

STUDIES OF BEETHOVEN'S GREAT FUGUE

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requirements for the degree

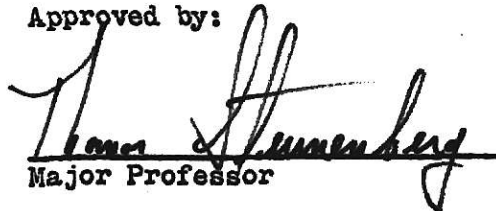
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INTRODUCTION

Beethoven wrote the String Quartet, Opus 130 in 1825 with the Great Fugue as its finale. The first performance of this work was on March 21, 1826, by the Schuppanzigh Quartet. In this first performance, the presto and the 'danza tedesca' were encored, the cavatina made no impression and the fugue was condemned.¹

Later, Beethoven wrote a new finale for the Bb quartet and the fugue was published as a separate opus, dedicated to Archduke Rudolph of Austria. Artaria published the Great Fugue as Opus 133 and it is claimed that it was he who persuaded Beethoven to write a new finale for the Quartet Opus 130 in Bb.²

The Great Fugue was among the last compositions written by Beethoven. A short summary of his style of composing from 1815 to 1826 will be helpful in understanding it.

Besides the Great Fugue, Beethoven also composed his last five piano sonatas (1816-1822) in this period, the Missa solemnis, Opus 123 (1817-1823), the Diabelli variations, Opus 120 in 1823, the Ninth Symphony, Opus 125 (1817-1823), and the last string quartets in 1825 and 1826. Most of his opus numbers from 101-137 were written in this period.

The adjective used most often to describe the late Beethoven compositions is meditative. This was the time when Beethoven became almost totally deaf and he was forced to turn inward and compose from the purely inward workings of his thoughts. Vincent d'Indy gives a thumbnail sketch of

¹Sir George Grove, "Beethoven", Groves Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 3rd ed., I, 299.

²Vincent d'Indy, "Beethoven", Cobbett's Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music, 2nd ed., I, 104.

the three styles of compositions written by Beethoven.

And he creates no longer with a view to passing success, as in his youth, nor to pour out his feelings and his passions, as in his second period; he creates in pure joy or sorrow, seeking only to elevate that soul in which he lives, alone.¹

Another of the characteristics of his third period is the discarding, or enlarging, of traditional forms. Grove, in his article about Beethoven, states that in the later quartets Beethoven wandered further away from the old paths; the thought was everything and the form nothing. He states further that it is the obscurity of these thoughts and their apparent want of connection that make these quartets difficult to understand.²

Two forms that characterize the last works of Beethoven are the fugue and the variation forms. Even in his early works Beethoven used theme and variation, but in his third period his themes were not only varied, but they were transformed into completely new material. The Thirty-Three Variations on a Waltz by Diabelli is an example of this thematic transformation. d'Indy uses the Twelfth Quartet as an example of a variation of a theme amplified to the extent of causing the emergence of a totally new melody.³

Fugues were used to a great extent in Beethoven's third period. Joseph Kerman, in writing about these fugues, says:

What is known is that in these years fugue sketches came very naturally to Beethoven's pen. During the third period, fugue was the crop that he cultivated most eagerly and harvested most stubbornly. He rarely missed an opportunity to fertilize the ground.⁴

¹d'Indy, "Beethoven", p. 98.

²Grove, "Beethoven", p. 306.

³d'Indy, "Beethoven", p. 99.

⁴Joseph Kerman, The Beethoven Quartets (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), p. 270.

Of the sixteen major works by Beethoven in the ten years before the last quartets, Kerman found nine of them to contain fugues ranging from merely prominent to sensational.¹ Beethoven increasingly used the fugue, according to Kerman, because he was looking for alternatives to the sonata form.²

The use of contrapuntal lines also led Beethoven to use new sonorities. Grout lists several new effects that Beethoven used in his last period sonorities. Among them were:

The widely spaced piano sonorities at the end of the sonata Op. 110, the partition of the theme between the two violins (on the principle of the medieval hocket) in the fourth movement of the C-sharp minor Quartet, and the extraordinary dark coloring of the orchestra and chorus at the first appearance of the words "Ihr sturz nieder" in the finale of the Ninth Symphony.³

Briefly, there were four stylistic devices used by Beethoven in his third period that are directly relevant to the Great Fugue. These were: (1) Beethoven's abstract working out of themes, (2) his increased use of fugue and canon, (3) his use of widely spaced harmonies and wide melodic leaps, and (4) his development of the variation form. Musicians have found all four of these devices used when analyzing the Great Fugue. It was Beethoven's use of these techniques that make listening to the Great Fugue difficult. Mason, writing about the complexities of the piece, says:

. . . if his contemporaries found it so long and fathomless that another finale had to be substituted for it, how shall we better prove our superiority than by enduring

¹Ibid., p. 270.

²Ibid., p. 275.

³Donald Jay Grout, A History of Western Music (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1960), p. 488.

greater length and penetrating more impenetrable profundity than they could?¹

Beethoven said of his last period compositions: "What I write now bears no resemblance to what I wrote formerly; it is somewhat better."²

Beethoven's "somewhat better" writing was too abstract for some of his contemporary listeners. Their reactions, along with more recent reactions to the Great Fugue, will be examined in the following section.

¹Daniel Gregory Mason, The Quartets of Beethoven (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947), p. 229.

²d'Indy, "Beethoven", p. 98.

