<sup>124</sup> It is a different matter when we come to the construction of an entire movement on fugal principles. There is a sense, perhaps, that Beethoven is here stretching fugue beyond its 'natural' limits. J. S. Bach had been able to generate hundreds of examples within his understanding of the genre, without becoming mechanical and formulaic; each of Beethoven's is *sui generis*, absolutely unrepeatable. 'Mere fugality', in the academic sense of the Albrechtsberger exercises was not enough; 'mere fugality' in the transcendent sense of J. S. Bach was not a possibility. For fugue to be a valid component of Beethoven's style at this stage, it needed to be superheated, infused with an expressive content that he could only see as something alien: 'To make a fugue requires no particular skill; in my study days I made dozens of them. But the fancy wishes also to assert its privileges, and today a new and really poetical element must be introduced into the old

<sup>123</sup> *Vorlesungen über Musik* (Zurich and Stuttgart, 1826), quoted in Plantinga, *Clementi*, p.82.

<sup>124</sup> The tonal course of this movement as a whole, in fact, contains nothing that would have raised eyebrows in 1770. Its style and texture, of course, is another matter.

traditional form.’<sup>125</sup> Weber expressed a similar idea in his unfinished novel *Tonkünstlers Leben*, in the form of a dialogue thus:

Diehl: ‘...I should have thought that [strict fugal writing] needed no great effort of your imagination, only a first-class knowledge of your Kimberger, your Fux, your Wolf or whatever the brutes are called.’

Myself: ‘Oh! no, actually it’s in abstract work such as this that one has most need of one’s feelings to act as guides, so that one doesn’t founder in the dry sands of boredom, misled by mere academic fluency.’<sup>126</sup>

This distinction between, shall we say, ‘art’ fugue and academic fugue seems to have been a commonplace of contemporary criticism. But how was a composer to indicate unambiguously that he was writing fugue not as an academic but as an artist?

The finale to the Sonata in A flat, op.110, is an illustration of how Beethoven introduced the harmonic range and radical discontinuities of his late style into his fugal style. Like a number of his later movements, it is an interlocking structure of two tempi (compare the first movement of the sonata op.109, the finale of the quartet op.127, the first movement of the quartet op.130, the first movement and ‘*Heiliger Dankgesang*’ of the quartet op.132.) Parallels could also be drawn with the finale of Clementi’s Sonata in B minor, op.40/2—perhaps even the G minor sonata, op.34/2. By contrast with Clementi’s clear, almost schematic boundaries between movements, however, Beethoven carefully smudges the join between this structure and the previous Allegro molto. The Allegro concludes with an unexpectedly cloudy major chord, which functions as a dominant to the beginning of the next section. There follows one

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<sup>125</sup> Thayer-Forbes, *Beethoven*, p.692.

<sup>126</sup> Weber, *Writings*, p.357.

of the very few passages of instrumental recitative to be found in Beethoven,<sup>127</sup> in which thematically and tonally indeterminate material leads imperceptibly to the ‘Arioso dolente’ in A flat minor which is the beginning of the finale proper.

Although only eighteen bars long, the Arioso has none of the incomplete, provisional nature of an introduction. It is a perfectly self contained binary *Liedform* in four symmetrical clauses, without the slightest phrase extension except for an additional cadence at the end. If it had been an introduction its relevance would be exhausted by the arrival of that which it was intended to introduce, and it could be forgotten once it had served its purpose (as in Haydn’s Symphony no.104, Mozart’s string quartet K.465, or Clementi’s Sonata op.40/3, where a serious introduction gives way to a more light-hearted allegro). Instead it simply finishes what it has to say and stops, leaving unanswered the question of what function it serves in the structure as a whole. Out of the final A flat emerges a consolatory fugue in the major, containing some of the smoothest counterpoint Beethoven ever wrote (even if a few of his chromatic neighbour-notes are not quite impeccably Baroque). The tonal course of this fugue shows his respect for the normal range of keys, confining itself to I, ii, iii, IV, V, and vi. This means that when an E flat seventh chord unexpectedly mutates into a second inversion G minor chord (‘L’istesso tempo di Arioso’), it is—within the context of the movement—nothing less than a catastrophe. The fugue is completely dispersed, for the moment at least. Beethoven’s fugal style cannot absorb a shift like this from A flat to G minor without considerable disruption. Like a repressed memory the Arioso dolente returns, in an even more broken-backed form, stubbornly unreconciled with its surroundings. When the fugue starts again in G major (with the subject inverted), Beethoven has set himself a difficult problem. To integrate the

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<sup>127</sup> Statistically very few, but immensely influential: Tovey notes ‘how enormously these two single clauses of recitative have bulked in the imagination of critics and composers .... In the works of Mendelssohn’s boyhood—the Sonata, op.6, and the A minor Quartet, op.13—they expand to pages and pages’, *A companion to Beethoven’s pianoforte sonatas* (London: ABRSM, 1931), p.263.

Arioso into the rest of the movement he has to find his way back to the tonic A flat without disrupting the fugal continuity—that is, without appearing to stretch its tonal conventions unduly. He achieves this through a discreet sleight of hand in bb.145-52. The crucial shift, prepared by a stray E flat in b.145, is brought about by reinterpreting G major as the dominant of C *minor* in b.152. From this key it is an easy step to E flat (b.168 ‘Meno allegro’), and A flat is confirmed with the bass entry—the subject in its original form—at b.174. What the first exposition in A flat failed to do, the second has now achieved.

In itself this is nothing more than a clever expedient, an ingenious solution to an interesting musical problem; its emotional significance derives entirely from the pathos of the Arioso and the affect, consoling then celebratory, of the fugue. But this procedure is the engine which raises this emotional significance to a higher power than would have been possible with a more conventional tonal scheme. There is something profoundly redemptive about the way the second fugue works its way back from G, taking the estranged key of the Arioso into itself and reconciling it with the tonic.

Of another order of magnitude again are the two enormous fugal finales in B flat: that of the ‘Hammerklavier’ Sonata op.106, and the *Grosse Fuge*, op.133. Separated by about a decade, they have a lot in common—their immense length, their gritty, involuted counterpoint, their vast tonal and expressive range, and their complete disregard of the listener’s comfort or convenience. There are also significant differences between them, however.

Like that in op.110, the ‘Hammerklavier’ fugue is an exercise in the systematic integration of distant keys into Beethoven’s fugal style; unlike op.110, this is not provoked by the presence of a ‘foreign body’ in the movement, but emerges from within the fugal texture itself. The problem here is how to make the full range of late Classical/Romantic tonal possibilities available without falling into the tonal disorder



(or ‘spontaneity’, if one prefers) of Samuel Wesley’s ‘Sonata with a Fugue’. The sonata style of the time achieved this, of course, by counterbalancing wayward tonal excursions with a great weight of tonally stable material, supported by a large proportion of purely architectural thematic material, and substantial preparation for and reinforcement of important tonal goals. None of these resources were available within an orthodox fugal style.<sup>128</sup> What Beethoven does therefore, within the constant local flux that fugal writing tends to encourage, is map out a large scale plan of significant tonal destinations; this course is given coherence not by the repetition and architectural passage-work of normal sonata writing, but by a tendency to identify particular kinds of material with particular key areas. The exposition begins in an orthodox enough manner, with entries on I, V, and I. Before long, however, the subject appears in D flat (b.52), then in A flat (b.65), displaced both tonally and rhythmically. Clearly, we have embarked upon a substantial expedition flat-ward. Important events during this part of the movement include a lengthy entry in augmentation (begins b.94) and a recognisable episode which occurs first in G flat, then in A flat (bb.85 and 130; this is the only trace of literal repetition in the entire movement). At b.150, the fugue ‘turns the corner’ enharmonically, signalling the shift by an unexpected turn to the minor as it modulates through the cycle of fifths from G flat major to B minor. The next section, in ‘sharp’ keys, presents new permutations of the subject: retrograde in b.153, and inverted in b.208, then a beautiful new (counter)subject appears in b.250 (Ex.5.9).

