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Teaching the preludes of the well-tempered clavier

Kerstin Barger Stone
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TEACHING THE PRELUDES OF THE WELL-TEMPERED CLAVIER

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the School of Music and Dance

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Kerstin Barger Stone

December 2003

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ABSTRACT

TEACHING THE PRELUDES OF THE WELL-TEMPERED CLAVIER BOOK I

by Kerstin Barger Stone

The *Well-Tempered Clavier* is often thought of as pairs of pieces that go together, the prelude followed by its fugue in its key. This paper gives each prelude a long deserved moment in the spotlight, unencumbered by the intellectual weight and technical challenge of each fugue. Each prelude is a little gem in itself, ready to please first, to instruct upon request. Each brings its own specific, individual, and ingratiating world along with it. Bach intended these pieces for the delight of learners, the young, and the experienced. They are, as he intended, a special pastime. This paper introduces each prelude, places it in an instructional context, and attempts to increase its accessibility to the first time player. It particularly recommends the occasional prelude to the busy teacher for recreation and renewal.

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Chapter I

The *Well-Tempered Clavier*: The Special Pastime

The Well-Tempered Clavier is a collection of paired preludes and fugues composed by Johann Sebastian Bach during more than twenty years of his life as a teacher, performer, and composer. Each of its two volumes includes a prelude and fugue in each of the twenty-four major and minor keys. *The Well-Tempered Clavier* is often referred to as the *WTC*, and also as “the Forty Eight.” John Fuller-Maitland’s book *The ‘48’* was published in the early years of the twentieth century.¹ *The Well-Tempered Clavier* contains forty-eight preludes and forty-eight fugues. These ninety-six pieces constitute a veritable encyclopedia of Baroque musical thought.

The title Bach chose for this work, *Das Wohltemperirte Clavier*, is ornamentally inscribed on the elaborate title page (see Figure 1) of the autograph fair copy believed to be the only existing manuscript of Book I in Bach’s own hand.² This translation accompanies the facsimile of the title page in the edition of the *WTC* edited by Willard Palmer.

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1. John A. Fuller-Maitland, *The ‘48’: Bach’s Wohltemperirte Clavier, Books I and II* (Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1970 [1925]).
 2. Richard Jones, “Critical Notes” from J. S. Bach, *Well-Tempered Clavier Part I*. (London: The Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, 1994), 164. This manuscript is housed today in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, identified as *Bach 415*. It is also referred to as Source A, and by the names of two prior owners, Wagener-Volkmann.

Figure 1. Title Page of the Autograph for *The Well Tempered Clavier*

Preludes and Fugues through all the tones and semitones both as regards the major third or Ut Re Mi and as concerns the minor third of Re Mi Fa. For the profit and use of the musical youth desirous of learning, as well as for the special pastime of those already skilled in this study. Composed and written down by Johann Sebastian Bach, p.t. [pro tempore] Capellmeister to His Serene Highness, the Prince of Anhalt-Cöthen and Director of His Chamber Music. Anno 1722.³

Bach was thirty-seven years old in 1722, the date on the title page. An experienced teacher, he had already composed and compiled original instructional materials. Earlier versions of eleven of the preludes in Book I came from one of these collections, *Clavier-Büchlein for Wilhelm Friedmann Bach*, a notebook for his

3. J. S. Bach, *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, Vol. I, ed. Willard Palmer (Sherman Oaks, California: Alfred Publishing Co., Inc. 1981), 3.

eldest son. In addition to the *WTC*, two other collections of instructional materials date from this same period, 1722–23. The “Upright Instruction” containing the two part inventions and the three part sinfonias, and Bach’s method for beginning organists, entitled *Orgel-Büchlein*, appeared in fair copies prepared with explanatory title pages.

The death in 1722 of the scholarly virtuoso, Johann Kuhnau, created an opening for the position of Cantor at St. Thomas’s Church in Leipzig. Since teaching was an important aspect of this position, the eminent Bach scholar Christoph Wolff believes that Bach prepared fair copies of his best work to support his application for this post. The title pages attest to Bach’s experience and competency as a teacher, and to his scholarly approach to the evolving science of music in his time.

Wolff quotes from the title pages of the three manuscripts:

The Well-Tempered Clavier, or preludes and fugues through all the tones and semitones, both as regards the tertia major or Ut Re Mi and as concerns the tertia minor or Re Mi Fa. For the use and profit of musical youth desirous of learning as well as for the pastime of those already skilled in this study [a volume of 90 pages in folio format, dated 1722].

Aufrichtige Anleitung, wherein the lovers of the clavier, and especially those desirous of learning, are shown a clear way not only (1) to learn to play clearly in two voices but also, after further progress, (2) to deal correctly and well with three obbligate parts; furthermore, at the same time not only to have good inventiones but to develop the same well and, above all, to arrive at a singing style in playing and at the same time to acquire a strong foretaste for composition [a volume of 62 pages in quarto format, dated 1723].

Orgel-Büchlein, in which a beginner at the organ is given instruction in developing a chorale in many divers ways, and at the same time in acquiring facility in

the study of the pedal since in the chorales contained therein the pedal is treated as wholly obbligato.

In Praise of the Almighty's will
and for my neighbor's greater skill.

[A volume of 182 pages (many unfilled) in quarto format; undated and primarily written in Weimar; the title page was added in Cothen, circa 1722–23.]⁴

Wolff concludes:

Therefore, these keyboard volumes epitomizing a fundamentally pragmatic approach to musical science would not only demonstrate Bach's didactic experience but, more important, underscore his stature as a musical scholar, deemed essential for a successor to the learned Johann Kuhnau and for as ambitious and demanding an academic environment as St. Thomas's.⁵

It seems likely that the quality of Lutheran piety would have been valued by the community of St. Thomas Church. The little rhyme from *Orgel-Büchlein* is but one indication found in Bach's scores of his intention to serve and glorify God in all his endeavors. At the end of his compositions he inscribed the letters, 'S. D. G.', *Soli deo gloria*, To God Alone Be Glory.⁶

The Well-Tempered Clavier was, and remains, a landmark in the progress of the science of music. Bach's choice of the terms "well-tempered" and "clavier" reflect two developing areas of musical science of the time, tuning and instrument making. It is generally conceded that a clavier was any keyboard instrument with strings. Bach's use of the term clavier reflects the evolving keyboard technology as well as the variety and the lack of standardization in keyboard making in his

4. Christoph Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach: The Learned Musician* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2000), 226–227.
5. *Ibid.*, 227.
6. John Butt, *The Cambridge Companion to Bach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 52.

time. The clavichord, a small instrument with a soft intimate sound, was referred to as a *clavier* in Bach's day. It is the true ancestor of the piano because its metal tangents actually strike the strings, giving the player some control over the dynamic and color of the sound. The harpsichord, also called a *clavier*, is a larger, more resonant instrument. Its keys activate a plectrum that plucks the string. While each of these instruments has its devotees who claim authenticity for it, the dominance of the piano in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries created some controversies concerning the appropriate instrument for performing the music of the WTC. The size and complexity of the instrument affected its acoustical properties. In the early eighteenth century, the vocabulary of tonality so familiar to us today, major and minor, was not yet in common usage. The octave was not always divided into twelve equal semitones as it is on the contemporary piano. In Bach's day the musician, who was often the composer as well as the performer, served as technician too, tuning his instrument for the performance. A player could choose among many different tunings in use at that time. Part of the player's potential expressive capability depended upon the way he chose to tune his instrument.

Bach did not originate the idea of well-tempered tuning. He was not the first composer to write a cycle of pieces in many keys. He encountered these ideas in the works of other musicians.⁷ The term "well-tempered" was first used by the organist, Andrea Werckmeister, who was considered the foremost theorist in Germany.⁸

7. Wolff, *Bach*, 279.

8. *Ibid*, 96.

Bach used this tuning in order to play in all the keys. In 1702 J. F. K. Fischer wrote a cycle of improvisatory preludes and three voice fugues called *Ariadne musica* that used nineteen keys. However, Bach was the first composer to write in all twenty-four keys.⁹

The Well-Tempered Clavier was among the works that kept Bach's reputation alive in the years following his death in 1750.¹⁰ Treasured copies of these pieces circulated among his large network of musical relatives.¹¹ His students and realtives made copies for their own study, and shared them with students as they began to teach.¹² Organists and harpsichordists who knew his playing especially valued these compositions, but the theorists of the time also recognized them as a trove of tradition.¹³ It is hard to say whether human error or human musical imagination contributed more to the amazing variations in these surviving manuscripts. The annotated editions,¹⁴ discussed in Chapter VII, enumerate these variants and tell a great deal about the interaction of musicians with this music over time. The survival of this huge body of work is a testament to its vitality and its significance to

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9. Laurette Goldberg, *The Well Tempered Clavier of J. S. Bach: A Handbook for Keyboard Teachers and Performers* (Berkeley, California: MusicSources, Center for Historically Informed Performances, Inc. 1995), 4.
 10. Hans T. David and Arthur Mendel, eds. *The New Bach Reader: A Life of Johann Sebastian Bach in Letters and Documents*, rev. Christoph Wolff (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998), 488-489. Mozart and Beethoven studied the works of Bach, including the *Well-Tempered Clavier*.
 11. Wolff, *Bach*, 458-459
 12. Jones, "Critical Notes," 164-166.
 13. The work of several theorists is cited in *The New Bach Reader*. Among them are: Johann Philipp Kirnberger, Johann Matheson, and Friedrich Wilhelm Marpurg.
 14. The editions by Hans Bischoff and Willard Palmer give detailed accounts of the variants.

the many musicians who loved it and kept it alive. The transcendence of Bach's universal language will continue to speak to the musical mind of every era and to show its colors through the prism of every generation's transitory ideal.

In the preludes, the variety of forms, character, and mood equals the variety in keys. Among the twenty-four preludes in Book I, several are traditional preludes based upon repeated musical figures. Among the preludes the musician can also find Baroque genres such as Italian concerto grosso, toccatas, trio sonatas, and inventions in two and three parts. Some of the preludes are written in dance forms such as gigue, allemande, and sarabande. Prelude #7 in E-Flat Major is a prelude plus a fugue plus a double fugue combining the themes of the preceding prelude and fugue.

These pieces illustrate Bach's encyclopedic knowledge of the international styles of his time. The French tradition was elegant, refined, and highly ornamented, and made use of dance forms and contrasting instrumental colors. The Italian tradition featured long melodic lines and the concerted forms. There was a wider range of tempos in Italian music. German music was influenced by the tradition of counterpoint and the technical development of the organ, which was widely used in the worship of the Lutheran Church.

Johann Kuhnau (1660-1722) was the first German composer to transfer the Italian church sonata to the harpsichord. Kuhnau's *Biblical Sonatas* showed the influence of the French instrumental forms, including dance forms and chorale preludes.¹⁵ It was Bach's practice to study the works of such exemplary musicians

as Kuhnau, assimilating these international influences and forms. Bach's compositions reflected established traditions both in music and in musical science.

In the piano studio, this music serves the purposes Bach envisioned. The student develops keyboard technique while absorbing the musical thought of the Baroque Period. Playing the music in preparation for teaching, the teacher enjoys a special pastime, recreating the logic and imagination of the writing, resonating with the spiritual uplift, solace, and exuberance of Bach's compositions. In *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, we see the musical mind absorbed in the flow of the serious endeavor that is work-play.

Although the preludes of Book I are the focus of this paper, the existence of the twenty-four more preludes of Book II lends so much importance to the topic that a few words about it are included here. Bach worked on the second book during the late 1730s. In addition to the new pieces he composed, Bach reworked and transposed preludes and fugues that he had already written.¹⁶ Book II was actually completed c. 1738–42.¹⁷ The London Autograph of Book II, "the most complete original source we have,"¹⁸ was copied by Bach's son-in-law, Johann Christoph Altnikol and dated 1744. Book II is longer than Book I. The fugues of

15. Manfred Bukofzer, *Music in the Baroque Era* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1947), 263.

16. Wolff, *Bach*, 373.

17. David, *The New Bach Reader*, 218. A facsimile of the title page in the hand of J. C. Altnikol appears on page 217. The translation is given on page 216. "The Well-Tempered Clavier's Second Part, consisting of Preludes and Fugues though all the tones and semitones, written by Johann Sebastian Bach, Royal Polish and Electoral Saxon Court Composer, Capellmeister and *Directore Chori Musici* in Leipzig.

