

INTRODUCTION

~~xxxx~~ December 7, 1950

We are pleased to welcome you to this lecture-recital in which it is hoped you will find some interest and perhaps a little new information about the work of a composer in the field of music. We ~~are~~ are going to present a group of four selections for which we have devised a commentary to accompany the performance. ~~xxxx~~ ^{The commentary} ~~xxxx~~ is designed to bring to light some of the aspects of ~~this~~ music which might otherwise remain hidden from your view and it is hoped that you will find not only an esthetic pleasure from the hearing of the music but also an intellectual temptation for further listening and, for some of you, possible study.

The composer whose work we are presenting is Johann Sebastian Bach, one of the giants of the world of music, and the Shakespeare ~~of music~~ in his field.

Living in an age as we do, when the emphasis ^{on} ~~is~~ [^] ~~is~~ the social, cultural and economic ~~xxxx~~ aspects of our lives is upon the ~~individual~~ individual rather than upon the group or whole, it is well to consider some of the cultural products of ^{a period} ~~at~~ ~~xxxx~~ when individual rights were born, but the emphasis was upon the attainment of what we may call here a general living space in society for the exercise of the rights of the individual. Our composer, Johann Sebastian Bach, lived in such a period just after the Reformation, a period in which the hard won victories of a new ~~system~~ social and economic system, ~~xxx~~ ^{the} capitalism, against ~~the~~ reactionary and dying order of feudalism, were being consolidated. The social ~~forces~~ and economic forces which were shaping the conceptions of all people, including ^{and artists} the musicians/ of that time, were ~~xxxxxxx~~ destroying the basis for ~~the~~ ^{enriched} idea of an/autocracy at one end of the social scheme and the mass of exploited and persecuted people at the other. The progressive elements

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of society then were by one means or another engaged in social, cultural or economic activities the sum total of which was creating an awareness of and willingness to struggle for the new rights of man. The new forces created a social tide which swept all before it and the realm of music was no less a part of this tide than the political struggles although its ~~real~~ true role is yet to be seen clearly. When Martin Luther ~~nailed~~ defiantly nailed up his 95 theses his hymns were being sung by the people to signify a moral confirmation of the new way of life. The main challenge of the Protestant Reformation against the ^{Feudal} old order was ~~in~~ expressing a higher conception of the individual rights of human beings on earth and ~~the~~ one of the chief problems of this new ^{social, religious and political} movement was that of developing an ^{attachment to} ~~awareness of the desirability of~~ these new rights through every available means.

Where the old system had ~~ruled out~~ ruled out the participation of the congregation in religious services the new ^{movement} made it a necessity. Where the reactionary order stipulated a slavish obedience to ~~the arbitrary rule of the authorities~~ the new movement fought to develop an awareness that the final authority rested with the people. ~~And so~~ And so the cultural products which were shaped and took form in the crucible of this general struggle at the end of the middle ages reflected an awareness and longing for the new democratic relations among the people which were in birth.

In the realm of music a trend of development which had been underway for two hundred years arose to its peak in the works of Bach and his immediate predecessors and some contemporaries. Its chief characteristic was in the setting of numerous parts, voices or melodies, each of which carried a part of the total musical idea and which when sung gave the predominant feeling of cooperative enterprise. This development was called

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counterpoint and represented a fundamental change from the predominant characteristics of all pre-existing music. Of course Bach and his contemporaries did not invent such a system; it had been in the process of development for 150 years, and its roots extended as far back as the struggle for emancipation ~~of~~ from the bonds of feudalism had itself extended. But Bach did develop this system of contrapuntal writing of music to its highest point and it is that aspect of his work that we relate to his period and which today we are going to examine.

1.

We have chosen a group of compositions to play for you in which this principle of the cooperation of parts, the counterpoint of two or more melodies, is well illustrated.

