



(LEMS 8048)

BACH ON CLAVICHORD, Vol. 4

J.S. Bach: The Art of Fugue, Violin Transcriptions, Fantasias

Richard Troeger, Clavichord

World Premiere Clavichord Recording of The Art of Fugue

To the Memory of Mary Shipman

THE ART OF FUGUE

Bach's *The Art of Fugue* (*Die Kunst der Fuge*) is the summit of his art and perhaps of all polyphonic writing. The work is a collection of fugues and canons, using a common theme and making a virtually exhaustive exploration of that theme's possibilities in polyphonic combinations.

The main subject is not always the primary material. In some movements it appears late (in Cp. 9, for example) or in an altered form; in others (including the canons) it takes on melodic embellishments. Each movement can stand more or less individually, but some suggest developments within a larger structure rather than fully autonomous fugues. (Hence, perhaps, Bach's label of "Contrapunctus" rather than "Fuga.") The collection has often been likened to an enormous variation fugue (a fugue whose subject is put through a series of treatments), and the original ending of Cp. 3 on the dominant chord, so as to move directly into the next movement, suggests that Bach was thinking in such terms.

In the outline of *The Art of Fugue* given below, various symmetries will be apparent

within and across the groups of movements. For example, in Cp. 8-11, the two triple fugues (Cp. 8 and 11) flank the double fugues (Cp. 9 and 10). On a larger level, the mirror fugues (Cp. 12 and 13) balance the stretto fugues (Cp. 5-7); the latter include inverted (mirrored) subject statements. Various counterpoises among the groups of movements have been suggested but because Bach's final intentions for ordering are unknown, the intended symmetries remain speculative. The placement (or even inclusion) of Cp. 14, and the placement and ordering of the canons, are the main points at issue (see below).

Because of the rigors of its counterpoint, its introspective nature, and the extent and density of the music, *The Art of Fugue* appears remote and forbidding to many listeners. Certainly the collection was intended for study as well as for delectation, but this seems to be true of a large proportion of Bach's keyboard works, from the *Inventions* and the *Well-Tempered Clavier* to, perhaps, the suites with their diverse treatments of dance "topics." Few will deny the emotional force of *The Art of Fugue*, but what is rarely discussed is the fact that the work embraces an immense variety of moods and colors. Affective qualities range from the gravity of Cp. 1 to the high spirits of Cp. 9, from the orchestral contrasts of Cp. 6 ("in *Stylo Francese*") to the pathos of Cp. 5. The chromatic intensity and rhythmic thrust of Cp. 11 are only two features of what is perhaps the grandest movement of the collection.

THE UNFINISHED FUGUE

What was apparently to be the last fugue (labelled "Fuga a 3 Soggetti" in the ca. 1751 printed edition, now usually termed "Contrapunctus 14"; neither label is Bach's) either remained unfinished, or the first draft was never revised and the last page subsequently lost. Several studies (beginning with that by Gustav Nottebohm in 1881) have shown that the three subjects of the fugue can combine with the motto subject of *The Art of Fugue*. Almost certainly, the missing portion of Cp. 14 would have treated the four themes in combination. As Gregory Butler has shown, this section would have occupied only one more page of the engraved edition, which (including seven measures by Bach not included in the print) would contain a maximum of forty-six or forty-seven measures. The title of the complete movement should in this case have been "Fuga a 4 Soggetti." There are very few voicings of the four subjects in combination that accommodate ten fingers, but I have used some of those that are viable together with connective passages (of a style either used elsewhere in Cp. 14 or related to Subject 3) to provide a conclusion to the movement. (Subject 3 is the famous pattern of B-flat - A - C - B-natural, which in German musical nomenclature spells out B-A-C-H.) Where the manuscript (not the 1751 print) of the fugue breaks off, the first three subjects have just been combined. Confining myself to forty measures, I have added a restatement of the three themes (with a fourth, free part) in A minor and statements of the three themes with the motto in D minor (high range), G minor (with the lines inverted), and D minor (low range). All of these statements are connected by episodes drawing on thematic material and followed by a very brief coda.

ORDERING OF MOVEMENTS

Since Bach did not live to see his work through the press, there has been considerable speculation on his intentions for the sequence of movements. Apart from some irrelevant movements (a chorale fantasia on *Wenn wir in höchsten Nöthen sein* and an early version of Cp. 10 without its present opening), the print's order seems to be fundamentally correct. As Butler has indicated, the movement now known as Cp. 14 should perhaps come before rather than after the group of canons. Further, Butler and other scholars have pointed out that the most complex canon (Canon 1, in augmentation and contrary motion) was likely intended to conclude, rather than to begin, the sequence of four canons. (It appears as the first of the group in the 1751 print.) I have followed these ideas in this recording.

