

CONTENTS

<i>Thematic Catalogue</i>	xiii
1 Partimento Fugue	1
2 Format and Contents of the Langloz Manuscript	9
3 Origins of the Langloz Manuscript	23
4 Principles of Performance	29
5 The Edition	33
6 The Facsimile	111
<i>Index</i>	189

PARTIMENTO FUGUE

While Renaissance polyphony arises from the combination of melodies in a circumscribed environment of consonance and dissonance, the baroque style is founded on thoroughbass, an underlying harmonic and voice-leading context. With the rise of instrumental forms in the baroque the ‘point of imitation’ that characterized the Renaissance motet expanded into a new and profound form of musical expression, the fugue. As the new contrapuntal forms of keyboard canzona, capriccio, ricercare, and fugue developed through the course of the seventeenth century, and as thoroughbass became the focal point of the musician’s art—central to harmonic knowledge, accompanying, improvisation, and composition—an increasing emphasis was placed on developing pedagogical models for thoroughbass as a foundation for the new imitative style, whether for accompanimental, improvisational, or compositional purposes. Contrapuntal composition by the layering of melodies or counterpoints on a given cantus firmus was replaced by a new harmonic approach. C. P. E. Bach describes his father’s method thus:

Since he [J. S. Bach] himself had composed the most instructive pieces for the clavier, he brought up his pupils on them. . . . He started his pupils right with what was practical, and omitted all the dry species of counterpoint that are given in Fux and others. His pupils had to begin their studies by learning pure four-part thorough bass.¹

Bach was by no means alone in this thoroughbass approach. Numerous treatises, the most practical of which is perhaps F. E. Niedt’s *The Musical Guide*,² attest to the pervasiveness of thoroughbass as a way of thinking about music around the beginning of the eighteenth century.

J. P. Kirnberger amplified C. P. E. Bach’s description in his 1792 treatise: ‘His method is the best, for he proceeds steadily, step by step, from the easiest to the most difficult, and as a result even the step to the fugue has only the difficulty of passing from one step to the next,’³ underscoring the absolute continuum from the simplest thoroughbass through the complexities of fugue. We need to remember too that by the last quarter of the eighteenth century C. P. E. Bach and Kirnberger were reminiscing about their formative years some fifty years earlier and that Sebastian Bach had come to represent a historic musical style and technique that had been

¹ Carl Philipp Emmanuel Bach, letter to Johann Nicolaus Forkel, 13 Jan. 1775, trans. in Christoph Wolff, ed., *The New Bach Reader* (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1998), 399.

² Friederich Erhardt Niedt, *The Musical Guide* (*Musikalische Handleitung*, Hamburg, 1700–17), trans. and ed. Pamela Poulin and Irmgard Taylor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

³ Johann Philipp Kirnberger, *Gedanken über die verschiedenen Lehrarten in der Komposition als Vorbereitung zur Fugenenntnis* (Berlin, 1792), 4–5, trans. in Wolff, ed., *The New Bach Reader*, 320.

largely superseded by a *galant* aesthetic based on the grammar and rhetoric of instrumental melody supported by simple accompanying harmonies and basses.

A logical starting point for the study of fugue through thoroughbass was the accompaniment of instrumental or choral fugue, where the keyboardist is provided with a figured bass part for a fugue. Such parts normally contain the lowest sounding part plus figures as a digest of the harmony represented by the upper parts. When the bass rests, the continuo follows the tenor line, or indeed the alto or treble, necessitating considerable use of C clefs. Passages such as these were known as *bassetto* (small bass). Where only two upper parts are sounding, the continuo part typically shows both parts on a single stave.

