

J.S. Bach

*Das
wohltemperierte
Klavier.*

John Butt

Johann Sebastian Bach *Das wohltemperierte Klavier*

John Butt *harpsichord*

The Well-Tempered Clavier Book I, BWV 846–69

Disc 1

1. Prelude No. 1 in C major.....2:00
2. Fugue No. 1 in C major1:31
3. Prelude No. 2 in C minor 1:26
4. Fugue No. 2 in C minor..... 1:20
5. Prelude No. 3 in C sharp major 1:20
6. Fugue No. 3 in C sharp major..... 2:16
7. Prelude No. 4 in C sharp minor 1:53
8. Fugue No. 4 in C sharp minor.....2:45
9. Prelude No. 5 in D major 1:11
10. Fugue No. 5 in D major..... 1:34
11. Prelude No. 6 in D minor 1:20
12. Fugue No. 6 in D minor..... 1:46
13. Prelude No. 7 in E flat major.....3:28
14. Fugue No. 7 in E flat major1:34
15. Prelude No. 8 in E flat minor.....2:23
16. Fugue No. 8 in D sharp minor.....3:50
17. Prelude No. 9 in E major 1:18
18. Fugue No. 9 in E major.....1:14
19. Prelude No. 10 in E minor 1:42
20. Fugue No. 10 in E minor 1:23
21. Prelude No. 11 in F major..... 1:03
22. Fugue No. 11 in F major..... 1:12
23. Prelude No. 12 in F minor 1:14
24. Fugue No. 12 in F minor.....2:49

Disc 2

1. Prelude No. 13 in F sharp major..... 1:24
2. Fugue No. 13 in F sharp major..... 1:33
3. Prelude No. 14 in F sharp minor.....1:19
4. Fugue No. 14 in F sharp minor..... 1:52
5. Prelude No. 15 in G major.....0:52
6. Fugue No. 15 in G major.....2:38
7. Prelude No. 16 in G minor..... 1:09
8. Fugue No. 16 in G minor..... 1:32
9. Prelude No. 17 in A flat major 1:22
10. Fugue No. 17 in A flat major 1:56
11. Prelude No. 18 in G sharp minor 1:13
12. Fugue No. 18 in G sharp minor 1:52
13. Prelude No. 19 in A major.....1:21
14. Fugue No. 19 in A major 2:02
15. Prelude No. 20 in A minor 1:08
16. Fugue No. 20 in A minor 3:48
17. Prelude No. 21 in B flat major..... 1:15
18. Fugue No. 21 in B flat major 1:38
19. Prelude No. 22 in B flat minor 2:17
20. Fugue No. 22 in B flat minor..... 1:58
21. Prelude No. 23 in B major.....0:57
22. Fugue No. 23 in B major 1:36
23. Prelude No. 24 in B minor.....4:06
24. Fugue No. 24 in B minor 5:08

The Well-Tempered Clavier Book II, BWV 870–93

Disc 3

1. Prelude No. 1 in C major.....	2:01
2. Fugue No. 1 in C major	1:40
3. Prelude No. 2 in C minor	2:00
4. Fugue No. 2 in C minor.....	1:45
5. Prelude No. 3 in C sharp major.....	1:44
6. Fugue No. 3 in C sharp major	1:38
7. Prelude No. 4 in C sharp minor.....	3:16
8. Fugue No. 4 in C sharp minor	2:01
9. Prelude No. 5 in D major	5:16
10. Fugue No. 5 in D major.....	1:57
11. Prelude No. 6 in D minor	1:35
12. Fugue No. 6 in D minor.....	1:38
13. Prelude No. 7 in E flat major.....	2:38
14. Fugue No. 7 in E flat major	1:35
15. Prelude No. 8 in D sharp minor.....	4:07
16. Fugue No. 8 in D sharp minor	2:19
17. Prelude No. 9 in E major	4:14
18. Fugue No. 9 in E major.....	2:14
19. Prelude No. 10 in E minor	3:37
20. Fugue No. 10 in E minor	2:40
21. Prelude No. 11 in F major	2:52
22. Fugue No. 11 in F major.....	1:30
23. Prelude No. 12 in F minor	3:34
24. Fugue No. 12 in F minor	1:57

