



Yale University Department of Music

Marpurg versus Kirnberger: Theories of Fugal Composition

Author(s): Howard Serwer

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MARPURG**VERSUS****KIRNBERGER:**

In her article "The Harmonic Theories of Kirnberger and Marpurg"*1, Joyce Mekeel described Wilhelm Friedrich Marpurg's advocacy of Rameau's harmonic theories in Germany during the last half of the eighteenth century and outlined the essentials of Johann Philipp Kirnberger's dissent from Marpurg's views. As she correctly points out, Marpurg's comprehension of Rameau's ideas was defective in certain important respects, and Kirnberger's arguments against the idea of the fundamental bass left something to be desired in terms of comprehension and logic. On the other hand, Kirnberger's categorical rejection of the notion of subposition and his insistence that ninth, eleventh, and thirteenth chords are the product of melodic embellishment demonstrated a viewpoint more practical than that of Marpurg. In passing Mekeel observed that Marpurg was

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guilty of abusive language and even quoted a rhetorical question that included a snide but mysterious reference to Kirnberger as a "double contrapuntist"*2. This is a direct reference to a polemic conducted by Marpurg against Kirnberger in the pages of the former's musical periodical, *Kritische Briefe über die Tonkunst* in 1759-1760.*3 The tone of this series of articles attacking an unpublished fugue by Kirnberger was so nasty that Kirnberger felt obliged to publish and defend his work. This led to even more unpleasant replies by Marpurg and subsequently to an attack on another of Kirnberger's fugues that had been published by Marpurg himself.*4 For the rest of his life, Kirnberger hated the very mention of Marpurg's name, even though Marpurg seems to have held Kirnberger in professional, if not personal, esteem.*5

Apart from the scandalous aspects of Marpurg's attacks on Kirnberger's music, the former's comments about the compositions themselves provide us with rewarding insights into contemporary theoretical attitudes about harmony, counterpoint, and the composition of fugue. In addition, they tend to confirm Prof. Mekeel's observations that though Kirnberger was often practical and progressive in his theoretical views, there were atavistic elements as well.*6 As will appear below, Marpurg pointed out that Kirnberger's notions of tonality in the context of fugal composition reflect an innate conservatism.

On June 23, 1759 Marpurg began the publication of his *Kritische Briefe über die Tonkunst* as the periodical organ of a "certain musical society".*7 The first issue introduced its members, all of whom bore Greek pseudonyms, describing their personalities. The group was most certainly fictitious, being patterned after a similar society created a half-century before by Addison and Steele for their periodical, *Spectator*. Just as Addison and Steele were the authors of all that appeared in the *Spectator*, so there seems little doubt that Marpurg was responsible for everything in the *Kritische Briefe* except for letters to the "Society" signed by real persons.

The second issue of the *Kritische Briefe* appeared on June 30 and contained a parody of an old-fashioned pedant's attack on Marpurg's *Kritische Einleitung in die Geschichte und Lehrsätze der alten und neuen Musik*.*8 This "critique" included such foolishness as a solemn discussion of the question of the temporal priority of the flute versus the violin. The writer concluded that the latter was more ancient because Moses said that the violin and the pipe came from Jubal (rather than the pipe and the violin). Doubtless Marpurg's immediate circle of readers in Berlin knew full well that he was lampooning Kirnberger's style and approach to technical and historical matters. Those who were not in the know had to wait until the following January, when Marpurg asked in mock innocence whether it was the society's fault that Kirnberger recognized himself as the laughable figure introduced in the second letter.*9

This pedantic commentary was followed by an even more mysterious letter signed by one Peter Kleinlieb (Marpurg) who asserted that not all wisdom resides in large wigs, as he demonstrated last Sunday, when he "had successfully invented a third voice for the adagio of a certain duet and was honored with a 'Bravo!' in all modesty by some of those invited witnesses to that event".*10 The author then offered to help members of

the society to compose passages for concerti as needed. The following Brief brought forth a reply from a Paul Dreyklang (Marpurg) who asserted that since Herr Kleinlieb had come forward with the bass to one duet in a set of six, that he was now obliged to provide basses for all the rest and publish them. If he failed to do so, then he would be nothing but a windy braggart.*11 The sixth Brief shed further light on the affair, because the author of the letter, Herr Sechsstern (again, Marpurg), claimed that Herr Kleinlieb had promised to compose basses for certain duets but had not come forth with them. In the meantime, the author had obtained a copy of a two-voice fugue by Herr Kleinlieb which was supposed to have been a masterpiece of harmony, counterpoint, and modulation but which was very bad indeed. The balance of the sixth Brief is a critique of the fugue.*12

Three months later, in October 1759, Kirnberger published his *Allegro für das Clavier alleine, wie auf für die Violin mit dem Violoncell zu accompagniren von Johann Philipp Kirnberger componirt und vertheidigt* (Allegro for the Keyboard Alone or for Violin and Accompanying Cello, Composed and Defended by . . .). *13 The preface to the Allegro states that this is the work that was criticized in the sixth Kritische Brief. The preface also includes a copy of a letter, dated July 29, 1759 (the day after the publication of the sixth Brief), written by Kirnberger to the society complaining about its critique of his Allegro. The letter attempts to refute the society's identification of him as Peter Kleinlieb and promises a reply to the attack. The preface concludes with a statement that the letter was returned by the society without a single excuse.*14 The rest of the publication is taken up with the fugue and a detailed defense of the work including extensive quotes from the sixth Brief.