From the study of thoroughbass accompaniment it is a small step to the *partimento*, literally a small score. In the context of baroque music, partimento refers to an independent figured bass that contains the basic elements of a simple composition. Partimenti fall precisely on the cusp between musical exercises and compositions. They exhibit the formal properties normally associated with complete compositions, yet their focus is pedagogical, leading to studies in improvisation and fugal composition.⁴ *Partimento fugue*, then, refers to partimento composition in fugal style, based on restatements of a main theme in various registers through the course of a piece.⁵

Perhaps the most prolific composer of partimenti was Bernardo Pasquini, Italy's 'Apollo of music', and a remarkable virtuoso at the keyboard. Pasquini's hundreds of extant partimenti are preserved in two manuscripts, *London, British Library MS Add. 31501* and *Rome, Bibliotheca del Conservatorio di Musica Santa Cecilia, MS A/400*.⁶ The shortest and simplest of Pasquini's partimenti, found in the section of the London manuscript entitled '102. Versetti in Basso continuo Per rispondere al coro', are intonations or interludes that could be elaborated upon as organ preludes or versets in a liturgical context. They are grouped by key or tone, and several contain overt references to psalm-tone intonations. Example 1 illustrates three of these. The first partimento sets forth a simple imitative motive in semiquavers followed by a cadence. The second is a freely developed bass-line. The third is a point of imitation on the fifth psalm-tone. A second style is represented by lengthier basses that contain considerable motivic development and figuration as well as modulations to related keys. A third group would be partimento fugues, which generally repeat brief subjects in diverse registers and transpositions. Example 2 is such, arranging seven subject statements in a variety of registers, followed by a formal cadence in mode 1. Pasquini's unique contribution to the literature is his numerous partimento sonatas for two keyboards. These contain two independent but related continuo parts that are to

⁴ Carl Philipp Emmanuel Bach, *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments* (*Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen* (Berlin, 1753–62)), trans. and ed. William Mitchell (London: Cassell, 1949), 442–5, discusses and illustrates how such a bass can be developed into a completed improvised composition.

⁵ As David Schulenberg points out, 'there is little difference between free fugal improvisation and the realization of a figured bass accompaniment in an *a cappella* fugue'. David Schulenberg, 'Composition and Improvisation in the School of J. S. Bach', *Bach Perspectives* I, ed. Russell Stinson (Lincoln, Nebr.: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 14.

⁶ Facsimile editions: Alexander Silbiger, ed., *London, British Library, MS Add. 31501* (*Bernardo Pasquini, Partial Autograph*), *Seventeenth Century Keyboard Music*, vol. 8 (New York: Garland, 1988), and Alexander Silbiger, ed., *Rome, Bibliotheca del Conservatorio di Musica Santa Cecilia, MS A/400*, *Seventeenth Century Keyboard Music*, vol. 13 (New York: Garland, 1987).

be performed simultaneously. One can imagine no more effective means for master and apprentice to work together in the development of thoroughbass technique.

Ex. 1. Pasquini, London, British Library, MS Add. 31501: (a) II–24^v; (c) II–52^r

Ex. 2. Pasquini, London, British Library, MS Add. 31501: (a) III–5^v

The examples in the manuscript *Precepts and Principles for Playing the Thorough-Bass or Accompanying in Four Parts*, attributed to J. S. Bach, support the view that Bach himself advocated the use of partimento in his teaching.⁷ While much of the music in the *Precepts and Principles* is decidedly inferior, fourteen admirable figured-bass exercises founded on descending scales and sequences contained in the section ‘Principles for Playing in Four Parts’, may indeed be by J. S. Bach. Each exercise utilizes a different combination of figures. Exercise 13, for example, teaches the resolution of suspension chords in third inversion. Example 3 shows a possible realization in small notes. Simple cadences, repetition in closely related keys, and a *da capo*, develop a rudimentary ternary form in this elementary figured-bass exercise. Studies such as this would be practised in all the familiar keys and in due course would become a natural part of

⁷ J. S. Bach’s *Precepts and Principles for Playing the Thorough-Bass or Accompanying in Four Parts* (*Vorschriften und Grundsätze zum vierstimmigen Spielen des Generalbasses* (Leipzig, 1738), trans. with facsimile, introduction and notes by Pamela L. Poulin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994). This work also appears in Johann Phillip Spitta, *Johann Sebastian Bach*, 3 vols., trans. Clara Bell and J. A. Fuller-Maitland (London: Novello, 1883–5), iii. 315–47 (Appendix 12), and in Hans David and Arthur Mendel, *The Bach Reader*, 2nd edn. (New York: Norton, 1966), 392–8. Parts of the work are taken from Niedt’s *The Musical Guide*. Carl August Thieme, whose handwriting appears on the title-page and in corrections through the course of the volume, was a student at the Thomas-Schule from 1735 to 1745. Hans-Joachim Schulze, ‘“Das Stück im Goldpapier” Ermittlungen zu einigen Bach-Abschriften des frühen 18. Jahrhunderts’, *Bach Jahrbuch*, 64 (1978), 19–42, has cast doubt upon Bach’s involvement with this work. See also Hans-Joachim Schulze, *Studien zur Bach-Überlieferung im 18. Jahrhundert* (Leipzig: Edition Peters, 1984), 126–7.

