

# Schumann's 'Textbook for The Composing of Fugues'

*Schumann used Fr. W. Marpurg, Abhandlung von der Fuge, 1806; and L. Cherubini, Theorie des Kontrapunkts und der Fuge, 1835, as models for his textbook, according to Boetticher (1942). However, the following crucial sections, differing from similar texts, were written by Schumann, and are translated from excerpts found in Boetticher's book:*

The Teaching of the Fugue: ... The word *Fuga*, which, in Classical Latin, means "flight," and in medieval Latin, "chase," as in the hunt, or pursuit, is already to be found in compositions of the 15th and 16th Centuries [marginal note by Schumann—"Source?"]. The fugue as we now know it, is, so to speak, the keystone of counterpoint. It is here, first and foremost, that one finds applied the lessons so derived, as it may be considered the transition from the strict style to the free one, and moreover, allows possibilities which one would be entitled to expect from a complex art form. In the words of Cherubini, "everything a proper composer needs to know will appear in the Fugue in its rightful place; it is the veritable archetype of all musical composition." And in truth, to the extent that they proceed from the very deepest understanding of the art form, practically all masterpieces, including those in a somewhat freer mode, may be traced back to the Fugue form.

In another sense, [the term] Fugue refers to a piece of music elaborated in two or more voices, based on a Theme, in which the Theme appears in various places (in different voices) and retains its value right unto the end. The Theme may also be called Subject, or Dux (Leader). The Theme having once been stated, it will be repeated by the second voice in the Dominant of the main key (although this may vary at times, depending on the first note of the Dux). This re-exposition is called Answer or *Comes* (that which accom-

panies). The Dux will be set in counterpoint to the Answer, which counterpoint refers to a counter-harmony. The Answer having said its part—in a fugue with several voices—the Theme of the Dux will thereupon enter in the same position in the scale; fourthly, the Answer will enter, etc. ... All four having ended, there will begin a small interlude, freer, which may, though, be taken from the Theme; this is known as the middle-entry. Following which, whichever voice has not uttered the theme for the longest time will take it up afresh, as a new Answer in a new, though related key.

As the [fugue] proceeds, one attempts to bring the Answers ever closer to the Question (after the necessary, freer middle-entry) ... and finally closes with a Pedalpoint. ...

In relation to the Theme: how great, or slight, the effect may be, will ever depend on the quality of the theme itself. Accordingly, the student's greatest care shall go to [the finding of] a good theme. All the skill poured into a work may go to waste, if the basic theme be unsound, or if the underpinning of a substantial basic theme be lacking. However lovely, perhaps, this or that motive, it may prove an unsuitable Fugue Theme. The rigor of this style calls, above all, for a seriousness, a vigor and a dignity of thought—although it is yet a domain open to playfulness, yea even humor. The weak and sentimental lies farthest removed from this style. ...

The student must also see to it that the Theme not exceed an octave's range. ... Little is to be achieved though, by rule. Of the essence is that the Theme lie within a natural and, in fact, middle range of the voice that states it. ... The counter-subjects of a Fugue may appear at the same time as the main one. That being said, a still greater effect will be attained by introducing the counter-subject little by little, bearing in mind as well, that in order to apprehend two themes and their elaboration, considerable ability will be required of the listener's ear. ...

In relation to the Pedalpoint: This is indeed the place for remote modulations, whereupon the Theme will promptly follow through each of the voices.