Recorded at

St Martin's, East Woodhay, Hampshire, UK
15–18 July 2013

Produced and recorded by **Philip Hobbs**

Post-production by **Julia Thomas**

Disc 4

1. Prelude No. 13 in F sharp major.....	2:42
2. Fugue No. 13 in F sharp major.....	2:05
3. Prelude No. 14 in F sharp minor.....	2:21
4. Fugue No. 14 in F sharp minor.....	3:36
5. Prelude No. 15 in G major	2:24
6. Fugue No. 15 in G major.....	1:16
7. Prelude No. 16 in G minor.....	2:22
8. Fugue No. 16 in G minor.....	2:48
9. Prelude No. 17 in A flat major	3:25
10. Fugue No. 17 in A flat major.....	2:15
11. Prelude No. 18 in G sharp minor.....	5:15
12. Fugue No. 18 in G sharp minor	3:25
13. Prelude No. 19 in A major.....	1:40
14. Fugue No. 19 in A major.....	1:21
15. Prelude No. 20 in A minor	3:30
16. Fugue No. 20 in A minor.....	1:42
17. Prelude No. 21 in B flat major.....	5:17
18. Fugue No. 21 in B flat major	1:54
19. Prelude No. 22 in B flat minor	2:27
20. Fugue No. 22 in B flat minor.....	3:21
21. Prelude No. 23 in B major.....	1:59
22. Fugue No. 23 in B major	2:30
23. Prelude No. 24 in B minor.....	1:47
24. Fugue No. 24 in B minor	1:48

Design by **gmtoucari.com**

Harpisichord by **Bruce Kennedy**

Copy of a German instrument (1702–4)
by Michael Mietke (d. 1719), owned by
the Dunedin Consort, tuned to $a' = 415\text{Hz}$
by Edmund Pickering

Tempo relationships in eighteenth-century music: historically inspired creativity?

Studies of tempo in eighteenth-century music, particularly that of J.S. Bach, have a long modern history, and there is no doubt that the majority of those writing on tempo in the music of Bach have been seduced by the craving for order that the composer so often seems to inspire. One strand may attempt to make Bach the glorious inheritor of the great mensural system that was already falling into decline a century before his birth, another seems to presuppose a rational and graduated system of Italian terminology that generates specific tempi. Others are attracted to a sort of pseudo-hermetic tradition by which Bach must have had some secret system, governed by strict mathematical principles and doubtless involving some degree of religious symbolism. It is tempting to agree with Ido Abravaya – perhaps the most sceptical writer regarding supposed Bachian systems – that the sort of consistency and omniscience often attributed to Bach seems more appropriate to a godhead than to any eighteenth-century musician.¹

Indeed, one could perhaps go further and suggest that in fact most of the orthodoxies of ‘historically informed performance’ (HIP) assume a consistency and thoroughness of knowledge that can verge on the preposterous. We pretend we know far more than we actually can, and we also assume that composers and their performers were thoroughly consistent throughout their careers and were fully conscious of every aspect of performance practice at every juncture. If we had to account for received historical accuracies in purely numerical terms, the proportion of things that are unequivocally accurate and documented beyond any reasonable doubt would surely be found to be depressingly small.

But perhaps one of the real advantages of HIP is the fact that historical considerations can encourage us to consider new relationships – new connections – between different factors. While historical study will naturally generate new data, might not inspiration for actual performance come more from new ways of configuring and combining what we already know and experience?

1 Ido Abravaya, *On Bach's Rhythm and Tempo* (Kassel, 2006).

When considering issues of tempo, the period performer may be led astray by the assumption that a specific metronome mark is to be aimed for, when such a thing could not easily have been established in Bach's environment. And the various shards of historical evidence and thought that we can find perhaps suggest rather that that would be to substitute an end result for a much more productive process. In other words, the actual tempo may well have been a by-product of several other considerations. It may also be wrong to assume that there was ever any intention (or indeed ability) to perform in anything like the strict manner that would later be termed 'metronomic'. Here is an instance where history might inspire us to think of several dimensions simultaneously – say, pulse, notation, genre, mood, harmonic rhythm, range of note values – rather than aiming for a specific, ideal tempo. While we can never recreate the thought processes of another age, we may at least be able to share in some of the ways in which performers combined ideas and parameters, even if we shall inevitably be faced with many different priorities in the factors we come to choose.