the musician's vocabulary. One need only compare an exercise such as this with the early versions of Bach's figured *Well-Tempered Clavier* I preludes to understand how these patterns could form the basis not only of improvised 'preluding', but also of genuine composition.⁸

Ex. 3. *Precepts and Principles*, 'Rules for playing *en quatre*', No. 13

The *Precepts and Principles* also contains five brief partimento fugues ranging from fourteen to twenty-one bars in length. Example 4 is typical. It is to be regretted that these examples have been the most widely available partimento fugues. Their barely competent, certainly unimaginative realizations, possibly by a student of Bach, give little idea of the range of musical possibilities inherent in partimento fugue.⁹

In the course of the 'Narrative of Tacitus', an imaginative allegory of the merits of thoroughbass as against the difficulties of the old German tablature contained in Niedt's *Musical Guide*, it is suggested that the thoroughbass method allows students quite easily to 'make a fugue and the like *ex tempore*'.¹⁰ In order to support this claim, Niedt includes an example of partimento fugue near the end his treatise. Example 5, much longer than any in the *Precepts and Principles*, includes several subject statements in each part. In this particular type of partimento fugue all entries of the subject are notated.¹¹ This fugue appears again as Fugue 22 in the Langloz manuscript (see Chapter 3).

⁸ William Renwick, *Analyzing Fugue: A Schenkerian Approach* (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon, 1995), ch. 1, illustrates this connection.

⁹ The rudimentary style and glaring errors were noted by Spitta, in *Johann Sebastian Bach*, and by Franck Thomas Arnold in *The Art of Accompaniment from a Thorough-Bass*, 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1931), i. 215.

¹⁰ Ibid. i. 222.

¹¹ In *The Musical Guide* this partimento fugue is incorrectly identified as a 'Two-Part Fugue'.

PARTIMENTO FUGUE

Ex. 4. *Precepts and Principles*, 'Elementary Instruction in Figured Bass', Ex. 12

Ex. 5. Niedt, *The Musical Guide*, 48–50

G. F. Handel composed several partimento fugues, apparently in the course of his instruction for Princess Anne, eldest daughter of George II.¹² Handel's examples are comparatively sophisticated, indicating in letter notation the starting pitch of each entry of the subject, thereby facilitating entries in the upper parts above the bass. In his commentary on Handel's sketches and thoroughbass exercises Alfred Mann concludes that 'in Handel's instruction the study of fugue evolved from thoroughbass technique'.¹³

The distinction between partimento fugue and fully-composed fugue can be slight indeed. Example 6 (a), from an organ prelude by Buxtehude, shows how little additional detail is in fact required beyond the partimento to realize a simple yet genuine fugue. The descending order of entries allows complete freedom of motion in the upper parts, just as in a typical partimento fugue. Once the music reaches three parts in bar 48, the counterpoints revert to the simplest continuo harmony, throwing the quick notes of the subject into relief. Example 6 (b) shows how the same music might be represented as a partimento.

Pachelbel's fugues in C major and A minor, and the first fugato of Bach's early Prelude and Fugue in A Minor, BWV 551 are conceived on equally simple lines.¹⁴ These pieces represent the final step to genuine fugue; the final step in a gradual process which is documented at each step as a pedagogical tradition, precisely as outlined by C. P. E. Bach and Kirnberger. Fugues such as these may be the most representative examples we possess of what extemporized fugue was actually like as it was practised by countless organists throughout Germany around the beginning of the eighteenth century.

