

Bach's Well Tempered Clavier II, BWV 870-893

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[my recording of this can be found in my channel at Youtube: Gilead Bar-Elli plays at home]

Bach's *Das Wohltemperirte Klavier*, usually translated as *Well Tempered Clavier* (WTC) was complete by 1722. Twenty years later Bach composed another volume, which just like the first, consisted of 24 couples of preludes and fugues in all the keys in major and minor. His son (and others) referred to it as WTC II. Though Bach himself didn't call it by that name, he probably knew it and did not object. Some of the introductory notes to my remarks on WTC I (in this site) are relevant here too and I shall not repeat them. WTC II was composed in 1742 (or perhaps mainly in 1740), sometimes using older materials. While a purpose of WTC I was probably to demonstrate the possibilities and advantages of equal tuning, that of WTC II is less clear (unless composing divine music is considered a purpose). It belongs to the last phase of Bach's life (he died in 1750). An autograph (almost complete, but with few numbers in the hand writing of Bach's second wife, Anna Magdalena, which Bach certainly checked) passed several hands and was in the possession of M. Clementi in the early 19th century and then passed some more hands until it was bequeathed to the British Museum in 1896 and has been in the British Library since 1973. It is known in the literature as the "London Autograph". There are also some authentic manuscripts dating from Bach's life or soon after his death. The most important ones are two by Altnikol from 1744 (some years after the London Autograph), which were certainly seen by Bach and contain some corrections and additions by him (e.g. the ending of the fugue No. 10 in E minor), and one by Kirnberger. Altnikol and Kirnberger were Bach's students and accomplished musicians. Kirnberger was a composer and an influential theoretician. Altnikol was an organist and composer, and Bach's son in law – he married Bach's daughter Elizabeth Friedricka in 1749, i.e. about a year before Bach died and 7 years after the completion of WTC. He had known Bach and studied with him long before the marriage and scribed his works under the master's supervision. His manuscripts (it is not clear which one of them is the later) probably indicate Bach's final intentions better than the London Autograph.

In general, the preludes in the second volume are grander and more elaborate than those of the first. Though very different from one another, each having its own character, many of them are somewhat of the nature of the two voices inventions (e.g. Nos. 2, 6, 8, 10, 20). The contrapuntal composition of some of them (e.g. Nos. 4 in C# minor, 11 in F, 21 in B \flat minor) is not less impressive and sophisticated than that of the fugues. This, and

a possible desire for improving the balance between the preludes and fugues could have been a reason for compiling the second volume. But the fugues are, of course, pearls in themselves. They are in 3 and 4 voices (no fugues in 2 or 5 as in the first book).

Bach's clavier works, and WTC in particular, were permanently studied by eminent musicians and admired by the greatest composers. Mozart transformed some of it to a string quartet (in which he participated). Beethoven studied the WTC in his early teens and continued to play and teach it throughout his life. Mendelssohn, Brahms and Chopin are reported to have played Bach regularly, and Schumann is said to have suggested to musicians to play Bach daily, as their bread and butter. He also remarked that "Bach Fugues are character pieces of the highest order, at times genuinely poetic creations, each demanding its own expression" (note 12 to p. 207 in *Cambridge Companion to Bach*).

Albert Schweitzer, the renown organist, theologian and Bach scholar, characterizes these "character pieces" more precisely in the following words, which, in spite of being meant to explain (unfortunately) why detailed analysis is superfluous and impossible, are worth quoting:

"What so fascinates us in the work [WTC, G.B.] is not the form or the build of the piece, but the world-view that is mirrored in it. It is not so much that we enjoy the Well-tempered Clavichord as that we are edified by it. Joy, sorrow, tears, lamentation, laughter — to all these it gives voice, but in such a way that we are transported from the world of unrest to a world of peace, and see reality in a new way, as if we were sitting by a mountain lake and contemplating hills and woods and clouds in the tranquil and fathomless water. Nowhere so well as in the Well-tempered Clavichord are we made to realise that art was Bach's religion. He does not depict natural soul-states, like Beethoven in his sonatas, no striving and struggling towards a goal, but the reality of life felt by a spirit always conscious of being superior to life, a spirit in which the most contradictory emotions, wildest grief and exuberant cheerfulness, are simply phases of a fundamental superiority of soul." (Schweitzer, *Bach*, vol. 1, pp. 338-9, trans. E Newman, A&C Black, London)

The following remarks are based on notes prepared for lectures cum performance I sometimes give at home for groups of friends (I hope to put shortly recordings – home recordings – of my performances of WTC II in my Youtube channel "Gilead Bar-Elli plays at home"). These remarks are designed for people who can read music notes and know some elementary theory. I hope though, that musicians and more advanced students can also benefit from them. I have tried to make them short and to drive attention to what seems to me of special importance in each work, with particular emphasis on thematic relation. Bach, as we know, ascribed particular importance to the (musical) subjects in his works. This was also a prominent issue in his teaching. Part of the reason has to do with the beauty and expressive power of the subject. But part of it (not the only one), I

surmise, is that Bach conceived the subject as containing, sometimes concealing, the seeds of whatever goes on in the work, or at least to its main features. Indeed, these are very often repetitions, operations on and developments of elements of the subject. This gives the particular coherence to the work, so typical of much of Bach's music – the preludes and fugues of WTC being prime examples. Thematic relations between motifs of the main subject and other subjects, contrapuntal maneuvers and other developments in a work, are essential to this coherence. Being cognizant of these relations and their significance is therefore of prime importance in understanding and appreciating these works. I therefore also concentrate in the following remarks on thematic relations and their significance in a work. I presume that they are read with the music notes open before the reader, and make frequent references by bar numbers. I generally use Bischoff's edition, but there are many other reliable ones. Of special value is D. Tovey's edition of 1924, reissued recently by Dover Publications, New York.

No.1 in C major, BWV 870

[An improvisatory prelude and a fugue with energetic subject cutting sometimes through a cadence.]

Prelude – The term "prelude" fits this work more than most of the other preludes in the corpus. It is rich and freely improvisatorial in character, wide and wavy – giving one a feeling of as if floating on a boat in a calm sea. This character is manifested, among other things, by interweaving the various voices to form not only rich harmonies but also new melodic lines. In relation to the flowing character of the piece it should be noticed that though it touches on the dominant here and there (e.g. mm.5, 31)¹, there is no real cadence to the dominant. The harmony is rich all through, mostly in full four voices, with long sustained notes. Though free in character, it has a fairly clear structure. This can be sketched as follows: After four introductory bars, the first section, (A), begins (m.5), manifesting the above mentioned weaving of voices. A new motif occurs after a cadence to D (m.13). After another cadence to F (m.16) and three Transitory bars of a chromatic character, section (A) is repeated (with slight variants) in the subdominant ((A'), mm.20-28). Another chromatic Transition (mm.28-30) leads to a Coda (mm.30-34), which brings the Prelude to an end.

Fugue – The fugue is in three voices in 2/4. The subject, which enters in the middle voice (mm.1-4), has, like many of the subjects in WTC, two motifs: (a) (mm.1-2) and (b) (mm.3-4). Motif (a) is virile, rhythmic and assertive, while motif (b) is calmer and tranquil, constantly moving homogenously in semiquavers (sixteenth notes). It smoothly flows into a countersubject, which is an important element throughout the fugue – either in itself (e.g. mm. 33-38) or as counterpoint to motif (a). The first episode (from m.13) expands motif (a), completing its ending second into a whole descending third, and this is presented in a stretto of the two upper voices. It ends with a cadence to G, but in its middle, quite unexpectedly, the subject enters in the middle voice (mm.21-28), and should be regarded as still part of the episode, which ends on the tonic (m.39). Hence, although formally it is not a deceptive cadence, there is something deceptive about the previous cadence to G – due to this entry of the subject that cuts it through. It is advisable to bring this out by adding a mordent on the B in m.22. A second episode begins there (m.39) with the subject in the lower voice, expanding motif (b) and ending with the subject in the upper voice (m.51) in the dominant. This continues with another episode,

¹ Numbers in parentheses (or prefaced by "m.") indicate bar-numbers. "m/n" refers to the nth beat of bar m. "/n" refers to about the middle of bar n.

which like the first one, completes the ending of motif (a) into a descending third in a stretto of the two upper voices, streaming into a false cadence (or "interrupted cadence", m.68), which is followed by a sequence of six entries of motif (a): two in the lower voice (mm.68-71), two in the middle voice (mm.72-5), and two in the upper voice (76-80). This false cadence occurs at a structurally similar place to the one we discussed above (m.22), namely, after the development that expands the stressed descending second of motif (a) into a whole descending third. This supports our reading of that cadence (to G) as "deceptive", due to its being cut through by the entrance of the subject in the middle voice of m.21.

No. 2 in C minor, BWV 871

[A melancholic subject gains force in the Prelude, and a subject is coupled with its own augmentation in a stretto Fugue]

The **prelude** is divided into two almost equally long parts, each to be repeated. It is in two voices in 4/4. In spite of the rather homogenous texture, one should note the different "faces" of the main subject and the emotional dynamics of the piece: It begins by a sort of melancholic descent of a fourth (mm.1-2); it then gains energy by a rising sequence (m. 3-4), which brings to a resolute and decisive descending sequence of mm.5-9, ending with a calm and peaceful return of the first motif in the relative major (Eb, m.9/3).

The second part is more varied melodically and harmonically. Instead of the narrow, stepwise texture of the beginning of the first part, the beginning of the second proceeds by leaps on the harmonic tones. One should note the chromatic descent in the bass of mm.17-18 and the ascent in m.27.

Fugue – This is a fugue in four voices with a rather short subject and no countersubject. The copious of strettos (two with the augmented subject) may justify calling it a stretto fugue. The exposition ends in m.8 on the dominant. It is immediately followed by a slight rhythmic variant of the subject in the soprano (m.8), descending gradually to F minor in m.10, using the motif of the last quaver (1/4 note) of m.1 of the subject. Note the extra entry of the subject in G major in the middle voice (m.10) followed by one in F minor in the bass of mm. 11/3. Note also the slight Neapolitan moves (within F minor) at the ends of mm. 11 and 12. A dense harmonic progression brings this section to an end on the dominant (14). The development begins with a stretto combining the subject with its own augmentation in the alto (mm.14-15), followed by a quadruple stretto of the subject in all the four voices – A, S, B, T (mm.16-18). Another entry of the augmented subject in the bass is combined with various syncopated variants of the subject (mm.19-20). Note in particular the soprano inversion of the above mentioned motif of the last quaver of m.1. A coda (from m.23/3) presents a dense stretto of 4 entrances of the subject in the 3 upper voices (A, S, S, T) with glimpses at the subdominant (F minor) and the sub-tonic (Bb minor) on the way, bringing the fugue in a dense harmonic progression to a vigor dominant cadence.

No. 3 in C# major, BWV 872

[A prelude with a long harmonic progression and an Allegro. A fugue with Strettos, inversions, augmentations and diminutions of a very short subject]

Prelude – This tranquil prelude in 4/4 ends with an Allegro fugato, with eccentric rhythm in 3/8. The texture of the main prelude is a fixed pattern built on a continuous harmonic progression, in a style somewhat similar to the C major prelude of WTC I (an earlier version of the prelude was indeed in C major, written, like that of book I, in chords). It is in fact a model of keeping the harmonic tension from beginning to end in one long progression. Apart of its harmonic line, it is of a rather homogeneous texture, which can explain the attachment of the completely different vivid Allegro. It is in this respect unique in the set (but cf. e.g. No. 10 in E minor of the first book).

