

## WTC II/2 in C minor – Prelude

This prelude is composed in almost consistent two-part texture. There are only three instances—mm. 12, 26, and 28—where the simple pattern is suspended in favor of an apparent third voice or voice-splitting into fuller chords. Polyphonic independence of the two voices, however, is very limited. Most measures feature open or slightly concealed parallel motion. At the same time, each voice consists of various levels, often allowing a distinction between “melody” and “background.” The background may be a pedal note or an ornamental filler. On the melodic plane, several gestures recur, both in imitation or sequence and in various modifications and developments. Yet owing to the very uniform rhythmic structure consisting exclusively of 16th-notes and eighth-notes and interrupted only in the final measures of each section, these melodic gestures seem to bear less weight than they might in different surroundings. The result is a light piece shaped primarily by large motions of ascending and descending lines, reminiscent of the B-major prelude from book I.

Harmonic data provide insight into the structural layout. Within the first section, mm. 1-5<sub>1</sub> confirm the home key C minor, mm. 5-9<sub>3</sub> modulate to the relative key E<sub>b</sub> major, and mm. 9<sub>3</sub>-12 confirm this secondary key. In the second section, mm. 13-17<sub>1</sub> modulate to the subdominant F minor, mm. 17-22<sub>3</sub> confirm the subdominant, after which mm. 22<sub>3</sub>-26<sub>1</sub> return to and mm. 26-28 confirm the home key.

A simple rhythmic pattern and the presence of leaps and ornamental figures in the pitch outline suggest a lively basic character. The articulation requires non legato for the eighth-notes and a very crisp quasi legato for the 16th-notes. The tempo is gently flowing. Performers will want to make sure that listeners perceive a quarter-note pulse with ornamentation rather than melodious 16th-notes while avoiding the impression of sheer finger virtuosity. Not only did Bach choose 4/4 and not 2/2 for the meter, but he also expects additional ornaments on some of the 16th-notes. The inverted mordents in mm. 7 and 8 pose no problem: there is ample time for the three notes and the pitch of the lower neighboring note is unquestionably G. The trills in mm. 14 and 16 are more demanding. Even though they do not encompass suffixes since the following note qualifies neither melodically nor metrically as a resolution, four notes must be fit into a 16th-note, due to the regular beginning on the upper neighbor note.

With regard to color shading, careful gradation of intensity in the notes belonging to the different melodic “layers” accounts for the beauty in this prelude. To give an idea of how dynamic shading can convey this particular textural design, the following example depicts these “layers” in mm. 1-2:

The image shows a musical score for two measures. It consists of four staves. The top two staves are grouped as 'background' and the bottom two as 'foreground'. The top staff has a dynamic marking of *p*. The foreground staves have dynamic markings of *mp+* and *mp-* in the first measure, and *mp-* and *mp+* in the second measure. The score includes various rhythmic figures, including sixteenth-note patterns and quarter-note pulses.

The initial motif (M1) begins in a metrically weak position. The bass note C on the downbeat serves as an anchor: it takes part in neither the melodic lines nor the regular background features. Its tone quality is therefore sonorous but neutral. M1, as shown in the example above, consists of a melodic descent in quarter-notes doubled in compound thirds. On the first level of background, a 16th-note-figure in the shape of an inverted mordent serves both as a melodic link between the notes of M1 and as an octave ornament of its parallel. Finally, the off-beat eighth-notes in the accompanying voice represent a repeated C that, although it gives way to the harmonically required B $\flat$  at the end of the measure, conveys a strong sense of an indirect pedal note. All features recur in inverted voices in m. 2. Moreover, they turn out to be the constituents of the entire piece.

