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THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PIANOFORTE FUGUE SINCE BACH

BY

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THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY

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## THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PIANOFORTE FUGUE SINCE BACH.

In the study of piano fugues, it is, of course, necessary first to know something of fugues in general or the fugue form. To begin with, the word fugue is found in the French language derived from the Latin "fugare" which means to flee. We find in studying the construction of the composition that the name is very applicable, for there is constantly the flight of the subject against a counter-point.

There are three main sections in a fugue. These are easily distinguished in listening, but at no time is there an absolute close. The first section is the exposition, in which the subject and answer in all voices present enter. The procedure is very simple and follows this general plan; the subject appears alone in any voice as an opening to the fugue. This is answered by the same subject in a second voice at the interval of a fifth higher or a fourth lower. The third voice is heard in the original form except that it is either higher or lower by an octave.

The development section follows after the subject has been stated a sufficient number of times. Here there is a development of all the possibilities of the subject. It is made interesting by imitation, strict and free, double counterpoint, strettis, inverted counterpoint, and almost anything to vitalize the subject. Episodes are brought in from time to time to vary the work. These are composed of a few measures in a form as a part previously heard. There are no set rules for episodes, and in consequence



they may be entirely original and used as modulatory devices when needed.

In the last section we hear the subject and answer again simply stated, but preparing for the climax. There is a changing of voices and a general hurried feeling. The distance between subjects and answers is shortened by means of strettii and there is, in some instances, inversion and diminution of the subject. About ten measures from the end, it is not unusual to find a pedal point or a double pedal point to strengthen the tonality at the close.

The fugal form of writing is extremely old, but there is little similarity between the fugues of today and the compositions which were first called by that name. In the sixteenth century the word "fuga" meant a movement in canonic form. This came from the phrase "fuga per canonem," or fugue according to rule. Our present canon resembles the "fuga" of that time. There were two species of "fuga," the limited, or what is now strict canon, and the unlimited, which began strictly but which soon became very free with only points of imitation here and there. The early counterpoint was formal and uninteresting. The writers sacrificed beauty and interest to exactness, and there seemed to be a desire to make the composition as incomprehensible as possible. It played its part, however, in the development of instrumental music and shows a knowledge and study of the technical side of writing.

About 1725 Fux placed the fugue on its present basis. He gave it form although undeveloped and simple, but it still remained a study in technique with no especial musical interest. It was Bach who really made the fugue what it is now. There was a sort of organic completeness, a consistency or unity of idea in



all of Bach's work, and in this form of writing he rose, as always, superior to all regulations. It was as though from the skeleton there had been formed a living fugue. By applying the new key system with its endless possibilities of modulation and with the freedom of genius which he possessed, Bach evolved a form of composition which was a masterpiece in a technical, melodic, harmonic, contrapuntal or, summing it up, in a musical way.

Up to this point we have not mentioned the piano in connection with fugues, yet in studying the development of piano fugues we must know something of the growth of the instrument and the effects gained through it. The harpsichord and clavichord were sufficient to express the dainty melodic compositions of the early French writers such as Couperin, Rameau and others, but it seems that Bach was ahead of his time in his ideas. His ideal instrument of the clavier type was a mixture of the volume of tone of the organ and the expressive quality of the clavichord in proportion. This was found, of course, much later in the piano-forte.

The piano was made late in the life of Bach, and his severe criticism went a great way toward improving the instrument. Between 1740 and 1750 Gottfried Silbermann constructed two claviers with hammer action. Bach played on one of these and criticised the feebleness of the upper notes and the heaviness of the touch, but praised the tone. Silbermann worked for years perfecting the piano and at last earned full praise from the master.

It is interesting to notice how well the clavier music of Bach is suited to the piano. It is not necessary to wish for the return of the harpsichord or clavichord to receive the atmosphere of his music. We need, rather, the sustaining power of the piano, the ability to subordinate certain voices and bring out





others, the forte and piano contrasts which are almost impossible on the older forms of keyboard instruments, but which are possible with the piano, to receive the full power of Bach's fugues. Since Bach's was the pinnacle of contrapuntal writing, as has already been said, after his death other forms of composition became predominant, and the fugue form was obscure for many years. When there was a return to any extensive use of it, it was found in the work of the writers of Mendelssohn's time and those following him.