The Allegro is in 3/8 and is a short fugato in three voices, with eccentric syncopated rhythm somewhat like some of the courantes of Bach's suites. Its subject is completely different from that of the main prelude (which is an obvious difference from e.g. the presto of No. 2 in C minor, or the Allegro of the E minor prelude of the first book). It begins with a stretto of the two upper voices, virtually repeated at mm.17-21. It ends with a chromatic descent in the middle voice, leading to the final cadence.

Fugue – This fugue is in three voices in 4/4. The arpeggio element of the chords progressions in the prelude provides also for the main element of the subject of the fugue. This subject is extremely short and consists of two motifs: (a) the staccato 8th notes (quavers) of m.1; (b) the legato move in sixteenths notes (semi-quavers) of m.2. Within this short subject the voices enter in stretto (of 2 quarters phase) already in the exposition, which is itself very short – only three bars long. Moreover, the third entry (middle voice, m.2) is not only in stretto, but inverted (this inversion of the full subject is repeated in m. 15). This play with stretto and inversion in the exposition fuels the entire fugue. Much of it deals only with the four first notes of the subject – motif (a). It is immediately manifest in m.4 where the stretto is intensified to a phase of one quarter (crochet), and the bass-entry is inverted. In m.5 diminutions of (a) are introduced, first in the soprano, then in the middle voice and then, inverted, in the bass. These diminutions come to the fore again at mm. 18-19.

In m.8 motif (a) in the soprano is accompanied by a new motif (c) in the bass, which is immediately repeated in the middle voice and the soprano, and which is so

important in the sequel that one may regard it as a (late) countersubject (in addition to its repeat in the bass, with inversion in the middle voice in m. 10, see e.g. mm.17-18, 24-31). Its ending is obviously derived from motif (b) of the subject (just add the rhythmic formula to its ending), as is evidenced by the bass at the end of m.15. Thus it is not only motif (a), but also (b), developed into (c), which provides the basic thematic material for whatever happens in this fugue.

Voices change roles in a repeat of the exposition in the relative minor (A#) in m. /14, where an inversion of the subject in the soprano (m.15) is combined in stretto with a stretto of the subject in the two lower voices. At mm.25-28 inversions of (a) in the soprano and bass are combined with its own emphatic augmentation, first in the sub-dominant in the middle voice (m. 25-6) and then in the dominant in the bass (m.27-8). This dominant dominates the ending in a fairly ostentatious cadence to the sustained organ tonic in the bass (m./34), on which a coda is built to the end.

No. 4 in C-sharp minor, BWV 873

[A lyric prelude of 3 subjects and a triple fugue of a subject, its inversion and its countersubject]

Prelude – This lyric prelude is particularly rich, both melodically and harmonically, and has a copious of mordents and grace-notes (to be played as quavers). It is in three voices that intermingle in rich contrapuntal fabrics. It has three main subjects which, although having each its own character, are closely interconnected, the last two being in fact variants of the first. The second subject (b) beginning in m.17, sounds like a variant of the second part of the first (mm.5-6). The first subject (a) recurs in the middle voice (/7) with the bass serving as a sort of accompaniment, though of a particularly rich melodic content having its own character. The second subject (b) enters (17) in all the three voices (in C#, F#, B) like in a fugue. In m.27 a variant of the bass accompaniment of m.1 appears as forming a third subject (c) that appears again in the three voices (it is to be developed in the second part of the prelude). The main subject (a) returns in m. 33 in the middle voice in F# with its bass accompaniment, while the upper one plays a variant of the middle voice of the beginning.

Another entry of (a) in the upper voice in m. 39 in the tonic marks the beginning of what may be regarded as the second part of the prelude and a repeat of the main subject of the beginning, but it soon modulates with beautiful chromatic variants (mm.45-50), followed with variants of the third subject in stretto (mm.50-52; the second subject (b) does not return). Another variant of (a) (from m.56) concludes the prelude.

Fugue – This fugue is missing in the London autograph. It is a three-voices fugue in 12/16. In m. 16 a second exposition (often called "(counter-exposition)") makes it into a sort of a "double fugue". It is immediately followed by yet another exposition – this time of the inverted subject (m.24), making it actually into a triple fugue. The third entry of the subject in the second exposition (mm.20-2) is accompanied by a contrapuntal line in the soprano that is very important. It is in fact a countersubject – the first one in the fugue – consisting of a chromatic descent followed by two leaps of a quarter (imagine just the upper notes of the triplets). It is in fact hinted at the second entry there (m./17 – imagine the tied C# at the beginning of m.18 turned into B#). This countersubject is as important in the sequel as the main subject. It comes to the fore in the soprano of mm.35-36, where it occurs as a subject in itself, not as a countersubject accompanying the main one. It then recurs immediately in the bass of mm./37-39, and later on at e.g. mm. 48-9, 55-6, the bass

of mm.61-2, the soprano of mm. 66-7, the middle voice of mm.68-9. Its two motifs – the chromatic descent and the quarter-leaps – function also independently: the quarter-leaps in e.g. the upper voices of mm.44-6 and the bass of mm. 57-8; the chromatic descent – in e.g. the bass of m. 48-9, the middle voice of mm.51, 53-4, 61-2, the soprano of mm. 55-6, 66-7 and the middle voice of mm.68-9. At mm. 48-9 it occurs in the bass as a countersubject to the main one on its first occurrence in the direct mode after the inverted exposition. The whole countersubject occurs towards the end of the fugue in the middle voice of mm.68-9, where the upper voice expands the chromatic descent and the bass develops the main subject. This remarkable synthesis of all these elements together brings the fugue to its end.

This is one form of a typical feature of Bach's fugues, where a marked intensification of various factors occurs towards the end. This intensification can take many forms: strettos, harmonic emphases, rhythmic compression, and, as in our case, contrapuntal synthesis of various previous subjects (Cf. our remarks on the ending of the fugues No. 2 in C minor, No.5 in D, of No. 6 in D minor, No.8 in D# minor, No. 14 in F# minor No.18 in G# minor, No. 22 in Bb, and many more).

No. 5 in D major, BWV 874

[A prelude of festive trumpet-calls announces a stretto fugue with a "begging motif"]

Prelude – This is a sort of a festive piece. It divides into two unequal parts, each repeated – the second being three times longer than the first. The main subject begins as if announcing or praising the appearance of a king by a trumpet-call ascending on the tones of a D major chord. Then from m.5 the first motif is used repeatedly in the three voices moving in various keys to the dominant at the end of this part.

The second part, which is also repeated, is divided into two main sub-parts (m.41) with a coda (m. 53). It begins as an inversion of the main subject but soon turns into a real development of it. In m. 41 the first part is repeated with some variants.

Some scholars believe the dotted quavers (1/8) should be played as double dotted – a notation, which was apparently introduced by Leopold Mozart and was unknown to Bach. This is a debatable question. I find it convincing when a tone is repeated in a trumpet-call manner, like in the bass of mm.5, 6, 10,11 or the soprano of 7, and all similar places. (Of course, not all dotted rhythms are alike in this respect. One should perhaps compare it to the prelude no.13 (F# major) to appreciate it)

Fugue – This is a stretto fugue in 4 voices (cf. fugue 1 in C of book I) *alla breve*. The short subject (mm.1-2) is the only material – there is no counter-subject, nor any other material. It consists of two motifs: (a) m.1, and (b) m.2 (in particular the first four notes). Motif (b), with its rising fourth and descending third, often sounds like expressive of begging or urgent request. It turns out to be the main material of the fugue. It appears about 100 times in this 50 bars fugue. Many of these occurrences are in condensed strettos. Note that (b) ends differently in the four entries of the subject already in the first exposition. The strettos with (b) occur already in mm.6-9 – twice in a phase of 1/2, and then from m.7 it is intensified to nine times in a phase of 1/4. This developed, rich and condensed stretto culminates the exposition. In m.14 the whole main subject (a+b) appears in a two-voices stretto on the fourth in a phase 1/2, and this culminates episode 1. A similar stretto on the fifth occurs in the middle of episode 2 (mm.21-23). In m. 27 we have a three-voices stretto of (a) on the octave at a phase of 1/4. In m. 33 we have a bit more sophisticated one, not on the octave but on the notes of the G chord. These culminate in a condensed four-voices stretto at a phase of 1/4 on the notes of the VI⁷ (mm.44-46). But as said before the main material for the strettos is motif (b) – they are

too many to be detailed here. Motifs (a) and (b) are also often played in counterpoint against each other (mm.6, 10, 11, 14, 21, 22, 28, 34, 40, 44). Note the expansion of the fourth-leap of (b) into a leap of a fifth in the tenor of the last bar.

This fugue exhibits a typical feature of Bach's counterpoint: The main musical subject consists of some motifs (mostly two), which are then treated separately as independent musical units in strettos, inversions, augmentations and in being counter-motifs against each other. We saw it before (e.g. in No. 1 in C), and shall see it again (e.g. in No. 6 in D minor and many other fugues), but our fugue, it seems, exhibits it in a specially clear way.

No. 6 in D minor, BWV 875

[A chromatic subject, its inversion and its countersubject feed exposition and episodes]

Prelude – A vigorous and virtuosic piece in two voices, built on the notes of a fairly simple harmony (mainly I - IV (II) - I - V (VII)) - I. Note the simple imitative counterpoint in mm.9-17, and the chromatic ascent of mm.40-41, which may adumbrate the chromatic motif of the fugue.

Fugue – This is a fugue in 3 voices (sometimes called "the chromatic fugue"). The subject enters in the middle voice and consists of two motifs (a) - four triplets of sixteenth notes from D to A; (b) a long chromatic descent in steady quavers (eighths) back to D. They are so clearly distinct that it would be overdone if emphasized by a difference of dynamics. Throughout the fugue (a) and (b) are treated either separately or as counterparts to each other. Accompanying the second entry of (b) in the upper voice, the middle one continues with a counter-subject ((c), m.3), which is an important element in the sequel. The exposition ends in m.10 on the tonic.

The first episode is a lively play with all these three elements (a), (b), and (c): (a) has its inversion as a counterpoint; (b) has its dotted and syncopated analogue as a counterpoint; and (c) has a stretto on the octave in a phase of 2/4 (mm.12-13). This is followed by a stretto of the entire subject (two upper voices) accompanied by (c) in the bass (mm.14-15).

The second episode (from m.17) is a stretto of the inversion of the subject between the two lower voices in a phase of 1/4). The inversion has its partial hints e.g. in the middle voice of m.5, and the upper voice of m.10. Plays of (a) and its inversion, in the lower voices, with a final entry of the whole subject in the upper one (m. 25) bring the fugue to its end.

No. 7 in E_b major, BWV 876

[A graceful prelude built on arpeggio accompaniment and a virile stretto fugue on a long subject]

Prelude – this graceful prelude is a tranquil and flowing piece in 9/8, built mainly on eloquent cantabile arpeggios, and turns on the notes of the chords, suggested already in mm. 1-2 in the left hand. The left hand, besides gently pointing the harmonic tones, gives a dotted accompaniment (e.g. 5-9), but at times joins with the right hand in a parallel motion (e.g. m.13-16) and even in a real counterpoint (e.g. the middle voice in mm./5-10). The dotted rhythm of the accompaniment is extensively used and developed in the sequel (e.g. mm.34-42; 63-66). The opening simple bass accompaniment in m.1 is a key to whatever goes on, not only in the arpeggio on the tonic chord, but not less so in the neighbor-tone turn – E_b–D–E_b – at its very beginning. This turn is developed in the second part of the subject (from m.4/3) and is a key motif in the rest of the prelude. The main theme repeats with enlargement in m.61.

