The Forty-Eight preludes and fugues of J. S. Bach
MAI JAN 19 1978

MAI MAY 9 1978

MAI JUN 1 1979

MAI DEC 4 1978

MAI MAY 22 1979

MAI DEC 12 1983

MAI MAR 04 1989

MAI OCT 22 1989
THE FORTY-EIGHT
PRELUDES AND FUGUES
OF J. S. BACH
IN MEMORIAM B.V.D.

‘Tu duca, tu signore, e tu maestro’
(Dante Alighieri; Inferno, Canto II, 140)
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introduction</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### BOOK I

| No. 1 in C major | 13 |
| No. 2 in C minor | 18 |
| No. 3 in C sharp major | 21 |
| No. 4 in C sharp minor | 23 |
| No. 5 in D major | 28 |
| No. 6 in D minor | 30 |
| No. 7 in E flat major | 33 |
| No. 8 in E flat minor | 36 |
| No. 9 in E major | 39 |
| No. 10 in E minor | 41 |
| No. 11 in F major | 43 |
| No. 12 in F minor | 45 |
| No. 13 in F sharp major | 49 |
| No. 14 in F sharp minor | 53 |
| No. 15 in G major | 56 |
| No. 16 in G minor | 57 |
| No. 17 in A flat major | 59 |
| No. 18 in G sharp minor | 61 |
| No. 19 in A major | 63 |
| No. 20 in A minor | 66 |
| No. 21 in B flat major | 68 |
| No. 22 in B flat minor | 69 |
| No. 23 in B major | 72 |
| No. 24 in B minor | 73 |
BOOK II

General Observations .................. 76
No. 1 in C major .................. 83
No. 2 in C minor .................. 84
No. 3 in C sharp major ............... 87
No. 4 in C sharp minor ............... 90
No. 5 in D major .................. 92
No. 6 in D minor .................. 96
No. 7 in E flat major .................. 99
No. 8 in D sharp minor ............... 101
No. 9 in E major .................. 104
No. 10 in E minor .................. 106
No. 11 in F major .................. 108
No. 12 in F minor .................. 110
No. 13 in F sharp major ............... 113
No. 14 in F sharp minor ............... 115
No. 15 in G major .................. 119
No. 16 in G minor .................. 121
No. 17 in A flat major .................. 124
No. 18 in G sharp minor ............... 128
No. 19 in A major .................. 131
No. 20 in A minor .................. 134
No. 21 in B flat major .................. 137
No. 22 in B flat minor ............... 139
No. 23 in B major .................. 143
No. 24 in B minor .................. 146
INTRODUCTION

The greatest masters, we are often told, are never great innovators or experimenters, but come rather at the end of a long period of development and are for the most part content to accept the conventions and procedures of their predecessors, which they merely bring to an ultimate point of perfection. Bach is generally pointed to as the supreme example of this type of artist. Dr. Albert Schweitzer, for instance, in his monumental study of the composer, says at the outset that 'Bach is a terminal point. Nothing comes from him; everything merely leads up to him', and most subsequent writers on the subject have unthinkingly echoed this dictum.

It is only partially true. The great artist certainly inherits the rich legacy of the past, but he also adds to it and leaves to posterity a greater wealth than he received. There is no great figure in the history of music who has not in some way or other contributed substantially to the enrichment and expansion of the art, with the possible exception of Brahms, and it is precisely for that reason that many people feel that he is not one of the first rank. He is, you might say, one who has received a vast inheritance which he has handed on to his successors undiminished, perhaps, but also unincreased. The history of music would be the same in all essentials if Brahms had never lived; one cannot say the same of any other great composer—certainly least of all of Bach. It is true that he represents a terminal point in the sense that everything seems to lead up to him and that he had no direct successor to carry on the
tradition that he had inherited and consolidated, but that is not to say that 'nothing comes from him'. For a short time after his death, and even during his life, no doubt, his art may have seemed to be, and probably was, a dead end, a road leading nowhere; the new ideals exemplified in the art of the Mannheim school and Joseph Haydn led music in a very different direction from that of Bach. But this period of neglect and eclipse did not last long. Its end is generally ascribed to the year 1829, when the young Mendelssohn successfully revived the St. Matthew Passion after the lapse of about a century, but that is only true so far as the general public were concerned; his influence had begun to work on composers, secretly, occultly, long before this. It is even doubtful whether it ever really disappeared. Already Mozart, we are told by his biographer Rochlitz, was transported on coming by chance across a motet of Bach, and said, 'That is indeed something from which we can learn.' That he did so learn, too, is seen clearly in many of his later works, in which contrapuntal writing plays an important part; the Fugue in C minor for two pianos, a three-part fugue for piano, and such things as the last movement of the G major Quartet, the last movement of the Jupiter, the Magic Flute Overture, and the duet for armed men in the same work, based upon an old German chorale which is treated in the contrapuntal, imitative manner of the old master—so much so, indeed, that one might easily imagine that it was he, and not Mozart, who had written it. Beethoven, again, was deeply influenced by what he knew of Bach's music, especially in his later work, and from the time of Mendelssohn onwards there is hardly a composer of any importance, except possibly
Berlioz, during the nineteenth century, who is not profoundly indebted to him; and this is equally true of the romantic revolutionaries and the champions of traditionalism—of Liszt, Chopin, and Wagner, on the one hand, of Mendelssohn, Schumann, and Brahms, on the other. The influence of Bach, moreover, continues to grow progressively as we approach the present day, when it is no exaggeration to say that there is not a single composer of eminence who does not, theoretically at least, seek to follow in his footsteps—with, once more, a French exception, Debussy—and who does not claim him as his model and master; no revolution of the left or reaction of the right that is not carried out in his name. The literary and pictorial descriptiveness of many of the cantatas has been adduced in support of the similar elements in the symphonic poems of Richard Strauss; on the other hand, the abstract, purely musical, quality of so much of his work has inspired the neo-classical later Stravinsky into precisely the opposite tendencies. Darius Milhaud, quoting a canon by Bach in which the two parts are in definitely separate keys throughout, triumphantly hails him as the father of polytonality and the justification of his own activities; Bach is equally evidently the ancestor of atonality, not merely because he was the first composer to adopt the principle of equal temperament in tuning, which alone made composition in twelve tones possible, but also directly, by virtue of his counterpoint and his chromatic harmony.

Every one, in fact, can find in Bach precisely what he wishes to find, because everything is contained in him. It is symbolically significant that, such was the great prestige of the Bach family in music, the name of Bach,
in his native Thuringia, was synonymous with ‘musician’; for Bach is, in truth, a kind of compendium and epitome of musical art—when we speak of the art of music we might just as well speak of the art of Bach. The very letters of his name are music, forming as they do in German nomenclature a pregnant and deeply expressive theme which has inspired many composers of every tendency, starting from his own Art of Fugue, through Schumann and Liszt (even Beethoven, who in the year of his death was engaged in planning an overture on the theme) up to Schönberg, in whose recent Variations for Orchestra, op. 31, it plays a prominent part.

So far is it, then, from the truth that ‘Nothing comes from him’ that it would be nearer the truth to say that there is nothing in music to-day that has not come from him. In the same way that he summed up everything that had gone before him, so he anticipated everything that has succeeded him; it is even probable that every future development that the art has in store will be shown to have its origin and justification in Bach. He bestrides the world of music like a Colossus; there is no other composer of such gigantic historical stature and importance. The only figure in any art with whom one could compare him in this respect is Dante Alighieri, who similarly seems to stand between the ancient and the modern worlds, summing up the one and anticipating the other, and creating the Italian language almost single-handed, by the sheer force of his genius. But Dante represents one national literary tradition only, among many; Bach stands for the whole of music. And out of all his gigantic, wellnigh fabulous output it is

1 In Germany the letter B represents B flat, and H, B natural.
the Forty-eight Preludes and Fugues which best exemplify the amazing duality of his genius, both its 'passé-ism' and its futurism. In some numbers we feel the pull of the tradition which goes back through Palestrina to the Netherlanders, and from them to Gregorian chant itself, the fountain-head of all European music; in others we hear the tones and accents of the modern world, and a hint of those of the music that is yet to come.

The Forty-eight were not conceived as forming one group. The first twenty-four were completed in 1722, the second in 1744—twenty-two years later. Only the first set originally bore the title Das wohltemperirte Klavier, which has since been applied to both; the second set were merely designated as 'Twenty-four new Preludes and Fugues' by the composer, and there is no reason to suppose that he intended them to be regarded as a sequel or addition to the former. There is, I feel, this difference between the two sets, considered as wholes: that while the quality of each individual number of the second may be as high as that of the constituents of the first, the latter (i.e. the first) is the more consistent and homogeneous of the two. Not only is one conscious of a definite logic in the sequence of the numbers, and a spiritual relation between them, but one also feels that the particular key in which each number is written is the inevitable, the absolutely right key. The second set appears more to be a collection of excellent pieces which have not been conceived in relation to each other; the keys, moreover, are sometimes felt to be arbitrary in comparison with those of the first book—one can perfectly well imagine some of them in other keys than those in which they appear.
Transposition does not affect their essence; the sequence of moods, too, has not the same logic and necessity as in the earlier collection. One might define the difference between the two volumes as that which exists between a sonnet sequence, and a volume of sonnets written at various times without relation to each other, and only brought together later. In addition, it may be observed that Sir Donald Tovey is of the opinion that the later twenty-four are not consistently conceived in terms of the clavichord, as are the earlier, but sometimes suggest the very different medium of the harpsichord. This would seem to bear out the above conclusions.

The Berlin autograph of Das wohltemperirte Klavier bears an inscription of which the following is a translation: 'The well-tempered Clavier; or, Preludes and Fugues on every Tone and Semitone, with the major third Ut, Re, Mi, and minor third Re, Mi, Fa. For the Use and Profit of Young Musicians anxious to learn, and as a Pastime for others already expert in the Art. Composed and sent forth by Johann Sebastian Bach, at present Capellmeister and Director of Chamber-music at the princelely Court of Anhalt-Cothen. Anno 1722.'

The meaning and significance of the title, 'The well-tempered Clavier', is well known, but had perhaps better be repeated here for the benefit of those to whom it is not. In music previous to Bach's time the keyboard instruments were tuned in such a way that the intervals, while scientifically correct and aesthetically satisfactory in some few keys, were incorrect and unsatisfactory in others—the more remote ones. 'Equal temperament' means the tuning of the intervals of the chromatic scale in such a way that, although scienti-
fically incorrect in all keys, they would be aesthetically tolerable in all. It might perhaps be going too far to say that this revolutionary innovation was primarily due to Bach's initiative; its theoretic desirability had been recognized for a long time before him, and ultimately it would have been adopted without him. The fact remains that he appears to have been the first practical and practising musician to write a work conceived for and, indeed, only executable by means of, this new method of tuning. No better evidence than this could be found of the futuristic outlook of Bach, to which reference has been made above. He was, in fact, even in the conventional sense of the word, the most 'advanced' composer of his age, apart from anything else.

A few words concerning the nature of fugue may perhaps not be amiss here. Fugue is, practically speaking, the only tolerably strict musical form that there is. Sonata is loosely described as a form, but in practice you will find that a composer can call anything a sonata (or a symphony, which is formally the same thing), and 'get away with it'; but you cannot call any piece of music a fugue. At the same time it is not as strict a form as, say, a sonnet is, consisting as it does of a fixed number of accents in a fixed number of lines, and demanding a fixed scheme of rhymes. Even according to the medicine-men and witch-doctors of musical theory, who have made fugue their special preserve, there is always a certain amount of latitude in the procedure that can be followed. The amount of latitude that Bach permits himself, incidentally, may be gauged by the fact that none of the recognized authorities who have written treatises on the subject—such as Fux, Albrechtsberger, or Cherubini—ever even
mentions him. In the form as Bach practised it only one principle is invariable—that of the exposition so-called, in which the subject is first announced alone, and then answered by another voice, while the first voice continues with a counterpoint to it. This counterpoint, however, may or may not be a regular counter-subject, as it is termed, which recurs throughout the fugue. (In this connexion it may be mentioned that in eighteen out of the forty-eight there is no regular counter-subject.) Again, the nature of the answer mentioned above may vary; it may either be what is termed 'real' or it may be 'tonal'. In the former the subject is repeated, note for note, in another key—almost invariably the dominant, or fifth above; in the latter the subject is altered in such a way that where the tonic originally appears in the subject, the dominant appears in the answer, and vice versa, and with some subjects this may sometimes involve the alteration of other subsidiary notes of the subject. A particularly succinct example of what can happen in this way is afforded by the first fugue of the second book, in which the subject

\[ \text{Ex.1} \]

is answered thus:

\[ \text{Ex.2} \]

It need hardly be pointed out that such a variability between subject and answer often entails difficult problems of texture and construction, especially where a
counter-subject is concerned, since a melody which will accord perfectly with the subject may prove entirely discrepant with the answer. In consequence it will generally be found that the more transcendent feats of contrapuntal virtuosity are the 'real' fugues; the 'tonal' fugues are chiefly distinguished for their freedom, poetic charm, and fantasy generally. One cannot build skyscrapers in sound on shifting foundations. In this connexion it may be observed that twenty-seven out of the forty-eight are tonal, and twenty-one real.

After the exposition, however, in which the voices enter one by one with subject and answer alternately according to the number of parts, almost anything may—and generally does—happen with Bach. Only a few, and they the weakest of the Forty-eight, have a similar form apart from the expositions; the others are all different. For the most part, too, the chief interest does not consist so much in what he can do with the theme itself as in the way in which the dramatic structure develops from the fragments of the theme, and the whole is held together by recurrence of the complete subject itself. In a Bach fugue it is not enough to study the subject and its partner, if any, and to take the rest for granted; it is just that rest that matters most, as often as not—more often than not, I should say. Many misguided people imagine that they are listening to and appreciating a Bach fugue if they diligently fix their ears, so to speak, on the theme, and follow it closely throughout without paying any attention to what is going on around; and unfortunately this erroneous notion is fostered by many pianists who insist on thumping out the subject whenever and wherever it appears,
even when it is for the moment merely the thread on which some exquisite and much more important chain of thought is suspended. Such people—and they are, I am afraid, the majority—remind one of those motorists who have no eyes for anything but the road and the other cars upon it, and for whom the scenery through which they are passing has no interest; or those tourists for whom a foreign city consists merely in its churches, museums, and other show-places, and who have no interest in the lives and customs of the people who inhabit it, or the ever-changing kaleidoscope of its streets by day and night. Such people miss everything, and so will the listeners to Bach's fugues miss everything if they insist on gluing their ears on to the subject and the various metamorphoses and transformations it undergoes, and neglecting everything else.

As for the various ingenious technical procedures employed by the composer in constructing a fugue, it is not really necessary for the listener to be acquainted with them in order to enjoy the music. On the other hand, there is no doubt that a certain knowledge of them can enhance intellectually the purely emotional and sensuous delight which alone, ultimately, determines the value of any work of art.

The chief of these technical devices are augmentation, diminution, inversion, and stretto. Some of these terms more or less explain themselves. Augmentation signifies the presentation of the subject in longer note-values, diminution in shorter; in inversion the theme is turned upside down, as it were, going up a third, for example, where the original went down a third, and so on. Stretto occurs when the subject and answer are brought closer together, canonically—a canon being,
of course, the combination of a theme with itself at one, two, or more measures of distance, as if several people were to repeat the same sentence, each starting a few seconds after the other. While nothing could be more ridiculous than this in words, in music it is, and always has been, one of the most effective and telling devices in the composer’s armoury; in fugue particularly the stretto provides as a general rule the moment of highest tension and climax, both structurally and emotionally.

As I have already said, it is not strictly necessary for the ordinary listener to pay much attention to all these technical procedures; they merely constitute the scaffolding, so to speak, by means of which the composer builds up his tonal edifice, with which alone the listener need be concerned.

Two groups of statistics may be suggestive. Out of the entire forty-eight fugues no fewer than twenty-six are in three parts; of the rest nineteen are in four parts, only two in five, and one solitary specimen in two. It follows, therefore, that three-part writing—rather than four, which is what one would have expected—is the staple allowance. Again, the number of fugues in duple rhythm is more than twice that in triple—thirty-three to fifteen. This latter point seems to confirm the impression which most workers in contrapuntal form must have experienced: namely, that two- and four-rhythms lend themselves more freely to complex contrapuntal combinations than triple rhythms—precisely why it would be difficult to say. But it is certainly a fact that the most consummate feats of contrapuntal virtuosity among the Forty-eight are almost without exception in square, as opposed to what one may figuratively call circular, rhythm; those in the latter, as a general rule,
are distinguished by their lyrical and imaginative rather than by their architectural qualities.

Whether in the one category or the other, however, Bach's supremacy over all other composers who have attempted fugal form is unquestioned. If one were asked to name the greatest symphonist, or opera-composer, or song-writer, or anything else, one might legitimately hesitate before giving an answer; there could be no hesitation where fugue is concerned. The question, in fact, could never arise; no one would be so foolish as to ask it, for there could only be one answer—Bach.

So far as the preludes are concerned there is little that can be profitably said about them collectively. For the most part they conform to one or other of three clearly recognizable types; firstly, the graceful elaboration of a series of harmonic progressions, as if in improvisation; secondly, a more polyphonic and sometimes even fugal style of writing; thirdly, a cantabile melody with accompaniment. All the preludes of the first set belong to one or other of these types, the former comprising the larger number of examples; in the second set one finds in addition a few specimens in the old sonata form, on a miniature scale.

In conclusion, I should like to add that I am greatly indebted to the late Bernard van Dieren for valuable suggestions regarding some of the earlier numbers in the first book. I also owe much to the admirable introductory notes of Sir Donald Tovey in his edition of the Forty-eight.
No better exemplification than the First Prelude could be found of the contention adumbrated in the foregoing essay, to the effect that the first book of twenty-four is a work conceived as a whole, for it would be impossible to imagine a piece more perfectly fitted to serve as an introduction to what is to come; it immediately demonstrates the tendencies, moods, structural intentions and connexions of the whole coming opus. It is like an entrance, a portal, an archway leading into the temple, and it is symbolically appropriate that one Charles Gounod should, in his *Meditation on the First Prelude of Bach*, have scribbled a blatant tune over it, just as the illiterate tourist scribbles his name on the façade of an historical monument or building. Let it be admitted that every musician might, in some way or other, be similarly inspired to melodic utterance by this perfectly articulated structure with its aura of iridescent tints suggestive of so many possibilities, a kind of accompaniment to our inner thoughts—but only a fool and a vulgarian would attempt to supply one, or to realize them.