So, what aspects of tempo choice offer the closest degree of certainty – or, better, strong likelihood – in eighteenth-century practice? In the absence of any metronomic absolute, the most common reference to any standard – a *tempo ordinario*, as it is sometimes called – relates to the human pulse. This immediately implies a regularity (at least for good health), but also considerably more flexibility than mechanical means of tempo regulation might suggest. The connection of the *tactus* to the human pulse already had a history of several centuries, so it is tempting to abstract from this some sort of consistency with Renaissance practice. Some things may well have changed in the course of the seventeenth century, not least because of the new resonance the pulse undoubtedly gained with the discovery of the circulation of the blood. The recent work of Luca Guariento points to Robert Fludd's increasing interest in the *pulsus*, gained through his experience as a physician and also as a result of William Harvey's discoveries (published 1628).² And the metaphorical connection between his cosmology and music was clearly influenced by this emphasis on pulse.

For Quantz, writing in the middle of the eighteenth century, there seems to be no specific mystical or spiritual association between music and pulse. He implies that the connection is more one of convenience, and derives four basic levels of speed from multiples and divisions of the pulse. Allegretto corresponds to the pulse (c.80?), while allegro assai is twice as fast and adagio

2 Luca Guariento, 'Music as Metaphor and Its Changing Perspectives throughout Robert Fludd's *opera omnia*' (PhD dissertation, University of Glasgow, submitted 2014).

cantabile and adagio assai are respectively twice and four times as slow.³ What other writers, most importantly (for Bach) J.G. Walther, also suggest is that the pulse itself is much prone to variation according to age, gender, temperament, mood and illness, and that associated texts might also have a strong influence.⁴ So, we might imagine, the relation of the pulse to something between 60 and 85 beats a minute is only a sort of standard measurement and not to be applied in every possible case. The background pulse would seem to relate to the broadest range of likely human experience, but not, say, to the animal world, or to the type of pulse possible with the machinery of the industrial age.

Quantz derives triple times by according a 'normal' (i.e. standard duple) pulse to each component of a hemiola across two bars (the beat of a triple metre thus becomes twice as fast as that of a duple allegretto, each bar of the triple being 1.5 duple beats). Triple prestos can be derived from abstracting three quavers from fast 2/4 time; or, if the tempo is clearly to be even quicker, a single 'normal' pulse (in duple time) accords to a whole bar of triple time.⁵ What Quantz's system suggests is that all tempi can relate to the human pulse at some level, but that there is a clear variety within this. Moreover, there is evidently the possibility of a proportional relationship between different metres, although Quantz never discusses this in terms of the successive sections of a piece or of a sequence of shorter pieces.

At this point, one might still object that composers such as Bach did not study or entirely understand the proportions of the Renaissance mensural system. Nevertheless, the essentials of this system can be derived from reading together several individual entries in Walther's *Lexicon* (1732), while it is also clear that Bach had an interest in ancient and traditional music theories. A more practical issue to consider is that Bach, like so many of his contemporaries, regularly performed motets from the late sixteenth century as well as those by Lutheran composers in the generations leading up to him. Although there is every likelihood that directors of this repertory may not have fully understood all proportions relating to 'high' Renaissance practice (particularly given that the meaning of time signatures had changed quite radically over the interim), they must have been

- 3 Johann Joachim Quantz, *Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversiere zu spielen* (Berlin, 1752); trans. Edward R. Reilly, as *On Playing the Flute* (London and Boston, 1966), pp. 283–4.
- 4 Johann Gottfried Walther, *Musicalisches Lexicon oder Musicalische Bibliothec* (Leipzig, 1732), entry 'Battuta', p. 80.
- 5 *On Playing the Flute*, p. 286.

at ease with some form of proportional relationship in order to be able to perform this music successfully at all (and particularly the ubiquitous sequences between passages in C or cut-C time and 3/2, which would have been familiar in the motets of the Bodenschatz collection).⁶

