

WTC II/9 in E major – Prelude

The E-major prelude is composed in a texture that moves consistently in three parts, apart from voice splitting in the final measures of each half. Although closer inspection reveals that the lower voice has a less active role in contributing thematic material than the upper and middle voices, the setting is undoubtedly polyphonic. The material does not center on any one melodic idea but presents a chain of motifs. All motifs are either sequenced or imitated right away, but only a few also recur later in the piece. This thematic design, together with the structural layout in two repeated halves, is reminiscent of movements in a Baroque suite. Given the prevalent rhythmic features and the triple meter, one thinks of a courante.

The distinct motifs are interspersed with cadential formulas that, although not always typical in their melodic details, stand out from their surroundings because of the noticeable absence of motivic material. It is these cadential closes, rather than the ones concluding a four-measure motif, that shape the harmonic layout of the piece. One can distinguish five sections:

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|-----|------------------------|--|
| I | mm. 1-18 ₁ | tonic to dominant (E major to B major) |
| II | mm. 18-24 | dominant confirmed (B major throughout) |
| III | mm. 25-32 ₁ | dominant to tonic relative (B major to C# minor) |
| IV | mm. 32-46 ₁ | return to the tonic (C# minor to E major) |
| V | mm. 46-54 | tonic confirmed (E major throughout) |

Among other structurally relevant features, symmetries and pedal notes deserve attention. Correspondences can be found three times:

- mm. 1-5₁ ≈ mm. 5-9₁ ≈ mm. 25-29₁ (varied),
mm. 18-21₁ ≈ mm. 46-49₁, and
mm. 21-24₁ ≈ mm. 43-46₁.

Pedal notes occur, directly or indirectly, in 19 of the prelude's 54 measures:

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|------------|---------------|--------------|
| mm. 1-3: E | mm. 18-20: B | mm. 46-48: E |
| mm. 5-7: B | mm. 28-30: G# | mm. 51-54: E |

The rhythmic pattern is simple. Melodically relevant notes are either 16th- or eighth-notes. Longer notes occur only in accompanying voices (see particularly mm. 1-3 and 5-7 etc.) or in complementary patterns (see, e.g., the syncopations in mm. 18-20 and 23-24). The pitch pattern features ornamental figures in the 16th-notes (see particularly the frequently recurring "turn") and broken-chord figures (L: mm. 3 and 7, U: mm. 9 and 10,

etc.). The eighth-notes move mainly in leaps, in broken chords, or in octaves. The basic character can thus be identified as rather lively. The tempo is paced in a swift triple-meter pulse. Ornamental 16th-note figures should be perceived as groups projecting a single gesture. The articulation requires legato for the 16th-notes and non legato for most of the eighth-notes. Exceptions occur only where one of the voices in the three-part texture splits to form a complementary rhythm and the detachment thus separates the notes of each layer but not the succession itself (see, e.g., mm. 23-24).

Three ornament symbols appear in the score. Two of them indicate mordents (L: mm. 21 and 43). As both are preceded by an appoggiatura, they begin on the main note and contain only a single three-note shake. The trill in m. 26 also begins on the main note with a 16th-note, followed by seven 32nd-note pairs, the last of which is the suffix A \sharp -B \sharp .

In terms of the material characterizing this prelude, the first eight measures are dominated by the theme and its answer on the dominant. The theme consists of three and a half measures. Harmonically, a tonic pedal is followed by a short brushing of the dominant chord (m. 3₃) before the tonic is reinstated. After a 4/16 link establishing the dominant as a new center of reference, the theme recurs a fifth higher, with its upper and middle voices inverted.¹ The most prominent features are the eighth-note upbeat to a weak beat (see, e.g., m. 1: U upbeat to beat 2, M upbeat to beat 3) and the “turn” figure. With regard to texture, the theme involves two voices in free imitation and a pedal that the third voice sustains and to which it returns after a short-lived attempt to take part in the polyphonic play. At the beginning of the prelude’s second half, the theme can be heard in the original order of voices but with slight modifications. The lower-voice notes B \sharp -C \sharp in mm. 26-27 abandon the pedal-note effect without disturbing the main outline of this voice, while U: mm. 26-27 and M: m. 28, setting out from analogous notes and ending in the “turn” figure on the expected pitch, feature different curves in between. This statement of the theme modulates from B major to C \sharp . The “turn” figure alone recurs in several other instances. These include the preparation for the first section-ending cadence, the preparation for the prelude’s concluding phrase, and the beginning of two motifs.²

¹Note that there is no immediate modulation. In mm. 5-6, B major is still the dominant of E major. B major as a new tonic is only established after the F \sharp ⁷ chord in m. 7.

