

Master Teacher Column*

Teaching Fugue à la Handel: Lessons for Princess Anne

PAMELA L. POULIN

Handel, while living in London, once told Dutch organist Jacob Wilhelm Lustig, who was visiting that city, “No power on earth could have moved me to resume teaching duties again—except Anne, the flower of princesses.”¹ Anne, the daughter of George II, studied composition with Handel from 1724 to 1734. For this gifted keyboardist, Handel wrote a series of thorough-bass exercises, culminating in six fugue exercises, three fugue models and one sketch. These lessons later became part of Handel’s bequest of his manuscripts to his friend John Christopher Smith, who acted as his manager. They are now preserved in the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge.²

*Editor’s note: Volume twenty-one of this journal (2007) initiated the invitational master teacher column. We continue the format in this issue with Pamela Poulin’s enlightening study of Handel’s pedagogy for teaching fugal composition. Skeletons for Handel’s six fugue exercises and three models, to which this column refers, can be downloaded at <http://music.ou.edu/publications/jmtp/vol22/Handel.pdf>.

¹ Jacob Wilhelm Lustig, *Inleiding tot de Muziekkunde* (Groningen, 1771), p. 172. An earlier version of the present article was originally presented as a paper at a meeting of the Society for Music Theory. The author would like to thank Robert Gauldin, Eastman School of Music, for his helpful suggestions.

² See the *Hallische Händel-Ausgabe*, suppl. vol. I, Alfred Mann’s critical edition with facsimiles of the *Aufzeichnungen zur Kompositionslehre aus den Handschriften im Fitzwilliam Museum Cambridge* (Kassel, 1978). This volume comprises the Lessons for Princess Anne as well as complete canons and other material, including sketches for other compositions, for example, *The Messiah*.

See also David Ledbetter, *Continuo Playing According to Handel: His Figured Bass Exercises With a Commentary* (Oxford University Press, 1990). Ledbetter offers his own solutions to the fugue exercises; Mann also offers a few in the *Aufzeichnungen*.

Handel's teaching document of composition exercises begins with simple bass lines in slow note values, progressing from root position triads, through sixth chords, to solving various problems in voice leading and resolution: seventh chords ($\begin{smallmatrix} 6 & 4 \\ 5 & 2 \end{smallmatrix}$), suspensions involving the fourth ($\begin{smallmatrix} 4 & 3 \\ 4 & 3 \end{smallmatrix}$), the seventh ($\begin{smallmatrix} 7 & 6 \end{smallmatrix}$) and the ninth ($\begin{smallmatrix} 9 & 8 \\ 9 & 6 \end{smallmatrix}$ and $\begin{smallmatrix} 9 & 3 \end{smallmatrix}$, i.e., 9-8 with a change of bass) and double suspensions ($\begin{smallmatrix} 9 & 8 \\ 7 & 6 \end{smallmatrix}$ and $\begin{smallmatrix} 9 & 8 \\ 4 & 3 \end{smallmatrix}$). Next come three longer practice examples incorporating the above.³ The collection then proceeds with the six fugue exercises, three of which, Nos. 3, 5 and 6, are accompanied by the models mentioned above, on different fugue subjects and completed by Handel himself. These fugue models are invaluable teaching aids, demonstrating skills the student may put to use in the fugue exercise with which each is paired. Thus, Handel does not introduce fugue writing until the skill of thorough bass is first mastered. In other words, harmony and voice leading come first and only then fugue writing. For Handel, thorough bass is the basis of the art of the fugue.⁴

³ A parallel document to that of Handel is the "*Vorschriften und Grundsätze . . .*" or 'Precepts and Principles for Playing the Thorough Bass or Accompanying in Four Parts by the Royal Court Composer and Kapellmeister as well as Director of Music and Cantor of the *Thomas-Schule* Johann Sebastian Bach at Leipzig for his Students in Music, 1738," translated with commentary as *Precepts and Principles* by Pamela L. Poulin, with a Preface by Christoph Wolff (Oxford University Press, 1995). Bach dictated this document to a student at the *Thomas-Schule* in Leipzig, and a student worked out the sixteen figured bass exercises and five fugue exercises that comprise the fourth section of this document. In the case of the *Precepts and Principles*, however, we are not given the Master's fugue exercises, but exercises worked out by an unknown student, complete with errors, as they were not corrected by Bach. We do not know in what form the fugue exercises were given to the student.

