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I, ________________________________________________________________________,
hereby submit this work as part of the requirements for the degree of:
Master of Music
_________________________________________________________________________
in:
CCM Division of Composition, Musicology, and Theory (Theory Emphasis)
_________________________________________________________________________
It is entitled:
A Study of Felix Mendelssohn's Piano Fugues
_________________________________________________________________________

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A Study of Felix Mendelssohn’s Piano Fugues

A thesis submitted to the

Division of Graduate Studies and Research
of the University of Cincinnati

in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF MUSIC

in the Division of Composition, Musicology, and Theory
at the College-Conservatory of Music

by
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2008

B.M., Cleveland Institute of Music, 2005

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Felix Mendelssohn’s piano fugues went through a significant transformation in style, from those of his youth (dating as early as 1820) to those composed in later years (the 1830s). As one would expect, these are indebted to Baroque models. However, one might suppose the earlier works would have the strongest Baroque influences, and that these would recede over time, as Mendelssohn’s own personal style evolved. Instead, Baroque characteristics are more prevalent in the later (as opposed to earlier) fugues. In order to examine this stylistic transformation, this thesis presents a general discussion of Mendelssohn’s piano fugues, followed by an analysis of four fugues. The analysis focuses on subject treatment, harmonic practice, and texture; the fugues are also investigated for the influence of conventional Bachian fugal technique.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to express my great appreciation to Dr. David Carson Berry for sharing his wealth of knowledge while advising this thesis. A very special thanks goes to Dr. Catherine Losada, who has invested much in helping me succeed, not only in this project, but throughout my study at UC. Thank you also to Dr. Melinda Boyd for her encouragement and insight.

I appreciate Scott Kimmell’s assistance in helping me understand the differences between piano and organ music. Thanks also to the office staff at my church, who graciously allowed me to use a computer with internet as often as I needed to email members of my committee.

Thank you to the myriad of people who patiently listened to me vent frustration throughout my work on this thesis. These people, including family, friends, and even strangers, encouraged me to “just do it,” and also reminded me of the importance of periodically resting from my labors. Finally, I wish to thank my parents for their love in raising a persistent and diligent child that grew up to be persistent and diligent enough to finish this project.
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CHAPTER I—INTRODUCTION

Felix Mendelssohn (1809–47) received a thorough music education from a young age, first from his mother and subsequently from private tutors. He excelled in composition and was renowned for the contrapuntal features in his music. Despite a youthful reputation for studiously pursuing contrapuntal practice, his early fugues are hardly academic replicas of Bachian style. Several of Mendelssohn’s piano fugues from his youth combine a mastery of counterpoint with notable departures from Bachian fugal technique; that is, his early fugues tend to display certain stylistic mannerisms of Romanticism. In particular, the fugues from the 1820s demonstrate a contemporary harmonic language that radically reinterprets the Baroque-influenced harmonic practices generally associated with the fugue and related techniques. Additionally, as observed by Glenn Stanley, Mendelssohn’s early fugues depart from traditional Baroque technique in the thick texture and Romantic development of the episodes, in the preservation of the voices as presented in the exposition, and in the treatment of the subject within the context of the whole fugue (i.e., infrequent subject entries and minimal use of stretto).¹ Despite the contrapuntal nature of the fugue, many of Mendelssohn’s have passages with melody-accompaniment texture (including the Fugue in G Minor [1824] and Fugue in E Minor [1827]), or octave doubling of a voice (a technique used in all the currently-published fugues except Op. 35/2 [1835]). The fugues from the 1820s also include unconventionally prepared or resolved non-harmonic tones, juxtaposition of triple and duple subdivisions of the beat (especially in the Fugue in G minor

¹ Glenn Stanley, “The Music for Keyboard,” in The Cambridge Companion to Mendelssohn, ed. Peter Mercer-Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 156. This taxonomy is offered to provide general characteristics of Mendelssohn’s stylistic approach to fugal composition. Though the fugues from the 1820s typically show these characteristics, there is a notable exception concerning stretto and the frequency of the subject: Fuga, Op 7/5. This fugue perpetually presents multiple entries of the subject. Throughout this thesis, specific examples may exhibit specific traits contrary to one or more of the characteristics listed by Stanley.
[1824]), and subjects that change over the course of the fugue while maintaining some consistency in the development of these changes.

Because his early fugues display certain stylistic characteristics of Romanticism, one might expect these Romantic traits to increase in the ensuing years, as the composer further developed his personal style. Conversely, they recede somewhat in the fugues Mendelssohn composed just ten years later. His approach to fugal writing in the mid-1830s embraces Baroque influences to a greater degree, as evidenced by their voicing, subject treatment, and episodic organization. The significant stylistic transformation in Mendelssohn’s approach to piano fugues, between the 1820s and 1830s, calls for a comparative examination of these pieces. This thesis is intended to provide one.

Studying these fugues demonstrates that if Mendelssohn’s earliest fugues were oases of experimentation, his later style evolved to recall more closely typical Baroque fugal techniques. To this end, Chapter II offers an overview of Mendelssohn’s fugal style, incorporating examples from several piano fugues. Then, four fugues representing a broad chronological spectrum will be analyzed more closely in Chapters III–V, with special attention paid to: 1) the subjects, both in their own terms and with respect to how Mendelssohn transforms them throughout the fugue, including also their harmonic implications and how Mendelssohn subsequently evades these implications; 2) issues of harmony, in terms of both large-scale and localized phenomena; and 3) issues of voicing, including the presentation of additional voices in mostly four-voice textures, the use of octave doubling, and voices exchanging position relative to their original presentation.

To study Mendelssohn’s music contextually, we must be informed about how it was shaped by his life and culture. His artistic oeuvre was influenced by his experiences and musical training in the age of Romanticism. Therefore, what ensues is a brief overview of Mendelssohn’s
life, with a focus on his musical education from childhood through the 1830s. A summary of trends in Romantic music follows, after which there is a brief history of the contrapuntal genre of the fugue and commentary on how Mendelssohn’s piano fugues fit into that history.

1. Mendelssohn’s life and musical education.

Jakob Ludwig Felix Mendelssohn was born in Hamburg to Jewish parents on 3 February 1809. Despite the Jewish legacy bequeathed by Felix’s grandfather, the philosopher Moses Mendelssohn (who was a significant figure in the Jewish Enlightenment, or Haskalah), his parents, Abraham and Lea, chose to raise their children in a Christian home. When the French drove the family out of Hamburg in 1811, they moved to Berlin (the center of the Bach revival in Germany), which remained their home for many years. Throughout their lives, the Mendelssohn family was close-knit, a reflection of their Jewish heritage; all four children of Abraham and Lea had a deep respect for their parents and for each other.

Lea became her children’s first piano teacher. After a trip to Paris in 1816, during which both Felix and his older sister Fanny studied piano with Madame Bigot, the family formally employed tutors for the children: Karl Heyse aided their academic work, Ludwig Berger taught them piano, Carl Henning was employed for the learning of violin, Carl Zelter taught harmony and composition, and Samuel Rösel taught drawing (one of Felix’s favorite hobbies). In addition, the affluent Mendelssohn family hosted Sunday musical gatherings in their home. This setting

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provided an ideal opportunity for the young Felix to hear his compositions performed, often by members of the royal chamber musicians.³

Mendelssohn credited Zelter for instilling within him a love of meticulously crafted counterpoint. Zelter had studied with Carl Friedrich Christian Fasch and J.S. Bach’s student Johann Philipp Kirnberger, both contemporaries of C.P.E. Bach. Fasch was known for performing and collecting J.S. Bach’s music, and for founding the Berlin Singakademie, which was dedicated to the performance of music predating the nineteenth century, especially that of J.S. Bach.⁴ Kirnberger advocated composition training rooted in figured bass and chorale harmonization (the method employed by Bach in teaching composition, according to Kirnberger).⁵ Thus, as a reflection of his own education, Zelter employed a Bachian method of thorough training in figured bass and chorale harmonization as he taught the young Felix.⁶

In 1821, Mendelssohn was introduced to Carl Maria von Weber, who possibly influenced him to compose several operettas in subsequent years. In 1824, upon witnessing the performance of one of these operettas Der Onkel aus Boston, Zelter declared, “My dear Boy, from now on you are no longer an apprentice, but an independent member of the brotherhood of musicians. I proclaim you independent in the name of Mozart, Haydn and old father Bach.”⁷ Thus, Zelter’s role in Mendelssohn’s musical education transformed from that of teacher to mentor. The two

⁴ R. Larry Todd 1983, 6, 10.
⁵ Kirnberger, The Art of Strict Musical Composition, trans. David Beach and Jurgen Thym, Music Theory Translation Series, no. 4, ed. Claude Palisca (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982). Throughout Kirnberger’s text, he refers to the practices of J.S. Bach. For additional information on Kirnberger’s claim that the method in this book is derived directly from the teaching of J. S. Bach, see xv–xix of the introduction by David Beach.
⁶ Todd 1983, 2.
⁷ Translated and quoted in Philip Radcliffe, Mendelssohn, 3d ed., revised by Peter Ward Jones, The Master Musicians, ed. Stanley Sadie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990). 8. R. Larry Todd also reports this incident as relating to the work’s alternate title, Die beiden Neffen (Todd 2001, 582). Compare with Dorn 1872, 80, which reports Zelter as saying, “Felix, you have hitherto only been an apprentice; from today you are an assistant, and now work on till you become a master.”
remained close until Zelter’s death in 1832. In addition to six unpublished fugues, and the fugues in G minor (1824), E-flat major (1826), E Minor (1827) and E Minor, Op. 35/1, Mendelssohn’s student compositions (that is, works composed by age eighteen) include several chamber works, such as the Octet, Op. 20; at least thirteen sinfonias; a handful of concerti; and numerous sacred works, including the *Gloria*, the *Magnificat*, and the *Te Deum*.

*Life experiences, 1828–32.* During the years 1828–32, Mendelssohn composed no fugues for the piano. The events of his life in this period are of interest to the examination of his approach to fugal composition in that they shed light on influential factors in the drastic style change before and after this time. During this period, Mendelssohn organized his most widely recognized achievement within the historicist movement: the 1829 performance of J.S. Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion* at the Berlin Singakademie. Prior to that time, J.S. Bach’s music was rarely performed, even by the Singakademie, which rehearsed his music so faithfully. Zelter had reservations that Berlin audiences were prepared to hear a performance of a massive Bachian choral work, but the performance proved a huge success and attendance was around three thousand over a total of three performances.

Also during this time, Mendelssohn experienced numerous travel opportunities. One of his first extended journeys came in 1829, when he departed for London, a destination that appealed to continental composers of the late eighteenth century because of the numerous concert opportunities and audacious publishers. Mendelssohn was particularly fond of the social atmosphere of England, where his genteel manners and charm were immediately

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9 Ibid, 213.
embraced. His letters from the time reflect his partiality to English audiences, partly because of his enthusiastic reception in England and the abundance of performance opportunities, and also because his perception of English audiences was that they were able to “understand spontaneously, to engage themselves, and to participate in musical life.”¹¹ The English in turn influenced his style by advocating and encouraging composition that was refined, as opposed to much of the music produced on the European continent of the time, which could be characterized as blatantly volatile. Mendelssohn traveled to England a second time in 1832.

A trip to Italy in 1830 was delayed by three months when Mendelssohn caught the measles. While in Italy, he developed strong opinions, both positive and negative, about the sacred music there. He disliked plain-song chant, but appreciated the Credo and was particularly fond of Palestrina’s Lamentations and Improperia.¹² Despite his own strong opinions at this time, later in his life Mendelssohn disliked the divisiveness among certain factions of the historicist movement. As he confided in a letter to his sister, Rebekka Dirichlet, “it is a constant source of annoyance that one person can see good only in Beethoven and another only in Palestrina and a third only in Mozart or Bach.”¹³

Mendelssohn’s trip to Italy was purely for pleasure, and his prowess at the piano proved an effective means to make friends. In this setting, he created “Songs without Words” to be performed in informal musical gatherings. The first book was composed 1830–32, although the

idea of incorporating songlike elements into instrumental music was first conceived in 1828;\textsuperscript{14} it was so popular that he eventually composed seven more books of “Songs without Words.” Additional composition projects during this time include Symphony No. 5, “Reformation”; String quartet no.1 in E-flat major, Op. 12; a piano concerto; the *Hebrides Overture*; a smattering of works for piano, organ, or other instruments; *The First Walpurgis Night*, Op. 60; and several vocal pieces, including the *12 Songs*, Op. 9.

*Life after 1832.* While on a journey to London in 1832, Mendelssohn received word of Zelter’s death. Upon his return to Berlin, he was denied the opportunity to be Zelter’s replacement at the Singakademie. Feeling thus rejected in Berlin, Mendelssohn went to Düsseldorf to conduct the Lower Rhine Music Festival, where he met such success that the city immediately placed him under a two-year contract.

In 1835, Mendelssohn accepted a position as conductor of the Leipzig Gewandhaus orchestra. (While serving this position in Leipzig, he met his future wife, Cécile Charlotte Sophia Jeanrenaud.) As the conductor, he elevated musical standards in the city by judiciously planning programs and by bringing in famous performers for specific concerts.\textsuperscript{15} During his time in Leipzig (where he composed the Fugue in D Major, Op. 35/1) he, in the words of a nineteenth-century biographer, “cultivated a relish for the historical development of music...and summoned the mighty spirits of the past to the help and delight of the present age.”\textsuperscript{16} One facet of his “relish for historical development of music” is seen in the fugues of this time, which more directly

\textsuperscript{14} Hans Tischler and Louise H. Tischler, “Mendelssohn’s ‘Songs without Words,’” *The Musical Quarterly* 33 (1947), 3. This article also contains information about how a “Songs without Words”-style penetrated various genres of Mendelssohn’s instrumental music in subsequent compositions.


reflect Baroque ideals than the fugues of the 1820s. From 1832 to his death in 1947, Mendelssohn composed not only five of the Op. 35 fugues, but also three sacred oratorios, *St. Paul, Elijah*, and *Christus*; seven books of Songs without Words; Symphonies No. 4 “Italian,” No. 2 “Lobgesang” (“Song of Praise”), and No. 3 “Scottish”; and other works.

The tripartite segmentation of Mendelssohn’s life presented in this section is convenient to this study because it considers his career when he composed his early fugues, the time when he composed no piano fugues, and his return to fugal compositions for the piano. It also coincides with the stages of his career as delineated by his nineteenth-century biographer W.A. Lampadius: childhood, travel experiences, and, finally, a time to prove his musical maturity. Mendelssohn’s music was a product of his own personal experiences and influences, and their interaction with the cultural trends of Romanticism. It is to the latter that I now turn.

2. *Romanticism*

*General remarks.* The Romantic movement in music is generally considered to consist of music composed after Viennese Classicism and before “modern” music. Chronological borders are difficult to identify, however, because scholars disagree on when Viennese Classicism ends and when “modern” composition begins. Because Mendelssohn lived and worked towards the beginning of the nineteenth century, this section will focus on some ideas about the *beginning* of Romanticism—i.e., the end of Viennese Classicism—particularly as summarized by Carl Dahlhaus in his tome on nineteenth-century music.

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17 Ibid, 32–33.
19 Ibid, 1–2. The following paragraph draws on information from these pages.
Though some scholars, such as Georg Knepler, date the beginning of Romanticism in music as early as the French Revolution in 1789, and many recognize the preeminence of Romanticism coinciding with literary Romanticism in the second decade of the nineteenth century, other scholars, such as Thrasybulos Georgiades and Friedrich Blume, place the date as late as 1830. In this case, Viennese Classicism encompasses all of Beethoven’s and Schubert’s works, and also Mendelssohn’s youthful compositions. Regardless of the dating system used to mark the beginning of Romantic music, Mendelssohn’s style of composition felt the impact of the changing cultural scene of Europe in the early nineteenth century as Romantic values swept through Europe.

Scholars disagree not only on the dating system distinguishing Classicism from Romanticism, but also on the extent to which these styles are codifiably different. Some, such as J. P. Larsen, observe a disjunction between Classical and Romantic styles. Likewise, Mark Evan Bonds understands Romanticism in terms of idealism, as it represented significant changes in the dominant musical style in Germany at the beginning of the nineteenth century. He defines idealism as follows:

> In the broadest terms, idealism gives priority to spirit over matter. Without necessarily rejecting the phenomenal world, it posits a higher form of reality in a spiritual world beyond: objects in the phenomenal world—including works of art—are understood as reflections of noncorporeal ideals. From an aesthetic standpoint, idealism holds that art and the external world are consonant with one another not because art imitates that world, but because both reflect a common, higher ideal.

This concept of idealism is particularly relevant to abstract instrumental works, such as the fugue, because of their problematic relationship to the natural world. Bonds emphasizes the

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distinguishing features of Romantic idealism as juxtaposed against the backdrop of the eighteenth-century mimetic notion that music’s emotional power arises from the imitation of nature, a transformation recorded in the writings of E. T. A. Hoffmann, Friedrich Schlegel, Jean Paul, and others. Thus, Bonds observes a difference between Classicism and Romanticism based on the orientation of music as a means of expression: in the eighteenth century, the aesthetic of mimesis called for music as an expression of observable phenomena; whereas in the nineteenth century, idealism promoted music as an expression of the intangible. Mendelssohn’s fugues present conflicting values concerning idealism: on the one hand, they emphasize the impenetrable notions and passions in the spirit of the Romantic musician, but on the other, the fugues, especially from the 1830s, also represent the tangible facets of fugue found in Bach’s music, such as the persistently contrapuntal texture.

Leon Plantinga appeals to many of the same writers as Bonds when claiming that the distinguishing stylistic traits of “Classical” and “Romantic” music are blurred by similarities and overlapping characteristics of these styles. He observes that certain characteristics of the Classical style—regular meter, diatonically-oriented harmony, slow harmonic rhythm, and a mostly homophonic texture—remained largely intact through much of the nineteenth century. Stylistic blending at the turn of the century has long been observed; most great classical composers demonstrated some aspects of Romanticism as they displayed their own perception of beauty. This overlapping of stylistic features reflects Romanticism not as a reaction against Classicism or an attempt to evade tradition, but as an environment in which to define and promote Classicism and to continue it in new ways. Because nineteenth-century Romantics were

22 Ibid, 387.
enamored by historicism, inspiration for their musical imagination was provided by music of the past, including the “Classical” music that was composed in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Like Classical composers, Romantic composers recognized standard forms and harmonic structures; unlike Classical composers, however, nineteenth-century composers approached these structures not as expressive stimuli, but as barriers to overcome. This model of the transition to Romanticism fits Mendelssohn’s fugues, where the fugue was treated as a structure within which the composer could freely express himself.