I

CRITICAL REACTIONS TO THE GREAT FUGUE

Not many of the reactions of Beethoven's contemporaries remain in writing at the present time. Some of the comments that do remain are produced below.

Schindler, a contemporary of Beethoven, wrote that the Great Fugue was an anachronism, and ought to belong to the primitive times when music was nothing but a mathematical combination.¹ Already mentioned was the condemnation of the fugue at its first performance. This incident was one of the few times Beethoven let the judgment of his contemporaries influence him. However, he still had the fugue published as a separate work. His attitude toward his critics is shown by this excerpt from Gerhard von Bruening.

Once, as often was the case when I arrived, I found him asleep. I sat down beside his bed, keeping quiet - for I hoped the rest might be strengthening - in order not to awaken him. Meanwhile, I turned the pages and read one of the conversation notebooks which was still lying ready for use on the little table next to the bed, to find out who had lately visited him, and what had been said. And there, among other things, I found in one place: "Your quartet which Schuppanzigh performed yesterday did not appeal to me." When he awoke a short time after I held the sentence up to him and asked him what he had to say to it: "Some day it will suit them," was his laconic reply. He at once added with legitimate self-confidence some brief remarks to the effect that he wrote as seemed well to him, and did not allow himself to be led astray by contemporary opinion: "I know that I am an artist!".²

Some of the more recent evaluations of this fugue are contained in the analyses of it by d'Indy, Mason and Kerman. Other comments that lie

¹Mason, The Quartets of Beethoven, p. 210.

²Gerhard von Breuning, Beethoven Impressions of Contemporaries (New York: G. Schirmer, Inc., 1926), p. 206.

outside these analyses are by Sir George Grove who said, "Of the last named fugue (Op. 133) one has no opportunity of judging, as it is never played."¹ Another comment, this one made by Marion M. Scott, aptly describes the two main themes of the fugue.

Beethoven's intellectual plan is almost staggering in its immensity. He begins with an overture in which the fugue motto subject appears, its successive guises forecasting the nature of the three sections in which it will later be developed. At the commencement of the fugue a new theme appears, a leaping, leggy devil of a subject that assumes command as principal, the motto sinking to the counter-subject.²

Ulrich writes: "The whole movement is an example of thematic conflict unsurpassed in the literature." He goes on to state, ". . . a quality of growth, of organic development pervades the entire work. Beethoven here reveals the actual life process of music—truly a stupendous achievement, even for Beethoven."³

The comments made about the Great Fugue by the men that have published analyses of it are diverse in their praise and criticisms. The analysis of the Great Fugue by d'Indy was, chronologically, the first. Parts of his analysis are quoted by Marliave from notes taken by d'Indy's student, Coindreau, in 1909. However, a more complete analysis by d'Indy is given in Cobbett's Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music. About this work d'Indy says:

This somewhat strange and rarely performed work is, nevertheless, of immense interest. It is worthy of deep and serious

¹Groves Dictionary, p. 309.

²Marion M. Scott, Beethoven (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 2nd ed., 1936), p. 270.

³Homer Ulrich, Chamber Music - The Growth and Practice of an Intimate Art (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948), p. 279.

study, for the mysterious beauties with which it is filled are revealed only to those who can rise to the heights of the Beethoven spirit.¹

Daniel Gregory Mason, in the analysis of the fugue that he made, not only used his own caustic phrases, but also quoted from a number of other sources that found the fugue equally confusing. He quotes Harvey Grace as saying, "The devil! Did he mean all that?"² Some of Mason's own statements about the entire fugue, or about its themes, are choice jewels of sarcasm.

For example, he begins his analysis with this sentence. "This long, complicated, and, through many hearings, repellent, if not unintelligible work is the most difficult movement justly to evaluate to be found anywhere in the Quartets. . . ."³ Mason's description of the fugue themes is as follows:

This rhythm, both jerky and monotonous, its notes leaping upon two strings, neither of which gets a chance to sound, is as dry and ungrateful for the ear as it is wearisome for the mind.⁴

Mason ends his chapter on the Great Fugue with the statement, "'The Big Fugue', great as it also truly is in parts, is likely to remain as a whole the most disappointing episode in the entire series of Quartets."⁵

The analysis of the Great Fugue made by Joseph Kerman is not concerned with criticizing the themes Beethoven used, as was done by Mason, but

¹d'Indy, "Beethoven", p. 104.

²Mason, The Quartets of Beethoven, p. 230.

³Ibid., p. 229.

⁴Ibid., pp. 229-31.

⁵Ibid., p. 238.

is more concerned with what Beethoven was able to do with his themes. Kerman says that one passage may be the most extreme thematic transformation prior to Schoenberg.¹ In that passage, Beethoven passed fragments of the main theme through the lower three instruments of the quartet. Another observation made by Kerman is that Beethoven went from one plateau to another with a Stravinskian effect. According to Kerman, the Great Fugue is Stravinsky's favorite work by Beethoven.²

His study is the most comprehensive of the three analyses used in this paper, perhaps because he dealt with the notes on the page rather than with the technical difficulties in playing the notes, or in listening to them. Kerman refrained from editorializing on the Great Fugue.

