Bach's Last Fugues

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who was killed in the Caucasus) prophetically wrote on some quartet parts the initials 'O.U.M.C.', saying that Oxford ought to have a Musical Club.

As a matter of fact the Club was formally constituted on April 3, 1872 (two years after Sir Hubert left Oxford), on a suggestion made by Mr. Mitchell-Innes, now the Very Rev. the Provost of Inverness Cathedral, to Mr. (now Dr.) C. Harford Lloyd, who was elected the first president. A meeting was held in Mr. Lloyd's rooms at Magdalen Hall (now Hertford College) in April, 1872. The minutes of the Club record these facts, and in an interesting letter from Mr. Mitchell-Innes to Dr. Lloyd, the Provost says:

It is all quite fresh in my memory. It was the intense pleasure which I derived from those delightful string quartets in Wild's rooms [at Christ Church] which made me regret that a larger audience could not share the pleasure, and this suggested the idea of a club which you took up so keenly and carried into effect.

Over a hundred past and present members of the Club attended the dinner, including the president (Dr. C. B. Heberden, Principal of Brasenose), the Vice-Chancellor, the Senior Proctor, the Warden of New College, the Master of University, the President of St. John's, the Registrar, the Poet Laureate, Mr. Sedley Taylor (from Cambridge), Mr. A. E. Donkin, Mr. E. H. Donkin, Dr. C. H. Lloyd, Dr. Roberts, Dr. Harwood, Dr. Walker, Dr. Allen, Mr. W. Warde-Fowler, Mr. D. F. Tovey, Mr. R. F. Holme, Mr. Bruce Richmond, Mr. Gerrans, Mr. H. G. Ley, and Mr. B. C. Allchin. The toast of 'The Club' was proposed by the Vice-Chancellor and responded to by Dr. C. H. Lloyd as first president, and the Principal of Brasenose as actual president. The idea of the dinner originated, we believe, with Dr. Allen, who carried out the arrangements with his usual energy.

The programme of music performed at the subsequent concert in the Club room was as follows:

CONCERTO IN C for Two Pianofortes, with
accompaniment of Strings J. S. Bach

Allegro moderato—Adagio ovvero Largo—Fuga.

Dr. H. P. Allen and Mr. D. F. Tovey.

Strings—Rev. E. H. Fellowes, Messrs. A. Gibson,
E. H. Donkin, F. E. Oboussier, A. G. Garrod,
C. C. Banks, H. M. Dowson, N. F. Smith, A. E.
Donkin, J. Denniston, H. Taylor.

Conductor—Dr. B. Harwood.

ANDANTE from Sonata in D for Two
Pianofortes (K. 448) Mozart

The Vice-Chancellor and The Principal of Brasenose.

SUITE in the old style in B flat for
Pianoforte and Clarinet C. H. Lloyd

Prelude—Allemande—Minuet and Trio—Sarabande—Gigue.

Dr. C. H. Lloyd and Mr. O. W. Street.

SELECTION from the 'Davidsbündler,'

Op. 6 Schumann

(Nos. 1, 2, 4, 5, 14, 16, 17, 18.)

Dr. E. Walker.

TRIO in E flat for Pianoforte and Strings,
Op. 1, No. 1 Beethoven

Allegro—Adagio cantabile—Scherzo e Trio—Presto.

Messrs. P. V. M. Benecke, E. H. Donkin, and
A. E. Donkin.

The fact that the Vice-Chancellor of the University (The Rev. Dr. T. B. Strong, Dean of Christ Church) and the ex-Vice-Chancellor (the Principal of Brasenose) played a duet for two pianofortes is worthy of note. It is probably a unique occurrence. Their performance was highly appreciated and loudly applauded.

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BACH'S LAST FUGUES.

BY LAWRENCE HAWARD.