²Furthermore, L: mm. 3-4₁ can be recognized in L: mm. 40-41.

The theme is complemented with nine motifs or figures. They are of varying extension (two measures long, one measure, or shorter) and display different textures.

M1 appears in U: mm. 9-11₁. Its distinctive features are, rhythmically, the three syncopations, and melodically, the broken diminished-seventh chord on the second beat and the diminished-seventh interval at the end. This motif is accompanied by a contrapuntal line (see M: mm. 9-11₁). Dynamically, the motif contains two climaxes. The weaker one falls on the first syncopation at m. 9₃ and, after the relaxation up to A# at m. 10₂, is followed by a stronger buildup through the second broken chord up to the final powerful diminished-seventh interval. The contrapuntal companion reaches the moment of greatest tension on its syncopation (i.e., the tied note), thus describing a single curve. M1 recurs immediately. As in the theme before, the imitation is set harmonically one fifth up from its original position (see L: mm. 11-13₁). The companion is shortened and simplified (see M: mm. 11-12), while the third voice (L: mm. 9-11 G#-F# corresponds with U: mm. 11-13: D#-C#) appears much more elaborate.

M2 is also first presented in the upper voice (mm. 13-14₁). Its metric organization and melodic design are very straightforward and create a simple one-measure tension increase, in which the climax falls on the final downbeat. M2 is imitated twice (M: mm. 14-15₁ and L: mm. 15-16₁). Harmonically, the imitations descend in the circle of fifths (m. 14₁ = B major, m. 15₁ = E⁷, m. 16₁ = A⁷). This motif has no steady companion.

M3 is introduced after the B-major cadence. It consists of a two-part complementary pattern spanning one measure (see U + M: mm. 18-19₁). With only a minor adjustment in the initial interval, the complementary motif is sequenced twice in descending direction (mm. 19-20₁ and 20-21₁). The original motif is accompanied by a pedal in leaping octaves, as are its two sequences. Dynamically, the initial figure (U: F#-B-A#-B) represents a dynamic increase followed, in both voices in conjunction, by a relaxation up to the next downbeat. On a larger scale, the descending sequences cause an overall diminuendo throughout mm. 18-20. The third sequence omits the upper-voice resolution. Instead, the lower-voice B turns into an appoggiatura to A# (m. 21₁), thus linking this motif to the next.

M4 is even shorter. Its lower-voice leader consists of eight 16th-notes (L: mm. 21-22₁) sequenced twice in descending order. The upper and middle voices accompany the ascent of this motif with two metrically accented and harmonically active double notes, while the descent is met with the passive gesture of a note repetition in the upper voice alone. To observe these details in the accompanying voices is essential since they

emphasize the metric grouping of two-quarter-note length reminiscent of the conspicuous hemiola characteristic of the section endings in Baroque courante movements (see the climaxes in L: mm. 21₃, 22₂, and 23₁). The prelude's first half is then rounded off by a 1½-measure cadential close with abundant syncopation and, in the final measure, the elaborate key confirmation typical for allemandes and courantes.

M5 (U: mm. 29-30₁, sequenced in mm. 30-31₁) follows the restatement of the allemande theme at the beginning of the prelude's second half. It effectively combines features of several motifs heard previously: the first four 16th-notes are reminiscent of the opening of M3, the following eight 16th-notes are similar to those in M2, the middle-voice indirect pedal recalls the accompaniment of M3, and the metrically fixed, harmonically active upper-voice notes place the originally hemiolic accompaniment of M4 into a non-hemiolic pattern. Like M2, this motif describes a simple dynamic rise. The climaxes in each statement are enhanced by the accompaniment, so that this motif appears almost homophonic.

M6 is launched after the one-measure cadential close that establishes the tonic relative at m. 32₁. This motif consists exclusively of stepwise motion describing a long curve in 16th-notes (A to A) followed by a shorter one in 32nd-notes (B to B). From its original position in the middle voice, M6 moves to the upper voice where it is subsequently sequenced (see U: mm. 33-34₁ and 34-35₁). The accompaniment with its sequence (L: mm. 32-33 ≈ 33-34) suggests a contrapuntal voice, but later recurrences reveal that only the final four-eighth-note descent is characteristic while the two initial notes may be changed or omitted. (See the recurrences of M6 in U: mm. 41-42₁ and M: mm. 42-43₁.)

