

NOT CURRENTLY OFFERED

Bach's Art of Fugue, written near the end of his life, represents one of the great achievements of Western music. Not merely of academic interest, this is music of great purity and expressive gesture, deeply moving and fascinating. Having been composed most likely for keyboard originally, the fugues from the Art of Fugue suit and profit from the peculiar strengths of the string quartet. The music is aptly illuminated by that special combination of harmonic blending and contrapuntal individuality which is the hallmark of this medium. It is a work for which composers throughout the ages have had the highest regard and which many have found to be a great inspiration. In commissioning composers to write "commentary" pieces as companions to selected contrapuncti from the Bach work the Brentano Quartet is presenting an evening of Bach and contemporary composers' musical reactions to his work. We have asked each composer to write a short piece that reflects on a particular Bach fugue, each in his or her own idiom. As well as being a celebration of Bach and of composing, this project represents a celebration of the tenth anniversary of our quartet, and we have chosen composers with whom we have had exciting and meaningful collaborations over this span of years. We have also included a few composers with whom we haven't worked before whose work has fascinated and intrigued us. The first season of concerts for this project will take place in venues where we have been happy to play during our first ten years of quartetdom, all of which have come together with generosity and vision to make this possible. We couldn't be more pleased and excited. It is our belief that it will make for a compelling evening of listening, linking the past to the present, and giving us all the opportunity to listen to the music of Bach through the ears of some of the great composers of our own time.

On Art of Fugue

With the Art of Fugue, a veritable Bible of fugal techniques and expression, Bach produced a monumental edifice cloaked in mystery. A compilation of fugues based on a single subject (and its variations), the Art of the Fugue seems to be an exhaustive study of the possibilities of the form, a composer testing his mettle, expanding his horizons. Such a mammoth achievement from the great composer's last days comes to us only incomplete, as the final fugue trails off unended, thus inviting romantic speculation. Some see in this series of fugues a sort of last will and testament from arguably the greatest master of contrapuntal music ever to live. There is the most likely apocryphal story of Bach dying as he dictated the final fugue, having just incorporated his own name as a musical cipher into the fabric of the piece. It has long been debated whether the work is in fact a study, theoretical or conceptual, never meant to be performed. Were it meant to be performed there is much speculation on what instrumentation was intended; is it a keyboard work, a work for a consort of like instruments, for a broken consort, a vocal group? The piece is written in "open score" – on four staves, one per part, with no other indications. There is much room for discussion, for scholarly musings and musicological excavation. What is clear to us is that this is a golden treasure trove of riveting musical rhetoric, elevated, intricately woven round-table discussions which make for an engaging concert experience. It is music for which we have a deep love and which we feel we can illuminate effectively through the medium of the string quartet.

The Art of Fugue as a whole forms a sort of treatise comprising a set of discussions related to a common theme. Imagine hosting a series of fascinating evenings devoted to discoursing on politics, or a specific political problem, dealing with one main insight on each such evening. In much the same way as such a series of evening sessions would, we find that this set of fugues exhibits a certain shared "aboutness," rooted in descent from a common fugue subject.

Sometimes other, secondary subjects are brought in to comment on and shed light on the first (such as in Contrapunctus XI, which has two additional subjects), or a theme is turned upside down to be viewed from a new angle (Contrapuncti IV, VI and XI), or it is stated rather more slowly or quickly in order to lend it a different weight (Contrapunctus VI). Parts support or challenge one another. All these are familiar concepts to anyone who has been engaged in fruitful debate, and make for stimulating repartee.

Nicholas Maw Intrada

Writing music in some way connected with great music of the past can be both a stimulation and a challenge. My contribution to this contemporary presentation of Bach's Art of Fugue opens the work, so I have aimed at creating both a prelude to the first fugue and a general sense of introduction to all that follows. As a result this Intrada consists largely of three elements: a strong pointer toward the tonal center of D (all the fugues to Bach's work are in the key of d minor), a certain opening up of auditory territory through a medium fast tempo and contrasting material that is mainly undeveloped, and the establishment of the characteristic sonority of the instrumental combination used in this version of the work: the string quartet. (In Bach's preludes and fugues for keyboard instruments the preludes are usually strongly allied to the particular instrumental qualities, the fugues somewhat less so.)

Eric Zivian Double Fugue

Double Fugue is what it is named, a fugue with two subjects. The first is a dance-like subject of my own invention, the second the inverted subject from the Art of the Fugue (the one used in Fugue number 4). The piece begins with a short introductory passage using fragments of both themes, after which there is a complete fugal exposition of my subject. After some development, Bach's subject is introduced in mysterious-sounding harmonics. A brief bridge passage leads to a double exposition where both themes are combined for the first time, in a rhythmic proportion of 7 to 4. More development of both themes follows, making liberal use of episodic material from the Bach fugue. After a climax based on Bach's modulating version of his theme, a slow episode is followed by a scurrying passage. This fast music rushes to a rousing climax that suddenly fades away into silence. I tried to make my piece as transparent as possible, despite the inherent complexity of a double fugue. The piece is less pure, more dramatic, than the fugue on which it is based. Perhaps it could best be described as Bach seen through a Beethovenian lens, then put through a more contemporary filter.