The nature of expressive stimuli in Romantic music is yet another contention among scholars. One view maintains that instrumental music imitated vocal music, especially in its character of melody and texture. (Mendelssohn’s fugues Op. 35/4 and Op. 35/2—both from the 1830s—exemplify vocally-oriented instrumental music in their singable, lyrical subjects.) To this end, Dahlhaus describes “the nineteenth-century tendency to view instrumental works as vocal music by supplying them with an imaginary text.” He claims that text and music were inseparable in the early nineteenth century, but absolute music became increasingly recognized as a legitimate form of musical expression through the course of the century. On the other hand, Bonds argues that purely instrumental music became a medium of high musical art as an aspect of the significant style changes taking place in the early nineteenth century. Instrumental music, which had previously been considered a limited art form due to its abstractness, became advantageous to composers who sought expression beyond the limits of texted music. This was especially true in Germany, where the prevailing sense of musical nationalism dissented against

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26 Ibid, 28.
27 Ibid, 5.
28 Ibid, 6.
29 Bonds 1997, 387.
the Italian style that pervaded German music through the eighteenth century. Mendelssohn found a happy medium balancing the various views of instrumental music: he exploited the expressive capabilities of untexted instrumental music that contained song-like characteristics (namely, in the “Songs without Words”), through which he developed a compositional approach that affected all his subsequent instrumental genres. (The “Songs without Words”-style is particularly noticeable in the preludes to the Op. 35 fugues.)

*Social influences.* Mendelssohn’s career is situated squarely in the Romanticism of Germanic culture of the early nineteenth century. Beginning in the late eighteenth century and continuing into the nineteenth century, Europe witnessed several socio-political changes that influenced popular axiology of the arts. These changes in the social climate centered around the rise of the middle class and the increasing interest and availability of music among the middle classes, which coincided with a deteriorating patronage system in the arts.

In the late eighteenth century, social power transferred from the nobility to a broader spectrum of the population. Many factors contributed to this shift of power. Formerly, wealth was calculated by ownership of land, but by the nineteenth century, wealth included a variety of possessions. This allowed for a somewhat more even distribution of resources in Europe. With the transfer of power in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the patronage system, which had long supported the arts, weakened. Ironically, opera, the most expensive of musical art forms, set a precedent in eschewing patronage. This started in Italy in the seventeenth century when public opera houses opened, allowing the middle class to access professional

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31 See Tischler 1947.
32 Stanley 2004, 156. Further discussion of the relationship between these preludes and “Songs without Words” will be left for another author.
performances. In Germany, public concerts originated in amateur *collegia musica* as early as the seventeenth century. These *collegia* eventually included some professional musicians.\(^{33}\)

Through public concerts, music became part of the culture of the middle class. Public concerts, however, were not the only means of disseminating music across a widespread segment of the population. Printed music became more widely available to amateurs as early as 1765. Additionally, music periodicals were introduced—the first being *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*,\(^{34}\) which began in 1798. Most of these periodicals were issued by music publishers who wanted to lure amateurs to buy their music.\(^{35}\) They provided a medium for discourse and commentary on music; indeed, Robert Schumann provided commentary in his own *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* (founded by Schumann in 1834) on Mendelssohn’s Op. 35 preludes and fugues.\(^{36}\)

*General stylistic attributes.* Despite his reputation for Classically-oriented music,\(^{37}\) as a composer of the early nineteenth century, Mendelssohn was rooted in the aesthetic values of Romanticism.\(^{38}\) As a style of music, Romanticism often combines an affinity for music of the past with the dissolution of traditional form; and it is expressive, contending that instrumental music is capable of transcending the emotional-expressive capacities of verbal language.\(^{39}\) “Romantic” is a term that has been applied to music since the beginning of the nineteenth

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\(^{33}\) Plantinga 1984, 1–7.
\(^{34}\) Ibid, 10.
\(^{35}\) Ibid, 10.
\(^{36}\) Schumann 1946, 214–16. For additional information on the original publication of the material in this book, see the “Foreword,” 25–26.
\(^{38}\) An interesting collection highlighting the duality of romanticist and historicist influences is the Seven Character Pieces, Op. 7. Of these, Todd describes #1 as modeled after Bach, #3 as in the style of Handel, #5 in the style of Beethoven, #2 and #4 as romantic etudes, and he does not comment on #6. See Todd 2001, 591.
\(^{39}\) Dahlhaus 1989, 15–18.
century—by authors such as W. H. Wackenroder (1773–98), E. T. A. Hoffman (1776–1822), and G. W. F. Hegel (1770–1831)—to mean “imaginative” and “modern.” Rivals of Romanticism, however, used the term derogatively to mean absurdity and chaos. Adherents to both claims on the label “Romanticism” valued originality of texture, color, and harmonic phenomena. In addition to the varieties of colors and moods, one stylistic trend of Romanticism is a preference for simple texture and structure, a reflection of the stylistic continuity with Classicism. Mendelssohn’s penchant for writing counterpoint at every opportunity was balanced by the Romantic tendency toward simplicity. However, contrapuntal genres such as the fugue tend toward complexity of both texture and structure. The piano fugues of Mendelssohn are no exception. Fugues, like many other genres of Romantic music were generally characterized by monothematicism. The monothematicism of Romanticism, however, often presents lyrical lines, which are not easily integrated into a fugal texture. Despite monothematicism, Romantic music is rooted in contrast and the expressive capabilities thereof.

Historicism and its role in the Romantic movement. Romantic aesthetic values are represented by a continuum stretching from the forward-looking originality discussed above to the intense advocacy of musical styles of the past. In the nineteenth century, for the first time in the history of modern music, musicians and audiences developed a keen appreciation for—and reverence of—music of past generations. The English commentator Henry C. Lunn, writing in 1874, expressed this reverence when he wrote, “The works of genius may slumber, but can never

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40 Plantinga 1984, 20–21.
42 Ibid, 175–77.
die; and the spirit of revival, so characteristic of the present day, should be helped on by all who have the true interest of music at heart.**

As summarized by James Garratt, factors contributing to the rise of historicism include:

1) a desire to restore to modern society something that has been lost, 2) a desire to oppose modern trends by advocating the integration of past and present, and 3) a desire to confront contemporary aesthetic values and affirm the legitimacy and authenticity of a plurality of styles. As a result, proponents of historicism lifted up examples from the past as models for the present. Historicism is seen through the continuing influence of composers like Beethoven, and through the resurgence of Renaissance music (especially the Palestrina Revival), and of Baroque music (especially the Bach Revival). In Germany, Bach was lifted up as the epitome of the German musical heritage, a consequence of the rise in nationalism. As a result, the Bach Revival became the most significant facet of the historicist movement in Germany in the nineteenth century.

Though Mendelssohn’s famous 1829 performance of the St. Matthew Passion is often cited as providing the primary stimulation for the Bach Revival, other signs of this revival had been in effect already for many years. Despite the prevalent notion that J. S. Bach’s music was hardly known and was performed only occasionally at the Thomasschule in Leipzig prior to 1800, certain advocates of Bach (notably Kirnberger, Marpurg, Fasch, Zelter, and Bach’s son C.P.E. Bach) kept his music alive in Germany in the late eighteenth century. Donald Mintz has summarized the general attitude toward Bach in the eighteenth century: “Bach at this time is

** Garratt 2004, 56.
viewed as a didactic composer, the master of counterpoint whose music should be studied rather than emulated or loved.\footnote{Mintz 1954, 202.} In contrast, by 1829 (and resulting partly from the performances of the *Passion*), perception had transformed to a “religious view of Bach with the church works standing not on the periphery of his creativity but in the very center of his entire musical personality.”\footnote{Ibid, 208.} The Revival was unleashed by the publication of the *Well-Tempered Clavier* in 1801, and J.N. Forkel’s biography of Bach, which appeared two years later. In addition to Forkel, noteworthy proponents of Bach’s music in the early nineteenth century, including Friedrich Rochlitz, who was the founding editor of the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*,\footnote{Konrad Wolff, foreword to *On Music and Musicians*, by Robert Schumann (New York: Pantheon Books, Inc., 1946), 19.} and Carl Friedrich Zelter, advocated Bach’s music through both performance and written works.\footnote{Tan 1998, 10.} Thus, Mendelssohn’s performance of the *Passion* did not initiate a new movement as much as it established a new focus within the revival. The performance kindled interest in Bach’s vocal works, as opposed to just instrumental.\footnote{Blume 1954, 294–95.}

Susanna Grossman-Vendrey has established that Mendelssohn’s interest in music of the past (including Bach’s fugues) is deeply rooted in his training with Zelter and other experiences of his childhood and youth, including familial environment, the Berlin Singakademie, and international travels.\footnote{Susanna Großman-Vendrey, *Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy und die Musik der Vergangenheit* (Regensburg: Gustav Bosse Verlag, 1969), 13.} For Mendelssohn, the role of historicism was manifest through both the Bach revival and “Neo-classicism” (i.e., music of the Viennese masters that never went out of favor). Of these historicist mannerisms, Leon Botstein claims they “guided [Mendelssohn]
throughout his life, often in conjunction with the sensibilities of Romanticism.”\textsuperscript{53} Historicism influenced Mendelssohn to compose oratorios, which, like Handel’s oratorios of one hundred years earlier, were extremely popular in England;\textsuperscript{54} and also in his penchant for contrapuntal music, especially as manifest in his fugues. Though Mendelssohn’s fugues of the 1820s demonstrate stylistic boldness generally associated with Romanticism, his fugues of the 1830s become increasingly subtle in their reflection of Romantic values.

3. A Brief history of the fugue and its manifestations in the nineteenth century

In order to better understand Mendelssohn’s compositional approach to the fugue, we must briefly canvass the history of fugue as a compositional process, as well as the role of fugue in the early nineteenth century. Fugue remained a persistent and crucial element in the development of Western music from the fifteenth to twentieth centuries because it involves a melodic line and a clearly delineated tonal system.\textsuperscript{55} How it portrays these has varied in different musical eras. In the early sixteenth century, the \textit{fuga sciolta} was primarily a technique of sacred vocal composition. In this style, the text guided many components of the music, including the usage of cadences and rests. Remnants of this style are found in later instrumental fugues where rests become a vital component in emphasizing the subject, which usually enters after a period of rest. Though cadences in the early sixteenth century were often associated with the subject, one common characteristic of instrumental fugues is the overlapping of the subject with an otherwise strong cadence.


\textsuperscript{54} Krummacher 1992, 82.

The fugue, due to its process of restating a subject (at whatever tonal level), has the potential to be monothematic. However, instrumental fugues of the seventeenth century tended towards polythematicism. In these compositions, each theme was presented in turn through an exposition, possibly followed by a brief development of the subject. Indeed, most polythematic fugues of this period consist of a series of short monothematic fugues. (This contrasts Mendelssohn’s polythematic G-minor fugue [1824], in which the two subjects are initially presented as short monothematic fugues, and then combined in a double fugue.)

In the eighteenth century, contrapuntal writing, including the fugue, was primarily influenced by Fux’s “neo-Palestrina” style. Fux encouraged contrapuntists to return to the tonic briefly in the midst of non-tonic middle entries. The concept of fugue as a discussion among several people (that is, voices) must have been widespread during the late Baroque and is remarkably close to the concept of strict contrapuntal writing attributed to J. S. Bach by his first biographer, Johann Nikolaus Forkel (1749–1818).

In the early eighteenth century, fugue could be a closed form, existing outside the context of a larger work. A specific form for fugue was not prescribed until the second quarter of the nineteenth century, however, when the three-part school fugue became standard in the conservatory curriculum. This school fugue includes an exposition, episodes between middle entries, and a final section including stretto. Regular fugues exhibit all of the formal elements of the school fugue and may be placed in one of two categories: the “strict” or “free” fugue. In strict fugues, all the material is derived from the subject. By contrast, free fugues have all the elements of a regular fugue, but incorporate contrapuntal activity not derived from the subject. Irregular

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56 Ibid, 263.
58 In Germany, this sectionalized three-part form was promoted by Marx and Albrechtsberger, among others. French and Italian conservatories also recognized this form, derived from the work of Padre Martini and codified by Reicha and Colet. See Horsley 1966, 264–71.
fugues eliminate or severely alter some element of the school-fugue prototype. Mendelssohn composed fugues in all of these categories.

After the age of the high-Baroque fugue, fugal composition declined. The fugue was reinvigorated through the masters of the Viennese School, culminating in the late works of Beethoven.⁵⁹ Thus, in the shadow of Beethoven, fugue entered into composition practice of the nineteenth century. Many nineteenth-century composers studied Bach’s *Well-Tempered Clavier*, which was published for the first time in 1801 (simultaneously by three different publishers), and many wrote fugues in an attempt to imitate Bach.⁶⁰ Despite pedantic emphases stressing a rigidity seemingly contrary to Romantic aesthetic values, many Romantic composers embraced the fugue as a structure within which they could freely explore new colors and sounds.

Mendelssohn’s piano fugues reflect common aesthetic values in the context of the nineteenth century. How these various Romantic values coalesce into a nineteenth-century aesthetic axiology of fugue has been discussed and summarized by Eun Young Lee:⁶¹ Romantic fugues often had an exposition similar to a Baroque fugue—usually without a countersubject to allow greater harmonic flexibility of the subject. Though some subjects recall those of the Baroque, many others reflect Romantic values such as lyricism, chromaticism, and a wide palette of moods. Through the course of a fugue, the texture typically becomes increasingly homophonic and the counterpoint leads to distant keys. Voice-leading was often inconsistent with Baroque standards: there were often a variable number of voices, and additional contrapuntal lines or unresolved lines were frequent components of Romantic fugues. Voice independence was commonly sacrificed in favor of long lines and large ranges. This outline of general traits of the

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⁵⁹ Kurt Frederick has explored this decline and revival of the fugue in his dissertation, “Fugal Writing from 1750 to 1827” (Ph.D. diss., University of Rochester, 1957).
⁶¹ Ibid, 190–92.
nineteenth-century fugue provides a context in which to provide an overview of Mendelssohn’s piano fugues.

4. Summary

In the eighteenth century, Jean-Philippe Rameau defined fugue as “an adornment of music governed by good taste alone.”62 The “taste” by which Mendelssohn “adorned” his fugues was filtered through the Romantic trends of the early nineteenth century and his own musical education, which was especially influenced by the strict and traditional training provided by Zelter. His training, alongside the Romantic inclination toward historicism, cultivated within Mendelssohn a deep-rooted respect and admiration for the music of J.S. Bach. This, in turn, directed him towards a penchant for contrapuntal writing, manifest in nearly all of his compositions, but especially in the fugues, which were infused with both Baroque and Romantic characteristics.

Romantic aesthetic values represented a continuum stretching from a passionate desire for originality to an intense appreciation for music of the past. Through his connection to the Berlin Singakademie and familial influences, Mendelssohn was steeped in the latter-named end of this spectrum. However, his fugues are inundated with originality, what Robert Schumann calls “those little touches peculiar to Mendelssohn, which identify him among a hundred other composers.”63

The remainder of this thesis seeks to identify “those peculiar touches” as portrayed in Mendelssohn’s fugues, and to track the development of these “touches” through the course of his

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fugal compositions. To this end, the next chapter will examine many fugues in order to discern their stylistic traits. This will be followed by detailed analyses of four fugues according to the roles of the subject, harmony, and texture. Through this investigation, I will demonstrate that Mendelssohn’s approach to contrapuntal composition transformed from the experimental tendencies of his teenage years to a synthesis of Baroque and Romantic ideals.
CHAPTER II—AN OVERVIEW OF FELIX MENDELSSOHN’S FUGUES

According to the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Felix Mendelssohn composed seventeen piano fugues. The five earliest (including two from 1820, three possibly dating from 1822) exist only in manuscript form at the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin Preussischer Kulturbesitz; this library also holds another unpublished Fugue in C# Minor, dated 5 Jan. 1826. Two fugues have been published in the collection *Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy: Early Works for Piano* (edited by R. Larry Todd): the Fugue in G Minor (11 Sept. 1824), and the Fugue in E-flat Major (11 Sept. 1826). 1827 witnessed the composition of two fugues in E minor; one eventually became the first fugue of the Six Preludes and Fugues, Op. 35 (first published in 1837), and the other has been published without opus number. To distinguish between these two E minor fugues, the one will be referred to as Op. 35/1, and the other as the Fugue in E Minor (1827). The remainder of the Op. 35 fugues were composed in the 1830s: no. 2 in D major (c. 11 Jan. 1835), no. 3 in B minor (21 Dec. 1832), no. 4 in A-flat major (6 Jan. 1835), no. 5 in F minor (3 Dec. 1834), and no. 6 in B-flat major (27 Nov 1836). Finally, the list includes two undated fugues: in E-flat major (Andante) and in E minor; the former is at the Bodleian Library in Oxford, England, and the latter of these is at the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin Preussischer Kulturbesitz. Although not listed as fugues in the taxonomy of *New Grove* solo piano works, two additional piano fugues by Mendelssohn are found in his Seven Character Pieces, Op. 7: no. 3, and no. 5, the latter headed “Fuga” (published 1827).

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64 Published at Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.
Of the nineteen fugues listed above, twelve were composed by the end of 1827, five were composed between 1832–36, and two are of unknown dates of composition. The following commentary has necessarily been restricted to the eleven that have been published: the Fugues in G Minor (1824); E-flat major (1826); E minor (1827); the six fugues of Op. 35; and the two fugues found among the Seven Character Pieces, Op. 7. To some degree, each of these matches Lee’s description of the romantic piano fugue discussed in Chapter I. All clearly present an exposition in four voices.

This chapter presents an overview of the musical attributes of Mendelssohn’s published piano fugues. This discussion will focus first on traits of subjects of these fugues, followed by issues of texture, and then form. Harmony (which will be the primary topic of Chapter IV) will be addressed as it relates to particular topics within each of these sections. The goal of this discussion, which briefly addresses musical characteristics of a broad spectrum of Mendelssohn’s fugues, is to provide the reader with an analytical context for understanding the more-detailed subsequent chapters, and to introduce terms that will be employed further throughout this thesis.

1. Subjects

In this section, I will describe attributes of Mendelssohn’s fugal subjects as represented in several of the published fugues. These subjects will be examined for how they establish the key of the fugue, as well as for the melodic and rhythmic nature of their thematic ideas. The originality of Mendelssohn’s subjects is observed particularly through the sometimes ambiguous harmonic implications, unusual leaps, and ambiguity concerning the conclusion of the subjects.
Before launching this discussion, some general information about subjects would be useful. The traditional purpose of the subject was to reveal the key of the fugue. Patterns of establishing tonality had their basis in older musical traditions in which Mendelssohn was well-versed—both through his own musical culture and through his training. In sixteenth-century fugues, tonality was established foremost through the starting note—usually 1 or 5. Later, 3 was considered an acceptable starting note. Additionally, tonality was often reinforced through emphasis of the 4th, 5th, or complete triad.