J.P. Kirnberger, claiming to codify all he had learned from Bach, relates tempo to manifold aspects of mood and representation and recommends that each metre is best learned through associated dances. He suggests that we imagine tempo like different forms of water-flow, from the gentlest stream to the wildest sea. Not only this, but each metre brings with it a 'natural tempo' – its *tempo giusto*, which is itself modified by dance style (e.g. a sarabande in 3/4 time would obviously be slower than a minuet in the same metre). Having this as a starting point, one next looks at the shortest prevailing note value, which will normally moderate the tempo, the shorter the value. Only then does Kirnberger mention Italian terms, suggesting that they can make the estimate of both tempo and expression more precise: they might point to something that one would not otherwise already have guessed from the metre, genre and shortest note value.⁷

Among several other insights, most useful perhaps is Kirnberger's view that, even if the absolute tempo of a piece in compound time and one in simple time with triplets is essentially the same, the latter will have a quicker harmonic rhythm, with no regular change of harmony on the last component of the beat; it will therefore have a lighter sort of flow.⁸ In all, what is attractive about Kirnberger's system is its multiplicity of factors, all mutually inflecting, which together generate a tempo. Like Quantz, he suggests that each metre implies a sort of *tempo giusto*, or *tempo ordinario*, which is the starting point for gauging speed, although he does not specifically relate this to the human pulse.

Returning to Bach, it is interesting that some authors (among them Abravaya) take the lack of direct agreement between Quantz and Kirnberger to suggest that there is no system at all to Bach's tempi, while others (such as Don Franklin and Robert Marshall) tend more to synthesize a system out of either or both authorities, and support it with very close study of the internal evidence of Bach's own notation. Among several rules of thumb, Marshall usefully adapts Quantz's practice to suggest

6 Erhard Bodenschatz, *Florilegium portense* (Leipzig, 1603, rev. 1618–21). This collection was used in Leipzig throughout the seventeenth century and was still staple repertory in Bach's time.

7 Johann Philipp Kirnberger, *Die Kunst des reinen Satzes in der Musik* (Berlin, 1774–9), vol. 2, pp. 106–7.

8 *Ibid.* p. 129.

that Bach's 'normal' relation of simple time to compound is to preserve the beat in simple time as the hemiola of the compound (i.e. one beat of a simple time, like 2/4, becomes two-thirds of a beat in 6/8, so that each compound beat gains a half value – an extra quaver); to put it simply, a quaver in compound time would be the same length as a quaver in simple time. For faster tempi, on the other hand, the compound unit would equal the beat of the simple (i.e. three quaver subdivisions of compound time would fill the space of two in simple time).⁹ Franklin's hypotheses, based largely on Kirnberger, are more elaborate and suggest that pieces belonging together can actually relate to one another and that Bach will often employ a fermata at the end of a piece or subsection to indicate that the prevailing *tempo giusto* is to be cancelled and reset.¹⁰

Already it is very clear how quickly historical information, which itself may be ambiguous or even contradictory, can be assimilated and then supplemented by something for which there is no direct historical support (e.g. the role of the fermata, though Bach's use of this is clearly telling, as Franklin has demonstrated). But the process is certainly not entirely fictitious, since there is an inductive relationship between the historical theories and the notation that Bach actually employs, and this can sometimes be supplemented by other factors. For instance, it is over 50 years since Arthur Mendel and Bernard Rose independently pointed to two likely tempo relationships in the Mass in B minor.

9 Robert L. Marshall, 'Bach's *Tempo ordinario*: A Plaine and Easie Introduction to the System', in *Critica musica: Essays in Honor of Paul Brainard*, ed. John Knowles (Amsterdam, 1996), pp. 249–78; reprinted with new postscript in *Performance Practice Review*, 13/1 (2008), article 5. See also, 'Tempo and Dynamic Indications in the Bach Sources: A Review of the Terminology', in *Bach, Handel, Scarlatti: Tercentenary Essays*, ed. Peter Williams (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 259–75.

10 I am most grateful to Don Franklin for extensive private discussion regarding his ideas and theories on the tempo relations in the WTC. His published writing on the subject is spread across a number of articles. Among the most seminal are: Don O. Franklin, 'The Fermata as Notational Convention in the Music of J.S. Bach', in Wye. J. Allanbrook et al., *Convention in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Music – Festschrift für Leonard Ratner* (New York, 1992), pp. 345–61; 'Aspekte von Proportion und Dimension in Johann Sebastian Bachs Missa von 1733', in *Leipziger Beiträge zur Bachforschung*, Bd. 5, ed. Ulrich Leisinger (Hildesheim, 2002), pp. 219–54; 'Das Verhältnis zwischen Taktart und Kompositionstechnik im wohltemperierten Klavier I', in *Bach: Das wohltemperierte Klavier I. Tradition, Entstehung, Funktion, Analyse*, ed. Siegbert Rampe, Musikwissenschaftliche Schriften, Bd. 38 (Wiesbaden, 2002), pp. 147–58; 'Composing in Time: Bach's Temporal Design for the Goldberg Variations', in *Bach Studies from Dublin*, Irish Musical Studies 8, ed. Anne Leahy and Yo Tomita (Dublin, 2004), pp. 103–28.