He does begin his introduction by calling the Great Fugue, "The most problematic single work in Beethoven's output - the most seriously or vitally problematic work, doubtless, in the entire literature of music."³

The critical evaluations of the Great Fugue run the entire spectrum of praise to censure. Even Beethoven must have had some doubts about this fugue. His removal of it from the Bb Quartet was one of the few times he changed his music because of public opinion. J. W. N. Sullivan called this movement the "crown of the whole wonderful Quartet."⁴ In contrast, Daniel Mason called it a potpourri and the most disappointing episode in the series of Quartets.

¹Kerman, The Beethoven Quartets, p. 292.

²Ibid., p. 274.

³Ibid., p. 268.

⁴J. W. N. Sullivan, Beethoven - His Spiritual Development (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1927), p. 186.

II

CRITICAL ANALYSES OF THE GREAT FUGUE

Analysis by Vincent d'Indy

Both the Mason and Kerman analyses were made at later times than that made by d'Indy. For that reason, the d'Indy analysis will be presented first. Two of d'Indy's studies of the Great Fugue are available in print. The earlier of these is printed by Joseph DeMarliave. This analysis is from notes taken at the Schola by M. Coindreau in 1909. However, Mason points out a mistake in Part III where the key should be Gb, not Db.¹

The Coindreau-Marliave version of d'Indy's analysis is shown below:

- I. Introduction. Exposition, in related keys that lead to the dominant, of the principal subject in its four important aspects:
1. In its aspect as counter-subject of the first fugue.
 2. In the rhythm of the second fugue.
 3. In the form of the second fugue.
 4. Accompanied by the rhythm of the counter-subject of the second fugue.

In this main theme is the germ from which the entire work grows.

II. First fugue, with three variations.

1. Statement of the counter-subject alone. Exposition of the fugue according to the usual rules in four entries (S.A.S.A.). The basic theme is characterized by the compass of its melodic intervals. Episode in the same rhythm. Return of the subject in one part leading to the
2. First variation, consisting of the subject (S.A.) in the subdominant, coupled with a new triplet rhythm. Episode based on the first phrase of the subject. As above, the return of the theme is in one part only, and this time appears as the answer, not as the subject, and leads on through the statement of the answer, transformed, to an exposition of the answer in the relative key. Episode in the

¹Mason, The Quartets of Beethoven, p. 231.

rhythm of the subject.

3. Second variation in the principal key of B flat. An exposition (S.A.) with a new rhythmic figure of semiquavers. Episode in the rhythm of the subject accompanied by the semiquaver figure.
4. Third variation. Exposition in the original key (S.A.S.A.). The subject is varied by borrowing the triplet rhythm. As in the two first subdivisions the return of the subject appears in one part only, and leads to the

III. Second fugue, also with three variations.

1. In the key of D flat, the new counter-subject is first stated alone, as in the first fugue; it is formed from the basic theme in a rhythm announced in the Introduction. Exposition (S.A.S.A.) where the new subject is the counter-subject of the preceding fugue. Episode based at first on the answer in canon, then on the development of the subject. Development of the counter-subject, which leads to the
2. First variation, in B flat, the principal tonality. Exposition (S.A.) of the second fugue, in a rhythm announced in the Introduction. Episode based on the subject in this rhythm. Re-exposition as in the first fugue, but here in two sections, based on the subject and leading to the
3. Second variation in A flat. Exposition (S.A.) of the subject by augmentation upon the inverted subject, in the rhythm of the first variation.
4. Third variation. Divertissement on the subject by diminution, with much modulation.

IV. Development of the two fugues in three sections.

1. Divertissement on the figure of the principal subject.
2. Divertissement on the first subject and the beginning of the second.
3. Divertissement on the second subject in similar and contrary motion, with the second counter-subject and the rhythm of the first, leading to the

V. Re-exposition in the principal tonality.

1. Re-exposition and repetition of the first variation of the second fugue.
2. Development of the second fugue.

VI. Conclusion in B flat, principal key.

1. Reminiscence of the first fugue by its subject.
2. Subject of the second fugue.
3. Recapitulation, based on the first subject in its ordinary form, with the second in augmentation with the triplet rhythm of the first fugue.

4. Concluding bars of massive statement of the basic theme.¹

From the key of Bb, Beethoven moved to Ab Major where he used subject A in four entries in augmentation, followed by an episode that moved to the subdominant. The subdominant leads to the third division of the fugue.

About the third section d'Indy said:

The third part opens with a long episode in which the two subjects are brought face to face, subject A tending by its rough ejaculations



to bridle

the exuberant performances of its rival.

Failing to impose itself by force, subject A makes an attempt by a process of 'infiltration', if the term may be so employed; it enters in fragments and in all manner of ways, by direct or contrary motion, always accompanied by the capricious twists and turns of the other 'individual'; then after twenty-two bars of uneasy hesitation, it comes to a decision, and, shedding its garb of gloom, it starts off cheerfully in the principal key, where it settles down in long held notes. A last brief attempt on the part of subject B to gain the upper hand is soon repressed, and subject A takes charge of the conclusion in peace, subject B, now conquered, being reduced to the secondary role of a countersubject.¹

¹d'Indy, "Beethoven", p. 104.

Analysis by Daniel Mason

Daniel Mason gives a more concise view of the Great Fugue. In his analysis, he uses bar numbers. They are a great aid in comparing his analysis with Beethoven's music. Mason uses d'Indy's terminology for Subject A and B. Also, he breaks the Great Fugue into six sections in the same manner as did Coindreau.