Note the nice modulations to C minor (mm.19-24) and the tense sequential build-up to G minor (mm.32-47). This quite special transition to G minor consists of a sequence of descending thirds in the upper voice (taken actually from that of B_b – A_b – G of m.3-4) with a chromatic descent in the middle (mm.34, 37, 41).

Fugue – If, as some people believe, there is a musical relationship between a prelude and its coupled fugue, it is here by contrast: the two are very different both in musical material and general character. This fugue is in 4 voices (in 2/2), which enter in the exposition (mm.1-30) from bass to soprano in that order, ending on the dominant. It has a fairly long subject of 8 bars, which is the only material – there is no counter-subject, or any other theme in the episodes. However, an element in the subject proves to be important in what may be regarded as a countersubject in the bass of mm./9-14, namely the descending and ascending thirds (these are suggested already in mm.2-3 of the subject). These thirds prove to be important in the sequel (e.g. upper voices of mm.30-32; bass of episode in mm.46 etc.)

There are some notable strettos of the subject: one is on the fourth (fifth below) between the tenor (m.30) and the bass (m.31); then comes another between the alto (m.37) and the soprano (m.38). Two other elements of the subject are exploited in the development: the syncopated jump of a fourth (m.3) and the neighbor-tone turn in eighths (quavers) in mm.4, 6, 7. The fourth-motif gets special significance towards the

end of the exposition in the bass of mm.23-28, where the syncope is avoided. These two elements are the basis of the sequential dialogue in the second episode (from m.46), in which the tenor is absent. This episode consists of a dialogic sequence which proceeds in five stages of the circle of fifths (G – C – F – B \flat – E \flat). It smoothly flows into a third stretto between the main subject in the tenor (m./53) and a variant of the subject in the alto (from m.54). The fugue ends with yet another stretto, again on the fourth, this time between the soprano (m.59) and the bass (m.60). So, all in all, we have four strettos – three between the adjacent voices: Tenor and Bass (30-39); Alto and Soprano (37-46); Tenor and Alto (53-61); and one between the furthest ones: Soprano and Bass (59-68). Some of these couples (e.g. those at mm.37, 59) begin before the previous one ends (as are of course the entries of the subject in the exposition), which is itself in a stretto-like manner.

Though different readings of the subject are possible, I think that its "square" rhythm and its angular contour, with its syncopated fourth and quaver-turns, give it a virile character, which even verges on the jocular (I would therefore not recommend the "molto legato" added in Bischoff's edition).

No. 8 in D# minor, BWV 877

[A graceful prelude, like an invention with many copying passages, and a solemn double fugue with two expositions]

Unlike WTC I in which Bach wrote the prelude in E \flat minor and the fugue in D# minor, which of course is its enharmonic equivalent, here in WTC II he wrote both in D# minor.

The Prelude is a sort of an "invention" (that is, in the style of Bach's fifteen two-part inventions) in two voices. It has two parts which are to be repeated. Within its contrapuntal fabric, voices often copy each other. In the second part the right hand enters a rhythmic arpeggio subject as a counterpart to the main one in the left hand, and then the hands exchange roles. This interplay is repeated and developed at mm. 28-29 and again towards the end, with an emphatic rhythmic condensation, where the arpeggio subject enter in the two voices in a phase of one bar (mm.32-36).

The Fugue –This is a solemn, touching double fugue in 4 voices, in which Bach goes somewhat back to his Buxtehude style. The voices enter in the first exposition (mm.1-11) in an unusual order: Alto, Tenor, Bass, Soprano. The third one (bass) continues by repeating the countersubject of the first (alto), while the two other voices don't, though the material of this countersubject serves as a countersubject (in the tenor) to the bass entry at mm.7-9. At mm. 15-24 there is another, even more condensed, exposition (B, A, T, S), with a slight variant of the beginning of the subject. This turns the fugue into a double fugue. The ending of this second exposition is somewhat blurred by an entrance of the subject in the alto at the end of m.23, which begins a stretto (the tenor of m.24 and the bass of m.25). Here begins a series of more entries of the subject in various keys: First in the soprano in C#(/27), which after a short episode leads to a cadence to the relative major (F#, m.30) with another entry of the subject in the alto in B (30) and in the tenor in D# minor (32). The first mini-episode at mm.5-6 develops the syncope element of the subject at the beginning of m.2 and is itself developed mainly in the bass of mm.36-39. The long episode of mm.34-40 leads to another entry of the subject in the tonic in the bass (m.40), with emphatic chords in the other voices. This is followed by a sort of a coda (/43) in all the four voices in which the soprano and the tenor move together – the soprano with an ultimate entry of the subject in the tonic, and the tenor with its inversion.

No. 9 in E major, BWV 878

[A delicate fugal prelude and a slow solemn stretto fugue with many strettos on the subject, its inversion, diminution and the countersubject]

Prelude – This is a delicate piece in three voices, where two of them often imitate each other and change roles. It is a fairly long piece consisting of two parts which are to be repeated, and it can generally be regarded as in a sort of sonata-form. The first part can be regarded as an exposition section, which displays three main subjects. The first subject consists of delicate singing melody around a descending fourth (C# – B – A – G#, mm.1-4). It begins with the two upper voices imitating each other in a difference of a third, and ends on the dominant, where it is repeated with the voices switching roles. The secondary subject, in the dominant, begins in m.9, and although is of a more arpeggio-like character, its ending (16-17) reveals affinity to the main subject. It also displays switching of roles between the voices. A closing theme then comes in m.18, building again on a descending fourth (B – A – G# — F#) like that of the main subject, in a texture that is a subtle variation of it. Note that this is formed by a sequence of descending thirds (B-G#, A-F#...) in the upper voice, which is derived from combining the heads of the two upper voices at the beginning.

The second part (from m.25) is a development section – it develops the subjects of the first in a free way. Beginning with the first subject it soon turns into a long development of the closing theme of the first part and of the two together (from m.29) with many adumbrations of the arpeggio-like character of the second subject (e.g. the right hand of m.30, the left hand of mm.31-3, etc.).

Fugue – This is a four voices "heavy" fugue – slow, solemn homogenous and very stressed and sophisticated contrapuntally. The meter is *alla breve* (on the half) with four halves in a bar. The entries of the subject (S) in the exposition (1-9) are in the bass, tenor, alto and soprano in that order. In mm.3-4 the subject continues with a countersubject (CS), consisting of a rising fifth (CS1) in quarters (crochets) and a leap of a fourth (CS2) with a syncopated descent. (CS) is taken up by the other voices in their turn in the exposition and is heavily used in the sequel. There is hardly a moment in this fugue in which these two themes do not appear, sometimes in sophisticated strettos.

A condensed stretto in a phase of two halves in all the voices – alto, tenor, bass and soprano – begins in m.9. The two last entries in the stretto combine the beginning of S with that of CS, and continue in mm.13-15 in a canon on CS. This finishes with a

cadence to C# minor – the relative minor (m.16). Another condensed contrapuntal section then begins with the two upper voices playing a stretto of S on a fifth in a phase of four halves, and the bass proceeds with a new motif of chromatic ascent (mm.16-17), while the tenor plays a variant of CS2. Voices then switch roles where the bass takes the main theme (m.19) and the tenor enters in stretto at a phase of four halves. The chromatic motif is meanwhile taken by the tenor (mm./17-19) and the alto (m./19-20), while the variant on CS2 is taken by the tenor (m./17) and the soprano (m./19). This multiple counterpoint terminates in a cadence to F# minor (m.23).

An episode (m.23) consisting of strettos of variants of S, first between soprano and alto (m.23) and then between bass and tenor (m.25), both at a phase of a half, leads to an entry of a diminution of S in the soprano (m.26/4.) A series of strettos on this diminution follows: The alto enters in a stretto on a fifth (fourth below) in m./27. Another stretto of this diminution in the tenor and the bass immediately follows (m.28). Another stretto then follows between the diminution of S in the bass of m.30 and S *simpliciter* in the alto. A sequence of parallel moves with inversions of S (mm.31-34) leads to a cadence to G# minor (m.35). Another stretto immediately follows with a gradual augmentation of the distance between the entries. It begins with S in the alto, then the tenor enters at a phase of two halves, then the bass at a phase of four halves (m./36) and then the soprano at a phase of six halves (m./37), in all of which variants of CS serve as counterpoint in the other voices. The descent of the soprano entry is extended to a full octave descent in halves. This is echoed in the bass and soprano of m./40-42). An entry of S in the bass (m.40), coupled with elements of CS in the other voices, lead to the final cadence, dominated by CS1 in the bass and its diminution in the soprano (m./42).

This copious of strettos, either of S or of its diminution, with a sophisticated contrapuntal use of the motifs of CS, justifies calling it a stretto fugue and make it an outstanding example of its kind.

No. 10 in E minor, BWV 879

[A Fugue on a vigorous, varied and long subject, thematically connected to the prelude, whose countersubject consists of two independent motifs]

The fairly long **prelude** in 3/8 has two parts, each to be repeated. It is in two voices, often imitating each other. The subject begins symmetrically, but then come the two tense leaps of mm.3 and 4 while the left hand enters in copying the first motif of the subject. These leaps inspire the right hand "new" subject of mm.17-20, and more manifestly in m.22. They are more dramatically developed in mm.37-41 and 95-98.

The second part begins on the relative major (G). At its beginning, while the left hand develops the main motif and its inversion, the right hand inserts a rather new melodic line. The development continues in a freer way, moving between various keys and building again mainly on combining the main motif and its inversion with the quaver thirds of the left hand of mm.6-10.

The **fugue** is in 3 voices, marked *alla breve*. It has a long and varied subject – both melodically, harmonically and rhythmically. Its first motif consists of a rising third (G-A-B, mm.1-2) in a strong dual rhythm, forming a notable thematic connection with the prelude; its second one contains a descending diminished fifth (C to F#, mm.3-4), and its third – a triplets movement back to the tonic. This varied texture of the subject with its three motifs is uncommon, and it contrasts with its march-like character. There are no strettos, inversions, diminutions etc. of the subject.

The countersubject consists of two distinct motifs, which have their roots in the main motif: CS1 (mm.7-8), CS2 (mm.9-12). These are sometimes treated separately. CS1 with its rising third: G#-A#-B is a variant of the main motif of mm.1-2, while CS2 is a variant of the descent of the diminished fifth from C to F# (mm.3-4). These two segments of the countersubject accompany the subject in all its entries. Already in the bass entry of the exposition the countersubject is divided into CS1 in the soprano (mm.13-14) and CS2 in the middle voice (mm.14-18). The episode after the exposition plays on the triplet movement of the second motif of the subject, and the dotted rhythm of the third. In the entrance in G (24) CS1 and CS2 come in the middle voice in succession. But immediately after that, in the entrance in D (30), they divide again into CS1 in the bass and CS2 in the soprano (32). The latter is preceded by a new element – a chromatic descent, which is repeated (e.g. in the bass of mm./67-69) and inverted (the bass of mm. /34-36; /55-56). In the entrance in B minor (m.42) CS1 and CS2 come in the middle voice in succession, and in the following one in E minor

(50) they come in succession in the bass. In the entrance in A (60) CS1 is in the bass and CS2 in the middle voice (61). In the last entrance in the tonic E minor (71) CS1 is in the soprano, followed by CS2 in the middle voice (74). CS1 is then dramatically expanded in the soprano of mm.79-81 on an organ point of B in the bass, followed by a cadence passage using mainly the third motif – the triplets motif – of the subject, which brings the fugue to its end.