The construction is the perfection of simplicity, but fine-spun like a spider's web, in which there is a centre where the vibrations are caught with full force as much from the furthest periphery as from the nearest. With all its deceptive simplicity, in fact, it is wrought with
exquisite subtlety and delicacy. It will be noted that although seemingly in simple broken chords it is in five-part harmonic writing throughout.

The question whether there is any relation between Bach’s preludes and fugues is an interesting one. It has been rightly said that the connexion between them cannot be very close if there is room for argument on the point, and certainly it must be admitted that in many cases it is impossible to find any definite relation. On the other hand, in quite a remarkable number of cases an interrelation can be clearly perceived, and there are also instances in which it can be equally clearly felt, even when it is impossible to show it by chapter and verse. On the whole I think it can safely be said that in the majority of instances there is some kind of connexion between prelude and fugue, however remote.

In the first we have an example of a very subtle connexion. At first sight one would not expect to find any at all, but if we immobilize the first bars of the prelude into plain chords, as follows:

Ex.3

we clearly find a resemblance, characterized principally by the rising fourth and falling fifth, to the theme of the following fugue:¹

Ex.4

¹ I have not attempted to provide dynamic or other expressive
As if to show what we may expect of the author and of the work, the first fugue is at once one of the most complex and most profoundly thought out in design. Its very mastery has something stern that would be almost forbidding if its virtuosity were not so dazzling. Not only is there never a moment’s suggestion of effort, but, amazingly enough, there is, both for uninformed listeners and for those initiates who have preserved their innocence, an air of improvisation about it. So naturally and unassumingly does it move that it almost sounds as if it were made up as it goes along. In reality, however, the subject from which the whole fugue un-coils—there is no counter-subject in it, and no other thematic material—is not of the kind that was ever just playfully extemporized by any man, whatever his genius. On the contrary, its construction must have cost even Bach himself the most concentrated application and intense effort.

The device that, more than any other, is a test of mastery in fugal writing—namely, stretto—is most lavishly used in this piece. Few, if any, of the other fugues equal it in that. Stretto is the master device that most composers reserve to the end and show off as a climax at the end of their fugues. Once they have done this there is nothing further in the way of surprise left to them; they have shot their bolt, called out the Old Guard. Bach here, however, with unparalleled audacity, manages to start with one immediately after the exposition when the theme and its answer have barely run through the four voices, at bar 7.

indications in the musical examples which follow; they vary greatly according to the taste of different editors and players. Since the purpose of the illustrations is purely structural the omission is of no consequence.
A theme has to be built specially to allow of a stretto, for every note of the melody must make harmonic sense with others preceding it by a few beats. Hence the difficulty of making a theme that will obey this condition several times, i.e. beats three, four, and five must all fit one. It must not be forgotten, too, that each such relation must hold good for all subsequent notes. If the composer can make these entries at any interval the task is greatly simplified, but it is always a hard one when he has the very restricted choice which the relationship between the voices in a fugal exposition leaves him, because the subject and its answer must be always at the distance of a fourth or a fifth.

In this fugue Bach has used the device of stretto which few composers have been able to apply to anything but the most primitive themes, in such a way that he achieves not merely a florid and yet singing line, but the entries follow each other so closely that there is no possibility of extra matter being introduced to soften the relationship of two or three parts and reveal, or rather, explain, doubtful harmonic clashes by completing the resultant chords with extra notes. He must go on with the subjects and answers themselves after they re-enter as new parts, because he is bound to his strict canonic treatment, and they run on to the length required, which itself is determined by the dimensions of the subject on its first exposition. The miraculous achievement of Bach is that he keeps it constantly
singing melodiously all together when there are so many needs to attend to, and while he is as shackled as he seems to be, and then over and above this he gives to the whole piece independently a structure that relies on proportions of so many bars. This plan again runs parallel with a colour scheme, the harmonies becoming more involved (not because they must on account of the polyphony, but with deliberate impressionistic intent) towards the middle, where they glow in many tints, after which they slowly sober down again to the comparative monochrome of the ending, as of the beginning.

As if to make it quite clear at the very outset of his work that he does not intend to be bound by the doctrines and theories of the fugal pundits, Bach starts off with an irregular exposition; the subject in the alto and its answer in the soprano are followed first by the answer in the tenor and then by the subject in the bass instead of vice versa. In the stretto alluded to above (Ex. 5) which now ensues, the canon is on the third note between soprano and tenor, the other parts answering at the full distance. After the bass has completed the stretto, the music modulates to A minor, in which a certain harmonic and colouristic intensification takes place, which in its turn is followed by a series of strettos drawn ever closer and tighter, modulating all the while through a chain of different keys. On arriving back in the tonic the tension suddenly relaxes, and the fugue comes to a tranquil end with a flourish built upon the notes of the subject twice repeated running through one and a half octaves. The following is one of the most masterly strettos in the work, occurring about half-way through, after the modulation to A minor:
I. 2

PRELUDE AND FUGUE (THREE PARTS)
IN C MINOR

Dr. Schweitzer, in his book on Bach, says that any one thoroughly conversant with the composer will at once see that this prelude, among others, does not show the same maturity as most of its fellows; but it is difficult to see exactly why he should think so. In his immature work Bach generally writes in four-, eight-, and sixteen-square bar-periods; here the clauses are distinctively asymmetrical, on the contrary, and free in their rhythmical articulation. The first period, for example, consists of two sections of seven bars each, and the second of ten bars with three added. It is a proudly defiant, passionate, restless piece, suggesting, as Busoni has said somewhere, the flickering flames of the fire reflected in the restless rush of the stream.

Here, again, one may note a definite connexion between the prelude and the fugue which follows it, in the figuration with which the former opens:

Ex.7

and the affinity is made even clearer in a subsequent development of the figure:
Here is the subject of the fugue itself:

This fugue has been greatly praised for its contrapuntal skill, the logic with which the counter-subject is treated, and its close imitations. In reality it is a most simply made piece, one of the simplest in the book, and on account of its strict symmetry so easily followed as to be popularly acceptable everywhere.

The simple and charming theme with its obvious rhythm does not demand, or, for that matter, lend itself to, the same elaborate and exhaustive treatment as that of its predecessor. It does not, for example, permit of strettos. Hence, therefore, the stress and weight laid on the counter-subject, which constantly recurs throughout.

Hence, also, especially as there are only three parts, the necessity for important episodes that treat some motive of the theme freely. These are of frequent occurrence, the first of them making its appearance before the end of the exposition, after the subject and answer and before the entrance of the third voice.
This little episode, with its emphatic inversion of the counter-subject, prepares a return to the key of C minor which Bach needs for his next, and final, entry in the bass. Hereafter follows a modulatory middle section with the rhythmic motive of the theme alternating between the upper parts, while the descending scale passage of the counter-subject accompanies this dialogue in the bass. In the course of this episode the key of E flat is reached, in which the subject is reintroduced in a fresh guise by the soprano, which then gives out the inversion of the scale passage based on the counter-subject which appeared earlier in the bass, accompanied by thirds in the lower parts. This modulates back to the original key, in which the answer is stated by the middle part with the counter-subject above it. Another episode follows, also founded on material already presented, and characterized by piquant harmonic clashes and false relations:

Ex.12

This paves the way to a triumphant resumption of the subject given out by the soprano, and this is followed by yet another episode consisting of a dialogue between the two upper parts with a brilliant semiquaver scale figuration in the bass. This culminates in another forceful statement of the subject by the latter voice, concluding with a tonic pedal over which the soprano gives it out once more in conclusion. An unusual feature of the
close is the addition of extraneous harmonic parts in the last two bars—a procedure at variance with the strict style of fugal writing, but thoroughly in keeping with the wayward, playful character of the whole piece, which, with all its exquisite finish and formal perfection, is completely lacking in the contrapuntal earnestness and severity of its predecessor. It would be difficult, indeed, to imagine a more complete contrast than that which exists between the two, and it is more than probable that No. 2 was deliberately written with the intention of providing an effective foil to its forerunner.

I. 3

PRELUDE AND FUGUE (THREE PARTS)
IN C SHARP MAJOR

This prelude is one of these sweetly fluting pastoral movements of which Bach alone possesses the secret; for sheer sunny gaiety such as this there is no composer to approach him, except possibly Haydn. The gaiety of Mozart has nearly always a core of sadness to it; that of Scarlatti is apt to be cold and glittering, inhuman and heartless; that of Beethoven and all modern composers is more willed and feverishly compelled than genuinely felt; but the gaiety of Bach is a thing of absolute repose, without a passing shadow even, yet never cold or hard, never self-conscious, always completely effortless. Such is the mood both of the prelude and the fugue which succeeds it. And again there is a thematic connexion between the two, rather more definite and unmistakable than usual this time.
The first three notes for the right hand and the leaping figure in the left clearly constitute the thematic material out of which the fugue subject is built; alternatively, the prelude represents the chips and fragments left over after the building of the fugue. In either case the intimate relation between them is patent.

Pedantically speaking, the answer is tonal in that the first note of the subject, the dominant, is altered in the answer to the tonic, but for the rest the exact intervals are preserved unaltered, the melodic line being too characteristic to permit of any substantial modification. The counterpoint to the answer is a regular counter-subject which goes arm-in-arm with the subject throughout the entire fugue.

The pastoral atmosphere of the whole, the suggestion in the subject of a shepherd’s piping, the close, loving union of subject and counter-subject, all combine to bring before one the picture of a bucolic idyll: no Dresden china shepherds and shepherdesses, however, in silk pants and flounces, but the authentic eclogues
of the antique world, the idylls of Theocritus, the pastoral loves of Daphnis and Chloë. Praise be to the composer who can thus bring into the monkish and scholastic atmosphere of fugue, as others make it, the scents and sounds of fields and woods and valleys!

It follows, by reason of its very nature, that we must not look in this fugue for any astonishing feats of contrapuntal invention or combination. It might even be freely conceded that the developments are somewhat to order and mechanically rather than organically constructed, while the form as a whole is inclined to be loosely knit. There is considerable repetition of episodes which are often merely transposed with only a contrapuntal inversion—a rare procedure in Bach’s fugues, and one which is only found in the more long-winded examples when, as here, the themes have no such strongly contrasted individualities as in the succeeding fugue, No. 4, in C sharp minor, for instance. But these are only the inevitable defects—if defects they are—of its qualities; one cannot expect or desire the same erudite and scholarly discourse from Daphnis and Chloë as from Abélard and Héloïse.

I. 4

PRELUDE AND FUGUE (FIVE PARTS) IN C SHARP MINOR

Dramatically arresting, deliberately planned, beyond doubt, is the contrast between this and the foregoing number. There all is gaiety, light, laughter, joy in life; here we find ourselves in a world beyond joy or sorrow even. At the very outset of the prelude the recitative-like phrases, the solemnity of the melodic line, are
strongly reminiscent of the Passion Music of Bach. Here, indeed, we have Bach the priest, in ceremonial robes, intoning a chant in which we catch an echo of the very incantation that preceded Creation itself. It is a miraculous piece, of the utmost simplicity, so that any child could play it; at the same time there is in it a depth of meaning, a perfection of utterance, to which the greatest artist can hardly do justice.

The connexion here between prelude and fugue is less clearly evident than in those we have hitherto been examining. In the following quotation of the opening bars the accents underline the relevant progressions which link the two pieces together:

Ex.16

Here is the fugue subject:

Ex.17

The connexion may seem somewhat arbitrary and far-fetched, reminiscent of the methods whereby the anagram of Francis Bacon can be detected in a sonnet of Shakespeare; and so it would be were it not for the indisputable affinity of mood and thought which binds the two together—they are of the same flesh, one and indissoluble, whether there is any real thematic interconnexion or not. There could be no other introduction
than this, one feels, to one of the most glorious tonal structures ever conceived by the mind of man.

Everything about this fugue is on the grand scale. It is one of the longest in the whole collection of forty-eight, and one of the only two which are written in five parts; the thematic content is of unexampled richness and diversity, and its melodic lines and curves are like those of a Gothic cathedral, losing themselves in the half-lights of distant arches and transepts.

In the course of the work the first and last notes of the subject are often changed in length, but the characteristic interval of the diminished fourth is always in its right place. Only once is it altered, when it appears in bars 55 and 56 in the soprano part, because of the momentary change to a major key.

Ex.18

The main features of this broadly designed yet intricate fugue is the long deferred and thereby all the more effective appearance of two counter-subjects, their melodic independence, and their treatment in stretto.

The first section brings against the theme a counterpoint which is not a counter-subject proper, but which is treated consistently and exhaustively enough to claim our attention, especially in its continuation when the third entry occurs.

Ex.19

As soon as all the parts have entered with subject and answer, the entries being in regular order from the bass
up to the soprano, the following passage in the bass definitely foreshadows the advent of the first counter-subject, of the first part of which it is an inversion in augmentation:

Ex. 20

Here is the first counter-subject itself, as it originally appears in the soprano:

Ex. 21

Shortly after this triumphant entry, Ex. 19 presents itself humbly in the bass and thenceforth is not seen again. On this final occasion, however, it concludes with the following commonplace and unobtrusive phrase (seemingly), which it leaves behind, as it were, and which blossoms out into the second counter-subject:

Ex. 22

And here is the second counter-subject itself:

Ex. 23

In the whole range of Bach’s creations there is nothing that more clearly bears the signature of genius than this subject. He takes here the phrase which is perhaps the most threadbare and commonplace in the whole of music—the formula which occurs on every page of
sixteenth-century music times without number, the cliché with which every student concludes his exercises in strict counterpoint—and reveals in it a beauty and a splendour which had lain there unsuspected by any other composer. From being a hackneyed tag it suddenly, in Bach's hands, becomes a profound thought. How is this miracle accomplished? The explanation is no doubt partly to be found in the fact that what is elsewhere invariably a cadence, a concluding phrase, a dying fall, is here transformed into a buoyant initial assertion, and is thereby invested with a wholly new significance.

But even this is only one part of the miracle which Bach has here accomplished in creating firstly such a pregnant and yet simple subject, and then in inventing two such superb counter-subjects to it, each of which is a thing of beauty in itself, and yet both of which go together with the subject in a perfect three-part counterpoint, as here, on the first appearance of the second counter-subject:

Ex. 24

This miracle once accomplished, the fugue simply makes itself. With three such themes even a second-rate composer could hardly fail to create a masterpiece if he took sufficient trouble; to describe what Bach makes of it would demand the invention of a superlative to the word 'masterpiece'. One could write a whole book about this fugue alone without exhausting
one part of its splendours; to do justice to the inspired ingenuity of its contrapuntal combinations here one would have to quote it in its entirety. One bar leads into another with such inevitability and such absolute continuity that it is difficult to cut out any single episode and present it in isolation; it is probably the most organically constructed piece of music in existence. With all its consummate virtuosity, however, the most admirable feature of the fugue is its expressive beauty.

It may be observed, in conclusion, that although it is written for five parts, the greater portion of the texture is in four and three: not, it need hardly be said, because Bach found any difficulty in handling five parts—he could have handled twenty without so much as noticing it—as because he chooses to husband the full weight of his resources for crucial moments.

I. 5

PRELUDE AND FUGUE (FOUR PARTS)
IN D MAJOR

Dulce est desipere in loco, and in no place is wholesome relaxation more in keeping than after the tension and austerities of the great Prelude and Fugue in C sharp minor. In the same way that Bach wisely precedes this colossus with a light-hearted and comparatively ingenuous number, so he follows it in the same way.

The D major Prelude is again one of these pieces of purely happy music of which Bach possessed the secret and the virtual monopoly. Even the dramatic-looking diminished sevenths and the cadenza at the end are mere playful make-belief, a mere pretence at being serious.
The connexion between prelude and fugue, though real, is again of a tenuous and remote order, such as that which exists between two words in different languages which have the same deeply hidden root in common; the first phrase of the fugue, for example, is simply a sophistication of the first of the prelude and, again, the mood is clearly congruous.

Ex.25

Ex.26

It is interesting to note, moreover, a certain fundamental relation between this subject and that of the first fugue in C major.

Ex.27

At the same time, no two fugues could possibly be more completely dissimilar in character. The C major is a grandly austere piece, full of the most arcane and recondite investigations of contrapuntal problems; the D major is thoroughly frivolous and innocent of any subtleties or complexities, either of thought or texture or design. It is in conception one of the least contrapuntal of the Forty-eight—perhaps the very least. For the most part the voices move together in the same rhythm, and the harmonic implications of their combination are of much greater moment than their independent existences.
The extravagant initial flourish of the subject is the most striking feature of the piece, and dominates it from beginning to end. Apart from the concluding three bars, there is only one bar in which it does not occur. There is no regular counter-subject, but the figure marked with a bracket in the following quotation gives rise to a progression which plays an important role in the various episodes:

Ex. 28

The whole piece is so straightforward and simple, so lacking in any deep implications of any kind, that analysis is wholly superfluous. A charming and admirable piece of music, it is one of the most unfugal of fugues ever written, though none the worse for that. Coming where it does, it serves its purpose as a foil to one of the most transcendent feats of contrapuntal ingenuity and intricacy ever created.

I. 6

PRELUDE AND FUGUE (THREE PARTS)
IN D MINOR

This prelude is of an improvisatory, toccata-like character, chiefly notable for its finely wrought, boldly stepping bass, and also for the daring and originality of some of the harmonic progressions. The chromatic cadenza at the close might have been written by Liszt, and if it had been would have been heartily abused and denounced as fustian, tinsel, and so forth, one can be sure; but since it is by Bach it passes without comment.
Commonplace though it may seem to-day, this passage is, historically considered, of a rare boldness considering the time at which it was written.

Here for the first time it is impossible to detect any definite relation between prelude and fugue. The character of this latter is, once more, in sharp and striking contrast to its predecessor; it is as highly artificial, in the best sense of the word, i.e. full of artifice, as the D major is homely and unsophisticated—as ingenious as the latter is ingenuous. The harmonic idiom of the D major is ripe, full, almost luscious; that of the D minor rather dry, thin, austere, and even tart. Some of the progressions, indeed, are decidedly odd, experimental, and daring. Note, for example, those in the following quotation:

Ex. 29

In particular the triple semi-tonal clash of G, G sharp, and A must be wellnigh, if not absolutely, unique in the music of the period, or of any period up till quite modern times. Harmonic clashes, indeed, are a prominent feature in the character of this fugue; there is hardly a bar that has not some piquant dissonance.