18. Wolff, *Bach*, 373.

Book II use three voices or four voices. There is no evidence that Bach thought these two volumes belonged together. Why then did he undertake this huge task all over again? In *The Well Tempered Clavier of J. S. Bach: A Handbook for Keyboard Teachers and Performers*, Laurette Goldberg conjectures, "My guess is that the real reason Bach wrote the second volume of the *WTC*, was that writing—and playing—the first volume had given him so much pleasure."¹⁹

19. Goldberg, *Handbook*, 10.

Chapter II

History of the Prelude

The prelude was an instrumental form that evolved in the fifteenth century from the short improvisation preceding the performance of groups of pieces. The word itself is based upon the Latin root *pre*, meaning "before," and *ludus*, meaning "play."¹ The prelude established the mode of the pieces to follow and allowed the player to check the tuning of the instrument. Often, the prelude was based upon a harmonic progression and included scalar passage work. The quick passage work typical of the prelude would suggest the possibility that warming up technically for the main performance was as important a part of its function as setting the mood for the music to follow.

Introductory pieces sometimes took their title from the rhetorical *preambulum*, whose function was to attract attention or introduce a topic. The larger Italian pieces with a prefatory function were sometimes called *ricercare* or *intonazione* or *toccata*. *Entrada* is the corresponding title in Spanish. Other titles were sometimes given to prefatory works, such as *overture* or *fantasia*. The title prelude did not always mean music to precede another piece; introductory pieces were not always called preludes.

1. Goldberg, *Handbook*, 7.

The oldest surviving preludes were written in tablature for organ in 1448 by Adam Ileborough.² During the seventeenth century, the figured prelude, based on broken chords and arpeggios, developed from the performing traditions of lute players in Italy³ and France.⁴ In the German traditions of organ performance in the Lutheran liturgy, the prelude was often attached to the music that followed it. The chorale prelude, traditionally a form specific to the hymn for which it was composed, was used as an introduction to congregational singing.⁵ Paired preludes and fugues typically grew out of the tradition of improvising a short chordal section followed by a fugue on a single subject. The organists created larger forms by adding additional sections of improvisatory material alternating with fugal treatments. These larger multi-sectional works were often called toccatas. Frescobaldi, Buxtehude, Kerll, Pachelbel, and Bach were known for these impressive, virtuosic works.

Groups of shorter pieces, often in dance forms, began with a prelude. This type of prelude appeared in string sonatas by Corelli and in sets of dances by Handel and Purcell. Each of the six *English Suites* of Bach begins with a prelude. *L'art de Toucher le Clavecin* by Couperin, a volume of music for keyboard first published in 1716, contains eight preludes "for loosening the fingers and trying out an unfamiliar instrument before performing."⁶ Bach's singular success with the pre-

2. David Ledbetter, "Prelude," *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians Second Edition*, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan Publishers Limited, 2001), 20: 292.

3. Goldberg, *Handbook*, 9.

4. Ledbetter, "Prelude" *The New Grove*, 292.

5. The chorale-preludes of Bach are independent pieces.

lude reflected his ability to synthesize his own personality with all the traditions and styles of his time and place, creating a transcendent musical language. From the traditional, improvisatory Prelude #1 in C major, the preludes branch out into all the twenty-four keys, but also embrace the range of expression and genre. Traditionally, the preludes are not performed without their accompanying fugues. Nevertheless, the preludes deserve to be played as individual pieces.

The incredible Prelude #7 in E-Flat Major, patterned after the great organ toccatas, is a masterpiece suitable for any occasion. Appropriate preludes for a meditative moment before, after, or during an event of worship or memorial include the Prelude #22 in B-Flat Minor, Prelude #4 in C-Sharp Minor, Prelude #8 in E-Flat Minor, Prelude #1 in C Major, and Prelude #9 in E Major. The merry ones in the major keys are especially appropriate for a quick encore.

The preludes influenced the course of music history in the generations after Bach, inspiring others to compose preludes. Hummel published two sets of twenty-four preludes in the major and minor keys, Op. 63 and Op. 67, in the early part of the nineteenth century. Mendelssohn's Op. 35 consists of six preludes and fugues for piano. A German pianist born in 1783, August Alexander Klengel was among the countless students who studied the *WTC* in his youth. As an adult, he studied and traveled with Clementi. Known for his support of the Bach revival, Klengel edited the *WTC*. Also a composer, Klengel wrote his own cycle of forty-eight kanons and fugues. Making the acquaintance of Chopin in

6. Louis Couperin, *L'art de Toucher le Clavecin*, ed. and trans. Margery Halford (Sherman Oaks, California: Alfred Publishing Co. Inc., 1964), 55.

Paris, he shared his enthusiasm for Bach in many conversations that Chopin enjoyed very much.⁷ Chopin wrote his Preludes Op. 28 in 1836–39. Other sets of twenty four preludes were written by Heller (Op. 81), Alkan (Op. 31), Cui (Op. 64) and Busoni (Op. 37). Liszt wrote a Prelude and Fugue on B-A-C-H in 1855.⁸

In the twentieth century, independent preludes tend to be short characteristic pieces with no prefatory function. Instead, they explore a particular mood or technical challenge. Debussy's two sets of twelve preludes are unusual in that each has a programmatic title at the end of the piece. Preludes also appear in the catalogs of works by Shostakovich, Gershwin, Rachmaninoff, Kabalevsky, Antheil, Skryabin, Messiaen, and Ginastera.⁹

Preludes are a popular genre for pedagogical composers. Of particular interest is the little set of textbook examples called "Five Miniature Preludes and Fugues" by Alec Rowley.¹⁰ Sets of preludes for intermediate students have been written by William Gillock, "Lyric Preludes in Romantic Style," published by Summy Birchard, Catharine Rollin, "Preludes for Piano," published by Alfred, Robert Vandall, "Preludes (Vols. I–II)," Myklas, Dmitri Kabalevsky, "Four Preludes" published by MCA.

7. Joel Sachs, "Klengel," in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians: Second Edition* ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan Publishers Limited, Inc., 2001), 671.

8. Howard Ferguson, "Prelude," in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians: Second Edition* ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan Publishers Limited, Inc., 2001), 293.

9. Ferguson, "Prelude," *The New Grove*, 293.

10. The publisher is Chester Music, distributed by Music Sales Limited. This is an accessible introduction to imitative composition and the elements of fugal writing.

Chapter III

Ornamentation

Ornamentation is both the delight and the vexation of the player of Baroque music. An awkward ornament is an impediment rather than a decoration. Making intelligent and musical choices about ornaments requires understanding of both the ornament and the elements of the music—rhythm, harmony, melody, and formal structure. Components of the meaning, such as the character and mood of the piece, affect the choice of the ornament, and determine its function in the musical line. The ornament needs to sound like a spontaneous flourish; an ornament fails if it is anticipated with anxiety and dread. Hear these wise words from Dr. Alfred Kanwischer: “If the ornament is too hard, the piece is too hard.”¹

The player can plan the ornament using the following questions. How does the ornament fit into the line of the music? Where does the ornament begin? How does it continue, and where does it end? Where does this ornament fit into the ongoing pattern of consonance and dissonance in the phrase? How does it support the rhythmic characteristics at work here? What should the ornament do? Accent? Emphasize? Prolong? Connect? Interrupt? The possibilities are endless, but must become specific at the moment of performance. It is the music that

1. Alfred Kanwischer, “Ornamentation Part IV,” *The Music Teacher: The Official Journal of the Music Teachers’ Association of California*, 6 (1982): 18.

gives meaning to the ornament, not the ornament that gives meaning to the music.

Ornaments are dependent upon technical proficiency. The fingers are mainly responsible for the task. Dr. Kanwischer's succinct admonition reminds student and teacher alike, "Fingers have a memory, but no brain."² Fingers remain at the service of the thinking process. The thinking process must continue through the performance, and through the ornament specifically, in order to add beauty to the music, and to avoid defacing it. Each finger has its own personality, a particular energy, and range of motion. The fifth finger will never be a thumb. It swings best when it is not too curved. The fourth finger does not lift readily. Its weight can relax it into the key if it is straightened just a bit. The third finger influences those on either side of it. The second finger raises the most easily, but can be too quick. The thumb remains heavy and stiff until it moves from the joint near the wrist. Free at this joint, it is able to move in, out, up, down, and around with the support of the hand. The nature of all motion in the fingers, hand, wrist, and arm is circular.

Ornaments often consist of scale fragments. A mordent, or a trill, or a slide, each is a fragment of a scale. All of the earliest technical training in scales and Hanon exercises prepares and strengthens the fingers for the task of ornamentation. Many of the preludes include these patterns written out in the line of the pieces.

2. Kanwischer, "Ornamentation Part III," 14.

Chapter IV

Getting Started

Prelude #1 in C Major, BWV 846

The first prelude is the ideal starting place. While most of the pieces require a great repertoire of advanced skills and understandings, this one opens its arms and smiles "Come in!" even to the intermediate student just learning to find her way through the primary chords. There is no need to mention that it is a harmonically sophisticated, five-voice piece. It is just the thing to motivate and encourage a student returning from an absence or a disappointment. It is just the thing to calm the agitation of the over-worked, under-rewarded teacher, to energize the weary, to inspire the flagging spirit, to brighten the soul obscured by life's daily dust.

Like traditional preludes, the first prelude is based on harmonic patterns. Here is the perfect material for connecting the concept of metric rhythm to harmonic rhythm. The harmonic rhythm is perfectly regular. The chord changes on the first beat of every measure and lasts throughout the measure.

Enjoyable on the surface because of the flowing chords, its pleasures remain after relentless scrutiny of its structure. Draw attention to the unifying rhythmic motive. The long note values in the bass line allow the left hand to hold on to its lines. Map the half notes in the bass line; write them out in phrase length clumps.

Present this exercise as an aid to memory.

Measures 1–11 CCBC CCBB ADG

Measures 12–21 GFFE EDGC CFF[#]A^b

Measures 22–35 GGGG GGGG CCCC

The melody in the top voice can be spelled in letter note names too. Engaging sequences appear in mm. 5–8 (ADGC) and in m. 12–15 (C[#]DBC). Hermann Keller's grouping, based on the soprano voice, includes two groups of three measures (see Figure 2). Keller's three measure groups are mm. 21, 22, 23, with E E^b D in the soprano voice, and mm. 32, 33, 34, with E F B in the soprano over the tonic pedal.¹ By reducing the soprano line to one quarter note per measure, Keller presents the entire piece in ten measures. The student can write this out very quickly and be amazed at the revelation.

Figure 2. Melodic Reduction of Prelude #1 in C Major

As is the case with many of the preludes, the final flourish is a departure from the unifying motive of the piece. To make the performance secure, practice the end first and from memory as soon as possible. By this practice process, the ending

1. Hermann Keller, *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, trans. Leigh Gardine (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. 1976), 48.

becomes the strongest part of the performance rather than the weakest. Always starting at the beginning of the piece continues to strengthen the beginning and tends to weaken the ending.

Chapter V

Getting Grounded

Serious preparation becomes an issue after Prelude #1. These pieces require more skill and understanding than merely the ability to identify the notes and decipher the rhythms. Some young children are able to decode the words of the financial page of the newspaper, yet they cannot tell you what they have read. In the same way, the young student may have the reading skill and the playing facility to play these preludes, yet not be able to understand the language or communicate the meaning. The student needs to have enough experiences with many styles of music so that she can distinguish one style from another. She must own some vocabulary for discussing and comparing differing styles intelligently. The student needs to have a sense of Bach's place in the continuity of music history. How did Bach learn to use the language of the German organists, the French composers and dance masters, the Italian composers of operas and concerti for strings?