Most of Mendelssohn’s subjects announce the key of the fugue by one or more of the aforementioned means. However, since Mendelssohn was not a Baroque composer, many of his subjects present exceptions to the earlier standards of establishing key. For instance, though the Fugue in B-flat Major, Op. 35/6 unequivocally presents B-flat major at the opening by emphasizing the tonic triad (see Example 2.1a), it becomes tonally ambiguous toward the end. The subject starts by presenting the tonic triad, embellished by passing and neighbor notes. The second part of the subject is more jaunty, and introduces chromatically variable forms of 3 and 4 in a compound melody. The two distinct parts of this subject identify it as an andamento-type, as defined by the renowned conservative pedagogue Giovannin Battista (Padre) Martini. A voice-
leading reduction of this subject (Example 2.1b) reveals the relationship between all parts of this subject and the tonic triad.

Example 2.1a: Op. 35 #6 subject

Example 2.1b: Op. 35 #6 reduction of subject

Although the B-flat subject and other subjects not discussed here (most notably the subject of the Fugue in E-flat Major[1826]) have some mildly unusual features relating to chromatic inflection and large melodic leaps, these features are not as shocking as the dissonant leaps found in the subject of the Fugue in E Minor (1827) (Example 2.2a). This subject, which is first presented in the alto voice, is immediately marked as non-baroque by the prominent major-seventh interval separating the first two notes. The disjunct nature of this subject is brought out even more in the tonal answer where the second interval, originally an octave leap, is expanded to become a minor ninth (Example 2.2b). The tonality of this subject is not clearly displayed until its conclusion (Example 2.2a), where the key-defining tritone presents the tonality of E minor.

Example 2.2a: E minor (1827) subject

Example 2.2b: E minor (1827) subject
Mendelssohn provides an ambiguous ending to the subject through the use of a suspension in the alto voice where the answer enters in m. 5. Theorists generally did not provide many guidelines concerning the end of the subject until the early eighteenth century, when Jean-Philippe Rameau commented that subjects should end on 1, 5, or 3 and on a strong beat. The subject of this E-minor fugue, however, ends with a suspension-like figure on a strong beat that is appropriately resolved on the weak beat. Thus, the subject either ends on an unresolved 4, or it concludes on a weak beat at the resolution of the suspension. Either way, it breaks out of the mold of the late-Baroque fugal model as defined by Rameau. A third possibility for defining the end of the subject, one which fits Rameau’s suggestions, is that the subject overlaps with the answer until the third beat of m.5. With this hearing, the subject concludes on a strong beat (beat three) after a descent to tonic. The multitudinous interpretations of the conclusion of the subject suggest that Mendelssohn was eschewing Baroque values in this fugue from the 1820s.

The end of the subject becomes increasingly ambiguous as it is changed throughout the fugue—a characteristic common to many of Mendelssohn’s fugues. The third entrance in the exposition retains the suspension, but does not continue the descent to tonic. The bass entrance, which is the final voice presented in the exposition, does not even preserve the suspension in its

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71 Jean-Philippe Rameau, Treatise on Harmony, as reported in Horsley, 133. Rameau’s description of the end of a fugal subject is consistent with many of Bach’s fuge subjects. Table 2 of William Renwick’s article “Structural Patterns in Fugue Subjects and Fugal Expositions,” (in Music Theory Spectrum 13 (1991): 198) categorizes the fugues of Bach’s Das wohltempierte Clavier according to six “linear progressions,” each of which ends on a degree of the tonic triad. Only six fugues in Das wohltempierte Clavier do not fit into one of the paradigms, thus reflecting the validity of Rameau’s statement.

72 Given that a 5-6 bass suspension is not conventional (as is the 2-3 suspension, for example), the initial placement of this figure in the lower voice (the A–G shown at the end of Example 2.4) could indicate a figure belonging to a iv→i progression. Subsequent statements of the subject, however, reveal that Mendelssohn interpreted this figure as a suspension.
entrance (mm. 13–16). Subsequent middle entries also alter the suspension ending. Example 2.3 shows a complete soprano entry in mm. 21–25 that concludes with a direct resolution of the tritone, as opposed to a resolution displaced by the suspension. The whole notes in the bass towards the end of the example are the head of a false entry. The entry, mm. 49–51 (Example 2.4), ends a whole measure early by abruptly shifting away from what is expected to be its fourth measure. Though this entry does not explicitly state the tritone, as in earlier entries, Mendelssohn has by this time conditioned the listener to expect a tritone at this point in the subject.

Furthermore, the bass voice of m. 53 presents a resolution consistent with the expected resolution of the expected tritone. The elimination of the last measure of the subject is continued in the entries of mm. 60, 76, 99, and 112. The subject is complete, however, in the entries of mm. 102, and 108. The entry at m. 73 (Example 2.5) is also complete, though it is traceable only by looking at all the voices.
In Baroque fugues, shortened entries such as described here are often labeled “false entries.” In these cases, which usually occur toward the end of a fugue, the shortened entry participates either in a heightened sense of melodic urgency, leading to a final entry, or in sequential passages functioning within an episode. The shortened entries of the E-Minor Fugue (1827) are worthy of being called “entries” because, with few exceptions, all middle entries take an abbreviated form. The entries are not sequential and they lead to a final entry only as much as any middle entries participate in intensification to a climactic return of the subject in the original tonic key.

As demonstrated by the aforementioned subjects and manipulations thereof, Mendelssohn was concerned with the Romantic ideal of originality. In the final example in this section, the ingenuity of the fugue lies in the facility with which Mendelssohn manipulates the subject material (rather than in the subject per se). The “Fuga” movement of the Seven Character Pieces (Op. 7/5), labeled “Ernst und mit steigender Lebhaftigkeit” (“serious and with increasing liveliness”), begins simply: with a four-measure subject arpeggiating the tonic triad and then stepping down from \( \hat{6} \) to \( \hat{3} \) (Example 2.6). There is nothing unusual about the four-voice exposition. Through the course of this fugue, Mendelssohn presents the subject in augmentation and diminution, and also each proportional rhythmic value of the subject in inversion. As per the subtitle of the movement, the fugue has increasing liveliness throughout, produced by stretto. Mendelssohn’s goal seems to be to keep the fugue going as long as he can possibly fashion new combinations of subject material in different contexts. This fugue, with its endless possibilities

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of subject presentation, earned Mendelssohn a compliment in the form of an anonymous review, which asserted that the fugue “display[ed] publicly how diligently he has studied, how he has mastered his material through counterpoint.”

75 (One can imagine the fifteen-year-old composer gloating over having composed a 254-measure fugue using all the tricks-of-the-trade!)

The subjects are integral components of fugal procedure. Countersubjects, however, are defined by their consistent relationship to the subject; although they can have a significant function in the interplay of contrapuntal events of a fugue, they do not necessarily have a defining role in the fugue itself. Accordingly, I will offer only a few comments here. In Mendelssohn’s piano fugues, countersubjects are not uncommon in the expositions: recurring counter-melodies appear in the Fugues in E-flat major (1826); E Minor, Op. 35/1; and B-flat Major, Op. 35/6. Two countersubjects arise in the fugues in A-flat major, Op. 35/4; B minor, Op. 35/3; and Seven Character Pieces, Op. 7/3. In most cases, though the countersubject is consistent through the exposition, its presence is increasingly rare throughout the remainder of the fugue. The Fugues in G Minor (1824); E Minor (1827); and D Major, Op. 35/2 have a counter-melody juxtaposed against the answer that recurs only once in the exposition. The Fugue in F Minor Op. 35/5 and the “Fuga” Op. 7/5 have no countersubject.

The preceding discussion provided an overview of Mendelssohn’s fugal subjects from a broad spectrum of his piano fugues. The attributes of the subjects discussed here provide a context for the discussion of Chapter III, which will delve deeply into the subjects of the Fugues in G minor (1824), E minor Op. 35/1, B minor Op. 35/3, and D major Op. 35/2. Chapter III will

conclude by comparing these subjects and considering how they inform an understanding of Mendelssohn’s changing style as manifest in his piano fugues.

2. Texture

All of Mendelssohn’s published fugues present expositions in four voices. In the remainder of each fugue, however, there is much variation of this basic framework. Mendelssohn frequently thickens the texture via octave doubling and adding voices. The texture is also occasionally varied by voices exchanging position within the texture. All of these techniques of varying texture contribute to the originality of these fugues in comparison to Baroque models.

One of Mendelssohn’s most-frequently utilized techniques for varying texture is octave doubling. This is employed most often in the bass, although occasionally it occurs in voices played by the right hand, as in the Fugue in G Minor (1824), m. 68. The technique of doubling at the octave is found in most of Mendelssohn’s piano fugues. Its first appearance often emphasizes a middle entry of the subject (such as in mm. 49–52 of the Fugue in E minor (1827)) or to highlight other melodic lines (such as in the walking-bass-style accompaniment in mm. 73–78 (Example 2.5) of the same fugue). Another prime example of this is in the “Fuga,” Op. 7/5, where the augmented form of the subject is introduced in m. 95, doubled at the octave. In other cases, Mendelssohn selects only a short motive for octave doubling (e.g., mm. 79–80 of the Fugue in E-flat Major (1826)).

Sometimes, the octave doubling reinforces a particular voice within the contrapuntal texture. An example of this occurs in the Fugue in B-flat Major Op. 35/6. In this example, though the bass line presents a compound melody alternating between quarter notes and a dotted-eighth rhythm, the quarter-note line is reinforced through Mendelssohn’s conspicuous use of
octaves. Example 2.7a outlines the octave-reinforced bass line along with the harmonies supported by this line. (Example 2.7b shows the score that Example 2.7a analyzes.) The harmonic goal of this section is to get from G minor to B-flat major. Mendelssohn starts by moving from a G minor to a C minor triad; they are connected with a diminished-seventh chord that shares two common tones with each triad. In m. 72, the bass passes through a 4/2 chord on its way to A major, a chromatic mediant relation to C. Then the chromatically descending bass (recognizable in the dense texture by the octave doubling) supports an alternation of fully-diminished seventh chord and Major-minor-seventh chord in third inversion (see Example 2.7a). In this passage, the octave doubling collaborates with the harmonic progression to achieve musical tension. Mendelssohn releases the tension of this passage through a retreat from the chromaticism, corresponding with a bass descent to B-flat, and the octave doubling gives way to a less-intense texture.
Because all of the fugues under scrutiny were composed for piano, the texture frequently eschews the voice-structure presented in the exposition.\textsuperscript{76} This is especially noticeable when Mendelssohn adds an additional voice to the texture. Most instances of the added fifth voice are very brief, such as in mm. 84–85 in the Fugue in F Minor, Op. 35/5 (see Example 2.8). On occasion, however, the fifth voice is present for longer periods, such as in Seven Character Pieces Op.7/3 (Example 2.9), in which the texture is further thickened by the octave doubling of the bass. In both these examples, the added voice does not create a new contrapuntal line, but instead is part of a layered texture: in the Fugue in F Minor, Mendelssohn layers two distinct rhythmic patterns (dotted quarters against sixteenths), whereas the fugue of Op. 7/3 employs ...

\textsuperscript{76} Baroque instrumental fugues were strongly influenced by earlier vocal polyphonic genres and therefore typically retained the voice structure of the exposition throughout the fugue until the end, where an extra voice was sometimes briefly added to intensify the climax.
three layers of activity (the half-note bass line, the “middle” harmonic layer, and the melody). The thick texture of the five-voice effect also characterizes parts of the E-Minor fugue (1827). Here, added voices are employed as in the previous examples, and the texture is further intensified by chords with as many notes as seven (mm. 63–64, 69–70) or eight (mm. 131–32). Chordal textures like this contrast with the contrapuntal texture of the fugue.

Mendelssohn further adapts the voice structure when voices exchange position within the texture. The clearest example of this is in the E-minor fugue Op. 35/1, mm. 58–60 (Example 2.10). This passage starts with rests, indicating that the alto and bass voices are silent while the soprano and tenor provide the musical momentum. In the second measure of the example, the scalar sixteenth-note line (previously in the soprano) becomes the middle voice of the three-voice texture as the head of the subject enters in the soprano. Meanwhile, the sixteenth-note line is reinterpreted as a tenor line in m. 60 when another voice enters between the established
sixteenth-note line and the new top voice.

Whereas many of Bach’s fugues reduce the number of voices in the episodes, Mendelssohn often maintains or even increases the number of voices present in these sections. One example of this is the E-flat major fugue (1826) where Mendelssohn regularly maintains four-part counterpoint in the episodes.

Another common method of varying texture (both in entry and episodic sections) is to have a melody-accompaniment style of writing. Passages demonstrating this style typically have one moving voice with homophonic chordal writing in the other voices. This quasi-contrapuntal writing, in which the voices lack rhythmic independence, is used in Op. 35/6, mm. 58–62, and again in mm. 85–89. It is also heard throughout the E-minor fugue (1827) and in other fugues as well. Chordal harmonic support is particularly prominent in Seven Character Pieces, Op. 7/3, where a triad reiterated in several positions accompanies the sixteenth-note line derived from the tail of the subject.

3. Form

Modern theorists tend to regard fugue more as a compositional process than a form, and indeed its components are arguably more fluid than those of (for example) a tripartite dance form. Yet however elusive formal labels may be, form is an aspect of Mendelssohn’s approach to

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Example 2.10: Op. 35/1, mm. 58-60. Voices exchange position within the established structure accel. poco a poco al Allegro con fuoco

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77 Sheldon 1990, 553.
fugal design that should be considered. The ensuing discussion provides a context in which to further consider form in Mendelssohn’s fugues. William Renwick has described formal process in fugue as the product of all the distinctive elements of a fugue as employed in conjunction with the tonal procedure. He claims that “[i]n the end, the form of any given fugue is a unique result of the process of exposition, transformation, contrast and combination, expressed through a tonal plan that supports the ideas in an effective manner.”78 The tonal plan of each of Mendelssohn’s fugues certainly operates in conjunction with the melodic development to produce varied forms.

In the nineteenth century, fugue was generally taught as having a sectionalized three-part form.79 This formal plan, while providing a concise method of teaching certain fugal procedure, rarely reflected actual romantic fugues such as Mendelssohn’s.80 In an effort to draw attention to the continuity of fugue—as opposed to the sectionalized approach of nineteenth-century pedagogues (which is sometimes taught even today)—Gregory Butler has compared fugue to the oration of classical rhetoric.81 He cites seventeenth-century sources (especially by Johann Mattheson (1681–1764) and Friedrich Wilhelm Marpurg (1718–95)) as providing the historical basis for such comparison.

As described by Butler, the seven parts of the oration in standard classical disposition are: 1) *exordium*, which draws the audience into the speech; 2) *narratio*, which introduces subject matters (and is optional); 3) *propositio*, the “formal statement or enunciation of the principal argument(s) at issue; 4) *divisio*, in which the *propositio* is divided into specific points that are discussed in detail; 5) *confirmatio*, in which arguments are supported (some consider the *divisio*

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79 Sheldon 1990, 553; and Horsley 1966, 264.
80 The ternary form fugue is equally uncommon in Baroque composition. One of the few examples of a ternary fugue is Bach’s E minor fugue for organ, BWV 548.
81 Butler 1977.
to be a part of this, instead of a separate part in its own right); 6) *confutatio*, in which “arguments brought against the case by the opposing party are refuted and dismissed”; and 7) *peroratio*, the conclusion. These parts may be grouped into three main sections: the *propositio* (which is prepared by the *exordium* and *narratio*), *confirmatio* (composed of the *divisio*, *confirmatio*, and *confutatio*), and the *peroratio*. Mapping these components onto those of a fugue, the *propositio* corresponds to the fugal exposition, the *confirmatio* corresponds to the episodes and entries (*divisio*=episodes, *confirmatio*=entries, *confutatio*=false entries and stretto, to be discussed in the next paragraph), and the conclusion is represented through the preparation for a final cadence.

Additionally, the term *traductio* (anglicized as “traduction”) generally refers to rhetorical techniques of repetition, particularly repetition by variation. Butler cites Joachim Burmeister (c. 1566–1629) in defining traduction as variation applied to an established musical base. As such, it is applicable to Mendelssohn’s early fugues (particularly those in G minor (1824) and E minor, Op. 35/1, as will be discussed in subsequent chapters). Because the concept of traduction is not developed in modern fugal theory, and because Mendelssohn’s variation of the subject so closely corresponds to the rhetorical usage of the term, traduction will be explored more fully in the next chapter.

Of the aforementioned parts of the oration, the *confutatio* provides the most interesting application to fugue and will be mentioned frequently in the following chapters. There are two distinct aspects of the *confutatio*: 1) the opposition is presented or musically rendered through

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83 The rhetorical role of stretto in fugue has been further explored in Sheldon 1990.
84 Other rhetorical terms applicable to Mendelssohn’s fugues include: *copulatio*—repetition in quick succession, either at the same or different pitch level (as in a sequence); *hypallage*—melodic inversion of the subject; and *apocope*—a shortened statement of the subject (see Butler 1977, 52–59 for further discussion of these terms). Because music theorists already have standard terms synonymous with the rhetorical terms (*copulatio* = sequence or sequential passage; *hypallage* = inversion; and *apocope* = false entry) the usual theoretical terms will be used in this paper.
85 Butler 1977, 62. Butler relates this term particularly to the tonal answer, but its use does not have to be restricted to this type of variation.
harmonic dissonance or melodic fragmentation; and 2) the opposition is refuted, especially by adamantly proclaiming the subject as through use of stretto. From the writings of Bontempi, Butler derives a definition of the *confutatio* that involves musically exploring specific parts of the subject, as in sections commonly called episodes.⁸⁶ Both terms—*confutatio* and episode—imply deviation from subject material. Butler, however, resists the concept of a fugue exposition followed by an alternation of episodes and entries. This labeling system suggests a break in the flow of the subject, whereas in actuality episodes typically further develop components of the subject. Butler prefers the term *confutatio* because it presumes a resolution to the opposition that confirms the unified musical argument known as a fugue.⁸⁷

Daniel Harrison, in his article titled “Rhetoric and Fugue,” takes issue with Butler’s approach to applying rhetoric to fugue. He claims that Butler considers fugue only as a form of what George Kennedy calls “secondary rhetoric”—that is, its delivery and ornament—without considering its “primary rhetoric” (the craft of its invention) using modern analytical tools.⁸⁸ Secondary rhetoric concerns style, whereas primary rhetoric concerns the art of persuasion and the actual text in use. As primary rhetoric, Harrison claims that the “task of the fugue is to persuade the audience that the musical material can make a convincing and successful composition and that the composer has sufficient technique, control, and artistry to create an

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⁸⁶ Ibid, 82.
⁸⁷ Ibid, 99. Butler’s comment about the inappropriateness of the term “episode” is well taken and certainly applies to Mendelssohn’s piano fugues, in which elements of the subject are nearly always present. However, due to the potentially broad application of *confutatio* (as will be explored in the fugues discussed in the following chapters) and the convenience of a commonly defined “episode,” for the remainder of the paper, “episode” will be used to indicate lack of presence of a (more-or-less) complete subject statement. The *confutatio* as it concerns both entries and episodes of Mendelssohn’s fugues will be discussed in ch. 4.