Given the lack of textural and thematic corroboration, one’s first impressions about the long-range significance of particular modulations are often misleading. For example, the shift from somewhere around D major to E flat in b.230 sounds like a serious turn toward the home key; but it is just a Neapolitan parenthesis, for D has

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<sup>128</sup> It is also fair to say that these elements were becoming less important in Beethoven’s other music as well—especially when compared with their overwhelming presence in his ‘middle period’ works.

returned by b.248. On the other hand, the rather weak shift to B flat in b.279 sounds like just such a parenthesis, but in fact proves to be the definitive return to the tonic. Sounding at first anything but, it takes the remaining third of the movement (which stays largely in and around B flat) to convince us that, yes, this is indeed the home key, and to balance the peregrinations of the first part.

The ‘Hammerklavier’ fugue maintains the same metre from start to finish, but this does not mean that its rhythmic movement is uniform throughout. Aggregate semiquaver motion is very common, of course, but there are also substantial passages where quavers predominate, beside the more indeterminate passages where trills dominate the texture. Most remarkable is the *sempre dolce cantabile* subject in even crotchets which appears which has already been noted in Ex.5.9. In one sense the presence of several levels of rhythmical activity in the same fugue had not been uncommon throughout the Baroque: *WTC I* in C sharp minor, for example, or several examples from Eberlin’s toccatas and fugues. In these cases, however, the rhythmical progression always works in the opposite direction, slow to fast, and the slower rate of movement is simply absorbed into the faster. In op.106 Beethoven at first insulates the new fugato from its surroundings, allowing for an intensely poetic moment of stasis, before he reveals its identity as a countersubject.

The *Grosse Fuge*, op.133 goes further in this direction, falling into several ‘movements’, with strongly contrasting metres. Quite apart from any difficulties of style, its vast size, coming at the end of a long quartet, made it difficult to accept in its intended position—Beethoven was prevailed upon to write another finale (the last movement he was to complete), and the *Grosse Fuge* was sequestered to an opus number by itself. The temptation to categorise its sections according to the normal Classical sonata scheme is almost irresistible, but equally futile. After the various harrumphs and false starts which now seem to be necessary for Beethoven to get a

finale off the ground (and which in this case serve to present the most important material) the fugue proper begins, Allegro, in b.26. This, if you like, is the ‘first movement’, and sure enough it is followed by a slow movement, ‘Meno mosso e moderato’ (b.159). There even follows something that might be said to serve the function of a scherzo, a tripping 6/8 movement (b.233)—but then things get complicated. Another, quite different 6/8 ‘movement’ follows, much more gritty and sinewy; or is it part of the same ‘movement’? The ‘slow movement’ reappears in an abbreviated form, then our 6/8 ‘scherzo’ again. The fugue ends much as it began, with the same thematic fragments and fortissimo unison, the coda a distant recollection of the first fugue. In op.106, the tonality was constantly shifting and modulating, at least until the later part of the movement. Here, the keys are arranged in ‘plateaux’ that correspond with the major structural divisions. Thus, the first fugue lies mostly in and around B flat, the two sections ‘Meno mosso e moderato’ are in G flat and A flat, the first 6/8 section in B flat while the second is in A flat, the coda of course in B flat; the prevalence of stepwise tonal motion is curious.

The actual subject (Ex.5.23) has something of a nebulous existence. It serves in a variety of rhythmic shapes as a cantus firmus for the different sections, and tends thus to be overshadowed by the other, more strongly profiled thematic material. Only in the B flat 6/8 passages does it come to the fore, in a rhythmicised variant. During the first fugue its presence is often nearly inaudible. A sort of thematic *éminence*

*grise*, it nevertheless exerts considerable influence upon the texture as a whole. Like the famous ‘B-A-C-H’ motif it has a strong orientation toward the supertonic, and thus it creates a constant low level of harmonic instability whenever it is present. This plays as much of a unifying role as any overt thematic significance that it might have (although, to be fair, the way in which Beethoven isolates the theme and presents it in its naked form several times during the course of the piece makes this as clear as is reasonably possible). Even for listeners today, however, this movement is hard work. Stravinsky spoke of it as ‘the most absolutely contemporary piece of music I know, and contemporary forever’<sup>129</sup>—its difficulty arises not from a contradiction between the work and the musical expectations of a particular age, but from tensions that lie within the work itself. The fact that it remains so challenging to follow gives us at least one valuable opportunity. Almost alone among Beethoven’s works this movement enables us to hear with our own ears the sorts of almost overwhelming difficulties his music created for many of the listeners of his time.

Warren Kirkendale has argued plausibly that, for all its apparent modernity, op.133 is a compendium of the fugal devices to be found in Albrechtsberger’s *Anweisung*: augmentation, diminution, abbreviation, sycopation, stretto, and—unique to Albrechtsberger—‘Unterbrechung’; placing rests between the notes of a subject (as can be seen in the first part of the *Grosse Fuge*).<sup>130</sup> The ‘Heiliger Dankgesang eines Genesenen an die Gottheit, in der lydischen Tonart’ from op.132 recalls a different aspect of his study with Albrechtsberger: the fugues he wrote upon chorale themes.

Excerpts from one of Beethoven’s chorale fugues, with Albrechtsberger’s alterations, can be found in Alfred Mann’s *The study of fugue*.<sup>131</sup> By this stage Beethoven’s harmony and counterpoint was sufficiently grammatical to require little in

<sup>129</sup> Kirkendale, *Fugue and fugato*, p.257.

<sup>130</sup> Kirkendale, *Fugue and fugato*, pp.261-264. Another example of this rare device can be seen, curiously enough, in Ex.5.20.

<sup>131</sup> (New York: Norton, 1965), pp.213-20; a translation of the chapter on chorale fugue from Albrechtsberger’s *Gründliche Anweisung* follows on pp.221-27.

the way of repair, and so Albrechtsberger's advice mostly suggested refinements of style. It is not hard to see reasons for his alterations. Some concerned fugal technique specifically: the avoidance of non-thematic entries, for example, or entries a seventh or ninth from the note last quitted, and the enrichment of Beethoven's strettis. There are broader principles, however, to be inferred. In general, Albrechtsberger's emendations could be said to result in greater consistency of melodic and harmonic rhythm, and a more efficient development of the fugue's motivic ideas—bringing Beethoven's already competent exercise still further into line with Baroque norms.

As was the case with Sechter's completion of Mozart's fugue in G minor K.154/385k (pp.277-8 above), Albrechtsberger's alterations are demonstrably superior to Beethoven's original, in the sense that they fulfil the conventions of eighteenth-

century fugal writing more satisfactorily. Ex.5.24 shows how Albrechtsberger achieves a greater sense of flow by regularising Beethoven's rather haphazard melodic and harmonic rhythm, and how he sharpens the tonal focus by giving the passage a clear major/minor orientation, with firmly cadential secondary dominants.

It is curious, then, that the distinguishing features of Beethoven's '*Heiliger Dankgesang*' should involve a radical reversal of precisely these principles. The counterpoint which (especially in the final section) looks so much like Baroque motivic-work, obstinately refuses to shape itself into the clearly directional sequences which form the backbone of this style. The progression from chord to chord is likewise hesitant and equivocal, irregular in harmonic rhythm and often obscured by delayed or irregular resolutions—a long way from the predictable fifth-related movement of Ex.5.24b. The tonal orientation of this movement is similarly elusive. In one sense it is almost purely diatonic, with hardly a single accidental to disturb the course of any of the three *molto adagio* sections. But Beethoven's choice of the Lydian mode renders all of this ambiguous. It is profoundly disconcerting, with one's sense of hearing so conditioned by major/minor tonality, to discover that the chord we have taken to be the subdominant is actually the tonic after all.