M7 is introduced in U: mm. 35-36₁ and imitated in M: mm. 36-37₁. This motif sounds particularly charming if the hidden two-part content of the final eight 16th-notes is emphasized: it thus presents itself as an initial "turn" (U m. 35₁: C#-B-A#-B) answered by its expanded retrograde in the higher register (see U: mm. 35₂-36₁, A-B-A-G#). The climax falls, at least in this interpretation, on the highest pitch on beat 3.

M8 is another motif launched with the "turn" figure from the theme (mm. 37-38₁, sequenced in mm. 38-39 and 39-40). It is conceived in three voices. The leading upper voice is complemented by the middle voice, while the lower voice creates a contrapuntal contrast with its descending scale. M8 contains four syncopations in each measure. After the link from the end of the theme and reminiscences (M6, M4, part of the cadential close that ended the first half of the prelude, and M3), m. 49 brings forth a one-measure preparation for yet another cadential close on the tonic.

The very last four-measure phrase of the prelude presents M9 in mm. 51-52₁ (see in U: the ornamented E major chord, complemented in M by four descending 16th-notes). Together with its two sequences, this motif represents the chords of the final cadence spread over a final tonic pedal: m. 51 = I, m. 52 = IV, m. 53 = V⁹, m. 54 = I. The texture is gradually expanded from three voices to four (mm. 51-52), five (mm. 52-53) and six (m. 54). In keeping with the motif's original shape, the climax falls each time on beat 3, followed by a relaxation to the next downbeat.

To sum up: In each of the prelude's halves the length of the motifs shrinks gradually while the harmonic development progresses in waves through the circle of fifths.

theme (4 + 4 mm.)	E ⁷	theme (4 mm.)	B-C#-G#
	B	M5 + cadence (1 + 1 + 1 mm.)	
M1 (2 + 2 mm.)	F#	M6 (1 + 1 + 1 mm.)	
	C#		
M2 (1 + 1 + 1 mm.)	B	M7 (1 + 1 mm.)	
	E ⁷		
	A ⁷	M8 (1 + 1 + 1 mm.)	
cadence (1 + 1 mm.)	B	end of theme (1 m.)	A ⁷
		M6 (1 + 1 m.)	B
M3 (1 + 1 + 1 mm.)	B	M4 (2/3+2/3+2/3 mm.)	E
M4 (2/3+2/3+2/3 mm.)	F#	close (1/2 mm.)	E
close (1 1/2 mm.)		M3 (1 + 1 + 1 mm.)	B ⁷
<hr/>		<hr/>	
= 24 measures		= 24 measures	
		+ cadence + M9 (3 + 3 mm.) E	

WTC II/9 in E major – Fugue

The beautifully simple curve of the E-major subject leaves no room for doubt about its length or phrase structure. Beginning on the downbeat of the first measure it builds an almost symmetrical arch through four half-notes before concluding in the middle of m. 2. The pitch pattern in the subject features only small intervals: a single minor third is surrounded by seconds. The rhythmic pattern encompasses the initial whole-note, four half-notes and the final quarter-note. In the course of the fugue, Bach adds eighth-notes and syncopated half-notes as well as dotted half-notes and

various tied notes. The time signature is somewhat puzzling since we are used to reading the ♩ as 2/2 time. Here Bach's indication refers to the half-note as the relevant beat, without specifying that he is fitting four half-notes, and not just two, into each measure. The subject's harmonic background describes the simple progression I–ii–I₄⁶–V⁷–I. The dynamic development follows harmony (rising from the tonic to the subdominant, falling on the way back to the tonic) as well as melody (increasing from the keynote through ascending step and skip, and diminishing with the descending line).

The fugue comprises 31 subject statements in a great variety of shapes and sizes, but nevertheless in strikingly regular order.