The subject conforms to a type of which Bach was very fond, beginning with a scale passage, then a little curling fioritura in the middle, and then a bold upward leap. Compare with the subject of the C major, for example. Completely different though they are in many
respects, they are both constructed according to the same formula, which seems to lend itself particularly well to contrapuntal treatment.

The clear-cut, immediately recognizable profile of this subject renders it eminently suitable to inversion and other forms of alteration. However much it is pulled about it can always be identified, and never loses its sharply defined individuality. In all its metamorphoses, moreover, the harmonic foundation is strictly maintained throughout the duration of the fugue. The characteristic counter-subject—

plays almost as important a part in the fugue as the subject itself; few are the bars in which it does not appear.

The chief interest of the fugue consists in the resourceful exploitation of the devices of stretto and inversion, and the combination of both on occasion; in one place, for example, the subject is combined with its own inversion in stretto.
In the concluding bars, too, both the direct and the inverted subject are set against each other in thirds, the number of parts being augmented for the purpose:

This is a spare, sinewy, athletic, somewhat uncompromising piece, certainly not one of the most popular in the collection, commanding respect and admiration rather than affection or enthusiasm.

I. 7

PRELUDE AND FUGUE (THREE PARTS)
IN E FLAT MAJOR

This so-called prelude and fugue are the most strangely assorted couple in the entire Forty-eight. The former, indeed, is no prelude at all, but a majestic fugue on the grand scale, more than twice the length and many times the weight of the fugue which succeeds it. At the same time there is an obvious connexion between the two. Here is the fugal subject of the soi-disant prelude:

And here is the subject of the fugue proper:
The latter looks, sounds, and no doubt deliberately is, a kind of light-hearted caricature of its imposing and solemn forerunner. The fugue, in fact, mocks at and makes fun of the prelude in the same way that the last movement of Liszt’s ‘Faust’ Symphony satirizes the preceding movements, but with this important difference, that it is always good-humoured; you may say that it constitutes the harlequinade which succeeds the solemn drama that has taken place.

To return to the prelude. The semiquaver figure with which it starts becomes eventually the counter-subject of the fugal fantasia which follows. After being treated in extemporary fashion in dialogue form between the two hands, it gives place to a solemn piece of four-part contrapuntal writing which leads to the enunciation of the subject in the bass. A short way farther on the subject is combined with the counter-subject, which has already been adumbrated, thus:

\[\text{Ex. 36}\]

The answer is exact, but irregular, in that it appears in the subdominant instead of the dominant, as is customary. After the exposition has run its course a series of strettos are introduced, and thenceforward the subjects are combined with unfailing resource and with a never-flagging sense of onward movement and growing climax right through to the impressive close.

In the fugue proper the answer to the subject is for the first time in the book strikingly modified. Compare
it with the subject quoted above (Ex. 35) and it will be seen to differ from it in several important respects.

Ex.37

One good reason for this drastic modification is to be found in the fact that the subject itself modulates into the dominant; if the answer were to progress similarly, the resultant remoteness of key would seriously dislocate the exposition. An inevitable consequence of the difference between subject and answer, however, is that it is impossible to construct a counter-subject which will go unaltered with both. The theme which appears as counter-subject to the answer—

Ex.38

has to be modified thus when set against the repetition of the subject by the third voice:

Ex.39

This instability of subject-matter necessarily militates against the building up of an imposing architectural structure such as we find in the big fugues with regular answer and counter-subject. But this is no loss, because the very nature of the subject and of the whole fugue is opposed to the monumental; its spirit is wayward and capricious, mocking and volatile, and its thematic ambiguity only serves to enhance this character. Scholastic devices are conspicuous by their absence; here are no augmentations, diminutions, or
inversions—not even a stretto. The arpeggio figure, incidentally, with which the subject concludes, becomes detached in the course of the development and virtually acquires independent thematic status.

I. 8

Prelude and Fugue (Three Parts)

In E Flat Minor

There are occasions on which the writer on music feels more than usually superfluous, works to which no written tribute, however eloquent, can hope to do justice, and this prelude in E flat minor is one of them. Its utter simplicity renders any attempt at analysis or explanation ridiculous; its depth of emotional expression reaches down to levels to which no mere words can penetrate. No composer has ever combined this simplicity of expression and depth of emotion as Bach has; nowhere has he so consummately achieved the feat as in this miraculous piece of music.

Once again, as in the C sharp minor Prelude, one is reminded of his Passion Music; there is a religious tenderness here, but also a dramatic breadth as, for example, in the mighty recitativo for the bass in bar 18, which, following on the passionate ascent of the soprano before, is like the rending of the veil that hid the holiest. This middle section, incidentally, breathes a certain spirit of revolt, of protest; the lamentation of the beginning and the close is, on the contrary, one of resignation and acceptance. This is no prelude, but a postlude, an epilogue, a meditation on a tragedy that has gone before. It is a Pietà in sound: τετελεσταυ, it seems to say, ‘it is finished’.
To create such a piece as this is already an unsurpassed achievement; to conceive of one that can follow after it without a sense of anti-climax is perhaps even more remarkable, yet Bach succeeds in doing so; the fugue in E flat minor is not merely one of the finest of the entire Forty-eight, but probably the only one which, in emotional pitch and key, could properly follow on what had gone before. In construction it is as complex and intricate as the prelude was straightforward and simple; at the same time it is deeply moving, but with a kind of abstract, disembodied passion. You cannot, in fact, say that this music is sad or that it is gay; it includes and yet is beyond both. But it is in the combination of this deep, transcendent emotion with the non plus ultra of inspired craftsmanship that this fugue is well-nigh supreme. With the possible exception of the C sharp minor this is the most consummately wrought, and at the same time moving, piece with which we have so far dealt; one which is equally appealing and impressive, whether viewed as a contrapuntal structure or as a mystical hymn. It stands in interesting contrast to that other masterpiece in that the latter has two regular counter-subjects and the plot of the fugue consists largely in the complex triangular relationships to which they give rise; the E flat minor, on the other hand, has no counter-subject at all, like the C major, and the action, so to speak, is entirely self-evolved, consisting of strettos, inversions, and augmentations of the one and only subject, which is:

Ex. 40

[Musical notation image]
This fugue provides an exception to the general rule that the most elaborate and artificial fugal constructions are ‘real’; this one has a tonal answer, with tonic replying to dominant. It is true, however, that this only involves the alteration of one note, and since there is no regular counter-subject the consequences are immaterial. On the contrary, the latitude permitted by the two alternative versions of the theme gives rise to a diversity of contrapuntal treatment without which the incessant reiteration of the theme might become wearisome. Altogether, including inversions, augmentations, and so forth, there are at least some thirty entries of it in the course of the eighty-seven bars, the majority of which, it is interesting to note, embody the answer rather than the subject proper.

Concerning this astonishing masterpiece one can only repeat what was said about the great C sharp minor, but with even greater emphasis, that it would require at least a large and bulky volume to do justice to the sheer contrapuntal virtuosity revealed in every bar, and to the way in which it is all kept strictly subservient to the expressive intention. In this respect there are few things in the entire range of musical literature to equal it, the chief reason being that, whatever Bach does to the subject—whether he turns it upside-down or stretches it to breaking-point like a piece of elastic—it remains a thing of beauty. Indeed, the most deeply moving moments in the piece coincide with the supremest artifice, as, for example, in bar 24, where one encounters a particularly lovely sounding stretto in all three parts at only a crotchet’s distance—(Ex. 41)—and, most exciting and momentous of all, the passage towards the close, in which the theme appears in aug-
mentation in one part, double augmentation in another, and in normal form in the third—

Note how, from this triumphant apotheosis of the theme in augmentation for the soprano, the melodic line sinks through a compass of nearly two octaves, and then mounts up again to a serene close.

I. 9

PRELUDE AND FUGUE (THREE PARTS)
IN E MAJOR

This prelude constitutes a notable exemplification of Bach’s timelessness, of his power to range the centuries and find himself at home in all alike, a cosmopolitan in time as others are in space. If we try to look at this melodic line objectively, as if we had never seen or heard it before—
our first thought would probably be of Chopin; but at the last phrase of the quotation, with its grace and poise and lyrical expressiveness, the name which instantly leaps to the mind is Bellini. And indeed it is an authentic Bellinian melody, not merely in its line and its romantic sentiment, but in the very lilt—12/8, Bellini's favourite rhythm. Compare this tune, for example, with the lovely 'D'un pensiero' from La Sonnambula; it is a twin birth, the tempo is different, that is all.

Simple though it is, this prelude provides an interesting object-lesson of the way in which Bach, in these works, as opposed to the Brandenburg Concertos, for example, builds in groups of three bars, three constituent figures, and so forth, rather than in the square two, four, and eight periods.

While it is impossible to trace the slightest thematic resemblance here between prelude and fugue, there is no instance in the Forty-eight where there is a closer spiritual kinship and emotional sequence. The former breathes the air of early spring, the latter is spring in full flood; the little work—it is probably the shortest of the whole Forty-eight—bourgeons from beginning to end. Despite its slightness and gossamer delicacy, it is remarkably organic in construction. Take the very subject itself:

Ex. 44

It is impossible to say where subject ends and counter-subject begins; they are both of a piece. To analyse this little masterpiece would be to dissect a butterfly; it is enough to say that the simple melodic formula of the
counter-subject—or is it part of the subject?—dominates the entire work, occurring in all bars, without exception, and filling most of them. No scholastic devices tarnish the radiant and glittering surface of this music with the pale cast of thought.

I. 10

PRELUDE AND FUGUE (TWO PARTS)
IN E MINOR

Busoni, in his fine edition of *Das wohltemperirte Klavier*, says of this Prelude in E minor that it is ‘a great and broadly conceived chant, now and then rising to passionate heights, breathing an air of sadness, but not indulgence in it, or discouragement’. Others, on the contrary, find this one of the least distinguished or attractive pieces in the collection. The truth, as so often, is probably between the two extremes, namely, that it is a piece grandly planned, on the heroic scale, but somewhat lacking in inspiration. It is a remarkable illustration of Bach’s power of constructing a whole movement out of a single germ of a figure of accompaniment which runs its course unbroken throughout; it is also interesting and historically significant in that it foreshadows to a great extent the Chopinesque conception of rubato melody set against an unwavering accompanying part. This broadly shaped, if somewhat undistinguished, cantabile stretches out over twenty-two bars; it is then abruptly abandoned, the tempo quickens, and the rest of the movement is devoted to the development and extended discussion of the figure of accompaniment alone. Once again one sees here at
work the principle of contrast and diversity which
governs Bach’s choice of sequence; no more striking
antithesis could be conceived than that between this
piece and its immediate predecessors in the major.
There all is glow and warm sunshine; here the mood
is that of February or November. The key no doubt
has something to do with it; E minor seems always
to carry with it sullen and morose associations.

The succeeding fugue is noteworthy for being the
only one in the entire Forty-eight which is in two parts
only. It follows that there can be little question here of
any elaborate contrapuntal refinements, or of anything
beyond mere canonic imitation, such as we find in
Bach’s two-part Inventions. The whole piece, indeed,
gives the impression of having inadvertently strayed
out of its proper place among these latter. The Inven-
tion-like character is revealed in the general freedom of
treatment and even in such details as the irregular entry
of the answer, which does not wait for the subject to
finish.

Ex. 45

Moreover, although the theme has modulated, there is
neither a modulatory episode as one generally finds on
such occasions, nor does the answer, by substitution of
tonic for dominant and dominant for tonic, adhere to
the accepted formal principle which is customary in
such cases. Instead, he keeps to the strict answer, with
the result that he rises from fifth to fifth and finds him-
self in F sharp by bar 5 already—a very unusual, if not unique, occurrence in the fugues of Bach, and decidedly not one to be imitated.

The theme itself by its shape and impetuous, fiery character, as if ranging over three strings of a fiddle with the top E treated as if it were an open string, strongly suggests a canonic duet for violin and violoncello, and it is more than likely that it was thus originally conceived. It may further be noted in this connexion that after the first appearance of the counter-subject in bar 3, it acts by imitation as a principal theme two bars later; and the following repetitions underline the episodal character of this extension of the exposition. The general proportions and form of the piece, moreover, emphasize the fact that there is here little of the usual fugal structure. In two places he even seems to find two parts superfluous, and lapses into octave passages. But whether it is, strictly speaking, a fugue or not, there can be no two opinions concerning its intrinsic worth simply as music.

I. 11

PRELUDE AND FUGUE (THREE PARTS)
IN F MAJOR

This prelude, like the fugue which precedes it, suggests a two-part Invention; with the exception of harmony notes in a couple of bars towards the close the writing is in two parts throughout and largely in dialogue—a device to which Bach is very partial in the Inventions. A whirling, vertiginous little piece, ended almost as soon as begun; a ballet of atoms and molecules, the
dance of motes of dust in a bar of sunlight, penetrating on a summer afternoon through the blinds into an oak-furnished library wherein sits a wise, contented scholar at peace with himself and the world.

The fugue has much the same mood and atmosphere as the prelude, though slightly more restrained. Erudite and scholastic, it nevertheless carries its learning lightly, more lightly, perhaps, than any other of the Forty-eight, for in general the more gay and care-free numbers are not distinguished for their contrapuntal virtuosity, whereas this fugue, despite its air of deceptive simplicity, certainly is.

The demurely tripping little theme runs smoothly into a counter-subject which is a continuation of its own figuration, as in the E major Fugue:

Ex. 46

The mood of tranquil, sunlit contemplation is sustained throughout, save for a momentary passing shadow when the music modulates for a brief space into the minor; but even here there is no hint of sadness, but only the gentle and wistful elegiac melancholy of the trio of a minuet. Altogether, incidentally, there is more than a suggestion in this fugue of the symmetry of sonata form as opposed to a strictly contrapuntal structure; this applies particularly to the long coda-like section beginning seventeen bars from the end. The thematic allusions are so many and so subtle, and the smaller and wider symmetrical groupings are so mani-
fold in their connexions, that it would repay the student to spend an hour or more over these seventeen bars and discover how, with imitation, transposition, dovetailing, transformation, reiteration, and so forth, there are several reasons to be found for the precise place and nature of every single note and every number of notes in combination. It will show him what real organic construction means, and what a rare quality it is in the music of other composers. Such a fugue as this has the same seeming simplicity as a flower, and the same bewildering complexity when submitted to the scrutiny and analysis of the microscope.

I. 12

PRELUDE AND FUGUE (FOUR PARTS)
IN F MINOR

The mood of this prelude is one of a deep but unobtrusive melancholy, of sorrow uncomplainingly borne by a heroic heart, of bitterness that is free from any resentment, of grief without self-pitying eloquence. It has the mellowness, too, of a wisdom that never spells disillusion, of a spirit so strong that it need never be hard, so sensitive that it can never become cynical—a philosopher-poet’s melancholy that is never brooding, but contemplates without flinching the great riddles, the eternal problems, of life and death. There is probably nothing else in music to which one could compare the peculiar flavour of this particular piece. To find its like one must turn to another art, to the mighty humanism of that other German master, the sixteenth-century wizard Albrecht Dürer, with his engraved triptych of
St. Jerome, the Knight, Death and Demon, and the Melancolia.

The lovely dark line with a light shining edge to it with which the prelude starts is transferred, in the second measure of the second bar, to the bass, which steadily meditates upon it throughout the whole piece in a sustained vocal line rising to high G above, and sinking to low C below, the bass clef.

There is a strong connexion between the prelude and the fugue, both in general mood and in the shape of the material. The thoughtful crotchet theme recalls the course of the melody of the prelude—

Ex. 47

\[ \text{music notation} \]

and in combination with its counter-subject—

Ex. 48

\[ \text{music notation} \]

points even more strongly to the crotchet with tied-on group of three semiquavers over a diminished seventh, found in so many passages of the former. (It should be noted, incidentally, that the ‘tonal’ answer which is so conspicuous at the outset never reappears.)

These notes are not, strictly speaking, the proper place for criticism, but rather for exposition and description; it is difficult, however, to achieve these ends without expressing the opinion that this fugue is a very unequal piece of work. A sure sign that Bach is nodding
is his fatal propensity to fall into facile sequences, the same pattern of notes and intervals repeated higher or lower, and this fugue, and particularly the middle section, is full of them. See, for example, bars 22, 23, 24, which fall a note each time; bars 31, 32, 33, where all the parts subside by a third, and bars 50, 51, 52, always rising one note. Another defect is that the thematic material, apart from the easily recognizable subject, is so much alike that a certain impression of monotony is apt to result, and this is accentuated by the unusual length of the piece. On the other hand, it contains mag-

Ex. 49

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>1st Counter-subject</th>
<th>2nd Counter-subject</th>
<th>3rd Counter-subject</th>
</tr>
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</table>


nificent things, and certainly grows in beauty and in
grip as the ear learns to unravel the constant narrow
dovetailing between the theme and three counter-sub-
jects. (Other analysts and commentators speak of two
counter-subjects only. One can only suppose that the
third has in some mysterious fashion escaped their
notice: for there it is, as large as life.) In order to show
the relations between them it will be necessary to set
them all forth in open score; on two piano staves their
outlines are apt to appear confused (Ex. 49). It will
further be found that these do not always fit exactly
into one another, and a particular figure is frequently
used to connect the theme and counter-subject No. 1
with the two others; it is—

Ex. 50

also appearing as—

Ex. 51

or sometimes—

Ex. 52

Complex relationships with the three counter-sub-
jects provide the interest and plot of this fugue, as in the
C sharp minor, and unlike the C major and the E flat
minor, where strettos and inversions of the theme itself
alone constitute the chief development. There is, in-
deed, no attempt at a stretto in this fugue; the subject
does not permit of it, and even if it did it would be unsuited to its character.

I. 13

PRELUDE AND FUGUE (THREE PARTS)
IN F SHARP MAJOR

In the preliminary essay it was suggested that in the first twenty-four of the Forty-eight one is conscious of a definite logic in the sequence of the numbers and a spiritual relation between them; also that the particular key in which each number is written is the inevitable, the absolutely right key—one cannot conceive of any one of them being transposed into another key without impairing its character.

