

A large, faint, hand-drawn crosshair graphic in the background, consisting of a horizontal line and three vertical lines, all with a rough, textured appearance.

J.S. BACH
The Art of Fugue

Tatyana Nikolayeva

The 1993 Sibelius Academy Recital, Helsinki

1	Contrapunctus 1	[4:29]
2	Contrapunctus 2	[3:27]
3	Contrapunctus 3	[2:54]
4	Contrapunctus 4	[4:41]
5	Canon in hypodiapason (Canon alla ottava)	[4:26]
6	Contrapunctus 5	[2:40]
7	Contrapunctus 6 per diminutionem in stylo francese	[5:23]
8	Contrapunctus 7 per augmentationem et diminutionem	[3:49]
9	Canon alla duodecima in contrapunto alla quinta	[4:00]
10	Contrapunctus 8	[6:06]
11	Contrapunctus 9 alla duodecima	[3:04]
12	Contrapunctus 10 alla decima	[4:32]
13	Contrapunctus 11	[6:40]
14	Canon in hypodiatessaron per augmentationem in contrario motu	[4:40]
15	Canon alla decima (Contrapunto alla terza)	[4:15]
16	Contrapunctus 13 (Rectus)	[2:41]
17	Contrapunctus 13 (Inversus)	[2:44]
18	Contrapunctus 12 (Rectus)	[3:03]
19	Contrapunctus 12 (Inversus)	[2:33]
20	Contrapunctus 14	[11:34]
Total Timing:		[87:58]

Tatyana Nikolayeva *piano*

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Johann Sebastian BACH (1685–1750) Die Kunst der Fuge (The Art of Fugue), BWV 1080

One of the greatest Bach players of her generation, an undisputed authority on the music of Shostakovich and a musician of the highest capabilities, Tatyana Nikolayeva (1924–1993), who was born in Bezhitza, near Bryansk (between Moscow and Kiev), was a person of piercing intelligence and a delightful generosity of spirit. Her mother was a professional pianist who had studied with the great Russian pedagogue Alexander Goldenweiser (1875–1961) and Tatyana was fortunate in also being able to study with Goldenweiser from the age of thirteen, continuing her lessons with him at the Moscow Conservatory, thereafter graduating in 1947.

Nikolayeva's studies were interrupted by the Second World War so that she was 23 by the time she graduated from Goldenweiser's class. However, in 1945 she had already won a competition held in memory of the death of Scriabin thirty years earlier. Three more years at the Conservatory were spent in the composition class of Yevgeny Golubev during which time she won second prize at the First International People's Competition in Prague.

1950 was an important year for Nikolayeva as not only did she graduate from Golubev's class, but she won the Bach Competition in Leipzig. Even more important than winning the competition was the fact that jury member Dmitri Shostakovich was so impressed with the fact that Nikolayeva could play any of Bach's *48 Preludes and Fugues (The Well-Tempered Clavier)* from memory that he decided to write 24 preludes and fugues of his own for her. This started a friendship that lasted until the composer's death twenty-five years later. Nikolayeva gave the premiere of the *24 Preludes and Fugues, Op. 87* in Leningrad in 1952. From 1959 she taught at the Moscow Conservatory becoming a professor in 1965, but it was not until the early 1980s that she began to perform regularly in Europe, Japan and America, eventually playing in more than 35 countries. Her repertoire was vast, with some fifty works for piano and orchestra ranging from Bach to Bartók and Shostakovich, all the keyboard works of Bach, all the piano sonatas by Beethoven, plus major compositions by Haydn, Mozart, Schubert, Schumann, Chopin, Scriabin, Rachmaninov, Tchaikovsky, Arensky, Liadov and Stravinsky. In the

1990s she played Rachmaninov's *Piano Concerto No. 4* in America and it was during a performance in San Francisco in 1993 of Shostakovich's *Preludes and Fugues, Op. 87* that she suffered a stroke. She continued to play to the end of the first half of the programme, but had to cancel the rest of the performance. She died two weeks later.

Nikolayeva was also a composer. Her works include two *Piano Concertos*, *24 Concert Studies for Piano* and a *Piano Sonata* as well as an arrangement for solo piano of Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf*.

Although *The Art of Fugue* work was long thought to have been written on Bach's deathbed, recent research has shown that he was working on it during the early 1740s. The autograph from this time comprises fourteen movements (twelve fugues and two canons), but at the end of his life Bach revised the unpublished work adding two fugues and two canons. Engraving of the plates for publication began during the last months of Bach's life and he was able to proof read some of them albeit with failing eyesight. However, when the work was published at the end of 1751 Bach was already dead and the last fugue left incomplete.

