

J.S. Bach

In Colour

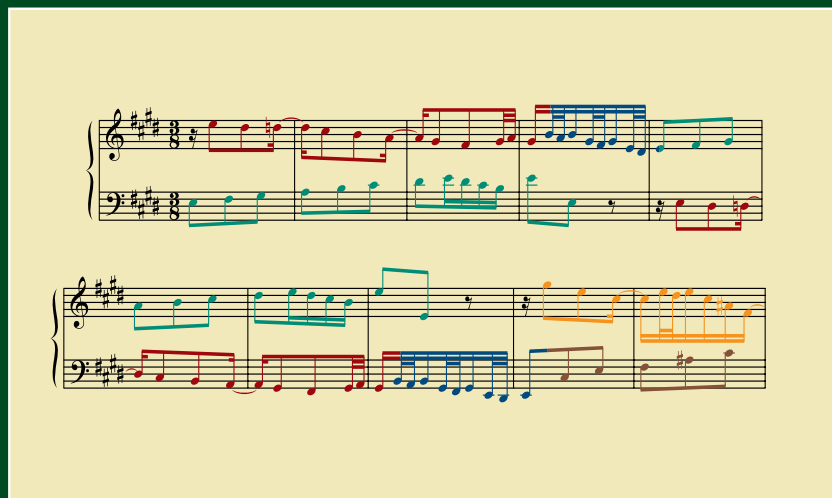
Inventions

BWV 772 - 786

Introduction to an alternative reading

of

The Well - Tempered Clavier



Structural analysis by Claude Charlier

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A coloured edition, analysed and defended according to the criteria that
were in use during the eighteenth century

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Bach in colour

This new collection presents an edition of J.S.Bach's essential works. It is a very original edition for more than one reason. Firstly, it is the very first musical edition in which the analysis is fully presented with colours. Secondly, its bases are set following the contrapuntal rules that were in application during the eighteenth century, so it resettles Bach's work in a true and faithful historical background.

Remarks

Although musical analysis is not an exact science, it is still possible to show that one analysis technique is more rational and more historically appropriate than another and that it fits logically in with the type of composition we want to look at. Obviously there are certain points of detail which are always open to discussion. I make no claims to a "note-by-note" analysis; this is a polythematic, structural analysis which shows and dismantles the architecture of J.S. Bach's fugues.

His works are extremely complex and, especially in analytical terms, this complexity leads to an imbroglio in the use of a number of terms such as subject, countersubject, motif, episode, divertimento, etc. For reasons of clarity I shall always be using the same terminology for the whole of the collection, at least on the technical data sheets. The term "subject" is only used for the theme(s) which make up the start of the work, in other words the exposition. All of the other themes which appear during the course of the composition are called "Counterpoints".

In my analysis, each theme is represented by a specific colour. Notes shown in two colours relate only to thematic counterpoints. The thematic variants, passing notes, ornaments and grace notes remain in black. When the themes are in an uninterrupted succession in a single voice, I have sometimes- based on *The Well-Tempered Clavier*- underlined this usual compositional feature with a little reference mark.

Claude Charlier, Doctor in Philosophy and Letters (Musicology) in the Université Libre de Bruxelles, defends here a polythematic conception of Bach's work, related to the final development of his musical legacy : the triple fugue in *The Art of Fugue*.

Foreword

We would be right to ask ourselves about the necessity to publish a new edition of J.S.Bach's Inventions. Indeed, a great majority of the editions we can find underline the aspect of interpretation as an introduction to the execution of *The Well Tempered Clavier*. But Bach, in his foreword to these inventions, explains that they should also be seen as a "first approach" to composition. This too often neglected aspect will be the object of the present edition : an analysis of the writing in relation with the criteria used in the eighteenth century. This analysis will then lead to a better reading and understanding of *The Well- Tempered Clavier*.

We can indeed find all the contrapuntal techniques used by Bach – except augmentation and diminution – in this collection, wrongly locked in the confined circle of the Music Schools.

The Inventions are less easy to analyse than the fugues because they are much more concise, so we need to master all the techniques used by Bach in his many works to understand and bring to the fore the links with all his compositions. The criteria of analysis of Bach's fugues according to the conceptions of his time underscore a polythematic vision leading to unity of thought and consistency. On the other hand, a traditional monothematic analysis will only result to a series of exceptions, and will inevitably miss the point.

J.S.Bach's music praises a multithematic vision. This is why we choose to present a coloured edition. This coloured presentation of the various themes enables us to immediately visualize the proportion they have in each work, its structure and its complexity.

As for the edition itself, this is no urtext edition, but it is rather viewed as a comeback to a didactical tradition that has been perpetuated since the beginnings of the twentieth century, and that is centred on counterpoint. The settings are due to the particularities of the project. Each work will have a technical card presenting a legend for the colours and a short commentary underscoring the strong elements of the composition.

These cards are written in order to put forward the presence of the subjects, using a comparison with one or several other works of Bach, in which similar techniques have been used.

The proper analysis offers us an authentic rereading of J.S.Bach's Inventions. Of course, a debate about some details, for instance concerning the sections in which the themes are not fully stated, remains open. But the framework of each piece is clearly defined.

This sort of analysis enables the reader to apprehend Bach's work with a new philosophy that is more complex, more elaborated, and that gives a meaning to this fullness that penetrates us while listening to his music.

Claude Charlier

Technical card BWV 772

Tonality : C Major

Type of exposition : A

Type of counterpoint : Simple

Structure : Enunciations of the theme by straight and contrary motion

Legend of colours

Dark green : Subject

Ligth green : Subject by contrary motion

Black : Linking counterpoint

Commentary

This first Invention could also be called : Preambulum, Inventio, Imitatio, Fuga... In the eighteenth century mentality was a bit regardless about terminology, but to me the term counterpoint seems the most appropriate.

In this piece Bach makes a thematic demonstration on the straight movement and its opposite : the inversion. The inversion of the subject is equal to its inverted reading : to an ascending motion, corresponds a descending motion. The contrary motion is a crucial element for the analysis. When in doubt, this is one of the solutions that exist to determine the presence of a subject in a contrapuntal scheme.

In the case of a fugue with one subject or of a simple counterpoint, the thematic proposition often appears alone : we speak then of a separate exposition (A).

In this piece, the subject is limited to the first eight notes. Some specialists estimate that the subject lasts till the beginning of the second bar, but this lyrical outburst doesn't correspond to the baroque aesthetic. Indeed, all the thematic imitations of the piece contradict this possibility. Let's consider, for instance, the first imitation, called answer. It would be absurd to consider that this answer wouldn't state the subject in its totality. Now we still have to clearly explain what a simple counterpoint is.

This is a fundamental and unavoidable notion if we want to understand all Bach's music. In a fugue with one single subject, each entry of the subject or of its answer is called : repercussion

All the rest is written with a simple counterpoint, also called linking counterpoint, free counterpoint or filling counterpoint.

This is a counterpoint that can vary or modify, and which purpose is to structure the composition outside the thematic enunciations. It has nevertheless some common points with the subject: rhythm, melodic units... those elements help to bring unity across the complete work.

In Germany, in the time of Bach already, the ordinary counterpoint has a tendency to disappear.

BWV 772

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