Sechsstern's (Marpurg's) reply to Kirnberger's defense took up most of the twenty-third to twenty-eighth Briefe.*15 Marpurg reasserted his claim that Kirnberger had indeed added a bass to a certain duet from a set of six and had even attempted to humiliate the composer by playing the arrangement on the organ during a public service. He further alleged that Kirnberger was unable to add basses to the other duets in the set and wrote his Allegro instead.*16 In the thirtieth Brief*17 Marpurg denied that he or anyone else in the society wrote the original critique, and he also denied that he had rudely returned Kirnberger's letter. Rather, he insisted that, having published the critique, he was perfectly willing to print Kirnberger's letter and his defense of the Allegro. He claimed that it was Kirnberger who, after twice presenting the letter to the society

for publication, twice changed his mind and withdrew it.*18

One of the most important points taken up by Marpurg in his discussion of Kirnberger's *Allegro* concerns the harmonic implications of the subject of the fugue (Example 1, measures 1-4). He observes that the roots of the implied harmony on the first beats of the first three measures are D, A, and G, and in the answer they are A, E, and D (measures 4, 5, and 6). According to Marpurg, Kirnberger should have used a instead of e for the first note of the upper part of the second half of measure 4, e instead of b for the first note in measure 5 and d instead of a at the beginning of measure 6. The reason given is that the three notes actually used (e, b, and a) are all fifths of the implied triads, and if the two voices were to be inverted, they would produce an implied six-four combination, something that is not permitted in pure two-part double counterpoint unless prepared and resolved as though it were a dissonance. At measure 24, the subject is harmonized correctly according to Marpurg but he is quite certain that this is inadvertent.*19 Our critic also remarks that, though sound reason tells him that each principal section of a fugue must be erected on pure and correct harmonic foundations, he can if required cite the authority of an old "arch contrapuntist" for the benefit of those who like to hide behind famous names.*20 As will appear, Marpurg seems to have guessed correctly that Kirnberger would defend himself by adducing numerous examples from the works of famous composers, including J. S. Bach.

In his reply to Marpurg's objections to the counterpoint in measures 4, 5, and 6, Kirnberger held that it was not always necessary to write invertible counterpoint and that any thirds and sixths are permissible.*21 In support of his position, he quoted passages from the first expositions of two fugues by J. S. Bach, one by C. P. E. Bach, and one by Handel.*22 Further, he asserted that even if measures 4, 5, and 6 were inverted, the result would still be perfectly correct.*23

Two theoretical questions are raised by Marpurg's discussion:

- 1) Must all the counterpoint in a two-part fugue be invertible?
- 2) In the composition of two-part invertible counterpoint, must the composer allow for the harmonic implications of the intervallic structure?

Kirnberger's reply to the first was clearly negative. Unfortunately he gave no clear answer to the second. In fact, Marpurg accused Kirnberger of failure to understand either the argument or the harmonic implications of his own examples. For

EXAMPLE

1

Johann Philipp Kirnberger
Allegro für das Clavier alleine (1759)

Allegro.

This musical score is for a piece titled 'Allegro für das Clavier alleine' by Johann Philipp Kirnberger, composed in 1759. The piece is in G major and 3/4 time. The tempo is marked 'Allegro.' The score is written for a single piano on a grand staff, consisting of seven systems of two staves each. The first system begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 3/4 time signature. The music is characterized by rapid sixteenth-note passages in the right hand and more rhythmic accompaniment in the left hand. The piece concludes with a final cadence in the seventh system.

This page contains eight systems of musical notation, each consisting of a treble and bass staff. The notation is complex, featuring many sixteenth and thirty-second notes, often beamed together. Measure numbers are placed at the start of specific measures: 37, 42, 47, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, and 59. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat signs at the end of the eighth system.

instance, Kirnberger quoted measures 5-8 of the fugue in F major from the second volume of the Well-Tempered Clavier and asserted that the thirds as Bach wrote them were proof that all thirds and sixths were permitted,*24 (Example 2). Marpurg's analysis of the passage *25 (Example 3) demonstrated that there were no implied six-four combinations. Neither this example nor any others quoted by Kirnberger in his Allegro could be considered cases in point.

