WTC I/5 in D major – Prelude

Underneath a virtuoso surface structure the D-major Prelude is entirely determined by harmonic processes. Its 16th-note pattern does not develop motifs. Any recurrences are transpositions that occur exclusively in connection with analogies in the harmonic development.

The first cadence ends at m. 3_1, after a harmonic progression from the tonic (m. 1) via ii^7 and V^7 (m. 2) back to the tonic. This cadential close comes with a subtle structural break. The next harmonic progression modulates to the dominant. During this modulation, the right hand's ornamental line resembles that of the first cadence (compare mm. 3 and 4 with m. 2); its end in particular is an exact transposition of the previous end (mm. 5_3-$6_1 \approx 2_3$-3_1). As before, this cadential close signifies the completion of a structural unit. There are altogether eight closed harmonic progressions. Note that each phrase begins with the second 16th-note in the right-hand pattern. The upper/lower-case letters indicate major/minor keys:

mm.	1-3_1	D—D	mm.	14-20_1	D—G
mm.	3-6_1	D—A	mm.	20-22_1	G—G
mm.	6-12_1	A—e	mm.	22-25_1	G—D
mm.	12-14_1	e—D	mm.	25-35	D—D

This prelude, like several others from the first volume of the WTC, derives from a much shorter model in Bach's *Note Book for Wilhelm Friedemann*. The original version comprises 22 measures. Of these, mm. 1-17 are retained unchanged, while mm. 19-20 can be found in mm. 27-28 of the *WTC* version. An interesting question is therefore whether the basic binary form of the Wilhelm Friedemann version has only been extended, or whether the addition of mm. 18-26 and 29-35 changes the structure.

No portion of the D-major prelude is repeated literally. There is, however, a striking five-measure analogy: the prelude's beginning is restated in the middle of the prelude in the subdominant key (mm. 1-$6_1 \approx$ 20-25_1). The modulation from tonic to dominant that takes place at the beginning of the prelude thus serves, when launched from the subdominant, to return to the home key in the manner of a typical Baroque recapitulation.

Furthermore, there are several smaller analogies: The end of the modulation in the second section recurs as a "bracket" in the subsequent section: compare mm. 5-6_1 with mm. 6-7_1 and 10-11_1, and the beginning of this

modulation then reappears with some interval adjustments at the outset of the ensuing section: mm. $3\text{-}4_3 \approx 14\text{-}15_3$. A further correspondence includes 2½ measures built on a pedal note, followed by another 1½ measures that conclude the modulation (compare mm. $8\text{-}12_1$ with mm. $16\text{-}20_1$). The bass line of these two passages differs slightly while the right-hand part is an almost exact transposition, with only a tiny adjustment in the last half measure.

The choice for the prelude's tempo should be made after considering the following two aspects: The bass line is composed as a hidden two-part structure. This might indicate that an *alla-breve* pulse should be made perceptible behind the given 4/4 time signature. The treble shows a pitch pattern that is easily unmasked as an ornamentation of broken chords. A melodious treatment of this line would mislead listeners into expecting a true melody that then does not materialize. The appropriate tempo is therefore fairly fluent: fast enough to give the impression both of a half-measure pulse and of a non-melodious, arabesque-like right-hand pattern. The corresponding articulation is legato or, better still, quasi legato for the right hand. The left hand plays non legato; because of the obvious rests in the bass part, this indication affects the touch and coloring of the notes rather than their actual duration.

Exceptions from the patterns established in m. 1 only begin with m. 27 and become more prominent from m. 32 onward. Here, a peak-note line in the right hand is marked as a suddenly emerging melodious upper voice. Owing to the features of this line, a syncopated rhythm and a do–si–do formula, legato playing is indispensable here. (This can either be done by fingering 4–5 on each of the three syncopations, or by playing these notes with 4–5–4 right away). At the same time, the newly created "tenor" should sound non legato. The same holds true for the second half of m. 34 where the "soprano" takes up the typical closing formula while the simultaneous quarter-notes in the left hand continue the non-legato touch.