With regard to the first point, a comparison of the foregoing with the succeeding twelve is illuminating. The whole set is a microcosm of human experience; as Schweitzer says: 'Joy, sorrow, tears, lamentation, laughter—to all these it gives voice', and a certain spiritual progression can be perceived throughout the entire sequence which corresponds to that of life and nature themselves—from youth to age, from morning to evening, from spring to autumn. In the second dozen a more definitely pensive mood predominates, and this becomes increasingly evident as it proceeds. In the first twelve numbers a tempo allegro prevails; excluding two which can only be called moderato, neither one nor the other, one may say that seven are in rapid time and three in slow. In the second twelve the proportions are exactly reversed, and this slowing down of the tempo becomes particularly noticeable in the last
numbers. Needless to say, this progression is only a very general one. It is not suggested that there are no gay fugues in the second half and no serious ones in the first—the laws of contrast and opposition, which are as integral to perfect form as fundamental unity of design is, demand sharp alternations of mood, thought, and even style throughout; but the underlying rhythm of the whole is not thereby disguised. The predominance of a more pronouncedly pensive mood, moreover, is accompanied by a stylistic and formal broadening-out; the fugal subjects tend to become longer, and also the fugues themselves.

The psychology of the ‘key-sense’, the feeling for tonality which necessarily plays such a large part in this work, constitutes one of the most obscure problems in music. A definite feeling for character in keys, for example, is often encountered in people who have no absolute sense of pitch. It is no doubt, in large part at least, due to complex associations of ideas; a great masterpiece written in a certain key tends to impart something of its individual qualities to the key itself in the mind of the listener. But there is more in it than that. The impulse that compels the composer to choose one key rather than another has undoubtedly its counterpart in the psychology of the listener. Personal idiosyncrasies account for much nonsense written about the characteristic qualities of the different keys, and people sometimes differ entirely from each other in their feelings about some particular key or other; what is surprising, however, is the degree of unanimity that is reached with regard to certain tonalities. One of these is the tonality of the 13th Prelude and Fugue—F sharp major—which every one without exception seems to
find bright and luminous. One certainly cannot think of any subdued or pensive piece of music written in this key, and both the present specimens conform in mood and character generally with what one normally encounters in music conceived and written in this tonality. There may be many gayer, more brilliant and vivacious couples among the Forty-eight, but none with a deeper, quieter, sunlit peace and tranquillity. The mood is estival rather than vernal, as of late August, when the evenings have perceptibly drawn in, but the feeling of autumnal declension has not as yet made itself felt.

The prelude is of highly individual character and construction. It is written in only two parts throughout and, apart from the gentle, rocking arpeggio figure which is interchanged between them at the outset and recurs at intervals in different forms, consists in a kind of duet in which the left hand maintains a steady pulsing rhythm in equal notes, while the right darts about in capricious syncopations suggestive of the irregular flickering flight of swallows on a late summer evening. Particularly birdlike are the concluding bars, in which the melodic line rises up to a point, hovers uncertainly for a brief space, and then gently alights, as if with outspread wings.

Some commentators on the Forty-eight have professed to find 'a family likeness between the semiquaver triplets of the prelude and an important semiquaver figure in the fugue' which follows it (see Fuller Maitland in the 'Musical Pilgrim' series); but although I may be reproached for tracing resemblances where none exist between some of the foregoing preludes and fugues, I must confess that, with the best will in the world, I cannot here see the faintest thematic
connexion in this instance, but only a certain stylistic affinity.

Most fugal subjects, it will be noticed, and certainly all the best ones, tend to possess a centre of gravity, a melodic pivot around which they revolve; when they move decisively upwards or downwards at any given point, the movement is generally corrected by a progression in the opposite direction. A long-continued movement in either one or the other direction is of rare incidence, and for good reasons; firstly, on account of the purely technical difficulty involved in the statement by several voices of the same theme of wide compass; secondly, on account of the impression of monotony which is apt to result from the uniformity of line thus conditioned. The fugue in F sharp major is to some extent an exception to this general rule. The subject, it will be observed, after the initial upward leap, gradually sinks down a whole octave:

Ex. 53

and the counter-subject has also a distinct though less pronounced downward tendency:

Ex. 54

The same applies also to another theme, chiefly characterized by repeated notes, which appears in the first episode, and gradually supplants the counter-subject in its role of companion to the subject. Apart from the recognizable feature alluded to, which remains
constant, this figure is of protean versatility, appearing throughout in all parts, and subjected continuously to modifications and developments of every kind.

Ex. 55

But except when it is inverted its tendency also is consistently downwards, and this tendency on the part of all the subject-matter of the piece naturally imposes itself on the piece as a whole, which droops gracefully, like a full-blown flower, throughout its brief and charming existence. The form and development are clear, simple, and straightforward, standing in no need of analysis or explanation. Elaborate scholastic devices are conspicuous by their absence; there is not even a single stretto. The fugue is what is called 'tonal', but the substitution of tonic for dominant, and vice versa, is confined to the first note of the subject only. The rigorous application of the principle would have distorted the theme out of all recognition.

I. 14

PRELUDE AND FUGUE (FOUR PARTS)

IN F SHARP MINOR

The foregoing prelude and fugue, it was observed, suggest the atmosphere of late summer; the present pair are definitely autumnal in character. The prelude is restless and uneasy; a chill little wind blows through it, driving the semiquavers in front of it like the first fallen leaves from the trees, and there is a suggestion of drops
of rain in the staccato single notes in the first bar for the left hand.

The thematic material on which practically the whole prelude is based appears in the first two bars:

Ex. 56

There is a curious affinity between this poetic little piece and the earlier fugue in C sharp major. Compare the semiquaver figure in the foregoing example with the second bar of the quotation Ex. 15; it is recognizably the same melodic idea, and the closeness of key (C sharp major being the dominant of F sharp minor) only serves to emphasize this relationship. At times, as in the following passage, one almost feels as if one had momentarily passed back into the earlier composition, with its above-mentioned semiquaver figure and the leaping quaver figure in the bass:

Ex. 57

It is like a landscape first seen in spring, and then revisited in autumn; the features are the same, the tone-colour and the feeling in the air entirely different.

At two places in the latter half of the piece and again at the close the strictly contrapuntal texture is en-
The fugue is a work of a definitely elegiac, even sorrowful character. The subject seems to struggle upwards with difficulty, strainingly, and then falls back again in despair. The counter-subject, though of a more resigned and consolatory character, is also expressive of sorrow:

In the course of the development this counter-subject tends to usurp the place of the subject itself in importance, and dominates the scene.

The exposition, which is exceptionally long, largely on account of the codettas which succeed each entry of the voices, is unusual and irregular; the fourth entry being with the subject in its original form and not at the fifth above, as dictated by convention. Once more, there is no stretto in this fugue and, apart from two inversions of the subject in the alto at bar 20 and in the bass at bar 32, there is again a noticeable lack of fugal ingenuities, the chief strength of the work consisting rather in its deeply expressive beauty.
I. 15

PRELUDE AND FUGUE (THREE PARTS) IN G MAJOR

In marked contrast to the foregoing pair, this prelude and fugue are among the gayest and brightest of the entire Forty-eight. The principal thematic germ of the brief prelude consists in a mere arpeggio figure in the conventional harmonies of tonic, subdominant, dominant, and tonic, punctuated by a leaping octave figure in the bass. Nothing could be simpler and nothing more effective. Except for the final chord, it is in two-part writing throughout its short career.

The fugue is built on a long, bustling, somewhat prolix subject, which, moreover, at its first appearance, strikes one as being rather commonplace in comparison with most of Bach’s fugal subjects.

Ex. 60

The counter-subject, too, is apt to seem somewhat dry and lacking in distinction.

Ex. 61

But out of this rather unpromising material the composer builds up a delightful and exhilarating structure. After the exposition has run its course there occurs a counter-exposition in which the subject is made to stand on its head, as it were, in inversion, in all three voices, beginning with the middle part.
In this guise the theme acquires a character and a distinction which it did not possess in its original form. The interest of the texture is further enhanced by several strettos, of which the last, near the close, combines the theme in its ordinary form with its inversion.

The episodes in which the subject proper does not appear are many, and are chiefly built out of a development of the first bar of the counter-subject (Ex. 61). A noteworthy feature of the fugue is the extreme prevalence of two-part, as opposed to three-part, writing. For considerable stretches, indeed, one or other of the three voices is silent, but we are never conscious of any thinness of texture occasioned thereby, on account of the richly woven tracery of the two parts at these junctures.

I. 16

PRELUDE AND FUGUE (FOUR PARTS)
IN G MINOR

The most arresting feature of this very beautiful, contemplative prelude is the recurrence of a long sustained trill, accompanied by shifting harmonies; on its first.
two appearances it is in the treble, on the latter two in
the bass. For the rest the piece is an outstanding ex-
ample of Bach's unique power of weaving exquisite
melodic arabesques which, in addition to their sheer
formal perfection, are deeply imbued with expressive
significance. It will be of interest and profit to the
student, incidentally, to compare this prelude with the
two-part Invention in B flat, No. 14, and to see the way
in which Bach employs there almost identically the
same demi-semiquaver figure as appears about half-
way through this prelude, and yet makes something
entirely different out of it.

The fugue is one of the most perfect and finely wrought
of the entire series. More perhaps than any other it is all
of a piece. The noble, pensive subject

Ex.64

\[ \text{[Musical notation image]} \]

itself provides its own counter-subject, which is self-
evidently only an inversion of the second clause of the
subject:

Ex.65

\[ \text{[Musical notation image]} \]

Close scrutiny will show that there is not a bar in the
whole work which is not thematic, i.e. which does not
present either some portion of the subject or counter-
subject. The new theme, for example, which appears
in the second episode at bar 24 et seq. in the treble, is
only a counterpoint to an extended development of the
second bar of the subject in the bass. There are two
magnificent strettos, each as noteworthy for expressive
beauty as for technical ingenuity. The following one in particular is a sheer *tour de force*:

Ex. 66

The final two bars in which the theme is triumphantly enunciated in the tenor part, with an additional fifth part introduced for the sake of harmonic enrichment, clinches the whole together, binding the first bar to the last in inimitable fashion.

Ex. 67

I. 17

**PRELUDE AND FUGUE (FOUR PARTS)**

**IN A FLAT MAJOR**

In conformity with the general character of the key these two pieces neither plumb the depths nor scale the heights of thought or emotion; they are essentially placid, serene, easy-going, but beautifully made throughout. The prelude is particularly noteworthy
on account of its economy of material and simplicity confined with concision of form. The initial motive—

Ex.68

occurs in every bar from beginning to end, with the exception of two bars about the middle of the piece and two more near the close, and the subsidiary thematic material consists entirely of counterpoints to it.

The fugue is of the kind called 'tonal', with the tonic replying to dominant, and vice versa in the answer, in such a way that the latter differs strikingly from the subject.

Ex.69

Ex.70

The result is that the answer is felt to remain in the same key as the subject, instead of being in the dominant, and to be in fact a part of it, completing it, as it were.

A consequence of this dissimilarity between subject and answer is a certain inconsistency and waywardness in the construction of the counter-subject, for obviously a sequence of notes which would fit perfectly with the one would be almost certain to be irreconcilable with the other. This is the counter-subject as it first appears:
but subsequently it takes other forms, the only element common to most of its eventual appearances being the even, flowing tenor of its groups of semiquavers. The numerous episodes are practically all founded on variations and developments of this flexible counter-subject. There are no strettos or inversions or other similar forms of fugal ingenuity in this fugue. Tranquillity and effortless freedom are its spiritual key-notes; in this it presents an unusually striking contrast to its prelude, which is in comparison highly logical, concise, and closely knit.

I. 18

PRELUDE AND FUGUE (FOUR PARTS)
IN G SHARP MINOR

Like the preceding prelude, this one consists entirely of statements, repetitions, extensions, variations, and developments of the thematic unit contained in its opening bar, together with counterpoints to it. The resource and easy mastery of this piece is only paralleled by its simplicity and limpidity of structure. In mood, however, it differs sharply from its predecessor, and is in comparison a meditative, somewhat introspective composition, recalling in this respect the great C sharp minor Prelude, with which, moreover, it has also structural features in common, besides a certain thematic affinity.

The fugue is similarly a highly expressive work—one of the most expressive, indeed, in the entire collection. Professor Tovey, in his valuable but all too brief annotations to his edition of the Forty-eight, rightly castigates those commentators who are of the opinion that
it is an early work and therefore inferior to the best in the collection, chiefly on account of its square rhythms and prevalence of full closes. 'With all its apparent simplicity and squareness', says Sir Donald Tovey, 'this is one of the profoundest of the Forty-eight.' To suggest that this masterpiece is in any way immature is to betray an astonishing insensitiveness to musical beauty; it is pure gold throughout. The subject itself is one of the most lovely and haunting in the whole two collections.

A remarkable feature of this subject, it will be observed, is that its second phrase modulates into the dominant. If the answer were what is called 'real', a transposition of the subject into the fifth above, the resultant remoteness of key would be disconcerting. What Bach does here is to modify the answer tonally in such a way that its first phrase is in the key of the sub-dominant, C sharp minor, and its second phrase consequently back in the tonic—a sheer stroke of genius, this.

The most striking characteristic of this beautiful and original subject lies in its concluding six-note phrase, with its drop of a fifth. This motive sometimes becomes detached from the rest of the subject in the course of the fugue, and becomes a subject in itself which is repeated and developed in an almost Beethovenian manner.
Altogether this striking and poignant figure is uttered no less than twenty-two times in the course of the composition. Four bars near the middle is the longest period of its absence, and its imminence haunts even those like an obsession.

Compare, incidentally, this little pregnant motive with the superficially not dissimilar theme of Rachmaninov's famous—or rather infamous—prelude, and try to discover how it is that the one conditions a masterpiece and the other something very different.

The counter-subject, so-called, is in reality hardly a counter-subject at all, but rather a derivative from the opening notes of the subject itself—

Ex. 74

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{\textit{Ex. 74}} \\
\end{align*}
\]

and its character is that of a sequel to, or continuation of, the subject, not of a foil or contrast, as is usual.

The exposition ends at bar 9 and is followed two bars later by a counter-exposition in which all four voices take part.

Once again there are no strettos or other learned devices in this fugue; everything is here subordinated to the richly expressive beauty which results from the simplest and most straightforward combinations.

I. 19

PRELUDE AND FUGUE (THREE PARTS)

IN A MAJOR

This prelude is comparable to that in E flat in similarly belying its designation; like the latter it is in reality
a highly organized essay in counterpoint, and in this respect indeed is superior to the charming fugue to which it is ostensibly meant to be the introduction. Not that it is in any way portentous or weighty; its erudition is of that unobtrusive order which passes unperceived in performance and only reveals itself in analysis on paper. In this it is a highly characteristic example of Bach’s consummate art, Horatian in its self-concealment; there is no other composer in all music capable of constructing such an ingenious piece of triple counterpoint which is at the same time so unpretentious and unassuming. Sir Donald Tovey says of it that it is ‘a little triple fugue, as strict as any, the first note in the bass being the only note outside the plan’. Its three themes are as follows:

Ex.75

Ex.76

Ex.77

These three subjects form, as already observed, a triple counterpoint; that is, each of them can be placed at top, middle, or bottom of the structure with equally satisfactory results. Out of the six possible dispositions, however, Bach only employs four. These form the main texture of the design; in addition there are two short episodes which introduce a new idea.
The subject of the fugue, with its preliminary isolated note and pattern of rising fourth is again strikingly original, and sharply differentiated from that of any other number in the Forty-eight. Bach’s power of creating thematic personalities, indeed, is only equalled by that of Shakespeare in creating human characters; the Forty-eight are a musical picture-gallery like the latter’s plays. Here is the subject:

This is one of the fugues in which the greatest latitude of interpretation is to be found in performance, and the impression it makes upon critical commentators is also curiously diverse. Sir Donald Tovey calls it a ‘subtle and complex scherzo’, while Riemann describes it as being ‘quiet and expressive—full of heart-felt sentiment’. But this only means that like many characters in actual life it presents a different aspect to different people. It is a kind of mirror which reflects one’s own image; it becomes what we wish it to become, and adapts itself to our desire or to the mood of the moment. In this respect, as in others, one might say that the fugue is characteristically feminine.

The exposition is remarkable in that the second entry, with the tonal answer, enters before the subject has run its course; you might say, therefore, that the fugue actually begins with a stretto. Another interesting feature of the exposition consists in the way in which,
after the three voices have successively made their entrances, the bass gives out what at first hearing appears to be a regular fourth entry, giving the answer to the second statement of the subject. But this is obviously only a sly practical joke on Bach’s part—the fugue is only for three voices, and this is only a false entry, intended to deceive. Another noteworthy feature of the fugue consists in the fact that it has no regular counter-subject until half-way through, when the appearance of the following new theme gives a fresh lease of life, a kind of rejuvenation, to the piece.

Ex. 80

This counter-subject, indeed, if such it be, dominates the whole of the second part.

I. 20

PRELUDE AND FUGUE (FOUR PARTS)
IN A MINOR

The general level of the preludes hereabouts, it will have been remarked, is consistently high, whether from the point of view of technical interest or that of expressive beauty, and generally from both points of view. In this sequence the Prelude in A minor is something of an exception. It is, in truth, somewhat mechanical in construction and colourless in mood, apart from the arresting melodic phrase which occurs rather more than half-way through.

Ex. 81
But nothing comes of this, and its momentary intrusion only serves to accentuate the monotony of the surrounding landscape. On the other hand, it might plausibly, and not at all speciously, be argued that Bach’s intention was precisely to achieve this effect in this particular prelude; not merely in order to provide relaxation or contrast in the particular place in which it occurs, but also because this character is in keeping with that of the key itself which, by general consent, is felt to be of a somewhat colourless order. And it certainly forms, in addition, an excellently fitting introduction to the fugue which follows it. The subject of the fugue, like the prelude, is somewhat level and monotonous, with one striking feature, the big downward leap in the middle, which stands out all the more prominently on account of the even flow of the rest, like a chasm in the midst of a plain.

Ex. 82

 Strictly speaking, there is no regular counter-subject running throughout the work, although the first and third bars of the part which accompanies the answer play a fairly important role in the subsequent proceedings.

Ex. 83

(The second bar, it will be seen, is only an echo of the second bar of the subject.)

This fugue is one of the longest, probably the very longest, in all the Forty-eight. It is also one of the
richest in contrapuntal artifices, making extensive employment of the devices of inversion and canonic stretto. There are no fewer than fourteen strettos in the work, some in direct and some in inverted form, some in both together. The most masterly of them all, which is appropriately reserved for the close, is of the latter variety:

Towards the close Bach augments the number of parts for the sake of added harmonic richness, and does not scruple to impair the strictly contrapuntal nature of the texture by the use of six-part chords on two occasions.

