

ARSIS

Johann Sebastian Bach



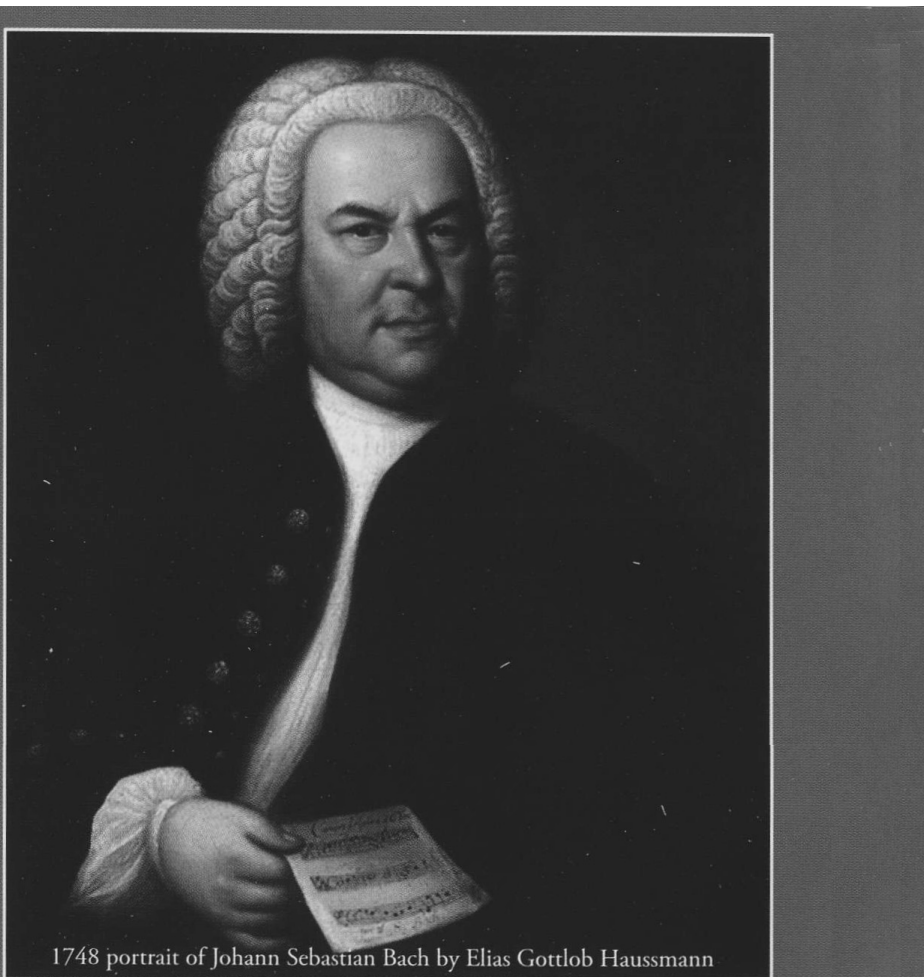
Die Kunst der Fuge

The Art of Fugue

BWV 1080

ROBERTA GARY

organist



Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)

***Die Kunst der Fuge / The Art of Fugue* (BWV 1080)**

Roberta Gary, organist

DISC ONE

1	Contrapunctus I	04:09
2	Contrapunctus II	03:46
3	Contrapunctus III	03:44
4	Contrapunctus IV	05:47
5	Canon <i>alla Ottava</i>	03:56
6	Contrapunctus V	05:14
7	Contrapunctus VI <i>in stile francese</i>	05:44
8	Contrapunctus VII <i>per Augmentationem et Diminutionem</i>	05:50
9	Canon <i>alla Decima</i>	06:24
10	Contrapunctus VIII	07:23

Total Disc One Time 51:59

DISC TWO

1	Contrapunctus IX	04:11
2	Contrapunctus X	06:13
3	Contrapunctus XI	08:05
4	Canon <i>alla Duodecima</i>	02:59
	Contrapunctus XII	
5	a. <i>rectus</i>	03:28
6	b. <i>inversus</i>	03:29
	Contrapunctus XIII	
7	a. <i>rectus</i>	03:08
8	b. <i>inversus</i>	03:15
9	Canon <i>per Augmentationem in Contrario Motu</i>	05:44
10	Fuga <i>a 3 Soggetti</i> (unfinished)	10:28