⁸⁸ As discussed in Daniel Harrison, “Rhetoric and Fugue: An Analytical Application,” *Music Theory Spectrum* 12 (1990): 3. One of Harrison’s arguments against Butler’s approach to applying rhetorical principles to fugue is that most of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century authors cited by Butler had only nominal knowledge of the art of rhetoric.
interesting piece of music despite the several obstacles that fugal form puts in the way.\textsuperscript{89} For example, the fugue of Op. 7/5 demonstrates that Mendelssohn indeed had “sufficient technique, control, and artistry to create an interesting piece of music” at a time in his life when he was just beginning to come into his own as a composer. Harrison initiates his discussion by relying on many of the same classical terms as Butler, but Harrison relies on a large-scale perspective of the complete fugue as a demonstration of the persuasive nature of primary rhetoric. That is, although he employs some of the same rhetorical terms as Butler, Harrison rhetorically approaches parts of the fugue only as they relate to the whole. In contrast, Butler thoroughly examines various parts of the fugue that correspond with certain parts of the oration and then fits them together as the whole.\textsuperscript{90}

The persuasive facets of Harrison’s rhetorical approach are compatible with Butler’s emphasis on classical disposition. Through primary rhetoric, the fugal composition is unified as an art of persuasion that has the depth of continuity of the classical oration. In later chapters of this thesis, I will combine elements of Butler’s and Harrison’s rhetorical approaches to fugue, for to focus on just one or the other would be inadequate. If an analyst relies exclusively on the ideals of primary rhetoric, some of Mendelssohn’s fugues (especially the early ones) would be considered unsuccessful, either because the tonal area of the beginning is not confirmed at the end (as will be discussed in Chapter IV) or because traduction of the subject distorts its persuasive potential. On the other hand, merely to focus on the \textit{parts} of rhetorical disposition would fail to account for many aspects of Mendelssohn fugal compositions.

More generally, a rhetorical approach is particularly well-suited to Mendelssohn’s fugues because they defy typical methods of formal segmentation. As discussed earlier, the subjects

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid, 5.
\textsuperscript{90} Fugal composition is often taught as the compilation of its component parts, similar to Butler’s assemblance of musical-rhetorical ingredients. See Schubert and Neidhöfer 2006, 217.
sometimes end in an only somewhat-defined manner that blurs the lines between entries and episodes. An example of Mendelssohn ambiguously delineating the end of the exposition occurs in the G-minor fugue (1824), the details of which will be discussed in Chapter III. Also previously discussed is Mendelssohn’s penchant for cutting short or changing the subject. The inconsistency with which he presents the subject makes it difficult to distinguish between episodic and entry passages of the fugue. Some of these passages blur into one another as the fugue achieves a unified whole, as per the ideals of the rhetorical oration.

4. Summary

Mendelssohn’s fugues represent a broad range of issues relating to his use of the subject, texture, form, and harmony (the last category discussed sporadically under the prior headings, but will be treated in depth in Chapter IV). The subject introduces the melodic and harmonic material yet allows harmonic inflection or melodic leaps uncharacteristic of Baroque fugues. The texture likewise exhibits non-Baroque features, especially in Mendelssohn’s use of octave doubling, the prominence of chordally-conceived passages, and additional voices placed within the texture. Fugal form in many respects may be interpreted in terms of classical rhetoric. Throughout the following chapters, rhetoric will be discussed as applicable to Mendelssohn’s fugues and as a basis for discussing how Mendelssohn’s fugues deviate from a strict adherence to a rhetorical model.

Having presented an overview of many of Mendelssohn’s piano fugues, this study will now turn to a more detailed examination of four specific fugues chronologically representing his fugal output. The next chapter is restricted to exploration of the subjects of these fugues, and
later chapters will consider how the subjects interact harmonically in the context of the complete fugues. Finally, in Chapter V the study will examine issues of texture and voice structure.
CHAPTER III—THE SUBJECT IN FOUR SPECIFIC FUGUES

Of Mendelssohn’s fugues, four have been selected for more detailed study: those in G minor (1824); E minor, Op. 35/1 (1827); B minor, Op. 35/3 (1832); and D major, Op. 35/2 (1835). They were selected because they represent Mendelssohn’s fugal output; respectively, they represent his earliest published fugue, one of the last he composed before his five-year sabbatical from piano-fugue composition,91 the earliest fugue from when he returned to piano-fugue composition, and one of the last piano fugues he composed. This chapter will focus on the subjects of these fugues, seeking to glean how an understanding of them informs the broader study of stylistic traits of Mendelssohn’s piano fugues. Other elements of these particular fugues will be covered in subsequent chapters.

Studying the subjects of the aforementioned fugues demonstrates Mendelssohn’s increasing tendency toward Baroque characteristics of the subjects; for each fugue discussed in this chapter, he employs a more “traditional” use of the subjects. This is seen not only in the manner by which Mendelssohn initially presents the subject as a key-defining tool (key is clearly established by the subjects of the D-major and B-minor fugues, and is more ambiguously presented in the G-minor and E-minor fugues), but also in subsequent entries (the subjects of the later fugues are preserved throughout, though Mendelssohn significantly manipulates some elements of the subjects of the fugues from the 1820s).

The subject presents the material upon which the rest of the fugue is based. It invites the listener into the music by introducing melodic and rhythmic material that will provide the foundation for future musical development. Though the subject itself is a melodic entity, it opens

91 During this time he traveled extensively to England and Italy. See Chapter I for additional information about this in between time.
the door to harmonic and contrapuntal phenomena that can uniquely color the subject and subsequent entries. Accordingly, this chapter will examine not only rhythm and melodic attributes, such as contour and linear progression (a term used by William Renwick to mean an underlying scalar motion connecting elements of a tonic triad\textsuperscript{92}), but also how the subjects are employed in various harmonic and contrapuntal contexts throughout the fugue. After examining individual subjects and their roles in specific fugues, the discussion will turn briefly to a comparison of the subjects, in order to discern aspects of stylistic development within Mendelssohn’s fugal output.

1. The subject and its role throughout the fugue

_Fugue in G minor (1824)._ The Fugue in G minor (1824) has two subjects. The first subject (here referred to as subject A) is the focus of mm. 1–27, the second subject (subject B) dominates mm. 27–66, and the two subjects are combined in mm. 66–138. Subject A (Example 3.1a), which opens the fugue, starts conspicuously in C minor, not the key proclaimed by the typically used title (i.e., “Fugue in G Minor”). C minor is the subdominant of the global key; while it is true that subdominant implications occasionally appear at the opening of subjects in baroque fugues, here the procedure is different. For comparison, consider the subdominant opening of J.S. Bach’s F-major fugue from _Well-Tempered Clavier_ I. Its subject starts on $\hat{5}$ before outlining the subdominant chord, and promptly thereafter it outlines the key-defining tritone. In contrast, Mendelssohn’s subject does not conform to the “official” tonic triad of G minor, but instead arpeggiates a C-minor triad, embellished by passing and neighbor motion.

\textsuperscript{92} William Renwick, “Structural Patterns in Fugue Subjects and Fugal Expositions,” in _Music Theory Spectrum_ 13/2 (1991), 197. Renwick’s study is based on Schenkerian principles.
Furthermore, it strongly asserts the root of C minor, and even presents its leading-tone to confirm its tonic status. That is, rather than offering a subdominant (C-minor) emphasis at the head of a subject that participates in a tonic-based (G-minor) linear progression, the subject actually embodies the tonal form expected of a C-minor subject.

If considered as a subject overlapping with (i.e., extending past) the beginning of the answer, this subject exemplifies a linear progression $\hat{8} \rightarrow \hat{7} \rightarrow \hat{6} \rightarrow \hat{5}$ (in C minor), which William Renwick associates with modulating subjects, based on his study of Bach’s *Well-Tempered Clavier*. Example 3.1b shows an analysis of the linear progression of this subject. Because the answer entrance overlaps with the $\hat{7} \rightarrow \hat{6} \rightarrow \hat{5}$ portion of this linear prototype, it may be useful to adapt this prototype to $\hat{8} \rightarrow \hat{7}$, where $\hat{7}$ (of C minor) instead of $\hat{5}$ functions as the pivot scale-degree to G minor.

Though the exposition consistently presents the subject as in the initial entrance—adjusted to G minor in the real answer—in subsequent entries, Mendelssohn substantially varies the subject through intervallic adjustments. (Example 3.2 shows the original subject followed by the three variations thereof.) The rhetorical term *traduction* may be applied to the intervallic

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93 Ibid, 199.
variations of the subject.\textsuperscript{94} Despite its changes, the subject’s contour and rhythmic juxtaposition of duple and triple divisions of the beat (which is rare in Baroque music) make it easily recognizable. Nonetheless, it is developed and transformed over the course of mm. 1–27.

The traduction of the subject (as presented in Example 3.2) demonstrates one method by which this fugue strays from Baroque fugal principals. In the variations, all of which are found in Example 3.2, the head remains intervallically consistent (i.e., the contour and intervals remain the same). Additionally, the subjects in Examples 3.2a, b, and d, start on the local tonic; the first note in the subject in Example 3.2c, however, functions as the fifth of the local V/G minor chord. This contextual change of the head of the subject requires a later contour adjustment: whereas Examples 3.2a, b, and d, all approach the triplet by stepwise ascent, 3.2c approaches the triplet by stepwise descent. Mendelssohn chose to descend into the triplet in order to provide the third of the local V\textsuperscript{7} (D\textsuperscript{7}) chord. Still later in the subject, the most consistent and conspicuous change is the ascending minor sixth that is frequently expanded to become an octave. Interestingly, the last time subject A is presented before adjourning to the next subject (Example 3.2d), it returns to the form of its opening presentation.

\textsuperscript{94} This argot was first applied to music by Francis Bacon (1561–1626) to refer to slightly varied repetition, such as the tonal answer (see Butler 1977, 62); but with respect to nineteenth-century music, the meaning may be extended to include more pronounced intervallic transformations, such as the variations of this fugal subject.
Subject B (Example 3.3a) contrasts subject A in terms of its melodic shape and contextual placement in the fugue. The subject B opens on beat three of m. 27 after a complete caesura following a PAC in the local tonic of B-flat major. The two-measure subject is accordingly presented in B-flat major—the relative major (III) of G minor, or (bearing in mind that this fugue has so far been presented as if in C minor) VII of C minor. It features a triplet figure embellishing a descent 5→3 in the local tonic, followed by a descent 3→1 in the local dominant. (The movement from tonic to dominant represents one rare similarity between the two subjects.) The subject is presented through a complete fugal exposition in B-flat major with a tonal answer. This tonal answer is unusual, however, in that the original 5 of the subject becomes 2 in the tonal answer (Example 3.3b); the intervallic adjustment affects primarily the end of the
Unlike subject A, subject B remains consistent through the course of subsequent entries. The only exception occurs in the entry of m. 37, where two beats are completely eliminated from the statement of subject B (see Example 3.4). This statement coincides with the only place in this section of the fugue where Mendelssohn combines elements of both subjects (Example 3.4). The section on subject B concludes with a fifteen-bar passage (mm. 50–65, nearly half of the subject-B section) where the subject is never presented. This offers a contrast with the section on subject A, which relentlessly provides entries of the subject until the cadence at m. 27.

Example 3.3a: Subject B

Example 3.3b: Tonal answer to subject B

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95 Tonal answers typically replace 5 at or near the beginning of the subject with 1 in the answer. Schubert and Neidhöfer 2006 cite Mattheson and Marpurg in suggesting that subjects starting on 5 have a tonal answer (145–46). This same admonition is repeated in several textbooks including Counterpoint in the Style of J.S. Bach (Thomas Benjamin, New York: Schirmer Books, 1996, 225–26) and Harmony in Context (Miguel A. Roig-Francoli, New York: The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 2003, 624), the latter of which indicates that a subject beginning on 5 “require[s]” a tonal answer.
The two subjects, which are initially presented separately, are juxtaposed in layers in mm. 66–end. In this final section, each subject is nearly always presented in conjunction with the other (the one exception being the inverted subject B entry of m. 92). Here, Subject A is presented consistently, without the traduction of the earlier section. The final entries eventually yield to a coda that does not present either subject.

*Fugue in E minor, Op. 35/1.* This fugue was composed in 1827, when Zelter’s traditional training was still fresh in the mind of the young Mendelssohn. However, R. Larry Todd claims that a stronger influence was in the emotional realm: Mendelssohn composed this fugue while at the bedside of his dying friend, August Hanstein.\(^{96}\) Julius Schubring commented on how this scenario affected Mendelssohn’s composition of the fugue:

I recollect…with what a serious religious feeling he pursued his art, the exercise of it always being, as it were, a sacred duty; how the first page of every one of his compositions bears impressed on it the initial letter of a prayer; how he devoted the time, as he watched through the night by the bed of his dying friend, Hanstein, to marking in the [E-minor] fugue, composed here, … the progress of the disease as it gradually destroyed the sufferer, until he made it culminate in the choral[e] of release in E major,...\(^ {97}\)

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Though this account was likely romanticized by the author, it suggests that Mendelssohn’s emotional-psychological experiences influenced the composition of the fugue and possibly stimulated some of the fugue’s interesting features, including the ambiguities relating to Mendelssohn’s use of the subject; the conflicting harmonic goals that are initially presented in the subject; the use of dissonance; and the disjunctness of the subject, manifest particularly in the tritone leaps.

The unusual melodic patterns of the subject represent one of its ambiguous elements. (The subject along with reductive analyses demonstrating voice-leading are shown in Example 3.5.) Melodically, the subject features dissonant leaps and outlines dissonances that do not resolve traditionally. Though it starts by filling in the interval between $\hat{1}$ and $\hat{3}$, the melody promptly expands to the $\#7$ and $\hat{4}$ tritone, implying $V^6_5$. Rather than resolving inward to $\hat{1}$ and $\hat{3}$, however, the tritone moves down chromatically to $\hat{7}$ and $\#\hat{3}$, shifting the lower note to a higher octave. The tritones here are indicative of a descending-fifths root progression, harmonized by successive dominant-seventh chords. The tritone of m. 2 resolves according to its tendency toward A minor. But, only one note of this diminished fifth resolves traditionally; the active leading-tone (G#) does not resolve. Instead, after the upper note resolves down to the third of A minor, the subject arpeggiates up to the fifth of the triad, which is embellished by an appoggiatura on beat 4. The reductive analyses in 3.5b and c capture the aforementioned melodic attributes. A D# in m. 3 signals a return to E minor at the end of the subject.
Another factor reinforcing the ambiguity of the subject is that it does not conclude with a clear point of repose on a member of the tonic triad, on a strong beat—as was discussed in Chapter II as being typical of Baroque fugues. The answer enters in the middle of m. 3 even though there has been no conclusion to the subject, and despite the unresolved leading-tone in the first voice. The leading-tone in m. 3, beat 1, could represent the end of the subject (as per the discussion in Chapter II), but nearly all entries in the remainder of the fugue continue the melody through the next four notes, rendering it contextually improbable that \(^7\) in m. 3 functions as the subject’s conclusion.\(^{98}\)

The difficulties in determining the end of the subject also make it difficult to specify the end of the exposition. For this reason, it is particularly appropriate to take a rhetorical analytical approach, for rather than seeking to discern where the exposition ends, it attempts to discover how the exposition functions in relation to the whole fugue. The rhetorical task of any exposition

\(^{98}\) Interestingly, the first two post-expositional entries are the only entries that do not continue the stepwise line toward the end of the subject. The leading-tone at the end of the tenor entrance, m. 12–15, is part of a V chord. Instead of a stepwise descent, Mendelssohn continues the five by having the subject (in the lowest voice) arpeggiate down to the root of the chord. The other exception is the bass entry in m. 15–17, which does break away from the subject pattern. At this moment, another subject enters (albeit an incomplete one), preventing the bass from continuing its descent as in other subject statements.
is to captivate the audience\textsuperscript{99} by introducing the musical material and presenting the “issues” that will ensue. In this particular fugue, such issues include the \textit{ambiguity} of the conclusion of the subject; the \textit{non-resolution} of tendency tones, such as the leading-tone of m. 3 (D#), and the local leading-tone of m. 2 (G#); and the harmonic \textit{tension} of the diminished-seventh sonority, which recurs after its initial presentation in the exposition (an idea discussed thoroughly in Chapter IV on Harmony). That is, the exposition foregrounds ambiguity, tension, and non-resolution, which become the main rhetorical ideas of this fugue.

Additionally, the rhetorical term traduction is appropriate because of the ways in which Mendelssohn alters the subject to fit the harmony of particular passages. The first notable transformation of the subject occurs in the entry of m. 12 (see Example 3.6), where the entry is prepared in the subdominant (A minor) and starts in this local key area. The entry is melodically altered in the second beat by increasing what was formerly a stepwise line to include a leap of a third. The entry remains a step lower than the initial note and harmony would suggest. Thus what seems to start as an entry in iv becomes an entry in III (G major), the relative major—which is a more typical key area for a first post-exposition entry in a minor fugue. The traduction of the bass entry in m. 15 (see Example 3.10) also features a single melodic alteration: though the harmonic preparation and the initial note indicate an answer in the dominant of the preceding subject in III (D major within the local key area of G major), the first interval \textit{steps} up to E, rather than \textit{leaping} up to $\hat{3}$ of C major. These two types of melodic alterations to the head motive (expanding the second interval as seen in Example 3.6, and condensing the first interval as seen in Example 3.7) are repeated throughout the fugue.

\textsuperscript{99} Daniel Harrison delegates the \textit{exordium}, which has the rhetorical task of captivating the audience, to the prelude accompanying the fugue (Harrison, “Rhetoric and Fugue: An Analytical Application,” \textit{Music Theory Spectrum} 12 [1990]: 15). This assignment of the \textit{exordium} is applicable to Mendelssohn’s fugues of Op. 35 and the Fugue in E minor (1827). The remainder of the fugues discussed in this thesis, however, are not preceded by preludes, and therefore the rhetorical task of the \textit{exordium} must be subsumed into the fugal exposition.
As often happens in fugues, fragmentation of the subject becomes rampant; this is especially true in mm. 58–88. This section features a continuous stream of sixteenth notes to accompany equally continuous fragments of the first four beats of the subject. The first four beats of the subject are readily recognizable, but then Mendelssohn often turns to sequential movement. The sequential motion allows Mendelssohn to tonicize a variety of tonal areas, from E minor to A minor to B minor to F# minor. Despite these brief tonicizations, the entire section ultimately reinforces E minor, culminating with a dominant pedal in mm. 83–89.
Like the exposition, this section resists traditional analytical terminological devices: it does not fit the definition of an entry section because so few subject statements continue past the first four beats. Yet, it does not quite fit the traditional definition of a episode—in sections of “thematic relief”100—because of the prevalence of what might be considered “false entries” (see Example 3.8). Melodically and contrapuntally, this section combines elements of the *divisio* and *confirmatio* (where the subject is fragmented and the “argument” of the subject is supported, as discussed in Chapter II): the fragmentation and sequencing of elements of the subject correspond to arguments brought against the subject.