M2, introduced in mm. 3-4, appears as if enlarged on various levels. The steps of the melodic line, now ascending, move in strong-beat half-notes so that we hear pairs of repeated notes in active/passive grouping: D-D, E $\flat$ -E $\flat$ , F-F, G-(E $\flat$ ). The parallel in the lower voice also begins, in m. 3, with an ornamented half-note G. Only in m. 4 do we hear chromatic steps in quarter-note pulse (A $\flat$ -A-B $\flat$ -B-C). The indirect pedal is abandoned in this motif. M3 in mm. 5-7 $\frac{3}{4}$  drops an additional feature: the accompanying eighth-notes. Instead, the parallel melodic steps, falling on beats 1, 2, and 3 of each of these measures, are surrounded by the ornamental figure that is now intensified in parallels, and complemented by a scale that overruns the obvious two-part texture by creating the illusion of a link between the

upper and the lower voices. In mm. 7<sub>3</sub>-8<sub>3</sub>, the lower part continues the previous pattern while the upper part emancipates itself briefly with a repeated ornamental figure. The harmonic progression is concluded in mm. 8<sub>3</sub>-9<sub>3</sub> with a closing formula in the bass and in the “melodic layer” of the upper part (E<sub>b</sub>-D-E<sub>b</sub>). The first section ends with a transposition of M1 (compare mm. 9<sub>3</sub>-11<sub>3</sub> with mm. 1-2) followed by another cadential close in mm. 11<sub>3</sub>-12.

The second section begins with a slightly more complex pattern. In mm. 13-14, we hear a hidden-three part texture consisting of an upper layer with melodic quarter-notes followed by a straightforward melodic figure and its descending sequence, a lower layer with neutrally-colored accompanying eighth-notes followed by quarter-notes, and an ornamental background that, here, does not move together with the melodic lines but presents an indirect pedal on B<sub>b</sub> (m. 13, right hand), followed by an ornamented G and F (m. 14, left hand). The entire pattern is then repeated in transposition (upper voice a fifth down, lower voice a fourth up), with only minimal adjustments at the beginning of the pattern.

In the substantial center of this second section, Bach establishes no motifs at all. Variations of earlier features can be made out, e.g., a modified version of M3 in mm. 19-20, a remote resemblance of M2 in m. 22, and ornamented indirect pedal-notes in mm. 17 (r.h.: C) and 21 (l.h.: F). Yet although a minimal sense of melodic recognition is encouraged by sequences, the predominant features are not found in the details but rather in the large-scale lines.

The following sketch, showing an excerpt of this prelude in its skeletal version, concentrates on these features and thus gives guidelines for intensity shading and dynamic shaping:

After the harmonic return to C minor, the prelude’s last three measures recapitulate fragments of the various features. There is a variation of M2 beginning in the left hand with an upbeat of three 16th-notes to m. 26. They are paralleled in the middle voice in m. 26 and picked up by the

upper voice in m. 27 (here accompanied by the chromatic steps heard several times before in the bass). The piece ends with a measure that resembles the final measure in the first section, thus establishing a certain sense of binary form that is otherwise easily lost in this piece.

Regarding the large-scale development of tension, the following dynamic pattern emerges from the play of motifs and peak-note lines:

mm. 1 and 2	+ 9 <sub>3</sub> -10 <sub>3</sub> -11 <sub>3</sub>	two self-contained curves
mm. 3-5 <sub>1</sub>	+ 11 <sub>3</sub> -12 <sub>1</sub>	crescendo
mm. 5-9 <sub>3</sub>	+ 12	diminuendo
mm. 13-14, 15-16		curves with climaxes at m. 14 <sub>1</sub> and 16 <sub>1</sub>
mm. 17-20		diminuendo
mm. 21		l.h. diminuendo, r.h. crescendo
mm. 22-25		diminuendo
mm. 26-28 <sub>1</sub>		crescendo
m. 28		diminuendo

### WTC II/2 in C minor – Fugue

With only 28 measures, the C minor fugue seems relatively short. This is also reflected in its subject, which spans only one measure, beginning after an eighth-note rest and concluding on the next downbeat. As in the preceding fugue, the subject sets out as if suspended on the fifth and closes on the third. Two further features are also reminiscent of the C-major in WTC II fugue: Regarding rhythm, the regular eighth-notes are complemented at the end of the phrase by two 16th-notes that, together with the final note, form an inverted-mordent figure. Regarding pitch, the subject features two consecutive leaps with large intervals (m. 1: G-C-F).