The first ~~four~~^{three} illustrations are taken from a group of compositions of Bach which he called two part inventions. He wrote them to illustrate for his students the best principles of part-writing and he started with the simplest elements of writing for two parts or "voices" as they are called. These little examples could be compared ^{to} ~~with~~ drawings in which an artist limited himself to black and white in order to study the technique of lines and shapes.

In this first example we have a very economical and simple choice of harmonies, rythm and melody. These chords (PLAY: C G C D G) are the unmixed colors on his pallet. For a melody what could be simpler than part of the scale? (PLAY: ~~XXX~~ FIRST FOUR NOTES) but it goes higher than that: (PLAY: NEXT FOUR NOTES) which sounds like this when played as a whole: (PLAY: FIRST EIGHT NOTES). ~~We said that~~
~~The~~ first principle of Bach's music is the cooperation of the voices so that now he introduces his second voice an octave lower: (PLAY: SECOND ENTRANCE 8 NOTES). Now while this second voice was coming in, the first voice had already completed its little statement and had to be doing something useful: (PLAY: COUNTERPOINT OF TOP VOICE), so that taken together they sounded like this: (PLAY: SECOND VOICE AND COUNTERPOINT OF TOP VOICE TOGETHER). Now we see that there is a contrast between the original statement: (PLAY: 1st 8 NOTES) and its own answer (PLAY CTP.) ~~and~~ furthermore they go well together: (PLAY: FIRST BAR COMPLETELY). But this puts us in a different key center (PLAY: G CHORD) from that which we started in with (PLAY: C CHORD). Now will you kindly show us how he gets back: PLAY: ALL UP TO DOWN BEAT OF 3rd BAR) which is our original chord (PLAY C), but look! We are so much higher up than where we began (PLAY MIDDLE C), it certainly can't be left up there. (PLAY FROM BEGINNING OF 3rd BAR TO 1st TWO NOTES OF RIGHT HAND OF BAR 5).

That was a clever way of getting down by simply turning the original statement (PLAY 1st 7 NOTES) on its head (PLAY 2nd TO 9th NOTES OF BAR 3).

But we had gotten to another harmonic destination there (PLAY D TRIAD IN 4/2 POSITION) and you left us in suspense. What happens now? (PLAY FROM FIRST BEAT OF BAR 5 TO CADENCE).

Well, now ^{we} see that Bach ^{disproves} ~~destroys~~ the old ^{saying} ~~proverb~~ about the right hand never knowing what the left had doeth. That counterpoint really teaches you how to cooperate with yourself, doesn't it? ~~Wouldn't it be safe to conclude~~ ^{and if true} that when Bach writes that way for a chorus or an orchestra the ^{performers} ~~members~~ have to feel and act very much as a cooperating team in order to produce the right effect? Let's see now, before you go on, each of these voices you played, did the same thing but at a different time and at a different place, didn't they? In this much older Gregorian chant (PLAY THE H.A.M. EXCERPT) all the voices did the same thing at the same time, ^{It is not as good an illustration of how different parts can get along together.} ~~so that it would be safe to say that in the space of a few hundred years, whatever it was that changed in society caused a higher expression in music of the elements of cooperation and interdependence. I think that is a safe conclusion.~~ But now let us hear ^{our invention} the music up to your last ending. (PLAY TO FIRST BEAT OF 7th BAR).

If we are not mistaken, Bach has now wandered away from his beginning harmonic center of C (PLAY C CHORD) to a new harmonic center of G (PLAY G CHORD). These two harmonic centers : C and G, which we call tonic and dominant, are old hat now. We hear them in nearly every song, (PLAY 1st "MY COUNTRY 'TIS OF THEE" AND THEN THE CHORDS C G C AGAIN), but in Bach's day they had come to signify the establishment of a definitely new harmonic system, a system which Bach himself helped to develop.