Of all the works of J. S. Bach the two which, if they cannot be said exactly to epitomise his attitude towards the Fugue, at any rate contain the most learned of all the examples of that form which he left behind him, are barely known by anything more than their titles. These two are the 'Musikalisches Opfer' and the 'Kunst der Fuge,' both of which were written at the end of his life. It is not altogether surprising that they should be little known, for, if we except the Sonata for flute, violin, and *continuo* in the first of these two works, and the eighth and eleventh Fugues in the second, the music consists of a series of exercises in technique or demonstrations of method, and can hardly be considered as coming into the same category as the big organ fugues, or the 'Forty-Eight,' which the composer made the means of the widest possible range of expression. Sir Hubert Parry puts it admirably when he says of them: 'They frankly present, with little æsthetical circumlocution, the methods of his fugal procedure. It is as though, having completed all his wonderful achievements in that form, he set himself to make a final exposition of his artistic creed, and to offer to the world some examples of pure fugal construction which would define and make plain the lines on which he had proceeded in making his works of art.' Another feature which differentiates both the 'Musikalisches Opfer' and the 'Kunst der Fuge' from his other fugal compositions is the fact that many of their component parts are not written for any particular instrument, and are not, indeed, intended for performance at all, but are simply abstract music for the eye alone, and in order to facilitate the reading, are written out in score. This is more particularly the case with the second work, which is more elaborate and more systematic in its demonstrations of the possibilities of fugal writing than the 'Musikalisches Opfer.'

'DAS MUSIKALISCHE OPFER.'

This work, as its title ('The musical offering') indicates, was a present, the recipient being Frederick the Great, whom Bach had recently visited at Potsdam, where his son, Philipp Emanuel, was installed as Kapellmeister in the King's suite. On this occasion the King had given a theme of his own to Bach to extemporise upon, and had also asked him to show him what he could do in the way of an extemporary fugue in six parts on one of the new Silbermann pianofortes. Even with the account of the incident given by Emanuel and by Friedemann, who was also present, it is not quite clear from the evidence whether the fugue in six parts which Bach invented was also on the King's theme or not; but however that may be, he resolved on reaching home to take up and work out more fully—'vollkommen auszuarbeiten,' he says in the dedication—the theme which his patron had condescended to give him. He was not satisfied, he declared in the same prefatory dedication, with the way in which he had developed the subject at Potsdam, owing to the want of the necessary preparation for the task. The result of this combination of loyalty to the King and the desire to do himself justice was a series of canons and a sonata in four movements (probably intended for flute, violin and *continuo*) in addition to the original Fugue in three parts which he had improvised at Potsdam and the Fugue in six parts which may or may not be the same as the one he played on that occasion. The probabilities are that it is the same, not only because there is no allusion in

the preface to its being a fresh composition, but also because it shows the same signs of being an improvisation as we find in the Fugue in three parts. That in fact is the main interest of these two Fugues. Even if we allow for Bach having to put on to paper what he had thought out on the spur of the moment some days previously, and perhaps for his correcting an imperfect passage here and there, we still have in these two works a record of his way of improvising in his old age. Beethoven, Mozart, Chopin, Franck, are all known to have been supremely gifted at improvisation, which in the 20th century is practically a lost art; but unless we count their Fantasias and Impromptus, which are really improvisations written down, we have no such faithful evidence of what they actually played as Bach has left us in this Musical Offering of his.