Marpurg's position represents an application of the principle of the fundamental bass to the old established rules for writing double counterpoint. These specify that when writing two-part double counterpoint at the octave, one must never use a fifth unless it is treated as a dissonance, because when inverted the fifth becomes a fourth. Thirds and sixths can be used freely because in the traditional system they produce no dissonance when inverted. Until Rameau's time there was no concept of invertible chords relating to a fundamental bass and therefore no question as to the possible harmonic implications of sixths and thirds in two-part counterpoint. As Rameau's principal advocate in Germany, Marpurg not surprisingly attempted to interpret the old rules in this way. Of equal interest is the fact that his recognition of the implied harmonic relationships in a thin contrapuntal texture is consistent with our present day notions of the "harmonically saturated" contrapuntal style of J. S. Bach.

By thinking in terms of inverted chords and the fundamental bass, Marpurg judged Kirnberger's counterpoint according to its functional harmonic structure rather than as a mere succession of intervallic simultaneities. Kirnberger defended his work in intervallic rather than harmonic terms, so that his position, while seemingly less rule-bound than Marpurg's, was in fact more old-fashioned.

Marpurg's reply to Kirnberger's defense begins in the twenty-third Kritische Brief. In it he restates his restriction on invertible counterpoint in two parts:

The discussion here is only of correct harmony in contrapuntal contexts and here I maintain that all inversions or root position passages which produce incorrect harmony or even imply it are forbidden. . . . For example, in a triad the third is an invertible voice which, if it is used as the bass, calls for a six-chord above it. However, the fifth, if not preceded by a tie, is, and remains, the middle voice in both, which calls for a six-four chord over itself,

and therefore in the strict style of composition cannot form the proper bass of an unprepared chord.*26

This statement may have made the rule a little clearer for Marpurg's readers, but it still did not answer the question as to why two-part counterpoint or fugue had to be invertible. Subsequent discussions by Marpurg of the same point contribute little. Thus the twenty-fifth Brief asserts once again "that the third over a bass note which requires a sixth over itself for harmony must not be used in pure double counterpoint, because when the thirds are inverted and made a bass the unprepared chord will call for a six-four".*27

Marpurg's original comments in the sixth Brief complained of Kirnberger's failure to modulate during the episodes in the first half of the Allegro. As a result, the subject is repeated at measure 12 and again at measure 24 in the tonic, and both repetitions are at the same pitch as that of the original exposition. Marpurg suggests that

if he had only written his subject an octave deeper there would have been a little bit of variety. Nevertheless, gentlemen, rejoice. Herr Kleinlieb [Kirnberger] will soon introduce fugues in rondeau. Often people become galant against their will.*28

Yet our critic acknowledges that even this composer knows that it revolts the ear to hear one key for too long. Therefore he introduces a new episode at measure 27, but, unfortunately, it again moves through the tonic (D) to the dominant (A), and only then goes on to a statement of the subject in the subdominant, G (measure 30). He observes that the latter lacks true contrapuntal treatment, but this of course takes time to work out. At least we have the modulation for which we have been yearning.*29

There follows an episode that leads to an exposition in E minor (measure 37), including an answer in B minor (measure 41). Here Marpurg objects to the d natural in the upper part at measure 42. In his opinion, both notes should have been treated as raised leading tones. The a natural was considered particularly bad because it produced A major harmony immediately after E minor. In addition the first bass note in measure 38 is wrong; it should have been b rather than f# to avoid the implied six-four.*30

Kirnberger's rejoinder held that taste in such things as modu-

EXAMPLE

2



3



lation varies. Some would prefer that the theme be restated in the tonic as at measure 12, some would prefer that there be no episode, and others might call for a restatement in a different key. In a further attempt to justify his own procedure, he quoted three fragments from Bach's fugue in C minor from the first volume of the *Well-Tempered Clavier* and noted that "the subject appears twice in the same range in the upper voice and in between in the bass in the same key."³¹

In defense of the exposition in E minor, Kirnberger asserted that a composer may take liberties without being *galant*, and in fact, had he used d \sharp and a \sharp at measures 38 and 42, the fugue then would have become *neumodisch* and *galant* instead of conforming to the principles of contrapuntal writing. To justify further his use of d and a, he quoted the following passage from the fugue in G major from Book II of the *Well-Tempered Clavier*, measures 40-44 (Example 4). The asterisks indicate those notes that Kirnberger considered to be analogous to those in his *Allegro*, measures 38 and 42. It should be observed that the passage quoted is an answer in B minor to a statement of the subject in E minor. Bach used the d natural as part of a B minor triad, a function clearly different from Kirnberger's d natural at measure 38. Bach's a natural however is analogous to the a natural at measure 42 of Kirnberger's fugue, both being the root of a triad on the lowered seventh degree in B minor.

Again it seems clear that Kirnberger was thinking in intervallic and linear terms when he chose to preserve the leap of the minor seventh in his subject transposed into a minor key. Marpurg's harmonically oriented thinking converted the minor seventh into a diminished seventh (measures 37-38: c-d \sharp ; measures 41-42: g-a \sharp). Kirnberger's practice tended to avoid accidentals and thereby minimized the effect of modulatory passages. Marpurg's view was consistent with up-to-date notions about the importance of leading tones in passages that introduce new keys or new aspects of a central tonality. As before, though the issue is clear enough to us, the protagonists themselves failed to focus on the real difference – linear or intervallic counterpoint as opposed to counterpoint – that clearly defines harmonic relationships.