Example 3.8: Op. 35/1, mm. 58-62. A plethora of false entries

In addition to the original subject, Mendelssohn significantly develops its inverted form. The first inverted entry appears in m. 41 (Example 3.9a), where the initial note of the entry is the seventh of a GM7 chord. The next inverted entry (Example 3.9b), half-way through m. 43, starts on the fifth of a D-major triad; the inverted statement of m. 46 (Example 3.9c) likewise enters on the fifth of the chord, this time of F# minor. The final entry of this entry group (Example 3.9d), m. 48 beat three, returns to the same pitch level as the first entry, this time with the opening note

functioning as the root of F# minor. Further harmonic implications of the subject and its inversions will be discussed in the chapter on harmony.

Example 3.9: Heads from inverted entries, mm. 41-50

\[ \text{Fugue in B minor, Op. 35/3.} \text{ After the E-minor fugues of 1827, Mendelssohn ceased composing fugues for piano until 1832. The product of this later endeavor was this B minor fugue (the subject of which is found in Example 3.10), completed in December of that year. R. Larry Todd describes this fugue as “a mirror inversion fugue based on an elaborate, pseudo-Baroque subject.”}^{101} \text{ By mirror inversion he refers to the prominence of inverted statements of the subject both as independent middle entries and in conjunction with non-inverted subject statements.}^{102} \text{ As for Todd’s “pseudo-baroque” description, it is true that stereotypical Baroque characteristics abound in this subject. In his book} Analyzing Fugue: A Schenkerian Approach, \text{ William Renwick opens with three examples of Baroque fugue subjects by J.S. Bach and G.F. Handel, all of which exemplify a structure of } \hat{5} \text{ descending to } \hat{3}.^{103} \text{ On a first hearing, Mendelssohn’s B-minor subject also descends from } \hat{5} \text{ to } \hat{3} \text{ (after an initial ascent). The subject}

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101 Todd 1992, 171.
102 A clarification made in email from Dr. Todd, Feb. 25, 2008.
defines the key of the fugue through its prominent placement of members of the tonic triad at the opening and closing of the subject.

Example 3.10: subject of Op. 35/3; arrows indicate notes with stems in the reduction

The interpretation shown on the lower staff of Example 3.10 is adequate when considering the subject on its own terms, independent of its future contexts. However, the countersubject, which accompanies some entries throughout the fugue (including an inverted countersubject when the subject is inverted), suggests a different interpretation: following an introductory chordal outline (of the local iv in the exposition), the countersubject arpeggiates vii\(^7\) (Example 3.11). This harmonic context suggests the interpretation shown in Example 3.12. In other words, while the subject seems “Baroque” upon a first hearing, due to a descending linear progression from of 5 to 3, the exposition later reveals a tendency toward the quintessentially Romantic trend of temporally extending dissonant chords.
The rests that punctuate the subject serve to increase its urgency by launching the rhythmic activity that follows. The strong march-like rhythm also contributes to the Baroque character of this subject. The rhythm is reminiscent of the Baroque dance rhythms that pervaded Baroque fugues.\textsuperscript{104} Mendelssohn’s regular and consistent use of the opening rhythmic motive provides momentum throughout the fugue and demonstrates that “motivic repetition can be a powerful tool for creating unity and forward motion,”\textsuperscript{105} as motives were often used in Baroque music, as well as in other styles.

Mendelssohn inconsistently employs each note of this subject within the harmonic structure of the local chords. For example, the original entrance of the subject presents the tonic as the first note, which is implicitly the root of a tonic chord. Later in the exposition, however, this first note is presented as the fifth of the local iv chord. (Example 3.13 shows the opening motive in its harmonic contexts of the entrances of the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th voices, respectively.) In the entry at m. 20, however, the subject changes in its relationship to the harmonic context, when

\textsuperscript{104} Schubert and Neihöfer cite Kirnberger in establishing the significance of dance rhythm to Baroque fugues. In this fugue, the rhythm is derived primarily from the Allemande. (Schubert and Neihöfer, \textit{Baroque Counterpoint} [Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentic Hall, 2006] 30.) For further insight about the Allemande, see Richard Hudson, \textit{The Allemande, the Balletto, and the Tanz,} vol. 1, \textit{The History} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

\textsuperscript{105} Schubert and Neihöfer 2006, 58.
the opening note functions as the third of the local F# chord (Example 3.14). With this novel role in the harmonic context, the entry facilitates a tonal transition to the minor dominant of F# minor (see example 3.15). This particular statement of the subject is answered in m. 23 (also in the lowest voice) employing the same relative position within the chord structure as the immediately preceding subject statement. The entry of m. 23 (shown in Example 3.16) again reinterprets the role of the subject relative to the local harmony. In this case, the opening motive of the bass subject is the root of a V7 chord in F# minor—the key achieved by the preceding entry. Thus as the subject steps up, it supports a deceptive resolution of V7 to iv6. The subject continues to interact with the harmonic context in ways not suggested by the expositional portrayal of the subject.

Example 3.13: Entrances in the exposition consistently present the opening motive as the 5th of the local triad

Example 3.14: Entrance in m. 20, where the subject initially functions as the third of the local harmony

Example 3.15: Entrance in m. 20 modulates to F# minor
After a fragmentary episodic passage, the subject enters in inversion in m. 31; the
countersubject is also inverted. Then, following several entries featuring the inverted subject,
Mendelssohn combines inverted and original forms in stretto—a form of mirror-inversion
counterpoint by temporal displacement. Every time this occurs—in mm. 57 (Example 3.17a), 60,
and 85 (the last of these is simultaneous, as shown in Example 3.17b)—the inverted subject is in
the lower of the two voices. Mendelssohn consistently employs $\hat{3}$ as the axis of inversion. Given
the nature of this minor fugue, the axis of $\hat{3}$ is conducive to its harmonic schema because the
members of vii$^7$ map onto each other under inversion, as do members of i. Given that the
subject in its original form presents an alternation of tonic and leading-tone chords, $\hat{3}$ makes a
suitable axis for both the simultaneous inversion and the inversion displaced by two beats.
Because the subject is sequential, the non-simultaneous mirror-inversion combinations (such as
in m. 57, Example 3.17a) result in brief passages of simultaneous inversion. Interestingly, $\hat{2}$ is
the local axis for these brief passages, even though $\hat{3}$ remains the overall axis for the non-

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106 By contrast, $\hat{2}$ arguably works best as an axis in major keys, when the inversions are simultaneously and
ccontrapuntally (as opposed to successively) combined, as explained in David Carson Berry, “On Teaching ‘Tonal
simultaneous inversion.

Example 3.17: outer-voice mirror inversion counterpoint with harmonic analysis

In sum, the subject of the Fugue in B minor, Op. 35/3 establishes Baroque expectations for this fugue especially through various aspects of its rhythm and contour. Robert Schumann suggested that the Baroque characteristics of this fugue and others of Op. 35 were intentional when he wrote, “In a word, these fugues have much of [Johann] Sebastian [Bach] and might deceive the short-sighted reviewer, were it not for the melody, the finer bloom, which we recognize as modern; and here and there those little touches peculiar to Mendelssohn.”¹⁰⁷ In the case of this B-minor fugue, it is not so much the melody itself that distinguishes the fugue as Romantic, but instead the ever-changing contexts in which Mendelssohn places the subject that reveal touches of Romanticism.

Fugue in D major, Op. 35/2. The D-major subject (Example 3.18a) outlines a tonic triad embellished by $\hat{6}$ as an upper neighbor. The contour of this subject, which rises from $\hat{1}$ to $\hat{6}$ and then descends, prompts R. Larry Todd to recall the subject of J.S. Bach’s D-major fugue from Well-Tempered Clavier $^1$ (Example 3.18b): both reveal a line that ascends from $\hat{1}$ to $\hat{5}$ via an upper neighbor to $\hat{5}$. The line continues to descend to the presentation of the answer (shown in Example 3.18c). However, following Walter Schenkman, who has analyzed Bach’s D-major subject for its hexachordal structure, we could mention a significant difference between these subjects (Bach’s and Mendelssohn’s) based on the rhythmic placement of $\hat{6}$: Bach places the tonic as an anacrusis to $\hat{6}$, which falls on a strong beat.$^9$ By contrast, Mendelssohn does not use $\hat{6}$ as a strong-beat melodic goal, but instead offers $\hat{6}$ as an unaccented neighbor to $\hat{5}$, the latter of which is not a member of a linear progression but a consonant skip embellishment of the initial $\hat{1}$. This interpretation is reflected in the reductive analysis of Example 3.18d. Another notable difference between Bach’s and Mendelssohn’s subjects is that Bach’s answer—which enters while the subject is on $\hat{3}$—initially participates in tonic harmony, whereas Mendelssohn’s answer enters over dominant harmony after the descent to $\hat{1}$ is complete.

$^1$ Todd 1992, 172.
$^9$ This is typical of Bach’s fugues, as observed in Walter Schenkman, “The Influence of Hexachordal Thinking in the Organization of Bach’s Fugue Subjects,” BACH The Quarterly Journal of the Riemenschneider Bach Institute (1976): 7–16.
The subject of the Op. 35/2 fugue does not encounter variation or fragmentation outside of clearly delineated episodic passages. Beyond the exposition, the most remarkable subject statement may be the final entry (m. 66) where the subject is presented at its original tonal level. In this instance, however, the presence of flat-$\hat{7}$ in a lower voice creates a $V^7/IV$ harmony. This alternates with the subdominant chord above a tonic pedal. Since the musical interest here lies especially in the realm of harmony, the end of this fugue will be discussed more thoroughly in Chapter IV.
2. Comparing and contrasting subjects of these four fugues

**Tonal implications.** In the B-minor and D-major fugues, tonality is clearly defined by the subjects. Not only do these subjects start on the tonic, but the subject itself outlines the tonic triad. The subject of the D-major fugue expresses primarily the tonic chord, whereas the subject of the B-minor fugue introduces the leading-tone and dominant chords in a role that supports the tonic. The subject of the G-minor fugue presents a clearly defined tonality, yet this tonality does not correspond to the tonality of the complete fugue. The subject opens by defining $\hat{1}$ and $\hat{3}$ of C minor (iv) and ends in the minor dominant of C minor. By contrast, the subject of the E-minor fugue presents conflicting tonal cues. Though it begins on $\hat{1}$, proceeds to $\hat{3}$, and immediately expands this interval to the key-defining tritone, the subject is harmonically ambiguous, and does not return to tonic harmony—as indicated by the presence of the leading tone—until its conclusion. In this way, the subject leaves room for many harmonic manifestations, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

**Rhythmic attributes.** Of the subjects discussed in this chapter, only the G-minor subject conspicuously displays rhythmic characteristics at odds with those of the Baroque. In this subject, Mendelssohn juxtaposes triple and duple divisions of the beat in a manner uncharacteristic of Baroque fugues. The triplet of this subject stands out especially because of its placement on a strong beat. All other fugue subjects discussed herein, including the E-minor subject, exemplify Bachian rhythmic attributes.

**Length.** Of the fugues studied in this chapter, the fugues in E and B minor have relatively long subjects. The B-minor subject, like long subjects by J.S. Bach, features diatonic sequential repetition. By contrast, Mendelssohn’s E-minor subject, while exhibiting sequential activity.
through a two-note motive, exhibits chromaticism rather than diatonicism in its presentation. The subjects of the G-minor and D-major fugues are relatively short.

*Transformations.* The subjects of the fugues of the 1830s do not undergo the *traduction* of the earlier fugue subjects. Whereas the D-major subject remains unchanged throughout the fugue, and the B-minor subject changes only in its tonal relationship to the harmonic context, the subjects of the G-minor and E-minor fugues undergo significant transformation. These changes often involve intervallic adjustments that affect the role of the subject in the harmonic context (to be discussed further in the subsequent chapter).

This study of the subjects of four fugues, as representative of Mendelssohn’s fugal oeuvre, shows that his subjects from the 1830s demonstrated more Baroque elements than those of the 1820s, both in terms of the subjects themselves and in their use throughout the fugue. Having thoroughly explored the melodic material that forms the foundation for these four fugues, the following chapter will focus on their harmonic attributes. Of course, certain harmonic issues have already been discussed during the present chapter’s investigation of subjects. The subsequent chapter, however, will address harmony as it is relevant to many additional aspects of the fugues.
CHAPTER IV—HARMONY

Harmonic development plays a significant role in Mendelssohn’s fugues, both locally and on the large-scale. Despite Oswald Jonas’s comment that “it is idle to speak of polyphony versus homophony,”\textsuperscript{110} a notable difference between Bach’s approach to counterpoint and Mendelssohn’s is that Bach’s harmony is contrapuntally conceived,\textsuperscript{111} whereas much of Mendelssohn’s counterpoint is harmonically conceived. This statement should not diminish the significant role of counterpoint in Mendelssohn’s style. His propensity for contrapuntal composition, as he reported to his friend J.C. Lobe, was instilled in him partly by his teacher, Carl Friedrich Zelter: “I love the finely crafted, worked-out voices and polyphonic composition, perhaps especially stimulated by my early contrapuntal studies with Zelter and by my study of Bach; purely homophonic writing pleases me less.”\textsuperscript{112} Furthermore, R. Larry Todd has remarked on Mendelssohn’s tendency to incorporate counterpoint into all genres of composition, and not just those such as fugue.\textsuperscript{113} Nevertheless, his harmonic conception of counterpoint is apparent, particularly in passages where a chord progression drives the harmonic flow—such as occurs in nearly all Mendelssohn’s fugues. (Examples 4.1, 4.3, and 4.12 all show passages where the contrapuntal interplay of the voices features a melodic entity with chordal accompaniment.) The harmony in these sections is not always functional in the sense of chords having a tendency to


\textsuperscript{111} For historical insight concerning this, see David Beach’s summary of C.P.E. Bach’s and Johann Philipp Kirnberger’s comments about J.S. Bach’s counterpoint and harmony in the introduction to the translation of Kirnberger’s treatise The Art of Strict Musical Composition, trans. David Beach and Jurgen Thym (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1982), xv–xvii. By contrast, Peter Schubert and Christoph Neidhöfer interpret some of the same sources to establish that Baroque music (particularly Bach’s) fundamentally grew out of harmony. (See Peter Schubert and Christoph Neidhöfer, Baroque Counterpoint (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2006), 8.


\textsuperscript{113} Ibid, 165.
resolve a certain way and fulfilling the tonal expectations derived from these tendencies.\textsuperscript{114} Rather, the chords, which sometimes behave functionally, provide a framework for the counterpoint.

All of Mendelssohn’s fugues demonstrate some of the aforementioned features that distinguish them from Baroque fugues. The fugues from the 1820s and 1830s differ in the extent to which non-Baroque harmonic practices are present within each fugue. The early fugues, for instance, radically implement large-scale harmonic phenomena: each of the early fugues studied in this chapter presents a different key at its conclusion than at the exposition. Additionally, these fugues seem to evade typical tonal centers for the early middle-entry groups. Though the later fugues also sometimes exhibit atypical harmonic progressions, these mostly relate to localized events and do not substantially affect large-scale goals. The extent to which Mendelssohn uses harmony to drive the fugue also distinguishes the fugues of the 1820s from those of the 1830s: the earlier fugues feature passages where interaction among the voices is at the mercy of harmonic progression, whereas the later fugues rarely subvert the independence of voices for the sake of harmony.

1. Dysfunctionality in fugues of the 1820s

\textit{Fugue in G Minor (1824)}. Opposition within a fugue is expressed in many ways.\textsuperscript{115} In this fugue, opposition is expressed not only through alterations to and fragmentation of the subject, but also through challenges to the harmonic structure articulated by the tonal relations on both large and small scales. The opposition presented through the large-scale harmonic plan of

\begin{itemize}
\item For more on harmonic tendency, see Robert Gauldin, \textit{Harmonic Practice in Tonal Music} (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), 93–95.
\item William Renwick discusses the opposition of $\hat{1}$ and $\hat{5}$ in fugues in “Structural Patterns in Fugue Subjects and Fugal Expositions,” \textit{Music Theory Spectrum} 13 (1991): 197–218. See also the discussions of \textit{confutatio} in Butler 1977 and Harrison 1990.
\end{itemize}
this fugue provides a foundation for local manifestations of opposition of harmonic and tonal relations. Although standard rhetoric advocates stating the case before refuting the opposition, in this fugue Mendelssohn chooses to commence with the opposing argument of C minor (as seen in Graph 4.1, which shows the harmonic structure of the whole fugue). The argument of C minor is established by the exposition, but is promptly refuted by B-flat major in the first middle entry group. Though B-flat major is an atypical harmonic resting point in the established context of C minor, it represents the relative major of the larger G-minor key. Thus, G minor is first presented indirectly through the presence of its relative major. The argument of C minor returns with a strong PAC in m. 66. Though a brief return to the original tonal center is common in fugues,\textsuperscript{116} the intensity of the medial return to the C-minor tonal center is unique to this fugue.

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid, 203. He suggests this harmonic feature of the fugue developed from the early imitative practice of the \textit{ricercare} and motet, both of which typically consisted of a series of (mostly) tonally-closed segments of imitative counterpoint.
Graph 4.1: Graph of the harmonic structure demonstrates the large-scale harmonic structure. The fugue starts in C minor (iv), transitions to BMajor (III), returns to C minor (iv), and finally adjourns to G minor (i).

Presentation and development of Subject A, mm. 1-27

Presentation and development of Subject B, mm. 27-66

Double fugue combining Subjects A & B, mm. 66-138
Because subject B features repetitive passing and neighbor figures followed by the arpeggiation of a triad (as seen in Chapter III, Example 3.3a), the section featuring this subject (mm. 27–66) is conducive to chordally oriented development. One example of this occurs in mm. 50–65, which offers an extended passage of free counterpoint (see the harmonic reduction in Example 4.1). This passage features triplet figures based on subject B, mostly in the left hand, while the right hand accompanies with chords, either block or arpeggiated. The passage starts in D minor, after a PAC in D minor on beat three of m. 49, and it transitions to C minor through a common-tone diminished seventh chord in m. 52, which is reinterpreted in the context of C minor.