I. 21

PRELUDE AND FUGUE (THREE PARTS) IN B FLAT MAJOR

In striking and dramatic contrast to the foregoing fugue, with its great length, massiveness, and ingenious intricacy of construction, are the following pair in B flat; gay and light-hearted in mood, euphonious in harmony, simple and unpretending in contrapuntal texture. The prelude is one of the most brilliant and vivacious, as it is also one of the shortest, in the entire collection. In some editions and in some performances the light, aerial, gossamer ending is rounded off with a low B flat
octave for which there is no authority and which entirely ruins the exquisitely poetical effect, not merely of the close, but of the whole piece.

The fugue is particularly noteworthy on account of the delicacy and refinement of its contrapuntal writing. The subject—

Ex. 85

has, exceptionally, two counter-subjects; the first charmingly characterized by its repeated notes—

Ex. 86

the second consisting of little, fluttering, butterfly groups of semiquavers.

Ex. 87

These, together with the subject, form a delightful triple counterpoint of which the resourceful and imaginative exploitation provides the chief interest of this genial and impeccable little masterpiece.

I. 22

PRELUDE AND FUGUE (FIVE PARTS)
IN B FLAT MINOR

Although I have an uneasy feeling that I have said much the same thing more than once already, it is
necessary to say that the pair of pieces in B flat minor are amongst the very finest of the entire Forty-eight. The expressive beauty and the technical simplicity of the prelude, the intellectual power and complexity of the fugue, together encompass the whole gamut of human knowledge and experience.

In every respect there is a close relation between these two pieces and those in C sharp minor; in each case the poignant emotion of the prelude is followed by an astonishing feat of contrapuntal mastery, and the two fugues are further alike in that they are both—and they are the only two in all the Forty-eight that are—in five parts. The latter pair, indeed, stand in much the same position at the end of the book as the former occupy at the beginning. The symmetry is not exact—the C sharp pair are fourth from the beginning and the B flat third from the end—but it is close enough to reveal a definite structural intention with regard to the whole set which is more often intuitively felt than logically and consciously apprehended. (It need hardly be pointed out that an exact symmetry in this connexion would have been impossible; the fugue fourth from the end is inescapably major in tonality and could not therefore correspond both structurally and emotionally with the minor fourth from the beginning.)

In speaking of the miraculously lovely prelude, as of those in C sharp minor and E flat minor, it is impossible to avoid evoking religious associations or referring to its close affinity to the Passion Music of Bach. It is, indeed, a companion piece to these two, and what has already been said about them applies equally here.

The subject of the great fugue is as follows:
The answer is tonal, with the result that the first two notes of the subject are the same in the answer, only in different order.

The answer begins before the subject is completed, and similarly the counter-subject overlaps its normal boundaries and spreads itself over the entire exposition, which it dominates with its long, sinuous line.

It never reappears again in anything like the same extended form; in fact it may be questioned whether it ought to be described as counter-subject at all, although it certainly makes its presence felt as such; but all Bach’s fugues, like Beethoven’s symphonies and sonatas and Haydn’s string quartets, make the conventional technical terms completely futile and meaningless. There are two magnificent strettos, the second of which constitutes the climax and culmination of the whole fugue, near the end—one of the finest examples of the employment of the device in all music, with the initial tonic and dominant minims tolling out like great bells
in reply to each other through a compass of two octaves and a fourth.

**I. 23**

**PRELUDE AND FUGUE (FOUR PARTS)**

**IN B MAJOR**

There is nothing that makes the appraisal of Bach's work more difficult than the fact that so much of it, both the good and the indifferent, seems to be constructed almost according to a formula. Sometimes the result is merely ingeniously mechanical, sometimes divinely inevitable. This Prelude in B seems at first sight to be merely a skilful exploitation of the possibilities of a transparently simple melodic formula, presented in the first bar; but close acquaintance reveals, behind the deceptive simplicity of its exterior, that true art which transcends all mere formularization.

In form and style it is akin to the three-part Inventions; towards the end, however, a fourth part makes its appearance. The simple formula which gives rise to every bar and even every single phrase of this miniature masterpiece is as follows:
The subject of the fugue affords one of the most obvious and striking examples of the thematic interconnexion of prelude and fugue in all the Forty-eight; not even the most sceptical could fail to recognize the obviously quite intentional relation between the first phrase of the prelude and the first notes of the fugue; it is evident that the one has suggested the other.

Ex. 93

This fugue is one of the simplest and most readily comprehensible numbers in the series. It is not one of the high peaks; rather is it deliberately designed as a point of repose between the austere grandeurs of its predecessor and the passionate intensity of its successor.

The counter-subject—

Ex. 94

is little employed and, indeed, only reappears in its entirety towards the end. For the most part the character and design of the fugue are determined by the recurrence and inversion of the easily recognizable and debonair subject, with its classic calm and symmetrical build.

I. 24

Prelude and Fugue (Four Parts)

In B Minor

Both in dimensions and in content this prelude and fugue are among the most important in the book, and
constitute as fitting a close as the C major pair were a beginning. The fugue in particular, one feels, quite apart from the fact of its key, could not have been placed elsewhere in the collection. There is a sense of finality about it; no successor could possibly surpass it, and, for once, a gay succeeding piece deliberately designed to afford contrast, or opposition, would be felt almost as an irreverent intrusion upon the sanctity of the death-chamber. That Bach was particularly concerned about the correct rendering of these two final pieces in the book is shown by the fact that in the autograph these two alone are given definite verbal indications of mood and tempo—andante and largo respectively.

The prelude, with its pattern of interwoven rising fourths in the right hand, over a semiquaver bass, unbroken throughout save for a cadence in the middle and at the end, calls to mind the opening of Pergolesi’s *Stabat Mater*. In form it is more conventional than most of its fellow preludes, consisting of two sections marked with repeats, like the movements in his suites. Its most prominent feature is the insistence on the interval of the rising fourth, which gives unity to the two sections.

The deeply expressive, sorrow-laden theme of the fugue:

![Ex. 95](image)

is matched by a counter-subject which, while affording contrast in the more technical sense, is none the less an expression of the same mood.
The last phrase by itself plays almost as important a role in the development of the work as the subject itself.

Contrapuntal ingenuities play very little part in the work. Quite apart from the question whether the subject would allow of them, Bach no doubt felt that they would have been unsuited to the character of the piece. The attentive listener can, however, if he wishes, discern three strettos, two of them incomplete—i.e. strettos into which all four voices do not enter. The first occurs between soprano and alto, the third between tenor and bass, while in the second all four voices participate. But the chief interest of the work, and its overwhelming significance, consists rather in the poignantly expressive beauty of the chromatic melody and harmony. In the introductory essay reference was made to Bach’s extraordinary modernity of utterance in some of these works; ‘we hear the tones and accents of the modern world, and a hint of those of the music that is yet to come’. To none of them is the remark more applicable than to this final fugue. It might, one feels, have been written to-day, or be written to-morrow. Its emotional chromaticism links it up with the world of Wagner’s Tristan, while its harmonic clashes and frequently angular melodic writing have clearly influenced Schönberg.

Ex. 96

[Music notation image]

Ex. 96
BOOK II

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

It is commonly supposed that the second book of twenty-four preludes and fugues was deliberately intended by Bach to be a sequel to the first. Mr. Fuller Maitland, in his booklet in the ‘Musical Pilgrim’ series (Oxford University Press), even goes so far as to say that ‘it is beyond doubt that in adopting the same elaborate plan of key-succession as had been used in the earlier collection, he meant the second set of pieces to be a counterpart to the first’. It is, of course, quite possible that this was Bach’s intention, but to say that ‘it is beyond doubt’ is surely going rather too far. For such a degree of certainty one would need the composer’s personal assurance, and this is lacking. To the present writer it seems exceedingly doubtful whether such was Bach’s intention, both from external and internal evidence.

In the first place, if Bach had so intended it, one would naturally expect him to indicate the fact in the title of the second set, but he does not do so. It was written—or, more accurately, compiled—twenty-two years after the set entitled Das wohltemperirte Klavier, and was designated by the composer merely as ‘Twenty-four New Preludes and Fugues’. To say that it must have been intended as a sequel or counterpart simply because it follows the same method is as if one were to say that his concertos were meant to be sequels or counterparts to each other, for they all more or less conform to the same standard of design—which is absurd.
In the second place, the two sets differ markedly in several important respects. The first set, as we have already amply seen, has a self-contained form and structure; the second, as we shall see in due course, has not. In the introductory essay it was suggested that not only is one conscious of a definite logic in the sequence of the numbers in the first book and a definite spiritual relation between them, but one also feels that the particular key in which each number is written is the inevitable, the absolutely right key, the one in which each was primarily conceived; that the second book, on the other hand, appeared to be more a collection of pieces, individually just as fine, no doubt, which had not, however, been conceived as a whole, and that the keys, moreover, were sometimes felt to be arbitrary in comparison with those of the first set: that one could quite well imagine some of them in other keys than those in which they actually appear. Spitta, for example, in his study of Bach, tells us that it is definitely known that the A flat Fugue was originally written in F major, that the C sharp Prelude was originally in C major, and that other pieces which he names existed in different forms long before 1744, the year in which the collection was made; and there are, one suspects, many other instances of the same thing for which the documentary evidence is not unnaturally lacking. Furthermore, it has been noticed by several acute critics, Sir Donald Tovey among them, that there are some numbers in the later twenty-four which are not consistently conceived in terms of the clavichord, as are the earlier, but suggest the very different medium of the harpsichord. Again, the second fugue of the later set in C minor, as we shall see, gives the impression of having been
originally conceived, if not actually written, for the organ rather than for either clavichord or harpsichord. Other fugues strongly suggest the probability that they were conceived for unaccompanied voices. If Bach, then, did not call the set Das wohltemperirte Klavier, 'Volume II', it was no doubt for the very good reason that it would not have been a strictly accurate designation. In no respect can the later collection be regarded as a sequel or supplement to the earlier one, which is absolutely complete, rounded, self-contained, and not susceptible of any continuation.

Needless to say, this does not necessarily imply that the second set is in any way inferior to the first. The fact that it is not conceived as a whole, as is the first, does not make the individual numbers any less great, in precisely the same way that, as observed in the preliminary essay, a collection of miscellaneous sonnets is not necessarily inferior to a sonnet sequence. On the contrary, many of the best judges favour the view that the second set on the whole reaches an even higher level than the first. As Spitta says: 'After careful comparison it must be admitted that (in respect of artistic skill) the first part is not so finely conceived as the second.' On the other hand, it is perhaps true to say that from the point of view of emotional expression, and particularly of a tragic order, there are fewer outstanding fugues in the second set than in the first. In this connexion Mr. Fuller Maitland has some interesting observations in his volume entitled The Age of Bach and Handel in 'The Oxford History of Music'. 'Nos. 2, 8, 22 in the second book are almost the only minor fugues that have the same poignancy of expression as 8, 12, 16, 18, 20, and 22 in the first, although many of the major
fugues of the second book are deeply emotional, as 9, 17, and 23. It almost seems that the possibility of expressing sadness in the major mode was only discovered in the second book, and in the same way several of the fugues which correspond in mood to the gayer numbers of the first book, such as 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, 21, are in the minor in the second book, such as 6, 10, 12, and 24, while the more jovial fugues in the major, such as 11, 15, and 17, are comparatively few.'

In view of these shrewd and penetrating observations it is rather curious that the same writer should conclude that in the second book 'we cannot profess to trace ... any very striking difference in style from the first book'. One would have thought that in the passage quoted above he himself had indicated some very striking differences of style, or at least of thought, if one can separate the two things.

There are two other important and interesting differences between Das wohltemperirte Klavier proper and the later set which, so far as I know, have hitherto escaped the notice of critics and commentators. Firstly, whereas in the earlier set eighteen numbers have regular counter-subjects and only six have not, in the later set there are twelve of each type. Secondly, in the later set there is, on the whole, a striking diminution in the amount of strettos and other erudite contrapuntal devices. The later set, in other words, are freer and more untrammeled than the earlier.

A further point worthy of note in this connexion is to be found in the fact that big chromatic fugues such as 12 and 24 in the first book are lacking in the second, and one might say without hesitation that, considering each set as a whole, the latter is more consistently diatonic,
and sometimes even modal, in comparison with the more chromatic and experimental writing which is characteristic of the earlier collection. This is not to say, of course, that there is no chromaticism in the second set, but merely that it does not play such an important part there as in the first. The fugue which, more than any other, seems to represent and sum up the first book, is, appropriately enough, the last number of all, the great B minor; the peak or summit of the second set, and the one which seems best to strike the spiritual key-note, is the great E major. The B minor, we have already seen, looks forward to Wagner and Schönberg; the E major, as we shall see later, looks backward into the past, towards Palestrina and his predecessors and even to Gregorian chant itself. The first collection, in short, exemplifies best the futurist, forward-reaching aspect of Bach's genius, and the second the 'passe-ist', or retrospective.

But it is perhaps in the preludes rather than in the fugues that the most obvious difference in style between the two sets is to be detected. Almost all the preludes in the first part conform to the type which consists in the elaboration and variation of a single figure or progression which is presented at the outset. In the second part, together with many which are still of this type, one finds a number which are very different; not only constructed on a much more ambitious formal scale, but written with greater flexibility and fantasy, greater primary invention. In the first set the preludes really are preludes for the most part; not necessarily connected thematically (though they frequently are), but generally felt to be 'leading up' to the ensuing fugue. In the second set the preludes have greater
independent interest on the whole, constituting, together with the fugue, a two-part form rather than a one-part preceded by a brief introduction, as in the earlier set. There are, of course, exceptions to this rule in both sets, but as a generalization the distinction will, I think, be found to hold good.
II. 1
PRELUDE AND FUGUE (THREE PARTS)
IN C MAJOR

The very first prelude of the set bears out the distinction made above. If it is compared with the first of the earlier set it will be seen that, whereas the latter is in the nature of an improvisation upon a pattern figure which is rigorously maintained throughout, the present example is very much freer and subtler in form and procedure. No two consecutive bars have the same design or pattern, and there is a minimum of sequential writing. At the same time it contains one dominant leading motive to which most of the melodic figurations are related, although they are not actually derived from it. This motive does not occur at the outset, although the first bars hint at it, but only at bar 5, in the bass.

Ex. 97

This little figure will be found running throughout the entire piece, though seldom recurring integrally.

The form, for the first nineteen bars, is free and rhapsodic. The succeeding nine bars recapitulate the earlier part of the piece, beginning at the point quoted in the example, in the key of the subdominant, F. A modulation is then effected which leads back to the tonic for the concluding bars.
One feels throughout the piece a definite tendency towards the subdominant and flat keys generally, it may be noted, an impression which is strengthened by this recurrence of the principal section in F instead of in the tonic. Curiously enough, the same is to some extent true concerning the fugue which follows. If we were to see or hear the opening bars without the fore-knowledge that they were in C we might easily suppose them to be in F—more easily, perhaps. The subject itself quite definitely revolves around F, and the answer in the first part of its career is quite clearly in C, not in G.

Ex. 98

Most commentators and analysts, by the way, regard the first four bars as constituting the subject of the fugue. In so doing, however, they are faced with the problem that in this case the counter-subject is a continuation of the subject. It would, therefore, seem more logical to regard the first two bars alone as the subject, and the succeeding semiquaver figure as part of the counter-subject. This view gains justification from the fact that towards the end of the fugue the two thoughts become definitely detached from each other. In all the last twenty-nine bars the entries of the subject are confined to the enunciation of the first two bars only, with the semiquaver figure acting as a counter-subject.

The subject, incidentally, affords a particularly striking example of the change of character which can
sometimes occur when it is answered tonally—i.e. not merely transposed intact a fifth higher or a fourth lower, but with tonic answering dominant, and vice versa. Here they are like entirely different themes.

In character the fugue is a light-weight. A charming piece, it neither scales any great expressive heights nor reveals any striking *tours de force* of contrapuntal ingenuity. Both prelude and fugue, it should be said, exist in earlier forms than those in which they appear here; the prelude in two other versions, which are to be found in the publications of the *Bachgesellschaft* (vol. xxxvi, p. 224, and vol. xlv, p. 248), and the fugue in a shorter version (vol. xxxvi, p. 224) in common time instead of, as here, two-four time. In this original version it would seem that the fugue was originally conceived for the harpsichord. The student is recommended to compare these earlier versions with the final forms in which the pieces appear, as an object-lesson in the art of composition.

II. 2

**PRELUDE AND FUGUE (FOUR PARTS)**

**IN C MINOR**

The Prelude in C minor, in distinction to its forerunner in the major, conforms closely in some respects to the type with which we have been made familiar in the first book. In other words, it is almost entirely built up on the figure presented in the first bar. On the other hand, it differs from all those in the earlier set (except the last, in B minor) in being constructed in two sections—the second in the relative major, E flat—with repeats indicated.
The figure on which this piece is chiefly built is as follows:

Ex.99

The theme on which the succeeding fugue is built is clearly cognate.

Ex.100

In form this fugue is something of a freak. It consists of no more than twenty-eight bars, but up till bar 19—slightly more than two-thirds of the way through—it is in three parts only and this final entry is with the theme, not in its ordinary form, but in augmentation, as if on the pedals of the organ. All commentators on the piece unite in emphasizing the organ-like suggestiveness of this procedure, some being definitely of the opinion that it was originally written for this instrument and only adapted later for the clavichord. This seems very probable. Spitta, in particular, draws attention to the close similarity which exists both in this and in other respects between this fugue and the Organ Fugue in C major (Bachgesellschaft, vol. xv, p. 234).

The fugue is introspective, interested only in its subject, and having no counter-subject. The only item of extraneous material consists in the semiquaver figure which appears in bars 5–6,
but even this does not play an important part in the subsequent events, which are almost entirely devoted to the development of the possibilities latent in the subject itself. From bar 14 onward the fugue is entirely preoccupied with strettos, beginning with a very remarkable one in which the theme in ordinary note-values is combined with its augmentation in one part and a free inversion in the other.

Ex.102

After this a succession of two-part strettos leads to the climacteric of the piece already alluded to—i.e. the long-deferred entry of the fourth part with the theme in augmentation.