Concerning Kirnberger's reference to Bach's fugue in C minor, we note that he copied statements of the subject from their context in the following manner:³² (Example 5). According to Marpurg this is misleading because the first quote is the beginning of the first exposition of a three-part fugue. The voice

EXAMPLE

4

Example 4 shows two measures of music. Measure 4 is a complex passage with multiple staves. The top staff features a melodic line with a sharp sign and a double bar line. The bottom staff contains a bass line with a sharp sign and a double bar line. Measure 5 continues the melodic and bass lines, with a sharp sign and a double bar line. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and bar lines.

5

Example 5 shows two measures of music. Measure 6 is a complex passage with multiple staves. The top staff features a melodic line with a sharp sign and a double bar line. The bottom staff contains a bass line with a sharp sign and a double bar line. Measure 7 continues the melodic and bass lines, with a sharp sign and a double bar line. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and bar lines.

quoted must be a middle one because the answer appears at the upper fifth. The third fragment is quoted from measure 20 and according to Marpurg represents the uppermost part since the countersubject and a third part appear below it. Marpurg seems to have incorrectly identified the second fragment, calling it the third part of the exposition (measure 7), when in fact the only statement of the subject starting on c does not appear until six measures before the end of the fugue. This apparent error notwithstanding, there is some justification to Marpurg's conclusion that Kirnberger misunderstood the plan of this fugue. *33

Concerning Kirnberger's claim that liberties can be taken in a fugue without being called galant, Marpurg inquires:

What is said to be galant in a composer? I think this is as much as saying that in a musical work, no matter what its external form, he works out a pleasing melody suited to an intended purpose over a correct and easy to understand harmony that is pleasant and moving even to those listeners who understand nothing of cancrizans canon. *34

Having established a definition suitable to his own purposes, Marpurg concluded that Kirnberger could not possibly be considered a galant composer. On the other hand, he wondered what Kirnberger meant by liberties. He sarcastically speculated that perhaps they relate to the liberties discussed by those who talk of nothing but forbidden fifths and octaves when they judge a work. Such persons "understand nothing of good invention, nor of correct plan or its working out, nor of expression, digressions, connection, nor relationships". *35

Marpurg concluded his reply with a detailed description of J.S. Bach's two part fugue in E minor from the first volume of the Well-Tempered Clavier. The reader will note that he stresses the invertibility of all of the counterpoint in the work, points out the tonal relationships, and takes particular notice of the unisono passages that end two of the episodes. Though the description hardly qualifies as analysis (Marpurg himself used the word *Beschreibung* in referring to it), I present it in its entirety as one of the earliest complete appreciations of a work by J.S. Bach:

For Herr Kirnberger's edification, I now finally present in conclusion the above promised description of a two-part fugue by Herr J.S. Bach. The fugue is in E minor and is forty-two measures long in three-four time. The first

two measures contain the subject of the exposition. There then follows in measures three and four the answer at whose second beat there appears a countersubject that is very different from the subject. In the fifth measure, the countersubject which first appeared in the upper voice is repeated in the lower one but provided with a new upper part and, by means of a transposition – in fact a clever transposition – together with two additional measures (an even cleverer procedure), it is led into G major. In this key at measure 11 the upper voice thereupon takes up the subject and has the invertible and here inverted countersubject under it. Immediately thereafter the answer appears in the bass in D major as is appropriate to a subject in G major. After this we have a free episode which is also inverted and in five measures leads, by means of the inverted fifth-transpositions so vigorously prohibited by Herr Kirnberger on page 9 of his *defense*, to A minor through A major, D major, G major, C major, and E with its third raised to introduce A minor (at which point both voices by means of a beautiful boldness repeat the previous episodic material in octaves for its increased emphasis). The lower voice immediately takes up the subject with the invertible countersubject over it and immediately thereafter the answer appears at the upper fifth of A minor in which the subject began – that is E minor with a further inversion of the countersubject in the bass. After this answer, there again appears the episode taken from the invertible countersubject as it appeared in the fifth measure but with the parts inverted, which again provides beautiful variety and leads through repeated transpositions at the fifth again in six measures (this is also a lovely procedure) to D minor. This is certainly a key very distant from E minor but we were led there in the cleverest and most natural manner. The bass immediately takes up the subject in D minor with the invertible countersubject in the upper voice. The answer appears in the upper voice in the following two measures with the invertible countersubject. There then follows the play with the connecting idea alternating between the two voices, transposed by fifths above and repeated at the end by both voices in octaves as it was the first time but now is a different key, which leads again to E minor. In conclusion the upper voice takes the theme once again in E minor for emphasis, this time omits the answer which has been heard enough, and with two additional measures makes a formal close. This is what is meant by a free two-voiced fugue with a superior plan, proper procedures, and noble boldness.*36