Example 4.1: mm. 50-66, harmonic reduction

Because of the strong harmonic foundation and predictable harmonic rhythm of the passage, this quasi-Schenkerian figured-bass example suffices to demonstrate this transition. In the above example, the bass notes correspond to notes occurring on beats. Sometimes, the triplet action consists of passing motion between two chord tones. In these cases, the note on the beat as well as the third note of the triplet are included as both notes usually have voice-leading implications. Where the third note of the triplet is not approached by passing motion, that note is not included in the reduction, because it tends to relate forward as an incomplete neighbor, rather than backward as a member of the chord.
At the return to C minor in m. 66, the balance swings toward a contrapuntal emphasis (from the chordal emphasis of the subject-B section) through the amalgamation of the two subjects. In the opening statement of this double fugue, subject A is in the bass, subject B in the soprano, and an inner voice fleshes out the harmony. Towards the end of this entry, the inner voice combines with the two subjects to create an unusual harmonic progression of successive six-four chords (see Example 4.2). The first of these is set up as a cadential six-four where the bass steps down (as per the melodic line of subject A) concurrent with the upper-voice resolution to V.

Example 4.2: mm. 66-68, successive six-four sonorities at the end of the entry

This final section, which continues to avoid G minor until m. 99, has some local harmonic features worth mentioning. One of these is a bass pedal on $\hat{6}$ (mm. 106–107), which originates as a deceptive resolution of the dominant at the end of m. 105 (see Example 4.3). Above the pedal the right hand plays chords that pass down to iv$^6$ (C minor). From the iv$^6$ sonority, Mendelssohn returns to V$^7$ (embellished by a 9-8 suspension) and maintains a dominant pedal in the bass until m. 113. In contrast to the descending chords over the $\hat{6}$ pedal, the $\hat{5}$ pedal concludes with an intensification of harmony as represented by chromatically ascending triads culminating on a strong PAC in m. 114. Another surprising harmonic event occurs in m. 117 and also involves $\hat{6}$ in the bass (Example 4.4). Although the vertical sonority on the first beat of this
measure appears to be a second-inversion Neapolitan chord, the remainder of the measure provides context that reveals this second-inversion triad to be an incomplete-neighbor chord to the German augmented-sixth chord that dominates the measure. The resolution of the German augmented sixth is prepared as a cadential six-four, but is presented in the middle of a musical line that leads to a strong PAC in m. 120. The passage mm. 114–120 is repeated mm. 120–126.

Making sense of this fugue’s harmony is challenging from a rhetorical standpoint. The confutatio—more commonly called the episodes—is typically marked by dissonance to be fended off by the return of the subject, thus demonstrating its enduring presence.\(^{117}\) In contrast to

\(^{117}\) This perspective is supported particularly by Mattheson in his discussions of fugue and rhetoric. See Butler 1977, 84.
this notion, Mendelssohn reserves some of his most dissonant sonorities for the end of the fugue, after the “return” to G minor and even after the last entry (as shown in Examples 4.3–4.5).

The harmony of this fugue also presents interesting issues from Harrison’s rhetorical perspective. Recall that, from this perspective, fugue and rhetoric are viewed as expressions of the art of persuasion. The task of this fugue is to persuade the listener that G minor should surmount C minor. Though this harmonic perspective does not exactly match Harrison’s definition of the rhetorical mission of the melodic subject as described in Chapter II, it opens the door to expand upon Harrison’s notion of fugue as an art of persuasion. The juxtaposition of C minor at the beginning and G minor at the end may also be considered in light of Mattheson’s and Marpurg’s understanding of fugue as a combative “dispute.” The eighteenth-century assessment of fugue as a “dispute” again refers specifically to a clash between the distinct melodic voices. Yet, this same analogy of fugue to combat may be applied equally well to the overall tonal areas of C minor vs. G minor.

**Fugue in E minor, Op. 35/1.** Tonal ambiguity and dissonance are tools of expression in the romantic conception of this fugue. Whereas the conclusion of the G-minor fugue (1824) is in a different tonal center than its opening, the fugue of Op. 35/1 retains its large-scale tonal center, but changes the mode. The formal elements of this fugue are tonally closed in E minor (see

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119 See Butler 64–65.
Graph 4.2). After the final entries, however, Mendelssohn shifts to the major mode for a Choral and Coda. R. Larry Todd suggests that the programmatic nature of this fugue\textsuperscript{120} explains the dramatic modal shift toward the end of this fugue.

The most interesting harmonic elements of this fugue collaborate with Mendelssohn’s manipulation of the subject. Through the course of this fugue, Mendelssohn repeatedly establishes an expectation for a tonal focus of each entry, but the fulfillment of this expectation remains ambiguous due to the chromatic nature of the subject and small intervallic adjustments in statements of the subject. The first example of unfulfilled harmonic expectations occurs within the first middle entry group in m. 12–24, which is presented with G Major providing the overarching tonal area (refer to “Ent II” in the Graph above). The group does not start in the relative major, however. Rather, the subject statement of m. 12 (Example 4.6) starts in the subdominant (A minor), but tonal adjustments are made so that the entry does not conclude in this key. It is atypical (though not unheard of) to employ the subdominant as primary tonal area for the first post-expositional entry. However, for a fugue in a minor key, the first post-expositional entry group is usually in the relative major, or perhaps the minor dominant. Through

\textsuperscript{120} Todd links programmaticism with this fugue based on Schubring’s comment quoted in Chapter III.
intervallic traduction (variation of the subject, as discussed in Chapters II and III), the subdominant becomes ii of the relative major, thus bringing the entry to the most typical tonal emphasis for the first middle entry group. The entry in m. 15 (Example 4.7) also reflects Mendelssohn’s creative harmonization, in that its harmony is not suggested by the original presentation of the subject. This entry starts on D, as a typical dominant answer to the previous entry in the relative major (G). The D-major triad that opens this entry leads directly to C major, however, and remains in that tonal area until the conclusion of the entry. Later in the fugue, Mendelssohn continues to prepare subject statements in one key, and then shift to another key near the beginning of the entry.
Within the local tonicization of C major in the middle of this entry group, in mm. 15–17 (Example 4.7), Mendelssohn employs some mode mixture with C minor—facilitated in part by the flat-$\frac{7}{2}$ in the subject. The tritone leap of m. 16 results in a second-inversion major-minor seventh chord (on C) that leads to G minor (a nod to mode mixture) through temporal displacement of the resolution of the chord seventh and a chromatic passing-tone embellishment in the soprano. Thus, the large-scale indecision regarding mode is reflected in this local part of the fugue.

After a PAC in G major, Mendelssohn uses three bars to transition to the distantly-related tonal center of F# minor, using the harmonic scheme shown in Example 4.8. He achieves this half-step transition through a two-note motive derived from the countersubject. The first part of
the episode (mm. 24–25) takes us from G major back to E minor. As the end of m. 25 leads into m. 26, this E-minor harmony participates in a descending-fifths segment, \( iv^7 \to vii^0 \) of B minor. This is promptly followed by the same progression removed by a fifth upward to F# minor.

![Example 4.8: harmonic reduction of mm. 24-26, episode transitions from GM to F#m](image)

The preceding discussion has addressed some harmonic considerations of subject statements in this fugue, and how Mendelssohn achieves tonal transitions between entries. We will now redirect our attention to the head motive of the subject and its harmonic contexts. Though dissonance plays a role in the presentation of the motive as early as m. 6 in the exposition, the intensity and frequency of dissonance surrounding this motive increases throughout the course of the fugue. The motive (shown in Example 4.9, along with its common variants), which occurs throughout the fugue at the opening of the subject, in sequential passages, and in isolation, is presented in a variety of harmonic contexts. It has a history of dissonant treatment: in the third entrance in the exposition (m. 6), the eighth note is the dissonant seventh of a seventh chord; and in subsequent entries (including those in mm. 27 and 29) the motive participated in a fully diminished sonority. The head motive is displayed sequentially in the soprano in mm. 35–36 (see Example 4.10). In each sequential unit, the bass creates dissonance against the motive by employing an accented passing tone. The sequence culminates in an unusual resolution \([V_5^6 \to III]/iv\) in B minor.
Much of the harmonic activity just described serves to intensify the shocking harmonic event involving the head motive at the cadence in m. 41 (Example 4.11). This cadence is twice prepared, once in m. 39 and again in m. 40, but a PAC is never implemented; in each scenario, Mendelssohn employs a means of evading the cadence. In m. 39, a strong cadence is prepared with a cadential six-four chord. Rather than following through with the expected cadence, he produces the head motive in the bass, functioning to extend the range of the cadential gesture. The motive, which was in the bass in m. 39, is passed to the soprano, and then to the tenor in m. 40, each time harmonized slightly differently: when in the soprano, the motive is harmonized by i₆→ii₆, and when in the tenor, it is harmonized by a cadential six-four and its resolution to a dominant seventh chord. Despite the strong cadential preparation, Mendelssohn evades an authentic cadence in B minor at this time, favoring instead a deceptive resolution to VI₇ where the seventh occurs because of an inverted head motive in the alto (as the start of a complete inverted entry). This initiates a section of inverted subject entries.
In the group of inverted entries, each subject statement is harmonized in vastly differing contexts. The head motive of m. 41 is harmonized by G major in the context of B minor. In m. 43 the motive is harmonized by D major (which becomes a dominant-seventh sonority) in the context of G major. The third entry in m. 46 is prepared in F# minor (the chord in first inversion that harmonizes the first note of the motive) by way of the dominant of this key throughout m. 45, but it promptly retreats through brief tonicizations of various keys. The transitory nature of the harmonic scheme in mm. 41–58 is why Graph 4.2 indicates no lower-level Roman numerals for this section. The first tonal area in which Mendelssohn settles—albeit only for four measures—is G major, established primarily through a dominant pedal in the bass. G major, though, turns out to be only a resting point on the journey back to E minor, the key that is firmly established in mm. 58–104.

The subsequent section (mm. 58–91) presents the return to tonic. Though Mendelssohn briefly digresses from E minor on occasion, he repeatedly and adamantly returns to the original tonic. Just as the confutatio seeks to bring “arguments…against the case by the opposing party” and systematically refute them, this section presents keys in opposition to E minor, which are then circumvented as E minor establishes its final authority. The relentless presence of E minor culminates in the dominant pedal in mm. 83–89, approached chromatically by way of a

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121 See note in Chapter II.
German augmented-sixth sonority. As Mendelssohn retreats from the pedal, tension continues to mount through a chromatically ascending bass line from the dominant to the tonic (see Example 4.12). Harmonic tension continues to build through the climax in mm. 96–100 (the harmonic progression of which is shown in Example 4.13). The rhetorical function—harmonically—of this section is that of the *confutatio*. The harmonic rhetorical function conflicts with that of the melodic/contrapuntal, which combines elements of *divisio* and *confirmatio*.\(^{122}\)

Example 4.12: mm. 82-91, bass line

![Example 4.12: mm. 82-91, bass line](image1)

Example 4.13: mm. 96-104, harmonic reduction

![Example 4.13: mm. 96-104, harmonic reduction](image2)

One of the most surprising harmonic events of this fugue is when Mendelssohn abruptly introduces E major through a I\(^6\) chord (shown as the last note in Example 4.13). E major governs the remainder of the piece, reflecting the romantic aesthetic value of concluding a work in a different mode than it began. This triumphant chorale—though not directly traceable to earlier Lutheran sources or found among Bach’s chorale harmonizations\(^{123}\)—contains harmonic progressions that could easily be analyzed using Roman numerals. The chorale though briefly tonicizing keys related to E major, returns to that key as contrapuntal writing involving the subject is reinstated at the coda. The chorale and subsequent ten measures (to the end of the fugue) correspond to the rhetorical *peroratio*. If considering this fugue only from a harmonic

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\(^{122}\) For a discussion of the melodic/contrapuntal rhetorical function, see Chapter III.

\(^{123}\) Todd 1992, 195.
standpoint, it is only partially successful in persuading the listener that E minor is the most appropriate key.

2. Harmony in fugues of the 1830s

Although the larger goal of this thesis is to demonstrate that Mendelssohn’s fugues of the 1830s are more Bachian than those of the 1820s, the later fugues certainly have some unusual harmonic attributes that deserve mentioning. Therefore, the purpose of the following discussion is not so much to describe Bach-like traits of these fugues, as to consider their harmony in the context of a nineteenth-century fugue bearing Baroque compositional influence.

Fugue in B minor, Op. 35/3. Unlike the earlier fugues discussed in this chapter, this fugue is tonally closed in B minor. Its mildly unusual large-scale harmonic feature is the subdominant tonicization of the first post-expositional entry—where either the mediant or dominant are more common. These elements and others are summarized by Graph 4.3.

As discussed in Chapter III, the subject of this fugue presents a B-minor tonic that is intensified by a neighboring diminished seventh harmony. The diminished seventh harmony that is portrayed so prominently through the subject and countersubject in the exposition continues to play a significant role in episodic passages and subsequent entries. Often, the diminished chord is employed in conjunction with an applied dominant chord of similar function and with three
common tones. This $\text{vii}^7\rightarrow\text{V}^7$ relationship is first presented in the subject where the $\text{vii}^7$ of m. 2 is altered to become $\text{V}^7$ in m. 3 through the introduction of F#.

The head of the subject is presented in a variety of harmonic contexts. In the exposition, the subject begins with iv adjourning to $\text{vii}^7$ on the third beat of the subject, where the pitch moves up a step.\(^{124}\) The first middle entry in m. 13 is likewise harmonized by descending-fifth root motion (see Example 4.14a). Here, a dominant-seventh chord on F# prepares a resolution to a dominant-seventh chord on B. The heads of each of the next two entries (Example 4.14b–c) are also harmonized by a descending-fifth progression, though the packaging of this progression varies from the previous entry. In m. 17, the opening of the subject overlaps with an IAC in B minor (so much for presenting the middle entries in keys other than the tonic!). The entry in m. 20 presents a similar harmonic progression ($\text{V}\rightarrow\text{i}$ in B minor), but the subject is presented in the bass, launched by $\hat{7}\rightarrow\hat{1}$, rather than by $\hat{2}\rightarrow\hat{3}$ in the soprano as in m. 17. Like the preceding entries, the head of the bass entry of m. 23 (Example 4.14d) presents a dominant-seventh sonority with strong tendency tones. Rather than resolving to i, however, Mendelssohn presents a deceptive resolution $\text{V}\rightarrow\text{iv}^6$. Thus, as the bass subject steps up, the root of the chord steps down. This becomes significant later in the fugue as Mendelssohn develops root vs. bass contrary motion, as in m. 38 (Example 4.14e). This entry, like the entry of m. 23, presents stepwise chord-root motion that is contrary to the stepwise motion in the bass; the bass subject steps down as an inverted subject while the chord roots go from G# to A, an ascending stepwise motion.

\(^{124}\) The exception to this is the first entrance, for which no harmonic context is provided and the listener may assume that i proceeds to $\text{vii}^7$, as described in Chapter III.
Example 4.14: harmonizations of the subject head involving a resolution of V
a) m. 13, alto entry on beat 3

b) m. 17, soprano entry overlaps IAC

c) m. 20, bass entry

d) m. 23, bass entry, deceptive resolution of V

e) m. 38, inverted bass entry
Each inverted subject statement of the entry group, mm. 31-48 is presented in a different harmonic context. The first entry (m. 31, Example 4.15a) elides with the resolution of a PAC in F# minor, where the third has been raised to yield a major chord. As the subject steps down (an element of the inversion), the major triad of the PAC yields to a dominant-seventh chord. A similar harmonic procedure is employed for the inverted alto entry of m. 33, except that it starts with a minor chord, necessitating that the third rise a half step to create the dominant seventh. After cycling through the complete circle of fifths at a steady half-note harmonic rhythm, the inverted subject enters in m. 43 (Example 4.15b), at the same tonal level as its initial presentation in m. 31. In addition to the harmonic contexts of these two passages being different (F# is prepared as the tonic in m. 31, whereas it functions as the dominant in m. 43), the later entry is embellished through passing motion with a displaced resolution, resulting in a suspension-like figure with a dissonant preparation. The last entry in this group (starting m. 45, beat three) has interesting harmonic action involving the countersubjects: rather than exhibiting a diminished-seventh sonority, Mendelssohn alters the countersubject, displaying instead a V\(^7\) chord in G major that prepares for a tonic arrival. This is the first time the subject has been presented in the absence of fully-diminished harmony.
The harmoic return to tonic is marked by stretto (Example 4.16). The stretto, which is comprised of the inverted subject with the non-inverted subject entering two beat later, is successful because both the original and inverted forms of the subject exhibit the same diminished-seventh chord (A♯⁰⁷, made possible by ∼3 as the axis of inversion, as discussed in Chapter III). Additionally, Mendelssohn combines harmonic elements already associated with the subject. For example, the first subject—in the lower of the two voices—enters on the root of the local chord, and the next entry on the fifth of the harmony. Each of these entries exhibits a V→iv progression, recalling the harmonic environment of m. 23. Whereas the mirror-inversion counterpoint of mm. 57 and 85 involves the outer voices, the soprano and tenor mirror each other in the entrance of m. 60. This frees the bass line to offer harmonic support (shown in Example
4.17). Thus, the entrances at m. 60 reveal a deceptive resolution of $V^7$ to $iv^6$ rather than the root-position $iv$ of the previous entry at m. 57.

Example 4.16: Stretto entry, m. 57

Example 4.17: Entry in m. 60 offers harmonic support by the bass line

In addition to the harmonic drive of the stretto entries, Mendelssohn employs a dominant pedal to build toward the climax. This pedal starts as part of a $V$ chord and then becomes part of a common-tone diminished seventh ($F#$ is the common tone). On the third beat of m. 72, the diminished-seventh chord—as outlined by the upper voices—shifts tonally from a $D#$ chord to an $E#$ chord (still juxtaposed above the $F#$ pedal). Against this harmonic backdrop, the subject enters in the tenor, proceeding from the $E#^7$ to $A#^7$ where the subject itself outlines the diminished $A#$ chord. The harmonic tension continues to build—mostly through the pervasive use of the diminished-seventh sonority—until the end of the fugue, where Mendelssohn functionally prepares the final cadence.
Fugue in D Major, Op. 35/2. This fugue, in its Baroque-ness, follows the most typical patterns of large-scale key areas. Mendelssohn starts by presenting the subject in the tonic, followed by the answer in the dominant. After all four voices enter in the exposition, an episode tonally prepares for a middle entry in the dominant, culminating with a PAC (m. 39). After yet more episodic material, Mendelssohn starts an entry in the supertonic that by its conclusion is harmonized by the subdominant as the local tonic. The return to D major is signaled via a dominant pedal underneath an answer. The final entry emphasizes the subdominant through use of flat-7.