There are a number of disputed facts surrounding the work, the main two being the order of the movements and the forces for which the work was written. Bach's son Carl Philip Emmanuel helped with the first publication and a second edition from 1752 appeared with an extended preface by F. W. Marpurg.

The order of the published edition is by fugue type commencing with four fugues in simple counterpoint. Then follow three counter fugues with normal and inverted forms of the theme used in combination (Nos. 5–7). Next come four fugues in double and triple counterpoint introducing new countersubjects (Nos. 8–11). Two mirror fugues (Nos. 12 and 13) are followed by four canons (Nos. 14–17) and the work ends with the incomplete fugue which, according to an obituary, was 'supposed to contain four themes, which afterwards were to be inverted note for note in all four voices'.

However, C. P. E. Bach's ordering of the movements does not match that of the surviving fragments of his father's working copy which seem to indicate that the canons were to be used to demarcate the end of the groups of fugues. Tatyana Nikolayeva chooses this option, but places the last two canons before the mirror fugues.

The early version was subtitled 'art of counterpoint in form of fugal variations' but by the time of publication had become 'the most perfect practical work on fugues' according to C. P. E. Bach. One can imagine the great composer nearing the end of his life wanting to prove to the world that he was the undisputed master of the fugal form and so created a work at once academic and cerebral rather like a massive and intricate crossword puzzle based on strict rules of structure and harmony. A man of Bach's genius could have heard the work in his head and would not necessarily have had to have it realised. Whether it was written for practical instruction or mental exercise is still undecided. Bach notated the work on four staves: this, obviously, was to make perfectly clear the separate parts and their movement in the sometimes labyrinthine score. Because of this, some commentators have thought it a work scored for four instruments and not a keyboard. However, the work can be played on the keyboard by two hands (with a slight compromise in the mirror fugues) and that is how it is usually heard today although many versions for all sorts of combinations of instruments have appeared since Wolfgang Greaser (1906–1928) prepared an instrumental performing version in 1924. This was taken up by Leopold Stokowski in the early 1930s while in 1932 Donald Tovey

produced a version for keyboard in which he completed the final fugue.

The unfinished fugue (*Contrapunctus 14*), which Bach notated on only two staves and not four, breaks off at bar 239 and this is where Tatyana Nikolayeva ended her live performances of the work. Indeed, when she performed it in London she closed the cover over the piano keyboard to indicate that no more music would be heard. The autograph has a note in the hand of C. P. E. Bach at this point stating 'At the point where the composer introduces the name BACH in the countersubject to this fugue, the composer died.' This is unlikely as the score is in Bach's hand and at the time of his death he was practically blind and in poor health so could not have written these bars of music as he expired. The notes B flat, A, C and B natural (BACH in German notation) actually appear at bar 193 and not where the score breaks off.

The performance heard here was given in Helsinki near the end of Nikolayeva's life. Less than seven months later on 13 November 1993 she suffered a stroke during a performance of the complete Shostakovich *Preludes and Fugues* in San Francisco at the age of 69 and died nine days later.

Nikolayeva's memory was prodigious. At the 1950 Bach competition in Leipzig the 26 year old offered any of the *48 Preludes and Fugues* to the jury as she could perform them all from memory. When she visited London in the 1990s in the days before the internet, she travelled without scores and would perform Bach's *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, *The Art of Fugue* and Shostakovich's complete *Preludes and Fugues* from memory. It should be noted, therefore, that there are two memory lapses in this live performance, one during the *Canon alla decima* (bars 28–37) the other at the end of *Contrapunctus 12 (Inversus)* (from bar 42). Nikolayeva also doubles at the octave the opening of *Contrapunctus 14* then plays the theme an octave lower, when the second voice enters, up to bar 13.

In creating his *The Art of Fugue* Bach proved that he was master of the form but in the hands of a musically intuitive interpreter such as Tatyana Nikolayeva it becomes one of the masterpieces of a world genius.

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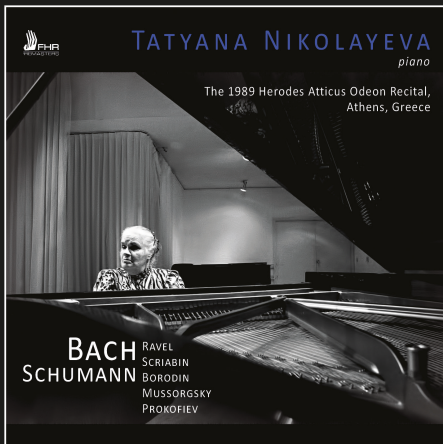
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