No. 11 in F major, BWV 880

[An elegant and homogenous prelude in 3 voices and a vivid, rapid fugue in 3 voices, with rich episodes, characterized by a sort of rhythmic asymmetry]

The **Prelude** – This is a fairly long prelude with a wide melody and a thick harmony of four (sometimes even five) voices. The opening turn around F, followed by a sequence of descending fourths in quavers, leaving long sustained notes of V⁷ chord, is the key to whatever thematically goes on in the prelude. This descending sequence is sometimes of four units (as here at the beginning, mm.1-2 or at mm.13-14), but most often shortened to three (m.3), two (mm.9, 10, 11) and even one (m.36). A transitory motif (m.5), which is a sort of a shortened inversion of the main one, serves for various modulations that carries us back to the main subject, from F (m.11) to the dominant C (m.16). The subject, with its transitory motif then recur with a grand modulation to D minor (mm.30-2) in which the following section proceeds until it comes back to a sort of recapitulation, with some harmonic variants, of the main subject in F (m.57).

A variant of the transitory motif (m.37) serves for building up a dramatic climax in mm.45-6 in A minor, which gradually calms down. The opening turn – direct or inverted – serves for sequences of its own (e.g. mm.5-8, 37-44). All this is presented in a rich contrapuntal fabric, usually of three voices, sometimes more, where different voices take the sequences in turn. The long retained notes build a solid harmony, modulating rapidly through various keys, embracing these endless plays with the sequences in all three voices. The perpetual rhythm and the tight parsimony of thematic material do not deprive the music of beautiful melodic curves, long flexible lines, expressive perhaps of something like reflecting on prosaic memories. Cadenced breaths (e.g. at mm.10, 17, 33, 56) give this ever flowing movement a clear structure.

The **Fugue** – This is a fairly “simple” fugue in 3 voices in a dual tempo of 6/16. It is vivid, light and sweeping in character, with no over-sophistication in its counterpoint: there are no strettos, inversions, augmentations, retrogrades, etc. (except the expansion of the subject at the cadenza-like coda). The few entries of the subject after the exposition (which ends on the tonic in m.18) are separated by long episodes, which carry the main weight of the fugue. The subject consists of two motifs: the two leaps of mm. 1-3, and the triplets descent of mm. /3-5. The dotted motif of mm.5-9 is of great importance in the sequel, though it can be hardly called a counter-subject. An

entry of the subject in the dominant (m./21) leads to a cadence on the dominant. The episodes lean mainly on the second motif of the subject in mm./3-5 which proves to be the main thematic material.

A notable feature of the fugue has to do with a sort of rhythmic asymmetry. As noted above each bar has two pulses; stressing the first has a trochee-like character, while stressing the second has a sort of iambic one. The four main bars of the subject are of the trochee kind. However, its continuation – the counterpoint to the second voice (mm./5-9) – suggests an iambic one. This sort of ambivalence is enhanced in the first episode where the two voices imitate each other and each oscillates between a trochee and iambic rhythm. For instance, the upper voice is trochee in m.10 and iambic in m.11, the lower one is trochee in m.11 and iambic in m.12, etc. This rhythmic sort of ambivalence continues throughout the fugue and culminates in the last entry of the subject (/85-89) with the cadenza like ending with the expansion of the subject in the bass (mm.89 to the end): mm./85-7 are trochee and 89-95 iambic, and 96 to the end – trochee again.

12 in F minor, BWV 881

[A seemingly simple prelude with symmetric, periodic subject and a "simple" fugue with a typical two-motifs subject, thematically related to the prelude]

Prelude – The prelude divides into two parts that are repeated. The subject of this famous prelude consists of two short motifs: (a) the simple turn $A_b - G - B_b - A_b$, or the parallel middle voice $F - E - G - F$ (mm.2-3), followed by (b) a descent of a fourth (mm.3-4). Despite the innocent simplicity of the prelude, these are used quite sophisticatedly in the sequel: (a) is answered by its inversion $E - F - D - E$ (mm./4-5), which is then expanded in the bass of mm.20-24 within a broader line of (b) (D_b to A_b at mm.21-24).

The second part begins by a variant of the subject on the relative major (A_b), which synthesizes motifs (a) and (b) by an ascent of a fourth with the turn motif. (b) is then expanded by two descents of a fourth, one in the soprano (/32-34) and one in the middle voice (mm./34-35). Once these relations are realized, one can easily see that they are delicately used and developed in the sequel, e.g. the seemingly new motif in m.40 is in fact a variant of (a), and the chromatic descent (mm.49-52) that modulates back to the tonic is a variant of (b).

Fugue – This is a relatively simple fugue in 3 voices in 2/4. "Simple" is not derogative God forbid, but just indicates that there are no sophisticated contrapuntal maneuvers like strettos, inversions, augmentations and others (unless one considers the last entry of the subject (m.74) at a distance of 3 bars instead of the usual 4, a stretto). After the exposition the fugue proceeds flowingly by various entries of the subject (or its variants) and episodes in between. This is one of the cases in which there is a thematic relationship between the subject of the fugue ($F - E - B_b - A_b$) and that of the prelude. The exposition ends in m.15 on the tonic. In m.17 an amusing transition theme appears, which is in fact a variant on the three knocks of eighths (quavers) of the subject. The development then begins with two entries of the subject: first in A_b (m.24/2), then in E_b (middle voice m.28/2) with the transition theme in C minor (m.33). An entry of the main subject in the bass (m.40/2) is accompanied by a dialogue of the two upper voices using motifs of the counter-point to the subject in the second voice (from m.5), with emphatic repeats of the three quavers (eighths) of the main subject and of the transition theme (m.50-53) in the bass, while the middle voice takes the full subject in the tonic (m.50/2), developing it first on E_b (56), then on the diminished VII of B_b (57) and then on C^7 (62). In m.71 the subject enters in the soprano in IV (B_b minor) and in m.74 in the middle voice back in the tonic,

conjoined with the typical three quaver-knocks of the transition theme. The close relationship between the main subject and the transition theme was clear enough all along, but here in the conclusion of the fugue it comes to the fore. Three appearances of the transition theme in full bring this quite jolly fugue to its end.

No. 13 in F# major, BWV 882

[A graceful prelude with invertible counterpoint of 2 voices and a vigorous fugue in 3 voices whose subject starts on the leading tone with a trill]

The Prelude – most of this *grazioso* prelude is in a continuous dotted rhythm with repeated fillings of fixed patterns in a rich harmonic structure. On the basis of this dotted accompaniment there are three main themes unequal in length and texture: (a) the melodic subject of the beginning (mm.1-3); (b) the filling pattern of m.4-8; (c) the bass of mm.6-11. A development of (c) in mm.12-16 leads back to a variant of (a) in the bass in the dominant (17). From m.17 the two motifs play together, with the voices changing roles in invertible counterpoint: the melody of (a) is in the lower voice, and the upper one is in the pattern of (b). These roles change again in m.20, and from m.23 the original texture of (b) returns. The role-changes of the two voices are intensified and compressed in mm.29-34, which are just in the middle of the prelude, except for the coda. Sequential modulations, on the pattern of (b), lead to the main cadence to D# minor (m.45). A series of modulations lead to the dominant (C# major) in m.53, and then back to motif (a) in the tonic (m.57). A sort of a coda (from m.68) brings the prelude to conclusion.

These plays with the three patterns of (a) (b) and (c) with their typical textures permeate the prelude and constitute its core. We thus see that (b), in particular, which might seem a trivial filling in of the chords, turns out to be not less important than (a).

It seems to me (and quite customary) that the dotted quaver cum semi-quavers here should be played as written, unlike e.g. in the D major prelude. The reasons, depending on a close comparison of the two will not be discussed here.

The fugue is in 3 voices *alla breve*. There are no strettos, inversions, diminutions etc. The only such device is the recurrent augmentation to minims (halves) of the rising minor third of mm./1-2 in mm.13-14, 15-16, 17-18, 19-20, 45-6, 47-8, 49-50, 51-2, and its inversion e.g. in the upper notes in mm./23-25. This is an important element in all the episodes.

It is well known that Bach ascribed great importance, also in his teaching, to the subjects. Let us therefore look into it more closely. It is of four bars and is peculiar in many respects: a) It consists of a somewhat indirect descent of an octave (to see it put C# instead of G# in m. 3); this winding character stands in contrast to the simple and straight forward descent at the beginning of the prelude. b) It starts with an emphatic

trill on the leading note E#, which gives it a particular vigorous character. This is the only fugue in the whole WTC that starts on a note different from 1 or 5 of the scale. The only other seemingly such case is the B \flat fugue, which starts with C, but this is just a short passing note. c) In our subject this E# is not a passing note and not short: The fugue starts boldly on this E#, and keeps it with the trill for quite long. d) Moreover, the E natural in m.2 presses the beginning of the subject as if to B, which makes the E# (of the trill) sound even more outstanding, for B does not contain E#. This has a special and unusual effect, and is a good reason to emphasize it and start the trill on the main note (E#) and not on the upper neighbor, as is the customary rule, for this would blur the special effect.

In his edition of WTC (1924; Dover, New York, 2014) Donald Tovey rightly recommends starting the trill here on the main note. However, he adds that mm. 32, 64 are exceptions and the trill should start on the upper neighbor, for the preceding note is also this leading note (E#). In this Tovey strictly (perhaps too strictly) follows his rule (c) on p. 16: "they (trills, shakes) never begin by repeating the preceding note". The obvious reason is not to break smoothness and continuity.

Tovey's "never" is, I think, exaggerated, and much depends here on context. In our case these two entries have a particular structural significance, which, I believe, gives enough reason to perform the trill on the main note just as in the exposition. It is worth posing on this structural significance. There are in our fugue three sets of entries at a distance of exactly 32 bars (1, 32, 64), each consisting of three entries in all the three voices. One is of course the exposition. Another starts in m.32, and the third – exactly 32 bars later, in m.64. The entry in m. 64 is the first of the ultimate set of three entries of the subject (in the three voices, mm.64, 70, 76), with which Bach (as often) concludes the fugue. Therefore, the trill in all of them should be executed the same way and the way it is executed at the exposition and in the middle set. Otherwise an important structural feature of the fugue is likely to be missed. Moreover, the little variant at mm. 20, 70 indicates that Bach wanted the subject to start on the leading tone. They are all emphatic pronouncements of the subject, which stand out of the preceding notes anyway. So, smoothness is not a dominating consideration here. I would therefore do it also at mm.32 and 64.

This then – beginning with a long trill on E# – is one aspect of the peculiarity of our subject. The winding descent of an octave mentioned above is another; so is the suggestion of B by the E natural (m.2). And there are still others, as e.g. the

multifarious rhythm: except for a pause, we have quarter notes (crochets), dotted quarters, eighths (quavers), sixteenths (semi-quavers) all within 2.5 bars.

On the entrance of the second voice (upper voice m.4), the first continues with the counter-subject (CS), which, though derived from the ending of the main subject, is of a different, almost opposed character. Its germ is a descent of two steps of a minor second, with a typical upbeat, derived directly from the ending of the main subject. This germ of CS has many occurrences in the course of the fugue. After the exposition (mm.1-12), in all entries of the main subject except one (mm. 20, 32, 36, 40, 52, 64, 70, 76), CS figures prominently in the contrapuntal fabric. The exception is the entry in m.70, which occurs within the only passage (after the exposition) that is in only two voices (it continues for 8 bars) and in which CS is lacking.

This entry is somewhat lighter than the others, as if preparing the way for the last one in the upper voice in m. 76, in which CS reappears and the three voices texture is renewed. CS also occurs without the main subject (e.g. m.m.20-23). Its prominence notwithstanding, the "parenthetical" motif of mm. /2-/4 is also of great importance and serves as a thematic basis of all the episodes. The close affinity between CS and this motif makes it difficult and unnecessary to differentiate their roles in many of the episodes and of the harmonic modulations (e.g. mm./24-32).