The only ornaments appearing in this prelude are the two arpeggios in mm. 33 and 34. They invite the same questions as the arpeggios in the C-minor prelude: Is the top of the arpeggiated chord primarily a melodic note, or is it primarily part of the chord, with no more melodic value than any note in the chord's middle register? The answer, as can easily be seen from the score, will be different for the two cases. In m. 33, the treble D is both an immediate continuation of the preceding melodic motion and the point of departure for the continuing line. In m. 34, by contrast, the logical target of the run in the preceding bar is the lowest note C♯, while the upper-register B♭ is only a chordal note. Admittedly, this B♭ expresses high

tension, representing the diminished seventh of this chord and moving up chromatically to the B♮ in the subsequent chord. Yet it is very important to realize that neither peak note carries the melodic flow, which can rather be traced like this:

mm. 32 . . . . . 33 . . . . . 34 35
F^{2} — E^{2} –D^{2} – C♯^{2} D^{2} . . . . . (D^{1}) C♯^{1} – D^{1} – D^{2} – C♯^{2} – D^{2}

Recognizing this melodic progression is particularly vital for performers as it will influence the execution of the two arpeggios: In the first arpeggio, the melodic note D should sound *on* the beat, together with the bass note A, while the remaining notes of the arpeggiated chord follow swiftly. Conversely in the second arpeggio, the melodic target is the C♯ at the base of the chord. In keeping with the rules of Baroque ornamentation, it will at any rate fall on the beat; the treble B♭ sounds here at the end of the broken chord, slightly *after* the actual downbeat.

The prelude's initial two measures establish the D-major key with a simple cadence. The harmonic curve contains no unexpected features; the subdominant harmony, here represented by a ii^{7} chord, is reached in the first half of m. 2, followed by the dominant and the resolution onto the tonic. The ensuing modulation builds up slightly more tension toward a climax, in the first half of m. 4, on the inverted seventh chord that brings the shift from one key area to the next. After this harmony, the tension subsides gradually until the resolution on the downbeat of m. 6.

mm.	1	2	3	4	5	6
	p	*mp* $^{-}$	*p*	*mp* $^{+}$	*mp* $^{-}$	*p*

The next measures represent a transposition of the preceding ones, with a similar climax in the first half of m. 7. The three final notes in m. 7 then announce a change, which materializes in the F♯ pedal extended for two and a half measures. During these measures (mm. 8-9), the tension that had just begun to decrease after the climax, rises again. This rise is more gradual than the former increases because it is not triggered by an active harmonic step but rather by the persistence of the pedal note. At the end of the pedal, m. 10 is the transposition of m. 5. In keeping with this structural analogy, the tension-decrease should end on the downbeat of m. 11 where the target harmony of this modulation, the E-minor chord, is reached. Yet Bach decides not to settle on this harmony. As if the target key had been reached too suddenly after the build-up over the pedal, he adds another measure confirming the E-minor tonality at m. 12$_{1}$. Then, with a swift turn, he reverts to the key of D major, which is consolidated by an extra measure on the tonic (m. 12 = modulation back to D, m. 13 = confirmation of D).

These two measures, which in the harmonic development represent a modulation of their own, thus appear more like an appendix to the previous progression. The entire segment, expressed in terms of dynamics, will appear somewhat like this:

mm.	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
	p	*mf*$^-$	*mp*$^+$	*mf*$^-$	*mf*	*mp*$^+$	*mp*$^-$	*p*$^+$	*p*

A process roughly similar to that described above occurs in the subsequent section. The first measure is yet another version of the active part of the modulation. After a renewed climax in the first half of m. 15, the tension begins to fall but is suspended in its descent by a pedal of 2½ measures on B (mm. 16-18). Here, the hidden two-part structure that so far characterizes the bass pattern is replaced briefly by a broken chord pattern, thus giving these two measures the even larger frame of whole-measure pulses. At the conclusion of the pedal, m. 18 seems to lead to a new key (A minor). Yet again this key is not confirmed but passed through on the way to G major. This time, however, there are no repetitions of the two target harmonies. As in the corresponding measures discussed above, this final small-scale modulation sounds like an appendix to what precedes it.

mm.	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
	p	*mp*$^+$	*mp*	*mp*$^+$	*mf*$^-$	*mp*	*p*

The recapitulation of the first five measures should, of course, retrace the dynamic outline from the beginning of the prelude; in other words:

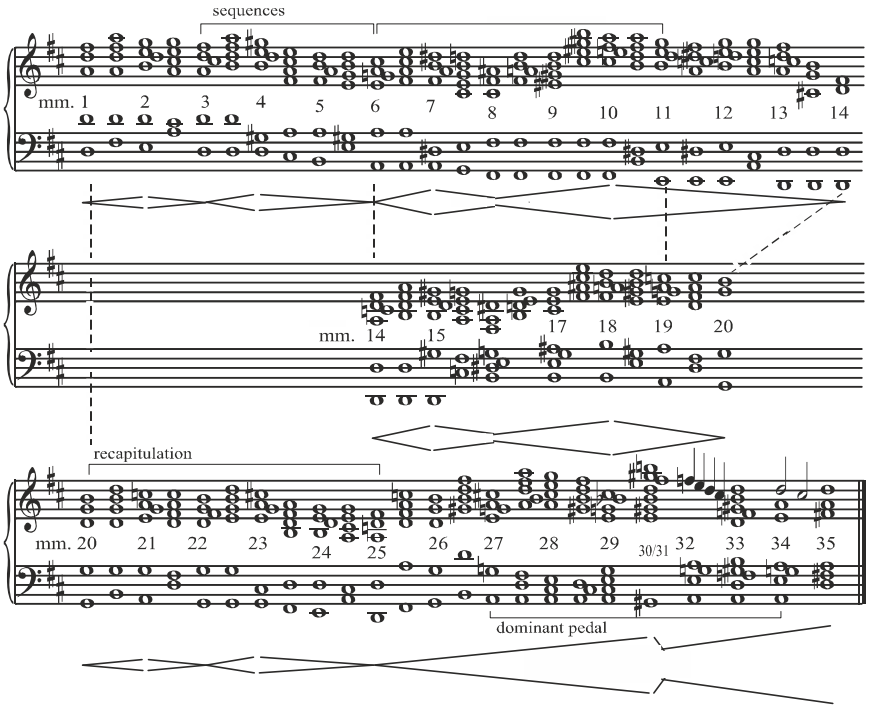
mm.	20	21	22	23	24	25
	p	*mp*$^-$	*p*	*mp*$^+$	*mp*$^-$	*p*

The prelude's last section begins with two measures that prepare the final pedal on the dominant. Unlike similar final pedals in other preludes, this dominant bass note is not preceded by its leading-tone. Here, instead, this leading-tone is made up for in the middle of the pedal (m. 30_2-31) where it combines with virtuoso peak notes in the right hand and thus creates a strong emotional climax. After this interruption, the dominant pedal continues—partly as a sustained note, partly implied under the cadenza-like setting of the right hand in mm. 33-34—and only resolves onto the tonic in the very last measure.

For the dynamic design this means a steady increase, with only slight inflections on the surface in those measures where the harmony seems to come to a halt, i.e., mm. 30-31 and m. 33. The overall dynamic development in this section may be described as follows:

mm.	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35
	p	*mp*$^-$	*mp*	*mp*$^+$	*mf*$^-$	*mf*	*mf*$^+$	*pf*$^-$	*pf*	*pf*$^+$	*f*

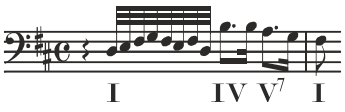
The following diagram attempts to capture the dynamic layout:



WTC I/5 in D major – Fugue

This subject is roughly one measure long. It begins after a quarter-note rest at m. 1_2, ends at m. 2_1, and consists of an indivisible phrase. Its pitch pattern features a predominance of steps interrupted by one major-sixth leap. This interval is not one of the so-called “high-tension intervals.” The rhythmic pattern includes three kinds of considerably different note values: the longest (dotted eighth-notes) are six times as long as the shortest (32nd-notes). Later in the fugue, quarter-notes are added. The rhythmic organization alludes to a specific musical genre: The almost constant presence of the dotted-note pair, interspersed with fast ornamental groups, is typical of the French overture. The fact that the fugue is modeled on such a distinct character piece accounts for most of the particularities that would, without this background, seem disconcerting in a polyphonic composition.