Once more it comes back to a question of creative authority. In 1794 Albrechtsberger was unquestionably more experienced at the business of academic counterpoint than his young student. In the context of these studies—as Beethoven readily acknowledged—any departures from the practice of his teacher had no independent stylistic legitimacy, being simply deficiencies in reproducing a particular style. But in 1825, after a lifetime's experience handling unusual and original textures, Beethoven was able to create a profound and arresting idiom out of the material of these 'deficiencies'.

Other factors corroborate the distance between the op.132 string quartet and the

youthful exercise. Quite apart from the ‘Neue Kraft fühlend’ sections (which to my ears also sound faintly archaic and neo-Baroque, with their descending bass-lines and ornate melodic writing) one could point to several details: the careful dynamic indications, the marks of expression and articulation, not to mention occasional double stops. These, however, are much less significant than a number of factors which are almost too fundamental to register in most analyses. Most obvious is the immense slowness with which the movement proceeds—the sort of time scale we would tend to associate with late Wagner, or even Messiaen. Also note Beethoven’s exploitation of extremes of tessitura far beyond the vocal limits of his Albrechtsberger exercises; in particular, the stratospheric pitch of the cantus firmus toward the end, as if it inhabits another world altogether from the rest of the texture. A combination of these two factors and the highly individuated sound of solo strings gives the timbre an intensity and exaltation utterly different from any conceivable mental image Beethoven might have had during his contrapuntal studies.

As much as the more obviously ‘adversarial’ fugues, this movement resists easy comprehension. The reason these late movements challenged Beethoven’s contemporaries was not that they were ‘ahead of their time’—their difficulty was not simply the consequence of a contradiction between their chronological age and their stylistic age. The paradox lies instead within the works themselves, and it will remain as long as performers and listeners continue to wrestle with them. What Weber said of J. S. Bach, whose works continue to astonish us three centuries after they were written, is true equally of Beethoven:

‘This new art continues for many years to serve as a model without losing its taste of novelty or its ability to shock contemporaries by its sheer power, while the heroic originator becomes the bright focal point of his age and its taste.’<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Weber, *Writings*, p.297.

## CONCLUSION

‘Like most other disciplines, literary criticism swings back and forth between a desire to do small-scale jobs well and carefully and a desire to paint the great big picture’ says Richard Rorty.<sup>1</sup> The same is true of musical criticism. This study has been more of a series of small-scale jobs done carefully and—I hope—well, than any grand, embracing narrative. Sustained analytical critique of individual pieces (and it is possible to write in much greater detail than has been attempted here) is naturally in tension with the possibility of doing justice to any wider context. I have to admit that, for me, the interest I find in the works themselves, with all their uniqueness and strangeness, far outweighs that of any historical generalisations that I might be able to extrapolate. The profound absorption of his father’s idiom in W. F. Bach’s fugue in C minor (pp.256-64); the quirky eclecticism of Samuel Wesley’s ‘Salomon’ fugue (pp.186-93); the vast ambition of Mozart’s ‘Great’ Mass in C minor K.427/417a (pp.256-64); the sublime indifference to his audience shown by Beethoven’s *Grosse Fuge* (pp.386-8)—these things are the real heart of this study, often at their most interesting when they diverge furthest from the mainstream.

The history of fugue at this time does not lend itself very well to a broad-brush historical approach. Its evolution was infinitesimal compared to the vast innovations that transformed other genres during the same period. Albrechtsberger in 1800 was writing fugues in much the same way Monn had in 1740. Charles Wesley’s fugal style was largely dependent upon Handel’s. The fugues of Johann Ernst Rembt (1749-1810) and Michael Gotthardt Fischer (1773-1829) are virtually indistinguishable in style from those of the first generation of Bach’s pupils. The history of fugue, then, during this period, is almost no story at all. It is possible, however, to summarise both

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Texts and lumps’, *New Literary History*, 17/1 (Autumn 1985), 1.



the chief musical environments in which fugue-writing continued to survive, and the ways in which fugal technique was affected by contemporary stylistic developments.

## **FUGUE AND ITS CULTURAL HABITATS**

### **CHURCH MUSIC**

First of all, consistently and primarily, fugue was associated with the church. The analogy between divine order and well-wrought counterpoint—theological orthodoxy and contrapuntal correctness—might seem to be obvious; but very few theologians have actually drawn such conclusions. The reasons for the survival of fugal writing appear to have been pragmatic and cultural rather than strictly theological.

Roman Catholic or Protestant, the liturgy was much more stable than the institutions and practices of contemporary concert life, and so musical change took place according to a different time-scale. ‘Ancient music’—Palestrina, Jacobus Handl, or Byrd, according to geography—was still to be heard; the example of past masters had a relevance and authority unparalleled outside the church until the rise of the musical canon. Furthermore, the very nature of a choral ensemble itself requires that the counterpoint be ‘strict’ in one sense at least: the separate voices are not just compositional abstractions but literally present in the flesh. Likewise, the presence of a text freights each line with a greater significance, making it harder to polarise the texture into the wide variety of melody/accompaniment textures on which the *galant* style depended.

Even the Viennese tradition of sacred music, long criticised for its ‘frivolity’ and ‘worldliness’, showed a much greater sense of continuity than contemporary secular music. Despite the hiatus of the Josephine reforms in 1782-90, its progression

from Fux to Haydn to Bruckner was nearly seamless.<sup>2</sup> Most of Mozart's liturgical works had a similar relationship with the Salzburg tradition of Eberlin, Adlgasser, and Leopold Mozart, into which they were born. As we have seen, his post-Salzburg music took a somewhat more distanced, reflective approach to this tradition,<sup>3</sup> absorbing the influence of Bach and Handel; but this only increased the contrapuntal saturation of Mozart's liturgical style.

## ORGAN MUSIC

Stylistically, much of this was true for organ music as well. Although the activities of Georg Joseph Vogler and Justin Heinrich Knecht prefigured those of nineteenth- and twentieth-century concert organists, for the most part the instrument was associated with the church, and heard in the context of the liturgy. Just as the corporate nature of the choir lent itself to counterpoint, so to did the sustained, level tone of the organ. Attempts were made to simulate the effect of an orchestral tutti and the labile, minute distinctions of the *empfindsamer* style,<sup>4</sup> but the dynamic flexibility of most contemporary music was difficult to achieve without desperate expedients like Vogler's Orchestrion or Maelzel's Panharmonicon.<sup>5</sup>

There is, however, one important difference between organ music and other church music. The composers of church music were, by and large, the composers of opera. Apart from the relatively small number who concentrated exclusively on

<sup>2</sup> Simon Sechter (1788-1867), Bruckner's teacher, was instrumental in transmitting the legacy of Fux and Albrechtsberger to the nineteenth century.

<sup>3</sup> Salzburg influences have, however, been sought and found in the Requiem: see M. Schuler, 'Mozarts Requiem in der Tradition gattungsgeschichtlicher Topoi', *Studien zur Musikgeschichte: Eine Festschrift für Ludwig Finscher* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1995), pp. 317-327, and A. I. Maitland, 'The development of form and style in eighteenth century Salzburg church music', (PhD Diss.: University of Aberdeen, 1972), pp.230-49.

<sup>4</sup> The swell pedal was invented in England in 1712 and became widespread there during the middle years of the century; only later was it adopted on the continent.