The general character of the fugue is vigorous and at times almost jocular. In this, as in many other respects, it contrasts with the prelude. For instance, the subject of the prelude is very "tonic": it begins by a straight descent from 5 to 1, and is harmonically simple and straight forward. That of the fugue is quite the opposite, as explained above. They are also very different, one could even say opposed, rhythmically. So if at all, they are related as contrasts.

No. 14 in F# minor, BWV 883

[Enchanting sad melody of the prelude combining triplets and 16th notes. A sad triple fugue, where the three subjects intermingle at various points]

The Prelude - There are few melodies that can compete with the enchanting beauty of this one. This sole beauty might seem to make an analysis superfluous.

Unsurprisingly it has become one of the most well-known pieces in WTCII. I'll confine myself to a brief survey.

The prelude has a fairly clear ternary structure. It is generally characterized by very long lines of continuous melody mixing 1/16th notes and triplets, conjoined with syncopated begging gestures. Its sad subject begins by a descending fourth (F# - C#) followed by a long line of continuous mixture of semi-quavers (1/16th notes) with triplets leading to the dominant (m.7). It immediately goes back to the tonic in which a new theme starts, building on the descending triplets of m.1. This leads to a development of the main theme in the minor V degree (m.12). After the first cadence (to the relative major, A, m.20) there begins a more intense development, passing through various keys in a sequence of a sort of begging or complaining phrases, building on the syncopated one of m.3. The main subject recapitulates on the tonic in m.30, again with intense begging variants of m.3 with a touching move to the Neapolitan lower 2nd (m.34). Bearing in mind Bach's Christian religiosity, note how the syncopated motif, which throughout the prelude had a character of begging, complaining sighs (or even cries), turns at the end (m.41) into a calming peaceful and complying passage.

The Fugue is in 3 voices in 4/4. It is a triple fugue with three main subjects, which at many points intermingle with each other. The first subject (mm.1-4), which, unlike in many of the fugues, is of one solemn motif, consists of a descending triad followed by a descending sixth from D to F#. The first section introduces the subject in the three voices, followed by an episode that relies on these motifs, which are often inverted, expanded or adumbrated in various ways. Note the sequence of descending triads at the countersubject to the entrance of the third voice (in the bass) at the upper voice of mm.9-10, followed by a dialogue with the middle voice of its inversion at the beginning of the ensuing episode (mm. 11-12). This continues with a dialogue of the head of the subject (the descending triad) and its inversions. Note also the expansion of the descending sixth of mm. 2-4 to a descending seventh in the middle voice at mm.7-9. This section comes to a close by a cadence to the relative major (A, m.20).

The second section presents the second subject (second half of m.20-21) in a very dense contrapuntal texture, where its main motif is cited in various voices in a repeated stretto manner in the various voices (mm.20-37). The second subject, though definitely different from the first, is adumbrated e.g. in the bass of mm.14/4-16/3. Within this run of strettos Bach inserts references to the descending triad of the first subject (middle voice of m.24, soprano of m.28) and the full first subject in the middle voice of 28-31, and again in the bass of 34-37). So here we have twice a sort of contrapuntal synthesis of the first two subjects towards the end of the second section.

The third subject, starting in the middle voice of m.36, consists of sequences of runs of 1/16th notes, chasing one another in the three voices (mm.36-40). It is then developed, direct and inverted, continuously virtually to the end of the fugue. In the middle of these runs of the third subject, Bach inserts the first subject in the middle voice at the end of m.52, and then again (with a little variant at the beginning) in the soprano of m.55, where it is immediately adjoined by the second subject (middle voice of m.56). This synthesis of the three subjects emerges again at mm.60-62 with the first subject in the bass, second subject in the middle voice and third subject in the soprano. So here, at mm.60-62, we have again all the three subjects together. This is repeated in the final entry (end of m.66) with the first subject in the soprano, the second subject in the bass (end of m.67), and the third subject in the middle voice (middle of m. 67). Just before these two triple counterpoint of the three subjects, Bach inserts a sort of a spacious dialogue with a new subject (mm.57-60, 63-65) forming a counterpoint to the 1/16th note runs in the bass, which incorporate expanded inversions of the third subject. Here we have thrice a contrapuntal synthesis of the three voices towards the end of the fugue.

This fugue, in conclusion, is not only a triple fugue with three subjects, each introduced in the three voices in a section of its own, but is also masterly structured so that the first two subjects are synthesized twice towards the end of the second section, and it culminates in the three subjects contrapuntally synthesized thrice towards its end.

No. 15 in G major, BWV 884

[A fast, light, Scarlatti-like prelude of 2 voices, followed by a fugue containing some interesting irregularities in the rhythm.]

There is an earlier version of the G major prelude and fugue (see Bischoff's remark and his appendix III). The prelude, though of a similar general character, is very different from the final version, but the fugue there has **the same subject**. Bach evidently was not satisfied with this earlier version of both prelude and fugue, but the fact that he kept the subject of the fugue in the final version and reworked the prelude on its basis perhaps means that there was something in this subject he particularly liked. I shall suggest a guess as to what this something was.

It is easy to miss an important point in both the prelude and the fugue (which Tovey describes as "the lightest in all Bach's mature works"!). The point I have in mind is a subtle rhythmic irregularity, or more precisely – a seeming incongruity between rhythmic stresses and melodic line. This, as we shall see, applies to both the prelude and the fugue, and may be part of the reason for joining them together.

The prelude is in 3/4 and consists of rapid parallel movement in both voices (except for the 4 bars at the end of each of its two parts) with an incessant tremolo in one of them. (In its general texture it is somewhat reminiscent of the first part of the solo cadenza of the 1st movement of the 5th Brandenburg concerto.) It consists of two parts of unequal length, each to be repeated. The irregularity I have in mind occurs already at the second half of m.2: the right hand C at the end of m.1 is a neighbor tone, mirroring the F# at the beginning, but Bach repeats it as a melodic tone at the half of m.2, expanding the whole phrase by 6 quavers. To feel the irregularity caused here imagine e.g. these 6 quavers (1/8th tones) skipped and continue with the last 3 quavers of m.3. The result would perhaps be rhythmically smoother, but of course much duller and routine in comparison to the text. This kind of irregularity recurs at some points in the sequel (e.g. at mm.5, 20). The rhythmic uniformity of the whole and the routine sequences of mm.9-11 etc. make this irregularity the more prominent.

The fugue is in 3 voices and is again in a triad metre (3/8), though at the fast tempo required, one should count of course on 1. The phenomenon I was talking about in the prelude is even more prominent in the fugue. Its subject (which, to repeat, is the subject of the earlier version) is a descending sequence of arpeggios. It starts with an upbeat to the high G on the third beat, and then a sequence of descending intervals: G2-G, E2-F#,

D-E, C-D. An irregularity occurs here just at the same rhythmic place as in the prelude – namely, the last half of m.2 (again, in order to feel it imagine e.g. the high G falling on the first beat with two 8th upbeat and the last 2 semi-quavers (1/16 notes) of m.2 skipped). This rhythmic spasm reflects in the syncopated counter-subject accompanying the entrance of the second voice, and is smoothly straighten up by the conjoined two upper voices that accompany the entrance of the third voice in which they descend by a whole octave (mm.16-23), where the exposition ends. This syncopated counter-subject is the main change Bach added to the earlier version, which lacked it. The typical slight irregularity I was talking about recurs in all the entrances, and comes back to the fore in the syncopated accompaniment of the very last entrance of the subject (mm.65-70).

No. 16 in G minor, BWV 885

[A solemn prelude in 3 voices in dotted rhythm that combine to form new melodic lines. A fugue with a virile, assertive subject that combines with its countersubject in various contrapuntal inversions].

The Prelude – Though this solemn prelude is obviously in 3 voices one of its main merits is the way the two upper voices combine in small units (of one bar) to form a melodic line within the harmonic skeleton. Almost each bar is an example. Having said that, one should not miss the larger lines and units, determined mainly by the harmony. Thus mm.1-4 is one such unit, repeated in transposition with variation in mm. 5-8, and again with another variation in mm.9-12. Note the acceleration of the harmonic rhythm towards the end of many of the phrases (e.g. mm.4, 8, 10) and the use of sequences to increase tension (e.g. in mm.13-14)

The fixed dotted rhythm throughout the piece is of course an important characteristic, but in performance it poses a challenge and a risk of being square and stale. The music however must "speak" throughout without breaking the rhythm and the structural symmetries. Many scholars believe the dotted quavers (1/8) should be played as double dotted – a notation, which was apparently introduced by Leopold Mozart and was unknown to Bach. (The same, by the way, is true of the prelude in D major (No.5) mm.5 etc. and many other works)

Tovey remarks that the "Largo" indication is by Bach, but yet, respecting Bach's metre of 4/4, the tempo should not be too slow so as to hinder the general flow.

The Fugue is in 4 voices in 3/4. The subject (S) is introduced in the 4 voices in the order tenor - alt - soprano - bass. The skeletal line of the subject is a descending fifth (D to G), though more conspicuous on the foreground is the parallel descending fourth of E_b - D - C - B_b). This skeletal fifth is shortened in the exposition to a third (D – B_b) and the missing last two notes enhance the tension in most of its entrances. "Most" because the full fifth appears in the last three entrances of the subject (see later): in the bass of (59-64) in E_b; in the tenor (67-71) in a shortened variant; and most clearly in the soprano of (69-75). It consists of two main motifs: (a) the emphatic movement of downward thirds with their preparing upbeat (m.1-3); (b) The repeated Cs with their closure (m. 4-5/2). The counter-subject (CS) consists of two main motifs: (c) the two downward jumps of a fifth, prepared by an upbeat (mm.5/2-7/2); (d) The descending zigzag of m.8. The exposition ends at m.17, and after a short episode S enters on the tonic (tenor of m.20/2) with CS in the bass. Another short episode leads to a repeat of this in the dominant (28), where S is

in the alto and CS in the soprano. This is repeated again on the relative major (B \flat , 32) this time with S in the soprano and CS in the alto.

Throughout the fugue S and CS are invertible in various intervals. In m.45 S enters in parallel thirds (alt and tenor) with CS at the bass, and immediately after – at parallel sixths (soprano and alt) at mm.51, where it is cut towards the end by the ending motif (d) of CS (m.55). This outstanding move is repeated with extensions at mm.59-67. Then the tenor displays the first motif of S (a), with the alt accompanying it with the first motif of CS (c). While they are doing that the soprano enters, in parallel motion with the tenor, with the full subject with the full skeletal descending fifth (m.69/2-75). This descent, with its dramatic cadence to the tonic brings the tension to a relief. A sort of a coda then begins (75), playing on the first motif of the CS (c) in a fugato in the three upper voices. This leads to an even more dramatic cadence (with a diminished VII), which leads to the last entry of S in the bass of m. 79/2, with a long descending scale in the soprano, while the two middle voices play the beginning of CS (c) in parallel, and then an augmentation of its ending (d) in all the three upper voices.

No. 17 in A \flat major, BWV 886

[An improvisatory festive prelude on the broken chord, with a clear structure.
A fugue with open and friendly subject that forms with its two countersubjects
various invertible counterpoints.]