The subject's harmonic background is that of a simple progression, with the sequence T S D^7 T. All musical aspects of the phrase unite in favoring one note for the climax: the dotted B in the center. Harmonically this B represents the active step (the subdominant), melodically it is reached in the most expansive leap, and rhythmically it represents a surprisingly long note after a bustling beginning. While the tension-rise before this climax sets out from the keynote in complete relaxation and escalates in almost no time, the subsequent resolution is much more gradual. As the subject ends on the third (F♯), the tension does not entirely fall back to the level of the beginning.



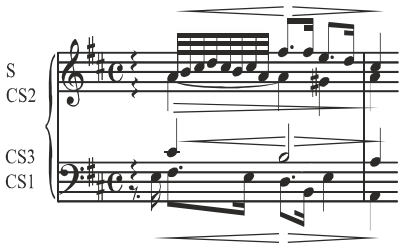
There are altogether 12 subject statements in this fugue:

1.	mm. 1-2_1	B	5.	mm. 7-8_1	B	9.	mm. 13-14_1	S
2.	mm. 2-3_1	T	6.	mm. 8-9_1	S	10.	mm. 14-15_1	T
3.	mm. 4-5_1	A	7.	mm. 11-12_1	S	11.	mm. 15-16_1	B
4.	mm. 5-6_1	S	8.	mm. 12-13_1	A	12.	mm. 24-25_1	B+S

This subject undergoes none of the modifications otherwise encountered in Bach's fugues: it is never inverted, augmented, or diminished, and its pitch and rhythm patterns remain untouched. The only exception occurs in the final statement (B: m. 24-25), which some scholars do not consider equal to the other statements as it is extended in both directions. The bustling 32nd-note group from m. 24_4 is preceded by three similar groups that gradually ascend in fourths toward the tonic level (see the groups from B, E, and A). Symmetrical to these anticipating figures, the subject's second half is extended with sequences in m. 26: the original notes of this half, G F♯ E D, beginning here with an octave displacement, recur in a first transposition a fifth down (C B A G), while a second sequence is modified to accommodate the cadential-bass steps (F♯ E D A). Moreover, while there are no real strettos in this fugue, the final entry is partially set in parallels—and as the parallel begins one beat (i.e., one whole figure) later, the deceptive impression of a stretto does arise for a moment. To complete this unusual entry, in its second half and throughout its sequences the three upper voices move in rhythmic alignment but in contrary motion (see the right-hand chords in mm. 25-26). The strong homophonic element in this final, extended subject statement enhances the outsider position it occupies in the design of the fugue.

The counter-subjects are unusual. They confirm that the French overture, an essentially homophonic genre, is indeed one of this fugue's god-parents. The contour appearing in continuation of the first subject statement and against the second entry consists of the notes G-F♯-E-D-E-A. It meets the three basic requirements of a counter-subject: to be easily recognizable, independent, and taken up again later in the fugue. Nonetheless the term counter-subject seems a little too big for this simple unit, not least because it sounds very much like a cadential-bass pattern and does not wander from voice to voice as a polyphonic unit should, but remains essentially at the base of the texture. A close look at the two other counter-subjects comes to similar conclusions: Although they are formally independent of the subject and taken up repeatedly in the course of the fugue, the fact that they resemble closing formulas prevents one from taking them too seriously as counter-*subjects*.

Dynamic shaping in the contrapuntal components allows for but little independence. The cadential-bass pattern of CS1 should logically approach the note that represents the subdominant as its climax—a climax thus coinciding with that of the subject. Similarly, CS3 with its quarter-note/ half-note/quarter-note rhythm will accent the half-note, which falls again on the same beat as the other climaxes. Only the syncopated CS2 could sound in diminuendo—if it were left alone; but more often than not its first note falls together with that of the subject beginning (see mm. 4, 5, 8, and 13). The dynamics of these four parts thus give a distinctly homophonic result.



Five times are the subject entries interspersed with episodes: E1 = mm. 3-4, E2 = mm. 6-7, E3 = mm. 9-11, and E4 = mm. 16-23. Among the three motifs that make up the episodes, one, appearing in four of the five episodes, uses the 32nd- note figure from the subject's beginning. Moreover, E4b (mm. 17-23) is dominated by the dotted rhythm of the subject's second half. Hence, most of the episodes in this fugue are closely related to its subject.