Ex.103

One feels here, I think, a very definite pedal character in the lower part, as if it should be played, if not in octaves, at least an octave lower; and, in fact, many players rightly contrive to do so, notwithstanding the difficulty in the lay-out of the parts if this is attempted. The concluding bars contain some highly ingenious strettos:
II. 3

PRELUDE AND FUGUE (THREE PARTS)
IN C SHARP MAJOR

What was said above concerning the occasional arbitrariness of key in the preludes and fugues of the second, as opposed to the first set, is well illustrated by the present pair, both of which were originally written in C and obviously only transposed up a semitone in order to fill a vacant place in the key-sequence. Most people, one would imagine, must feel that the proper key for the prelude in particular is C major; in structure and mood generally it is clearly a companion-piece to the C major Prelude in the first book, except for the unexpected little final fughetta which it carries with it, in marsupial fashion. Like the C major Prelude of the earlier collection, the main body of this prelude is built up on a pattern figure which is only a sophistication of a series of five-part chords, and indeed, in its earliest version, in C major, it is actually written out in mere block-chords, with the indication arpeggio, leaving the precise figuration to the performer’s discretion. The form of the piece, with its quiet, meditative main section, followed by a brisk little mock fugue in three parts, is decidedly unusual, and without any parallel in the entire Forty-eight.
The fugue, like its prelude, was originally written in C major. The earlier version, which is still extant and can be studied in the publications of the *Bachgesellschaft* (vol. xxxvi, p. 225), is only about half the length of the final one—nineteen bars as compared with thirty-five here—and, as in the case of the first fugue of the book, a comparison between the two versions is of absorbing interest in throwing light upon Bach's method of composition and his tireless search for perfection.

Like both its predecessors, this fugue is highly unorthodox in certain respects, and has involved the learned pundits and commentators in amusing contradictions. Professor Iliffe, in his analytical disquisition on the Forty-eight, says that the subject 'is the shortest in the work, consisting of four quavers only'. Dr. Riemann, on the other hand, declares the subject to consist of the first six notes, and Sir Donald Tovey makes it a bar and a half long, consisting of twelve notes. That such eminent experts should disagree on such an elementary point as this constitutes an instructive demonstration of the inadequacy of technical analysis as applied to a work of genius. Which, if any, of the three solutions is the correct one must be left to the reader to decide. Here are the first two bars:

Ex.105

In any event, the fact clearly emerges that, if one accepts Sir Donald Tovey's diagnosis of the situation, the fugue starts off with a stretto in its very first bar,
and the same is true of Dr. Riemann's. Even if we regard Professor Iliffe's analysis as the correct one, namely, that the subject consists of four notes only, we find an inversion of the theme already in the second bar (in the alto part). However you choose to look at them, in fact, these opening bars are of quite exceptional unorthodoxy.

A further discrepancy between the learned, incidentally, consists in the fact that Dr. Riemann identifies the semiquaver figure as the counter-subject, whereas Professor Iliffe says there is no counter-subject. Sir Donald Tovey, of course, is not involved in this controversy, seeing that he regards the alleged counter-subject as being part of the subject itself. He admits, however, that 'in by far the greater bulk of the fugue nothing more of the subject is heard than the first four notes'. And, whichever of the three disputants is right, there is at least no denying that the entire plot of the fugue consists in the protean metamorphoses and combinations to which the initial four notes are subjected. Admittedly it is a figure that lends itself to ingenious developments, even in the hands of a mediocrity, but what Bach makes of it is an astonishing tour de force, even for him. It would require a whole volume to do justice to all the subtleties and profundities of construction that Bach has lavished on this little work; it is enough to say that there is not a bar from beginning to end in which one does not find the subject ingeniously introduced in one shape or form—sometimes in its ordinary form, sometimes in the form of the answer, sometimes inverted, sometimes in diminution, sometimes in augmentation, sometimes in stretto, and sometimes in various combinations of these devices. But first and foremost
and all the time, what is more important is that it is always a beautiful piece of music, even to one who knows nothing of such technical devices and cares less. But to those who do know and care this is one of the most fascinating of the Forty-eight.

II. 4

PRELUDE AND FUGUE (THREE PARTS)
IN C SHARP MINOR

This prelude is considerably longer than most, and the profusion of ornaments—trills, mordents, and appoggiaturas—suggests that the piece might have been originally conceived, not for clavichord, but for harpsichord, to which instrument these stylistic features are more suited. On the other hand, the strict and clear three-part writing which is maintained throughout suggests a piece of chamber music for three solo instruments. The bass behaves consistently like a 'cello part, and the treble is characteristically oboesque.

The form is closely and finely wrought. The chief thematic material, as usually, is presented in the first bars, and consists in a simple figure in the bass beginning with an arpeggio, and a cantabile melody in the upper part.

Ex.106
At the seventh bar this melody is taken over by the middle part, to which is also confided a further statement about half-way through, in the key of the subdominant (F sharp minor), succeeded shortly after by its restatement in the tonic by the treble voice. The bass throughout remains preoccupied with its own thoughts, except for a brief middle section. A noteworthy feature of the piece lies in the remarkable length of its melodic periods, unbroken by full closes, and its steady, onward flow from first bar to last.

It would be difficult to imagine a more striking contrast than that which exists between this reflective prelude and the fugue which follows it—a vivacious *perpetuum mobile* based upon a theme entirely in semiquavers:

Ex. 107

The answer, which is an exact transposition of the subject into the key of the dominant—this is the first ‘real’ fugue in the second book—starts on its course before the subject has quite finished, as if impatient and unable to wait; and this sense of headlong velocity is maintained throughout the entire fugue, every bar and every beat of each bar having in one or other of the three parts a triplet semiquaver figuration, like the subject which, with derivates, constitutes practically the sole thematic material of the fugue. There is no regular counter-subject, the only subsidiary element of melodic importance being a chromatic descending figure in relatively long notes, with which the subject is eventually combined:
Even the numerous episodes, together comprising more than half the fugue, are based upon fragments or derivatives of the subject, which is found in inversion as well as in its ordinary form:

The original meaning of fugue or ‘fuga’ is a flight. No other among the Forty-eight conforms more closely to this implied suggestion.

II. 5

PRELUDE AND FUGUE (FOUR PARTS)
IN D MAJOR

If the foregoing prelude resembles a slow movement for a three-part chamber music combination, the present example suggests strongly a gigue movement from an orchestral suite. The opening in particular, with its triumphant fanfare, calls out for trumpets. An interesting and uncommon feature in these first bars, by the way, is the alternation of twelve-eight and four-four time:

Ex.110

(quasi ¾)
Whether it was that such a proceeding shocked the conscience of nineteenth-century editors, or whether they refused to believe that Bach could have intended it, and supposed that he had simply made a slip of the pen, one finds in old editions, such as that of Czerny, and consequently in some performances, that the crotchets of the second and fourth bars are dotted and the even quavers split up into crotchet and quaver in order to make them conform to the rhythmical pattern of the first and third bars.

The form is that of all dance movements of the period, in two parts with repeats, the second part being in the key of the dominant, beginning with the theme of the opening section inverted. As in the preceding prelude the writing is throughout in three strict parts, except for a very occasional extra note, for purposes of sonority rather than in order to fill in the harmony.

The following fugue is one of the greatest marvels of workmanship, not merely in the Forty-eight, but in all the music of Bach, and even in all music whatsoever. From first bar to last the entire structure and texture evolves from the subject. It is true that most, if not all, of the contrapuntal ingenuities contained in this fugue are present in the theme to such an extent that even a second-rate composer could make a brave show if it were presented to him; but the fact remains that such themes do not present themselves to second-rate composers. In commenting upon the first fugue of the first book in these notes, I was once taken to task by a critic for suggesting that the subject of that work ‘must have cost even Bach himself the most concentrated application and intense effort’. Nonsense! said my critic, with an air of authority; the theme simply occurred to Bach,
and on looking at it he discovered, quite accidentally, that it would lend itself to all manner of contrapuntal ingenuities. One would have thought it self-evident that the possibility of a theme occurring to one casually, which was capable of such developments, was so remote that the chance of such an occurrence would be somewhat in the ratio of a million to one against—a chance as remote as that of doing a hole in one at golf. Granting that such phenomena can occur once in a century or so, it is inconceivable that they could occur regularly, as they do in the music of Bach.

This fugue is another example of the same thing as the first of the Forty-eight. I repeat, with emphasis, that in spite of the seeming effortless simplicity of the subject, its construction ‘must have cost even Bach himself the most concentrated application and intense effort’. It stands to reason that it must be so, for if such a theme might occur to any composer, by sheer good luck, it follows that any one might write fugues as great as Bach’s, because, given the theme, any reasonably competent composer could realize its possibilities adequately, for everything is latent in the theme itself.

In case my unsupported opinion should fail to carry conviction, I append here a passage from Schweitzer’s great book on Bach in which this very point is discussed. ‘Everything points to the fact that Bach did not invent easily, but slowly and with difficulty. . . . The working-out and elaboration of the themes may indeed not have cost him very much time, since it often happens with him that the whole piece, with all its developments, is already implicit in the theme, and evolves out of it with a certain æsthetic-mathematical necessity. We can, however, form only a faint idea of the long arduous
mental work that is presupposed in the development of a characteristic theme of this kind, according to its own mysterious inner laws, into a masterly piece of music. If Bach, as is generally supposed, had shaken themes out of his sleeve after the manner of genius, it would be incomprehensible how they all come to be so extraordinarily rich and characteristic. In all his works there is not one that is banal. But neither do we get the impression, in any one of these melodies, quivering as they are with inner life, of effortless invention; and the deeper we penetrate into Bach, the stronger does this feeling become.’

To resume: here is the subject of this truly magnificent fugue:

\[
\text{Ex. III}
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Even more fertile than the arresting initial progression (reminding one, incidentally of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony) is the second clause of the subject. Not merely does it occur at least once in every bar except two out of the fifty bars that comprise the work (the exceptions are, firstly, at the F sharp minor cadence about half-way through, and secondly, eight bars before the end), but altogether it occurs, as Sir Donald Tovey has computed, something between eighty and ninety times—even he cannot be more precise than that: it would take too long. Yet such is the resource with which the figure is treated that one is unaware of its omnipresence in performance.

Apart from this the chief feature of the fugue lies in its masterly strettos, six in number; all of them
object-lessons in the art, and all equally deserving of quotation did space permit—culminating in a remarkable stretto, in which all voices participate, each taking up the subject in turn without modification of the intervals, at only a crotchet's distance from each other. In order to appreciate this quotation it is necessary to see it in full score:

Ex. 112

II. 6

PRELUDE AND FUGUE (THREE PARTS)
IN D MINOR

Both the Prelude and the Fugue in D minor, unlike other pieces in the collection, are strongly identified with the key in which they appear, and were undoubtedly conceived in it. Furthermore, they are very much 'of a piece', although not thematically interconnected; both are fiery, tempestuous compositions in a recognizably similar mood.

The prelude conforms more closely with its designation than do many of its fellows in the second book; in other words, it is definitely felt to lead up to the fugue which follows. In this respect it is more characteristic
of the first book than of the second in style. Again, like the majority of the preludes in the first book, it is built up with great economy out of one or two leading motives which are presented at the outset; the initial descending scale passage and semiquaver chord figure in the right hand, and the simple arpeggio in the left:

Ex.113

together with a second line of thought, which can be reduced to:

Ex.114

This, incidentally, is still another piece which previously existed in a slightly different version before being incorporated in the present collection. The original version is to be found in the publication of the *Bachgesellschaft*, vol. xxxvi, p. 226.

The subject of the fugue possesses a strongly developed character, of which the principal traits are the impetuous, upward surging, initial triplets, and the subsequent downward sinking chromatics.

Ex.115

This is the first fugue we have so far encountered in the second book which has a regular counter-subject, the existence of which is undisputed and admitted by
all commentators. (The alleged counter-subject in the first fugue, as we have seen, can be legitimately regarded as part of the subject proper.)

A curious and interesting feature of this fugue consists in the fact that both subject and counter-subject only recur twice in complete form after the exposition; but the opposition and conflict of the two rhythmical principles which they respectively embody—triplet semiquaver figures and ordinary groups of four—is maintained throughout. It is also interesting and instructive to note that the triplets and quadruplets never come into actual juxtaposition, but only follow each other in rapid alternation. This feature imparts a curiously kaleidoscopic character to the fugue.

There are several rather free strettos in this fugue, sometimes with the direct theme, sometimes with it inverted, and sometimes with a combination of both, as in this one, three bars before the end:

An inversion of the triplet figure, incidentally, is already to be found in the course of the exposition, in the treble, before the entry of the third voice in the bass.
II. 7

PRELUDE AND FUGUE (FOUR PARTS)
IN E FLAT MAJOR

The Prelude in E flat, like so many other preludes in the Forty-eight, is constructed upon a single motive—in this case even briefer and more pregnant than usual. The essence of the whole movement, in fact, can be reduced simply to the alternating E flat, D, E flat of the first bar in the left hand—nothing more than that. On this simple formula are based the principal melodic developments of the piece, beginning with this in the fifth bar:

Even the drooping figure which appears in bar 34 is a derivative rather than a new thought:

While the fugues of the first book, Das wohltemperirte Klavier proper, are consistently instrumental in character throughout, the second collection, as already observed in the short introductory essay above, contains several numbers that are vocal in character and suggest the possibility that they were conceived for voices. In the earlier set there are very few; if any, which would be either practicable or aesthetically tolerable if confided to unaccompanied voices; in the later set there are quite a number. The D major Fugue in the
second book, for example, even if not directly conceived for chorus, contains nothing that would not be thoroughly practicable and artistically unobjectionable for that medium, with the sole exception of two low D’s for the bass part. The E flat major Fugue is even more positively vocal in character. Not merely would it sound perfectly tolerable if sung, but actually much better than when played on a keyboard instrument, which is unable to impart the sostenuto quality which is here so eminently desirable. Apart from two low E flats for the bass and a few high C’s and B flats for the soprano, neither of them impracticable, there is nothing in the fugue that is not in perfect conformity with the purest vocal style. It is, indeed, very much more vocal in style than a great deal of Bach’s own choral writing. It is further worthy of note that, whereas nothing could be more detestable and objectionable in general than the sort of village organist’s joke of setting words to the subjects of Bach’s fugues, this particular example seems actually to demand words; Dr. Riemann’s suggestion of ‘Lob, Preis und Dank sei dem Herrn, der uns erlöst von dem Tod,’ does not merely fit the notes, but seems to complete and express the conception.

Ex.120

First given out by the bass, the successive entries of answer, subject, and answer, are for tenor, alto, and soprano. The answer is tonal, so that the initial leap of a fifth in the subject becomes a fourth; otherwise the theme is unchanged. Once again there is no counter-subject in this fugue, the chief interest consisting in the
continuous series of entries of the majestic subject and its answer, sometimes in stretto.

The great length of the subject, treated by four voices, results in a somewhat exceptionally long exposition. The final clause of the last entry extends to bar 28. In spite of this the exposition is immediately followed by a counter-exposition beginning with a stretto between tenor and bass. The fugue is statuesque rather than dramatic, static rather than dynamic; tonic and dominant prevail throughout, and the key hardly changes from beginning to end.

II. 8

PRELUDE AND FUGUE (FOUR PARTS)
IN D SHARP MINOR

It is exceedingly difficult to discover why Bach should have preferred to write this pair of pieces in the troublesome key of D sharp minor instead of in the synonymous E flat minor, as in the first book; involving as it does the extensive employment of that abomination the double sharp instead of the simple natural which would take its place if the flat key signature were adopted. In the musical illustrations which follow I have consequently taken the liberty, out of kind-heartedness towards the reader, of enharmonically transposing them into the equivalent and much easier key of E flat minor.

The prelude, like several of those in the first book, resembles the two-part Inventions of Bach; with the difference that it falls into two sections marked with repeats, as do several of the preludes of the second book.
It is chiefly constructed, as usual, on the motive announced in the first bars.

Ex. 121

Everything else in this accomplished little miniature, thematically speaking, can be shown to be either derived from this embryo or else a counterpoint to it, or to a derivative.

The following fugue is one of the few serious and contemplative minor fugues in the second book which can compare with the fine examples in this category to be found in the first book. It is no way inferior to the best of them. The subject on which it is built is as follows:

Ex. 122

The answer is an exact transposition into the key of the dominant; in other words, it is what is called a 'real' fugue. The entries of the voices are in the order alto, tenor, bass, and soprano. Unlike most of the fugues in the first part of the second book, this particular example contains a counter-subject, one, moreover, which is not derived from the subject, but rather in strong contrast to it.

Ex. 123

During the first part of the fugue—the first twenty-three bars, to be precise—this counter-subject is very prominent, and plays as important a role as the subject
itself. From this point onwards, however, it entirely disappears.

Beginning at bar 15 the subject is presented several times in altered form, beginning in the bass:

Ex.124

A long chain of entries of the subject, either in this new form or in its original form, follows ultimately in a stretto. This device is not employed again, the climax of the fugue, on the contrary, being reached with a homophonic presentation of the subject in the bass, with accompanying parts in other voices.

Ex.125

In the concluding bars, however, a particularly ingenious piece of contrapuntal writing is to be found—a combination of the subject in the treble accompanied simultaneously with its inversion in the tenor.

Ex.126

Concentration on the subject is the prime characteristic of this fugue. Even the two so-called episodes are built upon suggestions contained in it.
II. 9

PRELUDE AND FUGUE (FOUR PARTS)
IN E MAJOR.

This prelude is a piece of charming, wayward poetic fantasy, recalling in some respects the first prelude of the second set, in C major. Like the latter it has a central thought which, however, is not as rigidly and logically developed as in most of the preludes which resemble it in this respect. It is very much freer and more flowing, more capricious than most of its fellows, and reveals Bach in a peculiarly gracious, whimsical, and tender mood.

The chief thought is, as usual, contained in the opening bars:

Ex.127

The first section, of twenty-four bars, is marked with a repeat. The second section starts off, as is customary in such cases, with a version of the original thought in the key of the dominant, but soon meanders away gently with charming inconsequence into fresh trains of thought, or rather fantasy.
The subject of the fugue is clearly related, although in subtle fashion, to the main idea of the prelude:

Ex.128

There is more than a suggestion of religious associations in this noble theme; indeed, it reminds one strongly of certain plain-chant intonations in particular, in spite of its strongly tonal character. Like the E flat major fugue, only even more so, this great fugue seems to demand the medium of unaccompanied voices for its proper realization. (The occasional low C sharps, D sharps, and E's in the bass part could all be in the higher octave without any detriment to the texture or logic of the piece.)

