

# Fugue Lesson

Major sections in bold, with double bars

J. Lee Graham

Technical points in regular

## Exposition.

*Artistic advice in italics*

Answer in the dominar

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

Subject stated (French folk song, "Ah vous dirais-je, Maman). end of subject begin counter-subject

*I could have ended the subject with just a half note on C, but I knew this little flourish would add interest. Later on it becomes important in development. It also introduces the movement that will drive the piece*

6

S

end of answer. modulation back to the tonic key

clash clash resolve resolve end of counter-subject

A

6

T

8

6

B

*note the suspensions I've employed here. Suspensions add harmonic interest and are highly desirable in contrapuntal writing; one must be careful to resolve them properly. The little jumps are often called "escape tones," and are also desirable. Mozart used suspensions similarly in his famous set of variations on this theme.*

Subject stated, back in the tonic

# Fugue Lesson

2  
11

S

A

11  
T

8

11  
B

*this held "common tone" in the alto line here is another desirable choice. It creates a situation of oblique motion, and anchors what is going on in the soprano and bass.*

*The last voice could have entered here with its Answer. But notice I added a measure here to solidify the tonality. I didn't want to have the answer enter with a B in the bass. This was an artistic judgment call on my part. You will make many such decisions in writing a fugue, as with any kind of composition; avoid taking too much license in the Exposition, though; as the fugue progresses, you can take more license legally, so save it.*

15

S

A

15  
T

8

15  
B

Answer in the dominant.

*note that when the bass voice is not stating the subject, it takes on more of the characteristics of a bass line, as it would in any other kind of composition.*

**End of Exposition.**

**1st Episode.**

*As you begin the 1st Episode, start thinking about which voice you want to enter next, and take that voice out of the texture as soon as it is practicable. Not only is it customary to "give that voice a rest," as it were, changing the texture adds interest and makes the ear appreciate the full texture more. Continue to consider this as the fugue progresses.*

*Always think a little ahead*

*Passing dissonance here. OK and even desirable as you anchor the tonality regularly*

*If you have reached the end of the Exposition, all voices having entered successfully, you're doing well. This is, honestly, the most difficult thing to accomplish. From here it is not necessary to Answer as was done strictly in the exposition.*

*I liked the bass line in the previous measure, so I decided to develop it in this episode. Notice how the alto and tenor take it up and "play" with it in a harmonic sequence. Sequences are almost indispensable in fugal writing. They assist in development and help you get from place to place harmonically. See how quickly I've modulated to B-minor? Very handy and desirable.*


harmonic statement of subject - intervals changed to fit the prevailing harmony at point of entry.

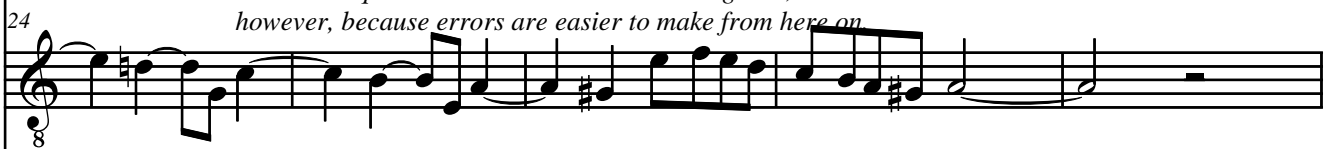
# Fugue Lesson

S 

*Technically, this little episode constitutes an incomplete exposition, which is allowable after the main exposition. Many fugues have another complete exposition after the 1st Episode, but it's not mandatory. From here on, there are fewer absolute requirements. You must be more vigilant, however, because errors are easier to make from here on*

Subject

A 

T 

B 

*oops! the tenor is above the alto! OK once in a while - here it works, but use it sparingly if you must, or the voices lose their individuality. Avoid it altogether if you can.*