The close relationship with the primary thematic material explains some of the dynamic developments in the episodes. M1 is an ornamented version of the unresolved second counter-subject (mm. 3_2-4_1 ≈ A: 13_2-14_1), a descending step in decreasing intensity. In analogy to the subject's second half, M3 also proceeds in decrescendo. Conversely, M2 with its relationship to the subject head seems at first to build up tension. Yet there

are three reasons that speak against this rendition: on occasion of its first entrance in mm. 6-7 the motif ends with the neutral interval of a fourth. In all other episodes it is launched on a strong beat and ends on a weak one. And above all: the fugue's structure would become incomprehensible were all M2 entries to sound at the energy level as the subject head.

The role played by the episodes in the course of the fugue is also puzzling. E1 with its underlying lines of parallel syncopations links two pairs of subject entries within the same section. Z2 has the same effect, although it marks the opening of a new section. By creating this relaxing effect in front of what should be a new impulse, Bach seems to thread the first two sections closely together, so that the feeling of a structural ending only arises when a new tonal sphere is reached, i.e., with the downbeat of m. 9 that establishes B minor. E3 is the first episode to be self-contained. It seems intended as a buffer between two larger portions of the piece.

The pattern of the subject's statements in mm. 9-16 (S, A, S, T, B) with its twofold soprano lead suggests a subdivision into two "rounds." The surprising deceptive cadence at the end of the alto entry and the M2 variant accompanying the concluding tone underline a caesura that is otherwise hardly tangible. By contrast, the extensive final episode is subdivided in itself: the brief first segment (E4a) is a cadential close and thus brings a feeling of relaxation (mm. 16-17_1), while the longer second segment (E4b) develops the material of E3 (mm. 17-19 + 21 ≈ 9-11). After descending sequences in mm. 17-20 it uses a dense web of imitations to rebuild tension within a single measure. The subsequent cadential close with its soprano ascent to the third does not allow a complete resolution. After another measure with M3 in three-part homophonic texture Bach repeats the cadential close, now with conventional formulas in the soprano and bass.

The character of this fugue is determined more by the mood of a French overture than by the conventions it shares with other polyphonic compositions. It is "stately," lively but not light. Articulation in French overtures is an intricate affair: The 32nd-note groups are legato—virtuoso figures that should never sound melodious, which gives an indication for a minimum tempo. The dotted-note groups reflect the stately character of this piece best if played in a rather heavy non legato. The longer note values in the subject's companions require three slightly different types of articulations: neutral non legato in the cadential figure of CS1, a more melodious non legato in CS3, and true legato in the do–si–do formula of CS2.

Of the 16th-notes in the upper part of M3, the first three—a written-out inverted mordent—should be played legato, while the fourth 16th-note may sound as non legato as the accompanying voices.

As the prevalent features in this fugue and its prelude are so different, a risk of monotony does not arise. The tempo proportion may therefore be simple: a half measure (two quarter-notes) in the prelude corresponds with one quarter-note in the fugue. (Approximate metronome settings: prelude beat = 120, fugue beat = 60.)

The fugue features three ornaments that, based on their print size in the *Urtext* edition, stem from Bach's own hand: the cadential ornaments in mm. 20 and 22 and the grace-note in m. 10. The first, a mordent, should consist of four notes (D-C♯-D-C♯), with a triplet of 64th-notes against the first two 32nd-notes in the left hand. The symbol for the compound trill in m. 22 indicates a "turn + mordent" figure: D-C♯-B-C♯-D-C♯-D-C♯ must be fitted into less than a dotted eighth-note as the anticipation should come after a short stop. A brilliant 64th-note execution, with the final C♯ on or before the dot, is the solution. The grace-note in m. 10 represents an appoggiatura, held for only a 16th-note to avoid the D-C♯ parallel with the bass. If played, it must be transferred to S: mm. 11 and B: mm. 18, 19, 20