11 Chorale Prelude: *Vor deinen
Thron tret' ich hiermit* 06:01

Total Disc Two Time 57:03

Johann Sebastian Bach's so-called Art of Fugue, a practical and splendid work of 70 plates in folio, will one day throw all French and Italian fugue makers into astonishment—at least to the extent that they can really penetrate and understand it, not to speak of playing it. How would it be, then, if every foreigner and every compatriot risked his louis d'or on this rarity? Germany is and will most certainly remain the true land of the organ and the fugue.
—Johann Mattheson, 1752

This one small, somewhat chauvinistic paragraph written scarcely two years after the composer's death not only provides a wealth of information, but gives no hint of the mystery and controversy that have surrounded J. S. Bach's *Art of Fugue* ever since. In just a few words Mattheson informs us that Bach was a brilliant yet practical composer, and that he had become a patriotic symbol of German superiority in the fields of contrapuntal music and organ playing. We also learn that Bach was not a very wise businessman, for just one year after publishing the *Art of Fugue*, Bach's heirs and friends were reduced to begging for takers. Indeed, the decision to publish the *Art of Fugue* in the form in which it was published may well have been the one factor that shrouded this masterpiece in centuries of mystery, rendering it all but completely inaccessible to succeeding generations.

By the time Johann Nikolaus Forkel wrote the first full biography of Bach in 1802, the story of the creation of the *Art of Fugue* had taken on this highly romanticized picture: Bach, the respected, aging composer; tormented by his inferiors and perplexed by new trends in music, lay sightless on his deathbed, dictating a final, colossal polyphonic masterpiece which was to be the summation of all that had preceded him. Just at the place where he musically weaves his own name into the work (BACH = B-flat, A, C, B-natural in the German spelling), Bach dies, leaving the work tragically unfinished. This was the picture that prevailed until recent years,

when objective research began to reveal a more practical, personal, human picture of the work and its composer.

Bach was nothing if not a practical composer. His entire life was an essay on how to blend the highest level of inspiration with the limitations of his working conditions. The cases where Bach altered a composition to make it more playable or more suitable for a specific situation are legion. His music was nearly always written for a specific purpose, whether it was a cantata for the church, or an elaborate contrapuntal labyrinth meant to impress a monarch. Keyboard music was most often written as a teaching tool, and it is this area which seemed to grow in importance for the composer as he aged. For much of his later life Bach had a penchant for assembling large collections of keyboard works; the two books of *The Well-tempered Clavier* simultaneously taught his students how to play and compose in variety of genres, styles, and keys.

When Bach came to Leipzig as Director of Church Music in 1723, his duty of supplying a steady stream of cantatas for use in church left him little time for the composition of such collections. But by 1729 Bach had already composed so many cantatas that he was able to recycle them over the course of the next twenty years, allowing him more time for the compilation of large-scaled instrumental works. From the late 1730s he seemed especially attracted to the idea of multi-movement treatments of a single theme; witness the fourth part of the *Clavier-Übung* (the so-called *Goldberg Variations*, published in 1741) and the *Canonic Variations on Vom Himmel hoch* (composed probably in 1746). By 1742 he had probably completed much of the first version of what is now known as the early version of the *Art of Fugue*. Perhaps at this point he still intended the work to form a fifth part of the *Clavier-Übung*, as this version of the work—still untitled—resembled the other parts of the *Clavierübung* in that at its center was a piece *in stile francese* (“in the

French style”). Most likely, Bach put the work away for a while, returning to it in the late 1740s to augment it with some new pieces and to rewrite some of the older ones. By 1749, Bach was preparing the work for publication with the help of some of his sons. It may well have been mostly complete by the end of that year, because he then turned to other things, such as the composition of certain parts of the *Mass in b minor* (*Confiteor*—his last composition?). The work was given the title *Die Kunst der Fuga* (*The Art of Fugue*) and published in 1751, one year after Bach’s death.