As seen in Graph 4.4, this fugue has two PACs, the first in A major (the dominant) at the end of the first middle-entry group, and the second in b minor (the relative minor) at the end of the second middle-entry group. An interesting harmonic feature of this fugue is that it has no tonic cadence to signal its conclusion. (For that matter, the fugue has no D-major PACs at all!) The last cadence prepared by a cadential six-four is in mm. 63–64 (see Example 4.18). Mendelssohn surprises the listener, however: instead of resolving the 6 4 to 5 3, he lowers the third of the resolution (that is, the expected D–C# above A resolves instead as D–C-natural) in anticipation of the V7/IV chord that falls where one would expect a tonic cadential resolution. Meanwhile, the bass steps down to F#, so the resolution is to a first-inversion chord; the evaded cadence elides with a false entry. All of this serves to evade the “cadential” attributes suggested in m. 63.
A tonic pedal in the bass starts in the middle of the final entry, supporting a $V^7/IV \rightarrow IV^6_4 \rightarrow V^7/IV$ progression that is punctuated by an accented chromatic passing tone at m. 69 (Example 4.19). The passing tone, which is the first occurrence of C# since the unexpected C-natural in m. 63, foreshadows Mendelssohn’s tendency toward chromatically variable $\hat{6}$ and $\hat{7}$ in this coda. Thus, Mendelssohn introduces (parallel) minor inflection of the harmony at the end of the fugue, while retaining $\#\hat{3}$. The result is tonal ambiguity between the tonic D major and the minor subdominant. The relationship between these tonal areas resembles the tonal relationship between i and V of G minor.
The accented chromatic passing tone in m. 69 is derived from a parallel passage in m. 16. The relation of the upper voices in m. 16 (Example 4.20) is identical to that of m. 69; the difference in the earlier passage is the lack of pedal note in the bass. However, the harmonic contexts of these two passages vary substantially. Though in both cases, the soprano note on beat two represents the seventh of the local major-minor-seventh chord, the latter participates in subdominant emphasis in a coda-like passage whereas the earlier example prepares an entry group in the dominant.

Example 4.20: mm. 15-16, compare to mm. 68-69 in Example 4.19

Each statement of the subject of this fugue works in combination with a different harmonic context (some of which are shown in Example 4.21). The exposition itself exposes several harmonic interpretations of the subject. The initial subject/answer statement presents I (mm. 1-2) leading through ii (m. 3) to V (m. 4), which becomes the local tonic of the answer. The answer repeats this tonal scheme a fifth higher. The harmonies change, however, when the subject enters in the alto in m. 8. When this voice first enters, it is harmonized by a dominant seventh chord, V₇/IV. Immediately in m. 9, ⁵ is interpreted first as the root of V (as opposed to the fifth of the local harmony), which resolves to I on beat two (at which point the A in the alto is reinterpreted as the fifth of the chord). I does not remain in effect throughout the remainder of the measure, however. Instead, Mendelssohn introduces vi on beat three, preceded by an applied diminished seventh. The last expositional entrance, in the soprano, again introduces a new
harmonic context for the second measure of the subject: as in the preceding alto entry, the second measure of the soprano entry starts as the root of the local dominant chord. Unlike the previous statement, however, the E remains the root of the chord until beat three, where the harmony adjourns to A major (local I).

Example 4.21: harmonic manifestations of the subject

a) mm. 8-9

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{DM: } & V^\text{V}_4 \\
& IV \\
& V^6 \\
& I \\
& \text{vi}
\end{align*}
\]

b) mm. 17-18

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{AM: } & V^7 \\
& I \\
& vii^9 \\
& vii^9
\end{align*}
\]

c) mm. 43-44

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Em: } & i \\
\text{GM: } & IV \\
& VI \\
& I
\end{align*}
\]

d) mm. 53-54

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{DM: } & V \\
& \text{E-fifth}
\end{align*}
\]
The first two post-expositional entries also present new harmonic interpretations of the second measure of the subject. In the first beat of m. 18, the subject is the third of a diminished triad that becomes a fully-diminished seventh chord on the third beat of the measure. The next entrance in m. 20—where the initial note functions as the fifth of the local triad, as opposed to the root as in all the preceding entrances—combines harmonic elements of the alto and soprano entrances of the exposition: the second measure of the entrance features a dominant chord through the first two full beats (as in the soprano entrance) and on beat three moves to vi, as in the alto entrance. The soprano entrance at m. 26 follows the same pattern, but it is in a minor key.

The entry at m. 43 presents new harmonies in that the harmonic context changes over the course of the subject from E minor to G major. Though the entry starts with E as the root of the local i chord and proceeds to VI (C major) on the third beat, as in many preceding examples, the C-major chord on beat three is reinterpreted in the context of G major; therefore, the second measure of the entry starts with the subject as the third of the local G-major harmony. The return to D major is signaled by the dominant pedal, which provides a new aspect of the harmonic context of the next entry. The pedal continues through the start of the entry at m. 57, creating a dominant ninth sonority on the third beat of this measure. The harmony of the final entry has already been discussed, as pertaining to Example 4.20.

3. Summary

*Large-scale harmonic implications.* The G-minor fugue (1824) presents a radical paradigm of large-scale harmonic cohesiveness. Despite the “G Minor” title of the modern edition, the fugue clearly presents an exposition in C minor, and later returns to C minor with a
strong PAC upon the return of subject A. G-minor attributes include the tonal motion to B-flat major in the first entry group (the relative major of G minor, or VII of C minor) and the final entries and coda in G minor. The E-minor fugue, Op. 35/1 also concludes in a different key than it started, though this transition is only to the parallel major. The fugue proper includes elements expected towards the end of an E-minor fugue (i.e., a dominant pedal and a final entry in the tonic of E minor), but concludes with a substantial coda in E major. By contrast, both the B-minor and D-major fugues start and end in the same key.

**Relationship between harmony and counterpoint.** Both the Fugues in G minor (1824) and in E minor, Op. 35/1 have substantial passages where their harmonic goals guide the interaction of voices. This is manifest particularly in places that exhibit a chordal structure, such as is found in much of the tonic return, in mm. 58–104 of the E-minor fugue (Op. 35/1), and in mm. 50–65 of the G-minor fugue, at times, resulting in the disintegration of counterpoint in favor of block chords. Mendelssohn also demonstrates a chordal conception of certain brief passages in the B-minor fugue, notably in mm. 38–39, 69, 79–81, and 87–88. Only two measures of the Fugue in D Major suggest a chordal conception; in both cases, the chords result from multiple voices lining up homorhythmically without non-chord tones.

The B-minor and D-major fugues, however, have richly varied harmonic contexts in which the subject is presented. In the Fugue in D Major, every entry is unique. The Fugue in B Minor is somewhat more limited harmonically because its countersubject features primarily an arpeggiated diminished-seventh chord. The subject, however, has different functions within its various local harmonic contexts. The Fugue in E Minor, Op. 35/1 also has diverse presentations of the subject, largely related to how Mendelssohn uses the subject to create dissonance. The
most unusual local harmonic features of the G-minor fugue do not directly relate to subject statements.

The next chapter will discuss harmony not only as it relates to the intricateness of counterpoint, but also in terms of its unusual harmonic features, both large-scale and local. Though all of Mendelssohn’s fugues demonstrate some features that distinguish them from Baroque fugues, the early fugues radically interpret large-scale harmonic phenomena: each of the early fugues studied in this chapter present a different key at its conclusion than at the exposition. Additionally, these fugues seem to evade typical tonal centers for the early middle-entry groups. Though the later fugues also sometimes exhibit unfulfilled expectations, these for the most part relate to localized events and do not substantially affect large-scale goals. The extent to which Mendelssohn uses harmonic progression to guide the course of the music also distinguishes the fugues of the 1820s from those of the 1830s: the earlier fugues feature passages where interaction among the voices is at the mercy harmonic progression, whereas the later fugues rarely subdue the independence of voices for the sake of harmony.

All of the fugues discussed herein display a mastery of both counterpoint and harmony, though the harmony does not always extend from Baroque practices. Studying the harmony of these fugues demonstrates that Mendelssohn employed some radical contrapuntal practices, particularly in the fugues of the 1820s. Though the fugues from the 1830s also exhibit some non-Baroquean harmonic events, they generally display more conventional uses of harmonic progression. A familiarity with these harmonic issues will also be helpful in the course of the next chapter, which deals with texture, because certain elements of texture result from the balance of counterpoint and harmony that Mendelssohn achieves in each fugue.
CHAPTER V—Issues of Texture and Voicing

Constant counterpoint is traditionally considered to be an essential element of fugue.\textsuperscript{125} Although this may be true of earlier fugues, in nineteenth-century fugues the contrapuntal texture of the fugal exposition gradually yielded to other pianistic textures.\textsuperscript{126} Whereas J.S. Bach’s fugues tend to have relentless contrapuntal activity (stemming in part from \textit{Fortspinnung}) that is governed by strict guidelines (for example, the prohibition against parallel octaves), many of Mendelssohn’s fugues eventually relax their adherence to these guidelines. This is especially true of his fugues from the 1820s. The fugues discussed in this chapter, namely G minor (1824), Op. 35/1, Op. 35/3, and Op. 35/2, display substantial passages of octave doubling and chordal textures, and are also sectionalized through textural changes. These attributes (which were discussed in Chapter II as they pertain to several of Mendelssohn’s fugues) are less prominent in the later fugues: their presence is less-marked in the B-minor fugue, Op. 35/3 (1832), and is nearly non-existent in the D-major fugue, Op. 35/2 (1835).

The present chapter is dedicated to a detailed exploration of texture in the Fugues in G Minor (1824); E Minor, Op. 35/1; B Minor, Op. 35/3; and D Major, Op. 35/2. Although “texture” can be a very general term—at times vaguely defined—here it will be used with respect to specific issues of voicing, doubling, and degree of contrapuntal interplay (that is, contrapuntal vs. homophonic writing vs. melody/accompaniment style, etc.).\textsuperscript{127} Because texture


significantly influences how the mind organizes music,\textsuperscript{128} changes in texture in the fugues from the 1820s reinforce the sectionalization that is also marked by harmonic phenomena.\textsuperscript{129} Examining these aforementioned issues in detail reveals that in the fugues of the 1820s, Mendelssohn’s textural orientation was at odds with Baroque norms; but in fugues of the 1830s, his textural orientation more closely approached these norms. Accordingly, a discussion of texture will help us better understand the transformation in Mendelssohn’s approach to fugal composition.

1. General remarks about texture

The piano changed remarkably between 1800 and 1830, making it more versatile and expanding the range of textures available to pianists and composers.\textsuperscript{130} The instrument that emerged by the 1830s could be played faster, more lyrically, louder, softer, and with a greater palette of tone color (largely due to development of the pedals) than earlier keyboard models. As a result, new pianistic textures were cultivated by composers, including arpeggiation, full chords, polyphony, and even an orchestral-inspired texture.\textsuperscript{131} Mendelssohn’s piano fugues demonstrate that he experimented with the musical capabilities of the changing instrument: each of these textures is found in the fugues from the 1820s. By contrast, those of the 1830s, which were composed after the novelty of the new instrument abated and with it the desire to experiment with the capabilities thereof, emphasize polyphony and do not significantly explore additional textures.

\textsuperscript{129} Textural changes often underscore other means of varying the character of the music. For more on this, see Janet M. Levy, “Texture as a Sign in Classic and Early Romantic Music,” \textit{Journal of the American Musicological Society} 35 (1982): 483.
\textsuperscript{130} Ratner 1992, 31. The following taxonomy of changes to the instrument is from Ratner 1992, 31–36.
\textsuperscript{131} Ibid, 40–50.
Texture is dependent on other parameters of music, and change of texture generally coincides with change of other musical elements.\textsuperscript{132} Changes of texture can occur gradually (as in a fugal exposition, where voices are added one at a time) or suddenly (as in the G-minor fugue [1824], where changes of texture signal an immediate transition to a new section). Furthermore, a listener’s perception of textural change is also influenced by pre-imposed notions of the nature of texture in a given genre.\textsuperscript{133} Since the fugue is generally associated with a consistent polyphonic texture, Mendelssohn’s alterations to this consistent texture are all the more prominent.

Writing in the mid-nineteenth century for the Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung, Robert Schumann observed three primary pianistic textures (or styles of expression):

$(1)$ richness of sound and varied harmonic progressions (made use of by Beethoven and Franz Schubert); $(2)$ pedal effect (as with Field); $(3)$ volubility (Czerny, Herz, and others). In the first category we find the expansive players; in the second, the fanciful ones; and, in the third, those distinguished by their pearly technique.\textsuperscript{134}

One may notice that Schumann associates each of these textures with other musical elements (such as harmony or rapidly moving notes). Shortly after the quoted passage, Schumann proceeds to assert that composer-performers who balance the aforementioned textures are the most successful.\textsuperscript{135} Mendelssohn achieves a different balance of these elements in each fugue. The early fugues sometimes employ extra voices to enrich the harmony. These fugues also feature passages deigned to show off quick-paced virtuosity. The B-minor fugue is less experimental with regard to texture, and the D-major fugue, which was originally composed for

\textsuperscript{132} Meyer 1956, 188; and Levy 1982, 482–83.
\textsuperscript{133} Meyer 1956, 190.
\textsuperscript{135} Ibid, 83.
organ\textsuperscript{136} (more on that in the section dedicated to Op. 35/2), demonstrates minimal use of these Romantic pianistic textures.

2. \textit{Inner voice vs. outer voice entries}

As a prelude to discussing textural aspects of specific fugues by Mendelssohn, we will consider the textural placement of Mendelssohn’s subject statements. As a point of departure, let us turn to the work of David Huron and Deborah Fantini, who have studied J.S. Bach’s fugues for the frequency of inner- and outer-voice entrances. They found that in four-voice fugues by Bach, there tends to be approximately equal distribution of entries among the voices.\textsuperscript{137} By contrast, each of Mendelssohn’s fugues demonstrates a gross imbalance toward outer-voice entries, as summarized in Table 5.1. (In this table only post-expositional entries are considered because entries of alto and tenor voices can be the only voice or are necessarily an outer voice until all voices enter the texture in the exposition.) A possible reason for this disproportion is that the richer textures available on the piano of the 1820s and 30s (as opposed to keyboards instruments in use a century earlier) rendered it more difficult to pick out inner-voice entries. Additionally, Huron and Fantini focused on occurrences of voices entering the texture following a time of rest. Analyzing Mendelssohn’s fugues in this same way is impractical because the number of voices increases or decreases as is convenient, many of Mendelssohn’s subject statements occur in voices that were already present in the texture (not entering after a rest), and,


as noted by Glenn Stanley, Mendelssohn does not strictly maintain autonomous voices within the structure.\textsuperscript{138}

\textit{Table 5.1: Number of inner and outer voice entries}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total # of post-expositional entries</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of inner-voice entries</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>1(+1 combo inner and top voice)</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of post-expositional outer-voice entries</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>16(+1 combo top and inner voice)</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Issues of texture in specific fugues

\textit{Fugue in G Minor (1824).} The main textural issues of this fugue are judicious use of chordal textures, octave doubling, and use of changes in texture to sectionalize the fugue. Mendelssohn employs chordal textures in varying degrees throughout the course of this fugue; the balance of counterpoint vs. chords is one aspect of texture that differentiates its three sections. Octave doubling, which does not appear until the third section, becomes pervasive in the final section of the fugue.

Throughout the opening section, Mendelssohn retains a mostly consistent use of the four distinct voices presented in the exposition. On some occasions, however, he exploits the fact that the fugue is for keyboard—and not four monophonic instruments—by presenting the harmonies more fully. An example of this is in the tenor entrance of mm. 21–23 (Example 5.4), which primarily features a three-voice texture until the fourth voice is added towards the end of the

entry. The fourth voice makes only a brief appearance (two consecutive quarter-note Fs), almost as an attachment to the tenor subject, and serves to flesh out the harmonic scheme. Mendelssohn continues to manipulate the contrapuntal lines of this passage according to the capabilities of a keyboard rather than the constraints of vocal counterpoint (i.e., the four “voices” of this fugue are flexible with regard to how they function within the texture). An example of this (also shown in Example 5.1) is at the false entry in m. 24. The head of the subject clearly starts in the alto line, yet continues in the tenor in m. 25.

Example 5.1: mm. 21-25, Mendelssohn conveniently manipulates the voice structure

In contrast to the persistent counterpoint of the previous section, the subject-B section is remarkably chordal. This first becomes apparent in the exposition, when the fourth voice enters in the bass and the other three voices are played as chords in the right hand (see Example 5.2). As the exposition leads to the episode, the chordal influence is retained as two voices hold notes of a chord while the third voice arpeggiates the chord (see Example 4.1 in Chapter IV.) The use of chords does not take over the texture until the free counterpoint towards the end of this second section of the fugue. While one hand or the other maintains a continuous stream of triplets that arpeggiates or embellishes the harmonic progression, the other hand fills out the harmony with chords.
The last section (mm. 66–end), which combines the two subjects, occasionally uses chords as a textural foundation, as in mm. 87–90 (Example 5.3). Octave doubling is introduced in the section and assumes an active role until the end of the fugue. Subject A is usually doubled at the octave, whether it is in the bass or soprano. The exceptions to this are the entries at mm. 90, 99, and 110. In the first two of these exceptions, the physical limitations of what span of notes a performer could play at the same time prevent Mendelssohn from using octave doubling. In the third exception, shown in Example 5.4, doubling at the lower octave would interfere with the dominant pedal in the bass, and doubling at the higher octave would result in voice crossing with the subject-B statement in the soprano.
Another instance of octave doubling occurs in the coda, which does not present either subject in full, but which draws from subject-B material. Though the texture is reduced to a single melodic entity in mm. 130–35, this line is played in both hands an octave apart. As such, it exemplifies a texture that Janet M. Levy describes as “unisons used … as auxiliary signs of close.”

The dissolution of the texture to a single line is particularly evident because of the polyphonic texture that has pervaded the fugue.

The final three measures of the coda depart from the triplet line in both hands in favor of a chordal harmonic progression that drives to the end.

Mendelssohn’s use of silence (that is, the lack of presence of any of the voices) for a quarter measure before the introduction of subject B (see Example 5.5) is a unique aspect of this fugue’s texture. Jean-Philippe Rameau commented on the presence of complete caesuras following cadences:

When all the parts stop together in order to give greater prominence to a new fugue, the strain must never appear to be completely finished; instead, we must always make the listener desire what is being prepared. This silence should thus only follow deceptive or irregular cadences. If the cadences are perfect, they must at least be in a key foreign to the central one.

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139 Levy 1982, 519.
140 Ibid, 520.
Mendelssohn’s fugue exemplifies Rameau’s instructions: by concluding the first part with a formal cadence and caesura concurrent in all the voices, Mendelssohn gives “greater prominence” to the exposition of the new fugal subject. Yet, despite the PAC that is so eminently displayed, Mendelssohn inhibits the sense of closure by presenting the cadence “in a key foreign to the central one.”

Changes in texture and rhythmic flow are the primary means through which different sections of the fugue are demarcated. The opening section on subject A (mm. 1–27) consists of contrapuntal interweaving of voices with a slow rhythmic flow (relative to the subject B material). The cadence described above, followed by a reduction in texture to a single voice and the introduction of a continuous stream of triplets contrasts the next section on subject B, mm. 27–66, with the material that came before it. From the time this section starts until it ends with the PAC in m. 66, there is no break in the triplets. Octave doubling is introduced into the texture of the third section, which starts in m. 66. In many places of this section, the texture consists of just two or three voices, often presenting the two subjects in conjunction with each other.