Mason's analysis is produced below:¹

OPUS 133

Introduction	Measures	Keys	Motive and Mood
	I- 10 II- 16 17- 25 26- 30	G to F F B flat	Motive A, in proclamatory mood A, in scherzo mood A, in lyric mood (Meno mosso) A, as countersubject for Fugue I
Section I, Fugue No. 1	30-158	B flat to G flat	'Exuberant' Motive B, with A as countersubject
Section 2, Fugue No. 2	159-232	G flat back to B flat	Motive A, in lyric mood (Meno mosso)
Section 3	233-272	B flat	Allegro molto, on scherzo form of Motive A
Section 4	273-413	A flat etc.	Recherchee section on proclamatory mood of Motive A, effect of augmenta- tion. At measure 350 begins a dimin- ution of it
Section 5	414-662	E flat etc.	A sort of development section: 'Struggle' between A and B, with return of scherzo section
Section 6	663-741	B flat	Reassertion of proclamatory Subject A in tonic, followed by combination of both Subjects in 'Simplest Summary'

¹Mason, The Quartets of Beethoven, p. 235.

Beethoven's full title for the Great Fugue was Grand Fugue tantot libre, tantot recherchee (sometimes free, sometimes artificial.) In section 4, Mason found Beethoven using recherchee, which, to the analyzer, inferred the early fugue form of *ricercare*. Mason analyzed this section as a scholastic fugue in which the parts were treated in the manner of an Italian *ricercare*.¹

One other point which Mason elucidates is the similarity between this fugue and a sonata. He points out that the Great Fugue begins with an allegro with a slow introduction, followed by a slow section. The slow section is followed by a scherzo and the finale. These are the four components of the sonata bound up in a single movement. Mason defends his observation with the following statement; "Surprising, hardly believable from so great a master of laconic logic as Beethoven, is the impression it produces of something approaching diffuseness, almost miscellaneity."²

¹Mason, The Quartets of Beethoven, p. 234.

²Ibid., p. 236.

Analysis by Joseph Kerman

The analysis by Joseph Kerman is longer and more detailed than the previously discussed studies. In his analysis, Kerman discusses Beethoven's modulations and the division of the fugue into separate parts. However, his main emphasis is on the thematic transformation that Beethoven used. This thematic transformation is the principal driving force behind the fugue. In one explanation of Beethoven's alteration of themes, Kerman says: "Beethoven is working less with fixed pitches than with the general shape of a theme - a semitone up somewhere around the tonic, followed by a large leap of one sort or another."¹

This section of this paper will deal with the thematic transformations Kerman found in the Great Fugue. However, it must be pointed out that this is not the only element that Kerman explored in this music. Mentioned above was the fact that Kerman also analyzed the modulations and the various sections of the fugue. Too, he gave a detailed account of why Beethoven was writing fugues in his third period.

The 29-measure overture, according to Kerman, is four themes utterly incongruous in feeling made from the same note set.² These themes were analyzed by both d'Indy and Mason as being variations of the central theme of the fugue. The main point of departure between Kerman's analysis and the others comes in the supposed homogeneous sections. In these sections, Kerman shows that the small variants in the themes either change the harmony or the rhythm.

¹Kerman, The Beethoven Quartets, p. 281.

²Ibid., p. 278.

After the Overtura, Kerman found the exposition to be orthodox. By the fifth entrance of the subject, he found an anti-contrapuntal texture, with the placement of the subjects in the outer instruments and with new chromatic inflections.¹ After this entry cadences, a new subsection begins with continuous triplets, which are a rhythmic figuration of the main theme.

Two of the thematic transformations Kerman wrote about are shown in the following printed examples. The first example shows measures 107-114. In this example, Kerman shows the subject compressed from its normal four bars into three and a half measures. The subject is also divided between two instruments. In these measures, the countersubject is syncopated, giving the fugue a new rhythmic impetus.



The second example shows measures 137-148. This is a regular, four-part exposition of the fugue. Kerman points out that the countersubject is no longer gapped. Both it and the subject are slightly varied at each

¹Kerman, The Beethoven Quartets, p. 283.

entrance.

137

141

145

ben marcato

The form of measure 147 is continued until measure 153 when the subject emerges in its original, non-compressed, non-triplet form.

Measures 153-160 are shown below:

ben tenuto

Meno mosso e moderato.

ben tenuto

ben tenuto

ben tenuto

ben tenuto

pp

The next section is the Gb fugue. The theme here is in even quarter notes. Kerman found most of the emphasis in this section to be harmonic.

Writing about the Great Fugue in its entirety he said:

At the risk of some oversimplification, it might be said that the Bb fugue, the Gb fugato, and the Ab fugue concentrate respectively on rhythmic, harmonic, and melodic potentialities of the basic theme.¹

In the third section, or the Ab fugue, Kerman studied the way Beethoven fragmented his themes. He analyzed the harmonic importance of some of these fragments and, also, the harmonic implications in the spelling of C or Db. The following example was used by Kerman to show how Beethoven transformed his theme.²



The Ab fugue ends with a section of strettos. The strettos are interesting because they are not made up of the whole theme, but of three-note fragments of it. They emphasize the key of Bb and are used to modulate into the final cadence section in Bb.

In his analysis, Kerman not only shows the obvious theme modifications

¹Kerman, The Beethoven Quartets, p. 288.

²Ibid., p. 292.

such as are found in the Overtura, but he also shows smaller modifications. He believes that this thematic modification provides the energy for the Great Fugue.