A wide playing experience with the intermediate literature of all the historical periods needs to be enriched by an equally wide listening experience. A few of the many listening opportunities for the young student include the teaching literature that is supported by recordings, the concerts especially for young listeners performed by youth orchestras, and the excellent classical concerts that are televised.

The student needs to be grounded technically. The ability to play fast with consistent intensity is basic. The fingers must be independent, able to release

quickly and sustain dependably. The hands must be independent and able to maintain separate articulations and dynamic levels simultaneously. The student needs to be able to imagine many dynamic levels, and create them to support an expressive idea by shaping a phrase. Familiarity with the scales enables the student to understand in a functional way their inter-relatedness in the circle of fifths. The understanding of triads as a subset of each diatonic scale, as well as the tonic-dominant relationships among the chords, helps the student identify the harmonic implications of the contrapuntal texture of Bach's writing.

The basis for success in Baroque style playing is a fundamental rhythmic competency. Baroque style derives a great deal of its expressiveness from the articulation within the *tactus* or basic pulse. The use of the concept of the *tactus* originated well before the Baroque Period. English writers referred to the *tactus* as the stroke. *Tactus* is the Latin word for a steady beat of the hand, an actual physical gesture, or the imagined physical gesture of keeping time with the moving hand performing a rhythmic gesture at a predictable rate. The speed was similar to the rate of the resting pulse.¹ In Baroque literature, the harmonic rhythm affects the *tactus*. It is always comfortable even if the rhythm is thirty-second notes.² The rhythmic drive to the cadence generates additional energy. The subtleties of Baroque rhythm and articulation need to be grounded in the student's ability to establish and maintain a steady beat. From the beginning lessons, beat

1. Robert Donington, *Baroque Music: Style and Performance: A Handbook* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1982), 12.
2. Laurette Goldberg, *Rediscovered Bach Vocal Chamber Music in the Bach Cantatas* (Berkeley: MusicSources, Center for Historically Informed Performances, 1999), 10.

competency and rhythm need to be the fundamental concern. A structured program of scales, chords, arpeggios in a progressive sequence of subdivisions of the beat addresses this concern. Mastery develops within the boundaries of controlled tempos.

The metronome is the student's friend and ally in the development of tempo control. Students vary in their ability to use the metronome. Often they express resistance to its relentless insistence. With few exceptions, students resist the absolute necessity of counting aloud.

Rhythmic competency is best addressed at an early age, four to seven years, with teacher and student up off the bench and moving as many large muscles as possible. The writings of Robert Abramson, Emile Jaques-Dalcroze, Carl Orff, and many others abound in suggestions for this kind of preparation.³ The older student who lacks this competency may enjoy walking, clapping rhythm patterns, and conducting patterns in various time signatures accompanied by the sound of the metronome.

The teacher can use the structure of prepared curricula to guide the student's progress in the sequential development of these skills. They are even more helpful in assessing the gaps in the development of skills that may be limiting the student's progress. The *Certificate of Merit Piano Syllabus* developed by the Music Teachers Association of California follows nine levels after the beginning Prepara-

3. Robert Abramson, *Rhythm Games for Perception and Cognition* (New York: Music Movement Press, 1973). Emile Jaques-Dalcroze, *The Jaques-Dalcroze Method of Eurythmic Movement* (London: Novello, 1916). Carl Orff, *Music for Children*, 1974).

tory Level. The repertoire list for the numbered levels does not include *The Well-Tempered Clavier*. The prescribed scale performance for Level Nine is ♩=100, four octaves in sixteenth notes. At Levels Eight and Nine, the *Inventions*, the *French Suites*, and the *English Suites* of Bach are included in the repertoire list.

In the syllabus for the National Guild of Piano Teachers, the Preparatory D Level, the fourth year of high school, suggests the *Well-Tempered Clavier*, the *Three Part Inventions*, or movements from the *French Suites* or the *English Suites*. The technique for this level includes all major and minor scales at ♩= 100, four octaves in sixteenth notes. This is minimal scale proficiency to bring to these demanding works. A scale tempo of ♩= 120–144 is a great advantage, and to ask a student to play this music with less facility may be a disservice to the student and the music.

In the fourth edition of *Intermediate Piano Repertoire* by Dr. Cathy Albergo and Dr. Reid Alexander, the works of Bach are listed in the order of difficulty beginning with the easiest dances. The classification A, for Intermediate to Advanced Intermediate level, includes the Fantasia in C Minor BWV 906, Italian Concerto, the Six English Suites, Six French Suites, and Six Partitas. *The Well-Tempered Clavier Book I* is the final work on the list. The suggested teaching order for the pairs in Book I is 2, 16, 5, 21, 1.⁴ This book does not mention specific technical requirements, but the list of musical and technical elements of Baroque literature is helpful.⁵

4. Cathy Albergo and Reid Alexander, *Intermediate Piano Repertoire: A Guide for Teaching*, 4th ed. (Mississauga, Ontario, Canada: Frederick Harris Music Co., Limited, 2000), 11.

This useful summary includes technical competencies such as hand and finger independence, articulation—legato, staccato and portato, terraced dynamics, contrapuntal voicing, and ornamentation. Rhythmic abilities include eighth, sixteenth and triplet rhythms, rhythmic augmentation and diminution of melodies, upbeats, and strong beats. Baroque literature requires an understanding of phrasing, the compositional techniques, and forms used.⁶

5. Albergo and Reid, *Intermediate Piano Repertoire*, 9.

6. *Ibid.*, 9.

Chapter VI

An Interpretive Approach

Ralph Kirkpatrick's book on the WTC approaches the *Well-Tempered Clavier* from the standpoint of six general approaches.¹ A chapter is devoted to each of them: "The Historical Approach and Its Limitations," "The Esthetic Approach," "The Melodic Approach," "The Rhythmic Approach," "The Harmonic Approach," and finally, "The Interpretive Approach," using Prelude # 20 in A Minor as his example. He chose it because it is so short. Before treating the prelude specifically, Kirkpatrick presents some profound ideas on technique and inner gesture. Although these ideas may seem esoteric and abstract, they need to be addressed from the first lesson with the youngest students.

The centrality of the cultivated inner ear in the re-creation of a musical score can not be over emphasized. So much of what the player learns in the process of preparation must function from the unconscious during a successful performance, because the inner ear monitors the variables of the environment—the instrument, the hall, the audience. All the elements of the music, such as rhythm, melody, harmony, come together in the experiential succession of musical events beyond observation or contemplation. The inner ear controls this flow, ideally with the same intensity that the composer's inner hearing motivated the effort of composition through the drudgery of notation. More important than intensity is

1. Ralph Kirkpatrick, *Interpreting Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier: A Performer's Discourse of Method* (New Haven: Yale University Press), 1984.

precision. Since the notes are merely a shorthand, suggesting the completeness of the conception of the piece, the inner ear, the performer's interior concept, is the source of the inspiration for the specific performance.

Although the section on the technical approach is slanted toward the author's focus on the harpsichord and the clavichord, he makes some significant points that apply to the piano as well. Technical training, always dependent upon the inner hearing, must address the timing of lifting the key, as well as the timing of pressing it. Workable fingerings need to address the goal of a perfect legato line with economy of motion.

Parallel to inner hearing is the sense of inner gesture. To express a musical idea, the inner hearing generates an ideal inner gesture that is unifying, pervasive, and continuous. The circle is a simple gesture that expresses continuity and unity.

The preparation of a piece begins with an initial sight-reading during which the player becomes acquainted with the notes, noticing whether the fingering comes naturally, or needs to be worked out. Kirkpatrick suggests that the initial sight-reading be followed by an analysis of the rhythmic aspects of the piece. The player needs to consider each voice in turn, beginning with the bass. Kirkpatrick shows how the student can mark the rhythmic syllables in each voice (see Figure 3). The beginning and ending of each rhythmic syllable is indicated with brackets sketched into the score.

Figure 3. Prelude #20 in A Minor, BWV 865, mm. 1-6

The rhythmic analysis enables the planning of the articulations necessary for clarity, such as the overlapping rhythmic pattern at m. 13, where the sixteenth note pattern begins on the A in the second beat because the C is tied. Kirkpatrick feels that it is necessary to assess the melodic intervals by singing each voice. Are there two melodies here? Or is there one melody in a harmonic context? The harmonic notes can be sustained, rather than articulated. The harmonic reduction in Figure 4 shows the harmonic rhythm. The harmonic motion is faster at mm. 9-11, 17, 19, 24. The first two phrases, mm. 1-4 and 5-8 follow a pattern of consonance, dissonance, consonance. The most intense dissonance begins at m. 17. The dissonances after m. 21 serve to establish the tonic, A Minor, and the cadential chords.

Figure 4. Harmonic Reduction of Prelude #20 in A Minor.

The tonal areas can be laid out in a graph; Kirkpatrick merely lists them before launching into a detailed discussion of passing tones, cross relations, and diagonal relationships. He includes two remarkable rewritings of the piece, one in the styles of Chopin and Rachmaninoff. Surely all avenues have been explored at that point!

Of great interest is the section entitled "The Later Life of an Interpretation, or Inspiration and Its Vicissitudes."² Kirkpatrick deals with a performance challenge that assails even the young player. The challenge is to prepare a secure, consistent performance and then recover the initial inspiration. He uses the term

2. Kirkpatrick, *Interpreting Bach's WTC*, 124.

"routining" to describe the process of preparing a dependable performance:

"Even that sacred repository of inspiration, the inner ear, may be invaded by the automatisms of routine practicing. It may become much more necessary to cultivate one's hearing than one's fingers."³

Kirkpatrick says that the *WTC* was never intended for public performance.⁴ He feels that Bach is not theatrical, and that the music can be lost if the performer is too entertaining. Furthermore, the music transcends the possibilities of any one instrument. Finally, the performer risks mistaking self indulgence for inspiration.

Speaking of the ideal performance, Kirkpatrick asserts that assessment of what something is *not* illuminates what it actually is, and what one doesn't like offers insight regarding what one likes.⁵ He proposes a comprehensive list of "candidates for the trash heap:" the parrot performance, dictated by coaches or editors, devoid of individual thinking, the traditional performance, pretty and timid, fearful of sounding unBachish, the sensationalized performance and its reaction, the authentic performance, the so-called definitive performance.⁶

It is the miraculous power of a work like the *WTC*, and many others, to survive its own time and context, to adapt to changing interpretations and to surmount misunderstanding and deformation. It has those qualities which give it the possibility of perpetual renewal and which prevent it from ever being rendered completely meaningless ... it is immortal.⁷

3. Kirkpatrick, *Interpreting Bach's WTC*, 124.

4. *Ibid.*, 124.

5. *Ibid.*, This comment is a classic dismissal of trendy performers of early music. "No time need be wasted on the primitive stages of technical incompetence or inadequate musical comprehension even though they are considered to have a certain charm when exhibited on old instruments." 125.

6. *Ibid.*, 126.

7. *Ibid.*, 128.

Chapter VII

Choosing an Edition for Your Study and Your Student

Two kinds of editions are widely available in retail music stores and mail order catalogs. Urtext editions include only the information the composer included in the autograph manuscript, first editions, and other sources such as letters, correction lists, and authorized later editions. Annotated editions contain material added by the editor such as fingerings, realizations of ornaments, information about history and performance practice. At some points in the past, annotated editions have been highly prized and considered authoritative. The appearance of the notation and the amount of assistance you or your student may need are the most significant considerations in the choice of an edition. Only a few of the available editions are considered here.