A considerable difference between the two thematic lines is that the interval leaps in the C-major subject occur in a metrically strong position (leading toward a downbeat) while the C-minor subject features the leaps in a metrically weak position (relaxing after a strong beat). And while the metric organization in the C-major subject leaves no room for doubt, the three initial eighth-notes here give the impression—certainly to all listeners who are not following a score—of an upbeat in a 2/4 measure, especially since they describe a melodic curve that returns to its beginning: G-E<sub>b</sub>-F-G. (It is, in fact, almost impossible—and perhaps not even desirable—to attempt a rendition for the beginning of this fugue that does not leave the metric organization unclear to the audience.)

The subject's simple rhythmic design is deceptive. From m. 5 onward, 16th-notes become a regular feature, occurring either in linear runs and figures or in complementary patterns between two voices involving dotted and tied notes. Finally, there are even instances where other note values—quarter-notes and 32nd-notes—play a role in the melodic material.

The harmonic background can be called rudimentary. It consists of a minimal I-V-I, making do without even a proper representation of the subdominant. Whatever the harmonization of the initial note, which Bach keeps changing throughout the piece, the tonic is established weakly on beat 2 and confirmed on the stronger beat 3. Where the connecting eighth-note is harmonized as a subdominant, this chord is not only placed in a metrically subordinate position but, more importantly, heard as ornamentation between the two tonic chords. The opposite is true for the fourth beat of this measure.



Considering this unusually plain harmonic design in conjunction with the metric particularities of the subject, there are two notes that might contend for the privilege of serving as climax. The F on the fourth beat is harmonically slightly enhanced and appears melodically prepared by the two consecutive leaps. The G on the middle beat holds the metric focus and could be regarded as the point of departure for an ornamented descent in quarter-notes G—F—E, D E. (In this interpretation, the C in the center of the two consecutive leaps would be read as a kind of background-level note not partaking in the main melodic line.)

This is a fugue with many subject statements—twenty-four altogether. While identifying the entries is not difficult, the voice allocation is not as obvious as it might seem at first glance. A straightforward reading would distribute the statements among the four voices that Bach's title mentions. Yet this obvious and apparently simple solution has several shortcomings: The fugue is consistently in three-part texture until m. 19, i.e., for far more than half of the piece. The exposition of a four-part fugue would have to include the fourth statement. The fourth subject entry in mm. 7-8, however, appears in a texture with only one other voice, and thereby gives the impression of opening a new section. As if to support this reading, the downbeat of m. 7 presents a cadential close that is melodically satisfactory, while that at m. 8, after the fourth entry, is much less convincing.

L. Czaczkes in his analytical work on Bach's fugues makes a suggestion for the structure of this fugue that may sound daring but has the advantage that it works, i.e., that it makes sense without asking for compromises. He

contends that what listeners perceive—and what Bach conceived—is a three-part composition, with a fourth “pedal” voice entering only toward the end and only for four repeated subject statements linked with cadential-bass notes. The table below lists the subject statement in a voice allocation according to the concept described above and, in brackets, the designation according to an open score (Thompson, Toronto) that represents the “first glance” view. The descriptions in this chapter will refer to the former.

1 mm. 1-2	A	9 mm. 14-16	A	17 mm. 21-22	B
2 mm. 2-3	S	10 mm. 15-16	T	18 mm. 22-23	B
3 mm. 4-5	T	11 mm. 16-17	A	19 mm. 23-24	A
4 mm. 7-8	T (B)	12 mm. 16-17	S	20 mm. 23-24	S
5 mm. 8-9	S	13 mm. 17-18	T	21 mm. 24-25	S
6 mm. 10-11	A	14 mm. 17-18	S	22 mm. 25-26	A
7 mm. 11-12	T (B)	15 mm. 18-19	A	23 mm. 25-26	T
8 mm. 14-15	S	16 mm. 19-21	B	24 mm. 26-27	B

The subject undergoes a number of modifications as well as various groupings. The answer differs from the original by a smaller initial interval: the major third is replaced by a major second. This allows the answer to begin on the tonic but continue in the dominant. Throughout the fugue, seven subject entries can be identified as answers. One of them adopts the interval structure of S: mm. 2-3<sub>1</sub> (A: mm. 16-17<sub>1</sub>) while the remaining five reduce the initial interval to a minor second (B: mm. 7-8<sub>1</sub>, A: mm. 10-11<sub>1</sub>, S: mm. 17-18<sub>1</sub>, B: mm. 22-23<sub>1</sub>, and S: mm. 23-24<sub>1</sub>). Subject inversions occur three times, all of them in the harmonic setting of an answer. Augmentation is used twice. Both enlarged entries quote the subject’s original shape without any modification.