Is it possible that he used that same relation of harmonies as a setting for the first statement of his little melody in both voices? (PLAY FIRST BAR AND END ON G CHORD FILLED OUT). Now ~~it is~~ wanted to

~~make a joke~~ We could ask the question? which came first in Bach's mind, the conception of the harmony, or the working out of the melodies with the harmony resulting from the two voices? But that would be as fallacious a question as the one about the chicken and the egg, ~~we~~ we know that neither came before the other, but that they developed together. In the ~~general~~ period that Bach lived ~~in~~ about 200 years ago, ~~they~~ ^{composers} weren't ~~preoccupied with~~ ^{interested} either the melodies alone or the harmonies alone, but were ~~engaged in~~ ^{in just} exploring all the new harmonic patterns which had been brought about by ~~virtue of a higher type of~~ ^{wearing several melodies together} cooperation of several melodies. We could ~~draw a little parallel in~~ ^{say that} the realm of human work here: more is possible when many people cooperate in different tasks than when they all do ^{exactly} the same thing. ~~But we have already said that~~ **I** it was ~~precisely~~ this that had been taking place in the realm of work and enterprise in the period before Bach lived, and this was what laid the social foundation for this music.

Well, now, we were at a new harmonic center; It would be logical to explore the new harmonic center somewhat, ~~isn't that what he does?~~ ^(PLAY CHORD) (PLAY FROM BAR 7 TO BAR 11), and in doing so we are not only presented with new combinations of the same little melody we began with but again, with another new harmonic center (PLAY D MINOR). Where we were taken to a melodic height, earlier from which he descended by turning the melody upside down, we are not taken to a harmonic height from which he returns by the same trick (PLAY FROM ~~KXXX~~ BAR 11 TO DOWN BEAT OF 13), but we see that this time he has changed the voices around so that what was formerly on top is now underneath and vice versa. (In a severe tone:) Aha, further evidence of cooperation, exchanging roles! Where does he go from there? (PLAY FROM BAR 13 TO 15). The two voices really cooperated that time -- they both ran along hastily together to the end and gave a sort of additional emphasis to the climax. Is that the end?

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LOUISE ANSWER: "NO. THEY TAKE TURNS RESTING." (AND PLAY FROM BAR 15 TO 19).

I see, and after they are through resting each other, they ought to be able to do something together again: (PLAY FROM 19 TO END).

Well! Now where has he taken us to?

LOUISE: "THAT'S THE END"

The end indeed! Why it sounded as though he could have gone on forever -- there seems to be no end to the possible ways of cooperating, ~~is there?~~ Would you like to play it all the way through? (PLAY THE ENTIRE INVENTION.)

That was our first example of two-part writing by Johann Sebastian Bach; and he ~~said~~ called it simply an invention. The next little piece, the second of his inventions for two parts, presents us with most of the same principles of organization of two melodic lines that the first one did. This time, however, instead of having a short little motive or musical idea, you might call it, as we had in the first invention, we now have a long motive, a musical paragraph, one might say. Bach is trying to show that counterpoint, the cooperation of two melodic lines sounding together, need not be made up only of short musical ideas, but long ones work just as well. Now it stands to reason that a setting for two voices or parts made up of long musical ideas would be harder to fit together than a setting of short musical ideas. That is not only true for the composing of the piece, but also true for the listening, so that in hearing this second invention a greater demand is going to be placed upon your listening and concentration in order to be able to follow the longer threads of the musical motive, or musical sentence. Perhaps we

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though you were carried away by your second thought!

~~LOUISE:~~ ^{the} "BUT IT JUST DIDN'T WANT TO STOP WHERE IT WAS SUPPOSED TO ** IT WENT RIGHT ON."

Yes, I see, your first voice began to ~~was~~ ^{get} poetic just about the time the second voice ended its statement of the first melodic idea, so that he was really making counterpoint to the counterpoint.

LOUISE: "YES, THAT'S WHAT IT WAS."

This is getting involved! Perhaps you had better play them both up to the point where your first voice calmed down: (PLAY BOTH PARTS FROM BEGINNING TO THIRD BEAT OF BAR 11). Wasn't that last bit in the left hand familiar?