As a basis for investigation of modern piano fugues in this thesis, several typical fugues of the "Well Tempered Clavichord" have been analysed. In these is shown Bach's masterful use of his subject matter in a modulatory way, his use of the stretto, inversions of the subject, and of material in episodes. Next some fugues which have been written since the time of Bach are analysed in a way which shows how the more modern writers have manipulated their material. It is determined whether or not the strict fugal form has been adhered to, and any interesting changes in the use of subject matter are noticed. This may include either those which may have been the outgrowth of the old forms of contrapuntal writing or which may have come from the modern freedom from form.

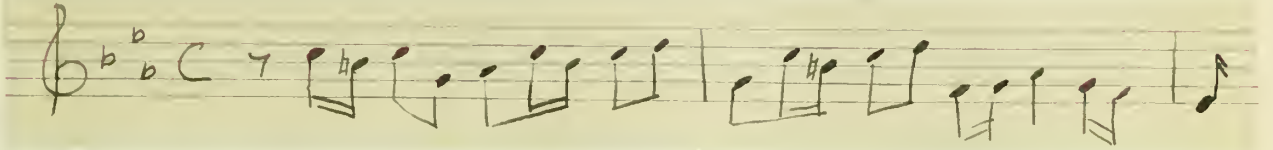


## Bach -- Well Tempered Clavichord

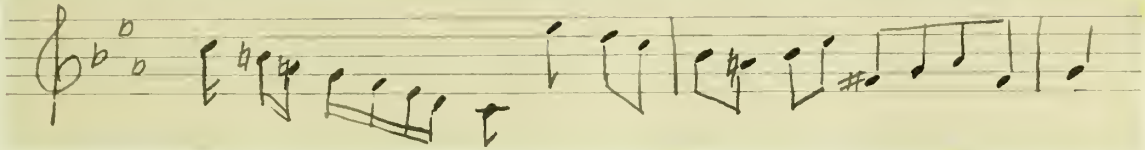
## Fugue in C minor

## Part I.

The first fugue taken up in this work is the one in C minor.



This is a tonal fugue of 31 measures in which the subject appears 8 times in full. There is a counter-subject which runs



throughout the composition and plays an important part in furnishing material for episodes. After the entry of the first two voices there is a two measure episode built up of the germ of the subject. The fugue is quiet and stately with regular movement, no stretti and a simple modulatory system of

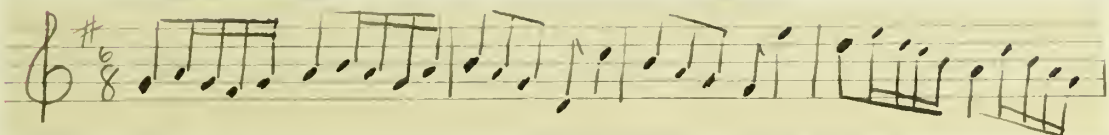
C minor - G minor - C minor - E<sup>b</sup>major - G minor - C minor -  
C minor - C minor.

The C major chord brings the fugue to a close.

## Fugue in G major

## Part I.

This is a three part fugue in the key of G major.





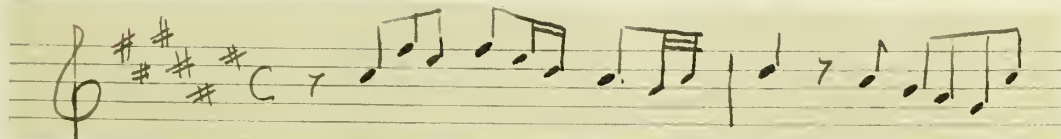
In the 85 measures there are 13 appearances of the subject. Between the second and third statements there are three measures of new material which is developed at times through the fugue, especially in the middle section. In measure 20 there is an inversion of the subject in the original key. Another follows in the 24th measure in D major. The 43rd and 68th measures also contain inversions. A stretto beginning in measure 50 is found between the soprano and bass. This is followed after an episode of 6 measures by another stretto between the same voices, but in the key of D major. In the 76th measure a stretto is begun between the alto in inversion and the soprano, both in D minor. The different keys in which the subject is heard are:-

G minor - D major - G major - G major - D major - E minor -  
D major - G minor - D minor - E major - G minor.