<sup>5</sup> Vogler's Orchestrion (1790) was a transportable organ designed by Vogler for his concert tours. Entirely enclosed, it had a wide and flexible dynamic range, but exercised little immediate influence upon organ design. Maelzel's Panharmonicon (1804) was a mechanical instrument intended to imitate the sound of the orchestra, best known for its association with Beethoven's 'Battle Symphony', *Wellingtons Sieg* (1815).

instrumental music (Clementi and Abel, for example), nearly every composer of significance wrote at least some vocal music for the church. This was simply not the case with organ music—a matter of some chagrin for organists today. Both Mozart and Beethoven achieved considerable renown on the instrument, yet wrote almost nothing for it. ‘What’ we may well ask ‘did they play?’

The answer of course is that, for most, it was less trouble to improvise than put pen to paper—the better the organist, unfortunately, the truer this was. Catholic organists needed a endless supply of versets for the liturgy, Lutherans needed chorale preludes, Anglicans voluntaries. Unlike choral music, it was possible for a competent organist to supply all that was needed on the spur of the moment.

The Pasquini example quoted on p.271 shows how the business of fugal improvisation was by no means a transcendental feat: ‘The fact that many people thought Samuel Sebastian and his father geniuses at improvising fugues, becomes a good deal less impressive when one examines the organ fugues they succeeded in writing down. If such flatulence was possible in recollection and tranquillity, what sort of fugue would be liable to emerge from an improvisation?’<sup>6</sup> Samuel Wesley’s manuscripts in the British Library are full of fragments: themes, fugal subjects, and bits of contrapuntal working. Many no doubt are abandoned or incomplete; but others were likely noted down as *aides memoires* for his renowned improvisation. It might therefore be better to think of them as un-notated rather than abortive compositions.

In such music as they happened to write down, organists generally maintained the genres which had emerged by the mid eighteenth century: preludes and fugues, versetti, voluntaries, ‘trio sonatas’, and chorale preludes—very few Classical sonatas

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<sup>6</sup> E. Routley, *The musical Wesleys* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1968), p.183.

were written for the organ.<sup>7</sup> While (as in the case of Krebs) a certain admixture of *galant* elements was not uncommon, the stylistic associations of the old genres retained much of their authority for even the most ‘progressive’ organ composers—Kittel, or Knecht, or Samuel Wesley. We have seen the continuing relevance of J. S. Bach for Krebs and W. F. Bach, of Handel for Stanley and Wesley.

#### CLAVIER MUSIC

To a lesser extent, fugue maintained a tenuous existence in the hands of clavier performers and composers. Fugal improvisation played a smaller role than it had in the past—Mozart’s was renowned, Beethoven is supposed to have been able to improvise fugally, and Hummel may have, but C. P. E. Bach, Clementi, Dussek, and Wölfl apparently did not. During this period the touchstone for contrapuntal mastery ceased to be the ability to extemporise fugues of one’s own, and became instead the ability to perform J. S. Bach’s *WTC*; a situation which is still the case today. Partly this was a consequence of the growing differentiation between the composer and the performer, partly of the increasing distance between the present and early eighteenth-century contrapuntal habits.<sup>8</sup>

All the same, it was not uncommon for keyboard composers to spice their publications with occasional fugal movements, as orthodox and old-fashioned as the rest of their music was up-to-date. Into this category fall most of the important keyboard composers of the time: Arne, W. F. Bach, C. P. E. Bach, J. C. Bach, Dussek, Hummel, Weber, Kalkbrenner, Glinka, Czerny, and Moscheles.

What is curious is that four of the composers to whom we have paid the most

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<sup>7</sup> Even Mendelssohn’s op.65 sonatas avoided the question of integrating sonata structural principles with traditional organ textures; it was Josef Rheinberger who first applied himself seriously to the problem, with his series of twenty organ sonatas written between 1868 and 1901.

<sup>8</sup> It seems likely to me that the decline of fugal improvisation may have had as much to do with the decay of the art of continuo realisation, and thus of the habits of improvisation in general, as with the specific ‘old-fashionedness’ of fugue.

attention do not fit this pattern at all. Haydn never published a single fugue for clavier; nor did Mozart—all his remained in manuscript (and, as we have seen, mostly unfinished). On the other hand, the substantial and long-standing engagement of Beethoven and Clementi with strict counterpoint is of an entirely different order to the brief dalliances typical of their contemporaries.

## CHAMBER MUSIC

For different reasons, fugal writing showed remarkable persistence in chamber music as well. Fugal textures do solve one of the basic problems of the chamber composer, that of giving each performer something interesting to play. By the time Haydn wrote his op.20 quartets, however, a different, more subtle solution was just around the corner. The question of precisely when the *point de perfection* of this mature Classical ‘string quartet’ counterpoint first emerged (or indeed if such a thing can be said to exist at all) is far from settled, and the significance of these fugues in relation to Haydn’s development remains ambiguous.<sup>9</sup>

Textural habits derived from the Baroque trio sonata continued to influence chamber music well into the second half of the century.<sup>10</sup> The *sonata da camera* quietly adopted *galant* idioms and dissolved into a chaotic variety of mid-century divertimento forms. We saw an early stage of this in the Telemann movement quoted on p.35, and a much later phase in the variety of textures to be found in Haydn’s baryton trios (pp.215-227).

On the other hand the *sonata da chiesa* (still often used, as its name suggests, in church) retained its identity, although sometimes abbreviated to a single

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<sup>9</sup> See pp.243-7.

<sup>10</sup> Tovey finds passages that betray the influence of the continuo as late as Haydn’s op.9, from 1769: ‘Even in his old age, Haydn’s pen is liable to small habitual slips, which, like all such lapses, should reveal to the psychologist how far the mind has travelled, instead of suggesting dismal broodings on squalid origins’; ‘Haydn’s chamber music’, *Essays and lectures on music* (London: Oxford University Press, 1949), p.7.

prelude/fugue pair. Perhaps rather surprisingly, the strongest centre of fugal chamber music was not ‘Bach country’—north and central Germany—but the imperial court at Vienna. In Chapter 3 we described how composers such as Wagenseil, Monn, Gassmann, and Albrechtsberger, maintained the contrapuntal tradition of Caldara and Fux; and how the fugues of Haydn’s opp.20 and 50 were not isolated ‘sports’ but emerged from a rich context of similar works. In fact the *chiesa* tradition could be said to have survived as late as the three- and four-part fugues for string ensemble that Beethoven wrote under Albrechtsberger’s instruction.<sup>11</sup>

### COMPOSITIONAL INSTRUCTION

The teaching of composition was of course one of the most durable functions that counterpoint was to serve, and to an extent this is one it still retains. It would seem that the living, evolving music of one’s own day is a somewhat unstable medium for compositional instruction. Although certain eighteenth-century texts—Riepel (1752-68), Daube (1771-73, 1797-98), Koch (1782-93), Kollmann (1799)—showed considerable insight into the workings of the new style and are thus of great interest to us, their treatises had only a limited influence in their own day. Compositional pedagogy remained centred upon instruction in strict counterpoint, founded upon either thoroughbass (C. P. E. Bach, Marpurg, Kirnberger) or species counterpoint (Fux, Albrechtsberger, Cherubini). We have seen the determination with which Haydn (pp.199-202) and Beethoven (pp.321-31, 388-90) pursued their contrapuntal education, and wondered at the apparent absence of Mozart’s (p.330).

As the late Baroque style passed further and further into history, the practice of instructing composers in one manner so that they might write in another<sup>12</sup> became

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<sup>11</sup> The Viennese court’s taste for fugue continued into the nineteenth century; the quote on p.200 about how Francis II (1768-1835) loved fugues ‘properly worked out, but not too long’ dates from 1823.

