ANALYSIS OF J. S. BACH'S WOHLTEMPERIRTES CLAVIER (48 PRELUDES & FUGUES), PART I. AUGENER'S EDITION. NO. 9205

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H. RIEMANN

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Trieste

TO

Prof. Dr. PHILIPP SPITTA,

THE ENTHUSIASTIC BIOGRAPHER

OF

J. S. BACH

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(FIRST PART.)

PREFACE.

The present analysis of J. S. Bach's "Wohltemperirtes Clavier" may be regarded as a sequel to the "Catechism of Composition", and specially as a Guide to fugal composition by the help of the most wonderful master-pieces in this branch of musical art; for to students of composition good examples are far more profitable than abstract rules and vague prescripts. If a well-known teacher of counterpoint is accustomed to tell his pupils that really not one of the fugues in the "Wohl. Clavier" is according to rule, surely one might turn the spit and maintain that rules which do not agree with Bach's fugues are worthless.

The first result of the present analysis of fugues is to establish in the clearest manner the perfect agreement of Bach's fugal structure with the norm of all other musical formation; tripartite division according to the scheme A—B—A (foundation-laying section in the principal key, modulating middle section, concluding section in the principal key is everywhere clearly exposed to view; and sound reasons, likewise, may be given for the few apparent exceptions. The free episodes are not merely connecting members inserted between the principal sections of the fugue, but they appear in the principal sections themselves, are complementary to the theme entries, serving as foils to them, or surpassing and crowning them. It

is quite evident that such an exposition of the contradiction between the fugal composition of the greatest master of fugue and pig-tail scholastic rules tends to excite strong opposition to insipid artificiality and formal workmanship, and opens up a path to youthful students in the practice of strict polyphonic composition.

The analysis of the preludes must be regarded in the light of a supplement to my work. As the preludes stand in close spiritual relationship to the fugues, it seemed to me that I had to consider them with regard to their spiritual contents; the technical (harmonic-metrical) analysis will not, however, I trust, be without its use. The astonishing simplicity and strict logic of the harmonic and modulatory structure causes these preludes to rank as truly classical models of development from short motives; future generations may study them again and again with profit. The harmonic schemes here communicated may be turned to most useful account if advanced readers try to work them out from figured bass at the pianoforte, but with other motives than those developed by Bach; the schemes may also be transposed and worked out in a similar manner, and the diversity of form which results, the utmost simplicity notwithstanding, will afford just cause for astonishment.

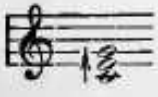
Sondershausen, June 15 1890.

Dr. Hugo Riemann.

PREFACE.

In order that the present analyses may be of service to those unacquainted with the other theoretical works of the author, it will be necessary first to offer a brief explanation of the harmony signs employed, as well as of the method of marking periods by figures beneath the bar strokes.

The new system of figuring chords traces back all harmony formations to the only two possible kinds of consonant chords, the Major and the Minor Chord, which are opposed the one to the other, and designated according to the doctrines of the greatest theorists of the past (Zarlino, Tartini, Moritz Hauptmann): — the Major Chord as the union of a note with those notes directly related to it above (prime, upper-third, upper-fifth), and the Minor Chord as the union of a note with those notes directly related to it below (prime, under-third, under-fifth). The intervals, considered upwards, of the Major Chord are indicated by *Arabian*, those, considered downwards, of the Minor Chord, by *Roman figures*, as for example: —

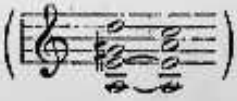


and

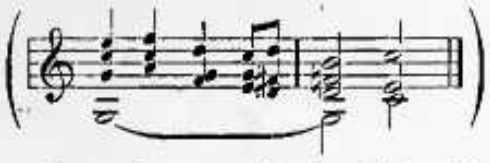
The Major Chord is briefly expressed by the *clang-letter* corresponding to its prime (*c*, *d*, *a* etc., or *c*♯, *d*♯, or *c*♭, *d*♭) with addition of a small *cross* +, which latter, however, when no misunderstanding is to be feared, can be omitted; the Minor Chord, likewise, is expressed by the *clang-letter* corresponding to its prime, with addition of a *nought* (o) in place of a +. The cross is really an abbreviation for $\begin{smallmatrix}5\\3\\1\end{smallmatrix}$, the ° for $\begin{smallmatrix}1\\III\\V\end{smallmatrix}$: both are therefore super-