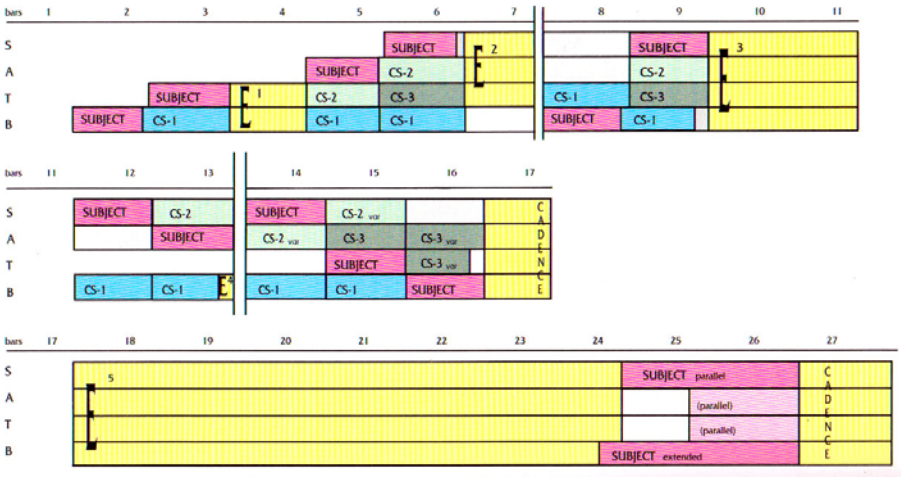
Other ornaments stem from copies. They may or may not go back to the master's suggestions but are worth considering. The subject could be played with ornaments on two of its dotted notes. The first is an inverted mordent (to be played with a whole-tone neighbor in all cases apart from mm. 8 and 15). The second is a mordent with three or, better still in overture style, five notes. Both ornaments must be either omitted or included in each subject statement. The mordent in M1 (T: m. 3) seems inconsequential but sounds pleasant. The inverted mordent in m. 15 may serve to enhance the fact that this subject statement, unlike all others, ends unresolved. The two cadential ornaments in mm. 16 and 26 are very typical. Both begin with the main note, ascend twice to the upper neighbor note, and end in a suffix. Their rhythmic realization depends on a decision that, unique to this particular fugue, has an impact on the rendition in general: Performers who wish to underline the French-overture character of the fugue will render these ornaments in the corresponding style, i.e., as fast as possible, concluding them in the time span of a dotted eighth-note or less and leaving ample room for a point d'arrêt. Performers preferring to stress the fugue over the genre piece will interpret the compound symbol as an indication for a note-filling trill; they will therefore sustain the initial main note for a 16th-note, followed by three regular 32nd-note-pairs.

This brings us to a rhythmic feature to be mentioned in this context. French overtures are known to feature "over-dotted" rhythms: some of the notes written with single dots were traditionally played as if they were double-dotted. Again: whether one wishes to play this composition in the

style of a true French overture or regard it as "after all, a fugue" depends on personal taste. In the first case, however, it is vital to know that the over-dotting does not apply equally to all dotted notes but only to those that are complemented by a single note, fall on one of the strong beats in a bar, and are not accompanied by lines that indicate normal dotting. To give an example: over-dotted eighth-notes are possible in mm. 1_3, 2_1, 2_3, 4_3, 5_1, and 5_3. Conversely, in the episodes in mm. 3-4 and 6-7 the strong-beat notes are complemented by three faster notes that must sound in their written value. In mm. 9-10, the spelled-out ornament of the upper part indicates that the parallel voices, too, are to be played as written. As a result, the following is possible: Subject and CS1 can be double-dotted in their middle; the subject's closing note can be double-dotted when followed by another subject statement (mm. 2, 5, and 12) or a sequence (mm. 25-26), but must be simply dotted when followed by a group of notes (mm. 8 and 14). All episodes in this fugue seem not to allow for double-dotting, except perhaps for the notes in the cadential formulas (mm. 20_3 and 22_3).

There are a few indicators of structural design in the surface features. The first subject statement to sound in reduced texture after the initial ensemble buildup is that in m. 11. The two-part setting here constitutes a dramatic reduction from the full ensemble of mm. 5 and 7-8. Furthermore, as mentioned above, the fugue features only one episode that manifestly concludes a section: that in mm. 15-17_1. We can thus deduce that there are two partitions in this fugue: one in m. 11 and another in m. 17. However, the assumed first section with its six entries contains one subject statement more than it "should." This section must, therefore, be further subdivided "below the surface." The same holds true for the second section: what points to sub-grouping here is not so much the number of entries but the fact that the soprano sounds both at the beginning (mm. 11-12_1) and in the middle (mm. 13-14_1). The third section is unusual in a fugue for other reasons. It consists mainly of an extensive episode that is twice interrupted by a cadential formula reconfirming the return to the home key. Its last portion finally leads into a subject statement that sounds quite different from what one might expect: luxuriantly extended at both ends, with the expected contrapuntal texture abandoned for parallel motion in the first and homophonic chords in the second half.