LOUISE: "YES, THAT WAS THE MAIN IDEA STARTING AGAIN".

But it isn't the lower voices' turn to say it!

LOUISE: "HE SAYS IT ANYHOW".

Well, I thought that counterpoint meant cooperation between the voices. Where does the lower voice get the right to hog the conversation?

LOUISE: "HE WASN'T HOGGING THE CONVERSATION. I THINK HE JUST DECIDED IT WAS TIME TO GET THE CONVERSATION BACK TO THE MAIN POINT. YOU KNOW HOW CONVERSATIONS GO."

Where does it go from there?

LOUISE: "WELL, THE UPPER VOICE LEAVES OFF WITH ITS POETIC WANDERING AND RETURNS TO THE MAIN IDEA TOO."

Will you pick them up where you left off a moment ago? (PLAY FROM BEGINNING OF BAR 11, WITH EMPHASIS ON LEFT HAND, TO DOWN BEAT OF BAR 15), EMPHASIZING RIGHT HAND WHEN MAIN THEME RETURNS).

Well, I heard the main idea return to the upper voice then, but it sounded a little subdued -- was he embarrassed about his having wandered away in the conversation?

LOUISE: "NO, IT CAME IN A LITTLE LOWER BECAUSE THEY ARE CONVERSING IN A DIFFERENT KEY FROM THE BEGINNING."

You mean the conversation is on a lower level?

LOUISE: "NO, NOT EXACTLY, JUST ON A DIFFERENT LEVEL. YOU KNOW HOW CONVERSATIONS GO."

What happens next? I suppose the lower voice is entitled to ~~have~~ ^{get} a little poetic, or has he a more mature approach?

LOUISE: "NO, HE GETS POETIC TOO." (PLAY LOWER VOICE FROM BEGINNING OF BAR 13 TO DOWNBEAT OF BAR 23). *ends on cadence.*

What do they sound like together there? (PLAY BOTH PARTS FROM BEGINNING OF BAR 13 TO BAR 23). I see, so now it's time for the upper voice to remind its partner of the main idea. Isn't that what it does?

LOUISE: "YES." (PLAY BOTH PARTS EMPHASIZING MAIN THEME FROM BEGINNING OF BAR 23 TO THE END.)

Oh dear! They were cooperating again. Well, that is a true sign of friendship -- when one gets his head in the clouds the other brings him back to reality. (SLIGHT PAUSE) That is indeed a fine example of counterpoint in two parts. Would you play it all the way through without stopping and perhaps we could hear the main idea a little more ~~readily~~ ^{easily} if you emphasize it a little more than ord inarily when it comes in. (PLAY INVENTION II.)



That was very clear. You know, I think that it would be interesting to hear these inventions played by two wind instruments, say an oboe and a clarinet. Our modern piano was unknown in Bach's day. The instrument he wrote these keyboard compositions for was called a harpsichord, which had much clearer tone than our modern piano. The strings were plucked with a metal quill rather than ~~struck~~ ^{hammer} by a soft ~~cushion~~ as the piano is.

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Sometimes it is difficult to follow the inter-twining voice parts on a piano in a composition such as that just played because the cushioned notes of the piano are not as easily heard as the plucked notes of the harpsichord. But the history of the piano and the harpsichord is a topic all in itself and we will save that for another time. I think we would all like to hear the next invention. This time we will reverse the procedure and play the invention first, and then see how it is put together. (PLAY INVENTION 8, F MAJOR)

That is really a lively one! But it sounds a lot simpler in its structure than the last one we did. That first little idea reminds me of a bouncing ball that knows where it is going. (PLAY FIRST TWO BARS OF RIGHT HAND). It seemed to bounce higher on each leap. (PLAY TO FIRST NOTE OF SECOND BAR AGAIN) then roll down gently (PLAY SECOND BAR): and when the second voice comes in there are two lively little voices bouncing up and rolling down again, what fun! (PLAY FIRST THREE BARS).