1.	mm. 1-2	B	17.	mm. 26-27	S
2.	mm. 2-4	T	18.	mm. 27-28	A
3.	mm. 4-5	A	19.	mm. 28-29	T
4.	mm. 5-7	S	20.	mm. 28-29	B
5.	mm. 9-10	A	21.	mm. 30-31	B
6.	mm. 9-11	T	22.	mm. 30-32	A
7.	mm. 10-12	B	23.	mm. 30-31	T _{var 2}
8.	mm. 11-12	S	24.	mm. 31-32	S _{var 2}
9.	mm. 16-17	A	25.	mm. 31-32	T _{var 2}
10.	mm. 17-18	S	26.	mm. 35-36	A
11.	mm. 19-20	B	27.	mm. 35-36	S
12.	mm. 20-21	T	28.	mm. 35-37	T
13.	mm. 23-24	S _{var}	29.	mm. 36-38	B
14.	mm. 23-25	A _{var}	30.	mm. 37-39	S
15.	mm. 25-27	B _{var}	31.	mm. 40-41	B
16.	mm. 25-27	T _{var}			



The answer is conceived without adjustments in the interval pattern. At the same time, Bach makes fullest use of almost all modifications that can traditionally occur to a subject. Besides abridgments of the initial and final notes the concluding resolution is postponed and replaced by a do–si–do formula (mm. 21–22). The subject's minor-third interval is repeatedly bridged by an inserted passing note, the climax often prolonged with a tie, followed by a descent accelerated to quarter-notes (S/A: mm. 23–24; B/T: mm. 25–26, at 'var' in the table above). A diminution of all notes to half their value occurs in mm. 26–29 (S, A, T, B) as well as in mm. 30–31 (B).

Moreover, the diminution may be inverted. In conspicuous modification, the initial note is additionally shortened and the initial interval increased; this variant appears in mm. mm. 30-31₃ (T), 31-32₁ (S), 31-32₃ (T) and 35-36₁ (S). In the two statements that conclude the fugue, the final notes do not find their expected harmonic resolution and (“therefore”) continue their descent in half-notes (mm. 37-42: S, B).

Strettos occur frequently, involving statements in original rhythm, diminutions, or a mixture of both. The follower may chase the leader at a very short distance, thus creating an extended overlap (mm. 9-11), or enter only after the leader’s climax (mm. 16-17 and 19-20). Chain strettos, in which a third entry overlaps with the second but not or hardly with the first, appear twice in this fugue and involve all four voices (see mm. 10-12 and 35-38: A/T/B/S). While parallel statements are not used, transitory parallels of subject segments do occur, particularly in the context of the diminished entries, and serve to heighten the tension (see mm. 28-29: A with T and m. 29: T with B).

As if the various modifications of the subject had not already provided a rather complex picture, further color is added by a number of regular counter-subjects. CS1 is introduced in the bass against the answer. It begins after a little buffer or link, the inverted-mordent figure followed by two leaps (B: mm. 2-3). The leaps, major third down and perfect fourth up, recur several times in the course of the fugue, jointly or separately. The counter-subject proper thus begins on a weak beat with an ascending tetrachord. Its ending comes in two versions: as a syncopated, flattened suspension (as in mm. 3-4) with belated final resolution (G#) or a closing formula (as in m. 5) with the penultimate note as leading-note resolving, on time and upward, into the keynote. CS1 recurs as the subject’s companion in mm. 4-5 and 6-7, varied and “late” in mm. 11-12, varied yet “on time” in relation to the subject statement in the alto in mm. 31-32, and regularly again in mm. 36-37, 37-38, 38-39, and 40-41. The last two entries are extended in keeping with those of the subject. Variations of the counter-subject are also used as episode material; see below.

CS2 is first presented in the tenor of mm. 16-17. It begins likewise on a weak beat and contains, after the initial fourth leap, two syncopations and two inverted-mordent figures before a final three-note descent. This counter-subject recurs, with variations that include a widening of the initial leap to a perfect fifth, only in A: mm. 17-19 and S: mm. 19-20. It is thus only of local importance. In m. 17, where it sounds as a companion to the second entry in a stretto, it changes its position (entering a half-note late) and its initial interval (to a fifth).

CS3 appears closely linked to CS2; they only ever materialize together. The third counter-subject is introduced in the bass of mm. 16-17. It consists of four ascending semitones in a short-long, short-long rhythm pattern, and a concluding do-si-do figure that recalls the ending of the first counter-subject. Its recurrences coincide with those of CS2: mm. 17-19 (T) and mm. 19-20 (A).

The image displays two systems of musical notation. The first system shows a Subject (S) in the treble clef and Counter-Subject 1 (CS1) in the bass clef. The second system shows the Subject (S) in the treble clef, Counter-Subject 2 (CS2) in the middle bass clef, and Counter-Subject 3 (CS3) in the bottom bass clef. Arrows indicate the relationship between CS2 and CS3, showing they are closely linked and often occur together.

There are six subject-free passages in this fugue.

