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FORM IN MUSIC

THE second of a series of brief articles by BESSIE POLLARD, Mus. Bac., on "Form in Music." These articles are closely related to a series of programmes on the same topic now being heard from 2YC on Friday evenings. Each of our articles is illustrated by a few bars of the music under discussion.

2 Fugue

FUGUE is not a "form" in the pedantic sense, but rather an all-embracing musical edifice—the personification of what is known in composition as "musical texture." At the same time it has certain vital peculiarities which stamp it indelibly as being in quite a different category from works written in any other form.

A fugue is a polyphonic work—that is, a work in which a number of independent melodies are combined. This process of combination is known as counterpoint. A fugue may be a composition to itself, or may form just a section of that work. Sonatas, symphonies and so on, often have portions written in a loose fugal style—such passages are called "fugato."

Examining the canon, we discovered that one voice (or part) repeated or "imitated" the others at a certain speci-

J.S. Bach "Forty-eight," Book I No. 2.



fied interval. A fugue begins with one voice announcing the main melody called the "subject"; this subject is then "answered" by the second voice. Again, in the canon, we saw that all the voices carried on with the same melody, but in fugue the first voice accompanies the "answer" with a new melody known as the "counter-subject." The entire statement of the subject by each voice in turn is known as the "exposition."

A division that doesn't incorporate any complete announcement of the subject is known as an "episode." A unique congruity and unity is achieved in a good fugue if the material used in the episodes is drawn from the subject or counter-subject.

So our fugue reveals itself through a balanced mixture of subject statement, and episodes, modulating through various keys until the final re-statement is reached. Now we hear a very arresting effect. The subject and answer, instead of succeeding each other, overlap—producing the device known as "stretto." Imagine a group of three or four people, so anxious to talk, that one starts before another has finished—except that in the fugue, they are repeating the same remark, in canonical style, in a different key.

J. S. Bach was the supreme master of the fugue. He left us two monumental works in this form—the Forty-eight fugues in his "Well-tempered Clavier," and the "Art of Fugue," a series ranging from those treated in the most elementary way to those with the most complicated design possible.

Beethoven also showed great command of fugal devices. It is interesting to note that his "Great Fugue, Op. 133," for string quartet, was considered by the musicians and critics of his time to be far too daring and modern.

Fugue still remains the one form which shows more than any other the composer's competency to incorporate technical skill with inventive freedom.

FUGUE—the second of a series entitled "Form in Music"—will be heard from Station 2YC at 9.30 p.m. on Friday, September 12.

"Mothers-in-law?"

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