That accompaniment in the right hand that comes next (PLAY BAR 4) doesn't really constitute a very involved counterpoint, does it. (PLAY BAR 4 AGAIN). No, and it doesn't go anywhere ~~right~~ either. Will you play it with both parts: (PLAY BARS 4 THROUGH 7). Nevertheless it was catching, for the other voice took it awhile, too. I think Bach was just filling up space there, after all the idea bounces and rolls so much it seems to need a little rest even though it can't sit still while it's resting! Will you play both parts up to that point? (PLAY BOTH PARTS TO BAR 8).

Now both parts have had their say; don't they go a little further to a momentary ending?

LOUISE: "YES" (PLAY BARS 8 TO 12)

It sounds as though we were in a new harmonic center (PLAY C CHORD) from that of the beginning (PLAY F MAJOR CHORD). Do the voices repeat

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everything now in the new harmonic center?

LOUISE: "NOT EXACTLY". (PLAY BARS 12 TO 26).

Well, he simply varied the situation a little and again they took turns resting -- or playing, depending on how you look at it. How does he finish it? (PLAY BAR 26 TO END). Bach has certainly used ^{simple}~~simple~~ material here but it is the liveliest ^{or of the two inventions,}~~one so far~~; - although the voices didn't have much to say in this one, they had fun with what they had. Will you play it through from the beginning? (PLAY INVENTION 8)

I think that it is worth mentioning that it is no matter whether the musical idea is simple as in this invention, or somewhat more involved as in the previous one, Bach still makes the two voices cooperate in their treatment of the melodic material and so far we haven't found a single example of where one part lords it over the other. Each voice has had its fair turn in the expressing of the musical material and they are continuously exchanging roles, relieving one another in the work, so to speak, and sharing in the fun. Up to now we have found both voices sharing the same material, almost imitating one another. Perhaps imitation is the first step in learning anything. One learns the simpler ^{side}~~rudiments~~ of cooperation ^{by} imitating, such as a child who helps around the house by imitating its mother. But a much fuller type of cooperation is possible. When two people cooperate in doing not the same, but different tasks, it requires a far more intense kind of cooperation. Each has a separate and different task, but each nevertheless, must be aware of what the other is doing, of how to complement the work of the other without interrupting his own.

Here we have an invention in which the two voices do not share in one musical idea, but share in the presentation of two distinctly different ideas. The upper voice played by the right hand has this as a beginning: (PLAY BAR 1 of RIGHT HAND - INVENTION 9), while the other, lower, voice

begins simultaneously with this: (PLAY BAR 1 OF LEFT HAND), so that they sound like this when put together: (PLAY BAR 1 BOTH PARTS). Notice that the upper part begins with the faster moving descending notes (PLAY FIRST FIVE NOTES), and ends ~~it~~ with the slow moving ascending notes (PLAY 3rd AND 4th BEATS OF BAR 1 OF RIGHT HAND) while the lower voice begins with the slow moving ascending notes (PLAY FIRST TWO BEATS OF BAR 1 LEFT HAND) and ends with the faster moving descending notes (PLAY 3rd and 4th BEAT S OF BAR 1 LEFT HAND). Again, they sound like this when played together; (PLAY BAR 1 WITH BOTH HANDS). There we have the two beginnings of the two voices.

There is already a considerable degree of cooperation in the association of these two little melodic fragments, but notice what happens: When the two parts are played together you can follow the moving notes first in the upper part and then ~~next~~ transfer your attention to the moving notes of the lower part and it makes a smooth continuous moving line which sounds like this: (PLAY 16th NOTES OF RIGHT HAND AND FLOW INTO 16th NOTES OF LEFT HAND OF FIRST ^{2nd} BAR). Thus we have a third melodic element that emerges as the result of the cooperation of only the two voices; but let us not stop here: listen now to the result of playing the first part of the lower voice with the second part of the upper voice: (PLAY LOWER VOICE 8th NOTES AND UPPER VOICE 8th NOTES IN A LINE). It makes a fourth element out of the slower moving parts of each of the two voices! Indeed here is an example of the sum being greater than the addition of the parts. Only two voices, but four distinct melodic elements as a result of the interaction of the parts.

