

THE AUGMENTATION CANON IN J. S. BACH'S *MUSICALISCHES OPFER*¹

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One of the most salient features of Johann Sebastian Bach's character, which emerges from an engagement with his life and works, is his single-mindedness, sometimes even stubbornness. This can be seen, not only in his handling of financial and professional matters, but also, for example, in his ideas on church music and the role of music in faith—as evidenced in the notes in his Calov Bible. I believe that this aspect of his personality can also be clearly perceived in his continuing penchant for contrapuntal music. It has been widely observed that Bach increasingly concentrated on strict contrapuntal techniques in the last decade of his life.

The present article will be concerned with one example that demonstrates Bach's endeavor towards increasing contrapuntal complexity particularly well: the augmentation canon in his *Musicalisches Opfer*.² It will be seen that this piece gives us a glimpse of Bach determinately working on sophisticated contrapuntal problems.

Until now, however, roughly two ways of resolving this canon have been suggested. The difference lies in the part of the original melody that is to be augmented. The most common solution is where

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²In this article, original titles will be given in italics; attributed titles will be given in quotes.