CHOICE OF INSTRUMENT

It is now well established that *The Art of Fugue* is a keyboard work, notated in open score both as an aid to study and in continuance of the seventeenth-century tradition of printing learned keyboard counterpoint in that format. The mere fact that such complex polyphony was crafted to fit under ten fingers (occasionally abandoning a rigorous adherence to contrapuntal requirements for the sake of playability) should be sufficient evidence that the collection was intended for the keyboard. Only the two pairs of mirror fugues, Cp. 12a-b and 13a-b, exceed the normal hand-span: the exigencies of the mirror writing forced Bach to abandon the accommodation for two hands that he maintained otherwise. As in the present recording, the four voices of Cp. 12a-b are usually deployed over two instruments. Bach made an arrangement for two claviers of Cp. 13a-b, adding a fourth part that is not involved in the mirror treatment. I have chosen to record the original three-part version, for the sake of the greater clarity of both the texture and the mirror procedure, and so that its position as a three-voice partner to Cp. 12 is more readily apparent than in the four-part arrangement. The six notes that my hands cannot accommodate are obligingly played by Paulette Grundeen.

Gustav Leonhardt's brilliant monograph long ago demonstrated that many stylistic details are shared by *The Art of Fugue* with Bach's other clavier works, as distinct from his ensemble and even organ writing. Although focused on imitative procedures and design, the work includes many purely keyboard idioms. In addition to the compositional virtuosity, there is virtuosity of the instrumental sort as well, most noticeable in some of the canons but also in the general demands of this staggering work.

Harpsichord, organ, and ensemble can all be effective media for *The Art of Fugue*. Among keyboard options, I have found the clavichord (here as elsewhere) to offer the greatest transparency in voicing. Albert Schweitzer put it very well in 1905: "The clavichord is a string quartet in miniature; every detail comes out lucidly on it." The instrument's hair-trigger responsiveness allows, in addition to unrivalled contrapuntal clarity, much diversity in color and affect. The sometimes kaleidoscopic changes of texture and mood in Cp. 11, for instance, find perhaps their most sensitive and complete expression on this instrument. As I have mentioned elsewhere in the notes for this series, the clavichord is the instrument that Bach could most readily have expected his publications' audience to have at home. Here, as for the rest of the clavier works, I am not (of course) arguing for exclusivity for the clavichord, but only for this instrument to

be recognized as one of several viable media, and one which has, indeed, a great deal to offer.

BRIEF OUT LINE OF THE ART OF FUGUE

All fugues are in four parts except Cp. 8 and Cp. 13a-b, all of which are in three parts. The four canons are all in two parts.

Four Simple Fugues

Cp. 1. Motto Theme (the basic subject) introduced in a stile antico fugue.

Cp. 2. Motto's conclusion put into dotted rhythm, which pervades this movement.

Cp. 3. Motto inverted; chromatic countersubject introduced.

Cp. 4. Motto inverted; chromatic counterpoint.

Three Stretto Fugues

(These three fugues use the same variation of the Motto theme.)

Cp. 5. Motto and inverted Motto. Concluding passage in six parts.

Cp. 6. "In stylo Francese." Direct, inverted, and diminished forms of Motto used in orchestral-style fugue.

Cp. 7. Motto appears in direct, inverted, augmented, and diminished forms.

Four Fugues--Double and Triple Fugues

Cp. 8. Triple fugue introduces two new themes, which eventually combine with a variant of the Motto.

Cp. 9. Double fugue based on a new theme, which soon combines with augmented form of Motto.

Cp. 10. Double fugue using new theme (heard in direct and inverted forms) that combines with Cp. 5's inversion of the Motto.

Cp. 11. Triple fugue using the variant of the Motto as in Cp. 8, with direct and inverted forms of the two new themes from Cp. 8 (the second of these themes emerges as B-A-C-H) and a new countersubject.

Two Pairs of Mirror Fugues

Cp. 12a and 12b. Two four-part mirror fugues (one reading as a mirror-like inversion of the other). The Motto is used in its original pitch sequence, but altered to 3/2 time. (Of the entire Art of Fugue, only these two movements are in plain triple meter.)

[Cp. 13a and 13b.] Two three-part mirror fugues in gigue-related style, using an embellished form of the Motto.

Quadruple Fugue

[Cp. 14.] The incomplete fugue on three new themes, which breaks off just before the introduction of the Motto as the fourth theme. (Completion here by R. Troeger.)