Neither Handel nor Bach appears to have used species counterpoint in his teaching. In describing his father's teaching to Bach's first biographer, Johann Nikolaus Forkel, C.P.E. Bach wrote, "In composition he started the pupils right in with what was practical, and omitted all the dry species of counterpoint that are given in Fux and others." This could also be a description of Handel's teaching methods. See Hans T. David and Arthur Mendel, eds., *Bach Reader*, rev. edn. (New York, 1966), p. 279. See also Alfred Mann, "Bach and Handel as Teachers of Thorough Bass," in Peter Williams, ed., *Bach, Handel, Scarlatti Tercentenary Essays* (Cambridge, 1985).

⁴ Other exercises exist of master composers studying with teachers, for example, Beethoven's studies with Albrechtsberger and Schubert's with

The fugue exercises were written on a single staff in a type of musical shorthand, with Handel writing a figured bass for each entire fugue, figures notated above the staff and entrances indicated below the staff using tablature: C for cantus (soprano), A for altus, etc., and the starting pitch in tablature. For example, in Fugue Exercise No. 3, Handel writes the fugue subject⁵ and then continues with a figured bass. In measure two, beat three, he writes “A” below the staff and with a single stroke above the letter f, indicates that this alto entry should begin on *f*.⁶

The figured bass supplied the harmonic underpinning, thus ensuring a certain degree of success, as Handel’s student, Princess Anne, would then complete the fugue from the sketch. In this series of six fugue exercises and three models, he led Princess Anne through a variety of fugal procedures that a student today may not have the opportunity to experience firsthand.

Thus, Handel provided his student with the fugue subject, the starting pitches for later entries, indicated in tablature, and the harmonies, indicated through a figured bass. For an assignment of today, an instructor might prepare such a skeleton in keyboard score,

Sechter. Exercises also survive of students with master composers, such as Attwood’s with Mozart. In these cases we have the student-completed exercises, and in some cases, for example, Attwood with Mozart, we have the master teacher’s corrections. However, in the case of Princess Anne’s studies with Handel, we have only the original exercises, neither the student-completed work nor Handel’s corrections. See Alfred Mann, *Theory and Practice* (New York, 1987).

⁵ The fugue subjects are original with Handel; he incorporates some of them in his other works. See Notes nos. 9 and 10.

⁶ See Mann, *Aufzeichnungen*, p. 48, for a facsimile of this fugue. Tablature is very similar to the Helmholtz system of pitch designation, e.g., F = great F, f = small f, f with a single stroke above = *f*l. Also notated in this fashion, and probably intended for realization at sight, are the less complex fugues by Francesco Durante (1684-1755), included in his basso continuo exercises, “*Partimenti ossia Intero studio di numerati per ben suonare il cembalo*.” Durante was a well-known Neapolitan teacher, who counted among his pupils Giovanni Battista Pergolesi (1710-36). Something similar, without tablature marking of entries (perhaps inadvertently omitted in publishing), appears in Niedt’s *Musicalische Handleitung*: what appears to be an unrealized two-voice fugue on one stave (employing several different clefs) might well have originally been a fugue exercise employing this same system of notation (see Pamela L. Poulin and Irmgard Taylor’s co-translation with Poulin’s commentary of Friederich Erhardt Niedt’s *Musical Guide* [Oxford University Press, 1989], pp. 48-49).

with spaces left for students to complete the fugue. An instructor might also make use of Handel's three completed fugue models. With any of these, it is possible to extract the fugue skeleton, consisting of all fugue entries, and prepare a figured bass (not included in the models). This has been done by the present writer for all six fugue exercises, as well as the three models, and may be found throughout this article. (Editor's note: Skeletons for both the exercises and fugue models can be downloaded at <http://music.ou.edu/publications/jmtp/vol22/Handel.pdf>.)