First, the move from the Gloria to the 'et in terra' seems nicely prepared by the hemiola pulse set up at the end of the Gloria, thus ensuring a crotchet = crotchet relationship (by which two thirds of a bar in the 3/8 becomes the beat in the C of the 'et in terra'), which is in line with Marshall's suggestions. The likelihood of this solution is greatly strengthened by the fact that it generates a 1:2 relationship between the two sections in terms of actual duration. The same process in reverse seems to connect the Sanctus to the 'Pleni sunt coeli' (by which the crotchet of the former becomes the hemiola of the latter); this relationship generates a durational relationship of 1:1. Another factor in the B minor Mass autographs is that Bach sometimes omits fermatas at the end of movements and further seems to suggest a quick onward flow with the addition of terms such as 'sequitur'. Franklin suggests that certain sections might therefore flow together in relational tempi.¹¹

Much of Franklin's work has been on establishing tempo, tempo relationships and the role of the fermata in the *Well-Tempered Clavier*. Although he does not propose an absolutely watertight system for the two volumes, he suggests that there is enough evidence to imply that when tempo relations mattered, Bach was consistent in providing the necessary indications. I have taken some of Franklin's suggestions and starting points, and at times have pushed some of his ideas further, beyond merely the relationship of prelude to fugue and towards whole sequences of pieces.

Several caveats are necessary here. First, although there is autograph material for both books, the manuscripts were written around 20 years apart, and there are many secondary sources that show Bach's development of his musical text beyond that of the autographs of both collections. In short, determining the order of composition and refinement of the contents of the WTC (particularly Book II) is one of the most complex editorial exercises in the whole of Bach's oeuvre.¹² So far as tempo indications and the placing of fermatas are concerned, it is unlikely that Bach's practice was completely consistent across the quarter century involved, and no one source provides unequivocal evidence of his final, refined thoughts. Second, it is absolutely clear that many of the

11 Franklin, 'Aspekte von Proportion'. For a summary of the observations of Mendel and Rose, together with my own observations on possible proportional relationships in the Mass in B Minor, see John Butt, *Bach: Mass in B minor* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 39 & 92-7; see also my notes to the Dunedin Consort recording of the Mass in B minor (Linn CKD 354, 2010).

12 See Yo Tomita, *Das wohltemperierte Klavier Teil II* (Munich: Henle Edition, 2007), Preface and Bemerkungen; see also 'The Well-Tempered Clavier, Part 2' (PhD dissertation, University of Leeds, 1991).

individual components of the WTC were composed at different times and that many relationships between successive pairs (and sometimes even within the pair) could not have been determined at the point of original composition. Moreover, the loose double-sheet structure of the London autograph of Book II suggests that the individual pairs could be taken out and played separately (each is designed so that the prelude was on one side and the fugue on the other, although recomposition and extensions often meant that one of the movements had to spill over on to the other side of the sheet). The collection could clearly be used for many purposes, ranging between pedagogy, performance and private edification.

Finally, there is evidence, passed down via the son of Bach's student Heinrich Nicolaus Gerber, that Bach sometimes played an entire book in sequence when he became weary of teaching.¹³ This method of performance perhaps comes closest to those modern recitals in which a whole book, or a half-book, might be played in one go and also of course to the CD/download format that invariably presents all the pairs of preludes and fugues in a complete sequence. This is therefore particularly relevant to the thinking behind the present recording as a whole. But that should not be allowed to obscure the fact that there are many equally plausible schemes for presenting these pieces, schemes that would be perfectly consonant with the various ways in which they might originally have been used, played and heard.

The approach in this recording is to consider how tempo relations might be established between certain pieces in the collection. I shall briefly describe these relations in five categories.

