

How to Use This Book

This book is not meant to be read through in one go. It aims to help you, its reader, achieve a creative understanding and interpretation of Bach's preludes and fugues by encouraging you to think for yourself.

After a brief introduction to the nature and origin of the *Well-Tempered Clavier*," you will find three parts of very different length and emphasis:

- I questions to be pondered
- II additional information
- III discussions of possible answers to the questions with regard to each of the 48 preludes and fugues

Before you approach the catalogue of questions, decide which prelude or fugue you wish to embark on and open your score. This is because the questions will only make sense if you have a particular piece in mind. The best edition to use for a task like this and for any serious interpretation, for that matter, is an *Urtext*, a score that is free of any particular editor's personal markings and contains only Bach's unaltered writing.

Now start working on the first question. Can you answer it right away? If you have any doubts as to what exactly the question implies, or what a particular term means, refer to the pages providing additional information. They will give you a more general background to each of the specific issues to be considered.

Proceed in the same way through all the questions. Be sure to take notes on your own answers: there will be far too many details to keep in your head. You can mark most of your answers directly into your score but will need a few separate sheets of paper for some drawings.

Finally, when you have found all the answers, or when you feel that you are stuck with a particular one, look up your piece in the section of this book that gives an in-depth investigation into the work, and compare the model answers with your own results. It is important to understand that for quite a few questions, there are several possible solutions: while some attitudes may be unwarranted, others are a matter of personal preference and thus not a matter of right or wrong.

This book seeks to list alternative solutions and views wherever possible, discussing the implications of each solution for the character and interpretation of the piece. In some cases, however, it may not have been possible or advisable to follow up on all of the alternatives. Using your own mind you will surely have no problems drawing any additional conclusions not mentioned here.

If, by the time you work on your third or fourth prelude and fugue, you have become so independent as an analyst and interpreter that you need only glance at the questions, if you can skip the information and peruse the model answers merely to consolidate your ideas—then this book has proved successful.



Abbreviations used:

S A T B	voices in four-part polyphony: soprano, alto, tenor, bass
U M L	voices in three-part polyphony: upper, middle, lower voice
v1, v2, etc.	voices in polyphonic works of five or more parts
S	subject: the principal thematic component in a fugue
CS	counter-subject: its recurring companion
<i>dux</i>	the subject's original form, launched from the tonic
<i>comes</i>	the subject's answer, launched from the dominant
M	motif: a small, distinct, recurring thematic unit
'CM'	(artificial term: the contrapuntal companion to a motif)
Ms, Mcs	motif derived from the subject / the counter-subject
rh	rhythm, rhythmic pattern, or rhythmic figure
var	varied, variation
inv	inverted, inversion
E	episode
m. 5 ₁	the downbeat of measure 5
mm. 1 ₃ -3 ₁	from the third beat of measure 1 to the downbeat of m. 3
T – S – D	tonic, subdominant, dominant in the major mode
T relative	the minor triad on the 6th scale degree of a major key
t relative	the major triad on the 3rd scale degree of a minor key
I – IV – V	the main cadential steps in a major key
i – iv – V	the main cadential steps in a minor key
r.h., l.h.	right hand (right-hand part), left hand (left-hand part)