In a keyboard score skeleton of a Handel fugue, we have something with interesting potential as a teaching tool for the tonal counterpoint instructor of today. First, students may be given Handel's exercise skeletons in keyboard score to complete, followed by the instructor's corrections and suggestions. Later, they can proceed to working out one of these fugue model skeletons, finally comparing their results with those of Handel as they study his actual model. It is perhaps as though the master composer has been at the student's very elbow.

In a typical tonal counterpoint class, it is unusual for a student to compose more than one fugue. Usually all that is required is one simple fugue, and sometimes only an exposition. A student who is able to begin by fleshing out the skeleton of a relatively uncomplicated Handel fugue (not at first one of the double fugues or one employing modulating subjects and/or stretto), given the subject and the location of the subsequent entrances, guided by the harmonic underpinning, and able, later, to learn from the version completed by Handel, may go somewhat further and with a deeper appreciation of the tradition involved.

OVERVIEW OF HANDEL'S FUGUES IN THE LESSONS FOR PRINCESS ANNE

Handel's fugues range in length from nine to thirty-two measures and employ the keys of C major, E major, E minor, F major (twice), G major (three times) and G Dorian (twice). He begins the set of fugue exercises with simple fugue expositions. Fugue Exercise No. 1, in three voices, is in G Dorian, making the answer relatively easy to compose, because it is a real answer and does not modulate to the dominant. The fugue employs a harmonic sequence based on 7-6 suspensions. Fugue Exercise No. 2, also in G Dorian, in four voices (as are the remaining fugue exercises and models), consists of an exposition and a bridge based on double suspensions of 9-8 and 7-6. While the Fugue Model accompanying Fugue Exercise

No. 3 in F major introduces a modulating subject in the setting of a double exposition, a modulating subject does not actually occur in Fugue Exercise No. 3. However, a tonal answer is nevertheless required since the subject begins on $\hat{5}$. This fugue, which does have a counterexposition, employs seventh chords in harmonic sequence as its closing material. Fugue Exercise No. 4, the longest of the group, touches on new keys (other than dominant for the first time) of the submediant and supertonic after a counterexposition and employs true episodic material for the first time. Its subject is based on that of Fugue Model No. 3. Here Handel introduces the technique of stretto in the form of mock stretto. In the Fugue Model in F major accompanying Fugue Exercise No. 5, double fugue is introduced and mock stretto is continued, which includes an introduction to augmentation. In Fugue Exercise No. 5 in E minor, the techniques of double fugue and mock stretto are continued. The Fugue Model in G major accompanying Fugue Exercise No. 6 is enriched by suspension and, for the first time, real stretto. In this double fugue, Subjects I and II take turns being the leading voice. The double fugue of the last fugue exercise, No. 6, takes as its subject the opening of the chorale *Aus tiefer Not*, here in E major, and makes use of stretto. Subject II is Subject I in augmentation, and the subjects appear in double counterpoint at the twelfth as well as at the octave. Lastly, the sketch in C major features the subject in stretto and its final entry in augmentation.