Prelude - Like many other preludes, this one has an improvisatory character, building on an elaborate harmony of massive chords and a two-voices dialogue. It is quite natural to think of an organ or a wind instruments ensemble in this prelude. Its structure combines features of the Baroque concerto and the classical sonata-form. In this spirit, without being rigid about it, one can discern an **exposition** consisting of two main subjects: The first subject consists of two motives: the jubilant opening (a) in full syncopated chords with an arpeggio-like dotted bass (m.1), and a solo answer (m.2). The second subject (m.7-9) is more elaborate and exploits in varied forms the dotted motive of the bass of the first subject in the left hand with a sequence of variations on its descending arpeggio. Mm.10-50 display a sort of a **development** combining these two subjects, where the main subject recurs in various keys like a ritornello in a Baroque concerto – first in the dominant (E \flat) and its subdominant (namely the tonic A \flat , mm.17, 19), then in F minor and its sub-dominant (B \flat minor, mm.34, 36), then in D \flat (m. 50). The development of the second subject is occasionally accompanied by dotted chords in the right hand (mm.23, 25, 27), reminiscent of the main subject bass in inversion. After the recurrence of the first subject in D \flat (50) there begins a **second development** combining the two subjects (mm.50-60). From m.60 virtually to the end the development is mainly of the second subject, though the arpeggio of the bass in (a), which is inherent also in the second subject, is prominent here – both direct and inverted.

One should note the pauses in the left hand in mm.29-31, which evidently contrast with the long notes in parallel places. One should also note the emphatic Neapolitan cadence (moving from lower VI (F \flat) to lower II (B-double \flat) in mm.73-74, which brings the prelude to conclusion. We shall find a somewhat similar feature in the fugue.

The Fugue - This Fugue is based on an earlier fughetta in F major (see Bischoff's remark), that ended in the exact middle of the present fugue (m.24). Although this is formally a 4-voices Fugue (in 4/4) most of it, except for some chords towards the end, is in 3 voices. At the very end – the last 3 bars – it is in 5 voices.

The subject, like many of Bach's subjects, consists of two motifs: the first (a) moves mainly in quavers (1/8ths) switching directions at each step in widening intervals. The second (b) is more rapid than (a) and is in semiquavers (16th notes) that smoothly slide

into the first countersubject when the second voice enters. In the course of the fugue the main subject falls on 3 out of the 4 beats of the bar: on beat I (mm.22, 24, 32, 35); beat II (m.37); beat III (mm.13, 16, 18, 42, 48).

There are two counter-subjects accompanying the main subject in most of its entrances: The first - CS1 - is a descending chromatic fourth in crochets (1/4s) (alto in mm.3-4); this, unlike the main subject, is linear and uniform in character (except for the syncope ending). The second - CS2- is mainly a descending sequence in semi-quavers (16th notes), obviously derived from the ending of (b), and though its tonal structure varies, it is easily recognizable throughout the fugue. CS1 recurs a lot in the fugue, e.g. in mm.6, 8, 11-13, 17, 47. CS1 and CS2 form invertible counterpoints among themselves and with the subject. This happens already in the exposition, where CS1 is first in the soprano of m. 6-7 (while CS2 is in the alto), and then CS1 is the alto of 8-9, while CS2 is in the soprano, and likewise in many other places in the sequel. At mm. 13-15, for instance, S is in the bass, while CS1 in the middle voice and CS2 in the soprano. At mm.18-20, S is in the middle voice, CS1 in the soprano, and CS2 in the bass. At mm. 22-24, S is in the soprano, CS1 in the bass and CS2 in the middle voice. At mm.24-6 we have again the combination of mm. 18-20 with S in the middle voice, CS1 in the soprano and CS2 in the bass, but where at first it was in the tonic it is now in the VI (F minor). At mm.35-7 S is again in the soprano, but CS1 is now in the middle voice and CS2 in the bass. At mm.37-39 S is in the bass, while CS1 is now in the soprano and CS2 in the middle voice. At mm.32-34 S is in the bass, CS1 is lacking and the two upper voices play CS2 in parallel thirds. Hence, of the possible 6 permutations, only the one with S in the middle voice, CS1 in the bass and CS2 in the soprano is lacking; But even this is not quite accurate for it partially occurs in the final entry at mm.48-50.

Many of the episodes exploit features of the counter-subjects. In the first large episode (mm.10-13) the bass ascends for a whole octave with a sequence of a motif derived from the head and its inversions of CS2. This recurs in mm.27-32, first in the soprano, then in the alto and then in the bass. The head of CS1, for instance, is expanded at the soprano of m.27-8.

After the exposition, which ends in m.10, there are, within the 40 remaining bars, 11 entrances of the subject with inverting counterpoint of CS1 and CS2. One of the entrances is in 4 voices (m.22), and the last one is in 5 voices (48-50). One should note the quasi-entrances of the subject (e.g. mm.5, 10, 12, 29, 31) and of the counters (soprano

of mm.10-11; alto of mm.12-13; bass of mm.28-9; soprano of mm.29-30). One should also note the syncopated CS1 in the imitating dialogue of the upper voices at mm.41-43.

The conclusion of the fugue is particularly noteworthy. The emphatic Neapolitan cadence on the lower 2nd (B doubleb, m.45) is akin to that in the Prelude, which occurs in a structurally similar place as mentioned above, and it prepares in a very dramatic manner the ending with the last entry of the subject (m.48/3). This last entry occurs in the tenor in a thick texture of 5 voices forming many diminished chords in the last 3 bars. The voice below it (the upper bass) accompanies it with CS1, which is partially coupled in the alto of m.49. This last entrance of the subject is "tonal" – it copies the subject with a slight change (in the first interval) to suit the harmony. This is quite common when the subject enters on the dominant (mm.3, 8, 16, 42) and some other keys, but here this last entrance is on the tonic and that is much less common. It is the only tonal one on the tonic in the fugue (cf. No. 2 in c minor m.24).

There are no strettos, inversions, augmentations etc. of the subject (which is quite remarkable in such a grand fugue), though, as mentioned above, there are expansions, inversions and augmentations of the counter-subjects.

No. 18 in G# minor, BWV 887

[The chromatic seed – It is laid out in long lines in the prelude and provides the way the second subject grows out of a counter-subject in the fugue]

The preceding number is in A \flat major. This one should be in A \flat minor, but like the corresponding number in WTCI, it is in G# minor, which of course is the enharmonic equivalent of A \flat minor. Both prelude and fugue are exceptionally rich in their musical material, especially in passages governed by chromaticism. Bach is not only the master of the fugue but also the master of chromaticism. No wonder that some of his works are called "chromatic" (not by him). This, I guess, is mainly when the main subject is chromatic (like e.g. the "Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue", or the D minor fugue of WTCII), which is not the case here. But as to its general character, chromaticism, as we shall see, is a governing idea here.

The Prelude, in 4/4, consists of two relatively long parts, each to be repeated. Its deceptively simple and periodic subject (mm.1-4) conceals the richness of its ensuing development. Already the immediately following descent to the dominant (mm.5-7) exploits the subtle rhythmic tension caused by emphasizing the second and fourth beats of m.2 to a more articulated syncopated motif (the appoggiaturas should be executed as quavers, as evidenced by mm.16, 43). Then, from m.8 begins an elaborate chromatic descent of a whole octave (D#⁻¹ to D#⁻², mm.8-11), which, although not explicit in the subject, proves to be the trademark of that prelude (as well as of the following fugue). On the basis of this chromatic move in the bass, the right hand elaborates a sophisticated variation on the subject in m.1. This comes to an end in m.16, where the subject recurs in the dominant (D#), followed by a development of the syncopated descent of mm.5-7, consisting of an accompanied dialogue between the two upper voices (mm.18-24).

The second part consists of variants and developments of the motives of the first with rapid harmonic modulations. Note the elaborate chromatic descent – now in the right hand – of more than an octave (A# in m.36 in the middle voice to F#⁻¹ in m.40/3). This, if I am not mistaken, is one of the longest chromatic lines in Bach's clavier works. A coda (from m.46) exploits in the bass once again the syncopated motif of m.5 with clear chromatic allusions (e.g. at 49/4-50).

The fugue is a double fugue in 3 voices of grand design with two expositions, each with its own subject (henceforth S1 and S2). The countersubject to S1 (CS1; upper voice, mm.5-9) displays a chromatic ascent, which, in its chromatic nature, is a governing idea

in the fugue, and forms (by inversion) the source of the second subject, S2 (m. 61). Even the short episode before the entrance of the third voice (m.13) plays on little chromatic moves. CS1 accompanies in the bass an extra entry of S in the middle voice (m.19) and here its ending (at mm.23-4) is the descending 5th of the ending of CS2 (see below). A second counter subject (CS2, upper voice mm.14-19) accompanies the third entry. It may be called a second counter subject because its building motifs (particularly the leap of a fourth up and the descending 5th at its end) play a role in the sequel (e.g. mm.23-25). The first exposition ends in m.17 on the relative major (B), and immediately after that (m.19) we have an extra entry of S1 in the middle voice on the tonic with CS1 in the bass as described above. Three more entries of S1 – at mm.33, 45, and 55 – are all accompanied by variants of motifs of CS2. The first two are in the dominant (D#), and the third is in the tonic, ending on the dominant, which prepares the entrance of S2 and the second exposition.

The second exposition begins with S2 entering in the soprano of m.61. It consists of a chromatic descent from D# to A#, and then a chromatic ascent back to D#. It is thus closely related to CS1. It is accompanied by a line in the bass, which combines elements of S1 and CS2, but a central motif of it is so important in the sequel that it may be regarded a countersubject to S2 – I mean the bass of m.62. Let us mark it CS/S2. It occurs so often in the sequel that it becomes a governing motif – not less than S1 and S2. It is clearly related to CS2 and in fact is a sort of a variant of it, but displays a fresh rhythmic turn into an otherwise rhythmically quite homogenous texture of triplets. S2 is then taken by the middle voice in m.66, and by the bass in m.71, in both of which it is accompanied by CS/S2 in the middle voice. This second exposition ends on the subdominant in m.75.

An episode begins with a contrapuntal play with CS/S2 in all the 3 voices (mm.75-78). Another entry of S2 in the soprano (m.79) is followed by an expanded modulatory sequence, which draws on a fragment of the chromatic ascent of CS1. A cadence with a long dominant leads to the tonic with an entrance of S1 in the bass (m.97), and this is accompanied by S2 in the middle voice. We have already remarked on the close relationship between S2 and CS1 (both built on chromatic moves). But here we have the two main subjects (S1 and S2) combined in a contrapuntal dialogue, where S2 is openly in the place of CS1.

This combination of the two subjects is continued with invertible counterpoint in m.103, where S1 is in the soprano and S2 in the middle voice. An episode follows, in which another dialogue discusses CS/S2 in all the three voices (mm.107-110), whereupon

S2 in the soprano leads to an entry of S1 in the middle voice in E major with CS1 in the soprano and a chromatic turn in the bass, leading in a condense harmony to the relative major (E, m.115). A long episode, which draws again on S2 and CS/S2 begins with the chromatic head of S2 in the middle voice (mm.115-117) and continues with an invertible counterpoint where the head of S2 is in the bass and CS/S2 in the middle voice (mm.117-118). A sequence of fragments of CS/S2 leads to an entrance of S1 in the middle voice in the tonic, which is combined, once again, with S2 in the deep bass (m.125). This is repeated with voices changing roles (S1 in the soprano, S2 in the middle voice) at the last entry of both subjects (m.135), with emphatic leaps of fourths in the bass, reminiscent of CS2 and CS/S2. So this ending is a sort of a synthesis of all the constituent motifs of the fugue.

We have confined ourselves to main lines and motifs. One could elaborate on many more details: there is hardly a bar in this long fugue, which does not draw directly on S1 and CS1 (which, to repeat, is the source of S2). For a typical example, note the chromatic line in the bass of mm.139/3-141, including all notes from E down to A#, before the ultimate cadence with which Bach ends the fugue (just like in the prelude), as if to remind us at the conclusion of the work of the importance of the chromatic feature.