The form in which the Art of Fugue was finally published begs many questions. For example, who determined the title (nowhere do the words *Kunst der Fuga* survive in Bach’s hand), and who was responsible for the order of the individual pieces? It is also unclear why and on whose authority the work was published in open score (the early manuscript is written in keyboard score). This one decision has led scholars astray for hundreds of years. Mattheson thought it perfectly natural that any organist (at least any German organist) be expected to play complex counterpoint from open score, and this expectation was reinforced by a long history of such publications (Samuel Scheidt’s *Tabulatura nova* of 1624, for example). With the loss of this practice in the nineteenth century came a series of curious theories. One was that the *Art of Fugue* was created as abstract music probably never meant to be played, and certainly never intended for performance. Another was the notion that the work was actually for a chamber ensemble or small orchestra, even though the score is remarkably unlike any of Bach’s chamber or orchestral scores. The first organ “transcription” appeared in 1866 in Germany, followed in 1926 by an orchestral version. Since that time the *Art of Fugue* has been subjected to performances by everything from saxophone ensembles to silent performances by a mime. In more recent years scholars and performers have come to regard the work as idiomatic key-

board music. (Though the controversy over organ versus harpsichord—or indeed clavichord—as the most appropriate instrument still persists, these arguments are fairly futile. Concepts of keyboard idiom among Bach and his students were much more loosely defined than modern musicians often care to admit. In fact, the *Art of Fugue* sounds just as effective, though very different, on either instrument.)

Another question arising from the first edition concerns the final, so-called unfinished fugue. Does it really belong to the *Art of Fugue*, and did Bach really die before he could complete it? For a long time it was this “unfinished” fugue which lent credence to the famous deathbed scenario (egged on by Bach’s son, C. P. E. Bach). [See autograph reproduction, page 10.] But it now appears that the ending to the fugue was lost rather than unwritten, and, whether or not it actually belongs to the *Art of Fugue*, this makes one wonder why Bach let the music trail off so mysteriously where he did. It is interesting to point out that Bach, who attached such importance to the mystical properties of numbers, allowed the voices of this fugue to dissipate in measure 239, just after a theme based on the letters of his name has been interwoven with the other themes of the fugue:

$$2 + 3 + 9 = 14$$

$$23 - 9 = 14$$

First phrase in right hand has 14 notes = B-A-C-H

$$B + A + C + H = 2 + 1 + 3 + 8 = 14$$

$$2 + 39 = 41$$

$$J + S + BACH = 9 + 18 + 14 = 41$$

The last complete measure, 238, has exactly fourteen notes.

The individual pieces in the *Art of Fugue* are not called fugues in the original print, but rather *contrapunctus*, or counterpoint (would Bach have preferred the *Art*

of *Counterpoint* for a title?). As such the entire work treats a single theme in various contrapuntal ways—“simple” fugues, double fugues, triple fugues, mirror fugues, *cantus firmus* treatment, and canons in many forms.

CONTRAPUNCTI I-IV together form a unit, progressing from a relatively simple and clear-cut fugue without a countersubject, and a similar fugue heightened by the use of a characteristic dotted rhythm, to two treatments of the inverted form of the subject (III is quite chromatic, and IV exploits the falling third, or cuckoo motive so popular among seventeenth- and eighteenth-century keyboard composers).

CONTRAPUNCTI V-VII all present the original theme immediately in some combination with itself. For example, V begins with a slightly altered version of the inversion of the main subject, and before this is completed, the bass enters with the upright form. VI presents the subject in both forms, but has them moving at different speeds in a brash dotted rhythm that Bach identified as being “in the French style”. VII takes this idea one step further, presenting the subject both in its upright and inverted forms at no fewer than four different speeds. Thus, while one voice takes two measures to state the theme, another voice takes a full nine measures.

CONTRAPUNCTI VIII-XI each introduces new subjects, combining them with the main theme, sometimes in surprising and quite playful ways (IX, for example). In this manner Bach is able to develop his contrapuntal ideas without falling prey to monotony.

CONTRAPUNCTI XII-XIII are known as mirror fugues. They are played twice, the second time being an exact mirror image of the first. Because of the restrictions involved in writing such a contrapuntal tour-de-force, the individual voices sometimes exceed the reach of a single player, and the help of a second player must be enlisted.

At this point in the first edition four strict canons appear—in essence elaborate rounds, with one voice following the other in exact imitation (sometimes in a slower rhythm and inverted). These are some of the most dance-like and light-hearted pieces in the *Art of Fugue*.