Soon after Marpurg's final reply to Kirnberger's defense of the Allegro, the *Kritische Briefe* carried a new series of public letters addressed to the old theorist and critic, Johann Mattheson (1691-1764), who was asked for his opinion of a discussion of a certain fugue that had appeared in Marpurg's *Fugensammlung* (Example 6)*37. This time the author adopted the pseudonym "Numquamne reponam?" (Shall I never rest?), *38 and described himself as a well-trained amateur who has traveled abroad and collected copies of good music wherever he went. *39 He claimed that he did not know the identity of the composer of the fugue so that he could be considered quite impartial. Further, he assumed that Herr Marpurg was willing to have works in his collection discussed in print, and, as a matter of fact, it would appear that the fugue in question seems to have been published for the specific purpose of eliciting comments. *40 This remark and others like it lead to the conclusion that the fugue was by Kirnberger and that Marpurg himself was the critic.

Marpurg's discussion of this second work focused on an alleged failure of the subject to establish clearly the tonic key. He held that "all beginnings of good melodies must be composed with those tones which give a clear idea of the key of the piece" *41 and went on to observe that such procedures are even more necessary in fugue than in other genres. Unless the tonality is clearly defined from the beginning, the listener will have difficulty in understanding the plan of the work. Yet in this fugue, Marpurg held that "the answer is in B \flat major and the subject is in F major; that therefore the answer has taken the place of the subject". *42 He conceded that the subject may modulate to the dominant, but not until the tonic has been established. According to Marpurg, such modern relationships must be distinguished from those arising out of the old system of modes which function according to the ambitus of the subject. He held that it certainly was not the composer's intent to write a fugue in the Hypoionian mode transposed down a major second and therefore the intended key was B \flat major. Because the triads outlined by the subject project a tonal relationship opposite to that prescribed by the rules and because the composer's own harmonization in measures 9-12 confirms this improper relationship, Marpurg held that the fugue was bad from its very beginning.

The following *Kritische Brief* predicted that the composer would raise a defense in the form of "a host of examples storming all about me all of which appear to defend [him]". *43 Marpurg was sure that some of the examples would be by earlier com-

EXAMPLE

6

[Kirnberger], fugue from the
Fugensammlung, 1. Thl. (Berlin, 1758)

die uns trof-fen ha , , , , ben. *Fuga.*

die uns trof-fen ha , , , , ben.

die uns trof-fen ha , , , , ben.

die uns trof-fen ha , , , , ben. ¹⁾ ²⁾ ³⁾ Dar-um fürchten wir uns nicht, wenn gleich die

9)

3) 6) 7) 8) Dar , um

4) Dar , um fürchten wir uns nicht, wenn gleich die Welt um , ter , gien , ge, dar , um

Welt um , ter , gien , ge, dar , um fürchten wir uns nicht, wenn gleich die Welt um , ter , gien , , ,

13) 14)

10) 11) 12) Dar , um fürchten wir uns

fürchten wir uns nicht, wenn gleich die Welt um , ter , gien , ge, darum fürchten wir uns

fürchten wir uns nicht, wenn gleich die Welt um , ter , gien , ge.

ge, wenn gleich die Welt, wenn gleich die Welt um , , ter , gien , ge, darum fürchten wir uns

15) 16) 17) 18) 19)

nicht, wenn gleich die Welt um , ter , gien , ge. Dar , , um

nicht, wenn gleich die Welt um , ter , gien , ge. Dar , , um fürch , ten wir uns

Dar , , um fürchten wir uns nicht, wenn gleich die

nicht, wenn gleich die Welt um , ter , gien , , , ge.

20) 21)

fürch , ten wir uns nicht, wenn gleich die Welt, wenn gleich die Welt, wenn gleich die

nicht, wenn gleich die Welt, wenn gleich die Welt, wenn gleich die

Welt um , , ter , gien , ge, 22) 23)

Dar , , um fürch , ten wir uns nicht, wenn gleich die Welt, wenn gleich die

Welt, wenn gleich die Welt un, ter, gien, ge, 27) 28)

Welt, wenn gleich die Welt un, ter, gien, ge, 24) 25) Dar, um fürch, ten wir uns nicht, wenn gleich die Welt, wenn gleich die Welt un, ter, gien, ge, dar, um fürch, ten wir uns

29) 30) 31) 32) 33) Dar, um fürch, ten wir uns nicht, wenn gleich die Welt, wenn gleich die Welt un, ter, gien, ge, dar, um fürch, ten wir uns nicht, wenn gleich die nicht, dar, um fürch, ten wir uns nicht, dar, um fürch, ten wir uns nicht, wir uns