III

FORM STUDY OF MEASURES 1-158

The first section of the Great Fugue is a 29-measure Overture. This Overture, like a table of contents, shows the various rhythmic treatments that theme A undergoes. Except for mm. 17-24, the Overture is in unison. This one section of harmony is in the form of the Gb section of the fugue.

Besides showing the various treatments that subject A will receive, the Overture also is a modulatory passage. It begins in the key of G and then moves through the circle of fifths to C, to F, and, finally, to the tonic key of Bb.

The first exposition of the two subjects are in mm. 30-46. In these measures both subjects are played by each instrument.

Measures 47, 48, and 49 are episodic. The first violin moves chromatically from C down to F in tied eighth notes. These tied notes are reminiscent of subject A. The lower three instruments harmonize the violin part, using the rhythmic figure of subject B.

The last half of measure 49, plus the music that continues through m. 53, contains another statement of the subjects. This statement contains some chromatic effects in the inner parts and leads to a modulatory episode, mm. 54-57. This episode modulates to the key of Bb.

Measures 58-71 contain another exposition. In these measures, Beethoven added a new rhythmic dimension by using a line of continuous triplets for the countersubject. Another feature of this exposition is its turning away from the key of Eb. The first entry in m. 58 is in the key of Eb, with an answer in m. 62 in Bb. In m. 68, the subjects begin in G Major and cadence in C Major in m. 72.

Following this exposition is an episode in mm. 72-78. The fourth exposition is contained in mm. 79-93. These measures contain, for the first time, in m. 82, subject B without subject A.

A long episode, mm. 93-110, follows. During this episode, Beethoven allowed the triplets to stop after 36 measures of continuous use.

In measure 110, Beethoven presented another variation of his subjects. He added a new rhythm for the countersubject in this exposition.

i.e.  He also slightly compressed his themes and divided subject B between two instruments.

Measures 119-138 form another episode. In this section, Beethoven used a two-beat fragment of subject B, and, by using sequences, gradually built this fragment into a two-and-one-half measure phrase.

The sixth exposition begins in m. 139. Here, however, both subjects were radically altered. Subject A was compressed by removing the rests and adding syncopation. Subject B was written in triplets and compressed from its original four measures to two measures.

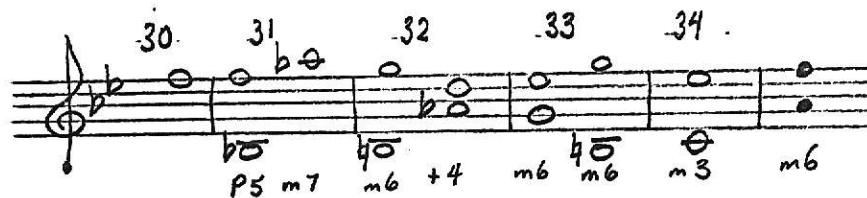
The fugue's sixth episode is contained in mm. 147-158. The final six measures of this section of the Great Fugue contain most of subject B played by the first violin and written an octave higher than it was written at its first entrance in m. 30.

IV

A STUDY OF THE BASIC COUNTERPOINT AND NONHARMONIC TONES USED IN THE GREAT FUGUE

The impact of the first 158 measures of the Great Fugue comes from the driving rhythm used and the dissonances Beethoven chose. The basic contrapuntal structure of the two themes, subjects A and B, is shown in the following example:

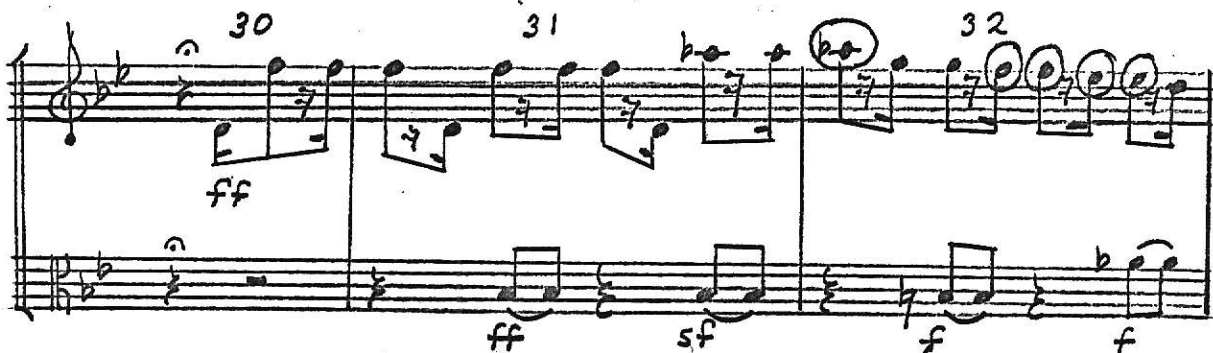
Ex. 1, mm. 30-34.



This example is a distillation of mm. 30-34 and shows the consonant notes. However, the great vitality of this fugue derives from the dissonances that Beethoven used in connection with the notes shown.

In the first four measures of the fugue, Beethoven used dissonances sparingly. In m. 32 there is an Ab suspension and F and Eb are used as passing tones. Measure 33 is completely consonant, while m. 34 has only an F passing tone. All of the dissonances mentioned are in the first violin part.

Ex. 2, mm. 30-34.