### Fugue in F# major

#### Part I.

This is a fugue of 34 measures with 6 appearances of the subject.



The counterpoint accompanying the first statement of the theme is used as a counter-subject throughout. There is a great deal of development of a small figure of four notes, the first two in ascending order, the second note repeated and the fourth descending again. This is used in the counterpoint and also in the strettii.

No use of the stretto is found in this fugue and no in-



versions. The subject makes its entrances in the following keys:

F# major - C# major - F# major - G# minor - B major - F# major.

### Fugue in A minor

#### Part I.

The A minor fugue is one of the longest in the "Well Tempered Clavichord," it being 87 measures in length.



The first section contains a mere statement of the subject in all the voices in order with only one measure of episode between the second and third occurrences. The second section is developed by means of inversions and stretti. There are four occurrences of the subject in inversion, first in the soprano in E minor, second in the alto in G major, next in the bass in D minor and fourth in the alto in F major. In measure 26 begins the first stretto between the soprano and tenor in A minor. In measure 31, a three-fold stretto in E minor appears in alto, bass and soprano. The 36th measure contains one between tenor and alto in A minor. This is followed by an episode of 6 measures, in turn followed by a stretto between soprano and bass in C major. Other stretti occur in the following manner:

Measure 48 between alto in F major and tenor D minor modulating to C major. The tenor is inverted.

Measure 53 between bass D minor and soprano D minor inverted.

Measure 57 between soprano in C major inverted and alto C major.

Measure 67 between soprano C major and alto F major both inverted.

Measure 73 between bass and alto in F major, both inverted.









## Fugue in A major

## Part II.

In this fugue we have one of the more simply planned fugues of the "Well Tempered Clavichord."



There are 24 measures in all, with 10 appearances of the subject. There are no inversions and no strettos to vary the work. There is a dotted figure which is developed in the episodes. The subject appears in this order:

A major - E major - A major - E major - F# minor - C# minor  
 A major - D major - E major - A major.



## Fugue in C major -- Mozart.

This is an older form of fugue which has many interesting features.



The fugue contains 67 measures with 20 statements of the subject. There is some use of augmentation and diminution of the theme and a considerable use of the stretto. After the first occurrence of the subject in C major and the second in A minor, there is an episode of three measures and the theme returns to C major. Two more statements, one in E minor and the other in A minor, before the first stretto in measure 15 between the soprano in D minor and the alto in F major. Measure 26 shows the theme in G major followed by a three-fold stretto beginning in measure 28 between the soprano in G major, the alto in C major and the bass slightly augmented in C major.

The remainder of the fugue follows this plan.

Measure 34, soprano in A minor.

Measure 36, bass diminished in A minor.

Measure 37, bass diminished in D minor.

Measure 38, bass diminished in G major.

Measure 39, bass diminished in C major.

Measure 43, stretto, soprano D minor and alto G minor.

Measure 48, stretto, alto F major and soprano F major.

Measure 53, soprano F major.

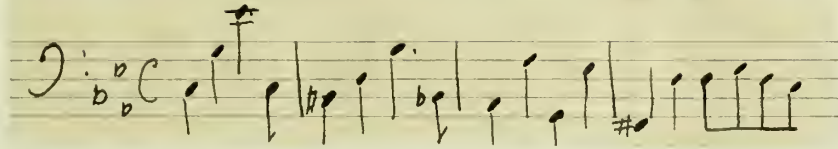
Measure 62, bass F major in octaves.

After one measure of episode the last two measures modulate back to C major.