If we contrast the Fugue in six parts with the one in C sharp major in the first book of the 'Forty-Eight,' which is in five parts, or with any of the big organ fugues, we shall see how stiff it is in comparison, and lacking in emotional impulse and strong personal feeling. The main subject itself gains little in the course of its treatment, the secondary subjects are discarded after they have once been used, and the total result is frigid and rather mechanical though the mechanism is wonderfully ingenious. The Fugue in three parts is still more obviously the result of momentary inspiration rather than of hard concentration; the episodes without the subject are conveniently long, the main subject itself only recurs twice in an inner part; the treatment of subsidiary and counter-subjects is not strict; there is no *stretto*, and so on. But this very looseness of texture is one of the main charms of the work. We are given a glimpse of Bach expressing himself in his habitual terms but without much hard thinking; we seem to be overhearing his conversation rather than to be listening to one of his set speeches. Both this and the Fugue in six parts were given the other title of 'Ricercare' by Bach, as it supplied him with the acrostic inscription 'Regis Jussu Cantio et Reliqua Canonica Arte Resoluta.' Both were intended to be played on the keyboard, the six-part Fugue not being really more difficult than the Chaconne in comparison with his habitual writing for clavichord or violin. But although in the autograph this Fugue was written on two staves, Bach printed it for the sake of clearness in score. The canons are not meant to be played on any instrument, except perhaps the *canon perpetuus* for two parts by inversion over a free bass, which may be intended, like the Sonata, for flute, violin, and *continuo*. The others are more in the nature of musical games, the solutions of two of which were withheld by Bach with the playful indication, 'Quaerendo invenietis.' And over two of the others he has written (like some old contrapuntist of the Netherlands), punning Latin legends containing symbolical compliments to his patron. As to the Sonata, it is a dignified work in the Italian style with two noble slow movements and two brilliant *Allegros*. The writing shows care and concentration when one turns to it after the extemporised Fugue in three parts, and the feeling throughout is cold, more especially if one contrasts this trio with the earlier work in 'eight' for the same instruments. It is the only number in the Musical Offering which is based on material derived from Frederick's theme rather than on the theme itself.

'DIE KUNST DER FUGE.'

While Bach was engaged on this offering to the King, the idea occurred to him to work out in a still more elaborate form a series of fugues (also built on a single subject) which should be a practical illustration

of this form of contrapuntal writing. If the former was a present to Frederick the Great we may look upon the latter as his legacy to posterity. Posterity, it must be admitted, has taken it very calmly. Even when Emanuel and Friedemann were alive not more than thirty copies of the first edition were sold, in spite of the eulogies of Mattheson and Marburg, the leading critic and theorist of the day; and eventually the plates were disposed of for their value as so much copper. The public was less interested in fugues than it had been, and found no doubt that a series of sixteen of them, accompanied by four canons, was beyond its powers of endurance, more especially as the music was not intended to be played. Bach called them 'counterpoints' (the title 'The art of fugue' was not his) and wrote them out in score, though in one case he made an enlarged arrangement for two claviers of a fugue and its inversion, thus bringing everything within practical range of the keyboard for the sake of those who see better with their fingers than with their eyes. Every conceivable kind of contrapuntal device is resorted to in the course of the work, which might well be taken by lecturers and writers of text-books as a storehouse for their illustrations. The musical, as distinct from the purely technical, interest of the 'Art of fugue,' cannot, however, be said to be very great except in the case of three of the fugues—the eighth, the eleventh, and the unfinished fifteenth. The eighth and the eleventh have material in common, the three subjects of the former being worked out in the latter Fugue in four instead of in three parts. The tenth and the fourteenth Fugues also have matter in common in a different sense, for except for a passage of some twenty bars they are identical; but it is clear that Bach did not mean them both to be printed. He died before the engraving of the plates had been completed, and the two sons who saw the work through the Press did not stop to arrange the material in proper order or even to pay attention to Bach's own list of *errata*. This accounts for the insertion of the two versions of the fourteenth Fugue and for the addition at the end of the volume of the choral-prelude for organ, 'Wenn wir in höchsten Nöten sind,' which Bach dictated on his death-bed to his son-in-law, Altnikol. But it was not by mistake, as has generally been supposed, that the huge unfinished fragment known as the fifteenth Fugue was included with the others. Spitta is decisively of opinion that it does not belong to them, and so are Wilhelm Rust, who prepared the critical edition of it for the Bach Gesellschaft, and Moritz Hauptmann, who wrote a critical pamphlet on it; and both Schweitzer and Parry are negative, though Schweitzer suggests that the fugue may possibly have been intended as a kind of appendix. Signor Busoni has, we think, conclusively proved in his 'Choral-Vorspiel und Fuge über ein Bachsches Fragment' (Messrs. Breitkopf & Härtel) that the unfinished Fugue was intended to be the *Finale* of the whole art of fugue, and the interest of the proof is that it is based, not upon documentary evidence, but upon purely musical reasoning.