fluous, when, for other reasons, figures become necessary (for instance, when it has to be shown that the third is in the bass, or when one of the three notes of the chord requires chromatic alteration, or finally when other dissonant notes are to be added to the chord); $^{c}_{3}$, for instance is the *c* Major Chord with the third as bass note; $g^{1\flat}$ a *c* Minor Chord (a *g* under-clang, or in short "under *g*") with lowered prime ($g\flat$). The two signs + (*raising* by a semitone) and − (*lowering* by a semitone) constitute the remaining signs of this system. The *figures* 2, 4, 6, 7, 8 and 9 (likewise II, IV, VI, VII, VIII and IX) are employed quite after the manner of general-bass figuring for the intervals of the second, fourth, sixth, seventh, octave, ninth, but always thought of from the prime (indicated by a clang-letter) of a Major or Minor Chord; therefore, always indicating an interval of definite size, as namely: — 1 (I) always the unchanged prime, 3 (III) the (major) third, 5 (V) the perfect fifth of the chord, and

2	(II)	stands	for	the	major second
4	(IV)	„	„	„	perfect fourth
6	(VI)	„	„	„	major sixth
7	(VII)	„	„	„	minor (!) seventh
8	(VIII)	„	„	„	perfect octave = 1 (I)
9	(IX)	„	„	„	major ninth = 2 (II)
10	(X)	„	„	„	major tenth = 3 (III)

In some cases figures occur in combination with (but in contradiction to) the clang signs (+, °), and then the clang signs of the chord and the figure have, with regard to the note, opposite meanings, for example $°a^{2+}$ = *d* Minor Chord (minor chord under *a*, abbr. "under *a*") with suspension of the minor *upper* second of the prime, *i. e. d f (a) b♭* (= chord of the Neapolitan 6th); also the union of two kinds of figures occurs, for instance $\overset{e^7}{V}\ \overset{°e}{V}$ = progression of the dominant chord with the seventh (e^7) to the tonic °e over the already anticipated fundamental note of the tonic (): the slur from the

one bass figure to the other is the convenient means adopted in *organ-point figuring*, for example g^{6}_{4}, f g^{7} c d^{+} g^{7}_{1} c^{+}

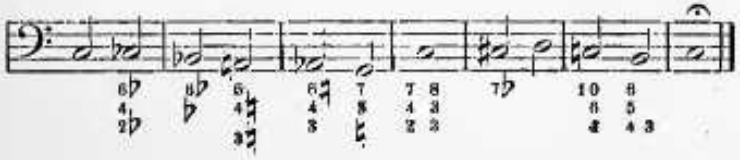


When a figure has a *stroke* through it, this indicates the *omission* of the note represented by that figure: if the prime is to be left out, the clang letter has a stroke through it

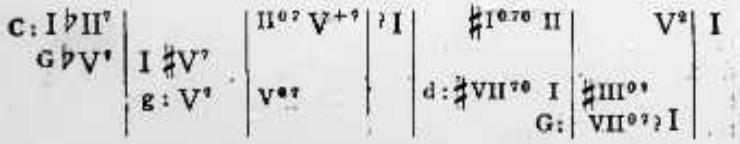
f^{6}_{5} = f a [c] d
g^{7} = [g] h d f

Two points (. .) indicate the repetition of the preceding harmony.

All the signs employed may be shown in an example, first written out with general-bass figuring



The indications introduced by Gottfried Weber (1824), and adopted by F. Schneider, E. F. Richter and others, in which triads, chords of the seventh etc. are taken on the various degrees of the scale, can only with difficulty express this example



Here is the new method of figuring, in which the progression of the bass is also partly indicated: —