13 *The New Bach Reader – A Life of Johann Sebastian Bach in Letters and Documents*, ed. Hans T. David and Arthur Mendel, revised and enlarged by Christoph Wolff (New York and London, 1998), p. 322: '[The WTC] Bach played altogether three times through for him with his unmatched art, and my father counted these among his happiest hours, when Bach, under the pretext of not feeling in the mood to teach, sat himself at one of his fine instruments and thus turned these hours into minutes.' The original German text can be found in *Bach-Dokumente – Dokumente zum Nachwirken Johann Sebastian Bachs 1750–1800*, vol. 3, ed. Hans-Joachim Schulze (Leipzig, 1972), no. 950, p. 476.

Category 1. Where does a tempo relation seem to be excluded by Bach's use of fermatas? Here, we might presume, a new *tempo giusto* is set for the fugue, without reference to the prelude. One example of this could be the D minor Prelude of Book I, where there is a fermata on both the last chord and over the final barline (coupled with the direction 'verte sequitur Fuga'). Here, then a huge gap does not seem to be implied, but the tempo is basically reset. Another example is the E minor Prelude of Book II, where the autograph shows a fermata over the closing double barline (but not the final note). If a connection is to be made here, it might well be based on the closing ornamental turn of the prelude, which seems to become a principal motive in the fugue. Perhaps Bach intended us to seek a relationship between the turns (which are put into relief by the use of staccato dots for the crotchet movement in the fugue subject) rather than a specific metrical relationship.

Category 2. Where does a consistent tempo between prelude and fugue seem implied? In Book I, the F major Prelude contains 18 bars of 12/8 and the fugue 72 bars of 3/8: so if the pulse is indeed identical, the two pieces are of the same duration. This principle could be applied in general where no specific change of tempo seems called for by the time signature or use of fermatas. A case like the opening C major Prelude and Fugue of Book II, where there is no fermata, might imply that there is some sort of continuity from the C time of the prelude to the 2/4 time of the fugue, but with an elevation of tempo implied by the latter.

Category 3. Where might there be a direct 1:2 or 2:1 proportion between prelude and fugue? An obvious example here is the B major Prelude and Fugue of Book II, where the prelude is in 4/4 time, the fugue proceeding with the same beat transferred to the minim in cut-C time (Bach's very careful notating of rests at the end of the prelude, without fermata, seems to imply a precise connection). Another example might be the F sharp major pair in Book II, where the beat of the fugue in minims could be the same as that of the prelude in crotchets. This also enables the final trill of the prelude to sound as if it provides the idea for the trilled subject of the fugue, which would proceed at roughly the same speed.

Category 4. Where might there be a more complex relationship between prelude and fugue? One example could be the C sharp minor Prelude and Fugue of Book I, where (given the evidence that triple metres are often faster than duple) the 6/4 bar of the prelude might equal a 4/4 bar of *tempo giusto*. Then, assuming the stroke in the C time signature of the fugue carries its traditional implication of halving the pulse (and thus doubling the speed), one bar of the latter piece would

be roughly equal to half a bar of the old (so that three crotchets of the prelude would relate to two minims of the fugue). Another example might be the A minor Prelude and Fugue of Book I, where, following Marshall's suggestions, the crotchet without its dot in the 9/8 prelude could be close to the crotchet of the C-time fugue. This would mean that the repeating mordant figure of the prelude would seed the anapaest of the fugue.

Category 5. If already much of this suggests a degree of speculation that is justified only to the extent that it provides some starting points for arriving at relatively integrated connections between prelude and fugue, what about possible relations between pairs? These would obviously only pertain if one decided to perform the pieces in succession (which Bach did only on certain occasions). In Book I, the C minor Fugue sets up a pulse that can be modified by the addition of a quaver in the C sharp major Prelude (thus the fugue's pulse is essentially the hemiola of the succeeding prelude); or for a faster performance, this could also be done with the 3/8 metre squashed into one beat of the preceding fugue. With no fermata at the end of the prelude, the C sharp major Fugue could either reverse the relationship and return to the tempo of the previous fugue or take the whole (dotted) beat of the prelude as the (undotted) beat of the fugue.