The appearance of the notation varies from crowded to spacious. A layout with more white space may appear easier to read. The more crowded score will require fewer page turns. While either of these can be an advantage, they tend to cancel each other out. Visual acuity and visual processing capabilities vary among teachers, as well as their students. The music needs to look easy to read to the person who will use it.

The intent of editorial additions is to assist the player in making the necessary decisions about the performance. The experienced, scholarly performer may disagree with the editor. Annotations often add to the visual clutter of the score.

The Urtext Editions

The Neue Bach-Ausgabe

The most authoritative edition of the preludes is that found in the *Neue Bach-Ausgabe* published in 1989 by Barenreiter. The editor is Alfred Dürr. The cloth bound library edition is beautiful to look at and printed on delectable, creamy paper. The scholar can consult this edition in libraries for the current word on the ultimate, correct version.

The paper bound edition of Book I is fourteen dollars.

The Henle Edition

The House of Henle in Munich, Germany specializes in high quality Urtext editions. The covers are a distinctive slate-blue. The print is hand-engraved in a spacious format. The non-glare paper is ivory in color and withstands erasures of pencils markings. The comments are given in German, English, and French. The Henle Edition differs from the *Neue Bach-Ausgabe* in details reflecting differences of editorial opinion. Redundant accidentals and placement of voices on the staff do not affect the sound of the music. The variations in ornamentation do make a difference in the sound, and are sure to be the focus of controversy.

Redundant accidentals appear as a reminder to the player after an altered tone has been cancelled, either by a natural sign, or, more often, a bar line. The difference of opinion among editors about where such reminders are needed is interesting in that there is no apparent scheme to their choices. These are easily added in the score by the player if need be.

The *Neue Bach-Ausgabe* places voices on the staff to give a clear picture of the alto and tenor lines. A note may appear in the bass clef at a point where it needs to be played by the right hand. The Henle places lines for the convenience of the player, which means that a tenor voice may be notated in the treble clef for convenient performance by the right hand. Some examples are given in the discussion below of Prelude # 7 in E-Flat Major.

Few variants are given in the Henle edition or the *Neue Bach-Ausgabe* edition. However, both of them offer the same variants for Prelude # 10 for mm. 5, 7, 9, and 11. The *Neue Bach-Ausgabe* gives variants from the *Clavier-Büchlein* for Prelude # 3 for mm. 1, 8, 16, 17, 24, 54, and 55.

The Henle edition of the WTC was re-edited in the year 2000 for the 250th anniversary of Bach's death. The editor is Ernst-Gunter Heinemann. It is available in paper binding with fingering by Hans-Martin Theobald, or without fingering at a slightly higher price. The cloth-bound edition is \$43.95.

Most of the music examples in this paper are from the study score edited by Otto von Irmer in 1970.

The Dover Edition

The Dover Edition contains both Book I and Book II for \$9.95, should price be a consideration. The text is based on the edition prepared by Hans Kroll for the Bach-Gesellschaft in 1866. The print is easy to read. However, it is crowded in some of the pieces. The Fugue #3 in C-Sharp Major, Fugue #4 in C-Sharp Minor, and Fugue #8 in D-Sharp Major are crowded onto two facing pages. The advantage is in being

able to see the entire piece at once. Several pairs (numbers 9, 11, 13, 14, 18, and 23) are confined to two facing pages.

This edition gives some variants on a third staff without citing sources. Examples among the preludes of Book I include Preludes numbers 3, 6, 7, and 12. The key signatures in the treble staff place F-Sharp on the first space, rather than on the fifth line (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Prelude #3 in C-Sharp Major, BWV 848 mm. 32–36

This edition is generally free of extraneous markings in the text, but it gives tempo indications for each piece and a metronome marking for each piece from the *Bach-Gesellschaft* edition of 1883 edited by Hans Bischoff. Where Sir Donald Tovey's markings differ from Bischoff's, Tovey's markings are given in parentheses.¹

The Annotated Editions

The annotated editions can be invaluable for the teacher's preparation. They give a great deal of background information about the sources and variants, performance practices, and Baroque thought in general. They are recommended for

1. J. S. Bach, *The Well-Tempered Clavier: Books I and II Complete* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1983), Note on Tempos, [iii].

the student who asks a lot of questions, likes to delve, and who can handle visual distraction on the page. Usually, the student's preference indicates the most advantageous choice.

The Czerny Edition

During the twentieth century, the edition published by Carl Czerny in 1837 was widely reprinted and used by many teachers. Czerny used the manuscripts of Schwenke and the 1801 editions published by Forkel, Bach's biographer, and the Swiss publisher, Nageli, for his sources. The interpretive additions he made to the score were influenced by his memories of the playing of his teacher. Since his major teacher was Beethoven, it took many years of definitive scholarship to create opposition to his concept. Czerny's editing is oppressive by current standards; he added fingerings, dynamic and tempo markings, and marks of expression that do not appear in the manuscripts. Czerny included the spurious measure attributed to Schwenke between mm. 22 and 23 in the Prelude #1 in C Major (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. Prelude #1 in C Major, BWV 846, mm. 21-24

He includes a final B-Flat in the low octave in Prelude #21 (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. Prelude #21 in B-Flat Major, BWV 866, mm. 19–20

This edition is very interesting for the teacher's reference. It is not recommended for students because it does not reflect the received views on the authentic sources.

The Hans Bischoff Edition

Hans Bischoff edited the version of the *Well-Tempered Clavier* published by Steingraber of Hanover, Germany, in 1883. Now reprinted as a Kalmus Classic Edition, it includes the translation of the text by Alexander Lipsky first published in 1942. It is heavily footnoted. Its Preface, included in the Kalmus reprint, gives a thorough discussion of Bischoff's manuscript sources. The footnotes relate the variants in the notation to these manuscripts. Dr. Bischoff did not agree with Hans Kroll's judgment that the Wagener-Volkmann autograph was the final source. Furthermore, Bischoff questions Kroll's judgement in accepting the authenticity of the corrections in Source A on the basis of their agreement with copes by Kirnberger, the theorist, and Altnikol, Bach's student and son-in-law.

In the Preface to his 1883 edition, Bischoff wrote,

It is superior to all the other manuscripts that we can mention. In the first place, it is practically complete; only the F-Sharp major Fugue and the beginning of the F-Sharp minor Prelude are missing. Secondly, it has been prepared much more carefully than any of the other definitely authentic autographs. Since it had found its way into the Danube, where it remained for some time, some of the characters in the handwriting have faded. This resulted in many subsequent efforts to retouch the manuscript; to this we can scarcely object. On the other hand, the autograph shows evidence of many important corrections, the authenticity of which is highly questionable. Kroll evinces such an inexplicably strong predilection for these corrections, the authenticity of which is highly questionable.²

The Tovey-Jones Edition for the Associated Board of the Royal

Schools of Music

Sir Donald Tovey edited a complete edition of both volumes of *The Well-Tempered Clavier* in 1924 entitled *Forty-Eight Preludes and Fugues*. It has been "the most widely used edition"³ in England. This edition was revised by Richard Jones in 1994 because of the textual deficiencies that can be traced to Tovey's use of the nineteenth-century editions of Kroll and Bischoff. As seen above, some differences of opinion existed between those two highly respected scholars. Feeling that no one source was absolutely authentic, Tovey chose among the variants according to his own opinion.

Tovey quite frequently gives alternative readings, encouraging players to adopt his own approach and make their own choices. In circumstances where Bach's own choices are obscure, such an approach can obviously be recommended. But today, it is clear that the corrected autograph fair copy of Book I represents the final definitive version ...⁴

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2. Hans Bischoff, "Preface" to Johann Sebastian Bach, *The Well-Tempered Clavier Volume I* (Miami: Warner Bros. Publications, First published in Hanover, [1883]), i.
 3. Richard Jones, "Introduction to the WTC," 12.
 4. Jones, "Preface," WTC, 7.

This disclaimer is Jones' justification for re-editing the most popular edition in England.⁵

The Willard Palmer Edition

Willard Palmer's edition is as generous with footnotes as the Bischoff. Palmer gives clear and copious information about the problematic terms of the title, "well-tempered" and "clavier." The introductory section, pages 3–27, covers performance practices, including a discussion of the specifics of ornamentation. A facsimile of the Table of Ornaments from *The Clavier-Büchlein for Wilhelm Friedmann Bach* is included in the introductory section on page 13. The manuscript sources are described clearly and concisely on pages 5 and 6. He describes the process by which he evaluated the sources and made the choices that appear in the edition, illustrated by two sample worksheets.⁶ The editorial additions are indicated in pale gray ink, clearly distinguishable from the actual manuscript indications.

The layout of the notation is spacious in spite of the wealth of information on the page, requiring more page turns. In the first book, the notation requires 178 pages, compared to 160 pages in the Bischoff Edition, 120 in the Tovey-Jones Edition for the Associated Board, and 85 pages in the Dover Edition. For example, in the Palmer Edition, Prelude #1 in C Major is notated on three pages, requiring a

5. Ibid., 138–139.

6. Palmer, WTC, 6.

page turn after m. 11. In the Dover Edition, a page turn occurs after m. 23, page 3, but the fugue is complete on pages 4 and 5.

Palmer includes generous help for the student including fingerings, suggestions for expression and tempo. All editorial suggestions are given in pale gray ink. Palmer's suggestions for the realizations of ornaments are written out on a third staff. Palmer invites the student or the teacher to think through the information and make a judgement of her own about the performance. This attitude supports the development of personal performing style and individual taste. In addition, it stimulates the imagination of the performer and nourishes the vitality inherent in this music. Orthodoxy becomes a gateway, not a barrier.

Other useful features include a thematic index of the preludes and fugues, a facsimile of the Johann Ernst Rentsch painting now housed in the Town Museum of Erfurt, believed to portray the young Bach. A facsimile of the title page of Book I appears on page 2 of this paper. In the back of the book is found a table of annotated articulation suggestions for all the fugue subjects, an exhaustive table of tempos from editions and recordings, a discography, and a bibliography.

Chapter VIII

Grouping the Preludes of *Book I*

In many publications, the preludes are discussed one by one in the chromatic order of the keys, the way they are published. Examples by Hermann Keller, Cecil Gray, and John Fuller-Maitland are listed in the bibliography. Maurice Hinson's *Guide to the Pianist's Repertoire* gives a brief summary of each prelude and fugue as a pair; his "progressive order"¹ sequences each prelude and fugue as a pair. In chapter six of Laurette Goldberg's *Handbook*,² the pairs are discussed in a concise, but illuminating way. She includes several helpful appendixes. Appendix A gives a teaching sequence for the pairs, the preludes alone, and for the fugues alone.³ Appendix B lists the original eleven preludes from the *Clavier-Büchlein for Wilhelm Friedmann Bach* summarizing the changes that were made when these pieces were compiled into the WTC. Five of these preludes entered the WTC unchanged: the E-Major, the F-Major, the C-Sharp Minor, the E-Flat Minor, the F-Minor.⁴ Appendix C gives the character of each of the preludes in Books I and II.

Here, the preludes are grouped in categories that serve the teacher's agenda. The preludes are considered in a specific context, a genre or a compositional

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1. Maurice Hinson, *Guide to the Pianist's Repertoire: Second, Revised and Enlarged Edition*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 45.
 2. Goldberg, *Handbook*, 46–51.
 3. Goldberg, *Handbook*, 59.
 4. Goldberg, *Handbook*, 61.

device. The traditional chordal preludes are accessible and rewarding as an introduction to the WTC. Should a student develop a particular interest in a specific genre, a prelude may be chosen to address that interest. The dances or an invention could make an engaging transition from the Suites or the Two and Three Part Inventions. Some of the preludes use specific compositional devices such as imitation, deceptive cadences, pedal points, and cadenzas. These categories overlap in such interesting ways, readily available for the delight of student and teacher.

The Traditional Chordal Preludes

Prelude #5 in D Major, BWV 850

A merry prelude in a merry key, Bach gives us an engaging chord study and a demanding etude for the right hand. The right hand part is based upon a chord with a passing tone creating a three note motive which alternately ascends and descends for twenty-nine measures (see Figure 8).