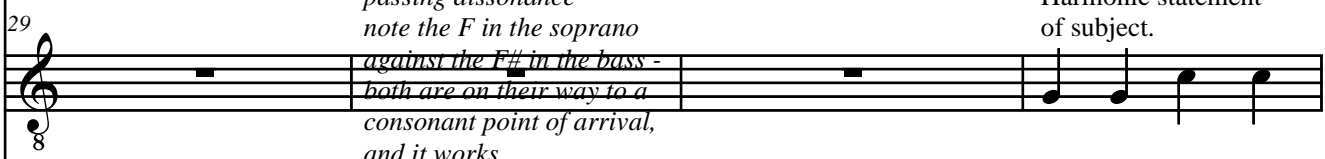
S 

*embellishment of the subject.*

A 

*passing dissonance - note the F in the soprano against the F# in the bass - both are on their way to a consonant point of arrival, and it works.*

Harmonic statement of subject.

T 

B 

33

S

A

T

B

Subject

*(augmentation is a compositional technique you can use to "spice up" your fugue. It's basically showing off, but it can be very cool).*

*notice the point of imitation between the alto and tenor here, a measure apart. Very desirable.*

38

S

A

T

B

Sequence

*I had to add an extra measure to balance this sequence, but I was able to make the cool "cross relation" between the C in the tenor and C# in the soprano work here.*

42

S

A

42

T

8

42

B

46

S

Full harmonic statement of subject in "stretto"

Partial statement of subject

Stretto is when a voice begins a statement of the subject before the previous voice has finished its statement - another "bells and whistles" technique.

46

T

8

46

B

important point of arrival here; it seemed time for a change in texture and character, so I dropped to two voices and changed the way they interact.

## Episode over subject in augmentation

50

S

A

50

T

8

50

B

Harmonic statement of subject  
in stretto and augmentation

The score consists of four staves labeled S, A, T, and B. The Soprano (S) and Tenor (T) parts are in treble clef, and the Bass (B) part is in bass clef. The Alto (A) part is in treble clef. The Soprano and Tenor parts feature a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, while the Alto and Bass parts feature a slower, more melodic line. The Soprano and Tenor parts are in unison, and the Alto and Bass parts are in unison. The Soprano and Tenor parts are in unison, and the Alto and Bass parts are in unison.

*NOTE: The fugue could go on indefinitely from here, alternating between subject statements and episodes. I have chosen to begin heading toward the end, employing advanced techniques*

Continuation of Episode  
over pedal point

55

S

A

55

T

8

55

B

Pedal Point - holding a note (usually in the bass) against contrasting activity in other voices

The score consists of four staves labeled S, A, T, and B. The Soprano (S) and Tenor (T) parts are in treble clef, and the Bass (B) part is in bass clef. The Alto (A) part is in treble clef. The Soprano and Tenor parts feature a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, while the Alto and Bass parts feature a slower, more melodic line. The Soprano and Tenor parts are in unison, and the Alto and Bass parts are in unison. The Soprano and Tenor parts are in unison, and the Alto and Bass parts are in unison.

60 *development of subject material*

S

60 *point of imitation in canon*

A

60

T

60

B

65 **Subject** **Episode**

S

65 *Partial statement of subject in stretto*

A

65 *partial statement of subject in stretto, "inverted" (upside down)*

T

65 *partial statement of subject in stretto, inverted.*

B

71 Subject

S

A

71

T

8

71

B

*point of imitation between  
tenor and alto*

75 Coda.

S

A

75

T

8

75

B

*The fugue is technically over at this point.  
The purpose of the coda is to "wrap it up with  
a bow" - release the built up tension and come  
to a satisfying ending.*

79

S

partial statement of subject in Coda,  
with partial augmentation.

A

79

T

8

79

B

I have sought through this little lesson to demystify the basic processes involved in composing a fugue, particularly for young people, in part through the use of informal, contemporary language and a familiar subject. If even a single inquiring composer is enlightened or encouraged by it, my heart will be gratified. *Soli Deo Gloria.* --J. Lee Graham