34) 35) 36) 37) 38) Dar, um fürch, ten wir uns nicht, wenn gleich die Welt un, ter, gien, ge, Welt, wenn gleich die Welt, wenn gleich die Welt unter, gien, ge. Welt, wenn gleich die Welt, wenn gleich die Welt, die Welt unter, gien, ge. nicht, wenn gleich die Welt un, ter, gien, ge. Dar, um

39) 40) 41) 42) 43) Dar, um fürch, ten wir uns nicht, wir fürch, ten uns nicht. Dar, um Dar, um fürch, ten wir uns nicht, wenn gleich die Welt, wenn gleich die Welt un, ter, Dar, um fürch, ten wir uns nicht, wir fürch, ten uns fürchten wir uns nicht, wenn gleich die Welt, wenn gleich die

44) 45) 46) 47) 48)

fürch,ten wir uns nicht, wenn gleich die Welt, wenn gleich die
gien // ge, wenn gleich die Welt, wenn gleich die Welt //
nicht, wenn gleich, wenn gleich die Welt un // ter // gien // ge, wenn gleich die
Welt un // ter // gien // ge.

49) 50) 51) 52) 53)

Welt // un // ter // gien // ge,
// un // ter // gien // ge. Dar // um fürch,ten wir uns
Welt un // ter // gien // ge. Dar // um fürch,ten wir uns
Dar // um fürch,ten wir uns nicht, dar // um

54) 55) 56) 57) 58)

Dar // um fürchten wir uns nicht. Dar // um
nicht. Dar // um fürch,ten wir uns nicht.
fürch,ten wir uns nicht, dar // um fürchten wir uns nicht, dar // um fürch,ten wir uns
59) 60) 61) 62) 63)

Dar // um fürch,ten wir uns nicht, wenn gleich die Welt //
fürchten wir uns nicht. Darum fürch,ten wir uns nicht, wenn gleich die
Dar // um fürch,ten wir uns nicht, wenn gleich die Welt, wenn gleich die
nicht, wir uns nicht. Dar // um fürch,ten wir uns nicht, wenn gleich die

64) 65) 67) 68)

unter gien ge, und die Ber ge

Welt unter gien ge, und die Ber ge mit ten ins

Welt unter gien ge, und die Ber ge die Ber ge mit

Welt unter gien ge, und die Ber ge

mit ten ins Meer fun fen, und die Berge mitten ins

Meer ins Meer und die Berge mitten ins Meer ins

ten ins Meer mit ten ins Meer fun fen, mitten ins Meer mitten ins

66) 70) 71) 72) 73)

mit ten ins Meer fun fen

Meer fun fen.

Meer fun fen.

Meer fun fen.

74) 75) 76)

fen.

posers who worked in the old modes, but these may not be applied to the present case, because even though the subject stays within the range of the Hypoionian mode transposed down a major second, it is harmonized with no less than five E naturals in measures 9-12, all of which contradict any modal tendency. Other examples may be by men who were trained in the old modes but who now try to compose in the new tonalities which have been around "here" for only a short time. Compositions by these composers can be expected to waver between the two systems.*44

Based on the foregoing, Marpurg suggested the following "improved subject and answer":*45 (Example 7) The tonal implications of the revised subject are far clearer than those of the original. Whether or not the revision is in fact better music than the original is doubtful. What is significant is that once again we find Marpurg suggesting that Kirnberger's tonally vague but perfectly musical passages be altered in favor of clearer harmonic definition.

The critique took the composer to task once again for failing to modulate after the exposition. Referring to his earlier attack on Kirnberger's *Allegro*, Marpurg admitted that this would be a familiar cry to the readers of the *Kritische Briefe* but in the person of Numquamne reponam? expressed pleasure that he had found someone who agreed with his long held opinion that it is a bore to hear one key for too long.*46 One need only examine the fugues of old Bach to see

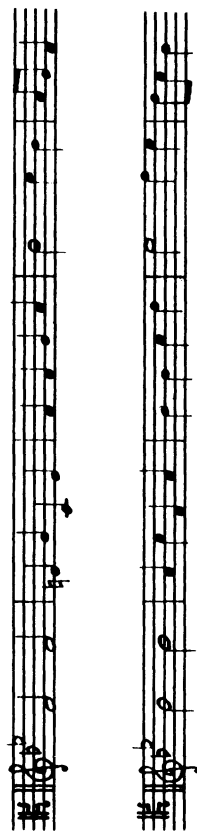
how many artistic transpositions of the subject into other keys and how many excellently timed episodes are to be found there. Once during my stay in Leipzig I spoke to him about certain matters concerning fugue and heard him call the works of an old laborious contrapuntist dry and wooden, and certain fugues arranged for the clavier of a recent no less great contrapuntist pedantic, because both remained in the principle key without any change; and the latter at least in the fugues of which we spoke had not shown enough fire to renew the theme through episodes.*47