In the logical development from simple thoroughbass to fugue, partimento fugue occupies a central position. Partimento fugue adds imitative counterpoint to the framework of pure voice-leading, and it is the essential link between a basic harmonic framework and an elaborative contrapuntal texture.¹⁵ Partimento fugue reflects a method of conceptualizing fugal composition and improvisation as an extension and refinement of thoroughbass, rather than as an extension of counterpoint. It illustrates a harmonic rather than a contrapuntal conception of fugue and attests to the attempt on the part of composers and improvisers to conceive of fugue in terms of thoroughbass during the baroque era.¹⁶

For the baroque keyboard musician, performing meant reading figures, composing meant working with figured basses, improvising meant spinning out and elaborating motives with their implied harmonies. We must remember too the manifold duties demanded of an organist or keyboardist during this period: preluding on a harmonic basis as outlined by Niedt and

¹² George Frederick Handel, *Aufzeichnungen zur Kompositionslehre* ('Composition Lessons'), *Hallische Händel-Ausgabe, Supplement, Band I*, ed. Alfred Mann (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1978). See esp. 44–52. See also David Ledbetter, *Continuo Playing According to Handel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

¹³ Handel, *Aufzeichnungen zur Kompositionslehre*, 45.

¹⁴ Johann Pachelbel, *Orgelwerke*, ed. Traugott Fedtke (New York: C. F. Peters, 1973), vol. 4, 20–3, 101–4.

¹⁵ Partimento fugue was also used to train in the accompaniment of imitative vocal polyphony. Indeed, occasionally the continuo part of a concerted fugue taken by itself resembles a partimento fugue. The partimento fugue in Johann David Heinichen's *Der General-Bass in der Composition* (Dresden, 1728) is conceived in terms of an accompaniment to a concerted fugue. See George J. Buelow, *Thorough-Bass Accompaniment According to Johann David Heinichen*, rev. edn. (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1986), 208–10.

¹⁶ Alfred Mann, 'Bach and Handel as Teachers of Thoroughbass', *Bach, Handel, Scarlatti Tercentenary Essays*, ed. Peter Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 256, and Handel, *Aufzeichnungen zur Kompositionslehre*, 47.

Ex. 6. Buxtehude, Prelude in G minor Bux WV 163, bars 44–52

C. P. E. Bach and still illustrated as late as the beginning of the next century in the work of J. C. Kittel;¹⁷ accompanying in thoroughbass, harmonizing and elaborating chorales, and improvising, including improvised fugues at the prestigious posts. These same keyboardists were responsible for directing rehearsals and performances from the keyboard and for realizing continuo parts for everything from simple chorales to eight-part concerted fugues. Since all of this activity centred on figured bass, C. P. E. Bach could provide a *summa* of musical art in the first half of the eighteenth century with his *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments*. Thoroughbass was the foundation of performance and composition; a unified means of dealing with the substance of music that bound together composer and performer, teacher, and student.

¹⁷ Johann Christian Kittel, *Der angehende praktische Organist, oder Anweisung zum zweckmässigen Gebrauch der Orgel bei Gottesverehrungen in Beispielen*, (Erfurt, 1801–8).

The influence of thoroughbass and the partimento inevitably waned in competition with the ascendant currents of Fuxian counterpoint, Ramellian fundamental bass, and *galant* melody in the latter part of the eighteenth century, during which time Vienna emerged as the centre of the nascent classical style and Johann Georg Albrechtsberger in particular reformulated Fuxian counterpoint within this new context. Albrechtsberger's *Elementary Method of Harmony and Composition* (Leipzig, 1790) substantially influenced Cherubini's *Treatise on Counterpoint and Fugue* (Paris, c.1837) in widening the gulf between counterpoint and harmony in pedagogical terms. The legacy of this division for counterpoint in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was the *fugue d'école* as codified by André Gedalge in *Treatise on the Fugue* (Paris, 1901).

Mattheson's brilliant 48 *Probe-stücke* or 'test-pieces', published in 1731, was the last important German collection of partimenti. In Italy the practice continued for some time, for we find a considerable collection of partimenti composed by Fedele Fenaroli around the end of the eighteenth century and reprinted throughout the nineteenth century.¹⁸ Virtually a lost art today, partimento fugue makes clear Kirnberger's point that even the fugue, as taught by J. S. Bach, is only one further step along a continuous path of ever growing complexity.

¹⁸ Fedele Fenaroli, *Partimenti ossia basso numerato*, 9th edn. (Florence and Milan: Giovanni Canti, 1863).