Figure 8. Prelude #5 in D Major, BWV 850, mm. 1–2

Watch for a resistance to reversal of direction in the three-note motive. Isolate the pattern and use a slight accent on the second finger ascending, the fourth finger descending. The student's coordination may be clarified by this focus of attention. The wrist needs to move readily in all directions, rotating slightly in the

figure and supporting the first and fifth fingers in the extensions. The left hand lightly marks the beat in a steady eighth note-eighth rest pattern. Lightness of touch originates in the shoulder, neck, and hip joints.

The version from *The Clavier-Büchlein für Wilhelm Friedmann Bach* is twenty-two measures in length, corresponding to mm. 1–18 plus mm. 27–29 of the WTC version. For the WTC, Bach added a recapitulation on the subdominant at m. 20. At m. 29, the two hands move in parallel sixteenth notes into cascades of diminished sevenths. The cadenza of arpeggiated chords and bravura scales resolves in a six-voice authentic cadence (see Figure 9).

Figure 9. Prelude #5 in D Major, BWV 850, mm. 27–35

The question of fingering is crucial for the sudden reaches in the perpetuum mobile motion of the right hand. In the first measure, the hand reaches the octave

from A to A, with the characteristic figuration rising and falling in between.

Throughout the piece, the right hand must stay centered on the three note motive while extending to an octave or a seventh on either side of it. In m. 7 the reach becomes a ninth; in the *Clavier-Büchlein* this interval is a seventh, E to D, rather than middle C to D (see Figure 10).

Figure 10. Prelude #5 in D Major, BWV 850, m. 7

The measures that require a reach of more than an octave, mm. 9, 13, 17, 23, 25, 27, 29, and m. 31, demand careful, consistent fingering and accurate, slow practice to negotiate the big stretches (see Figure 11).

Figure 11. Prelude #5 in D Major, BWV 850, mm. 9, 13, 25

Often the player needs to skip a finger in the three-note motive to free the hand for the coming extension. For example, the fingering for the descending three notes on the second beat in m. 9 is 431 on DCB in both the Palmer edition and in the Tovey-Jones. A stretch of a third may require adjacent fingers for the same reason. In m. 7, shown in Figure 8, the third beat is fingered 2345 on EGAB. The fingering is more detailed in the Palmer edition. Palmer's fingering often agrees with the Bischoff fingerings. The Tovey-Jones edition offers alternative choices, Tovey's fingerings avoid the thumb in many cases.

The recommendations for tempos in this piece vary among the editions. The Tovey notes suggest *Allegro leggiero* and a tempo that is "lively but not precipitous."⁵ The Palmer Edition gives an editorial marking of *Allegro* and $\text{♩} = 112-126$. The Dover and the Bischoff Editions are marked *Vivace* and $\text{♩} = 132$. That is precipitous!

Although the bass note of the arpeggiated diminished seventh chord in m. 33 is A in all of the current editions, even the Czerny, many of the manuscript copies, including the Schwenke copies P203, P417, and the Kirnberger, show B as the bass note.⁶ The *Neue Bach-Ausgabe* follows the autograph fair copy P415, which shows A.

5. Tovey, "Commentaries," *WTC*, 143.

6. Palmer, *WTC*, 69. The Tovey "Commentaries" address this "alternative reading" on pages 142-143. Tovey preferred B.

Prelude #15 in G Major, BWV 860

Just as jolly as the D Major, this sparkling chordal prelude gives the left hand a little more to do. In the third measure it imitates the broken chord pattern begun by the right hand. This piece would be easier than the D Major except for the pattern in the right hand at m. 4, which is then imitated in the left hand at m. 5, and once again at m. 9.

Figure 12. Prelude #15 in G Major, BWV 860, mm. 4–5

The dialogue between the hands at mm. 11–13 is pure gladness. The unusual time signature, 24/16, indicates compound meter; all the sixteenth notes are triplets.

Tovey advises a *leggiero* touch and a lively eight triplets to the bar.⁷ The great harpsichordist, Wanda Landowska, wrote of this prelude.

May I make a confession? This prelude has been my companion since the time I first touched the keyboard. It is difficult, but how invigorating! I have spent hours and hours attempting to master m. 13 and the following measures. Have I done it?⁸

Laurette Goldberg writes, "This is a remarkable prelude of intense spiritual joy."⁹

While the joys of this music are accessible to the learner-player, a mature, artistic

7. Tovey, "Commentaries," *WTC*, 153.

8. Denise Restout, *Landowska on Music* (New York: Stein and Day, 1964), 190.

9. Goldberg, *Handbook* 49.

performance demands the utmost in lightness, even fingers, and a sense of the long line.

Prelude #21 in B-Flat Major, BWV 866

This organ style toccata, the shortest prelude in the *WTC*, recalls Bach's fascination with the virtuosic toccatas of his early mentors, Buxtehude and Reinken. Its textures alternate between chordal and scalar passages that rise and fall in turn. It divides into two sections of ten measures each. The sprightly chordal first section is followed by the written out cadenza announced at m. 11 with massive chords dotted in the style of the French overture. Think of a spontaneous burst of laughter (for ten measures!), followed by a return to serious business refreshed and ready to work.

The opening two measures, as well as mm. 5–7 and m. 9, can be thought of as three voices with parallel melodies in the soprano and bass. Illustrating the energy inherent in a quick harmonic rhythm, the chord changes with each beat in the first two measures, (see Figure 13).

Figure 13. Prelude #21 in B-Flat Major, BWV 866, mm. 1–2

In the ascending scalar passages that connect these harmonies, the stemming indicates the division of notes between the hands. Listen carefully; the seams should not show.

The abrupt change at the downbeat of m. 11 affects the mood and the rhythm too. In one of the manuscripts, this measure is marked *Adagio*.¹⁰ In the Palmer edition, it is given in the editorial light gray ink because it is not in the autograph fair copy, *Bach P 415* (see Figure 14).¹¹

Figure 14. Prelude #21 in B-Flat Major, BWV 866, m. 11

In this cadenza, a delicate balance between rhythmic alteration and rhythmic integrity is necessary to maintain the drama of the French style without sacrificing the unity of the passage. Tovey included the indications for *Adagio* at m. 11 and *Presto* at m. 13 because they “rest on an old and intelligent tradition, and should be acted on to an extent which does not destroy the shape of the bar.”¹²

10. Jones, “Critical Notes” on *WTC*, 164. The manuscript known as C 1 or *Bach P 401*, is housed in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin. It is a complete copy in the hand of the student of Bach now known as Anon 5. It was copied from the autograph draft a, now lost, and corrected according to the extant autograph fair copy *Bach P 415*, or Source A.

11. Palmer, *WTC*, p. 5. Willard Palmer calls this manuscript “*The Fischhoff*”.

12. Tovey, “Commentary,” *J. S. Bach, WTC*, 160.

To accomplish this requires the utmost technical control combined with the highest level of intellectual and emotional sophistication. Who is to say how soon is too soon to investigate this wonder? If our reach should indeed exceed our grasp, here is an opportunity to reach technically and artistically. Performance of a work like this should not be undertaken lightly. But if you want your work to be true and profound play, the opportunity in this little prelude is virtually unlimited.

Prelude #2 in C Minor, BWV 847

The broken chord figuration of the second prelude repeats in each measure in the same way that the first prelude does. But the second prelude lacks the tranquility of the first. Brilliant and theatrical, this toccata begins with a traditional, figured prelude in two voices moving in contrary motion on the beats, but with parallel mordent-like figures between. Laurette Goldberg advises, "One way to find the 'pull' of this prelude is to play only the downbeats. A clear sense of direction and shape will emerge."¹³ The mordent-like decoration uses the lower neighbor as the third of each four notes. The dissonance of this lower auxiliary, combined with the tension between the two voices in contrary motion, create the energy that drives the piece. Again, Goldberg suggests that "Finger-pedaling the downbeats and pedal tones will also heighten the harmonic tension."¹⁴

Several interesting features intensify the mood of agitation in the course of the first section of twenty-seven measures. A feeling of compression looms at mm. 14

13. Goldberg, *Handbook*. 46

14. Goldberg, *Handbook*. 46.

and 15, as the two hands meet in the middle of the pattern on the same pitch, A-Flat in m. 14, and A-natural in m. 15 (see Figure 15).

Figure 15. Prelude #2 in C Minor, BWV 847, mm. 13–15

This tightening of the texture creates the need for additional articulation to maintain the clarity. At m. 18 the harmonic rhythm speeds up. The bass line changes at beat three from C to B-Flat (see Figure 16).

Figure 16. Prelude #2 in C Minor, BWV 847, mm. 16–18

The line seems to plummet to the subdominant at m. 19. The tension transfers to the rising soprano line over a dominant pedal and reaches a climactic point at m. 25. Three bars of single voices explode into the Presto at m. 28. Interrupted by the little one-measure fantasia marked Adagio at m. 34, the tempo returns to Allegro for the coda.

The unusual instance of three tempo markings in a short piece requires the player to plan the tempos carefully. The player must consider the specific

demands of each section and the unity of the piece as a whole. The busyness of this prelude can make for a harsh, abrasive sound if it is played too fast and loud. Also, a tempo that is too fast will take the teeth out of the remarkable dissonances. The opening tempo needs to be moderate enough to set off the Presto cadenza at m. 28. Maintain the energy at the Adagio. The concluding Allegro resolves to a peaceful Picardy third at the end. Keller suggests ♩ = 84 at the beginning, increasing to ♩ = 126 at the Allegro. The tempo of the Allegro, then, should match the tempo of the fugue that follows, ♩ = 63.¹⁵ Bischoff's markings are ♩ = 108 at the beginning, ♩ = 126 at the Presto. Tovey suggests Moderato at the beginning with a return to the same tempo and the Allegro.¹⁶ The Dover edition suggests Bischoff's recommendation of Allegro ♩ = 108, followed by (Tovey: slower).¹⁷

Prelude #3 in C-Sharp Major, BWV 848

The key of C-Sharp Major was so remote in Bach's day that it may not have been used at all before this prelude.¹⁸ Getting into this key requires the player to remember that the two white keys in the scale are sharps. If the scale has been learned only as D-Flat, a little time invested in rethinking it as C-Sharp will be well spent. Begin by playing the left hand motive in the first seven measures where the thumb is anchored on the tonic C-Sharp. Tovey suggests phrasing each measure rather than carrying the eighth note over the bar line.¹⁹ Then play the

15. Keller, *WTC*, 53.

16. Tovey, "Commentaries," *WTC*, 138.

17. Dover, *WTC*, 6.

18. Goldberg, *Handbook*, 46.

19. Tovey "Commentaries," *WTC*, 139.

right hand motive in mm. 9–15, the dominant imitation. Isolate the little tune in the top voice in the first five measures; add the middle line with an optimal amount of rotation at the wrist. Learn it at a fast tempo. Repeat the process from mm. 17–21 in the right hand, mm. 17–23 in the left hand. Since it is transposed to the D-Sharp minor chord, it feels different. The inversions at mm. 9–15, 25–31, 47–53 are even more different, however. But if you concentrate on this main theme, it falls under the hand surprisingly readily. The transitional measures are another matter (see Figure 17). The fingering is the key for the right hand and the upbeats in the left hand at mm. 8, 24, and 46. Work it out carefully at the outset, and be consistent. Rigorous concentration at a slow tempo produces a seamless performance.

Figure 17. Prelude #3 in C-Sharp Major, BWV 848, mm. 8, 24, 46

Bach included an early, shorter version of this prelude in *The Clavier-Büchlein for Wilhelm Friedmann Bach*. In the early version, mm. 1, 17, and 55 ascended from the fifth of the chord (see Figure 18). In the final version, these measures assumed the shape of mm. 10, 25, and 47 in the left hand of the early version.