HANDEL'S FUGUES IN THE LESSONS FOR PRINCESS ANNE BRIEFLY DESCRIBED

Here follow brief descriptions of Handel's exercises and fugue models. The author has prepared a handout of skeletons of Handel's actual pedagogical materials, downloadable in a form that is suitable for student completion at <http://music.ou.edu/publications/jmtp/vol22/Handel.pdf>.⁷

No. 1 (Exercise)

This fugue exercise of nineteen measures is a simple fugue exposition in three voices, in G Dorian, on a short subject of five pitches. The use of Dorian rules out the usual modulation to the key

⁷ In order to be specific as to the beginnings of entries and sections, portions of measures are counted instead of merely downbeats of measures.

of the dominant in the answer, i.e., the answer is *at* the dominant, but not *in* the dominant key. The opening subject is followed by two real answers (mm. 3-7). The subject's basic outline is $\hat{1} \hat{7} \hat{3}$ answered by $\hat{5} \hat{4} \hat{7}$.⁸ The short sequential bridge (mm. 7-10) that follows is based on the eighth-note motive of the subject, which may also be adopted for the bridge of mm. 13-15, employing a sequence of 7-6 following the redundant entry of mm. 10-12.

No. 2 (Exercise)

The hallmark of the second fugue exercise's subject is the repetition of tonic: the outline of the subject is $\hat{1} \hat{5}$ answered by $\hat{5} \hat{1}$. The use of G Dorian again makes for no change of key to the dominant for the answer. The subject of this simple fugue exposition, in four voices, is first stated in the bass, followed by a tonal answer in the tenor, then the subject in the alto and an answer in the soprano (mm. 1-5). A brief closing section employing double suspensions (9-8 with 7-6) leads to the cadence (mm. 6-9). There are no real difficulties for the student to encounter either in this nine-measure exercise or in the first fugue.

No. 3 (Model)

This fourteen-measure fugue model in F major, in four voices, paired with the following Fugue Exercise No. 3, makes use of a modulating subject ($\hat{1} \hat{4} \hat{5}$) from tonic to dominant, answered by $\hat{5} \hat{1} \hat{2}$. Prior to the final entry in the bass, in mm. 11-12, we rarely hear four voices together, mostly only three. A counterexposition follows in which the second tenor entry is shifted from the first beat to the third beat of the measure (mm. 9-10). Tonally, the exposition (mm. 1-6) consists of an alternation between tonic and dominant, and the counterexposition, an alternation between dominant and tonic, so that the fugue comes to a satisfying close in the home key (mm. 12-14).

No. 3 (Exercise)

This joyful sixteen-measure fugue exercise in F major, in four voices, makes use of a repeated-note figure once again, this time on the fifth scale degree. A true modulation to the dominant takes place in the tonal answer (unlike those of Exercise Nos. 1 and 2). The subject can be reduced to $\hat{5} \hat{4} \hat{3}$ answered by $\hat{1} \hat{1} \hat{7}$. Though short

⁸ See William Renwick's subject and answer paradigms (pp. 24-78) in his *Analyzing Fugue: A Schenkerian Approach* (New York, 1995).

in length, the fugue itself is quite challenging to realize, particularly because of the eighth-note activity in the bass line, which demands harmonization. For example, both the parallel sixths of m. 6 and deceptive resolution of m. 13 invite parallel fifths.

In terms of structure, the fugue consists of a double exposition, having voice entries of TASB ASTB, with a one-measure connection (m. 7). The exposition of four entries follows the plan of tonic, dominant, tonic, dominant, but the counterexposition is irregular: tonic, dominant, dominant, tonic. The second entry of the counterexposition is heralded with a deceptive cadence (m. 9) and the third and fourth entries, with 7-6 suspensions. The alternation of subject and tonal answer is interrupted briefly (m. 11) by the insertion of another answer (mm. 11-12), which paves the way for the final, tonic, entry of the subject in the bass (mm. 13-14). Lastly, a cadential extension featuring seventh chords in harmonic sequence concludes the fugue (mm. 14-16).