We regrettably haven't touched here also on details of harmony. One should compare the harmony of the various entries of both subjects to get a glimpse on the richness of the harmony in this fugue. This is of course related to the chromatic nature of both CS1 and S2 (see e.g. mm.103-104, 11-115), and their role in the course of the fugue.

As some other fugues in WTCII, this one, with all its richness, avoids the regular contrapuntal maneuvers of strettos, inversions, augmentations, etc. whose deployment (of which Bach was of course a great master) could perhaps conceal the contrapuntal and harmonic beauties of this fugue.

No. 19 in A, BWV 888

[A tranquil 3-voices prelude and a fugue with a jerky subject]

The prelude is a relatively simple one in 3 voices, flowing steadily in triplets all through, in 12/8, i.e. 4 triplets in a bar. The counterpoint is relatively simple, with the upper voices often imitating each other, while the lower voice giving mostly a harmonic support in dotted rhythm. Occasionally, it is the lower voice that makes the imitating, either direct or inverted (e.g. mm.6-7), often by joining one of the upper voices in parallel motion. After reaching the dominant (6), and re-emphasizing it in (9) with a gesture to an inversion in the upper voice, Bach modulates to the relative minor (F#, hinted at already in (13)) in the exact middle of the piece (16), where the lower voice takes a more dominant role, leading back, with chromatic descent, to the tonic (20). Notice the syncope jumps (e.g. mm.4-5 in the upper voice, and 25-6 in the middle voice), which give some "*jambic*" coloring to the steady and homogenous trochaic rhythm.

The Fugue - is in 3 voices in 4/4, which enter from the lower to the upper in order. As quite regular in Bach, before the entrance of the third voice there is a short episode (4). After the exposition there are at least 7 entries of the subject, the last four are in the tonic (lower voice (16), subdominant (upper voice (20), dominant (middle voice 23), tonic (upper voice (27)). The somewhat irregular rhythm of the subject, gives a somewhat jerky effect, which is often balanced by dotted accompaniment in one of the other voices. The ending of the subject (first two crochets (quarter tones) of m.2) serves for most of the material, including large imitating passages, in the episodes. The first entry after the exposition (lower voice of (7)) modulates to F# minor (9), which, with a chromatic accompaniment in the lower voice (10) is re-established (11), and then, in a more rapid harmonic pace, it moves to B (11), E (12), G# (13), C# (13), B minor, E (15)) and back to A (16). The development from there is marked by the chromatic dotted accompaniments, taken from (10), of the entries of the subject (20-21, 23-24).

No. 20 in A Minor, BWV 889

[A dual chromatic counterpoint in an expressive prelude with an assertive fugue]

The Prelude is masterly governed by dual chromatic counterpoint, where both voices proceed in chromatic melodies and imitate each other with both direct and inverted forms of the subject. There are two equally long parts, each to be repeated. The second begins as a free inversion of the first.

The structure of the second part has many analogies to the structure of the first, and it is worth spelling some of them out. The subject (m.1) – call it (a) – is repeated in invertible counterpoint in m.2, and this pattern is repeated in mm.4-5. M.3 inserts another material – call it (b) – still of chromatic character, which is repeated with some development in mm. 6-7. This general structure: [a-a*-b-a-a*-b'-b'] (* indicates invertible repeat; the apostrophe ' marks a developed variant) is repeated, again in invertible counterpoint, in the relative major (C) beginning in m.8. Towards the ending, (b) is slightly developed with a modulation to the dominant E.

I spell this in detail because I believe it is significant for the expressive content of the piece. The sad, suffering almost depressive character of the first part is connected with this structure. The sadness of the chromatic descent of the main subject – (a) – overshadows the brighter and more hopeful subject (b), but the endings of both parts are in a brighter and more hopeful spirit. This expressiveness is effected by the above structure. For instance, subject b, with its upward movement occurs in m.3 and is immediately overshadowed, so to speak, with the darker double occurrence of subject (a) in mm.4-5, and this, as we have seen, is repeated in (6) vs. (7-8). This is changed towards the end in a more balanced proportion of (10) vs. (11) and (12) vs. (13). The optimistic light of subject (b), however, is enhanced in the ending of this part with its double occurrence in (14-15) with no re-occurrence of the darker subject (a).

This expressive atmosphere is changed in the second part, with the inversion of the subject moving upwards in a more hopeful vein almost throughout (except for two occurrences (25, 31)). Besides its contrapuntal and technical sophistication, this, if I may say, is also an expressive or almost a psychological one, where Bach uses the same material nourishing the sad, suffering expression, in turning it into a more hopeful and optimistic one. Using the same material, in inversions and other developments of a subject, is of course very common in Bach and is a characteristic of

his writing, but here it has a special expressive power, which one can even relate to his religious attitude.

The second part begins, as mentioned above, with an inversion of the subject and invertible counterpoint like in the first part. But in m. 20, there begins a play or development in invertible counterpoint with both the direct form of the subject and its inversion. For example, m. 20 begins with the direct form but continues in its second half and in mm.21-22 with the inversion; the direct form regains force in mm.23/3-25, and the inversion in m. 26. In m. 27 a variant of (b) leads to a cadence back to the tonic (30), where the inversion (30) is balanced immediately by the direct form (31).

The Fugue, in 3 voices is a majestic one, with a tense assertive subject, which is rhythmically carefully planned – from the four spacious crochet steps with their pauses, to the eight quavers which are like two diminutions of them, to the rapid demisemi-quavers (32s) of the first countersubject. In its general character it is the very opposite of the prelude. It sounds like an assertive answer to the dialectic of suffering, begging and hoping we have seen in the prelude.

The subject enters in the lower voice first and then the middle one and the upper one. The ending of its entry in the second voice is accompanied by another countersubject (5), re-emphasizing the assertive character. After the end of the exposition (8) there are 5 more entrances of the subject, some of them with slight "tonal" changes. Note the shortening of the first countersubject in the stretto passage in (11-12).

The long build-up at the bass from the end of m.18 to the middle of m.21 reaches its peak on B \flat , which gives an interesting harmonic color to the entry of the subject in D minor there in the upper voice. The last entry is in the tonic (m. 25/4) and its ending is accompanied with the stretto passage of the ending of the first countersubject in the last two bars.

No. 21 in B \flat , BWV 890

[A continuous contrapuntal lyric prelude in 3 voices, and a lively indolent 3 voices fugue]

The prelude is a 3-voices piece in 12/16. The three voices form a continuous contrapuntal writing throughout the prelude. There are two parts, each to be repeated. The second is almost twice as long as the first. The first subject is a cantabile melody taken with slight changes by the three voices in turn. It consists of two sentences (mm.1-2; 3-4), the second – sort of inverting the first. This is developed in (5-8). Mm. 9-13 are of a different texture (call it b) – consecutive triplets in both hands, arpeggiating chords in stretto, descending a fourth to F, and then to B \flat (12). The descent of a fourth continue in stretto between the upper and lower voices in a slightly augmented form (13-17). At (17) begins a play (call it c) between variants of the subject and its inversion with imitating dialogues between the voices. A coda (mm.28-32) brings this part to its ending on the dominant.

The second part displays an enlargement and development of the main motifs of the main subject (e.g. mm.48-51 and the great expansion in the long sequences in the bass of mm.70-74) combined with those of (b) – the arpeggio stretto passage of descents of a fourth. A Neapolitan step at m.64, is re-emphasized in the repeat of the ending coda at m.85.

The fugue is of 3-voices in 3/4. Its subject (mm.1-4) consists, as usual in WTC, of two motifs: (a) a descending tonic chord divided into two triplets: B \flat -F-D and F-D-B \flat (1-2) with a preparing turn at the head of each; (b) two descending filled thirds: E \flat -D-C and F-E \flat -D (3-4). This forms a symmetrical structure of two couples of descents, once – of the tones of the chord, and once – of the consecutive thirds. This subject, with its two motifs is the only substantial material in the fugue. The entire fugue (including of course the various entries of the full subject) consists of various plays with these two motifs – sometimes separately, sometimes consecutively. For example, already the first episode (m.19) begins with (b) in the upper voice, then in the lower (20), then in both (21-22), and in both middle and lower voices (23-24); (a) comes again in the upper voice (25-6) and passes to the lower one (27-8); (b) returns in the middle voice of (29) and (a) in the upper one of (30). Similar plays to this one, of the two motifs of the main subject, continue throughout the fugue.

The descending third, which is the kernel of (b), is often inverted (already in the middle voice of (7) and often later), diminished (upper voice of 33-36, 49-50, lower

voice of 64-66 etc), augmented (lower voice of 33-35, 80-85, middle voice of 41-43). The copious of occurrences of the descending seconds of (b) is remarkable. For such descents like in (b) are often typical in Bach of expression of sorrow and pain. But not here. Here they fit the rather lively and even mischievous character of the piece.

No. 22 in B_b minor, BWV 891

[A highly contrapuntal prelude, and a grand double fugue, building only on the subject and countersubject, with a copious of strettos both direct and inverted]

The Prelude – this great prelude is highly contrapuntal and has in fact many features of a fugue, though it is of course not a fugue, but "only" a prelude to the great fugue that follows it. Its metre is *alla breve*, which may suggest not too slow a tempo.

For convenience we may discern two sub-parts in the main subject: (a) (mm.1-/3) and (b) (/3-10 in the middle voice). The bass accompaniment of (/4-8) is heavily used in the sequel and may be therefore regarded as a third subject (c). The two sub-parts of the full subject (a)+(b) are sometimes used and developed separately. The second subject (b) occurs (sometimes partially) 9 times (in mm. 3, 10, 25, 27, 33, 44, 50, 57, 64) none of which is exactly the same as any of the others (the differences are in the endings). In (25) it occurs in the upper voice without the preceding (a). Its entry there is in stretto to the full subject (a)+(b), which appears there in the lower voice for the first time and after what may seem as the end of the exposition (it is not really an exposition in the sense of it in a fugue).

All these subjects appear in all the voices and form various counterparts. For example, (a)+(b) appears in the dominant in the upper voice in (8). (c) appears as an accompanying voice (sometimes with slight variations) in most of the entrances of (a) and (b). The full subject (a)+(b) appears in the tonic in the lower voice in (25), with (c) in the middle voice of (24) and (29) and its inversion in the upper voice of (/27). All the three subjects appear in (31-37) with (a)+(b) in the upper voice and (c) in the lower one. (a) appears in the same voice again in (42) with (b) continuing in the middle voice in (44). A similar division between the voices occurs in (48) where the middle voice takes (a) and the upper one continues with (b) (50). The full subject (a)+(b) appears in the middle voice in (55). This is repeated with the middle voice taking (a)+(b) for the last time in (62). From (70) we have a sort of a coda, building mainly on (c).

I spell out all this in detail not only to drive attention to the rich contrapuntal structure of this prelude, but also to highlight the fact that we have here a quite special form, which we may call a "quasi fugue" – it is not a fugue but quite close to it and with slight modifications can be transformed into a 3-voices fugue.

The Fugue – This is a 4-voices grand double fugue in 3/2 (the longest in the set)² with a secondary exposition (from m.42) whose subject and counter subject are the inverses of the main subject and of the counter subject. It has a copious of strettos that justifies calling it a stretto fugue. The main subject and counter subject are the only materials, which nourish the entire fugue.