The work concludes with an enormous fugue based on three subjects, the third being the famous B-A-C-H theme. Each subject receives separate treatment before all are combined just before the music draws to its mysterious close. Because the final fugue survives only in an incomplete form, the original editors chose to include an additional piece to appease prospective buyers. It is a chorale prelude on the tune *Wenn wir in höchsten Nöthen sein* (*When We are in Greatest Need*), retitled *Vor deinen Thron tret' ich hiermit* (*Before Thy Throne I present myself*). Though it is stylistically akin to the chorale preludes of such earlier masters as Johann Pachelbel, this setting is clearly a mature work. It exudes Bach's personal piety and expression of faith.

Early in the 20th century, the Austrian composer Alban Berg explained the often extremely complex structural devices in his own works as being “purely private technical aids to the achievement of cohesion.” The fact that Bach's *Art of Fugue* is imbued with the most complex contrapuntal devices has led many a Bach lover to regard the work with so much reverence and awe that perhaps Bach's truest intentions have sometimes been overlooked. The complexity and profundity of Bach's work is humbling indeed. But the fact that Bach is able to awaken in the listener and the performer a broad range of emotional responses that transcend the composer's craft is his greatest achievement, and the one that leaves us most in awe.

—Gregory Crowell

Gregory Crowell is Director of Publications for the Organ Historical Society, and editor of its journal, The Tracker.



The last page of Bach's autograph (Deutsche Staatsbibliothek Berlin, Mus. ms. autogr. Bach P 200), showing the unfinished last fugue in Bach's hand. The notation following, probably in C. P. E. Bach's hand, reads as follows:

“Über dieser Fuge, wo der Name “BACH” im Kontrasubjekt angebracht worden, ist der Verfasser gestorben.”

(In this fugue, where the name ‘BACH’ was introduced in the counter-subject, the composer died.)

ROBERTA GARY is Professor of Organ at the University of Cincinnati's College-Conservatory of Music, where she teaches organ, a graduate seminar in organ literature, and organ pedagogy. She is currently Head of the Division of Keyboard Studies. In addition to her teaching, she is very active internationally as a concert organist and workshop clinician. Her particular specialties have ranged from Liszt, Reubke, Franck, and Messiaen to Bach, Buxtehude, and the meantone repertoire. Most recently her interest has turned to physical movement and ease

in playing. She and her husband, Thom Miles, are certified Andover Educators, and together they present workshops titled *What Every Organist Needs to Know about the Body*. Roberta and Thom reside in Cincinnati, Ohio.



THE INSTRUMENT

The organ at First Presbyterian Church in Springfield, Illinois, USA, was built by John Brombaugh & Associates of Eugene, Oregon, USA and was completed in June 2004 as its maker's Op.35. (Abbreviations used in the description of registrations stand to the right of the stop pitches. * = manual stop transmitting to pedal; + = bass pipes common with other stops.)

GREAT - MANUAL II		RUCKPOSITIVE - MAN. I	
Præstant	16 *+ P16	Quintadena	16 Q16
Octave	8 + O8	Præstant	8 + P8
Holpipe	8 Hp8	Gedackt	8 + G8
Octave	4 O4	Octave	4 O4
Spitzflöte	4 Spf4	Rohrflöte	4 Rf4
Quinte	22/3 Q3	Octave	2 O2
Octave	2 O2	Waldflöte	2 Wf2
Cornet	IV Cor	Sifflet	11/3 Siff
(discant, includes Holpipe 8)			
Mixture	IV-VI Mix	Sesquialter	II Ses
Cimbel	III Cim	Scharff	IV-VI Sch
Trumpet	16 Tr16	Dulcian	8 D8
Trumpet	8 * Tr8	Schalmey	4 Sm4
Trumpet	4 * Tr4	(based on drawing by Michael Prætorius)	
Haubois	8 Hb8		
(based on Alkmaar Bovenwerk Haubois)			

SWELL - MANUAL III	
Baarpijp	8 Bp8
Viola da Gamba	8 VdG8
Vox Celeste (tc)	8 VxC
Principal	4 P4
Flauto	4 Fl4
Nasard	2 2/3 N3
Querflöte	2 Qf2
Tierce (tc)	1 3/5 Trc
Scharff	III Sch
Fagot-Oboe	16 Fg16
(Dulcian C - f, rest is Oboe based on Hook, 1870)	
Trumpet	8 Tr8
Vox Humana	8 VxH8
(based on Haarlem Bovenwerk Vox Humana)	

COUPLERS, ETC.