<sup>12</sup> A comparison might be drawn with the way in which traditional English public schooling approached English grammar by way of Latin and Greek.

increasingly entrenched, and it remains an inescapable part of formal musical education to this day.

#### COMPOSITIONAL ANTHOLOGIES

Related to this was the practice of assembling anthologies of compositional technique, for the benefit of the student and the connoisseur. This practice, which flourished in the eighteenth century, appears to have received little scholarly attention. These anthologies would seem to have been intended specifically as models for composition rather than, as in most earlier or later examples (*Musica transalpina*, *Florilegium Portense*, *Der getreue Musik-Meister*, Clementi's *Introduction to the Art of Playing Pianoforte*) as a convenient assemblage of pieces for performance or teaching. With rare exceptions,<sup>13</sup> these collections of exemplary works showed the same bias toward strict counterpoint to be seen in contemporary pedagogy.

Chief among these, of course, was Martini's *Esemplare ossia saggio fondamentale pratico di contrappunto* (Bologna: 1774-75); two volumes of fugues by Italian masters of the previous two and a half centuries, with and without cantus firmus, from two voices to eight, with detailed commentary on each.<sup>14</sup> The assembling of anthologies was, however, a widespread activity, and other noteworthy examples include Marpurg's *Fugensammlung* (Berlin, 1758), Kirnberger's edition of C. H. Graun's *Duetti, terzetti ... ed alcuni chori* (Berlin and Königsberg, 1773-4), and Clementi's *Selection of Practical Harmony* (4 vols., London, 1801-15). The publication in 1804 of six fugal overtures from J. G. Werner's oratorios (arranged for string quartet by Haydn), and of six of M. G. Monn's seventy-year old string quartets about the same time, were probably undertaken in a similar spirit. To be sure, this

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<sup>13</sup> The musical appendix to Kollmann's *Essay on Practical Musical Composition* (London: 1799) includes, as well as a generous helping of J. S. Bach's music and some fugues of Kollmann's own, rondos by C. P. E. Bach and homophonic organ preludes by J. W. Häßler.

<sup>14</sup> It is excerpted and discussed in Mann, *Study of fugue*, pp.263-314.

practice is less concerned with the composition of fugues than their reception; but awareness of these anthologies could have influenced the way composers approached fugal writing. A contrast between the eternal verities of fugal construction and the ephemeral mannerisms of *galant* fashion may have underpinned many composers' attitude to counterpoint. To write a fugue was, in a sense, the musical equivalent of sculpting in marble—not just for an age, but for all time.

Musically effective as the results generally are, this insistence upon the pure sublime did tend to result in a certain uniformity of style. More interesting from an analytical point of view are the many different attempts that were made to synthesise fugal and sonata principles. I have (with a few exceptions) resisted the temptation to make this a history of the growing influence of contrapuntal and imitative writing upon sonata textures—a history which would have had to take in most of the development of musical texture during this period. The mutual interpenetration of Baroque and Classical styles has been, all the same, a constant preoccupation of this survey.

## STRATEGIES OF FORMAL INTEGRATION

In the introduction we discussed the fundamental incompatibility in tonality, texture, form, and phrase structure between fugal and sonata processes. Any attempt to combine them is therefore something of a tour de force. In one sense there are as many solutions as there are movements. Looking at the pieces we have discussed, however, it is possible to categorise a number of different ways in which fugal technique was made to accommodate Classical idioms.

First, and simplest, it could refuse to accommodate at all. There is very little about W. F. Bach's Fugue in C minor F.32 (pp.78-80), Krebs's Fugue in D minor (pp.100-1), Mozart's keyboard fugues, those of Clementi's opp.5-6 (pp.321-31), or



Beethoven's student-fugues (pp.321-31, 388-90) to indicate which decade of the century they belong to. In some cases (Krebs, W. F. Bach, Stanley, Albrechtsberger) this is the result of a conservative temperament or milieu, more comfortable thinking in fugal terms than keeping up with the latest developments. In others (Mozart, Clementi, Beethoven) composers have deliberately sequestered themselves from the present, choosing temporarily to limit their compositional resources. The contrast between their fugal style and their other works is often striking indeed.

Attempts to leaven fugal movements with a little *galant* suavity could take one of two forms: either using a more cantabile, tuneful subject; or giving the fugal texture a 'holiday' from time to time by interspersing homophonic episodes. Several examples of the former can be seen in W. F. Bach's *VIII Fugen*, notably those in C, E minor, and E flat (pp.64-74). When J. S. Bach wanted to write a progressive-sounding fugue, this was his own practice: a number of his subjects could be said to verge on the *galant* (*WTC I* in C sharp, for example, or *WTC II* in B flat). He knew, however, just how far it was possible to go in this direction, while W. F. Bach's subjects occasionally seem less than ideally fitted for the fugal treatment they receive. The Telemann fugue quoted on p.30 (Ex.0.4) exemplifies the opposite approach: its subject is conservative enough, but the episodes are prettily irrelevant.

Neither of these compromises seem to have appealed to Haydn, Mozart, Clementi, or Beethoven. Their subjects for the most part take their cue from the sternest examples of Fux or Bach,<sup>15</sup> and their fugues are consistently worked throughout—almost as if part of the attraction of fugue was its very distance from their usual style. On the other hand, Clementi, Wesley, and Beethoven sought also to expand the musical possibilities of fugue from within, so to speak. Clementi's fugue in C major (*Grados* no.13; p.370) exploited a tonal range well beyond that of the

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<sup>15</sup> The Classical-sounding chromatic passing notes in the subject of Haydn's op.20/2 fugue are an exception in this respect.

Baroque, but did so subtly, without endangering fugal continuity. His fugue in F (*Gradus* no.40; p.370) introduced something of the brilliant figuration his sonatas were famous for, with no compromise of thematic integrity. Wesley went further in his ‘Salomon’ sonata (pp.186-93), introducing not just the expanded tonal resources of the early nineteenth century but its sense of drama and rhetorical contrast, all within the context of a fugue, never losing sight of his subject. But it was of course Beethoven who had the most grandiose designs upon fugue, assembling a similar range of textures and keys on an even larger scale in the ‘Hammerklavier’ fugue (pp.384-6): an enormous design as clearly articulated as any sonata, but completely fugal in design; pianistically dazzling, but in three strict voices for most of its length. Seven years later he would surpass even this with the *Grosse Fuge* (pp.386-8), which could not even be contained within the boundaries of a single metre. Made up of several interrelated sections, all dependent upon the same subject, it resembles nothing so much as a variation canzona of the seventeenth century executed on an infinitely greater scale. With this movement the history of fugue could be said to have come full circle.

All of these can be fairly clearly identified as fugues rather than sonata movements, even if they show other influences; equally interesting are the hybrid structures which are difficult to classify as either. In Samuel Wesley’s Presto (pp.144-9), for example, two quite separate modes of organisation—sonata movement, with exposition (including a ‘second theme’ and strongly established secondary key), development, and recapitulation; and fugue, with successive permutational entries—coexist throughout. Haydn’s Symphony no.3 (pp.202-6) resists categorisation in a slightly different way, teasing us by apparently forsaking then reaffirming its contrapuntal intentions, suggesting but not quite completing a sonata design.

A more common, much simpler sort of hybridisation is represented by what

Kirkendale called a ‘fugato’, a fugue cast in a rounded binary shape.<sup>16</sup> Bach’s occasional use of this principle (*WTC* I in E minor, II in B flat) had been relatively subtle, hardly disrupting the flow of the counterpoint and not emphasising the caesurae with repeats. This was not true of more typical mid-century examples. Many can be found among Haydn’s baryton trios (pp.215-227). In most examples by Haydn and others the fairly nondescript counterpoint tends to evaporate toward the end of each section, to be replaced by equally nondescript homophony; as a genre it is a pleasant compromise, but little more. And yet the insignificance of most should not blind us to the truly impressive qualities of the finale of the string quartet in F sharp minor, op.50/4 (pp.234-5), a powerfully expressive movement, far transcending the other pieces whose form it happens to share.