## Fugue in A minor -- Klengel.

These fugues were written in imitation of the "Well Tempered Clavichord" and are interesting from that standpoint. The subject is 4 measures in length.



In the 70 measures of the fugue there are only 7 statements of the subject. There is a great deal of imitation of the subject, but on the whole the composition seems to be written very freely. The subject enters in the following keys:

C minor - G minor - C minor - G minor - C minor - B major -  
A major.

Nothing particularly interesting is found in the development of this fugue.

## Fugue in E major -- Klengel.

This fugue seems to follow more of the fugue form than the one in A minor. The subject is taken up in the order of bass, alto, and soprano.



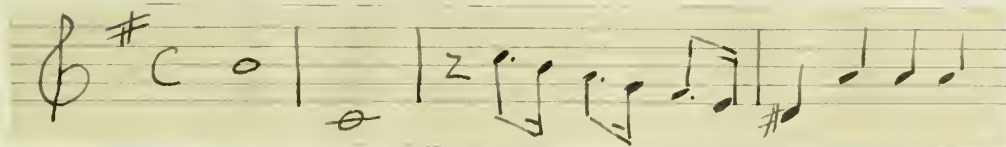
There are 9 occurrences of the theme in the 51 measures with one stretto to add to the interest. In the fourth statement in E<sup>b</sup> major the subject is not strict, but modulates into B<sup>b</sup> major in the next measure. This is followed by F major and the stretto in C major after four measures of episode. There is one more occurrence of the theme in the closing section and the fugue ends upon the tonic chord.





## Fugue in E minor -- Mendelssohn.

This fugue is found in the composition "Prelude and Fugue" in E minor. The subject is a very simple one of two measures.



The four voices enter regularly in the order E minor, B minor, E minor, B minor. There is no other statement until the 21st measure when one appears in B minor. This is followed by a free answer in F# minor in the 24th measure.

The development section beginning in measure 36 is made up of new material for a period of thirteen measures. The subject then appears in A minor in the bass followed by the soprano in A minor. Both subjects are incomplete. There is only one stretto throughout the fugue. This begins in measure 73 between the alto in D minor and the soprano in B minor. There are several hints at the subject in the episode leading up to 102 when the theme appears in E minor. The subject occurs twice more, both times in E minor, and a pedal point is brought in at 108 for 12 measures. The fugue ends with suggestions of the theme.



## Fugue in F major -- Max Reger.

This is a simply built fugue of 36 measures with the subject occurring 7 times.



There is some use of inversion of the theme in the development and one stretto in the closing section. Strict fugue form does not seem to be adhered to, as in the third appearance of the subject there are four interpolated notes, and one other statement is quite free. There is almost no modulatory scheme. The voices occur in the following keys:

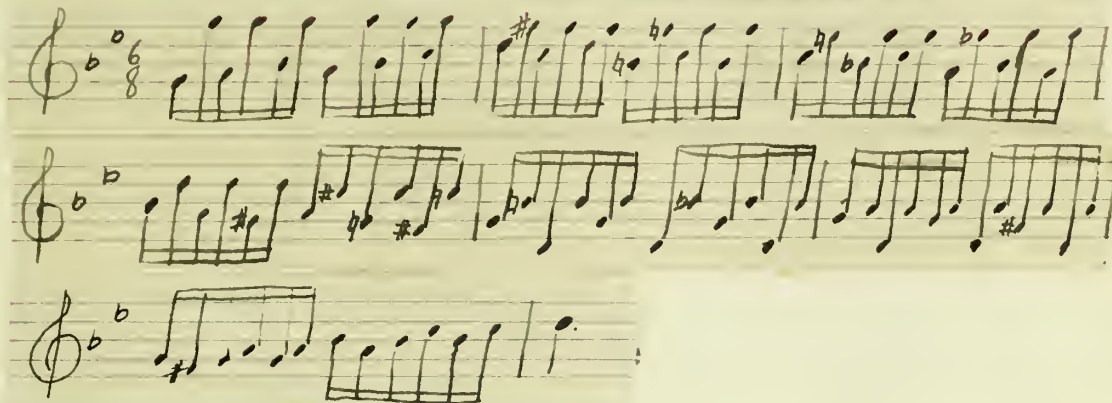
F major - C major - F major - C major - F major - F major -  
F major - F major.