Four Canons

Canon 1, in Augmentation and Contrary Motion. (Placed as the final movement in this recording.)

Canon 2, at the Octave.

Canon 3, at the Tenth.

Canon 4, at the Twelfth.

CHROMATIC FANTASIA AND FUGUE

The Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue has been one of the most famous of Bach's clavier works almost since it was first composed, as the many eighteenth-century copies attest. (With so many sources, by the way, it seems unlikely that final decisions on textual details will ever be reached.) As an exploration of chromatic harmony and as an expression of diverse emotions, the work is a rarity even in Bach's output. This is one of the very few of the composer's works to be recorded several times on the clavichord in the twentieth century, beginning with Arnold Dolmetsch's pioneering effort (the Fantasia only) in 1933.

VIOLIN WORKS IN TRANSCRIPTION

The Sonata in D Minor and the Adagio in G Major are arrangements of works for unaccompanied violin: the Sonata in A Minor (BWV 1003) and the first movement of the Sonata in C Major (BWV 1005). They are transposed down to take advantage of the most resonant areas of the keyboard. In these transcriptions we have examples of Bach's keyboard treatment of his violin writing as described by his pupil Agricola: "Their composer often played them [the works for violin solo] himself on the clavichord [auf dem Clavichorde], and of harmony added as much as he found necessary." The keyboard versions of the Sonata and Adagio survive only in a copy by Bach's pupil Johann Christoph Altnikol. It is not clear whether these arrangements were made by Bach himself or by Altnikol, modeled on the master's extemporized keyboard versions, but in any case they are masterfully done. The fugue (second movement) and the Andante of the Sonata are very fully and faithfully realized from the implications of the violin's necessarily sketchier textures. The Finale is transcribed quite conservatively and makes a fine keyboard effect with only a few octave doublings added to the violin original. The opening Adagio is given a resonant treatment reminiscent of the harpsichord's obbligato part (in the manner of a full-voiced continuo realization) in the second movement of the Flute Sonata in B Minor.

The Adagio in G represents a more radical approach to transcription, with wide bass intervals and broad-ranging arpeggio accompaniments that help to evoke on the keyboard a fullness of sound comparable to that of the violin in the original version.

The Partita in E Major, unlike the other transcriptions, retains the original tonality and is the most conservative of the arrangements; it may have been intended for either the lute or keyboard. The violin part, lowered by an octave, is often followed literally; at other times the implied bass and other parts are added. Where the original contrasts high and low registers of the instrument, the keyboard version often expands the range downward, to create similar contrasts in terms of the new medium. A few chords in the first movement nominally exceed any normal hand span, but arpeggiating them in violin style solves the problem.

Although I like to play these arrangements on the harpsichord, they have always seemed to me to achieve their fullest variety and color on the clavichord, whose inflections,

intimacy, and direct contact with the strings allow the keyboard player the experience nearest to the violinist's close involvement with the instrument.

FANTASIA IN A MINOR

This rhapsodic work of many moods seems to be an early composition by Bach. It gives wide rein to the free style ("stylus phantasticus") which characterizes certain sections of the Toccatas. The central, longest portion is technically a fugue of sorts, but like other parts of this work it is obsessive in its reiteration of a rhythmic pattern. This repetition and its combination with extravagant harmonic and tonal explorations give the piece a peculiarly gripping quality.

1. See Gregory Butler, "Ordering Problems in J.S. Bach's Art of Fugue Resolved," *Musical Quarterly* 69 (1983):44-61. On this topic, see also Christoph Wolff, "Bach's Last Fugue: Unfinished?" in Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach: Essays on His Life and Music* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), pp. 259-64; David Schulenberg, *The Keyboard Music of J.S. Bach* (New York: MacMillan/Schirmer, 1992), pp. 367-73; and Davitt Moroney's brilliant edition of *Die Kunst der Fuge* (Munich: Henle, 1989).
2. Gustav Leonhardt, *The Art of Fugue: Bach's Last Harpsichord Work* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1952).
3. Albert Schweitzer, *J.S. Bach*, transl. Ernest Newman (London: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1911), Vol. 1, p. 353.
4. See Richard Troeger, *Playing Bach on the Keyboard, A Practical Guide* (Pompton Plains, N.J./Cambridge: Amadeus Press, LLC, 2003), pp. 28-34.
5. *Bach-Dokumente III*, ed. Werner Neumann (Kassel/Basel/London: Bärenreiter, 1984), p. 293.

