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KNOW YOUR CLASSICS

THIS is the last of a series of articles written for "The Listener" by BESSIE POLLARD. Next week we will publish the first of five articles, each of which will discuss in outline an important symphonic work to be heard during the coming season of the National Orchestra.

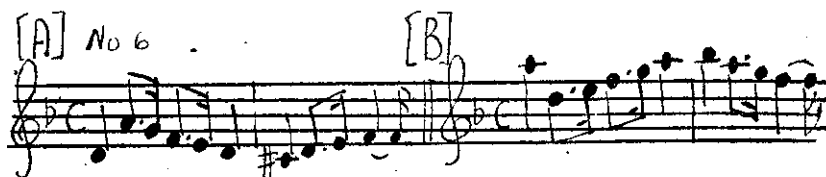
(25) The Art of Fugue (J. S. Bach)

THE *Art of Fugue* was Bach's last great work, written between 1749 and 1750 (the last year of his life) while he was totally blind. He died before completing the final fugue. The work was intended probably as an instructive thesis for the teaching of counterpoint and fugue by example rather than by rule. It comprises 14 fugues, four canons and two fugues for two claviars. Parry, in his book *Johann Sebastian Bach* states that the work was not named *Kunst der Fuge* ("Art of Fugue") by Bach, and that the movements were not called fugues, but "counterpoints." The *Art of Fugue* was published after Bach's death. Only 30 copies were sold, and Bach's son, Karl Philip Emanuel, disposed of the copper plates from which these were reproduced, as scrap metal. Three recent outstanding arrangements of the composition are: for two pianos, by Erich Schwabach; for string quartet, by Roy Harris and M. D. H. Norton; and for orchestra, by Wolfgang Graesser.

The entire work is based on varied developments of the same motto theme ("A" below) which is presented first as a simple fugue for four voices. In contrapunctus 3 we hear the inversion of this subject ("B" below)—



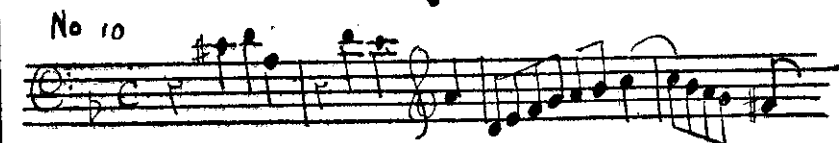
Contrapunctus 5 begins the fugues in contrary motion. No. 6—entitled *In Stile Francese*, no doubt because of its short runs and dotted rhythms—has the motto theme in diminution (shorter note values—see "A" below)—and inverted in diminution ("B" below), while No. 7 features them in augmentation (longer note values) direct and inverted.



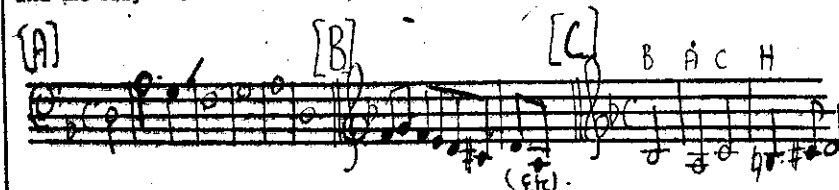
Contrapunctus 8 and 9 present new themes ("A" and "B" below)—



No. 10 also brings forward a new theme (below), while No. 11 is based on the same material as No. 8, but with all the themes inverted—



No. 12 is a canon at the octave; No. 13 at the 10th; No. 14 at the 12th; and No. 15 in augmentation and contrary motion. No. 18 begins the final great sweep of this mighty work, so dramatically interrupted by the composer's death. It is dominated by three new themes, the first ("A" below); the second ("B" below); and the subject on his own name, in German notation B. A. C. H. ("C" below).



Contrapunctus Nos. 1-8 from the *Art of Fugue* by Bach will be heard from Station 4YC on Tuesday, June 28, at 9.26 p.m.

NEW ZEALAND LISTENER, JUNE 24