In the case of the A flat major Fugue of Book I, there is a fermata over the last chord, but not over the closing barline (so, to take the guesswork even further, might this imply an extended last chord but no break in pulse?). Certainly a crotchet = crotchet relationship makes sense here, in that the alto movement in the closing bar of the fugue would set up the opening semiquaver figuration of the next prelude. In Book II, the opening C major Prelude could set up a basic pulse that is increased by the 2/4 Fugue and perhaps increased even further for the C minor Prelude (with its regular figuration and relatively slow harmonic rhythm); the fermatas at the end of that prelude (over both final chord and barline) might then imply that the C minor Fugue resets the tempo (as something closer to the 'original' tempo of the C major Prelude?). Next, the C sharp major Prelude (no fermata in between) shows a different way of dividing the same beat.

In turn, the C sharp major Fugue could set up the crotchet pulse of the C sharp minor Prelude (which, with the addition of a quaver, is thus slower). From here the quick pulse of the C sharp minor Fugue can be abstracted directly from three semiquavers of the prelude (though the pulse will perhaps be a little quicker in practice) and, finally, the D major Prelude returns to the pulse of the C sharp minor Prelude (again, perhaps a little quicker). Now, with the D major's prominent falling

gestures, beginning in bar 2 with a duple division of the beat, the pulse of the C sharp minor Fugue, just past, is also integrated. In all then, the D major Prelude would function to sum up the two types of pulse from the two previous pieces.

In some of these later cases I have ignored the fact that there is a fermata on the last chord (but not on the barline), as, for instance, at the end of the C sharp major Fugue. I do this on the supposition that a fermata on the last chord may imply a prolongation of the chord without necessarily changing the basic pulse to follow. If this distinction is observed (one that even Franklin has never countenanced), then there would be an obvious continuity of tempo between the A major Fugue of Book I and the A minor Prelude (both in the relatively rare time signature of 9/8), with a sort of pause for breath at the end of the A major Fugue.



It is impossible to deny that none of these experiments with tempo and tempo relations has anything of the type of certainty that a metronome-mark culture would require. It is also possible to trace a line from ideas that have some historical substantiation towards ones that are more or less fantasy, improvised on top of the previous levels of evidence. On the other hand, one might protest that historically informed performance is hardly likely to have any artistic plausibility if it does not involve creativity at some level. In any case, for the purpose of this recording the theoretical tempo relationships have been used as starting points for relating tempi rather than as precise goals, and the actual results may be quite imprecise if measured literally. The intention is to reveal some sort of connection between different pieces, even if it is a connection that leads to a marked contrast in the mood of embodied movement.

Why bother with all of this? The tendency in the great piano performances of the WTC over the last 50 years or has been for some considerable varieties of tempo, from the fastest, sound-barrier-breaking presto to the slowest, 'Barber-esque' adagissimo (Glenn Gould was a particular proponent of this, even though he did sometimes establish an almost mechanical relation between tempi, as for instance in his final recording of the *'Goldberg' Variations*). Two things about this trend are difficult to ignore. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with extreme tempo variations, and it is testament to the multivalent qualities of Bach's music that it has the potential for meaningful

performance at an astonishing variety of tempi. Second, one might claim that this approach is entirely authentic to twentieth- and twenty-first-century experiences: those of hitherto unimagined velocities together with human tragedies on industrial scales. So, if my approach is in any way accurate in revisiting eighteenth-century practices, what are they and what can they possibly do for us today?

It is well known that Gottfried Leibniz, the most significant German philosopher of the Baroque era, frequently used music as a metaphor – but also as an analogue – for the coherence of the world and our part in it. Its beauty and emotional power are, to him, precisely calculated in the pre-established harmony and all sounds we hear relate to mathematical ratios. Leibniz further asserts that our souls somehow intuit the calculations involved, relating to the beats and vibrations behind harmony, and that we experience this as pleasure. Dissonance – a sort of wilful imperfection in musical harmony – acts as a foil for consonance, which is then heard as that much more perfect. Thus, God has introduced exactly the right degree of dissonance (i.e. negative elements) into the world for us to appreciate the consonance, and so our world represents the best of all possible worlds. At least once, in his essay *On Wisdom* (c.1690), he extends this outlook towards the progression of beats in time:

All that sounds, has a sound or movement going to and fro in itself, as one sees in strings, and thus what sounds, produces invisible pulsations; when such are now not unperceived, but rather go in order, and coincide with a certain change, they are pleasant, as one also otherwise observes a certain change of long and short syllables, and a coincidence of rhyming between the verses, which, as it were, contains in itself a silent music, and if they fall right, are pleasant even without vocal music. Beats on the drum, the time and the cadence in dances, and otherwise similar movements in conformity with measure and rule, have their pleasantness from the order, for all order proves of use to the mind. And a proportionate, although invisible, order is found also in the artfully created beats or movements of shaking or vibrating strings, pipes or bells, yes, the air itself, which is brought through these into proportionate movement, which also, moreover, produces in us a harmonizing echo by means of hearing, toward which our vital spirits are stirred. On this account, music is so apt to move our minds, although, in general, such a chief purpose is not sufficiently observed nor sought.¹⁴

14 Trans. Anita Gallagher, accessed via www.schillerinstitute.org/transl/trans_leibniz.html#wisdom

The rhythms that make up the pulses of individual notes are part of a plenum of pulses that includes the rhythm, metre and overall order of music. As in Leibniz's theory of monads, the same patterns are found in the largest and smallest components of the world. There is also a strong resonance here with Leibniz's famous dictum that perfection lies in achieving the greatest variety through the simplest possible means. While variety within unity continued to be a central plank of aesthetic theory in the later eighteenth century, Leibniz's dictum is particularly related to his conviction that we live in the best possible of worlds. This latter point, central to his *Theodicy*, was considered naïve by the latter half of the century (it was lambasted by Voltaire in *Candide*, 1759), but the general enlightenment imperatives towards empathy and harmony according to universal principles still represent what one might call a 'one-world worldview'. The enlightenment was most concerned with the world in which we live and one in which the human is the central point of interest.

In short, the sorts of tempo relation I have been suggesting, together with the central analogy with the human pulse, relate to what I would describe as the 'one-world' view, a world with its own immense variety and regularities, and one in which the human seems meant to feel 'at home', since both the variety and the regularity have analogies with our own bodies and their functioning. I would therefore distinguish my attempt at a 'one-world' performance of the WTC from the 'multi-world' style of many other contemporary performances. The latter, I emphasize, are absolutely authentic to a world in which human capabilities, indeed the human imagination itself, are extended beyond any possible experience on the part of a single person. In the 'multi-world' view there is both wonderment at super-human possibilities and horror and alienation at our tiny place in such a daunting scheme.

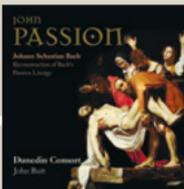
So are my 'one-world' tendencies simply naïve, just like Leibniz's view of our inhabiting the most perfect of possible worlds? Certainly, there is the danger of this, but perhaps there are also great advantages in being reminded of the one-world view in our own multi-world state. After all, the basic workings of our bodies have not changed that much since the eighteenth century, and our being grounded in the possibilities and variations of our own pulse, and the type of embodiment that this implies, is hardly just wishful thinking.

ALSO AVAILABLE ON LINN

CKD 463



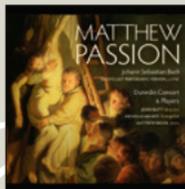
Dunedin Consort
J.S. Bach:
Six Brandenburg
Concertos



Dunedin Consort
J.S. Bach: John Passion
(Reconstruction of
Bach's Passion Liturgy)



Dunedin Consort
J.S. Bach: Mass in B minor
(Breitkopf & Härtel
Edition, edited by
J. Rifkin, 2006)



Dunedin Consort
J.S. Bach:
Matthew Passion
(Final Performing
Version, 1742)



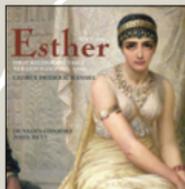
Dunedin Consort
Mozart: Requiem
(Reconstruction of First
Performance)



Dunedin Consort
Handel: Messiah
(Dublin Version, 1742)



Dunedin Consort
Handel: Acis & Galatea
(Original Cannons
Performing Version,
1718)



Dunedin Consort
Handel: Esther
(First Reconstructable
Version (Cannons), 1720)

For even more great music visit linnrecords.com



LINN

Just listen

Glasgow Road, Waterfoot, Eaglesham, Glasgow, G76 0EQ

T: +44 (0)141 303 5027 | E: info@linnrecords.co.uk