

Fugue

The Summit of Polyphony

Fugue

- A polyphonic composition for a fixed number of instrumental lines or voices—usually three or four—built on a single principal theme. This theme, called the fugue *subject*, appears again and again in each of the instrumental or vocal lines.

A Fugue Subject



Fugal Exposition

- At the beginning of the fugue
- All of the voices present the subject in an orderly, systematic way

Fugal Exposition

- A single voice first presents the subject
- A second voice enters (with the subject)
- Then a third voice
- And a fourth voice (if there is one)

Fugal Exposition

- Each voice continues playing after it has stated the subject, so the counterpoint becomes gradually more complex and full-bodied.

Fugal Exposition



- In this first example, we will hear only the subject entries—the other contrapuntal material is omitted.

Fugal Exposition

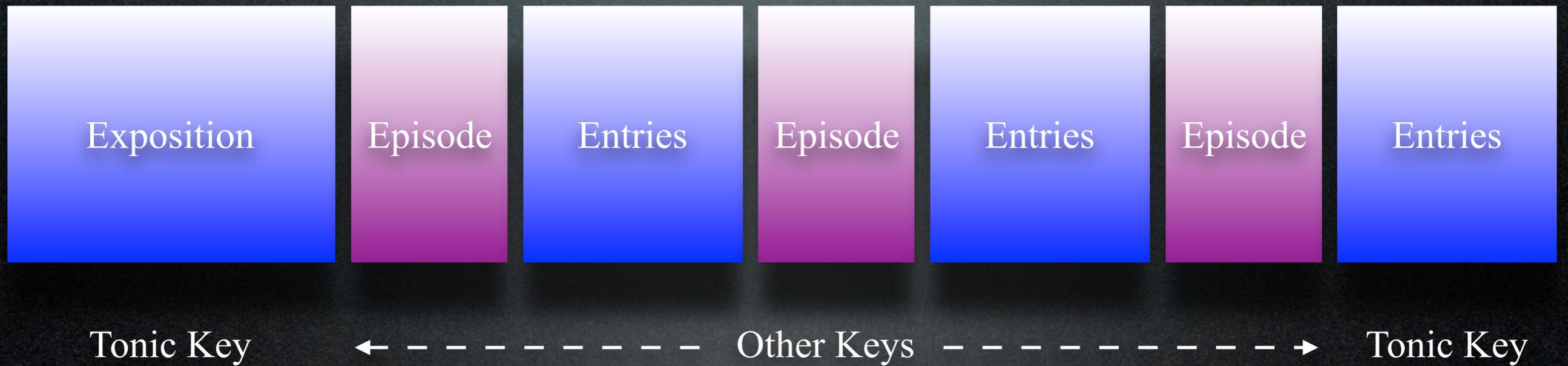


- In the second example, the contrapuntal material is included.

Episode

- An *episode* is a passage of music separating subject entries.
- It provides contrast to the subject.
- Also, episodes tend to modulate, thus preparing the next set of subject entries.

Overall Form



Well-Tempered Clavier, Book I

Prelude and Fugue No. 1 in C Major

Glenn Gould, piano

Prelude

Fugue

Stretto

- A “fugal device” (to be covered shortly)
- Subject entries overlap each other, instead of each subject finishing before the next one begins.

Exposition

Alto

Soprano

Tenor

Bass

First stretto:

Soprano

Tenor

Subject entry:

Alto

Stretto entries:

Bass

Alto

Tenor

Cadence

Stretto entries:

Alto

Tenor

Bass

Soprano

More stretto:

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

Cadence

Stretto entries:

Tenor

Alto

Soprano

Exposition

Alto

Soprano

Tenor

Bass

First stretto:

Soprano

Tenor

Subject entry:

Alto

Stretto entries:

Bass

Alto

Tenor

Cadence

Stretto entries:

Alto

Tenor

Bass

Soprano

More stretto:

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

Cadence

Stretto entries:

Tenor

Alto

Soprano

Fugal Devices

- Stretto: one subject entry overlaps another entry in time, with the second entering before the first is complete.



Fugal Devices

- *Augmentation*: all the note lengths are multiplied (usually by two).



Fugal Devices

- Diminution: all note lengths are divided (usually by two)



Fugal Devices

- Inversion: all intervals are reversed: steps up become steps down, and so forth.



Fugal Devices

- Retrograde: playing from right-to-left, instead of the usual left-to-right.



Fugal Devices

- Retrograde Inversion: also called *cancrizans*, combines retrograde with inversion.



Fugal Devices

- Multiple Devices (all in Stretto)
 - Voice 1: Original
 - Voice 2: Inversion
 - Voice 3: Retrograde Inversion
 - Voice 4: Augmentation
 - Voice 5: Diminution
 - Voice 6: Retrograde Diminution



Fugues in the Wild

- Choral Fugues
 - Handel: *Dixit Dominus* “Gloria Patri et Filio”

Fugues in the Wild

- Orchestral Music
 - Igor Stravinsky: *Symphony of Psalms*, second movement