A NOTE ON THE INSTRUMENTS

The clavichord heard throughout this recording is an unfretted instrument built in 1979 by Ronald Haas. It is modeled on originals by Johann Heinrich Silbermann, nephew and apprentice of Bach's friend Gottfried Silbermann. The design may derive from clavichords by the elder Silbermann such as were known to Bach; unfortunately, no authenticated clavichords by Gottfried Silbermann are known to be extant. Mr. Haas' clavichord allows a fine dynamic range across the entire compass of the keyboard, and a sustaining power, sensitivity of touch, and variety of color that are responsive to both contrapuntal and homophonic textures.

The second clavichord heard in Cp. 12a-b is an unfretted instrument, range C-e''', by Lyndon Taylor (1998). It is based on an original now in Markneukirchen that has been attributed to Gottfried Silbermann, although its provenance is uncertain. --Richard Troeger

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

RICHARD TROEGER, clavichordist, harpsichordist, and fortepianist, has been heard as a recitalist, ensemble player, and lecturer throughout North America and in Europe, as well as in numerous broadcasts on CBC Radio and other stations. His performances of music from the fourteenth through the twentieth centuries have consistently received high

praise for their combination of warmth, virtuosity, and scholarship. In addition to performing and teaching, Mr. Troeger is the author of many articles on early performance practice, and a contributor to the *Garland Encyclopedia of Keyboard Instruments*. In 2003 he published *Playing Bach on the Keyboard* (Amadeus Press), a book that puts musical and historical information into perspective for the non-specialist player; it has been named an Outstanding Academic Title by Choice (January, 2005). His earlier book, *Technique and Interpretation on the Harpsichord and Clavichord* (Indiana University Press, 1987; expanded edition in preparation), has become a standard reference, and includes the first modern in-depth study of clavichord playing. In preparation is a book on instrumental articulation, for which he was awarded a Canada Research Fellowship. Richard Troeger has worked with early keyboard instruments and their literature since the age of twelve. His teachers have included Hugh McLean, Marie Zorn, Thomas Binkley, and Anthony Newman. He holds degrees in Performance and Musicology from Indiana University and completed his Doctorate in Early Music there. From 1986-89 he taught at The King's College, Edmonton, Alberta and from 1989-97 at the University of Alberta. He has served as President of the Boston Clavichord Society and now lives, performs, and teaches in the San Francisco Bay Area.

PAULETTE GRUNDEEN, church musician, organist, clavichordist, harpsichordist, and choral conductor, has performed in recitals and radio broadcasts throughout North America, and taught at Indiana University (graduate assistant), Augustana University-College, and the University of Alberta. She holds a Doctorate in Organ Performance from Indiana University. Her teachers include Raymond Daveluy, Robert Rayfield, and Anthony Newman. She is on the Board of Directors of the Boston Clavichord Society.

A NOTE ON RECORDING AND PLAYBACK

The clavichord is a quiet instrument, but it can fill a room with extraordinary resonance. The goal of this recording is to reproduce that effect, as it would be heard by a nearby listener. For the most realistic quality, play these recordings at a low volume level. The variations in color and dynamics are the player's own, and have not been artificially enhanced.

--Garth Hobden, Recording Engineer

LYRICHORD'S BACH ON CLAVICHORD SERIES

Lyrichord's Bach On Clavichord series will issue all of the major solo keyboard works of J.S. Bach in performances on the clavichord by Richard Troeger. This is the first integral recording of this repertory ever to use the clavichord as its basis. Vols. 1 and 2 (LEMS 8038, LEMS 8041) present the Six Partitas and the Seven Toccatas, in their debut recordings on the clavichord. Vol. 3 (LEMS 8047) offers the Inventions, Sinfonias, and Little Preludes. Future volumes will include *The Well-Tempered Clavier* (Books 1 & 2), the French and English Suites, and other compositions. The harpsichord-specific works (Parts 2 and 4 of the *Clavierübung*) will be performed on the harpsichord. The instruments are by Ronald Haas, after antique models.

CREDITS

Tuning: Richard Troeger (A=440)

Recording Engineers: Garth Hobden (Arktos Recordings, Edmonton, Alberta);

Alan McClellan (Contrapuncti 12a-b; Partita in E Major)

Editing: Richard Troeger, Garth Hobden, Vivian Stoll (Partita in E Major).

Equalization and post-production: David Litwin (David Litwin Productions, Sausalito, Ca.)

Cover illustration and original design concept: Gudrun Cram-Drach

Photos: Ed Wiseman

Executive Producer and graphic production: Nick Fritsch



The Lyrichord Early Music Series

PO Box 1977 Old Chelsea Station

New York, NY 10011 Ph: 212 404 8290 Fax: 212 404 8291

email: nick@lyrichord.com Web: www.lyrichord.com

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