E1	mm. 7-9 ₁	E4	mm. 29-30 ₃ *
E2	mm. 12-16 ₁ *	E5	mm. 32 ₃ -35 ₁
E3	mm. 22-23 ₁ *	E6	mm. 42 ₃ -43

* These episode endings overlap with the beginning of the next subject statement.

The material of these episodes can be traced back to three different origins. The CS1 variants were already briefly mentioned. They may remain rhythmically faithful to the model (as toward the end of E1), rhythmically modified (as in E2), or shortened in the middle (as in the tripartite bass sequence in mm. 31-34). A second component consists of an ascending perfect fourth and an inverted-mordent figure. i.e., of CS2 segments that have already been heard in inverted order in the “buffer.” Finally, descending scales play an important role in the episodes. Together with the various closing formulas, they facilitate the listeners’ orientation. The only subject-free passage that does not feature any of these three components is the final 12-measure cadence.

The dynamic gestures within these components are very distinct and shape the episodes significantly: the CS1-variation forms a dynamic curve, the ascending fourth leaps raise the tension, the inverted-mordent figures sustain and the descending scales and closing formulas release the tension. All episodes thus end with a release of tension. E1 and E2 begin with an

active passage, in E5, the gradual buildup through the ascending sequences of the CS1-variation begins already under the umbrella of the preceding subject statement, and E3 and E6 create nothing beyond a cadential close. Only in E4 is the harmonic close not only diverted into an interrupted cadence (see m. 30₃: C# minor instead of E major) but also overlaps significantly with the beginning of the following bass statement.

The basic character of this fugue is calm. The four half-note beats³ can indeed be understood as fairly flowing, while on the other hand, “fast” tempo for the half-measures would be incompatible both with the eighth-notes and, more importantly, with the spirit of this fugue. The relative tempo of the prelude to the fugue is most convincing when larger units, not smaller beats, are chosen to establish proportion. A good solution is to make one prelude measure correspond with half a measure in the fugue. (Approximate metronome settings: prelude beats = 100, fugue beats = 66.) The articulation is primarily legato. Non legato applies only to quarter- or half-notes that form cadential-bass patterns or consecutive leaps (B mm. 2-3: D#-B-E; T + B mm. 7-8; etc.). Ornaments do not appear in this fugue.

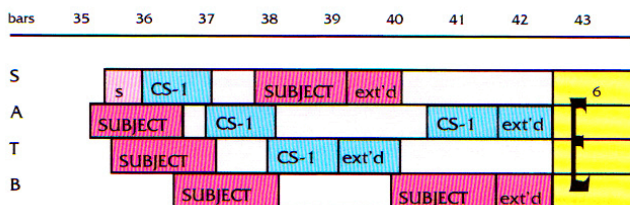
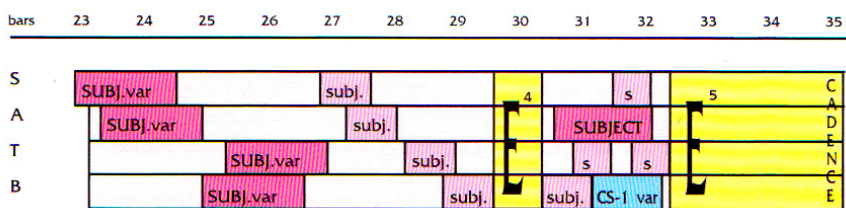
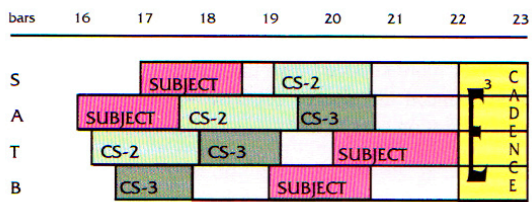
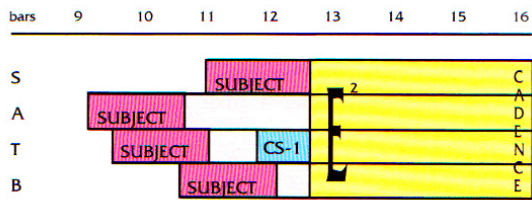
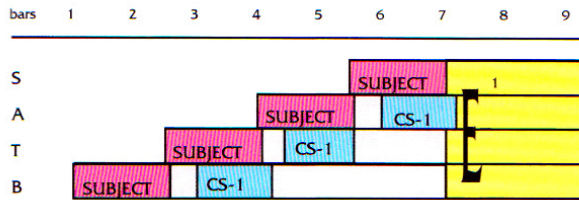
The structure of this composition is determined by the introduction of new transformations of the primary material. The concluding quality of all episodes except for E4 supports this concept. There are five sections in the E-major fugue.