It will be seen that the distinction between rounded binary fugues and sonata movements that contain a large amount of fugal writing is a fine, perhaps arbitrary one. In the course of this study we have seen fugue play a variety of roles within non-fugal movements. Most striking (most likely, that is, to attract the attention of the scholar in this connection) are cases where a fugal exposition serves as one of the primary thematic groups. In general, movements that begin with a contrapuntal gesture—the *Zauberflöte* overture (pp.23-5), for example, or Clementi’s sonata op.34/2 (pp.358-62)—tend to have a relatively high proportion of imitative writing. Sometimes the same thematic material appears in both homophonic and polyphonic guises, as in Clementi’s op.34/2, or the Kyrie from Mozart’s Mass in F, K.192/186f (pp.286-9).

More common than this, however, is when fugue takes a relatively subservient role, in the context of transitional or developmental passages. One of the basic dynamics of sonata-writing is the interplay between regular, periodic themes and other kinds of freely extensible ‘episodic’ material. That fugue, with its avoidance of

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<sup>16</sup> *Fugue and fugato*, pp.79-88

periodicity and its fluctuating tonality, should find employment as a mode of development is hardly surprising. An extreme case is the finale of Beethoven's op.101 Sonata in A, where a fugue upon a subject derived from the opening theme serves as the entire development (p.381). More typical are Clementi's opp.40 and 50 sonatas (pp.362-6), where imitative counterpoint is used in conjunction with a whole range of developmental techniques to destabilise and reinterpret the movement's thematic material. The same can be true within rondo forms as well. In the finales to Haydn's Symphonies no.95 and 103 (pp.211-5), and even more in Wesley's rondo 'The Christmas Carol' (pp.362-6), fugal imitation supplies flexible connective tissue between the recurrences of the rondo theme. On the other hand nothing can be taken for granted with Haydn, and the finale to his symphony no.101 reverses this procedure, substituting a sizeable fugal development for the final return of the rondo theme (pp.212-3).

This sort of unpredictability should warn us that generalisations will take us only so far. There was no 'normal' way of integrating fugue and sonata; in fact, the opposite is true. Each attempt to combine two such disparate ways of writing created its own problems and its own solutions, forcing composers to go beyond the conventional limitations of genre. It is no accident that the composers whose approach to form and texture was the most flexible and imaginative—Samuel Wesley, Haydn, Mozart, Clementi, and Beethoven—were also those who had the strongest affinity with the disciplines of strict counterpoint.

Our story ends with Beethoven. For all his immense influence upon the early Romantics, the distinctions between them are at least as important as any affinities. If he was the last to possess an instinct for the possibilities of the Classical style as a natural mode of utterance, it was this instinct that limited his ability to absorb the influence of the past—a presence that he and his contemporaries were increasingly

aware of:

‘It is worth noting, in this respect, the extremely limited influence of the music of Bach in Beethoven’s works, in spite of the fact that his knowledge of Bach was considerable. ...the use he made of this familiarity is very small, almost negligible in comparison to the continuous reference to Bach in the music of Mendelssohn, Chopin, and Schumann. The classical style had already absorbed all that it could of Bach as seen through the eyes of Mozart in the early 1780s, and as Beethoven continued to work within these limits, his love of Bach remained always in the margin of his creative activity.’<sup>17</sup>

This would not be true of the following generation.

## **AFTER THE *GALANT***

The structural incompatibility we have noted between fugue and sonata was paralleled by a strong antipathy certain mid eighteenth-century critics had expressed toward the barbarous ingenuity of their predecessors. The anti-clerical Frederick II reacted violently to any chamber music in which he detected ‘the smell of the church’.<sup>18</sup> Rousseau spoke of ‘counter-fugues, double fugues and other difficult absurdities which the ear cannot bear nor reason justify, ...nothing but the remains of barbarism and bad taste, which subsist, like the porches of our Gothic churches, only to reflect disgrace on those who had the patience to construct them.’<sup>19</sup> J. S. Bach’s former pupil Johann Adolph Scheibe complained of how Bach took away ‘the natural element in his pieces by giving them a turgid and confused style’, darkening their

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<sup>17</sup> C. Rosen, *The Classical style*, 2nd ed. (London: Faber, 1976), p.385.

<sup>18</sup> Kirkendale, *Fugue and fugato*, p.4. One might compare the attitude of twentieth-century modernists to ‘Victorianism’ or to nineteenth-century Romanticism in general.

<sup>19</sup> ‘Lettre sur musique Français’, quoted in E. Taylor, ‘Rousseau’s Conception of Music’, *Music & Letters* 24 (1941), 237.

beauty with ‘an excess of art.’<sup>20</sup> To critics like these it was clear that Bach, whom even his sons are supposed to have referred to as ‘the old peruke’,<sup>21</sup> had nothing to say to them.

Yet it was Rousseau’s own *Le Devin du Village* which was eventually to receive precisely this critique, ‘extinguished forever under beneath a huge powdered peruke, thrown at the heroine’s feet by some practical joker.’<sup>22</sup> As Berlioz noted, ‘*Le Devin du Village*, since that evening of blessed memory, has never reappeared at the Opéra.’<sup>23</sup> This happened in 1829, the same year as the triumphant rediscovery of J. S. Bach’s *St Matthew Passion*. ‘Me voilà perruqué!’ Mendelssohn laughed upon the publication of his own preludes and fugues op.35 and 37 (1837),<sup>24</sup> but already the term ‘*Zopfstil*’ was coming to refer not to the age of Bach and Handel, but to the once-fashionable *galant* style that had succeeded it: ‘the easy-going, the mechanical, the stereotyped, the mediocre, the manneristic and that kind of eighteenth-century composition in which immediate effectiveness took the place of something felt by the composer and toiled after by him in the effort to embody it in a dignified and worthy form.’<sup>25</sup> Robert Schumann, for example, referred to *galant* sonatas as ‘Perückensonaten’.<sup>26</sup> The wig had been bequeathed to the next generation.

The success of Bach’s *Passion* demonstrated that his music was not just for private or semi-private performance (as Baron van Swieten’s soirées had been), but that there was sufficient public interest for large undertakings of this sort. People’s tastes were changing. There was a new appetite for the archaic, the ‘Gothic’, the

<sup>20</sup> H. T. David and A. Mendel, *The Bach Reader* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Dent, 1945, 1966), p.238.

<sup>21</sup> See p.60 above.

<sup>22</sup> *The memoirs of Hector Berlioz*, tr. D. Cairns (London: Cardinal, 1990), p.45. Berlioz himself, present at the performance, was accused of having thrown the fatal wig; his denial is an unconvincing mixture of disapproval and amusement.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* p.45, fn (Berlioz’s note).

<sup>24</sup> R. L. Todd, “‘Me voilà perruqué’: Mendelssohn’s six preludes and fugues op.35 reconsidered’, *Mendelssohn studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp.162-99.

<sup>25</sup> P. Scholes, ‘*Zopfstil*’, *Oxford Companion to Music*, 10<sup>th</sup> ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), p.1127. This use parallels more closely the original application of the term in the visual arts and crafts.

<sup>26</sup> G. Stanley, ‘The music for keyboard’, *The Cambridge Companion to Mendelssohn*, ed. P. Mercer-Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.155.

sublime.