These results are supported by the harmonic development. After five entries in D major, the sixth is in the subdominant. This launches a modulation that passes through the relative key of B minor (m. 9) and returns to the subdominant G major (m. 11). The point at which this new key is established coincides with the subject statement in reduced ensemble and



thus indicates the beginning of a second section. Moreover, although the fifth entry (mm. 7-8_1) sounds in full four-part texture, it is accompanied by only one of the contrapuntal figures—the other two are substituted by episode-style material. This statement is also the first in the fugue to end not in a resolved root position but instead in an inverted seventh chord. It is thus weakened in two respects, and the concluding D^7 chord links it to the target key, G major, of the subsequent modulation. Bach seems to create two subtly distinct structural levels. The first ten measures consist of two only slightly separated sections, one that presents the buildup of the ensemble in ascending order and introduces the three contrapuntal figures but is harmonically static, and one that begins with the subject bolstered only by CS1 and two neutral lines in homophonic pattern, is harmonically weakened by its resolution onto a seventh chord tending toward the key of G, but followed by an entry that provides both the expected new key and the four-part ensemble with all three contrapuntal figures.

The second part shows a similar sub-surface split into two sections. Indicators appear once again in the harmonic development: The statement in m. 11, in the new key of G major and in two-part texture, is followed by an entry in three-part ensemble modulating to the relative minor key. This relates it directly to the sixth entry, which brought about the same modulation. The next entry returns to D major; in addition, its resolution chord contains the seventh (C♮) that relates this statement to the fifth entry in the fugue (the second section's first statement). Furthermore, the three-part texture is retained and not yet complemented with the missing fourth

voice. The next entry sounds in full ensemble and in the expected G major; but again, its resolution comes with a seventh (this time the major seventh). The third entry in this group reaches E minor, the subdominant relative and the key of the explicit cadence at the end of this part. The ensuing seven-bar episode is longer than any of the preceding sections; it is even longer than the entire six-measure second part.

Within the first part, the four subject statements of the first section bring forth an increase in texture. The increase in loudness, however, is comparably small because already the first statement should have fully declared the stately character of the piece. Throughout sections I and II, the tension remains almost unchanged. The two similar episodes—one within the first section, the other between the two sections—cause slight but inconsequential relaxations. It is only the third episode, at the end of the first part, which succeeds in conveying a more noticeable tension-decrease.

Within the second part, the buildup is again caused by the growing number of voices. While among the two statements in three-part texture, the alto statement in mm. 12-13 with its exposed pitch position sounds more outgoing than the soprano statement in mm. 13-14, the ensuing tenor statement in four-part texture and the last entry in the bass, accompanied by a parallel of CS3 in the two middle voices, share in the climax. As the end of this statement does not bring about the expected harmonic resolution but keeps the middle voices in suspension, the tension is allowed to subside only very gradually in the subsequent cadential measure.

The long episode opening the third part begins with the material from the tension-releasing third episode and thus creates a sense of continued relaxation until m. 20_1. Immediately following this, the fourfold imitative interplay of M2 propels the tension so high that even the cadential pattern with its typical closing-formula mordent cannot dissipate it fast enough. Another measure with M3 and the varied repetition of the cadential close, this time without the stormy 32nd-note stretto, is required to achieve relaxation. The following measure with its descending tendency continues this direction. As a result the final, unusually extended subject statement with its powerful parallel motion begins from a relatively soft level, only to unfold its tremendous buildup all the more forcefully.

The relationship between the three parts is obvious from all that has been said above: the first two parts are similarly built, with rises both times from about *mf* to a good *f*. The third part seems to delay the outbreak, and when it finally allows its only subject statement to make its declaration, this by far outranks that of all the previous entries.