The argument put forward by those who hold that the fragment does not belong to the collection runs thus: 'The whole point of the "Art of Fugue" is that each fugue should be based on the original theme or a derivative of it; the three subjects of this unfinished sketch do not include the original theme or a derivative of it; therefore the fifteenth Fugue does not belong to the "Art of Fugue."' The argument assumes that the Fugue was designed to be built on three subjects, and it is just this assumption which Busoni has shown to be unwarrantable. He has done it in this way: he has taken up the fragment at the point where it breaks off—that is to say, at the simultaneous entry of the

three voices already introduced (the last of the three being a subject on the name B A C H)—and after working the three together has added to them a fourth subject. This subject is nothing else than the chief theme of the 'Art of Fugue' on which all the previous fourteen are built, the very theme the absence of which was pointed to as an argument against the inclusion of the Fugue with the others. The working of the four subjects together has been carried out with masterly skill, but the chief interest, of course, of Busoni's completion of Bach's work is the fact that it shows that the fifteenth Fugue was undoubtedly designed to be the *Finale* of the 'Art of Fugue.' The introduction of the chief theme in fact finishes off the whole thing in an entirely logical and musically convincing way by summing up into a supreme climax everything that has gone before. A quotation to illustrate the combination of the four themes may be of interest :

Ex. 1.

Ex. 1. is a musical score for piano, featuring a complex contrapuntal texture. It consists of three systems of staves. The first system has a treble and bass staff. The second system has a treble, middle, and bass staff. The third system has a treble, middle, and bass staff. The notation is dense, with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes, and various accidentals. The piece is in G major and 3/4 time.

Here the right-hand plays the subject of the second Fugue, the tenor part is the subject of the third Fugue (B A C H), the second bass is the subject of the first Fugue, and the chief theme of the 'Art of Fugue' is given to the first bass. At the beginning Busoni has added a choral-prelude of his own on the subject, 'Allein Gott in der Höh' sei Ehr,' which in the second and enlarged version of the work, called a 'Fantasia contrappuntistica' (also published by Messrs. Breitkopf & Härtel), returns at the end immediately before the *stretto*. The three other features which differentiate this enlarged version from the earlier one are the treatment of the chorale with harmonies which are entirely modern in feeling—the harmonies that we find in the pianoforte 'Elegies'; the insertion of three variations, also in modern tonality, on the name B A C H, in the middle of the work so as to form an *intermezzo* between the third and fourth Fugues; and the introduction at one point in the *Finale* of the theme of the second of these interpolated variations, which comes in as a fifth voice simultaneously with the

other four. An example set out in score will make this piece of counterpoint clear :

Ex. 2. is a musical score for piano, showing four distinct fugue subjects and a variation. It consists of five systems of staves. The first system has a treble and bass staff. The second system has a treble, middle, and bass staff. The third system has a treble, middle, and bass staff. The fourth system has a treble, middle, and bass staff. The fifth system has a treble, middle, and bass staff. The notation is clear, with each subject and variation clearly marked. The piece is in G major and 3/4 time.

This 'Fantasia contrappuntistica' is intended as a study only, and is not meant for performance, though it has been played by Busoni at a private concert at Berlin. Arrangements of it have also been made (though not by Busoni) for organ and for orchestra. The orchestral version was to have been given at one of the Philharmonic concerts in 1913, but it had to be withdrawn at the last moment as sufficient time was not allowed to give it proper rehearsal. The fact that these arrangements have not been carried out by Busoni is due to his indifference to the medium employed. He has said of it himself, 'The "Fantasia contrappuntistica" is conceived neither for pianoforte nor for organ, nor yet for orchestra. It is music. The means of conveying the music in sound to the listener is of secondary importance.' It has been

written, in fact, as a kind of 'Musical offering' to Bach. 'I thought,' Busoni says, 'I should be acting in the spirit of Bach by taking our art of to-day with its utmost possibilities as the organic development of his own, and turning it to the service of what he planned, just as he expressed himself with the utmost possibilities of the art of his time.' The Fantasia is of great interest to the student, but for those who do not feel that they can look on at this meeting of the new spirit and the old from quite the same point of view, the smaller version will be the one to which they will turn. That is not merely a fine piece of creative work in itself; it also offers a solution, on purely æsthetic lines, of a curious problem in musical history.

