

History of the Fugue

I 14th Century

A. Jacobus of Liege was the first to use the term "fuga" in his writings.

B. Fugue was strictly a technique of composition, not a genre in itself.

C. was found almost entirely in secular instrumental music, which explains its scarcity and the lack of writing on it.

D. Canonic imitation gained importance during the century in two forms.

1. caccia

2. rondelles.

II 15th Century

A. First mention of fugue in sacred music was in the Trent Codices.

B. Still a generic term for imitation in general.

C. Tinctoris wrote of it as a technique of composition in the first musical dictionary - "the identity of rhythmic and melodic writing in various parts in a composition."

D. Bartholomew Ramos de Pareja was the first to suggest free imitation when strict imitation would present problems.

III 16th Century

A. The form began to flower, and discussion became quite expansive.

B. Vincentino - "L'Antica Musica ridotta all moderna pratica"

1. Discussed fugue extensively.

2. Discouraged use of entirely strict imitation.

3. Discouraged the necessity of a cantus firmus. Talked about imitation sections of a melody.

4. First to suggest that the composer choose a mode.

The tonal answer was the beginning of modern tonality.

C. Zarlino

1. Was the first to distinguish between fugue and imitation. Imitation was strict, fugue was not.

2. Introduced some fugal terminology.

3. Encouraged mixing free fugue and imitation.

D. Fray Tomás de Santa María wrote of improvisation in all chordal instruments - a technique which led to fugue.

E. Pietro Pontio wrote of the ricercare and its relation to and use of fugue.

F. Thomas Morley recommended widely spaced fugal entrances so the listener could discern the voices, also encouraged the use of rests and criticized the use of a single theme.

III 17th Century

A. "Fugue" became more exactly known as fugal exposition - fugue was becoming a piece in itself.

B. Important features of its structure were freedom from a cantus firmus and freedom from a verbal text.

C. Still instrumental.

D. Giovanni Coperario introduced the concept of theme and countertune.

E. Nucius related the term "thema" to "fuga" for the first time.

F. Michael Praetorius anticipated theme development.

1. Hinted of forms to come -

a. Canzon - fugal exposition, development, + restatement.

b. "Conzona de sonare" - sonata.

G. Picerli gave "canon" its modern definition as the opening voice in its entirety.

H. Bernhard constructed a system of modes with the first one

based on C rather than D.

1. led to tonality in fugue.
2. anticipated transposition and modulation.

I. Reinken (Buxtehude pupil) discussed tonality and structure, cadences, and recommended strettos.

J. Boncini wrote of "fuga regolare" which was based on the tonal answer. He recommended strettos.

K. Henry Purcell redefined fugue and imitation.

1. fugue is a technique used in "sonata".
2. imitation is a diminutive form of "fuguing".

IV. 18th Century

A. Fugue was fully developed as we know it today.

B. Walther wrote of *repercussio* music - music carried back to tonic from dominant.

C. Rameau defined:

1. imitation - casual application of imitative manner.
2. Fugue - harmonically oriented imitative manner.
3. the structure of fugue was to be the result of careful harmonic planning.

V. 19th Century

A. Giry wrote "Gradus a Parnassum" which was to become an abiding authority. This was the first attempt to write of fugue from a pedagogical standpoint.

B. The form was completely developed.

VI. 20th Century

A. Not much written on the subject, probably because it is a closed form - there is nowhere else to go.

B. Some composers still write in the form though it may be altered - Roy Harris, Ravel, Wallingford Riegger, Charles Ives, etc.

Analysis

M. Rauch

Jux - from *Gradus ad Parnassum*

Morley - A Plain and easy Introduction to
Practical Music

Buxtehude -

Fugue in G for Organ.

Pachelbel -

Magnificat Fugue No. 15 on D, for organ.

Bach -

Fugue No. 16 in G Minor

Handel -

Aria in F, for flute, violin, & continuo
allegro

Beethoven -

Fugue in D, op. 137, for string quartet

Robert Schumann -

Fugue # 3 in G minor

(from "Six Fugues on the Name of BACH",
op. 60; organ)

Barber -

Sonata, 4th movement, Fuga