At the end, without any preparation, there appears the third inversion of the tonic chord with the fundamental omitted.



## Fugue in G minor -- Rheinberger.

This is a fugue of 119 measures built upon a subject of 6 measures.



There are only eight occurrences of the subject, due probably to the length of the theme. There is a great deal of imitation throughout the fugue. The entries of the subject are as follows:

G minor - D minor - free statement in D minor - G minor - D minor - B major - F major - E<sup>b</sup>major - C minor, and the fugue comes to a close in the inverted subject in G minor.

## Fugue in A major, Op. 39 -- Rheinberger.

The most noticeable point regarding the fugues of Rheinberger is the great length of their subjects and their loose construction.





There are 12 appearances of the theme in the 150 measures of the fugue and one stretto in the 134th measure in the key of A major. The modulations are quite interesting and follow this plan:

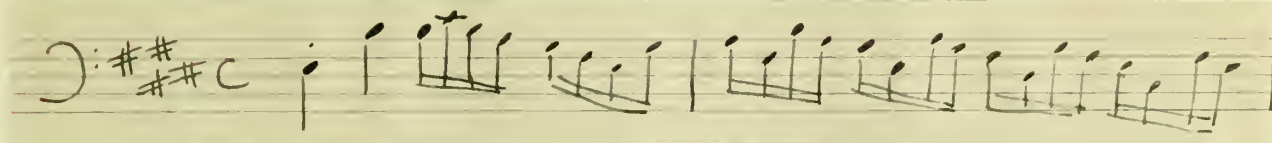
A major - E major - A major - A major - E major - E major -  
F# minor - C# minor - D major - A major - A major - F# minor.





## Fugue in E major -- MacDowell.

The Fugue in E major is a tonal fugue of 73 measures with the subject appearing 19 times.



This seems more loosely constructed than any of the older fugues. The episodes do not have any particular form such as is found in the "Well Tempered Clavichord." There is some use of inversions of the subject and the last occurrence of the theme is a stretto, but otherwise there is nothing to make it interesting except the free episodes and unusual harmonies. The subject appears nine times in E major at first, then inverts in the key of B major twice in the 36th and 38th measures. In measure 40 it returns to E major, and measure 42 to B major, both times inverted. The subject is heard three times in E minor, and in measure 64 a stretto begins between the bass and alto, also in E minor. The fugue ends on the note F# minor, but is followed by another form immediately.



## Conclusion.

In this thesis there has been carried on an examination of the available piano fugues written since the time of Bach, and the conclusions have been drawn from these only. It is interesting to note in the following table the decline in the use of the fugue form of modern writers in comparison with the number of fugues Bach has given to the world in his one work, "The Well Tempered Clavichord."

Table I.

Composers examined.	Number of fugues found.
Mozart	2
Schubert	none
Klengel	48
Mendelssohn	1
Schumann	none
Brahms	none
Saint Saens	none
Reger	3
Rheinberger	7
Tschaikowsky	none
Foote	1

Another interesting point is the general character of the modern fugue subject. In the study of Bach's fugues we notice that the subject is always closely woven and expresses a definite thought. In the later fugues there is more freedom, a certain looseness of construction within the subject itself.



The table which follows shows the growth in freedom of fugue subjects.

Table II.

Bach -----	Close construction, no modulation.
Mozart -----	Close construction, thought definitely expressed, no modulation.
Klengel -----	Rather free, loosely constructed Fugue in C minor, subject modulates to key of dominant.
Mendelssohn -----	Close construction, no modulation.
Reger -----	Simple subject, modulates to key of dominant.
Rheinberger -----	Very free, long subjects generally repeating within themselves. Fugue in A major modulates to key of dominant.
MacDowell -----	Modern freedom, but well expressed thought, no modulation, sequence figure is used.





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