



make your finger hold that tied note while you're negotiating the intersecting sixteenths? Answer. Relax!

But a third challenge awaits us (good things often come in threes). In the third and fourth bars of each entry, the subject and second countersubject run in parallel sixths or thirds (depending on who's on top). Sometimes these sixteenths have to be played in parallel thirds by one hand. That's hard enough, but at other times its the sixteenths and eighths that have to be played by one hand. That's even more difficult! It is a great etude for finger independence though.

And now, for my favorite aural problem in Bach: downward leaps in a middle voice. This fugue is full of them, and they present an extraordinary challenge. In bars 22-23 Bach has placed the subject in the middle voice, the first countersubject on top, and the second countersubject on the bottom.

One caveat of counterpoint is to avoid large leaps, especially when they descend. The reason for this is that the ear finds it difficult to follow the descending voice after it has dropped.

The subject of this fugue features descending sixths at the end of each of its first two bars. Playing these leaps with one hand in an upper or lower voice doesn't present too much of a problem, but you must listen to it and make sure that the voice's continuity is audible.

When the subject has been placed in the middle voice, however, its descending leaps are extremely difficult to execute properly. Here the leaps have an added complication: they must be played by both hands (and I won't even mention the sixteenths in the bass). *Ladies and gentlemen, start your keyboards!*