Strettos occur frequently. They include combinations of the original, the inversion and augmentation, combining two, three, or four statements. In one case, the overlap is so dense that a repeated entry in one voice unites altogether five statements into a group.

Modifications may appear at almost any place in the phrase; they can serve as variations, harmonic changes, or the one resulting from the other. Variations of the subject’s head include an abbreviation of the first note (mm. 8 and 17). Simple harmonic changes occur in the form of a change of mode (mm. 7-8<sub>1</sub>, 10-11<sub>1</sub>, 22-23<sub>1</sub>, and 25-26<sub>1</sub>). The final note may be raised in the manner of a Picardy third (m. 24<sub>1</sub>) or diverted so as to transform the inverted-mordent figure into a scale segment (m. 11<sub>1</sub>). Where this

deviation of the final note occurs in the inversion of a minor-mode entry, the subject ends in the melodic minor scale and thus contains shifting accidentals (mm. 16<sub>1</sub> and 22<sub>1</sub>). Similarly, a new harmonization of the beginning converts the second and third subject notes into the sixth and seventh degree of a melodic minor scale—followed in the descent by notes from the natural scale (mm. 16-19). Yet another change from major to minor owed to a stretto position occurs in mm. 24-25. Finally, the last statement surrounds its initial note with artificial leading-notes on both sides and then breaks into a virtuoso flourish (see B: mm. 26-27<sub>1</sub>).

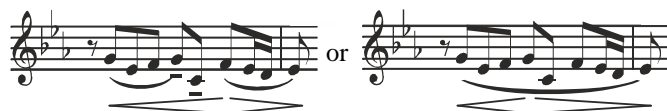
There is no true counter-subject. The simple descent accompanying the second and third subject entries (A: mm. 2-3, S: mm. 4-5) is an extension and further relaxation of the subject and fails to recur later.

The fugue comprises seven subject-free passages, most of them short:

E1	mm. 3-4 <sub>1</sub>	E4	m. 11 (eighth-notes 2-5)
E2	mm. 5-7 <sub>1</sub>	E5	mm. 12 <sub>3</sub> -14 <sub>1</sub>
E3	mm. 9-10 <sub>1</sub>	E6	m. 23 (eighth-notes 2-5)
		E7	mm. 27-28

The episodes are easily described in both their material and the role they play in the overall dynamic outline. E1 with its descending lines links two subject statements. E3 is related to the subject: it evolves from the preceding entry in two descending sequences of all three voices. Both episodes function as bridges, with slightly falling tension. E4, although only half a measure long, has highly important effects: it shifts the subject metrically (placing the climax on the downbeat) and harmonically (modulating with a chromatically enhanced bass line from C minor to F minor). The tension rises here. E5 and E6 contain typical cadential formulas, as does the final E7 that splits into five and (in the final chord) six voices. Only the one longer episode, E2, introduces an independent motif. First presented in the tenor, the motif's eight 16th-notes describe a fifth leap answered in opposite direction by an almost complete scale. The motif is sequenced once and then imitated in inversion in the upper voice, where it is again sequenced. A further imitation, now in the middle voice, accompanies the following subject entry. This episode is dynamically self-contained: the tension rises through one measure and falls through the other. In mm. 12-13, the ascending sequences in all three voices take up a mediating position between primary and episode material. The tenor presents a free variation of the subject (which includes a completely changed first eighth-note and two octave displacements). This sequential measure complements E5, extending it to two-measure length with a curved dynamic shape and thus establishing a correspondence to E2.