Charles Wuorinen ALAP

ALAP was composed in 2001 for the Brentano Quartet as part of their project of uniting new works with parts of the ART OF FUGUE. My piece is intended to precede Contrapunctus IX, and is based on material extracted from the main subject of the ART OF FUGUE. But it begins with a non-tonal contemporary view of this material, and evolves (or, speaking historically, devolves) into a progressively more diatonic environment, finally ending with a kind of dominant cadence in D, the key of Bach's great work, after which the Contrapunctus is played. The title refers to the opening section of a raga, in which the material of the whole is presented in fragmentary form.

Shulamit Ran Bach-Shards

While composing BACH-SHARDS I found myself gravitating, intuitively and gradually, toward a dual goal. First, though the tension and dissonance inherent in certain moments of Bach's own maze-like contrapuntal structures could quite easily and naturally lead one into a pungent contemporary terrain, I opted not to stray outside the realm of Bach-like materials and harmonic language. Instead, it was my hope to alter their relationships and context in ways

that add up to a something that's slightly different than the anticipated sum of the parts. A mildly deconstructed Bach, if you will. The other important challenge I set for myself was building up the latter, toccata-like portion of BACH-SHARDS in a way that would make the entry point of the fugue which it precedes, Contrapunctus X, seem thoroughly natural. It was my intent to have the first fugal entrance feel like a huge and much welcome release of the energy created by my Prelude's penultimate stretch, with its bravura figurations elaborating on an insistent dominant pedal point. Sofia Gubaidulina Reflections on the Theme B-A-C-H

(note by Mark Steinberg)

In this piece Sofia Gubaidulina reacts to the great unfinished fugue at the conclusion of the Art of Fugue, comprising expositions of three fugal themes, curiously excluding the original Art of Fugue theme. At the end of the extant section of the fugue Bach combines these three themes, and in fact it has been shown that it is possible to further combine them with the Art of Fugue theme as a fourth, as most scholars believe Bach intended had he completed the work. The third of the themes presented spells out Bach's name in musical notes (B being used in German for our B-flat, H for our B-natural), thus adding to the mystical nature of this fugue. Sofia Gubaidulina's piece responds with music of heart-wrenching intensity, using the Bach themes involved, often obfuscated by wailing, writhing figures of her own. Searching glissandi, ghostly ponticello tremolos, and poignant, intense silences color a response to the Bach which amplifies and sheds new light on the deeply spiritual and enigmatic music of Contrapunctus XVIII.

Wynton Marsalis Fugue

(note by Mark Steinberg)

In responding to Contrapunctus XII Wynton Marsalis has chosen to take the original Bach fugue as a strict model for his own composition. The result is a new fugue, emotionally and harmonically distinct from the original Bach, but formally an exact replica of it. In choosing this method of modeling his piece on the Bach work so directly, Marsalis joins a cherished tradition in music, whereby composers learn from earlier masters while retaining their compositional identity and personal voice in the finished product.

Bruce Adolphe ContraDictions

Like an actor preparing to play the part of a great historical figure, I combed carefully through the Art of the Fugue looking for aspects of myself, for something that might connect my world to Bach's in a sonically tangible way. Playing through Contrapunctus No. 2, I found that certain passing dissonances, if put on "Pause", so to speak, sounded like harmonies I have used as building blocks in my music. Encouraged by this small discovery, I used the phrases of Bach as a "table of contents" to open my piece, allowing the listener to hear exactly how the connections were made. Steadied by this harmonic rudder, I set sail and allowed Bach's obsessive rhythms to propell my piece forward. Once in motion, I found that the famous theme itself could flap freely in the winds of inspiration. Also of great importance to me was the Brentano Quartet itself. Having become enamoured of their ability to make music shimmer and glisten, I wrote music that I hoped would allow them employ a wide range of those textures that they alone use in quartet playing. David Horne Subterfuge

