

Graduate Music
History

J.S. Bach and Counterpoint

John Salehi
Graduate Student
Central Methodist University

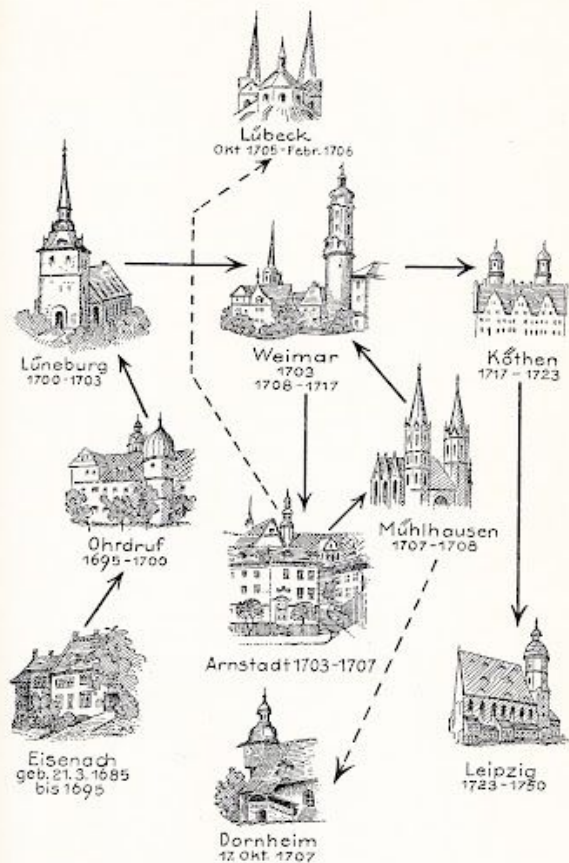
Dr. Jonathan Ray



J.S. Bach (1685–1750)

Early Life

- Born in Eisenach (8th child)
- Musical introduction
 - Johann Ambrosius Bach - violin & theory
 - Johann Christoph Bach (uncle) - organ
 - Johann Ludwig Bach - composition & violin
- Parents die when he is 10
- Moves in with Johann Christoph Bach (brother)
 - Organist w/ St. Michael's Church in Ohrdruf
-



1700-
1703

Lüneburg

- Georg Erdmann - BFF
- Began singing as a soprano
- Performed works on violin, harpsichord, and organ - Noticed by Georg Bohm

1703

Arnstadt (...and Weimar kinda...)

- First job in Weimar - Not much is known (mostly non-musical duties) - 7 month tenure
- First REAL Job in Arnstadt - premiered their new organ!
- PTO - studied with Buxtehude & Reinken (Fugue)

-

1707

1707

-

1708

Mulhausen

- Married his second cousin Maria Barbara
- Composed cantatas - more traditional
- Schemed to get a new organ



1708-
1717

Weimar Pt. 2 (The real one)

- Composed most of the Orgelbuchlein (Little Organ Book)
- Works around this time influenced by the Italian opera and concerto - Vivaldi
- Jail?

1717-
1723

Kothen (big boy job)

- Hired by Prince Leopold
- Sonatas, unaccompanied works, Brandenburg Concertos, canatas
 - (Kept in mind Prince's playing ability)
- The Well Tempered Clavier
- Married 2nd wife - Anna Magdalena Wilcken

1723
-
1750

Leipzig

- More cantatas! (about one a week)
- Magnificat, St. John Passion, St. Matthew Passion
- Mass in B Minor
- Performed around Germany



Meantone vs. Equal Temperament

- Temperament - system to define the intervals between notes in the octave
- Pythagorean comma
 - Left in for meantone - destroys idea of enharmonics
 - Dispersed for equal - allows existence of enharmonics

Counterpoint



Definition

- The relationship between two lines that are Harmonically dependent & Rhythmically independent with each other
- Polyphony!

J.S Bach



Bach's Use of Counterpoint

- The Art of the Fugue
 - Sequencing - Progressively got harder
 - Pedagogical tool
- Keyboard!

Influence

Beethoven, Mozart, Haydn

Re-Popularize the use of counterpoint at the end of the classical era

Mendelssohn

Brings back St. Matthew's Passion and begins the Bach Revival in the Romantic Era

Liszt

Arranged Bach's works in the Romantic Era

ETC.

Counterpoint Timeline

- Post-Guido-Organum
- Motets
- Machaut
- Focussed on hierarchy of voices

- Second Practice - more free use of dissonance
- Carissimi, Schutz, Purcell, Corelli, Vivaldi, -> the goat, J.S. Bach

- Heavy use of leitmotif - able to interweave motivic ideas in melody and harmony
- Bach Revival - Mendelssohn

Medieval

Renaissance

Baroque

Classical

Romantic

- Imitation - focussed on unity of voices
- Tinctoris & Zarlino set the rules
- Okeghem, di Lasso, Palestrina, Josquin des Prez - master the style

- Homophony killed the counterpoint trend
- Viennese School brings it back - Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven

Legacy

Children - Bach had 20 children, many being musically talented and important in the classical era of music - C.P.E., W.F., and J.C. are all notable children of Bach

Temperament - Redefined the standard of temperament in keyboard instruments which allowed people to play in all 12 major keys

Pedagogical Tools - Bach left behind treatises, collections, and compositions in the name of education to develop skills of performers, composers, and theorists - The Art of the Fugue, The Well Tempered Clavier, etc.

Compositions - Utilized his unique compositional style to influence genres at the time and for decades to come. Bach left hundreds of works for the future to study and perform.