Perhaps the most uninhibited, delightfully naïve expression of this attitude can be found in a letter William Crotch wrote to his grandson in 1835: ‘I determined to write something which would show what *I* was fond of & I gave a few first bars of Allegri’s Mass performed by *voices alone* at the Pope’s Chapel on Good Friday while all the lights are extinguished excepting one. These are as follow [a few modal chords and a cadence with 4-3 suspension]. Play them very slow & soft & tell me how you like them William? They make my blood run cold.’<sup>27</sup> This visceral, emotional response to the past was different to the approaches of previous generations. Most—Tinctoris, Printz, Burney, and Quantz, for example—had taken an evolutionary view, confident in the superiority of the present, and regarding the past as being of purely antiquarian interest—if that. Others (Pepusch, Hawkins, Gluck, Kirnberger) looked backed to a variously defined but static golden age (antiquity, the Renaissance, or the high Baroque), from which the present was an irreversible declension. For the Romantics, however, (and for their descendants today) the past took on a numinous aspect, not from any particularly ‘golden’ qualities of its own, but simply by virtue of its distance from the present.

We have already identified a very early example of this poetry of archaism in Clementi’s Sonata in D op.40/3 (pp.363-5 above—yet another example of Clementi’s ability to anticipate musical trends decades before they became current), and another in the fugue from Wesley’s *Confitebor* (p.155-8). But Felix Mendelssohn was the first to systematically exploit the emotional resources of nineteenth-century Romantic historicism. Whilst his fugal technique (developed under the stern eye of Zelter) was impeccable, he had not the slightest hesitation in riding roughshod over any notion of contrapuntal integrity if it served his expressive purpose. The Fugue in E minor

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<sup>27</sup> N. Temperley, *The music of the English parish church*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), vol. I, p.249.

(op.35/1) is a model of textural control, evolving seamlessly from the orthodox—if highly expressive—fugal imitation of Ex.6.1, to the utter contrapuntal dissolution of Ex.6.2.



At this point there is an outburst of virtuoso octaves in the left hand, and the piece receives a wholly unexpected consummation in the form of a slow chorale in the tonic major, over the walking bass the left-hand octaves have become. A brief return to the smooth counterpoint of the opening rounds the movement off.

It is of course completely anachronistic, a conflation of several different genres. No fugue of Bach ever had a chorale apotheosis like this: no chorale prelude of his was prefaced by an unrelated fugue. And yet the most remarkable thing about Mendelssohn's achievement—to my mind at least as remarkable as the originality of his more obviously 'radical' contemporaries—is the extraordinary directness and naturalness with which he was able to exploit the musical resources of earlier generations, combining the techniques of the previous century and a half into a newly expressive synthesis.



Robert Schumann, impressed by Mendelssohn's op.35 ('if [Bach] were to arise from the grave today, he would, I am sure ... rejoice to find at least flowers where he had planted giant-limbed oak forests'),<sup>28</sup> also published sets of contrapuntal movements: the six canonic studies op.56, six fugues on B-A-C-H op.60, four fugues op.72, seven fuguetas op.126, along with a number of separate examples in other works. These pieces are often regarded as being peripheral to Schumann's achievement. But the short-breathed tonal movement of his forms and the textural elaboration of his piano writing could prove to be a more hospitable environment for fugue than the homophonic, goal-oriented tonality of the Classical style. Ex.6.3 (from the Novelette in F sharp minor, op.21/8) shows how close his style could approach to a fugal exposition without a trace of archaism, without for a moment compromising its passionate intensity and pianistic richness. Not for nothing did he claim to have learned more of counterpoint from Jean Paul than from his long-suffering teacher Heinrich Dorn: 'It is most extraordinary how I write almost everything in canon, and then only detect the imitation afterwards, and often find inversions, rhythms in contrary motion, etc.'<sup>29</sup>

The Romantic preoccupation with counterpoint was continued in different ways by the works of Brahms, Bruckner, Franck, Liszt, Saint Saëns, and Reger—to name only the most prominent. More unexpectedly, it outlasted the Romanticism that gave it birth, forming a part of the quest for compositional order in the music of such different composers as Hindemith, Shostakovich, Bartók, and Stravinsky.

But now, as the musical convictions of twentieth-century modernism follow those of nineteenth-century Romanticism into history, we must ask ourselves: is the history of fugue over? Paul Walker points out how 'the principal compositional trends since World War II—total serialism, aleatory music and minimalism—have proved

<sup>28</sup> *The musical world of Robert Schumann*, ed. and tr. R. Pleasants (London: Gollancz, 1965), p.124.

<sup>29</sup> Quoted in J. Chissell, *Schumann* (London: Dent, 1967), p.88.

inhospitable to fugue.’<sup>30</sup> To these factors we should add the increasing acceptance of popular music in academic circles, and perhaps also the growing awareness of non-Western music. From both within and without, the foundational assumptions of Western ‘art’ music are now continually called into question.

Fugue, on the other hand, is essentially a music of faith; whether it be faith in a given social order, or faith in a specifically musical tradition of craftsmanship and textural elaboration. Only in such contexts is the study of fugue likely to seem anything but lost labour.

And yet, if there is one thing this study should have made clear, it is that the past remains with us, and continues to find its way into the present in unexpected ways. Who in 1750 could have foreseen Haydn’s sudden engagement with fugue in his op.20 string quartets, or Samuel Wesley’s passionate advocacy of J. S. Bach? Who could have anticipated the way that Beethoven would turn away from the success of his ‘middle style’ to embrace both the past and the future in his later music? If this particular chapter in musical history appears to be closed for now, the awareness of history itself is a permanent part of our musical culture. In both popular and ‘classical’ music the impulse to measure ourselves against our predecessors is as strong as it was for Mozart and for Beethoven; and who can tell where this may lead us?

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<sup>30</sup> P. M. Walker, ‘Fugue, 8: 20<sup>th</sup> century’, *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/51678> (accessed August 2, 2008).

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## Chapter 1

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Ex.3.5

J. Haydn, Allegro, Symphony no.40 in F (1763)  
ed. Jurgen Braun and Sonja Gerlach, *Sinfonien 1761-1763, Joseph Haydn Werke I:3*  
(Munich: Henle, 1990)

Ex.3.6a & b

J. Haydn, Vivace, Symphony no.95 in C minor (1791)  
ed. Robert Zahn and Gernot Gruber, *Londoner Symphonien I, Joseph Haydn Werke I:15* (Munich: Henle, 2005)

Ex.3.7

J. Haydn, Adagio, Baryton Trio in D Hob.XI:39 (c.1766-7)

Ex.3.8a, & b

J. Haydn, Finale: Allegro, Baryton Trio in D Hob.XI:40 (c.1766-7),  
ed. Hubert Unverricht, *Baryton Trios 2, Joseph Haydn Werke XIV:2* (Munich: Henle,  
1960)

Ex.3.9

J. Haydn, Finale: Fuga, Baryton Trio in D Hob.XI:97 (before c.1773; ?1766)

Exx.3.10-11

J. Haydn, Finale: Fuga a 3 soggetti in contrapunto doppio, Baryton Trio in C  
Hob.XI:101 (before c.1773), ed. Michael Härting and Horst Walter, *Baryton Trios 5, Joseph Haydn Werke XIV:5* (Munich: Henle, 1968)

Exx.3.12-13

J. Haydn, Fuga a IV Soggetti, String Quartet in C op.20/2 (1772)

Exx.3.14-15

J. Haydn, Finale: Fuga a due Soggetti, String Quartet in F minor op.20/5 (1772)

Ex.3.16

J. Haydn, Finale: Fuga, String Quartet in F sharp minor op.50/4 (1787)  
ed. Georg Feder and Sonja Gerlach, *String Quartets opp.20 and 33, Joseph Haydn Werke XII:3* (Munich: Henle, 1974)