The main subject S consists, as often in Bach, of two motifs: (a) m.1-2 and (b) (3-4). (a) is marked by its heavy steps around B \flat and by the leap of a tritone at the end (2). (b) is an upward movement of a third in quavers (8th notes) and an ending motif which repeats the tritone leap. Together they fill in an ascent of a fifth. The countersubject (CS) consists of two chromatic ascents, again filling in a fifth (5-7). The second chromatic ascent is a bit longer, and proves to be the more important one, sometimes appearing by itself (direct or inverted) without the first – e.g. the soprano in 59, the bass in 71 and in 72, the tenor in 82. The exposition ends at (21). We then have an episode that builds, as all others, on (b) – mainly on its ending motif. Two strettos of S follow – one in the tenor and alto (from 27) and the other in the soprano and bass (from 33). Both are on the 7th (one up and one down) at a phase of one half.

The subject of the second exposition (from 42) is the inversion of S and enters in the tenor, alto (46), soprano (52) and bass (58). Before the second exposition there is a fugato episode with a new subject (S2), derived from CS by inversion, that enters in the alto (37) and then in the soprano (38), tenor (39), and alto and soprano again (40, 41). This S2 does not recur after the fugato-episode, and it seems that the whole function of this fugato is to prepare the ground for the second exposition of m. 42. The chromatic CS of (5-7) is inverted in the second exposition in the alto (42-44) simultaneously with the inversion of S in the tenor. In (46) the alto takes the inversion of S and the tenor – the inversion of CS. In (52) the soprano takes S with CS in the alto. An episode leads to the entrance of the inversion of S in the bass (58). In its middle the second half of the inverted CS shines in the high soprano (59). The second exposition ends on a 4-6th chord of F \flat minor in (62).

Two couples of strettos of the inverted subject follow: one comes after an episode (again, building mainly on the ending of (b)), and consists of a stretto on the 9th of the inverted subject in the tenor and soprano (67) at a phase of one half. After an episode

² In his introduction to the Dover editions, Eric Wen writes that originally this fugue was written in 3/4. But there is no doubt that 3/2 is Bach's final version.

there is a similar stretto in the alto and bass (73). The second couple is even more interesting. A sequential episode leads to a stretto of soprano and tenor at a phase of one half in (80), but this time the stretto **combines** the inverted S in the soprano with the direct S in the tenor. A similar combining occurs at (89) with the direct S in the bass and the inverted S in the tenor.

Towards the end of the fugue we have another combined stretto, but this time each of the voices is doubled by thirds and sixths – the soprano by the alto and the bass by the tenor (96-100). This gives the ending a special dramatic force. as apt to this mighty fugue

There are about 12 episodes between the entrances and strettos of the subject (direct and inverted). Some are quite long, e.g. No. 3 (21-27), No.5 (37-41), No. 8 (62-66), No 11 (84-89) and it is worthwhile noting the natural and smooth way they all flow out of the endings of the subject and connect back to it.

No. 23 in B major, BWV 892

[A seemingly homogeneous prelude with a variety of textures and a solemn two-subjects fugue of rich counterpoint in 4 voices]

The prelude is mainly in two voices, but there are some substantial sections in three. Though throughout the prelude there is a non-stop movement of semiquavers (16 notes) that could give an impression of complete homogeneity, there still are a variety of textures it displays. The first subject is built on a rising scale of B followed by a rising fifth from B to F# (1-2), which is echoed in the left hand, after an inversion of the scale in the second half of (2). In mm. 3-11 a different subject, built on broken chords of I and V in a different texture, appears. Then in (12) we have in the right hand still another subject with a chromatic copying dialogue in the upper voices, while the lower one plays, with variations, the material of the right hand in (10). This is one of the passages that are in three voices. Then in m.17 we have a new texture of a sort of a free fantasy in one voice, moving mainly in I – VI – IV – V. This drifts into a new subject in (23), where again the right hand is in two voices, while the left accompanies in a sort of Alberti bass (reminiscent of the right hand in (3-6). A diminished 7th to VII (A#) takes us to another free fantasy which leads to a version of the second subject (33-6), which ends quite dramatically on the dominant. Here a sort of a recapitulation of the first subject, with substantial variations, leads to the end of the prelude.

The fugue – This is a solemn, long and sophisticated fugue in four voice in two halves metre. Though there are no usual contrapuntal maneuvers like strettos or notable inversions, its contrapuntal and harmonic richness is noteworthy. This however does not hinder its gentle smoothness. The main subject S (1-6) consists of two motifs: (a) steps of wide intervals in halves (1-3); (b) a rhythmic descent of an octave (4-6). It enters in the bass, tenor, alto and soprano in that order, and there are 14 entrances of the subject altogether. Note the contrast between the rhythmically homogenous (a) and the variegated (b). In all the entrances after the exposition, only (a) appears. This, if I am not mistaken is the only fugue in the set in which this happens. Note also the rhythmic pattern ta-te- ta--- ta-te-ta, at the end of (b) in m.5, which recurs twice at the beginning of the counter-subject (6-7). It gives special variegation and vividness to the rhythmically very homogenous (a). A possible explanation for avoiding (b) with its rhythmic pattern (as well as the counter subject)

in the other entrances is that they are all coupled with a second subject S2 (see below), which sort of compensates for that.

The counter subject (CS) is marked by its large, tense leaps of a 7th (6-7). Right when the exposition seems to terminate (19) S in the bass with CS in the soprano re-appear in a fifth entrance, which makes it reasonable to regard the exposition as really ending in m.22. We have seen similar cases before (see e.g. our remarks on No. 11 in F). This is followed by a short episode that leads to the dominant (27). Here S is taken by the tenor in the dominant, where a new subject (S2) enters from above in the soprano, and the two are played together. From here on all entrances of S are coupled with S2 or variants of it, where (b) and CS are absent. There are however passages in which S2 is treated on its own (e.g. mm.63-66; 71-74). When played together S2 usually enters after the third minim (half note) of S, but there are exceptions: in m.60 it enters in the soprano after the second minim, and at m.75 S enters in the middle of a variant of S2. An episode, using fragments of S2, leads to an entrance in the alto in the tonic (35). It is accompanied by variants of both (b) in the soprano and S2 in the bass. This is continued with the next entry of the subject in the dominant in the soprano of (42), where variants of S2 are taken by the alto. This is followed by two further entries of (a): one in the bass (48) (in the VI (G#)), and the other in the alto (60). In between there is another entry of (a) in the tenor in IV (53). These three quasi-entries (quasi – because they are of (a) without (b)) are the only ones which are not in the tonic or dominant.

After that, comes the longest episode (63-75), which displays a somewhat thinner texture of only 3 voices, and in which the dominant motifs are variants – mainly rhythmic – of the descent of (b) or of fragments of it. It builds up a climax by a sequence of descending fifths on the tones of the VI₇ (G#, B, D#, F#) in mm.68-71, with a sequence of S2 in various keys, leading eventually to I. The climax consists of three entries of (a) with which Bach resumes the four-part texture: at (75) in the tonic in the bass, at (85) in the dominant in the tenor and at (94) in the tonic in the soprano, all combined with S2 and fragments of it, with a quite unusually extensive doubling in thirds (see e.g. mm. 72-4, 77, 89-93).

From the second half of m.96, where the final entry of (a) ends, we have a sort of a coda. Note how Bach uses the trifle minor second zigzag we encountered in the alto of (22) and the bass of (23) and repeats it in a more emphatic manner in (98-99). The four bars before the last one display a variant of S2 in the soprano (100-101) and in

the bass (102-103) with an emphasized upbeat of a leap of a 7th (of the diminished VII of the dominant), which was a characteristic mark of CS. This is emphasized by 5 couplings of E# and D, forming of course a 7th of the diminished VII of the dominant (F#), in (100-102). CS (like (b)) does not recur after the exposition (except for once in m.20, which, as remarked above, should perhaps be regarded as still in the exposition). Strictly, one can therefore doubt whether to call it a counter-subject.

No. 24 in B minor, BWV 893

This is the last number in the Well Tempered Clavier, with which this gigantic work comes to an end. In the light of this, the most remarkable feature of it is, perhaps, its non-pretentious character, which of course is not meant to decrease anything of its value as a master-piece. There is however something very moving in the modesty reflected by this fact, particularly when the work is actually played as the last piece of the set (or even only after the previous one – the serious, dense and sophisticated No. 23 in B major). There are no outstanding maneuvers or preparations for the ending, no bravura passages or cadences; It simply ends in the manner and spirit it is proceeding all along, as if telling us "that's life", or "that's what gives life value".

The Prelude is a two voices invention of the kind of many of the preludes in the corpus. It is clearly structured, consisting of two main parts (divided at m.33) with a coda (59-66). Its main subject (mm.1-4) is of a very solid and assured character playing in the right hand in quavers and in the left in crochets on the triad of B minor with a simple I - V - I harmony. Note the short echoing of the 16th notes turn in mm. 1-2, which is important in the sequel. At m.9 a second subject, of syncopated character, appears in a sequence of some tension, which is in plain contrast to the first, assured and "square" subject. The main subject reappears in m. 17 in the relative key (D major), and is repeated in m. 21 with a little mischievous variant. The main subject in the left hand is accompanied with another variant in E minor. At m. 33 we have a sort of a development of all the elements mentioned above compressed together: the solid quaver steps on the triad, the 16th note turn, and the syncopated sequences with their tension. The main subject reappears in the bass of m. 59, leading to a coda with three short truncated cadences and a full final one to the tonic (62-66).

The fugue is in three voices in 3/8. The general character of the fugue is quite gay, happy and almost humoristic, definitely more so than any other fugue in the set. This is quite remarkable for a fugue, which is not only in B minor, but also the last in the entire set. One can speculate about the meaning of this, and let me remark in this connection that the last variation of the "Goldberg Variations", BWV 988, (the Quodlibet) is somewhat similar in this respect. These two sets, each being a peak of its genre, were composed at more or less the same time – circa 1741 – and this may even strengthen the temptation for such speculations, but I shall not yield to it here.

The main subject, whose head is clearly related to that of the bass of the prelude, is of 6 bars, and there are 10 entrances of the subject in the fugue, which consists of 100 bars. There are some quasi-stretos using the head of the subject (call it (a) mm.1-2), e.g. the lower voice in m. 8, middle voice in m.17, the upper voice in m. 28, the lower and middle voices in m.70-73 (which form a triple quasi stretto). This head shows up again in the very ending of the fugue in the three voices – middle, lower and upper – in turn. The other motif of the subject (call it (b), mm.3-4) consists of a descent of a fourth (G to D) with octave jumps. This fourth will also prove important in the sequel. A longer portion of the main subject appears in a quasi stretto in mm.70-76. The counter subject flows fluently, as usual, from the end of the main subject. It is used throughout, and elaborated e.g. in the episode of mm.60-69. Most of the episodes are rather short and derive from an elaboration of the minor-second motif B-A#-B of the beginning of the subject (m.2). Thus the middle voice in the episode of mm.32-35 is an elaboration of the minor second motif A-G#-A, and the upper one forms a stretto on that motif. Also, the upper voice in mm. 87-90 is built on the minor second motif D-C#-D, and the middle one forms a stretto on that motif. The minor second at the end of this motif is extensively used in the many trills in the counter-subject (e.g. m.9, 11,13 etc).

Another couple of episodes built on the end of the first motif of the subject – the ascent of a fifth from B to F# (2): the ascents from E to B, and from F# to C# (50-53) in the one, and from A to E and from B to F# (92-94) in the other. We mentioned before the descent of a fourth in (b) of the subject. This (in inversion) is used extensively in the episode in mm.60-68; note the three fourth-leaps in the upper voice in mm. 60, 62, 64, and then in the middle voice (67, 68), and their answers in a descending consecutive fourths. The strettos and inversions in the episodes, using, in a parsimonious manner, motifs of the main subject, are rather short and "simple", as apt to this masterly but quite modest fugue, which ends the entire set.