Subterfuge takes as its inspiration the 6th work in the Art of Fugue, "in the French style." It was initially quite hard for me to decide on a particular fugue, as I felt that all of them would have provided a valuable creative ignition, but in the end chose the 6th because of what I considered to be its rhythmic vitality. Rhythm, in turn, is one of the main driving forces in my own work, which also draws on much of the thematic material of the Bach. With regard to the latter, this is absorbed into my own style to the extent that the link may seem quite tenuous at first. Indeed,

much of my own compositional process here is about covering the original Bach elements in my work—hence the title. The actual opening pitches of the Bach however are used as the backbone of the whole of my own piece, and this is probably more apparent to the listener, serving almost as a remnant, or a reverberation, of the Bach. In addition, these pitches are scattered throughout my own work serving as starting focal points for the various sections. I find the Bach both dense and lucid in a manner that conveys a tremendous amount of energy. In my own humble way, I've tried to reflect this energy in my own work, hopefully gaining the maximum energy from the smallest amount of material. The work is dedicated to the Brentano String Quartet, whose virtuosity and musicianship is simply phenomenal, and who play my own recently completed work as if they'd known it forever. Chou Wen-chung *Contrapunctus Variabilis I*

Contrapunctus Variabilis I is a fugue strictly based, with the exception of the introduction and coda, upon right transformations of the principal subject, of which four permutations appear in ascending and descending orders. This is a procedure from ancient and Asian modal practices (for example, the melodic minor scale).

After the principal subject and its countersubject appear in the first exposition, a set of two transformed subjects and countersubjects is presented in each of the two following expositions.

There are altogether five subjects, each with its own countersubject, the fifth set resulting from the statement of the principal subject in descending order in the second exposition.

Tonally, the fugue is based on the *pien* (variable) modes that I have been developing since 1960 out of variable modal theories, as well as the ying-yang concept of opposing forces and the I Jing theory of interactive transformation. The subjects and countersubjects continually interact with each other and transform themselves to different modes. The contrapuntal procedures of augmentation and diminution are applied to rhythmic character and to the degree of chromaticism (i.e. density of pitch contents), as well as to the meter.

A subsequent *stretto* section presents all of these subjects and countersubjects in juxtaposition.

The ensuing coda focuses on the vertical relationships, whereas the introduction reveals the opposing modal component, both of which coalesce to generate melodic and harmonic motion. I intend for this fugue to be the first movement of my second string quartet. Performance affects and coloristic devices have been excluded so as not to mask the intrinsic structural integrity that is the virtue of all fugues. Similarly, free episodes and canonic passages have been reserved for other movements of the quartet, all of which are contrapuntal in nature—hence the title, *Contrapunctus Variabilis I*.

Steven Mackey *Lude*

In *Lude*, my aim was to use melodic and rhythmic materials from Bach's *Contrapunctus XI* in new contrapuntal contexts that would stake out a musical territory that I could claim as my own, in sharp contrast to Bach. I was not interested rhetorical opposition to Bach but rather an earnest characterization, using Bach's themes, of where I stand as an American composer working in the early 21st century. I've always been interested in exploring the edges that delineate contrast and by interspersing *Lude* around and inside C.P. XI had 4 edges to work with: as a pre-*Lude*, my music recedes gently and allows C.P. XI to emerge. As an inter-*Lude* I latched on to a particularly obsessive patch of C.P. XI and extended the obsession until it reached escape velocity and found its way back to *Lude*. The most challenging transition for me was returning from *Lude* back to Bach. It is quite a drawn out process culminating in what I hope is a gentle little bump as the tempo of *Lude* downshifts to the tempo of C.P. XI; (The two tempi stand in a 9:8 ratio). After the Bach ends the post-*Lude* dances off into the distance.

The Composers

Bruce Adolphe has composed music for Itzhak Perlman, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, Beaux Arts Trio, and many other renowned musicians and organizations. He has been composer-in-residence at the Caramoor, La Jolla, and Santa Fe Chamber Music festivals, among others. As education director and music administrator of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, he has led seminars and workshops for children, young musicians, teachers, and audience members. Mr. Adolphe has written three books on the art of listening to music: *The Mind's Ear: Exercises for Improving the Musical Imagination*; *What to Listen for in the World*; and *Of Mozart, Parrots and Cherry Blossoms in the Wind: A Composer Explores Mysteries of the Musical Mind*.

Born in China and now an American citizen, Chou Wen-chung studied composition with Nicholas Slonimsky at the New England Conservatory. He later became the pupil, friend and literary executor of Edgard Varese. Orchestras and festivals which have featured his works include the Berlin Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony, Orchestre National de Paris, the International Ferienkurse für Neue Musik, and La Biennale di Venezia. Founder of the Fritz Reiner Center for Contemporary Music at Columbia University, Mr. Chou has received numerous awards and commissions from the Guggenheim, Rockefeller, and Koussevitzky foundations, and the National Endowment for the Arts, among others. In 2001 he was honored by the French government with the order of Chevalier des Arts et Lettres.