No. 4 (Exercise)

The subject of Fugue Exercise No. 4 in G major may be seen as an elaboration of that of Fugue Model No. 3, through an extension by melodic sequence: $\hat{1}$ ($\hat{1}$) $\hat{7}$ answered by $\hat{5}$ $\hat{4}$ $\hat{3}$. Instead of simply marking the entrance of the answer (m. 3) for his student, Handel writes the complete real answer. This thirty-two-measure fugue exercise is longer by far than any of the other exercises or models and may pose difficulties for the student because of the modulating subject. Another problem is the matter of what range to place the voices in to make them come out right at the cadences. The fugue consists of two expositions, opening with a two and a half measure subject. Both expositions follow an SATB SATB format. The first exposition (mm. 1-11) alternates between subject and (real) answer and the second exposition (mm. 13-23), between answer and subject. Both the second and third entries of the first exposition and the third and fourth entries of the second exposition begin in the middle of the measure. In the last entry of the second exposition, the fifth and last two pitches of the subject are omitted (mm. 22 and 23), so that the subject becomes two measures—instead of two and a half measures—long. The next statement enters early, in m. 23, in mock stretto, in the key of E minor (the submediant), and is further truncated, creating an additional mock stretto with the next entry (in the supertonic, m. 25). As indicated earlier, this is the first time mock stretto and keys other than tonic and dominant appear

in either an exercise or model. One notes that Handel inserts the alto pitches of g^1 and e^1 in the score in m. 26, probably to guide the voice leading. An entry on D (mm. 26-27), preceding the final truncated entry in tonic (m. 28), is a return of the truncated fourth entry of the second exposition (cf. mm. 22-23 and 28-29). Thus, only the head motive is left intact. A short closing section concludes the fugue (mm. 30-32).

No. 5 (Model)

This eighteen-measure fugue model in F major introduces the student to writing both a double fugue and invertible counterpoint at the octave. The first subject may be reduced to $\hat{5} \hat{4} \hat{3}$ and the second subject to $\hat{1} \hat{5}$. The initial alto-tenor entry (mm. 1-3) is followed by a statement of the subjects inverted and remaining in F major (mm. 3-5). After a one-measure connecting passage to C major (m. 6), a tenor-bass statement in that key appears in mm. 7-8. (The root and third need to be doubled on the last beat of m. 7 in order to avoid parallel fifths.) Here, Subject I descends a second, instead of a third, between the second and third pitches, in three successive statements (mm. 7, 10 and 13) for a tonal answer. Subject II leads alone in the alto in m. 9, followed by Subject I in m. 10, with Subject II reappearing in its usual location in m. 11. A mock stretto of the first subject in two truncated entries occurs in mm. 12-15, i.e., the first statement of the stretto is shortened by one and a half measures (cf. mm. 1-3 and mm. 12-13). In m. 12, the tenor must move from c^1 to a in order to avoid parallel fifths, and mm. 12-16 present a rhythmic problem, i.e., how to maintain the eighth note motion of the preceding measures. The second statement of the stretto is shortened by three beats (m. 15) and is here accompanied by Subject II (mm. 14-15), also shortened by three beats. In mm. 16-17, an abridged statement in augmentation of Subject I, accompanied by Subject II (not in augmentation), concludes the fugue.

No. 5 (Exercise)

This twenty-four-measure fugue exercise in E minor is another double fugue.⁹ The exposition consists of three paired entries, with a tenor-alto opening, followed in mm. 3-6 by a bass-soprano answer (with Subject I a tonal answer and Subject II real) and then another

⁹ Evidently Handel liked these two subjects, since they also appear in *Israel in Egypt*, the *Utrecht Te Deum* and other compositions in slightly varied forms. See Mann, *Aufzeichnungen*, p. 49.

soprano-bass statement in invertible counterpoint. The first paired entries (mm. 1-2) progress from $\hat{5}$ to $\hat{1}$ and are answered by $\hat{1}$ to $\hat{5}$. The second and third paired entries (mm. 3, 6 [and also, later, one in m. 13]) are shifted to the fourth beat. A five-beat connecting passage (mm. 6-7) separates the second and third entries. After four beats, Subjects I and II, in the bass-tenor enter in the mediant, G major (m. 11), followed by a soprano-alto entry in D major, the dominant of the mediant (mm. 13-15). In m. 15, Handel changes the pitches of beats 2-4 in the alto of the D major statement. Mm. 16-19 comprise a sequential episode that returns the music to E minor for a final statement of the subjects in the alto-bass (m. 19-21) and a three-measure closing (mm. 22-24).