At the end of the article, Marpurg returned to the question of episodes and observed that the great modern composers like Bach, Handel, Telemann, and Graun employed them for variety. Old composers did not use them but still managed to compose with variety and logic. However,

all the great composers mentioned. . . certainly had their

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important reasons for departing from the practices of some of their predecessors. If a person cannot do anything but imitate, why not imitate them [the modern ones] rather than the predecessors? Many people are in the habit of praying, so to speak, with old Bach morning and evening. But when we look at their compositions, it appears as if they were composed to be the opposite of a Bach fugue.*48

Other aspects of the fugue came under fire. The stretto introduced at measure 17 should, according to normal expectation, be deferred to a point nearer the end. There is a deficiency of episodic material. At measures 40-41 the alto outlines a tritone $e\flat$ - a , and at measure 41 the soprano leaps from $e\flat$ to a .*49 The modulations (in the modern sense) from measure 40 to measure 51 are unnatural and the whole tonal plan of the fugue is confused. Finally, Marpurg took Kirnberger to task for mishandling the text. The first phrase, *Darum fürchten wir uns nicht wenn gleich die Welt unterginge*, is set to sixty-four measures of music while the second phrase, *und die Berge mitten ins Meer sünken*, occupies only twelve measures. "Indeed, it is as if the composer of our fugue and the author of the composed and defended Allegro either for the Keyboard Alone or for the Violin and Cello have a single very bad set of principles."*50

Though the letters in the *Kritische Briefe* seem to have been addressed to Mattheson only in a rhetorical sense, the old journalistic warrior from Hamburg could not resist the opportunity to engage in a bit of controversy. In his reply he disagreed with Marpurg about the basic defect of the subject because he felt that the first two long notes ($b\flat$ - bb) sufficiently emphasized the tonic and left little doubt about the key of the piece. He also objected to Marpurg's revision of the subject, which he felt would produce "nothing but stiff, pounding, chopping keyboard triads not at all suitable to a well-conceived fugue".*51 In fact he could think of no rule forbidding the reversal of subject and answer, nor did he see what difference it made which phrase came first, for whichever is first will be called a subject and the second will be an answer. On the other hand, Mattheson acknowledged that other aspects of the critique were excellent including the objections to tiring the ear with long passages in one key, the discussion of episodes, the comments about the transpositions of the subject, the criticism of the stretto, and the observation about the lack of overall symmetry.

In his reply to Mattheson, Marpurg expanded on his comments about tonality.*52 Again he referred to the tendency of some

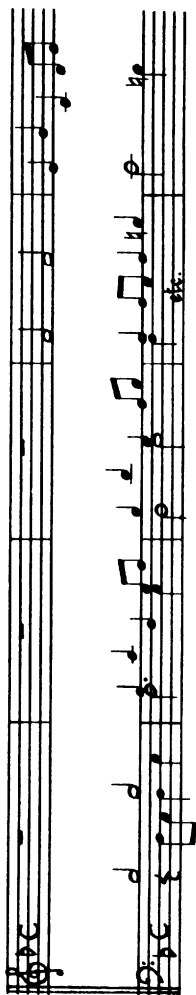
composers to be affected by modal thinking. He admitted that Mattheson was correct in saying that no text book forbids a reversal of subject and answer but claimed that even this lack of a prohibition is based on modal thinking. He observed that he himself thinks in terms of "our present day keys"*53 which require a clearly defined relationship between the tonic and the key of the fifth above. Even the two long notes that begin the subject do not sufficiently define the key. For example, some fugues begin on the fourth degree of the scale. To prove that such is possible here, Marpurg harmonized the subject as follows:*54 (Example 8)

Clearly Marpurg understood the difference between old and new styles of fugal composition. He recognized that works in the old style had few if any episodic passages, whereas in modern works they were a necessity. However, he never quite said in so many words that the lack of episodic material in old fugues was consistent with the nature of modal composition in which tonal areas were not clearly defined and were rarely contrasted with one another. Such works did not need transitional or modulatory material to lead the ear from one key area to another. "Modern" fugues called for procedures that defined tonal centers as clearly as possible and at the same time presented a number of different aspects of the tonic key. Marpurg's insistence on such variety helps us define the fugues of J. S. Bach as modern in contrast to the simpler tonal plan of typical works of such predecessors as Dietrich Buxtehude. Kirnberger, a man of Marpurg's generation and in some respects a more professional musician, seems not to have fully grasped the harmonic and structural implications of Bach's art, however much he may have respected and honored it.