Figure 18. *Clavier-Büchlein Praeludium* #21, mm. 1, 17, 55.

Bach added an extended cadence, mm. 63–98, for the WTC version. It is a new motive; the left hand moves in even eighth notes in contrast to the syncopated accompaniment figure of the first part. Another interesting variant from *The Clavier-Büchlein* is the absence, in mm. 99 and 101, of the G-Sharp present in the bass line of the WTC. Tovey preferred the early version “so that the whole four bars 99–102 should float away as a single part” (see Figure 19).²⁰

Figure 19. Prelude #3 in C-Sharp Major, BWV 848, mm. 97–104

Since the key is unfamiliar to the eye, the kinesthetic perceptions of the familiar harmonies support the learning process. The new intervallic relationships in the hand connect with the chords that are already in the ear. The student with a keen tactile sense will find particular satisfaction in the feeling of these witty, exuberant patterns under the fingers.

20. Tovey, “Commentaries,” WTC, 139.

Prelude #6 in D Minor, BWV 851

In the *Clavier-Büchlein*, this was the third prelude. An interesting departure from the previous two with their regular repetitions and full measure harmonic rhythm, it is the first to require a change of hand position for the right hand. The right hand is in constant motion over a wide range in a rapidly shifting harmonic rhythm. The left hand sets the tempo in an arresting series of steady eighth notes poised on the tonic. It begins to walk in the second measure.

In the *Clavier-Büchlein*, this prelude was a straightforward etude for the right hand. It ended after m. 14 with a D Major chord. For its presentation in the *WTC*, it is dressed up with a tonic pedal in m. 15 rather than the simple tonic chord (see Figure 20). A climax is reached in mm. 15–17 with a rising and increasingly disjunct figuration in the right hand.

Figure 20. Prelude #6 in D Minor, BWV 851, mm. 15–16

Jagged major sevenths in the left hand at m. 16 unravel chromatically as the right hand begins to fall in a scalar plummet to a fully notated cadenza. A “fabulously dissonant conclusion”²¹ begins at m. 20. Tension builds to the high B

21. Goldberg, *Handbook*, 47.

natural in m. 24, where chromatic thirds tumble to the final tonic, a solo for the right hand at m. 25.

Figure 21. Prelude #6 in D Minor, BWV 851, mm. 24–25

The addition of the spectacular ending passage lifts this prelude out of the right hand etude category, into the realm of the transcendent Bach prelude.

Prelude #10 in E Minor, BWV 855

Here is the etude for the left hand featuring a restless figuration that repeats in each measure. The figure is an ascending triad with a passing tone filling in the upper third (see Figure 22). The murmuring effect is hypnotic and not difficult to learn. The left hand develops control and balance in the process of keeping it even and smooth. The harmonic progression at the opening, I, $\text{II}^{\circ 4}_2$, V^6_5 , I, is unsettled by the third inversion of the II^7 chord at m. 5.

Figure 22. Prelude #10 in E Minor, BWV 855, mm. 1–6

In the WTC version, the right hand plays block chords connected by an ornamented soprano line above the constantly moving left hand. Again, the original version in the *Clavier-Büchlein* was shorter; it ended at m. 23 with a simple tonic chord.

Figure 23. Prelude #10 in E Minor, BWV 855, mm. 23–24

In the final version, we find one of the very rare tempo markings in Bach's own hand, Presto at m. 23 (see Figure 23). The "wild and wooly"²² Presto section breaks out into parallel running sixteenth notes in both hands, recalling the string orchestra texture of the second Prelude in C Minor.

The tempo in the Bischoff and the Dover Editions is Andante, ♩ = 69. Tovey suggests Andante cantabile.²³ Palmer's editorial indication is Andante sostenuto, ♩ = 52–60, for the final version; for the shorter version from the *Clavier-Büchlein*, Andante, ♩ = 54–60.²⁴ Laurette Goldberg argues that,

It is quite clear from this second version that we are to take clues for performance from the bass line. If the soprano is used to calculate tempo and character, the result might be slow, sweet, and arioso. But by using the lower part as the guide to unifying the two halves, it becomes necessary to see the bass figure as stormy and passionate, which then makes the Presto section intellectually understandable and aurally comprehensible.²⁵

The player can make a judgement about whether to be stormy or agitated, or vaguely uneasy. Angela Hewitt thinks of this prelude as an orchestral piece. Her insightful words illuminate a possible pitfall: "For a pianist, the challenge is to make it sound Baroque and not like Chopin."²⁶

The Imitative Preludes

Imitation is one of the main compositional devices used in canon, invention, and fugue, important genres in the Baroque era and in the music of Bach. In a

22. Goldberg, *Handbook*, 28.

23. Tovey, "Commentaries," *WTC*, 149.

24. Palmer, *WTC*, 103.

25. Goldberg, *Handbook*, 28.

26. Angela Hewitt, *Notes on the WTC*, (London: Hyperion Records, Ltd., 1998), 9.

canon, the musical idea simply follows itself through the structure of the piece. In an invention, a single musical idea or theme dominates the piece, imitated at the octave. The fugue develops by an imitative process, and expands by variation and transformation. A fugue may have two, three, four, or more voices. Each voice enters with a statement of the subject. Elements of the subject or counter subject can be developed as the piece progresses.

Prelude #12 in F Minor, BWV 857

The halfway point in the first book is reached in this full sounding prelude, the only one that lends itself to performance on the organ.²⁷ A study in legato sixteenth notes, this smoothly moving prelude has the processional feel of the allemande. It is serious, but not bleak. The tempo is an unhurried four pulses in the measure. From the contemplative opening measure to the affirmation of the beautifully extended cadence on the major chord, the subtle imitation of the motivic cells in the soprano voice unify without intrusion.

The rising seventh in the second beat of the first measure appears in every measure leading up to the cadence on the relative major chord, A-Flat, at mm. 6–7, where it supports the rising sequence of suspensions. The motive ascends stepwise for seven beats. There it is again over the D-Flat at m. 16, a gorgeous cadential moment that relaxes into the dominant pedal at m. 17 (see Figure 24).

27. Keller, WTC, 89.

Figure 24. Prelude #12 in F Minor, BWV 857, mm. 16–17

The rising arpeggio underscores some rich harmonic moments: the dominant at m. 3, the return to the tonic at m. 4, the cadence on A-Flat at m. 6, the G chord at m. 10, the B-Flat chord at m. 13, again inverted at m. 15, and the D-Flat at m. 16. Both Palmer and Tovey suggest long trills in triplets of thirty-second notes. The effect is very smooth and pleasant. The double stemming in the chordal motive indicates the harmonic function of the notes, rather than a thematic function. The texture remains four voices throughout. In the first measure, the alto voice is part of the right hand chordal motive. When the chordal motive is imitated in the left hand, the double stems indicate the bass voice.

The Forkel Manuscript contains an early, shorter version of seventeen measures. The ending is shown in the Palmer edition,²⁸ in the Bischoff edition,²⁹ and in the Editorial Notes and Commentaries in the Tovey-Jones edition.³⁰ The version from the *Clavier-Büchlein* ends on the E natural in m. 18 followed by a tonic

28. Palmer, *WTC*, 117.

29. Bischoff, *WTC*, 84.

30. Jones, "Notes on the Text," *WTC*, 151.

chord.³¹ There are myriad variants in the manuscript sources. The annotated editions enumerate them.

Prelude #19 in A Major, BWV 864

Prelude #19 in A Major is one of the easier ones in which imitation is a significant feature. It can be thought of as a three part invention³² or a trio sonata,³³ but it is also a "little triple fugue."³⁴ The open score of Prelude #19 in A Major is one of the two preludes included in Laurette Goldberg's book, *Open Score: The Well-Tempered Clavier: Book I*.³⁵ In open score, each voice is notated on a separate staff clarifying the progress of each voice.

In just twenty-four measures, this work uses four of the six possible combinations of the three subjects. The theme enters six times: in the soprano at m. 1, in the bass on the dominant at m. 4, in the tenor on the tonic at m. 8, in the bass on the tonic at m. 17, on the tonic again at m. 20. At m. 12 the theme enters in inversion in the relative minor.

The syncopated second subject, first heard in the middle voice on the last eighth note of the first measure, combines a suspension with a falling fourth. Unless it is carefully voiced to retain its integrity, it creates a compound melody with the quarter note third subject.³⁶ Short episodes prepare the entrances of the

31. Palmer, *WTC*, 117.

32. Keller, *WTC*, 108.

33. Goldberg, *Handbook*, 50.

34. Tovey, "Commentaries," *WTC*, 157.

35. Laurette Goldberg, *Open Score: The Well-Tempered Clavier Book I: The Twenty-Four Fugues and Two Preludes* (San Francisco: Medallion Guild, 1988), 71–73.

36. Tovey, "Commentaries," *WTC*, 157.

first subject in mm. 6–8, and 14–17. The fugue ends in contrary motion derived from the first subject in m. 22. It then expands into a contrary motion scale in m. 23, and finally moves quietly to the cadence.

The Dances

Allemandes

Prelude #14 in F-Sharp Minor, BWV 859

This prelude has the serious character of the allemande. Not exactly a two part invention, not quite a two voice fugue either, this sprightly movement has characteristics of both. The arresting fact is that half the measures have more than two voices, often in the form of continuo-type chords. Fugal characteristics include the answer to the soprano opening subject in the bass at m. 2, a second exposition in A, the relative major, at m. 6, and a solo soprano entry at m. 9 (see Figure 25). In the second section, the two voices enter again in mm. 12–14, at mm. 19–20 in inversion, and, finally in the coda at mm. 22–23. The recommended tempo varies from $\text{♩} = 84^{37}$ to $\text{♩} = 108^{38}$.

Figure 25. Prelude #14 in F-Sharp Minor, BWV 859, mm. 1–2

37. Keller, *WTC*, 95.

38. Bischoff, *WTC*, 95.

Prelude #16 in G Minor, BWV 861

The spirit of this prelude is the spirit of Couperin. This allemande recalls Bach's French Suite in C Minor. Stately and lyrical, ornamented throughout, its fully written-out ornamentation suggests the slow, introductory section of a French overture. Tovey suggests eight beats to the measure.³⁹

The piece is constructed on pedal points and thirds. These elements appear in the opening measures (see Figure 26). The whole note pedal tone affirms its tonal area each time it appears. In the first measure, the whole note tonic in the soprano is imitated in eighth notes in the bass which settle into a whole note tonic at m. 2. At m. 7 the inversion of the first measure appears in the relative major key, B-Flat. In m. 11 the inverted figure appears in the subdominant. Finally, in the penultimate measure, the tonic pedal anchors the final major chord.

The great Wanda Landowska says of this prelude,

Here again ... Bach dedicates a piece to the demonstration of ornaments and their interpretations. For this prelude he selected the slide and the turn ... giving us a priceless indication of the manner in which they should be scanned and incorporated in the melodic line.⁴⁰

Figure 26. Prelude #16 in G Minor, BWV 861, mm. 1-2

39. Tovey, "Commentaries," WTC, 155.

40. Restout, *Landowska on Music*, 190.

A sequence of slides is written out descending in the second measure and in mm. 4 and 5. Ascending slides appear in mm. 6 and 8. The turn figure, appearing in mm. 12–15, recalls the Invention in B-Flat.

Prelude #23 in B Major, BWV 868

B Major was a seldom used and challenging key in Bach's time. Prelude #23 is a merry little dialogue that quickly draws the player into the shapes of these sharps. The playing time for these nineteen measures is less than a minute! In the first measure, the right hand plays the motive that keeps repeating all the way through. The simple figuration with its inversions can be sorted out with dispatch (see Figure 27).

Figure 27. Prelude #23 in B Major, BWV 868, mm. 1–2

Analysis of the harmonies helps the hands to feel at home in the world of five sharps. Another example of the gentle allemande, this prelude can be thought of as a three part invention, although only two voices move at any given moment. At the cadence, a fourth voice gives a flourish for the ending.