- Section I comprises four statements in ascending order followed by E1. It concludes at m. 9₁ with a harmonic resolution into B major, after a one-measure dominant pedal. Except for the unaccompanied first statement, all subject entries are accompanied by CS1.

³The meter and, by extension, the tempo require some pondering. This is due to the time signature. As has already been mentioned, the C (*alla breve*) usually stands for 2/2 time. Thus performers may wonder whether in measures of two whole-notes each the information should be read to mean “only two beats in a measure” or rather “count half-notes.”

A helpful piece of evidence is found in Bach’s Partita No.6 in E minor. In the final version that performers use today, its *gigue* appears written with measures of double duration, with the time marked by a slashed circle (Φ). That this unusual metrical indication must be read as a 2/1 (= “count two whole-note beats in each measure”) is supported by the corresponding time signature found in the earlier version of this partita, included in Bach’s *Notebook for Anna Magdalena*, where all notes of the *gigue* are written in double speed (eighth-notes originated as 16th-notes etc.) so that each measure contains four quarter-notes. The matching time signature is C (*alla breve*), which unquestionably means “count two beats in each measure.” As it is most unlikely that the final version of the *gigue* with its augmented note values was not meant to retain this metric order, one may be permitted to deduce that the Φ symbol stands for “two beats in a measure of eight quarter-notes.” By extension, the C in the equally long measures of the E-major fugue from WTC Book II should be read as “count half-notes,” i.e., “four beats to the measure.”

- Section II also encompasses one subject statement in each of the four voices followed by a concluding episode (E2). The statements are grouped into two strettos here, with the “follower” entering in both cases on the second note of the statement presented by the “leader.” The episode is longer and much more substantial in material than the one in the first section. One could almost read this as an attempt to make up for the shrinking of the section as a result of the stretto overlap. The section ends at m. 16₁ in C# minor, the tonic relative.
- Section III, too, comprises four subject statements and an episode. As before, the entries are grouped in two strettos, with the distance between “leader” and “follower” now an entire measure. New contrapuntal material is presented in the form of the paired components CS2 and CS3. The section closes at m. 23₁ in F# minor, the subdominant relative.
- Section IV introduces the variation of the subject, presented in all four voices, which are once again grouped in two strettos. The distance between the entries of each stretto is smaller than ever before, and both strettos together cover only four measures. Without an episode to serve as a buffer, another transformation of the subject is introduced: its diminution. The distribution (one diminished statement in each of the four voices) and the structure (two strettos) are not surprising, even less so since these strettos are built by the voices that were paired just before in the strettos with the varied subject (mm. 23-24 S + A and mm. 25-26 B + T: subject variation; mm. 26-28 S + A and mm. 28-29 T + B: subject diminution). The distance in the stretto resembles that of section III, albeit in half size. After E4, which serves as an interruption without closing, the fifth stretto combines one voice from each of the two groups in a combination of two different versions of the subject (mm. 30-31 B: diminution, A: original values). One could thus describe the entries as presenting two intertwining rounds. There are 4 + 1 entries of the varied subject and 4 + 1 entries of the diminution. The redundant stretto combining the two different shapes is further distinguished by the surrounding material: it is accompanied by three entries of a diminished and inverted subject variation (mm. 30-32: T, S, T) as well as a variation of CS1 that extends, with its sequences, into the subsequent episode. The fourth section thus combines features from all three preceding sections before concluding at m. 35₁ in G# minor, the dominant relative.



- Section V presents five subject statements. The first two appear in *stretto*, at the same distance as those heard in section II, while the third and fourth statements overlap only very little. Both the fourth and fifth statements are extended by a descending scale in half-notes. Four entries of CS1 relate this section to the initial one. E6 concludes the section—and the fugue—in m. 43.

In terms of the development of tension, section I presents a fairly strong increase, which is surpassed by that in section II. At the respective end of each section, E1 grants a gradual relaxation while E2 provides a distinct color contrast before it concludes, with a cadential close in the tonic relative, on a particularly soft note. In section III, the minor mode, the softening of the contour with passing notes, and the lessened canonic density all add up to a result of reduced intensity, while the new counter-subjects make a change of sound color seem desirable. Section IV begins even more softly but then describes a powerful increase that will need the whole of the fifth section to achieve full relaxation.