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R E F E R E N C E S

- 1 Journal of Music Theory, IV(1960), 169-193.
- 2 Mekeel, p.181. The rhetorical question was quoted from the Anhang to Mar-
purg's Versuch über die musikalische Temperatur nebst einem Anhang über
den Rameau- und Kirnbergerschen Grundbass (Breslau: J. F. Korn, 1776). It
reads "What composer would ever think that the triad a-c-e or e-g-b could have
a C triad as a fundamental chord? Not even a double contrapuntist".
- 3 3 vols., Berlin: F.W. Birnstiel, 1760-1763.
- 4 The latter work appeared in Marpurg's Fugensammlung, 1. Thl. (Berlin: Gott-
lieb August Lange, 1758), pp.3-7.
- 5 See Johann Gottfried Heinrich Bellermand, "Briefen von Kirnberger an Forkel",
Leipziger allgemeine musikalische Zeitung, VI(1871), cols. 529-534, 550-554,
614-621, 628-630, 645-648, 661-664, 677-678. See also Bellermand's "Nach-
trag zu Kirnberger's Briefe", ibid., VII(1872), cols. 441-444, 457-460. This
is a collection of letters composed in the years 1779, 1780, and 1783. In them
Kirnberger was still raging over what he felt was Marpurg's vicious and unfair
published attacks on his fugues.
- 6 Mekeel, p. 181.
- 7 Friedrich Wilhelm Marpurg, ed., Kritische Briefe über die Tonkunst, I(1759),
1: "Eine gewisse musikalische Gesellschaft".
- 8 Berlin: G. A. Lange, 1759.
- 9 Kritische Briefe, I(1760), 234.
- 10 Ibid., I(1759), 15.
- 11 Ibid., p. 23.
- 12 Ibid., pp. 41-47.
- 13 Berlin: George Ludewig Winter, 1759.
- 14 Kirnberger, Allegro, p. 1.
- 15 Kritische Briefe, I(1759-1760), pp. 175-181, 183-189, 191-196, 199-205, 207-
213, 215-220.
- 16 The work to which Kirnberger was accused of having added a bass seems to
have been from Georg Philipp Telemann's six canonic duets, the second move-
ment of the first duet being an adagio. See Kirnberger's Allegro, p. 6.
- 17 Kritische Briefe, I(1760), 231-240.
- 18 Ibid., pp. 235-236.
- 19 Ibid., p. 42.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Allegro, pp. 6-7.

- 22 See *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, II, fugues number 11 (F major) and 15 (G major). Emanuel Bach's fugue is listed in Alfred Wotquenne, *Thematisches Verzeichnis der Werke von Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1905), p. 52, item X, 119, no. 6. For the fugue by Handel, see *Hallische Händel Ausgabe*, Series II, vol. 1: *Die achte grosse Suiten*, ed. Rudolph Steglich (Kassel: Bärenreiter-Verlag, 1955), pp. 73-75. This fugue is part of the suite in F major first published in London in 1720.
- 23 *Allegro*, p. 8. Kirnberger might well have argued that even if Marpurg was correct and six-four harmonies existed at the points in question, they could be considered essential dissonances that may occur on weak or strong beats with or without preparation. Furthermore such eighth-note passages in rapid tempo suggest relatively free treatment. It should also be noted, however, that this discussion took place in 1759-1760, some twenty years before Kirnberger published his own works on music theory. See Mekeel, p. 180.
- 24 *Allegro*, pp. 6-7.
- 25 *Kritische Briefe* I(1759), 192.
- 26 *Ibid.*, p. 181.
- 27 *Ibid.*, p. 191.
- 28 *Ibid.*, p. 43.
- 29 *Ibid.*
- 30 It should be noted here that Marpurg makes no mention of the fact that the use of $d\sharp$ and $a\sharp$ here would require further changes and would create serious difficulties in the part writing.
- 31 *Allegro*, p. 8.
- 32 *Kritische Briefe*, I(1759), 200 and *Allegro*, p. 8.
- 33 *Kritische Briefe*, I(1759), 202. It should also be noted that Marpurg correctly observed that Bach stated the subject a fifth time in C minor for purposes of tonal emphasis at the very end of the fugue.
- 34 *Ibid.*, p. 203.
- 35 *Ibid.*
- 36 *Ibid.*, 218.
- 37 See Reference *4.
- 38 *Kritische Briefe*, I(1760), 257.
- 39 This agrees with what little is known of Marpurg's background prior to 1749, the year of his first publication.
- 40 *Ibid.*
- 41 *Ibid.*, p. 258.

- 42 Ibid., p. 259. At this time writers on music recognized two meanings for the word *moduliren*. In his *Abhandlung von der Fuge* (2 vols.; Berlin: A. Haude & J.C. Spener, 1753-1754) I, 99, Marpurg notes that it can refer to moving from one key to another but that it can also refer to the conduct of a melody in a single key. Often however, the word *Ausweichung* was used to denote modulation in the modern sense.
- 43 *Kritische Briefe*, I(1760), 263.
- 44 In all fairness it must be pointed out that Marpurg has created a straw man, for nowhere does Kirnberger allege that his fugue was composed using one of the church modes.
- 45 Ibid., p. 268.
- 46 Ibid., p. 266.
- 47 Ibid.
- 48 Ibid., p. 276.
- 49 Ibid., p. 271.
- 50 Ibid., pp. 272-273.
- 51 Ibid., p. 352.
- 52 Ibid., pp. 364-374.
- 53 Ibid., p. 366.
- 54 Ibid., p. 372.