The basic character of this fugue requires careful pondering. Owing to the subject's simple rhythm and consecutive leaps, the initial two measures might easily lead one to assume a lively character, with detached eighth- and quarter-notes. Yet this articulation fails already in m. 3 where the syn-copated rhythm would be lost in detached style. From mm. 8-9 onward we need not only legato playing but a calm mood to appreciate the texture. Thus the complexity of the rhythmic pattern in the fugue as a whole dominates in determining the basic character as rather calm. In terms of articulation, the decision performers have made regarding the dynamic shape of the subject influences its performance: If the F on beat 4 of the subject is considered and played as the climax, then this climax is prepared in a linear way by the fifth + fourth leaps. In this case, these leaps would have to be played gently detached as they in fact interrupt the smooth melodic line. If, by contrast, the middle-beat G epitomizes the peak of tension, the situation is different. As was already briefly mentioned above, this interpretation supports the subsurface line G—F—E<sub>b</sub> D E<sub>b</sub> in the second half of the subject. In this concept, the C that causes the two leaps does not belong to the principal melodic contour but sounds on a secondary level of intensity. It thus acts as a momentary escape from a smooth line in descending seconds, and not as an equal participant in a pattern of active leaps. In this interpretation of the subject, the entire phrase would thus be played legato.



In either case there are a few leaps outside the subject that require non-legato rendering: the octave leap in m. 3 (G), the cadential leaps in the lower voice of mm. 8-10 and 13-14, the alto on the middle beat of m. 19, and the bass in m. 23 as well as in the three final notes in mm. 27-28.

The tempo of this fugue is moderately flowing: slow enough to allow for full appreciation of the texture in all measures with a complementary-rhythm structure, but not so slow as to stretch the augmented statements beyond recognition. These should still move in such a way that they could be sung on one breath. The relative tempo of the prelude to the fugue may be chosen in simple proportion since the two pieces are conceived in so different a character: a half-note in the prelude corresponds with a quarter-note in the fugue. (Approximate metronome settings: prelude beats = 108, fugue beats = 54)



When describing the fugue's layout, we must decide between Czaczkes' reading as a three-part fugue with late-coming pedal voice and the first-sight treatment as a four-part fugue with puzzling irregularities in the first two-thirds (mm. 1-19). The analysis that follows is based on the former assumption. The entering order of the voices in the three-part portion of the piece, the texture in which they appear, the dynamic gestures of the episodes, and the harmonic progression all support this plan.

The first section comprises three statements—one in each of the three voices—as well as a linking episode (E1) and a self-contained one (E2) concluding the section at m. 7<sub>1</sub>. The second section begins with the ensemble reduced to two voices and the subject statements representing the answer now in the major mode. There are four entries in this section, the last of which is redundant and appears in F minor. It is followed by a strongly varied sequence that shifts to G minor, the key in which the section ends with a cadential formula at m. 14<sub>1</sub>. Both episodes included in this section are bridges between consecutive entries. E3 corresponds with E1 in the first section both with regard to its descending sequences and with regard to its position between the second and the third statements. The third section begins again in reduced ensemble and is characterized by the introduction of an augmented subject in stretto with an original entry and an inverted entry. In this three-part stretto, the augmented alto entry serves as leader, although it enters second. In the next stretto, the salient feature is a repeated soprano entry (also entering second). This repeated entry takes up the same time as the augmented entry before. Secondary entries in this stretto appear in the alto, the tenor and again in the alto. The third component of this section is provided by the newly entering bass. Matching the preceding strettos with three entries, the bass covers consecutively the augmented, the inverted, and the original versions of the subject. The cadential close of E6 completes this section. The fourth and last section begins once more with a drastic reduction in the number of voices, but embarks on two more strettos. The first presents an interplay of alto and soprano, with sketchy support of the tenor and only an eighth-note C as a pedal note in the bass. The second stretto begins similarly (entries in soprano and alto, similar tenor figure, same bass eighth-note) but then includes a tenor entry and a strongly varied bass entry, together with fragments of the subject in the upper voices. E7 concludes this section.

The first and second sections are almost equally long and similarly designed. Moreover, sections I + II (mm. 1-14) and III + IV (mm. 14-28) are also of corresponding length.

The first two sections remain understated in their emotional content. The tension rises little in the course of the first section where the increase in texture is counteracted by descending lines in the accompanying voices and in the episode. The same holds true for the first three entries in the second section. Only the redundant entry presents a heightened level of intensity. The third section, by contrast, conveys impressions of density (in the five-entry stretto in mm. 16-19) and of grandeur (in the augmented alto entry, the reiterated soprano entry, and the threefold bass statement). While in the fourth section the bass pedal evokes a foreboding of the impending end, the impression of density is repeated in the final four-part stretto and the voice splitting of the closing episode.