Gigues

Prelude #18 in G-Sharp, Minor BWV 863

The uncommon key of G-Sharp is seldom found in music of any era; Bach only used it in the WTC.⁴¹ The student who avoids it here will miss the chance to enjoy an inventive invention in three voices. The subject in the soprano of the first measure balances the rising gesture in sixteenth notes with a sigh of falling eighths. Each gesture outlines a fourth. The ebb and flow of the motion stirs in every measure of the piece, in every voice, maintaining an expressive unity. The inversion of the motive appears at m. 10 in the soprano, m. 15 in the alto voice, m. 16 in the soprano, and in the alto voice in the penultimate measure beneath the tonic pedal in the soprano. The major chord dominates the extended tonic in mm. 27–29 (see Figure 28).

Figure 28. Prelude #18 in G-Sharp Minor, BWV 863, mm. 27–29

The technical challenge of the invention to develop a cantabile performance.⁴² The tempo should maintain a quiet motion without strong accents at 96 to the

41. Keller, WTC, 104.

42. Keller, WTC, 105.

eighth note.⁴³ Bischoff's metronome recommendation is 132 to the eighth note; that will be more like a gigue than Tovey's Andante cantabile.⁴⁴ The expressive high points are m. 18, where the theme is stated in the subdominant and the soprano rises to the high A natural, and the re-entry of the alto voice in double stops at m. 24 after two measures of silence. The compound meter gives it the dance like character of a gigue or a siciliano.⁴⁵

Siciliano

Prelude #9 in E Major, BWV 854

This tuneful pastorage appeared in *The Clavier-Büchlein for Wilhelm Friedmann Bach*, and later assumed its place in the *Well-Tempered Clavier* unchanged. It also appeared in the Gerber manuscript, C3,⁴⁶ as the prelude to the French Suite #6 in E Major. It is paired with one of the easier fugues and features a theme quoted from *Ariadne musica* by J. K. F. Fischer.⁴⁷ Pleasant and accessible, it is a good study of chords and suspensions. The long, melodic line requires a singing tone and a legato touch. The chromatic preparation for the cadences at mm. 7–8 and 21–22 is a unique feature (see Figures 29 and 30).

43. Ibid., 106.

44. Bischoff, *WTC*, 117. Tovey "Commentaries," *WTC*, 156.

45. Goldberg, *Handbook*, 50.

46. Tovey, "Commentaries," *WTC*, 148.

47. Goldberg, *Handbook*, 53.

Figure 29. Prelude #9 in E Major, BWV 854, mm. 7-8

Figure 30. Prelude #9 in E Major, BWV 854, mm. 21-22

The recapitulation in the subdominant at mm. 15-22 is another interesting and unusual feature. After the deceptive cadence in m. 22, the subdominant appears again in a striking arpeggio to the final cadence. The rhythm is regular and flowing in smooth triplets. This prelude does not include the dotted rhythm that is often featured in the siciliano form. The best tempo will retain the unhurried pace

of rich harmonies of the chromatic preparations while allowing an energetic transition in m. 14.

Loure

Prelude #4 in C-Sharp Minor, BWV 849

An arioso movement in the French style, this 6/4 piece recalls the loure, a French theatrical dance form that Bach also used in the French Suite in G Major⁴⁸ The theme consists of two motives. First a sinking sigh descends stepwise. After a leap of an octave the line descends in a sicilienne-like rhythm (see Figure 31). Wanda Landowska considered it “an eloquent avowal of Bach’s love for Couperin and French music.”⁴⁹ This prelude was handwritten by Wilhelm Friedmann himself in the *Clavier-Büchlein* without any notation for ornamentation. This early version is sometimes performed, as it was included in earlier editions of the WTC edited by Czerny, Busoni, and in the first Peters edition by Hans Kroll. The unornamented version is included in the Palmer edition on pp. 60–62. The fingering is helpful in developing the melodic line before beginning to think about the ornamentation. Many of the ornaments are mordents on the sustained notes.

Figure 31. Prelude #4 in C-Sharp Minor, BWV 849, m. 1–3

48. Angela Hewitt, *Notes on the WTC*, 6.

49. Restout, *Landowska on Music*, 183.

A lovely transitional theme appears at m. 5. A decorated triad rises to a tied note. Variants on these three motivic elements occur throughout the piece. The technical demands of this prelude are within the reach of the young student, but the emotional intensity and expressive depth require mature understanding.

Sarabande

Prelude #8 in E-Flat Minor, BWV 853

A moving aria in the tempo of a slow sarabande, this stately prelude shows the French influence in the dotted rhythms and the eloquent dignity in the ornamented line. The cantilena melody takes on the aspect of the recitative, always supported by the three chordal columns in each measure; the energy of these chords needs to be felt even when they are not actually present. The dance quality in the piece requires the feeling of the triple meter, avoiding the lugubrious feeling of six beats in the measure.⁵⁰ At first, the flow of the triple meter can be established in the line omitting the long trills. The long trills begin on the upper note. The Palmer Edition gives some interesting ideas in notation for varying the subdivision in the trills. Beginning with a triplet gives the sound of an appoggiatura. The even subdivisions emphasize the main note.

50. Goldberg, *Handbook*, 48.

The Inventions

Prelude #11 in F Major, BWV 856

Prelude #11 is a two part invention using an arpeggiated motive in the Italian style. The compound meter gives a dance-like feeling grounded in the groups of three eighth notes in the left hand.⁵¹ The time signature is 12/8 in the WTC; in the early version in the *Clavier-Büchlein* the time signature is 24/16.

The technical challenge is found in the long trills running over a stream of sixteenth notes. The Invention in A Major, #12, is a good preparatory piece because it presents the same basic challenge. extended trills over running sixteenth notes.⁵² The ornament can be approached from above the main note or from below the main note. For study purposes, the presentation in the Palmer Edition is useful because the notation for the trills is given on a third staff and the variants are explained in footnotes.⁵³ The score is spacious and unencumbered in the Tovey-Jones edition, but all of the notation and explanations are in the back in "Editorial Notes and Commentaries."⁵⁴ In the score from Dover Publications, the entire eighteen measures appear on a single page, across from the fugue, also complete on a single page.⁵⁵

51. Restout, *Landowska on Music*. Landowska wrote, "As we follow the rise and fall of these three notes, let us recall the dance motive from *Die Meistersinger* (Act III, Scene 5), which bears the title "Massiges Walzer-Zeitmas" and written by Wagner in 3/4 time" 187.

52. Angela Hewitt, *Notes on WTC*, 10.

53. Palmer, *WTC*, 110–111.

54. Tovey, "Commentaries," *WTC*, 149–150.

55. Dover, *WTC*, 42–43.

Tempo is a crucial consideration, and suggestions vary from edition to edition.

The Dover metronome marking taken from the Bischoff edition reads $\text{♩} = 80$, with the qualifying reference to Tovey's recommendation for a slower tempo.⁵⁶ Willard Palmer gives a range from $\text{♩} = 72-84$.⁵⁷

Prelude #13 in F-Sharp Major, BWV 858

Gently rocking triads form the opening motive of this pastoral two part invention. The triad figure rises to a trill on the dominant (see Figure 32). Over the imitation of the triad in the lower voice, a decorated sustained note is tied over the bar line. A similar feeling of syncopation is created by the use of a sixteenth note paired with an eighth note in mm. 2 and 3, 9 and 10. This characteristic syncopation is a unifying motive which appears in virtually every measure of the piece.

Figure 32. Prelude #13 in F-Sharp Major, BWV 858, mm. 1-3

A second unifying feature is the pervasive rhythmic motive in the bass line, which consists of walking dotted eighth notes. The steady rise and fall of these eighth notes is absent in only two measures, 1 and 13. The stepwise descent in mm. 2 and 3 and again in 8 and 9 is followed by an ascent in the succeeding mea-

56. Ibid., 42.

57. Palmer, *WTC*, 110.

asures creating an expansive phrase. Only the imitation of the triad motive interrupts the steady march of the lower voice to the decisive final cadence in m. 30.

The unusual time signature, 12/16, indicates four triplets to the measure. A legato touch and an amenable tempo allow the rich harmonies to sound and prevent its escaping into a frenetic jig. A galloping sequence rises to the closing over the dominant pedal in mm. 26–28 (see Figure 33). The tonic extension in the penultimate measure is a welcome reiteration of the deceptive cadence motive of mm. 5, 14, and 17. Joys abound in the thirty measures of this little journey.

Figure 33. Prelude #13 in F-Sharp Major, BWV 858, mm. 25–30

Prelude #20 in A Minor, BWV 865

In triple meter, this prelude dances a jig in the form of a two part invention. The theme is an arpeggio leading off with an accentuating pair of sixteenth notes filling in the tonic third with a passing tone (see Figure 34). This “elastically resilient”⁵⁸ subject, with its alternating rise and fall, is developed in dance-appropri-

58. Keller, WTC, 111.

ate four measure phrases. The lower voice poises on a firm downbeat, then trills on the second beat. This trill figure returns in the soprano voice on the tonic at the final cadence. Contrary motion on the third beat is pervasive throughout the piece, present in more than half of the measures.

Figure 34. Prelude #20 in A Minor, BWV 865, mm. 1–6

The theme of mm. 1–4 is imitated in the dominant at m. 5. A descending sequence at m. 9 modulates to the relative major at m. 13. When the theme returns at m. 22, the running sixteenth notes begin to take over and finally rush to the coda.

Figure 35. Prelude #20 in A Minor, BWV 865, mm. 26–28

Notice the deceptive cadence at m. 23, resolving to three measures based on an A Major chord over a tonic pedal. This creates an unexpectedly cheery conclusion for a minor piece (see Figure 35). Laurette Goldberg assesses this prelude in these words: "This is an excellent beginning prelude, not too difficult, but quite enjoyable."⁵⁹

The Baroque Genres

Concerto Grosso

Prelude #17 in A-Flat Major, BWV 862

Prelude #17 is a small Baroque concerto grosso movement in the Italian style. The key of A-Flat was rare in the Baroque Period. Characteristics of the concerto form include the two contrasting thematic motives alternating through the piece, the decorated cadences marking the end of the main sections, and the first theme's appearance in the dominant at the beginning of the second section. The first theme opens and closes the piece in the tonic key. The chordal motive affords a touch of formality that is reaffirmed at the closing.

The texture is dominated, and unified, by a rhythmic motive that Bach often used to express joy. The bass line of the first Goldberg Variations begins with this same rhythm. The mordent figure followed by three eighth notes appears in almost every measure of Prelude #17. It appears first in the soprano in mm. 1. It

59. Goldberg, *Handbook*, 50.

appears in sequence in m. 2. Imitations appear in the bass voice in mm. 3 and 4 (see Figure 36).

Figure 36. Prelude #17 in A-Flat Major, BWV 862, mm. 1–4

The chordal figure in the A section alternates with running sixteenth notes in the B section. The B section features the orchestral figurations common to the Italian concertos for strings. See mm. 13–16 in the soprano line, mm. 30–33 in the bass line, and in both voices at mm. 39–40. The contrasting themes can be emphasized by the use of contrasting dynamics.

Trio Sonata

Prelude #24 in B Minor, BWV 869

The final prelude in Book I is a trio sonata, the first binary form in Book I. The syncopated theme, built on rising fourths, sounds in the middle voice, and is imitated immediately in the soprano voice. This syncopated theme lends itself to suspensions over the bar line. The suspensions smooth over the constantly changing harmonies in the lower voice. Busy eighth notes rise and fall steadily in the manner of “a bored, underpaid cellist obliged to keep things moving.”⁶⁰ The bass voice can be played semi-staccato, quasi non legato, or legatissimo.⁶¹ Sud-

60. Goldberg, *Handbook*, 51.

denly, at m. 42, the cellist awakens, takes over with a wide leap to the lower range, interrupting the final cadence with a burst of dazzling chromaticism (see Figure 37).

