

The Baroque Fugue: Some Terminology

1. Subject: the opening melodic line (“theme”), usually presented by itself. The subject usually has a musical profile or character that makes it recognizable later in the fugue.
2. Answer: the second statement of the fugue subject. It is normally in the key of the dominant, in the same mode as the subject. Answers can be *real* (exacts transpositions of the subject) or *tonal* (modified transpositions of the subject). Tonal answers are used when the subject skips from 1 to 5 (answered by 5 to 1) or vice versa, or when there are other strong indications of dominant near the beginning of the subject. Tonal adjustments are made only for as long as is absolutely necessary (usually a note or two).
3. Exposition: the beginning section of a fugue, including a first statement of the subject in all voices. Sometimes expositions include “redundant” or “fake” entries (an additional statement or two of the subject) and often include a short extension leading to a cadence. The key scheme of the exposition is usually I-V-I-(V). In certain fugues there is a counterexposition (an immediate restatement of the subject through all the voices, following a similar tonal plan with a different order of voice entries).
4. Countersubject: a melodic idea presented as counterpoint to the fugue subject. The counterline should recur often enough in the fugue to be significant, and should be capable of being used in invertible counterpoint with the subject (that is, either line could be on the top).
5. Link, Bridge: short connective passages in the exposition (or in later areas of the fugue dedicated to entrances of the subject). “Link” is often used to refer to a short “tail” at the end of the subject, connecting it to a countersubject or to free counterpoint with the answer, while “bridge” denotes a connective passage of one or more measures between the answer and the third entrance of the subject (typically, either to disrupt the regularity of voice entrances or to modulate back to the tonic).
6. Middle entries: statements of the subject after the exposition. If the answer in the exposition has been real, there is no need to distinguish between a statement of the “subject” and of the “answer” later in the fugue. If the answer in the exposition has been tonal, one can distinguish later statements of the “subject” and the “answer”.
7. Episodes: passages in a fugue that do not contain a complete statement of the subject. Episodes can be made of free material, or based on fragments of the subject and/or countersubject. They frequently feature sequences.
8. Contrapuntal devices: various procedures applied to a subject and/or countersubject. These include *invertible counterpoint* (reversing the textural placement of two different lines stated simultaneously), *melodic inversion* (reversing the contour of a melodic line), *diminution* (presenting a melodic line in shorter time values), *augmentation* (presenting a melodic line in longer time values), *stretto* (overlapping statements of the subject) and *retrograde* (stating a melodic line backwards).
9. Double (or triple) fugue: a fugue with two (or three) separate subjects (each with their own expositions). Often, all the subjects will appear together at some point in the work.