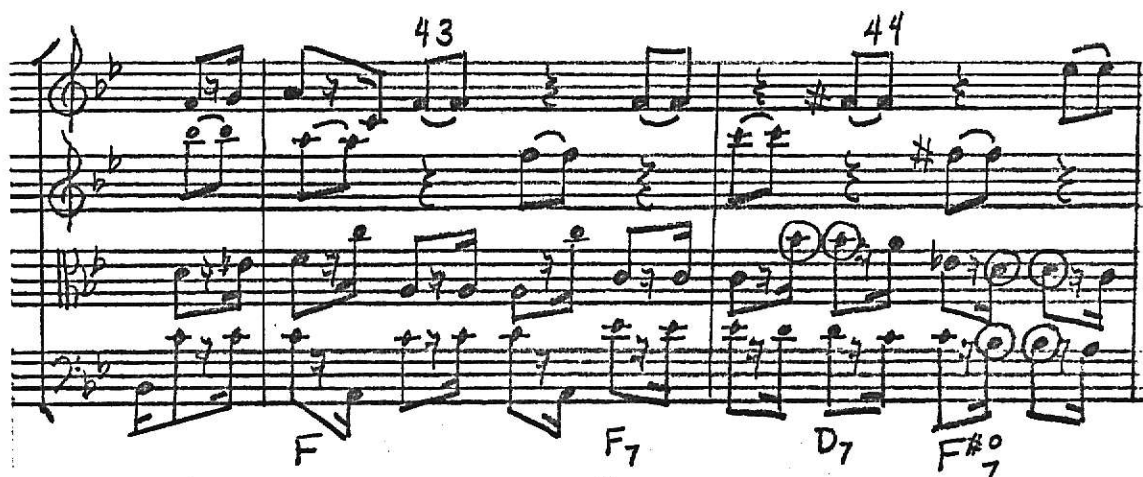
As the first exposition progresses and more parts are added, the dissonances become more pronounced. In mm. 42-46, the two subjects are inverted, causing the basic counterpoint to take the following shape:

Ex. 3, mm. 42-44.



The nonharmonic tones in these measures have the added force of being on the beat. Some of these dissonances also have an added emphasis of being preceded by a preliminary note.

Ex. 4, mm. 42-44.



Beethoven used the following chord structures in these measures:

(1) m. 43 - F Major to F₇, (2) m. 44 - D₇ to F diminished, (3) m. 45 - G minor, (4) m. 46 - A minor, C₇, F₇, and ending on Bb on the first beat of m. 47.

The notes that are nonharmonic are circled in Ex. 3 above. Measure 43 is completely harmonic, while m. 44 does not contain even one full count of consonant sound.

In the fifth entrance of the subject, mm. 50-54, Beethoven used more chords than in the previous entries. He also used more chromaticism in the inner parts.

The basic counterpoint of these measures is slightly different from that of the first entry. The following example shows the basic counterpoint:

Ex. 5, mm. 49-53

The chords used are shown in the following example and the non-harmonic tones are circled. In m. 51, the 2nd and 4th beats were emphasized by the writing of three parts in nonharmonic tones. Once again these dissonances were accentuated by the use of an up-beat.

Ex. 6, mm. 50-52.

The musical score for measures 50-52 is presented below. The chords are indicated at the bottom of the staves:

- Measure 50: Bb
- Measure 51: Bb_7
- Measure 52: C

Measures 54-57 show an example of Beethoven's use of nonharmonic tones in an episode. This episode modulates to the key of Eb Major. It also illustrates how long the nonharmonic tones are in relationship to the harmonic notes. Beginning with m. 55, the top line is an ascending chromatic scale up to the Eb in m. 57.

Ex. 7, mm. 54-57.

B \flat 7 Eb Ebm B \flat 7 Eb B \flat D7 Eb B \flat 7 Eb G7 Ab D \flat m

With the modulation to Eb in m. 58, Beethoven also added a line of triplets for the countersubject of the fugue. The addition of these triplets produced more nonharmonic tones, most of which are passing tones. Beethoven, in m. 59, once again wrote some of the dissonances on the weak beat combined with the added power of the anacrusis. These sounds were given even more stress because of the 3-against-4 rhythm of the preliminary notes.

Given below is the basic counterpoint for these measures:

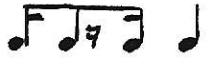
Ex. 8, mm. 57-61.

p5 m7 \flat 6 \flat 5 4 \flat 5 M3 M6 \flat 5 4 m2 4 M3 \flat 4 m6

Next is shown the score for mm. 58-61. The circled notes are the nonharmonic tones.

Ex. 9, mm. 58-61.

Handwritten musical score for Example 9, measures 58-61. The score is written on four staves. Measures 58 and 59 are on the first system, and measures 60 and 61 are on the second system. The music is in 3/4 time and features rapid chord changes. Chord symbols are written below the staves: B \flat , E \flat , E \flat 7, C7, E $^{\circ}$ for measures 58-59, and F $^{\flat}$ m, F $^{\sharp}$ M, C, F, B \flat , d $^{\circ}$, E \flat for measures 60-61. The notation includes various note values, rests, and accidentals.

The episode in mm. 72-78 is interesting because of the rapidity of the chord changes. Almost every beat contains a different chord. The following outline shows the soprano and bass parts, with chord symbols written below. As shown previously, there are various nonharmonic tones, but Beethoven, with his spacing of the  rhythm, used three-part writing for most of this episode.

Ex. 10, mm. 72-75.

72 73 75

C C G G7 C G7 D G D G G7 C#7 D A A7 D D7

Beethoven allowed himself more harmonic freedom in mm. 82-86 by presenting only subject B. These measures correspond to mm. 42-46, because they are written in the same key and subject B is in the cello part in both instances.