Ruckpositive-Great	R/G
Swell-Great	S/G
Great-Pedal	G/P
Ruckpositive-Pedal	R/P
Swell-Pedal	S/P
Cymbelstern	CyS
Tremulant, adjustable	Trem

REGISTRATIONS USED ON THIS RECORDING

CONTRAPUNCTUS I	GT: Hp8, O4 PD: Sb16
CONTRAPUNCTUS II	RP: G8, Wf2
CONTRAPUNCTUS III	RP: G8, O4
CONTRAPUNCTUS IV	GT: O8, O4, O2
CANON ALLA OTTAVA	Right Hand: SW: Fl4 Left Hand: RP: Rf4
CONTRAPUNCTUS V	GT: O8
CONTRAPUNCTUS VI	GT: Hp8, O4, Q3, O2, Cor, Tr8, Tr4 PD: P16, Sb16, Vb16, O8, Ps16, Tr8
CONTRAPUNCTUS VII	RP: G8, Rf4
CANON ALLA DECIMA	Right Hand: SW: Bp8, P4, N3, Qf2 Left Hand: RP: D8
CONTRAPUNCTUS VIII	GT: O8, O4, O2, Mix RP: P8, O4, O2, Sch PD: P16, Vb16, Sb16, O8 Meas. 93: +RP/GT Meas. 124: +GT Q3, +RP Ses
CONTRAPUNCTUS IX	RP: G8, Rf4, O2
CONTRAPUNCTUS X	GT: O8, Hp8, Spf4 (RP/GT) RP: D8, Rf4 PD: Sb16

CONTRAPUNCTUS XI GT: P16, O8, O4, O2, Mix (SW/GT)
 SW: P4, Sch
 RP: Q16, P8, O4, O2, Sch, D8
 PD: P16, Sb16, Vb16, O8, O4, Mix, Ps16, Tr8, Tr4

 Meas. 89: +GT Tr8, Tr4
 Meas. 128: +RP/PD, +PD C2
 Meas. 158: +RP/GT, +PD CPs32

CANON ALLA DUODECIMA Right Hand: SW: Bp8, P4, N3, Qf2, Trc
 Left Hand: RP: G8, Rf4, Wf2, Siff

CONTRAPUNCTUS XII, RECTUS GT: O8, Spf4 (alto and bass)
 CONTRAPUNCTUS XII, INVERSUS RP: P8, Rf4 (soprano and tenor)
 CONTRAPUNCTUS XIII, RECTUS SW: Bp8, VdG8, P4, N3, Qf2 (soprano)
 CONTRAPUNCTUS XIII, INVERSUS RP: G8, Rf4, Wf2 (alto)
 GT: Hp8, O4 (bass)

Assisting on the four mirror fugues above: Thomas Miles

CANON PER AUGMENTATIONEM
 IN CONTRARIO MOTO GT: Hp8, O4, Q3, O2, Tr8 (RP/GT)
 RP: O4, Ses

FUGA A 3 SOGGETTI GT: P16, O8, O4, O2, Mix, Tr8 (SW/GT)
 SW: P4, Sch
 RP: Q16, P8, O4, O2, Sch, Ses, D8
 PD: P16, Sb16, Vb16, O8, Ps16 (GT/PD, SW/PD)

 Meas. 194 +RP/GT, +RP/PD, +GT Tr4
 Meas. 232 +PD CPs32

CHORALE, VOR DEINEN THRON Right Hand: RP: P8
 Left Hand: SW: Bp8, VdG8
 PD: Sb16 (SW/PD)

Recorded October 10, 11 and 12, 2007 at First Presbyterian Church, Springfield, IL
 Recording Engineer: Edward J. Kelly, Mobile Master, Burtonsville, MD
 Editing and Mastering: Robert Schuneman, Arsis Audio, Boston, MA



Brombaugh Opus 35 (2004), First Presbyterian Church, Springfield, Illinois