

# Fugue No. 11

F Major

*Well-Tempered Clavier Book I*

Johann Sebastian Bach

© 2002 Timothy A. Smith (the author)<sup>1</sup>

To read this essay in its hypermedia format, go to the Shockwave movie at <http://www2.nau.edu/tas3/wtc/i11.html>.



**Subject:** Fugue No. 11, *Well-Tempered Clavier*, Book I

Here are the abc's of writing a fugue with canon. The building blocks are three musical figures: a, b, and c. Notice that figure c is a rhythmic diminution of figure a; it has the same melodic contour but its rhythmic proportions have been cut in half.

Arrange these figures one after the other and you have the subject. Since the subject begins on the dominant (C), it is answered on the tonic (F) with the third statement returning to the dominant. Figure d connects the abc's to each other. The subject having been stated in all voices, this comprises the fugue's exposition.

A counterexposition (m. 18) restates the subject with tonic/dominant polarity but following a different order of voices. Here Bach has retained the building blocks of the exposition but with large groups having been moved to different voices. In its last entry the subject is stated in canon.

The first developmental episode (m. 31) begins with a sequence of building blocks a and c with figure a having been melodically inverted in the low voice. In m. 37 Bach has stated the subject in the minor mode and in canon, high voice to low. This episode effects a strong dominant prolongation in the relative minor (dm).

The second development (m. 46) is like the first but reverses the voice order of the canon, now low to high. While the canonic episodes of both developments

---

<sup>1</sup> You may print, copy, link to, or cite this document, for non-profit educational purposes, so long as credit is given to the author as per fair use. You may not reproduce this document electronically, enfold it into a web site, or incorporate it into a saleable product without written permission from the author.

state the subject in all voices, they are not expositions. The reason is that these subjects are not answered with alternating tonic/dominant polarity as in the exposition and its counter.

The third development (m. 56) is unusual in its construction and effect. Notice that it contains not a single statement of the subject. Yet, as the animation reveals, it emanates entirely from the subject. All of the abc's are there, fragmented and highly sequenced, but very present.

Observe that I have called this a *fugue with canon*. It is not, like the e-minor fugue before to it, both a canon and a fugue. While the technique of canon figures prominently in this fugue, it is episodic and does not comprise the complete work.