Another characteristic feature, which this fugue shares with its predecessor in E flat, is a counter-exposition in which the theme is presented in stretto—the answer first, then the subject, in all four voices. It differs from the E flat fugue, however, in possessing a counter-subject: a powerful and arresting theme:

Ex.129

After the counter-exposition in stretto there follows an episode built upon the counter-subject, with its characteristic quaver figure modified into crotchets. Then there comes another stretto upon a chromatic bass. When this has run its course another episode occurs, based upon the subject, however, in F sharp minor. This is followed by a particularly felicitous employment of the device of diminution, by means of
which the subject takes on an entirely new character. This is also presented in stretto:

Masterly strettos, indeed, constitute the chief structural feature of this magnificent fugue, and occur in profusion right up to the end. The fact that the concluding bars are note for note the same as 'Rule Britannia' is not Bach's fault; it must be admitted, however, that to an English listener the effect is slightly disconcerting:

II. 10

PRELUDE AND FUGUE (THREE PARTS) IN E MINOR

The E minor Prelude is yet another of those Invention-like pieces of which so many examples are to be found
among the preludes in both books. In common with several other preludes in the second book it is in two sections, both of which have repeat indications. It is in strict two-part writing throughout, and the thematic material, as usual, is entirely contained in the first few bars:

![Ex.132](image)

Even the seemingly fresh train of thought, with which the second section begins, in the treble, is seen to be only a counterpoint to the inversion of the semiquaver figure of the opening bars:

![Ex.133](image)

The following fugue, if not a great favourite with the general public, has always been held in high esteem by theorists, by whom it is regarded as a model of the form worthy to be imitated. It will be gathered from this that the fugue is rather on the dull side, and more memorable for its consummate craftsmanship than for its inspired artistry. This is partly, at least, due to the subject, the length of which, and the dryness, are not conducive to the cultivation of the more poetic and imaginative possibilities of fugal form.

This is the subject, probably the longest of all the Forty-eight. It bears a remarkably close resemblance, by the way, to the G major fugue in the first book, not
merely on account of the closeness of key, but in general character as well:

The counter-subject falls into two clearly defined and contrasted sections which, except for one integral repetition, tend to become separate thematic personalities in the course of the piece:

The length of the subject is not congenial to the device of stretto, of which there is no example in this fugue. The chief interest consists in the ingenious metamorphoses and combinations of the dual counter-subject, and the resourceful employment of the subject material in building the numerous episodes, five in number.

II. 11

PRELUDE AND FUGUE (THREE PARTS)
IN F MAJOR

In contradistinction to the majority of the foregoing preludes, this particular example is chiefly noteworthy on account of the fullness and sonority of its harmonic
F MAJOR: II: 11

texture, mostly in four- and five-part writing. The style and feeling of the piece in general suggest the possibility, or rather the probability, that Bach had the organ in mind when composing it, rather than the clavichord, of which the slender and attenuated tone could hardly do justice to the conception.

The piece is chiefly based upon the initial phrase of the first bar, which runs through all the parts in endless permutations from start to finish, and is present in every bar in some form or another:

Ex.136

No greater contrast can be imagined than that which exists between the following fugue and its immediate predecessor in E minor. Here all is light and gaiety, with a complete absence of the slightly arid scholasticism which is to be found in the former—Bach in his most genial and accessible mood, in fact.

The subject is chiefly characterized by three little jumps, each one higher, and then a subsequent descent.

Ex.137

There is no regular counter-subject, no strettos, diminutions, augmentations, inversions, or any other kind of learned device in this fugue. It is as if Bach had deliberately set out to show that it was perfectly possible to write a good fugue and yet to dispense with every element and every procedure deemed indispensable by the pundits and pedants. There is even a suggestion of sly humour in the fact that Bach has placed this
nonchalantly unorthodox little fugue immediately after
the one which is held up to admiration by the pedants
as an irreproachable model of the form according to the
text-books.

It follows from the nature of the piece that analysis
of the ordinary kind is not merely superfluous, but im-
possible. Apart from the entries of the subject the chief
interest consists in resourceful variations on a little
semiquaver figure which first makes its appearance in
the codetta following the entry of the second voice with
the answer which, incidentally, is of the kind known as
tonal, the initial leap of a fifth in the subject becoming
a fourth in the answer.

The final statement of the subject in the bass, with
a brilliant superstructure of demi-semiquavers, is
worthy of attention: consisting in a fourfold repetition
of the characteristic initial leaping figure before going
on to complete the subject:

Ex.138

II. 12

PRELUDE AND FUGUE (THREE PARTS)
IN F MINOR

The late George Moore once observed that 'a great
artist is either before his time or behind it'. He might
have added that the greatest is often both. Bach, as we
have already had occasion to observe in the course of
these notes, seems often to anticipate the future, while
at other moments he looks backward to the past. The
inference of Moore’s dictum is, of course, that the great artist seldom, if ever, reflects the spirit of his age. Whether true or not as a generalization, it is certainly true of Bach. For once, however, in the F minor Prelude he does so. The piece is authentic Bach, but Carl Philipp Emmanuel rather than Johann Sebastian. Not only is this piece written in a more harmonic and homophonic style than is customary with him, but in structure it conforms fairly closely to the early type of sonata form which was beginning to be evolved during Bach’s lifetime, and of which the most distinguished practitioner was the master’s own son. In spirit, too, it belongs to its period.

Like some other preludes in the second set, it is in two sections with repeats; the second beginning in the relative major and modulating back to the tonic after an embryonic development section. The piece, incidentally, gives the impression of having been originally intended for the harpsichord rather than for the clavichord.

The fugue resembles its major predecessor in its remarkable freedom from any element of scholasticism. Concerning it Sir Donald Tovey remarks that ‘it shows it is possible for a fugue to enjoy life without stretti, double counterpoints, inversions, &c., and without anything but well-timed entries of the subject in the course of a happy flood of episodes’. Once again, then, technical analysis is more than usually superfluous in dealing with such a piece—there is really very little that is susceptible of analysis.

The subject upon which this charming and graceful fugue is built conforms to a very familiar type, and one which is frequently encountered among the minor
fugues in particular of the Forty-eight; embodying the formula of the tonic and the dominant with the semitones below and above them respectively—the leading note so-called and the sub-mediant. It has been calculated that no fewer than thirteen out of the twenty-four minor fugues in the collection are based upon variants of this simple formula. Compare the subject of the present example with that of the G minor Fugue in the first book, which is perhaps the clearest instance of the employment of this formula, and the structural resemblance is at once noticeable:

Ex.139

In this fugue once more there is not even a regular counter-subject for the analytical commentator to get his teeth into. The theme which accompanies the answer in the exposition is, in the first part of its course, self-evidently a mere prolongation of the subject, while the quavers with which it continues play no subsequent role in the piece:

Ex.140

Even the four episodes which break into the recurrences of the subject are based upon fragments of the subject itself. But ‘break’ is perhaps the wrong word; the steady, unending, inevitable flow from first bar to last is the most noteworthy feature of this admirable and unconventional little fugue.
II. 13

PRELUDE AND FUGUE (THREE PARTS)
IN F SHARP MAJOR

This prelude is in two-part writing throughout up till the last two bars, and is a remarkable example of Bach's phenomenal ability in achieving a richness and brilliance of texture out of modest and slender resources. It is also a noteworthy instance of his power to build up a whole piece by means of the development of one or two short, simple figures. The entire thematic material, as so often, is to be found in the first bars:

\[\text{Ex. 141}\]

(The appoggiatura in the initial phrase, by the way, is to be found in some manuscripts and not in others; its performance is therefore optional.)

The subject of the fugue is as follows:

\[\text{Ex. 142}\]

Unlike its immediate predecessors, this fugue has a regular counter-subject which plays almost as important a role in the subsequent proceedings as the subject itself. Here it is:

\[\text{Ex. 143}\]
After the exposition an episode occurs which is based upon the quaver figure of the subject combined with two new figures which together form a triple counterpoint of which great use is made, not only in this episode but also in another subsequent one:

A second episode is also based upon a variant of the same quaver figure of the subject in the bass, together with a theme in thirds and sixths for the two upper parts which is clearly related to the counter-subject:

After this has run its course, the subject reappears in the bass, and there then ensues a section which is something in the nature of a counter-exposition. A third episode then occurs, employing the same material as the first and exhausting all the possible permutations of the triple counterpoint. Finally, a fourth episode recapitulates the second. Otherwise the plot is mainly confined to resourceful combinations of the subject and counter-subject. If not one of the greatest or most immediately attractive numbers in the Forty-eight, it is a singularly fine example of Bach's effortless mastery of contrapuntal technique.
II. 14
PRELUDE AND FUGUE (THREE PARTS)
IN F SHARP MINOR

If we have not encountered any outstanding peaks among recent numbers, this is only because the general level is so high. Just as in the Pamirs the lowest valleys are many thousands of feet above sea-level, so in this musical ‘Roof of the World’ the lowest slopes are far above the highest capacity of almost any other composer. But in any case, we do not always want to be scaling mountains; valleys are just as enjoyable in their very different way. A world which consisted of nothing but mountain peaks would be a dreary place, and a work of art such as the Forty-eight, which is a whole world in itself and a microcosm of human experience, would not be as great as it is without the gentle, gracious declivities, carpeted with flowers, which lie between the great towering summits. And those music-lovers who are never satisfied with anything but the loftiest pinnacles, who are never happy unless they can see themselves proudly standing like conquering heroes on the top of some musical Mount Everest, are as boring and incomplete specimens of humanity as mountaineers are in actual life.

Which things having been said, we now find ourselves, with this Prelude and Fugue in F sharp minor, in the presence of one of the loftiest peaks in the whole Himalayan range of the Forty-eight. The Prelude, with its long, sinuous, unceasing flow of impassioned, rhapsodic melody, is like a road winding upwards from a fertile, flowering valley up to the towering summit of
the fugue, from which, in rarefied air, we look down upon a vista of musical beauty lying all around us. There is no thematic connexion between the two pieces, but in no other pair of the Forty-eight do we feel a more perfect relationship between the two.

Concerning the beauty of the prelude there can be no two opinions; it is among the finest in the whole series. Even Dr. Hugo Riemann, the absolute musical equivalent of the immortal Dr. Strabismus (Whom God Preserve) of Utrecht, in his gigantic lucubration in two volumes on the Forty-eight, for once lays aside his microscope and his dissecting instruments, pushes up his spectacles on to his forehead, leans back in his chair, and whinnies in sheer joy. Listen to the good Doctor. 'A prelude of wondrous beauty—an outpouring of the inmost soul, fresh with youth, overflowing with love, more, perhaps, than in any in the first part of the work—what freedom already in the unfolding both of melody and rhythm in the first half-period which forms the basis of the whole piece! Note well the insinuating fourth of the opening motive, the onward pressing triplets of the up-beat, the smooth semiquavers of the turn-like feminine ending of the second motive, together with its longing, upward-soaring, annexed motive; and also the bewitching syncopation effects from the third to the fourth measure.' But do not laugh, good reader; rather let us salute reverently the miracle of art which is able to elicit from a dry-as-dust professor such an emotional tribute as this—as miraculous as the blossoming of the withered staff of Tannhäuser.

There are few examples indeed in the whole of musical literature of such sustained melodic writing as is found in this prelude. From first bar to last of the forty-two
bars which comprise the piece there is an organic flow of melody such as even Bach himself has never surpassed, and seldom equalled. Musical quotations are useless here; one would have to quote the whole piece. There is not a break in the jointure from beginning to end.

It is written in three parts throughout, as is also the succeeding fugue, of which the noble subject is as follows:

Ex.146

It will be noted that this subject is three bars in length, instead of in the more usual one, two, or four. This peculiarity lends a supple, plastic character to the whole work. If Bach has a conspicuous fault, it is that of falling into symmetrical, mechanical patterns of four, eight, and sixteen bars in his less inspired moments. But this fault—if fault it is—is not to be found here.

It should be mentioned, incidentally, that this fugue is by some competent authorities spoken of as a triple fugue—i.e. a fugue based on three subjects of equal importance, of which that quoted is merely the first in order of appearance; others, equally competent, define it as a fugue with two counter-subjects. However that may be, the other two subjects, counter or otherwise, are as follows:

Ex.147

Ex.148
In this respect, as all commentators point out, there is a distinct structural resemblance between this fugue and that in C sharp minor in the first book. The resemblance is further intensified by the fact that the third subject (or second counter-subject) is strikingly similar in character to the second subject (or first counter-subject) of the earlier number. This semiquaver motive, it is interesting to note, does not make its appearance until almost exactly half-way through the piece. But from the moment of its entry right up to the end it is present in every bar in one or other of the parts.

The emotional and structural climax of the work is reserved to the close; firstly, when the theme recurs in the bass, and the other two subjects in the upper parts:

secondly, when the subject is given out by the treble, with the other two in the lower parts:
II. 15

PRELUDE AND FUGUE (THREE PARTS)
IN G MAJOR

The following pair, in G major, are among the light-weights of the Forty-eight, and this character is all the more intensified by reason of their position in the collection, coming after such a superb couple as those in F sharp minor. This may be partly due to the key; for some reason or other it is difficult to think deep thoughts or feel deep emotions in G major; in this key the composer has seemingly no choice but to be care-free and light-hearted. So it was in the first book; so it is here. But apart from this consideration it is difficult to resist the conclusion that these two pieces were not written contemporaneously with the bulk of the pieces of the second book, but were originally written much earlier, probably in Bach's youth, and only rewritten later. They give the impression of being youthful not merely in spirit but in technique. This conclusion is borne out to some extent by the fact that another version of the fugue is extant and has been reprinted in the collected edition of the Bachgesellschaft (vol. xxxvi). It is impossible to give any definite date to this earlier version, but it is difficult to resist the inference that it is an early work. In its original form it was called a 'fughetta', and even in its later extended form it still retains the character of a miniature.

The prelude is a brilliant and engaging little piece in binary form, based upon the following initial three-bar figure:
It consists in two symmetrical sections of sixteen and thirty-two bars respectively marked with repeats, of which the first modulates to a close in the dominant in orthodox manner, and the second modulates back through various keys to the tonic. It is all perfectly simple and straightforward, standing in no need of commentary or elucidation.

The theme of the fugue, like that of the corresponding number in the first book, is exceptionally long, and, again like its predecessor, is somewhat colourless and characterless:

This subject is not typically fugal; on the contrary, its length and predominantly arpeggio formation preclude masterly developments and thematic combinations. The composer therefore contents himself with constructing a brilliant little piece of a toccata-like character which affords little scope for analytical dissertations. The piece, moreover, is by no means strictly orthodox in texture, from a fugal point of view. About half-way through, in bars 30 and 31, an additional part is momentarily inserted for harmonic reasons, and the same thing occurs again towards the close in bar 60. The bravura passage in demi-semiquavers near the end,
mounting up in a scale-passage through three octaves, is also hardly in keeping with fugal character. It need hardly be said, however, that such questionable features from a strictly purist point of view do not prevent it from being a charming and brilliantly effective piece of music.

II. 16

PRELUDE AND FUGUE (FOUR PARTS)
IN G MINOR

The prelude is built upon the following figure:

![Ex.153](image)

but the texture, after the commencement in three parts, already becomes four at the third bar and remains so till the close. The general formal scheme and method of construction are of the type so often encountered in the preludes, consisting of the insistent but always amazingly resourceful extension, development, and metamorphosis of the rhythmical figure presented at the outset, and maintained unbroken till the concluding bar. This is one of the few pieces in the collection, by the way, which bears a tempo indication provided by the composer himself—*Largo*.

All of the last six fugues, it will have been noticed, are in three parts. The present example is, like its prelude, in four parts. The subject is as follows:
Its most striking feature is, of course, the unusual sevenfold repetition of a single note; for the rest it conforms to the type, of which we have already encountered several examples in the collection, which tends to circle or pivot around one note—here the third of the key. This is a type which lends itself to elaborate contrapuntal developments as a general rule, and the present example is no exception. The subject and its strongly contrasted counter-subject, which is as follows:

are in what is called double counterpoint, and this circumstance largely determines the developments which take place in the course of the fugue. On the other hand, there are here again certain unorthodox features which provoke the ire, or at least the disapproval, of the elect; firstly, the remarkable profusion, in the second part of the piece, of long passages written in thirds and sixths. One of the first things that the student of counterpoint is taught is that more than three consecutive thirds or sixths, though not a positive error like consecutive fifths, are destructive of the true contrapuntal spirit. Long passages of consecutive thirds, such as appear in this fugue, are more suggestive of the procedures of the Italian masters of the opera buffa who were Bach’s contemporaries than of the austere style of contrapuntal writing of which he is, wrongly, supposed to be a model. Bach does what he wishes when he feels like it; if he wants to write what in the hands of other com-
posers might seem simply to be a trumpery string of thirds, he does so, and in some mysterious way they lose their triviality.

A good example of this characteristic feature of the fugue is afforded by the passage in which the subject in thirds is set against the counter-subject also in thirds:

Sir Donald Tovey, it is amusing to observe, in his notes to this fugue in his excellent edition of the Forty-eight explains away this passage, which he would surely have stigmatized as trivial and unworthy in an opera of Donizetti, by saying that 'the four parts present inversion in the octave, the tenth (in two ways at once), and the twelfth with its characteristic sevenths now in completed chords'. Shades of Dr. Strabismus! Readers who understand nothing of this contrapuntal abracadabra can rest assured that the explanation is just as exquisitely comic to those who do. The plain fact is that Bach wanted to write a passage in thirds, for its rich harmonic effect, and he did so. *Voilà tout.*

A much more serious fault, to my thinking, than the frank sensuousness of such proceedings, is the tendency one perceives here and there in this fugue, as in the F minor Fugue of the first set, to fall into facile sequences—the same pattern of notes and intervals repeated in the next bar or bars, higher or lower as the case may be. But taken all in all, this fugue is a strenuous, powerful, and attractive work.
It will have been noticed, incidentally, that in none of the preceding fugues in this album is there any trace or vestige of the employment of the effective contrapuntal device of stretto. Neither is there here, even, so far as the subject is concerned; but towards the close there is a very effective little passage of stretto based on the counter-subject.