_Fugue in E Minor, Op. 35/1._ As in the G-minor fugue, changes in texture define the larger sections of the Fugue in E Minor Op. 35/1. On a localized level, textural issues include
voice-crossing, ambiguity of voice position within the structure, occasional lack of rhythmic independence (which distorts the contrapuntal nature of the fugue), octave doubling, and a fifth (and even sixth) voice sometimes being added to the texture.

Voice crossing occurs briefly or permanently at various points in this fugue. Example 5.6 shows one brief instance of voice-crossing; in this case, the soprano/alto crossing lasts only an eighth note before each voice returns to its proper place in the structure. Brief voice-crossing such as this occurs in many Baroque fugues and does not distinguish Mendelssohn’s from the approach of earlier composers. Of greater significance to the present discussion is the voice crossing at the end of m. 48 and thereafter (Example 5.7). Here, the voices initially cross in a manner similar to m. 27—as the soprano moves down, the alto leaps up. Rather than promptly returning to their own positions within the structure, however, the line that was formerly the soprano continues in the alto position.

Example 5.6: Voice crossing at end of m. 27

Example 5.7: mm. 48-50, permanent voice crossing
An issue related to voice-crossing is that of reinterpreting the position of a given line within the voice structure. Sometimes a melodic line starts in one voice, but as other voices come and go, the melodic line becomes a different voice in the four-part structure. An easily-observable instances of this, in mm. 58–60, was presented in Chapter II, Example 2.14. There are other occurrences; for example, the first inverted subject statement starts in m. 41 as an alto entry. Two beats later, the subject becomes the top voice of a mostly three-voice texture, although at one point there are three voices below the subject. As this subject statement comes to a close, a new voice enters, above the previous top voice of the sometimes four-voice texture. Voices also exchange position within the structure in mm. 28–30 (Example 5.8). At the beginning of this example, the alto and soprano are delineated and sixteenth notes are in the tenor line. By the end of m. 28, the top voice of the three-voice texture may still be assumed to be the alto line. But in the middle of m. 29, a fourth voice enters between the two voices formerly played by the right hand. Then, in m. 30 the two topmost voices share the false entry.

Example 5.8: mm. 28-30, voices exchanging position and mingling

Another textural issue that distinguishes this from a Baroque fugue is that the voices do not maintain rhythmic independence consistently throughout the fugue. Instead, rhythmic independence recedes through the course of the fugue. Each voice retains its individuality through the exposition and first two middle-entry groups. The first time several voices function as a single rhythmic unit is in m. 38, where the upper three voices are chordally juxtaposed in alternation with the bass (see Example 5.9a). In this case, the rhythmic codependency lasts for
only one measure. Later in the fugue, however, codependence of lines assumes an increasingly significant role. For instance, in the sequence of mm. 71–72 (Example 5.9b), the right hand features block chords above running sixteenth notes in the left hand. Lack of independence culminates toward the end of this section with perpetual sixteenth notes, where the moving line is accompanied by block chords moving at a half-note harmonic rhythm. The sixteenth notes finally break at the final entry of m. 91, but the tension continues to build as the counterpoint dissolves into arpeggiated forms of a diminished-seventh chord in the left hand (doubled at the octave), and full chords punctuating the rests of the right hand.

Rhythmic codependency is one textural sign that this fugue is not Baroque. Another sign is found in its increased amount of octave doubling. Octave doubling generally corresponds to local climaxes within the fugue. The earliest occasion of octave doubling coincides with the chordal texture of mm. 38–39 (see Example 5.9a above). The next occurrence of the octave doubling is in mm. 48–50, where Mendelssohn introduces the additional tension of the voice crossing (see Example 5.6 above). When the octave doubling occurs in mm. 56–57,
Mendelssohn uses this to establish an expectation for a local climax. However, he thwarts this expectation by a *subito piano*, accompanied by an immediate change in texture from four voices (one of which was doubled, creating five notes) to two. This initiates the running sixteenth notes that are continuous through the climax building to the chorale. In this way, the fulfillment of the expectation for climax of mm. 56–57 is not so much thwarted as delayed, gaining momentum throughout mm. 58–100.

Another aspect of building momentum in this section is the return of the subject in the original tonic key. The subject is stated four times in the tonic during this passage, each marked by a change in texture: 1) in m. 73, the subject is presented in the soprano voice, launched by an extra voice for the first chord (a four-voice chord in the right hand, above the bass); 2) when the subject is in the bass in m. 77, it is doubled at the octave for emphasis; 3) the soprano entrance at m. 86 is intensified through the dominant pedal in the bass; 4) the final entry is not only doubled at the octave, it is also marked by the end of the continuous stream of sixteenth notes, which gives way to block chords in the right hand. The fourth and last entry in this section builds to the climax of the fugue through sequential eighth-note motion in the left hand, doubled at the octave, juxtaposed against four- and sometimes five-note chords in the right hand, most emphasized with a *sforzando*. The last chord marks the climax with a fully-diminished seventh sonority that is prolonged through an arpeggiation of the octaves.

The tension of the climax is finally released in the *Choral* of mm. 104–124. This chorale seems to be a precursor to the “Songs without Words” style that Mendelssohn would develop just a few years later.\(^\text{142}\) It has a thick texture, consisting of a walking bass, doubled at the octave, and a melody that is also doubled at the octave; an additional one to three notes fill out the

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chords in the right hand. (This is one of just two places in the present fugue where an *upper* voice has octave doubling, the other being intermittent through the build to the climax, in mm. 89–96.) This chorale opens with a period structure in which rests punctuate the two phrases, briefly reducing the texture to the walking bass line. The next twelve bars constitute a sentence structure, also clearly delineated by rests in the right hand.

Like many of the “Songs without Words” to come later, this chorale concludes with a codetta,\(^\text{143}\) the opening of which is in Example 5.10. For this codetta, Mendelssohn returns to a (mostly) four-part contrapuntal texture. This texture, however, features a functional bass line that is doubled at the octave. Above the functional bass, Mendelssohn places a final rendition of the subject, this time in E major. Like contrapuntal activity earlier in the fugue, Mendelssohn establishes the position of each voice, then later brings in another voice that contradicts the previously-established positions. He does this again in the codetta, which starts with a four-voice texture with the subject in the top voice. Two and a half measures later, a new top voice enters with the subject head.

Example 5.10: mm. 124-26, soprano voice is reinterpreted as alto

*Fugue in B Minor, Op. 35/3.* Many issues discussed in the earlier fugues also have a presence in this fugue. Chord-based textures appear occasionally, as well as octave doubling.

\(^\text{143}\) Ibid, 9, informs us that codettas often concluded “Songs without Words.”
Whereas the earlier fugues impulsively add or remove voices from the texture, the B-minor fugue is much more consistent in employing the voice structure that is presented in the exposition.

In the present fugue Mendelssohn generally prefers three-voice counterpoint, judiciously selecting places to exhibit the fuller, four-voice texture. Until m. 60, four-voice counterpoint is generally avoided, and there are rarely four voices simultaneously present. Four concurrent voices occur occasionally to flesh out the harmony for a specific purpose, as in the cadence at m. 31 (where the presence of the fourth voice emphasizes the cadence, Example 5.11a), the last entry of the inverted entry group (so the subsequent episode can be reduced to three voices, Example 5.11b), the entrance of m. 45 (where the new voice enters before the alto voice gets out of the texture, Example 5.11c), and to emphasize the stretto entrance of m. 57 (Example 5.11d). The first time Mendelssohn chooses to sustain four-voice counterpoint is at the entrances of m. 60. Even here, though, all four voices are present for only two measures before the texture is once again reduced to three voices. Towards the end, Mendelssohn relies almost exclusively on a two-voice texture.

Example 5.11: Four-voice textures, mm. 20-60

a) mm. 30-31, emphasize cadence

b) mm. 38-39, enriched texture before episode
Mendelssohn frequently chooses a two-voice texture for the episodes. This is possibly because of the technical difficulty of negotiating multiple lines amid the flurry of sixteenth notes. Regardless of the reasons, the texture is reduced to two voices at the episodic interludes in mm. 16 and 19, though Mendelssohn does utilize three-voice counterpoint in the intervening entry. The large episode where only two voices are used is mm. 50–56 (Example 5.12), where Mendelssohn returns from A major to B minor. The last passage in which Mendelssohn employs only two voices is not an episode, but at the final entry, where the only voices present are the subject and its inversion.
The chordal textures that guide so much of the earlier fugues have a remarkably reduced presence in this fugue. The first instance in which the texture features block chords is at the PAC in mm. 30–31. Soon thereafter, diminished chords appear in mm. 38–39 (seen in Example 5.11b) to reinforce the harmony of the countersubject. Chords do not appear again until the drive toward a dominant pedal in mm. 69–70 (Example 5.13). Chordal writing again enters as an element of the texture in mm. 79–81, where the hands alternate playing a sixteenth-note figure derived from the subject and supporting chords reiterated every eighth note. The final appearance of chords is at the final cadence, where Mendelssohn homophonically presents a functional chord progression.

In addition to fewer and shorter passages of chordal writing, Mendelssohn employs octave doubling substantially less than in earlier fugues. In the present fugue, octave doubling
appears three times at the head of the subject in the bass (mm. 28, 77, and 85). Additionally, octave doubling appears at the PAC in m. 31 and the final cadence at mm. 87–88. Likewise, Mendelssohn tends to avoid the earlier practice of reinterpreting voice positions within the structure, preferring instead to maintain clarity in the presentation of the voice structure.

**Fugue in D Major, Op. 35/2.** As alluded to earlier, this fugue was originally conceived for the organ—Mendelssohn’s manuscript for the organ edition is 30 July 1834, almost six months before the 11 January 1835 date on the piano manuscript. Mendelssohn made minimal changes to the score when reworking it for piano. As a result, the texture of this fugue does not reflect some of the pianistic textures discussed earlier. The range of this fugue fits into the compass of the organ, and octave doubling of melodic lines (a technique nearly impossible on the organ) is not called for in this fugue.

In light of the discussion concerning earlier fugues, it might seem easiest to address the texture of the D-Major fugue, Op. 35/2, in terms of what it lacks: there is no octave doubling, only one case of a voice being added to the texture beyond the four presented in the exposition (a single sonority in m. 65 employs five notes simultaneously), and only brief and rare passages of chords in the texture. Though this fugue lacks many distinguishing features of the previously discussed fugues, Mendelssohn does combine the four voices of this fugue to create a rich texture.

Through most of this fugue, Mendelssohn chooses to utilize a four-voice contrapuntal texture (as opposed to the B-minor fugue, where he preferred a contrapuntal texture with fewer voices). As per fugal protocol, the texture starts out as a single melodic line to which others gradually join until the four-voice structure is complete. Four voices are used through the end of

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144 Todd 1992, 171.
the fourth subject statement and Mendelssohn proceeds with only three voices until the second middle entry at m. 20. This entry concludes with a PAC in m. 23, after which the texture is reduced to two voices. However, a third voice is promptly added in m. 24, and the fourth voice reenters the scene shortly thereafter. Mendelssohn uses a mostly four-voice texture until the PAC in m. 39, after which the texture is reduced to three voices for four measures. The fourth voice (bass) enters in m. 43, filling out the contrapuntal structure. Four voices remain the norm for the remainder of the fugue.

A particularly striking feature of this fugue is how freely Mendelssohn allows voices to come and go. For example, the four-voice texture of m. 13 (see Example 5.14) is reduced in m. 14, when one of the inner voices drops out on the second eighth note of the measure. This voice reenters for three eighth notes in m. 16 and promptly leaves the texture in m. 17. Mendelssohn again employs the technique of allowing voices to enter and exit the texture freely, at the deceptive cadence of m. 34 and in surrounding areas (Example 5.14b).

![Example 5.14: inner voice comes and goes freely](image)

Although the voices sometimes freely come and go within the texture, there is minimal ambiguity of the *position* of each voice within the structure (as compared with other fugues)
analyzed in this chapter). That is, voices typically do not permanently cross, nor does an entering voice suggest the reinterpretation of the position of existing voices within the structure. The one notable exception to this concerns the PAC in m. 39 (Example 5.15). In the left-hand part of this example on the first beat of m. 39, the B presumably belongs to both tenor and bass voices. The remainder of m. 39 features rests in the soprano, presumably indicating that the three voices present are the alto, tenor, and bass. However, by the time a fourth voice reenters in m. 43, those three voices have been reinterpreted as the top three voices; the fourth voice enters below the three that are already established.

Example 5.15: mm. 38-43, ambiguity of voice position within the four-part established structure

3. Summary

The relation of texture and large-scale form. All four fugues discussed in this chapter exhibit primarily a polyphonic texture; within each fugue, however, Mendelssohn finds ways of varying the texture. The fugues from the 1830s tend to employ a consistently contrapuntal texture; this texture is varied primarily by increasing or decreasing the number of voices present. In contrast, in the earlier fugues, textural variation is exploited as a means of sectionalizing the form. The sections of the tripartite G-minor fugue (1824) are reinforced by changes in the texture, which accompany PACs. The fugue starts by building to a contrapuntal texture, then it rebuilds the contrapuntal structures with a different subject and including arpeggiated and
chordal textures, and finally constructs a contrapuntal texture involving octave doubling. The drastic textural changes of the E-minor fugue (Op. 35/1) are equally effective at defining sections, though they are marked by evaded cadences. By contrast, since the Fugues in B Minor (Op. 35/3) and D Major (Op. 35/2) feature no dramatic textural shifts, textural changes cannot define sections.

Octave doubling. The fugues from the 1820s exploit the technique of octave doubling: the E-minor fugue doubles a line at the octave as early as m. 38, and persistently uses the technique until the end; the G-minor fugue waits to employ octave doubling until the third section, at which point the technique is employed in full force. In contrast, the Fugue in B Minor uses octave doubling only occasionally, in presenting the head of the subject; and the Fugue in D Major does not use octave doubling at all. In sum, whereas the early Fugues in E Minor and G Minor employ frequent octave doubling, particularly in the bass, the late fugues exhibit substantially less of this un-Bachian practice.

Voices exchanging position within the established structure. All of the fugues studied in this chapter have occasions where a line is reinterpreted within the voice structure. Though this occurs most clearly and frequently in the E-minor fugue, it is found in the others, including the D-major and B-minor fugues. This does not in itself refute the notion that Mendelssohn’s approach to fugal writing underwent a transformation from the 1820s to 1830s, but rather demonstrates a consistency in Mendelssohn’s style that illuminates the Romantic influence still in effect in all of his fugues.

Texture is a noteworthy element of Mendelssohn’s compositional style as portrayed in these fugues. It uniquely interacts with other elements of style, which have been addressed in
previous chapters, to create the distinguishing features of each fugue. In these fugues, Mendelssohn experimented with many aspects of texture, as manifest in the use of octave doubling; chordal, arpeggiated, or melody-accompaniment textures; and a single melodic entity changing position within the voice structure. The previous discussion has demonstrated that many of the un-Baroque textures utilized so strongly in the fugues of the 1820s recede in the fugues of the 1830s.
Fugue represents a relatively strict compositional process in which the composer has much freedom within the system of interwoven voices. The nineteenth century witnessed the dissolution of certain facets of this strictness while adhering to other aspects of fugal structure—namely the fugal exposition and later recurrence of the subject. Through the course of his career, Mendelssohn explored a variety of manifestations of fugal process and the dissolution thereof. Early in his career, even while still a student in the 1820s, he often experimented with ways to eschew Baroque fugal attributes: the texture varied from strict counterpoint, especially in the use of octave doubling and chordal or melody-accompaniment textures; the formal model that was generally taught in the early nineteenth century was manipulated, both additively and through the disintegration of the tonal support associated with this model; and the harmony, both locally and on the large-scale, entered tonal arenas atypical of eighteenth-century fugues. Whereas many of Mendelssohn’s earliest fugues experiment with the role of contrapuntal artifice in a Romantic fugue, his later style demonstrates more of an inclination toward baroque fugal practice. Though many of the aforementioned attributes are also present in Mendelssohn’s fugues from the 1830s, their degree of influence is substantially diminished from their earlier counterparts. His fugues of this time reflected the increasing momentum of the historicist movement through the early and mid nineteenth century.

To establish the stylistic transformation from the experimental approach to the more direct Baroque influence, this thesis explored the strong Bachian influence in Mendelssohn’s musical training (especially through his relationship with Zelter and the Berlin Singakademie),
and general issues pertaining to Mendelssohn’s fugues. This discussion was followed by a comparative study of four fugues, two of which were composed in the 1820s, and the other two of which were composed in the 1830s, focusing first on the roles of the subjects, then on the harmony, and finally on the texture.

Mendelssohn’s fugues from the 1820s often explore non-traditional techniques of voicing (including such radical procedures as octave doubling and adding voices within the existing contrapuntal structure), tonal orientations, and textures that do not reflect strict polyphonic writing. Additionally, the subjects, which present ambiguous tonal implications, are transformed through the course of the fugue. In experimenting with these musical encounters, Mendelssohn challenges rhetorical ideology associated with the fugue.

While the fugues from the 1830s also demonstrate Romantic influence, particularly of texture and voicing, this influence is not as pronounced as in the fugues from the 1820s. The later fugues presented in this study hardly deviate from standard tonal procedures and their subjects are only subtly transformed through the fugue. Additionally, these later fugues demonstrate the increasing significance of historicism within Romantic values of the early and mid nineteenth century.

Echoing Romantic historicist axiology, Arnold Schoenberg wrote in his Theory of Harmony:

[N]o one loves his predecessors more deeply, more fervently, more respectfully, than the artist who gives us something truly new; for respect is awareness of one’s station and love is a sense of community. Does anyone have to be reminded that Mendelssohn—even he was once new—unearthed Bach...

Though Mendelssohn was not alone in unearthing Bach, he played a significant role in the process, both by lifting up Bach as a great master of a past era, and by assuming certain

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contrapuntal procedures derived from the compositional practice of Bach. The fugues discussed in this thesis represent one avenue through which Mendelssohn sought to incorporate certain stylistic features of Bach into his own work.

Mendelssohn’s fugues represent a broad spectrum of approaches to contrapuntal writing. Because the high-Baroque fugue became the standard against which later fugal compositions were measured (particularly in historicist-influenced Romanticism), it is appropriate that Romantic fugues such as Mendelssohn’s be analyzed in light of general stylistic traits of Baroque fugues. Studying Mendelssohn’s fugues reveals the formidable influence of Baroque counterpoint. This influence, however, is most-strongly present in the fugues of the 1830s; in contrast, many of his fugues from the 1820s experiment with approaches to contrapuntal artifice within the genre of fugue.
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