## Chapter 4

### Mozart, finished and unfinished

Exx.4.1-2, 4

W. A. Mozart, Fugue in G minor K.401/375e (1773)

ed. Wolfgang Plath, *Einzelstücke für Klavier, Neue Ausgabe sämtliche Werke IX:27/2* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1982)

Ex.4.3

J. E. Eberlin, Fugue in G, *IX Toccate e fughe* (1747) no.8

ed. Rudolf Walter (Altötting: Coppenrath, 1968)

Exx.4.5-6

B. Pasquini, Sonata 7a, Primo tuono (late 17th century)

ed. Luigi Cataldi: <http://icking-music-archive.org/scores/pasquini/DD53/dd53.pdf> (accessed 15/02/09)

Ex.4.7

W. A. Mozart, Fugal fragment in G K.Anh.41/375g (1782)

ed. Wolfgang Plath, *Einzelstücke für Klavier, Neue Ausgabe sämtliche Werke IX:27/2* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1982)

Ex.4.8

W. A. Mozart/M. Stadler, Fugue in A minor, Violin Sonata in A/A minor K.402/385e (1782),

ed. Eduard Reeser, *Sonaten und Variationen für Klavier und Violine 2, Neue Ausgabe sämtliche Werke XXIII:2* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1965)

Ex.4.9

W. A. Mozart, Kyrie, Mass in G K.49/47d (1768)

Ex.4.10

W. A. Mozart, Cum sancto Spiritu, Mass in C (*Waisenhaus Messe*) K.139/47a (1768)

Ex.4.11

W. A. Mozart, Et vitam venturi, Mass in C (*Waisenhaus Messe*) K.139/47a (1768)

ed. Walter Senn, *Messen I, Neue Ausgabe sämtliche Werke I:1/1* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1968)

Ex.4.12

W. A. Mozart, Kyrie, Missa Brevis in F K.192/186f (1774)

ed. Walter Senn, *Messen 2, Neue Ausgabe sämtliche Werke I:1/2* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1975)

Ex.4.13-15

W. A. Mozart, Cum Sancto Spiritu, Mass in C minor K.427 (c.1782)

ed. Richard Maunder (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989)

Ex.4.16

W. A. Mozart, draft of Amen fugue (Lacrymosa), *Requiem* K.626 (1791)

facs in Thomas Bauman, 'Requiem, but no piece', *19th-century Music* 15/2 (1991), 151-161.

## Chapter 5

### Fugue in Beethoven: mundane and transcendental counterpoint

Exx.5.1-2

L. van Beethoven, Praeludium in F minor WoO 55 (?1785-6)  
ed. Otto von Irmer, *Klavierstücke* (Munich: Henle, 1950)

Ex.5.3

L. van Beethoven, Fugue in C Hess 64 (?1794)  
facts in A. E. F. Dickinson, 'Beethoven's early fugal style', *Musical Times* 96/1344  
(February 1955), 76-79.

Ex.5.4

L. van Beethoven, Fugue in F Hess 30 (1795)  
L. van Beethoven, Fugue in C Hess 31 (1795)  
L. van Beethoven, Fugue in E minor Hess 29 (1795)  
ed. Gustav Nottebohm, *Beethovens Studien. I: Beethovens Unterricht bei J. Haydn, Albrechtsberger und Salieri* (Wiesbaden: Sändig, 1971)

Ex.5.5

W. Birck, Fugue in A minor  
Subject cited in Warren Kirkendale, *Fugue and fugato in Rococo and Classical chamber music*, (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1979), p.228

Ex.5.6

L. van Beethoven, Prelude in C Hess 31 (1795)  
ed. Gustav Nottebohm, *Beethovens Studien. I: Beethovens Unterricht bei J. Haydn, Albrechtsberger und Salieri* (Wiesbaden: Sändig, 1971)

Ex.5.7

L. van Beethoven, Trio to Allegretto in C minor WoO 53 (1796-7)  
ed. Howard Ferguson (Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, 1986)

Ex.5.8

L. van Beethoven, Fugue, 'Eroica' Variations op.35 (1802)  
ed. Joseph Schmidt-Görg, *Variationen für Klavier, Beethoven Werke VII:5* (Munich: Henle, 1961)

Ex.5.9

L. van Beethoven, Fuga a tre voci, con alcune licenze, Sonata in B flat op.106  
'Hammerclavier' (1817-18)

Ex.5.10

L. van Beethoven, Arietta, Sonata in C minor op.111 (1821-2)  
ed. Heinrich Schenker, rev. Erwin Ratz, *Klaviersonaten IV* (Vienna: Universal, 1947)

Ex.5.11

L. van Beethoven, *Grosse Fuge* in B flat op.133 (1825-6)

ed. Joseph Joachim and Andreas Moser, *Sämtliche Streichquartette IV* (Leipzig: Peters, n.d.)

Exx.5.12-13

M. Clementi, Largo e sostenuto – Allegro con fuoco, Sonata in G minor op.34/2 (1795)

ed. Sonja Gerlach and Alan Tyson, *Klaviersonaten: Auswahl* (Munich: Henle, 1982)

Ex.5.14

M. Clementi, Allegro, Sonata in D op.40/3 (1802)

*Oeuvres de Clementi* (Leipzig c.1803-1819; facs ed. New York: Da Capo, 1973)

Ex.5.15

M. Clementi, Fuga in C minor, *Gradus ad Parnassum* op.44 vol.II/45 (1819)

Ex.5.16

M. Clementi, Fuga in B flat, *Gradus ad Parnassum* op.44 vol.III/57 (1826)

Ex.5.17

M. Clementi, Fuga in B minor, *Gradus ad Parnassum* op.44 vol.I/25 (1817)

Ex.5.18

M. Clementi, Fuga in F, *Gradus ad Parnassum* op.44 vol.II/40 (1819)

Ex.5.19

M. Clementi, Fuga in B minor, *Gradus ad Parnassum* op.44 vol.I/25 (1817)

Ex.5.20

M. Clementi, Fugato in F, *Gradus ad Parnassum* op.44 vol.I/18 (1817)

Ex.5.21

M. Clementi, Canone per moto contrario e per intervalli giusti, *Gradus ad Parnassum* op.44 vol.III/73 (1826)

facs. ed. Nicholas Temperley, *Gradus ad Parnassum* (New York: Garland, 1985)

Ex.5.22

J. S. Bach, Duetto in F BWV 803, *Clavier-Übung III* (1739)

ed. Manfred Tessmer, *Neue Ausgabe sämtliche Werke IV:4* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1969)

Ex.5.23

L. van Beethoven, *Grosse Fuge* in B flat op.133 (1825-6)

ed. Joseph Joachim and Andreas Moser, *Sämtliche Streichquartette IV* (Leipzig: Peters, n.d.)

Ex.5.24

L. van Beethoven, Chorale fugue in F Hess 239/1 (1794-5)

L. van Beethoven altered J. G. Albrechtsberger, Chorale fugue in F Hess 239/1 (1794-5)

ed. Gustav Nottebohm, *Beethovens Studien. I: Beethovens Unterricht bei J. Haydn, Albrechtsberger und Salieri* (Wiesbaden: Sändig, 1971); also quoted in Alfred Mann, *The study of fugue* (New York: Norton, 1965), p.218.

## Conclusion

Exx.6.1-2

F. Mendelssohn, Fugue in E minor op.35/1 (1837)

ed. Adolf Ruthardt, *Six Preludes and Fugues op.35* (London: Peters, n.d.)

Ex.6.3

R. Schumann, Novelette in F sharp minor op.21/8 (1838)

ed. Clara Schumann, *Robert Schumanns Werke 7* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1881-1912)

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