Let us hear these four elements: First the top voice (PLAY TOP VOICE FIRST TWO BARS) then the lower voice (PLAY THE LOWER VOICE FIRST TWO BARS) then the result of combining the faster moving parts of each (PLAY 16th NOTE PASSAGE OF FIRST TWO BARS) then the result of combining the slower moving parts of each (PLAY 8th NOTE PASSAGE OF FIRST TWO BARS) and there we have it.

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notice that not only is there a contrasting or opposing quality in the two voices, but also a contrast in rate of motion and the direction in the two resulting lines, one is fast and goes down (PLAY FIRST TWO BARS OF 16th NOTES AGAIN) and the other is slow and rises to considerable melodic heights (PLAY FIRST TWO BARS OF 8th NOTES AGAIN) We might as well mention that while the descending line moves with faster notes (PLAY FIRST BAR OF 16th) it descends as a whole quite slowly, while the ascending line of slow notes (PLAY FIRST BAR OF 8ths) climbs to considerable height very rapidly. All of this, mind you, takes place within the first bar of music, a truly remarkable example of craftsmanship. Let us now hear the first two bars of the music with both voices and we will try to hear all of these elements. It would be well to play that much through twice so that we get a better opportunity to hear what is happening. Miss Harwell will bring out the descending line the first time and the ascending line the second time. (PLAY FIRST TWO BARS THROUGH TWICE, EMPHASIZING 16ths FIRST AND 8ths SECOND TIME). Will you now play the music from the beginning to the mid point of the invention with both parts? (PLAY TO CADENCE IN C MINOR AT MID POINT WITH BOTH PARTS).

It is notable that this is the first point in the music that the continuous motion and flow of the two parts is felt to come to a rest. This harmonic center we are now at is the complementary harmonic color to the harmonic center of the beginning and ending of this invention. It is like blue is to yellow, ^{in art} and, as we found in the first invention, Bach uses the main harmonic centers of tonic (PLAY F MINOR CHORD), and dominant (PLAY C MINOR CHORD), in which to weigh and balance all of his melodic material. As we said before, Bach was in the process of balancing out and establishing what was then the new conception of tonal space, something we take for granted today, and he did so with infinite care. If you will

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think for a moment what it meant in the realm of painting to develop the use of technique of light and shade, those elements that present the conception of visual space, which was the great contribution of Rembrandt to painting, or if you will think of the phenomenal work of Shakespeare in the realm of social drama in presenting a spacial conception of social relations and human values, their depth and inter-relations, you will understand what is meant in Bach's development and consolidation of the harmonic system. Both Shakespeare and Rembrandt were practically contemporaries of Bach.

But we were in the midst of this invention. Will you play from this center point to the end? (PLAY FROM CENTER POINT TO END, BOTH PARTS). We have now returned to the harmonic center point with which Bach began the invention, and although we were probably not conscious of the harmony but rather much more conscious of the melody that was being heard, the harmony was nevertheless there like a vast container into which Bach poured his fluid melodic lines, giving them, in a sense, living space. I think that we would like to hear this invention all the way through again without interruption. (PLAY INVENTION 9).

We have now listened somewhat analytically to four of Bach's two part inventions and have learned what is meant by the term "counterpoint", and what it means in the way of a conception of cooperating parts, be they melodic lines and musical ideas, or ^{the lives} the people whose voices they represent.

We wish there was time today to present some of the larger works of Bach in which he presents these same principles on a grand scale, with not only two but with four, six, eight, nine or ten voice parts distributed in a chorus and orchestra. It will have to suffice for now to play as a finishing off number, one of Bach's three-part inventions which he calls a Sinfonia. Due to lack of time we will only be able to hear the playing of this selection once through.