Figure 37. Prelude #24 in B-Minor, BWV 869, mm. 39–47

This colorful expansion in mm. 42–46 may have been added to anticipate the subject of the fugue to follow. Perhaps this is yet another example of Bach's revisions.⁶²

The dialogue in the two soprano voices is an intense study of imitative compositional procedure. This duet should imitate the effect of two violins,⁶³ or two flutes, who pass the lead back and forth.⁶⁴ The tension/resolution of these voices and the rapid harmonic rhythm need the gentle four beats to the measure that Bach indicated.⁶⁵

61. Palmer, *WTC*, 197.

62. Tovey, "Commentaries," 162.

63. Goldberg, *Handbook*, 51.

64. Tovey, "Commentaries," 162.

65. Palmer, *WTC*, 197.

The open score notation of this three-voice work makes the shape of each voice clearly visible by the use of a separate staff for each voice.⁶⁶ A harmonic reduction is useful for tracking the rapid harmonic rhythm in this piece; the chords change twice in each measure.

In a Class by Itself Because It Is a Prelude and Double Fugue

Prelude #7 in E-Flat Major, BWV 852

Prelude #7 transcends the basic concept of the prelude by weaving two splendid, characteristic, organ-style themes into a third serene and seamless fabric of double counterpoint. The piece opens like a toccata. The serene theme of running sixteenth notes bursts into sequences of thirty-second notes at m. 8. The fingering suggestions given in the Tovey-Jones edition are helpful. The Palmer edition gives essentially the same fingering (except in m. 6). Palmer clarifies the thumb crossings by adding the adjacent finger numbers. Tovey gives only the indications for the thumb itself. With a student who is confident and persistent, the first nine measures would be an excellent exercise in creating a workable fingering. It is basically a scale fingering which should become apparent rather quickly to the well-prepared student.

This little toccata can also serve as a lesson in the use of imitation and sequence in mm. 1–4, in parallel and contrary motion in mm. 5–6, and in the

66. J. S. Bach, *Open Score*, ed. Goldberg, 73–75.

cadential trill at m. 9. The most sophisticated player can appreciate a beautiful example of these simple but powerful techniques.

The dominant pedal anchors the running thirty second notes beginning at m. 8. At the downbeat of m. 10, the tenor B-Flat is the initial note of the subject of a seventeenth century-style fugato. Tovey suggests that Bach used this type of old-style fugue after trying out the instrument in the passage work of the toccata section, to see whether the organ had good lungs.⁶⁷ Tovey further suggests that these fifteen measures "cannot be too legato and harmoniously full."⁶⁸ The process of writing these measures out in open score is an effective way to mine its structures for the logic and the beauty it manifests. Hermann Keller points out one of the typical features of seventeenth century fugue writing in mm. 12–13. The accent in the subject in the soprano line is displaced.⁶⁹ Again, the fingering is more generous in the Palmer Edition, but it is adequate in the Jones-Tovey, and will be appreciated by the first time player. The sustained, full sound requires appropriate and secure fingering.

More variants appear in the fugues of *Well-Tempered Clavier* than in the preludes. The argument of "if this is like this in the subject, that must be like that in the answer" in fugal writing fuels the endless controversy about whether a given note is an error or an expressive inspiration. In the Czerny Edition, a D-Flat

67. Tovey, "Commentaries," *WTC*, 145.

68. *Ibid.*, 145.

69. Keller, *WTC*, 72.

appears in m. 59 in the tenor voice that does not appear in any of the sources.⁷⁰

However, some variants do not change the sound of the piece.

In the *Neue Bach-Ausgabe* a voice is notated in the opposite staff from the Palmer edition and other editions to make the part writing clearer. In this double fugue, the *Neue Bach-Ausgabe* places the alto line in the bass staff in m. 28. The alto line appears in the treble staff in m. 40. In m. 48, the alto line is kept in the treble and the tenor in the bass. The alto voice is notated in the treble staff at m. 51.

Another obvious example is m. 67 of this prelude. In the *Neue Bach-Ausgabe* the E-Flat in the soprano is a half note on the second beat. In the Palmer Edition, it is a quarter note tied to a quarter note. The *Neue Bach-Ausgabe* does not include redundant accidentals as a rule, but it does add a natural sign to the D in the bass line in m. 47. The D in the alto line is a flat in the first beat.

Since the playing is so challenging, it is helpful to follow the score while listening to a recording. The tranquil flow of the running line bolstered by the stability of the sustained theme is inspiring and refreshing.

Bach seldom used the key of E-Flat major in the early periods of his work. This key is missing from *The Clavier-Büchlein for Wilhelm Friedmann Bach*. Keller offers the opinion "that [Bach] wanted to preserve a work from his youth that had special significance for him, and for which *The Well-Tempered Clavier* seemed a good home."⁷¹

70. Palmer, *WTC*, 83.

71. Keller, *WTC*, 71.

In a Class by Itself Because It Is So Beautiful

Prelude #22 in B-Flat Minor, BWV 867

Uncommonly rich in both melody and harmony, this exquisitely expressive prelude manifests the character of an orchestral reduction.⁷² It achieves Bach's ideal of variety within unity by the continual transformation of the simple motive found in the first five notes of the soprano line.

Figure 38. Prelude #22 in B-Flat Minor, BWV 867, mm. 1 and 24

Poignantly, the last five notes of the tenor line reiterate this motive, but with the final fall from G-Flat to the dominant F. The tension between F and G-Flat first appears in the alto voice at the chord change from beat 2 to beat 3, and again over the bar lines in the tenor voice between mm. 1 and 2, 3 and 4. The same tenor line appears again at mm. 19 and 20. At m. 11, the F sets off the striking G-Flat chord, the Neapolitan in this F Minor context.

72. Goldberg, *Handbook*, 81.

Figure 39. Prelude #22 in B-Flat Minor, BWV 867, m. 22

A recurring rhythmic motive, two sixteenths followed by an eighth note, knits the melodic motives in a unity that supports without intrusion. The sustained or repeated pitches prevent fragmentation by balancing the energy of the moving sixteenth notes. When the anapest appears in the bass line at m. 18, the balancing voice becomes the soprano, circling about the D that becomes the sustained note at m. 19. The only instance in the piece of seven consecutive sixteenth notes carries the soprano line to the recapitulation of the opening melody in mm. 19–20. The arresting ascent to the high G-Flat seems to rebound from the lowest note in the piece, the subdominant E-Flat in the bass.

The bass line carries gestures of meaning throughout the piece. It is the heart-beat on the tonic in the opening measures. It creates tension by rising toward the falling soprano in mm. 3–5. Its return to a stalwart tonic pedal at m. 7 relieves the tension for a cadential moment. It falls in a sequence of repeated notes at mm. 9–11. It withdraws to a simple supporting pulse at mm 13–14, as if observing the searching, heart-stopping dialogue in the alto and tenor lines. The bass line moves in canon with the treble from beat 3 of m. 15. Its dramatic double descent,

beginning in mm.18, rising to the hopeful dominant in the higher octave at m. 20, finally arrives at the climax of the piece in m. 22 on the low A-Natural. The tonic heart beat returns at the coda in mm. 23–24.

The number of voices is a determining influence on the volume of Baroque keyboard music. In this prelude, the dynamic level swells from four voices to five in the first measure and settling into four voices at m. 3. The dialogue at mm. 13–14, involving two voices answering two voices, will be a bit softer. An increase in the number of voices at m. 20 indicates a crescendo to the dynamic high point of the piece in m. 22. We hear five voices, then seven voices, then the towering diminished seventh chord in nine voices on the third beat of m. 22, rising to the dramatic G-Flat at the top. Keller describes this chord as “a shattering outburst...the outcry of a frightened soul.”⁷³

The tempo is slow, but not so slow that the sustained notes can not sing through the harmonies. The melodic tension must be maintained by means of continuous motion. Keller suggests “a slow step” ♩ = 50–54.⁷⁴ Tovey calls for “rather an Andante largemente at four-in-the-bar than Adagio at eight.”⁷⁵ The editorial tempo indication in the Palmer Edition is Adagio lamentoso, ♩ = 60–66 to the eighth note.⁷⁶ Bischoff reads Lento, ♩ = 92.⁷⁷ The Bischoff tempo is not slow; in my opinion, it is more likely to feel irritable or frenetic. The Palmer

73. Keller, *WTC*, 118.

74. *Ibid.*, 118.

75. Tovey, “Commentaries,” *WTC*, 161.

76. Palmer, *WTC*, 186.

77. Bischoff, *WTC*, 146.

tempo is indeed *lento*; it may be difficult to sustain the long notes at this tempo.

In the soprano voice in m. 3 of the Dover Edition, the Fs connecting beats two and three are tied. Czerny, Tovey, and Kroll used this reading, but it is not in the Source A autograph fair copy, nor in the *Neue Bach-Ausgabe*. The stemming in the Dover Edition is confusing too; the Palmer Edition and the Tovey Jones are easier to follow. Although the Tovey Jones has 'R' or 'L' for placing notes in the right or left hand in mm. 3–7, 14, 15, 22, and 23, the Palmer notation is clearer as to the most convenient voicing. The Tovey commentary offers this performance note. Spread the nine voices of the chord in m. 22 in contrary motion, the right hand upward and the left hand downward.⁷⁸ The effect is interesting because it arrives at the bass and soprano notes with a grand emphasis. The healing sigh of resolution in the coda reiterates one last time the opening melodic motive in the doubled alto voice. Faith triumphant sounds in the ornamented major cadence.

78. Tovey "Commentaries," *WTC*, 160.

Chapter IX

Conclusion

The preludes of *The Well-Tempered Clavier* stand on their own as unique musical works of substance, inspiration, and beauty. By their variety, they illuminate the scope of Baroque musical thought. By their variety, they develop the intellect and the facility of the fingers. But it is the particular and specific felicities of the individual prelude that delight and inspire.

Each prelude expresses a feeling tone from the vast palette of human response. Each prelude balances predictable structure and gleeful surprise in its own way. Each prelude creates a little corner in a wide world of musical possibility where the player can settle in for a moment of inquiry, invigorating challenge, and the solace of beauty. Each prelude radiates the inspiring qualities of Bach's personality. His dedication to scholarship and performance cultivated his ability to transform his experience into a transcendent musical language. Through the preludes Bach speaks of vitality and resilience, faith and affirmation. They have given me courage.

Imagine my great happiness to find corroboration for my high opinion of the preludes in the esteemed *Handbook* quoted so often in this paper. From "Chapter Four In Which the Author Demonstrates Her Deepest Admiration for the Prelude," Laurette Goldberg expresses it this way.

Fugues—like people with letters after their last name—seem automatically to command respect, regardless of their true qualities. And the mere use of the

word "fugue" (just as the title "Doctor") creates in the mind of the listener certain high expectations.

"Prelude" on the other hand, creates no such expectations and, sadly, commands no such respect. Even worse, the word suggests a dependence on what follows. This is an association that robs preludes of their individuality and relegates them to the role of supporting mate in a relationship and precludes any individual identity ("Mrs. Joseph Cantor," instead of "Anne Cantor"). Such is the burden generally borne by preludes.

In the WTC, however, Bach presents preludes in a completely different light. Over the course of both volumes, he composed a vast and magnificent collection of preludes, an unparalleled anthology of virtually all the forms in use during the first half of the 18th century. Some of these preludes are faithful to the "original" meaning of the word (being improvisatory in feeling). More often, though, these works express a strong character and design, and are wholly independent of the fugue that follows. In some cases, they are clearly even more important than their "partners"...each prelude is unique...¹

Preludes abound in the work of composers through the centuries as a result of Bach's investment of substance and spirit in his preludes. The gifts of joyous vitality and ingenuous spiritual strength bubbling up from the preludes of the WTC enrich the player and the listener. In an anxious age, the solace of Bach's faith remains accessible to all in this monument of musical achievement.

1. Goldberg, *Handbook*, 27.

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