The basic counterpoint for measures 82-86 is as follows:

Ex. 11, mm. 82-85.

83 84 85 86

P5 m3 P4 +2 M3 +4 M6 8 9 +4 m6 M3


The harmonic changes and the increased use of nonharmonic tones can be seen in the example on the following page, given in score form.

Ex. 12, mm. 82-86.

The only nonharmonic tones in the cello part are the anticipations in m. 83 and m. 86, and the suspension in m. 85. One of the characteristic, strident dissonances in the Great Fugue can be seen in m. 83 on the second beat of the measure. Beethoven prepared for an $F^{\#}$ diminished triad, in itself highly dissonant, by moving the inner voices in contrary motion.

On the second beat, both the second violin and viola play a D, which is one-half step away from the E_b played by the cello. The B also played by both these instruments produces the interval of an augmented fifth with the cello note. These inner parts resolve to the $F^{\#}$ diminished triad

on the last one-third of the beat.

In mm. 111-114 Beethoven introduced another rhythmic variation in his countersubject and in subject A. The countersubject was given the rhythm of  and subject A was syncopated. The upward leap of a diminished 7th, characteristic of subject A, was replaced with a leap of a minor 6th in m. 112.

In the following example of the harmonic structure of the measures mentioned above, the nonharmonic tones have been circled.

Ex. 13, mm. 111-114.



Chord symbols for measures 111-114:

- Measure 111: F, Bp
- Measure 112: Bb7, b0, G7, Cm
- Measure 113: Cm, CM, G7, C
- Measure 114: F7, Bb, C, F, C7, F

A fragment of the fifth episode is found in mm. 129-134. Beethoven, in this small portion of a longer episode, worked the leap of a 7th, found in

subject A, against the descending scale pattern of the B subject. In mm. 131-134, Beethoven used diverging and converging scale lines against the syncopated wide leaps that are reminiscent of subject A.

These measures contain surprisingly few nonharmonic tones. Beethoven let the rhythmic power of the hocket-like syncopations, and the sweeping scale lines energize this section of the Great Fugue.

Ex. 14, mm. 129-134.

Handwritten musical score for Example 14, measures 129-134. The score is written on four staves (treble and bass clefs). Measures 129-131 are on the first system, and measures 132-134 are on the second system. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The time signature is 4/4. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and dynamic markings. Chord symbols are written below the staves: C, G°, Bbm, E°, F7, Bb, and a° for measures 129-131; and F, Bb7, Eb, Bb7, Eb, Bb, and a° for measures 132-134. Some notes are circled, and there are handwritten annotations like 'b' and 'e' above notes in measure 129.

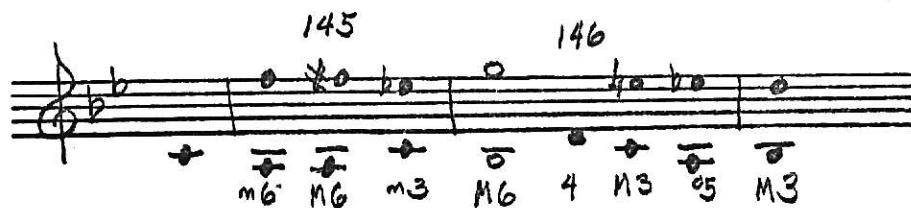
In measure 138, Beethoven began the final variation of his subjects in the first section of the Great Fugue. The basic counterpoint was changed from its original, noncompressed form. It takes a different shape, as is shown below.

Ex. 15, mm. 138-140.



Measures 145 and 146 show the fourth entry of this exposition. They correspond, approximately, to measures 43-46 in the first exposition. In comparing these two sections, it was found that Beethoven used a different basic counterpoint, different chord structures, and different rhythms. The basic counterpoint for mm. 145 and 146 is shown below:

Ex. 16, mm. 144-146.



The chords, rhythm, and nonharmonic tones are shown in the example from the score. There are nearly the same number of nonharmonic tones in this entry of the subjects as there were in mm. 43-46. However, this last episode is compressed into two measures, thus producing more nonharmonic tones per measure.

Beethoven also used diminished triads on three beats in this instance, compared with diminished triads on two beats in the original exposition. In proportion to the length of the themes, Beethoven used almost twice as much dissonance in this example as he did in the opening statement.

Ex. 17, mm. 145-147.

The musical score for Example 17, measures 145-147, is presented on four staves. Measure 145 features a diminished triad (F#, C#, G) in the bass. Measure 146 features a diminished triad (C#, G, F) in the bass. Measure 147 features a diminished triad (F, C, G) in the bass. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and accidentals.

The final example in this paper shows the suspensions used by Beethoven in mm. 151-152. The triplets in the outer voices are in thirds, two octaves removed. The inner parts are also in thirds, but written in a duple rhythm. The notes that fall on the beat are consonant, but the notes off the beat are dissonant. These dissonant notes in the inner parts are given added force because of the dynamic indications that Beethoven included in the score.

Ex. 18, mm. 151-152.

151

Handwritten musical score for measures 151 and 152. The score is written on four staves. The first staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The second staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat. The third staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat. The fourth staff is in bass clef with a key signature of one flat. The music features various notes, rests, and dynamic markings such as *sf* (sforzando) and *f* (forte). The notation includes slurs, ties, and accidentals.