Ex.157

II. 17

PRELUDE AND FUGUE (FOUR PARTS)
IN A FLAT MAJOR

The Prelude in A flat, although conforming broadly to the familiar type which exploits the thought exposed in the initial bars throughout the piece, is of a more subtle, intricate, and exquisitely wrought texture than usual. The method followed for the most part is perhaps best described by saying that Bach here takes a motive, varies it, then varies the variation, and so on; with the result that one often finds figurations which bear little or no resemblance to the original thought, but have yet been derived from it gradually, logically, inevitably. The first two bars, for example, clearly contain the thought that, in some form or another, underlies the whole piece which, incidentally, is considerably longer than the majority of the preludes:
After these have been repeated sequentially, a new melodic clause appears which in both of its parts is clearly derived from bar 2:

Then two bars later another variation on the same thought is accompanied in the left hand by a new figure, of which the rhythm continues to play an important role throughout the movement:

A little farther on this characteristic rhythmical motive in the bass is in its turn accompanied by a still more remote variation of the principal thought:
but if one now compares this upper part with bar 2 a considerable change will be found to have taken place, although the relationship is clear enough. But with this next metamorphosis all resemblance and relationship has vanished.

And so it goes on, throughout this very gracious and lovely piece.

The following fugue which, like its predecessor, is in four parts, is one of the finest in the second book. Like several other numbers in this second set, it exists in an earlier form, as a fughetta of only twenty-four bars' length as compared with the fifty of this later version, and originally written in F major. The key to the intricate plot is again to be found in the fact that it is based upon a triple counterpoint formed by the combination of the subject, which is as follows:

with two strongly contrasted counter-subjects; one a descending chromatic figure:

the other consisting of groups of smoothly running semiquavers:
Almost the entire substance of the movement derives from the various entries and combinations of these three subjects. It is a longish fugue, yet there are no more than two short episodes of relief from the main development. The subject itself enters in one part or another no fewer than fifteen times, and the parts played by the other two members of this magnificent thematic triumvirate are little if at all less important. The second counter-subject, incidentally, does not, as the others do, retain its thematic personality intact throughout, but frequently undergoes considerable modification.

In broad outline then, as suggested, the plot of this fugue is simple, being concerned with little else than the relations between and interactions upon each other of these three thematic personalities. In detail, however, there are even more than the usual subtleties and refinements of execution. These chiefly concern the treatment of the first counter-subject. The fugue is of the variety called ‘tonal’, involving the alteration of an interval in the answer which is as follows:

Here it appears, of course, accompanied by the counter-subject. When, at bar 18, the subject appears in its original form in the bass (with one tiny, cunning alteration of a semitone) it is accompanied by the counter-subject unaltered.
That the same sequence of notes should thus be capable of combining with two different versions of the same subject (in different keys even, be it remembered) is a remarkable technical tour de force.

Even more remarkable, perhaps, is the passage where the subject is combined with the counter-subject thrown back by a crotchet of time-value:

But the whole work is full of ingenuities, and there are few specimens of the Forty-eight which will more amply repay the student of such things.

II. 18

PRELUD AND FUGUE (THREE PARTS)
IN G SHARP MINOR

The next pair stand on an equally high level in their different way. The prelude, as is so often the case in the second book, is in two repeated sections, modulating to the dominant and back. The fact that the original manuscripts reveal the indications ‘piano’ and ‘forte’
at bars 3 and 5 respectively has been regarded as a sign that the piece was originally written for the harpsichord and that a change of keyboard was intended at these points. If this is so, it adds one more item of evidence to the already quite considerable mass in favour of our contention, expressed earlier in these notes, to the effect that the so-called second book of the Forty-eight, unlike the first, was not conceived as a whole, but is a haphazard collection of fine pieces bearing no relation to each other, and containing many pieces that were not even originally conceived for the clavier.

The beautiful chief motive of the piece, presented in customary fashion at the start, is not to the same extent as usual in Bach's preludes the sole begetter of the subsequent developments. It certainly plays the leading part, but not the only part.

Ex.169

The prelude and fugue are very much of a piece not only in underlying mood but also in thematic substance. The subject, at least, is of clearly cognate origin with the chief motive of the prelude.

Ex.170

This, it will be observed, is another of Bach's fugal subjects which revolve or pivot around one note—again, as in the G minor, round the third of the key.

The formal design of this fugue is unusual and strikingly original, giving rise to an interesting problem.
There is a fairly general consensus of opinion on the part of the experts in favour of the view that it is to be considered a double fugue—i.e. a fugue with two subjects, the second of which does not, however, make its appearance until about half-way through. Here it is:

Ex.171

The intensely chromatic character of this subject makes it a fitting foil to the strictly diatonic nature of the first subject. The point is, however, that some authorities see in this chromatic ‘second subject’ a development of the counter-subject of the earlier part of the fugue, first heard in the soprano part against the answer at the very beginning.

Ex.172

In the words of Riemann, ‘the counterpoint of the soprano to the first appearance of the answer, and the first episode, prefigure, as it were, the contents of a second theme of the fugue—in other words: from the motives of the first counter-subject and of the first episode is crystallized, later on, a real second subject which is developed independently, and then combined with the principal theme’.

Sir Donald Tovey, on the other hand, will have none of this. He refers, with evident satisfaction, to the shake or trill on the penultimate note of the second subject, as ‘a very necessary means of protecting the second subject from an undesigned resemblance to the occasional counterpoint of the first section’.
I do not—for once—signal this discrepancy in authoritative opinion out of any malicious intent, but because it raises an interesting point; namely, is the resemblance conscious or not on Bach’s part? Does he mean us to regard the second subject as a metamorphosis of the earlier motive, in the manner of Liszt’s device of thematic transformation? The listener must decide for himself. My personal feeling, for what it is worth, is that the resemblance is deliberate and intentional, that the second subject is a development of the earlier suggestion. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Sir Donald’s anxiety to ‘protect’ the second subject from such an imputation is in reality nothing more than the anxiety to protect Bach from the suspicion of ever having anything in common with the arch-fiend of music, in the eyes of all doctors and professors—Liszt. It is, in fact, only another aspect of that conditioned reflex to Liszt which refuses to allow any suggestion of a thematic interconnexion between preludes and fugues.

In form the fugue falls into three fairly clearly defined sections; firstly, one concerned with the development of the first subject, secondly, one concerned with the development of the second subject, and thirdly, one in which both themes are combined. An unusual feature consists in the fact that the whole of the first section is in the key of the tonic without modulations.

II. 19

PRELUDE AND FUGUE (THREE PARTS)
IN A MAJOR

This prelude has much in common with that in E major in the first book; not merely the same twelve-eight K 2
rhythm, but the same *pastorale* character, and the same long, winding, graceful, melodic line cut into irregular periods. The initial thematic clause, for instance, on which the whole piece is built, is of five bars’ length:

Ex. 173

Note, by the way, the fugal character of the writing, and how the middle part, in the very first bar, answers the subject tonally with rising fifth replying to rising fourth. See also how, after the first five bars, the bass takes up the theme in the orthodox fugal key of the dominant, and how, shortly after, the subject appears in inverted form:

Ex. 174
The initial six quaver figure is to be found in almost every bar of the piece in some form or another—either in its natural shape, inverted, or slightly varied. The texture throughout is consistently three-part up to the very last bar, which introduces an additional part in thirds to fill in and enrich the harmony.

The fugue once more belongs to the order of the lighter, slighter, and more diaphanous members of the collection; at the same time it is also one of the very shortest—a bare twenty-nine bars in allegro time.

The lively little subject is chiefly characterized by its syncopations:

Ex.175

These syncopations automatically determine the rhythm of the counter-subject material, which dovetails into that of the theme:

Ex.176

The counter-subject, in fact, you might say, is the rhythm, and the rhythm only; the melodic forms which it takes are continually varied. (The figure which accompanies the answer on its first appearance has no thematic significance, and does not, indeed, reappear.)

The plot and construction alike are crystal-clear throughout and call for no analysis or elucidation. Once again one has to record in this number a complete absence of all the ingenious scholastic devices generally considered essential to a fugue. Actually it would
probably be true to say that there is more of the strictly fugal style in the prelude than in the fugue proper.

II. 20

PRELUDE AND FUGUE (THREE PARTS)
IN A MINOR

The prelude, which is in two-part writing throughout, is chiefly based upon the thematic material which is presented in the first bar:

Ex.177

In the second bar the chromatic bass is transferred to the treble, and the treble part to the bass, and this characteristic procedure is maintained throughout the greater part of the piece. The third bar introduces a new, but clearly cognate, thought:

Ex.178

The entire prelude is constructed on this exiguous, but pregnant, material. Like so many of the preludes of the second book, this example is built in two sections, both marked with a double bar and repeat. The second part begins with an inversion of the thematic material which
is subsequently developed extensively, sometimes in juxtaposition to the themes in their natural form.

The chromatic bass figure of the first bar, which is the determining factor in the whole structure, both melodic and harmonic, is of frequent occurrence in the music of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The bass chromatically descending from tonic to dominant is, indeed, the formula which is most productive of daring and expressive harmonic writing during the period. The subject of the following fugue, or at any rate its opening progression, is similarly a stock property common to all composers of the time.

For example, one finds almost identically the same progression in the fourth number of Part II of Handel’s Messiah, ‘And with His stripes’, in the final chorus of his Joseph, in the ‘Kyrie Eleison’ of Mozart’s Requiem, in the Finale of the String Quartet, op. 20, no. 5, of Haydn, to mention only a few examples. Yet in each of these examples, if one compares them, the whole treatment and effect are entirely different. No better illustration could possibly be found of the truth that originality in music does not primarily consist in the invention of fresh melodic formulas, but rather in the
imaginative treatment of traditional material, or of subject-matter which belongs equally to all the composers of the period.

In the present instance this hackneyed formula—in the hands of minor composers—gives rise to one of the most powerful and vigorous fugues in the whole collection. A particularly striking feature of the work is the unusually extensive range of all three parts, but more particularly of the bass. Note, for example, the magnificent passage which begins about half-way through, and in which the bass mounts up steadily, step by step, from the low E below the bass clef up to the middle B flat of the treble clef.

The fugue is of the kind known as tonal, involving the alteration of the initial progression in the answer, thus:

Ex.181

and actually this is the form in which the theme chiefly recurs in the course of the fugue.

There is a regular counter-subject, which plays as important a part in the piece as the subject itself:

Ex.182

It is on the final phrase of this, by the way, that the bass passage referred to above is built.

After this counter-subject has entered for the first time, at the beginning of the fugue, it is succeeded by a pendant, or continuation, which also plays an important part in the fugue:
A fiery, precipitous figure in demisemiquavers which changes its melodic contours on each appearance, and consequently cannot be profitably quoted here, completes the thematic material of this fine fugue.

II. 21

PRELUDE AND FUGUE (THREE PARTS)
IN B FLAT MAJOR

This prelude is one of the longest, if not indeed the very longest, of the entire collection, and at the same time one of the most highly developed from a formal point of view. It is in fact, to all intents and purposes, nothing short of a first movement in sonata form, with regular first and second subjects, which are as follows:

The first subject is presented at the outset in three-part writing, the second in two, in close imitation. An
unusual feature of the texture consists in the employment of cross-hand passages:

Ex. 186

This characteristic feature leads Sir Donald Tovey to the view that this piece was conceived originally for performance on a harpsichord with two manuals rather than on the clavichord, and he is surely right.

Once again, this prelude is divided into two sections with double bars and repeats. The second part begins with what, to-day, we call a development section; and a recapitulation, not altogether regular, follows. The piece concludes with an almost prophetically Beethovenian coda in two-part writing, except for one interpolated bar of three-part.

The subject of the fugue is as follows:

Ex. 187

There is no regular counter-subject in this fugue, but it is probably not too fanciful to see, in the figure which first accompanies the answer to the subject:
the germ from which is eventually derived the following
counterpoint, which appears first about a third of the
way through, and plays an important part in the sub-
sequent proceedings:

Another important thematic subsidiary appears at
the same time in the bass:

and these two new subjects, in combination with the
original subject, form a triple counterpoint of which
the various possibilities are fully exploited in the re-
mainder of the fugue.

II. 22

PRELUDE AND FUGUE (FOUR PARTS)
IN B FLAT MINOR

This prelude and fugue represent the highest summit
we have encountered in the second book since the great
couple in F sharp minor. They are both pieces in Bach’s
very grandest manner.

The prelude is so densely informed with contrapuntal
implications that one feels it was only by accident that
it did not become a full-fledged fugue in the hands of the
composer. The chief melodic germ of the piece is in itself an ideal fugal subject:

Ex. 191

and the very first bars, with their fertile suggestions of all kinds of contrapuntal possibilities of stretto and inversion, contain in embryo the makings of great fugal developments. The texture is of a strict, closely knit three-part polyphony throughout, and the formal organization is intricate and complex. Apart from the invariably impressive returns of the principal subject, the chief structural interest consists perhaps in the protean developments to which its final bar gives rise. Either in the original form or in inversion it occurs nearly fifty times in the course of the piece.

In looking back at the last dozen fugues in this book, one is struck by the singular dearth of contrapuntal display of the orthodox kind which they collectively exhibit. In only one, for example, the A flat, does the device of stretto occur, and even then only once, and incompletely at that. Similarly devices of inversion, augmentation, diminution, and the like, are of almost equally rare incidence. The present number, in striking contrast, is one of exceptional virtuosity in these respects, yet never any the less admirable simply as music on that account. The subject is as follows:

Ex. 192
There is a regular counter-subject, which starts on its course immediately, before the entry of the answer:

Ex.193

Actually, however, this counter-subject is only active during the first part of the fugue and fades entirely out of the picture in the second part.

The exposition of subject and answer in all four parts, first in alto, then soprano, then bass, then tenor, takes twenty bars. Then, after an episode based upon the counter-subject, the first stretto makes its appearance, at the close distance of a minim, between alto and tenor:

Ex.194

This is followed, a few bars later, by another stretto at the same distance, for soprano and bass:

Ex.195

Shortly after this occurs a counter-exposition based upon an inversion of both the subject and the counter-subject in all four parts. The nature of the subject,
incidentally, is such that, so far from losing any of its beauty when thus inverted, it seems rather to gain:

Ex.196

This is followed shortly afterwards by an inverted stretto, firstly for tenor and soprano, then for alto and bass. After the conclusion of this there is another stretto, this time consisting of the inverted subject in the soprano which is answered by the subject in its natural form in the tenor—a remarkable feat of contrapuntal virtuosity:

Ex.197

This development has a sequel shortly after, when the direct subject in the bass is answered by the inversion in the alto:

Ex.198

Finally, to cap it all, the fugue concludes with a stretto of the subject, both direct and inverted, in which all four voices take part:
But, perhaps, even more remarkable than such transcendental feats of contrapuntal mastery is the fact that, as several commentators have pointed out, among them Dr. Hugo Riemann and Sir Donald Tovey, there are many other similar ingenious combinations latent in the theme which must have been perfectly apparent to Bach, but which, in his infinite richness, he chose to reject—an example of abnegation and self-restraint of which probably no other composer would have been capable. He alone can afford it.

II. 23

PRELUDE AND FUGUE (FOUR PARTS)
IN B MAJOR

Unlike the majority of the preludes, this particular example is not built up exclusively, or even predominantly, out of the thought presented in the first bars. The piece is rather in the nature of a free fantasy or improvisation of a toccata-like character. Nevertheless, it falls into four more or less clearly discernible sections,
the second of which begins with an entirely new line of thought consisting of a dialogue between the two upper parts over a rolling bass figure in semiquavers:

The third section similarly introduces a new idea:

and the fourth section begins with a modified version of the opening bars which, however, is soon abandoned in favour of a kind of coda. Wayward and even nonchalant in construction, it is nevertheless a piece possessing great charm and poetry.

The fugue is based upon a subject of great dignity and simplicity:

and a counter-subject in a strong contrast, but of equal power and beauty:
After the exposition, which includes an extra bass entry, a new theme is introduced by the soprano, against the subject in the tenor, which some commentators regard as a second subject, the fugue therefore being a so-called 'double fugue'. Others regard it as merely a second counter-subject. However that may be, it plays a large role in the subsequent developments and recurs in many transformations:

![Ex.204]

In addition to this form of combination with the subject another form is possible, as exemplified here:

![Ex.205]

Of the more recondite contrapuntal devices such as abound in the preceding fugue there are none—no inversions, no stretto. A noteworthy feature of the construction consists in the fact that the striking first counter-subject disappears entirely after the exposition and before the entry of the second subject (or counter-subject, as the case may be). Another feature consists in the large number and extent of the episodes which sometimes introduce a considerable amount of new material unrelated to the principal thematic protagonists. This is somewhat unusual.
II. 24

PRELUDE AND FUGUE (THREE PARTS)
IN B MINOR

In dealing with the corresponding pair of pieces in the first book it was observed that both in dimensions and in content they were among the most important in the book, that with their sense of finality they were peculiarly fitted to their position at the close of the series. No better illustration could be found of the contention which has already been made several times in the course of these notes to the effect that the second volume, unlike the first, is a series of unrelated pieces, than the fact that in this latter couple one feels no such inevitability or finality. These two pieces might just as well be in any other key and in any other position in the series. Actually, the last place that any composer would put them if he had any intention of presenting the set of pieces as a unified organism, a single work, would be the end.

The prelude is once more of the familiar type which uncoils effortlessly and inevitably from the material presented in the first bar:

Ex. 206

The initial figure for the right hand is particularly persistent. (It should be mentioned, incidentally, that this prelude exists in two different forms of notation, equally authoritative in their different ways—one in notes of half the time value of the other, and this is the
version followed in the above quotation. To the ear, of course, there is no difference between the two versions.)

Subsidiary, though related material is provided by the following counterpoint which appears in the third bar (according to the notation here employed—fifth bar in the alternative version),

Ex.207

and by the following theme which is employed episodically for the most part, in order to afford relief from the insistent primary material:

Ex.208

The gay, lively subject of the fugue, chiefly characterized by its two octave jumps, is as follows:

Ex.209

In this fugue there is a certain amount of ambiguity concerning the identity of the counter-subject. The counterpoint which first appears in the exposition, against the answer, imitates the subject in its second bar:

Ex.210

moreover, it does not long survive, and after only one or two brief reappearances, fades away altogether. For
this reason some commentators prefer to regard as the true counter-subject a theme which does not occur until some time later, in the 29th bar, to be exact:

Ex.211

But it must be admitted that if this is the real counter-subject it performs its duties in an exceedingly dilatory manner and is as often absent as present. This fugue, in fact, belongs to the category of Bach's wayward and fanciful examples, and the interest consists almost as much in the comparatively free episodes as in the treatment of the thematic personalities.