FOLK-SONGS.

BY EDMONDSTOUNE DUNCAN.

There was once a time when anyone walking into the country might have heard songs and ballads which people sang from sheer joyousness of heart,—tributes to the beauty of health and hope, of days and nights which brought forth a rich harvest of glad thought, thrilling the contented mind, and welling forth in liquid utterance, beside which the melody of birds was vain and artificial. Shakespeare's Pedlar not only vended such wares, he was also able to bear a part. Mopsa and he, with a shepherdess' help, and a new ballad before them, troll it out *a prima vista*, in a way that competitive sight-singers might envy. *Nous avons changé tout cela*; and although old songs of both town and country are still to be heard, the lover of folk-song must choose his ways carefully if he would be rewarded. Not many years ago the very existence of folk-song was seriously doubted. It was even scorned by the early historians. But it is now in high favour, and from being a luxury it has grown to a household word. The Society which directly patronises and preserves it can only boast of fourteen years' existence; yet its membership already enrolls the heads of the leading Colleges and Academies, with quite an array of University professors, musicians and critics. Books and MSS. before the time named did little to foster the movement. Nevertheless there existed a few undoubted folk-songs such as the traditional airs associated with Shakespeare, a handful of country dances of the 'Trenchmore' and 'Greensleeves' pattern, one or two isolated snatches of song like 'Westron Wynd' (in a 16th century Museum MS.), and a bundle of Christmas carols. We may accept or reject Lamb's 'vocal portraits of the national mind' as a satisfactory definition of folk-song or balladry, yet everyone has a shrewd idea that folk-music differs from the ordinary thing, inasmuch as it is traditional, and that no one can trace its precise origin. But whether or not behind each song there was an individual composer, who can be sure? Schlegel says there was; the Grimms held that such things grew by a common effort, like speech itself.

As everyday examples of what may be gathered in an afternoon's journey from Manchester, the following songs should prove of some interest. The first was sung by a huntsman, who knew no more of its history than that it had been handed down for generations and was a favourite with the craft. It was sung quietly, with a keen appreciation of its melody. Hills and vales seemingly took shape in the mind's eye; there was the swift rush of dogs, the race for life, with its inevitable end. Then one realised the snug celebration of the day's sport, its incense of tobacco and the healthy relish of rural cheer.

Ex. 1.

Bright beams ar-ray the fields at dawn, Hark, yon's the huntman's
mer-ry horn, Who could not on so fine a morn A
hunt-er's life en-joy? Oh, what a sight! 'Tis
my de-light, To see brave hounds Frisk o'er the ground.
Hark! hark! hark! that's Throwler, There's Dri-ver and there's
Jow-ler, And Mu-sic and old Tow-ler, What a
Repeat the Chorus.
mer-ry, mer-ry, jo-vial cry!

Now what's to do?
We're at a loss,
Perhaps he's skulking in yon moss,
Why casts he not his hounds across
For I know they'll hit her by.
Hark, hear you there,
Another cheer,
They're off again
Right up the lane.
It's hark, hark unto her,
See how they do pursue her,
Right up yon hill they view her,
What a merry, merry jovial cry.
Now she'll not last long,
Look o'er the lea.
They're viewing her hard
All down by yonder tree;
Run speedily
They'll tear her,
Run, hie thee, Ned,
Whoa dead, whoa dead.
Whoop! now it's all over,
They've kill'd her in yon clover,
By gum! she's been a rover,
With a merry, merry jovial cry.

The second and third songs came from a reaper in the fields: one who sang at his work, and scarcely seemed surprised that he should be asked to repeat so agreeable a diversion. His only regret was that he could not give more. We left him with his full-eared sheaves, a solitary figure, charming the lazy-footed hours with queer stanzas of song, some of which might have matched the quaint old church spire (peeping out in the distance) in point of age.

Ex. 2.

It's fare thee well to Glas-gow, Like-
-wise to Lan-ark shore, . . And fare thee well my
bon-ny lass, I'll nev-er see thee more. . .