SUMMARY

Without question, the Great Fugue shows the type of contrapuntal music that Beethoven turned to in his Third Style Period. Chronologically, it is one of Beethoven's last works, since it was written just two years before his death. Stylistically, it exemplifies many of the characteristics of his writing between the years 1815-1826.

Four important characteristics of these years were: (1) the musical language became more concentrated and more abstract, (2) extremes met, the profound and the apparently naive side by side, (3) themes were developed to their greatest possible extent, and (4) contrapuntal texture increased in importance.¹

The two subjects used in the first section of the Great Fugue are, in themselves, highly abstract. The first subject, with its minor 2nds and wide leaps, was fragmented in many ways and harmonized in various keys. The second theme, with its leaping notes and irregular rhythm, illustrated the great variety Beethoven achieved by using the notes of a diminished fifth interval. The character of these two, divergent themes presents a study of extremes. D'Indy called these extremes serious thought and careless merri-
ment.²

Variation and thematic transformation were used as Beethoven developed the themes to their utmost. Measures 110-114, where subject A was syncopated and subject B was divided between two instruments, contain the

¹Grout, A History of Western Music, pp. 486-488.

²d'Indy, "Beethoven", p. 104.

thematic transformations that occur in the first section. Both of the subjects, at this point, were also slightly compressed.

Another transformation took place in m. 139 where subject A no longer contained rests between notes and subject B was changed into two measures of triplets.

These transformations differ from Beethoven's earlier styles of motive development in that earlier he developed short motives, or fragments, but later developed the entire theme. As he expanded his theme development, he also dealt more with dissonances, to the extent that they became more of a force in his music than they had previously. The intense, driving vitality of the Great Fugue was controlled by the long periods of dissonant harmony, by nonharmonic tones and their resolutions.

Many of these dissonances occurred on the strong beats. Some were given added emphasis by the use of preliminary notes and dynamic indications which Beethoven, himself, marked on the score. Comparatively long nonharmonic notes were used against a short resolution to a consonant chord. For example, in mm. 54-56, nonharmonic tones sound on each beat but are not resolved until the last sixteenth note of the beat.

Some of the difficulties associated with Beethoven's Third Style Period are summarized by Donald Grout in the following way:

Critics have held that in his late works Beethoven went too far in subjugating euphony and considerations of practicability to the demands of his musical conceptions, and some attribute this fault to his deafness. There are places - the finale of the Sonata, Opus 106, the first section of the Grosse fugue, . . . - that almost require a miracle to make them "sound" in performance.¹

¹Grout, A History of Western Music, pp. 488-489.

Grout continues by stating that even if Beethoven's hearing had been perfect, there is no reason to assume that he would have changed any note, either to spare tender ears among the listeners or to make things easier for the performers.¹

In keeping with this statement, it is fair to assume that the Great Fugue was written to the point of Beethoven's satisfaction and that it shows a logical development of his style.

¹Grout, A History of Western Music, p. 489.

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STUDIES OF BEETHOVEN'S GREAT FUGUE

by

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

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Beethoven wrote the String Quartet, Opus 130, in 1825 with the Great Fugue as its finale. Later, Beethoven wrote a new finale for the Bb Quartet and the fugue was published as a separate opus, dedicated to Archduke Rudolph of Austria.

In his Third Style Period, Beethoven used four stylistic devices that musicians have found when analyzing the Great Fugue. These devices were: (1) Beethoven's abstract working out of themes, (2) his increased use of fugue and canon, (3) his use of widely spaced harmonies and wide melodic leaps, and (4) his development of the variation form.

Reactions of Beethoven's contemporaries to the Great Fugue were examined, as were more recent critical reviews. Shindler, a 19th Century contemporary, wrote that the Great Fugue was an anachronism and ought to belong to the primitive times when music was nothing but a mathematical combination. More recent comments come from J. W. N. Sullivan, who called the Great Fugue the crown of the whole wonderful Quartet. In contrast, Daniel Mason called it a potpourri and the most disappointing episode in the series of Quartets.

Several musicians have studied the Great Fugue in depth. Analyses of it by Vincent d'Indy, Daniel Mason, and Joseph Kerman are available. Vincent d'Indy has two analyses credited to him. The earliest of these was published in 1909, and, in it, the fugue is divided into six sections. D'Indy analyzed the form of the fugue and broke it into a series of variations. His second analysis was published in 1929. In this study, d'Indy divided the fugue into three sections.

Daniel Mason gave a short sketch of an analysis of the Great Fugue. In his study, he divided the fugue into six sections, listed the key plan of the fugue, and gave the motive and mood of each section.

A longer, and more detailed, study was made by Joseph Kerman. While he analyzed the form and modulations of the fugue, he primarily emphasized the thematic transformations that Beethoven used.

A number of striking dissonances and forceful rhythm patterns are contained in the first 158 measures of the Great Fugue. To determine how Beethoven developed these sources of vitality, a form study was made to determine the expositions and episodes. The basic counterpoint was analyzed, as were the nonharmonic tones in various, representative sections of the fugue. The chord structure used by Beethoven was also studied.

In many instances, Beethoven used nonharmonic tones on the strong beats of the measures. He also used relatively long periods of dissonance followed by a short period of consonance. In some instances, an anacrusis was used to stress a dissonance.

That the first section of the Great Fugue can be considered a representative example of Beethoven's Third Style Period was determined conclusively. Beethoven turned to this type of contrapuntal music in his last period of composition.