No. 6 (Model)

This pinnacle of the models Handel composed for Princess Anne, in G major, is twenty-one measures in length and makes use of double fugue. Its glorious sound devolves much from Handel's use of suspensions: 4-3 early on, in m. 2, followed by 2-3 in m. 3, 7-6 in m. 4 and two 4-3's in m. 5. (2-3 suspensions also appear in mm. 7 and 16; 4-3, in mm. 7, 16, 18, 19 and 20; 9-8 in mm. 9, 10 and 19; and a double suspension of $\frac{9-8}{7-6}$ in m. 11.) Subjects I ($\hat{1} \hat{4}$) and II ($\hat{5} \hat{1}$) are answered in mm. 2-3 in the tenor-bass. In m. 4, Subject II is the leading voice in the soprano, followed by Subject I in the alto. The tenor-bass answers in the dominant in mm. 6-7. (Compare this with the answer in m. 3, which does not make use of a leading tone, C-sharp.) An episode follows in mm. 7-11, employing sequence and 9-8 suspensions in mm. 9-11. Another answer enters (without C-sharp, cf. mm. 3 and 6-7) in the alto-soprano (mm. 12-13). After a short connecting passage (mm. 13-14), another statement of the subjects, in G major, appears in mm. 15-16. The dotted quarter motive from m. 3 appears in the right hand in m. 16. Next, a real stretto (for the first time) of the answer to Subject I, in the soprano-bass, appears on D in mm. 17-18, with Subject II accompanying the leading entry of Subject I in stretto, in the alto. The bass entry in m. 18 is slightly altered and a melodic sequence in the bass (m. 19) leads to the brief closing section (mm. 19-21).

No. 6 (Exercise)

Handel's fugue exercises culminate in a fifteen-measure fugue based on the E Phrygian chorale melody *Aus tiefer Not*, here, as noted earlier, in E major. In this double fugue, Subject II ($\hat{5} \hat{4}$) is an augmentation of Subject I ($\hat{5} \hat{4} \hat{3}$).¹⁰ The tenor-bass opening is followed by Subjects I and II in the soprano-bass, with real answers (mm. 3-4). Next, a chain of seventh chords appears as an episode (mm. 5-6) leading to a shortened version of Subject II, in mock stretto in answer form (mm. 7-8), accompanied in the bass with an incipit of beats 3-7 of Subject I (cf. the alto of mm. 1-2 with the bass of mm. 7-8). In mm. 9-10, the opening returns in the soprano on B and the alto, this time on E, for double counterpoint at the twelfth. Subject I appears in elaboration in mm. 10-11. Then, a true stretto of Subject II appears in mm. 11-13 and the fugue concludes with a two-measure closing featuring suspensions (mm. 14-15).

No. 6 (Sketch)

The Lessons for Princess Anne conclude with the sketch in C major, featuring a repeated dominant as a one-measure subject in stretto. The fugue opens with four entries: ATBS (mm. 1-6), after which the fifth and final entry appears in augmentation (mm. 6-8) and the sketch closes with a simple cadential extension (mm. 9-11).

We may be good instructors, but, after all, the student who has worked the above exercises, perhaps guided by one of us, has gone straight to the source and studied with the master teacher himself, Georg Frideric Handel.

¹⁰ These two subjects are used in choruses from "Let All the Angels of God Worship Him" from the *Messiah*, in the *Foundling Hospital Anthem* and in *Samson*. The same double exposition is found in the aria "Ti vedrò regnar" from *Ricardo Primo* (1727). See Mann, *Aufzeichnungen*, p. 50.