A resident of Germany since 1992, Sofia Gubaidulina studied at the Kazan and Moscow conservatories. Among the many organizations which have commissioned her are the Berlin, Helsinki, and Holland festivals, the Library of Congress, the Chicago Symphony, and the New York Philharmonic. Her two-part cycle, *Passion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ According to St. John*, commissioned by the International Bachakademie Stuttgart and the Norddeutschen Rundfunk Hamburg, was premiered in 2002. Ms. Gubaidulina has been the recipient of numerous awards including the Prix de Monaco, the Premio Franco Abbiato, the Heidelberger Künstlerinnenpreis, and the Russian State Prize. She has also been honored twice with the Koussevitzky International Recording Award.

Scottish composer David Horne studied composition at the Curtis Institute and at Harvard.

Among leading virtuoso performers on both sides of the Atlantic who have commissioned him are violist Nobuko Imai, percussionist Evelyn Glennie, and pianist Boris Berezovsky. His works have been performed by the London Sinfonietta, the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, the California EAR Unit, the Ensemble für neue Musik Zürich, and the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. Recent works include *Flex* for piano and ensemble, *Glow* for nine instrumentalists, and the mirror-pair of *Blunt Instruments* and *Broken Instruments*. Recently, he was appointed as composer in association with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra. Steven Mackey has been commissioned by the Chicago Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Kronos Quartet, Koussevitzky Foundation, and Borromeo String Quartet, among others. His numerous awards include a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Charles Ives Scholarship, two awards from the Kennedy Center, and the Stoeger Prize for Chamber Music. In the mid-1980s he resumed his interest in the electric guitar and toured with the Kronos Quartet in his own works.

In 2002 he will tour Europe with the British ensemble Psappha in an all-Mackey program, and in 2003 he will be the featured composer at the Holland Festival in Amsterdam. Mr. Mackey is a professor of music and co-director of the Composers Ensemble at Princeton.

Born in New Orleans, Wynton Marsalis became the first jazz composer to win the Pulitzer Prize, which he received in 1997 for *Blood on the Fields*, and epic oratorio on slavery. For fifteen

years he toured with his jazz groups to thirty countries on six continents performing more than one hundred twenty concerts a year. He is the artistic director of Jazz at Lincoln Center, which he cofounded in 1987. Other awards and distinctions include the Grand Prix du Disque, the Edison Award, eight Grammy awards for his jazz and classical recordings, honorary membership in the Royal Academy of Music, and a Congressional citation. In 1996 Time named him among America's 25 Most Influential People.

Nicholas Maw studied at the Royal Academy of Music and in Paris with Nadia Boulanger and Schoenberg's pupil, Max Deutsch. He has received commissions from major musical organizations such as the English Chamber and Philharmonia Orchestras, the Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, Glyndebourne Festival, and the London Sinfonietta, among others. Since 1984 Mr. Maw has divided his time between Europe and the United States, where his music has been performed by the Philadelphia Orchestra and the Chicago, San Francisco, and National Symphonies. Currently professor of composition at the Peabody Conservatory, he is the recipient of several awards, among them the Lili Boulanger Prize and the Stoeger Prize from the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center.

Winner of the Pulitzer and the Kennedy Center-Friedheim Award, Israel-born Shulamit Ran has also received major grants and commissions from the Guggenheim and Koussevitsky foundations and the National Endowment for the Arts. She came to America at the age of fourteen to study composition and piano at the Mannes College of Music. Her music has been played by major orchestras including the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Israel Philharmonic, and the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, among others. She has served as a composer-in-residence with the Chicago Symphony and the Lyric Opera of Chicago. Presently, she is the William H. Colvin Professor at the University of Chicago's music department, where she has taught since 1973.

Charles Wuorinen has been a forceful presence on the American musical scene for more than four decades. In 1962 he co-founded The Group for Contemporary Music, one of America's most prestigious ensembles dedicated to performance of new chamber music. In 1970 he became the youngest composer to win the Pulitzer for his electronic composition, Time's Encomium. As a pianist and conductor he has appeared with the Chicago Symphony, New York Philharmonic, and Cleveland Orchestra, among others. Professor of composition at Rutgers, he has served on the faculties of several schools including the New England Conservatory and Columbia, Princeton, and Yale universities. He is the author of Simple Composition, used by composition students throughout the world.

A graduate of the Curtis Institute, Juilliard, and Yale, Eric Zivian studied composition with Ned Rorem, Jacob Druckman, Martin Bresnick, Oliver Knussen, and Alexander Goehr, among others. His piano teachers include Gary Graffman and Peter Serkin. At Tanglewood he studied chamber music with Gilbert Kalish and Joel Krosnick. He won an ASCAP Jacob Druckman Memorial Commission to write Three Character Pieces, premiered by the Seattle Symphony in 1998. As a pianist, he is a member of the Left Coast Chamber Ensemble and the Clavion Quartet and has performed with Alternate Currents, the Emyrean Ensemble, and Earplay. He is also a frequent guest artist on the San Francisco Conservatory's faculty chamber music series.