

**Musical Rhetoric and Figural Vocabulary in the
Inventions and Sinfonias of J.S. Bach**

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April 30, 2022

4:00pm

Western Early Keyboard Association

“Upright Instruction [*Aufrichtige Anleitung*], wherein lovers of the clavier, and especially those desirous of learning, are shown a clear way not only (1) to learn to play clearly in two voices, but also, after further progress, (2) to deal correctly and well with three obligato parts; at the same time not only to have good *inventiones* but to develop the same well, and above all, to arrive at a singing manner in playing and at the same time to acquire a strong foretaste of composition.”

Johann Sebastian Bach, *Inventionen und Sinfonien*, Edited and supplied with fingering by Ulrich Leisinger and Oswald Jonas (Vienna: Wiener Urtext Edition, 2007), XI.

Common Figurations

Motivic

Corta
 Inchoatio Imperfecta
 Passus Durisculus
 Saltus Durisculus

Decorative

Transitus
 Groppo
 Tirata
 Diminutio/Meiosis

Contrapuntal

Metabasis/Transgressio
 Syncopatio/Ligatura

Imitative

Fuga
 Mimesis
 Hypallage
 Repercussio
 Paronomasia

Corta

“[Consisting] of three rapid notes, one of which has a duration equal to that of the other two combined.” (Wolfgang Caspar Printz, *Phrynis Mytilenaeus*, 1696)

Sinfonia 12.

The image shows a musical score for Sinfonia 12. It consists of two staves: a treble staff and a bass staff. The treble staff contains a series of eighth notes, with three of them grouped together and enclosed in red brackets to illustrate the Corta figure. The bass staff contains a series of eighth notes, some of which are beamed together.

See also: Invention 5, Invention 6, Sinfonia 8

Inchoatio Imperfecta

“The omission of the opening consonance in the melody which is supplied by a basso continuo realization.” (Dietrich Bartel, *Musica Poetica*, 1997)

Inventio 11.

The image shows a musical score for Inventio 11. It consists of two staves: a treble staff and a bass staff. The treble staff contains a series of eighth notes, with a red vertical line at the beginning of the first measure. The bass staff contains a series of eighth notes, some of which are beamed together.

Sinfonia 1.

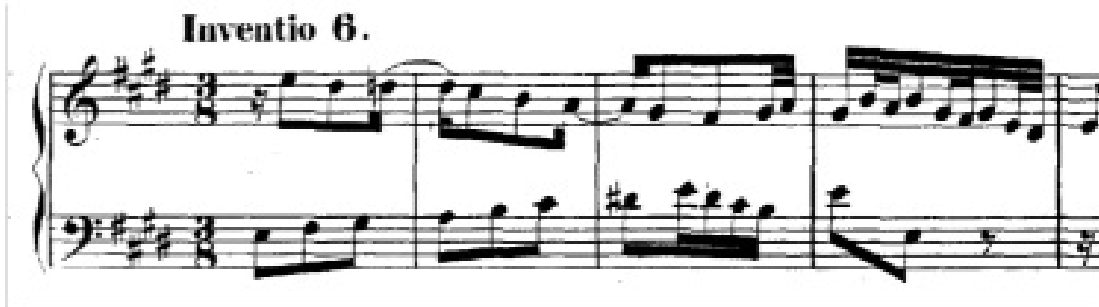
The image shows a musical score for Sinfonia 1. It consists of two staves: a treble staff and a bass staff. The treble staff contains a series of eighth notes, with a red vertical line at the beginning of the first measure. The bass staff contains a series of eighth notes, some of which are beamed together.

See also: Inventions 5, 6, 7, 11, 13, 14, & 15

Sinfonias 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, & 11

Passus Duriusculus

A voice rising or falling by half-steps



[Passus Duriusculus, cont.] Pathopoeia

“An apt figure to create affections...[occurring] when semitones are inserted into a composition which neither belong to its *modus* or *genus* but are introduced into a composition’s *modus* from another.” (Joachim Burmeister, *Hypomnematum*, 1599)

“Through semitones...no one appears to remain unmoved by the created affection.” (Burmeister, *Musica Poetica*, 1606)



See also: Invention 11, Sinfonia 4

Saltus Duriusculus

A leap of a diminished interval

Inventio 4.

The image shows the first few measures of 'Inventio 4' in G minor, 3/8 time. The treble clef part features a sequence of notes: G4, A4, Bb4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5. A red bracket highlights the interval between Bb4 and C5, which is a diminished second (one semitone).

Sinfonia 9.

The image shows the first few measures of 'Sinfonia 9' in G minor, 3/4 time. The treble clef part features a sequence of notes: G4, A4, Bb4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5. A red bracket highlights the interval between Bb4 and C5, which is a diminished second (one semitone).

See also: Inventions 2, 5, 6, 11, & 13

Sinfonias 2 & 3

Transitus

Inventio 11.

The image shows the first few measures of 'Inventio 11' in G minor, 3/4 time. The treble clef part features a sequence of notes: G4, A4, Bb4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5. A red bracket highlights the interval between Bb4 and C5, which is a diminished second (one semitone).

“A dissonant or passing note between two consonant ones, on either the strong or the weak beat.” (Dietrich Bartel, *Musica Poetica*, 1997)

Gropo

“A rapidly moving figure which appears to revolve as if it were a ball, thereby supplying its name. It consists of four rapid notes which form a half-circle, the first and third being the same, the second and fourth having different positions. It can be either ascending or descending.” (Printz, *Phrynis Mytilenaeus*, 1696)



Tirata

“A row of numerous notes of the same duration which either ascend or descend by step.” (Johann Gottfried Walther, *Musicalische Lexicon*, 1732)



See also: Inventions 3 & 4

Sinfonias 2, 6, 10, 12, & 13

Diminutio

“When a longer note such as a half or whole note is divided into numerous shorter ones.” (Meinrad Spiess, *Tractatus musicus compositorio-practicus*, 1745)



Diminutio, cont.

Sinfonia 6.

Three systems of musical notation for Sinfonia 6. Each system consists of a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The first system shows a melodic line in the treble clef and a bass line in the bass clef. The second system shows a more complex texture with rapid sixteenth-note passages in both staves. The third system continues the piece, featuring a dynamic marking of *pp* (pianissimo) in the bass staff.

See also: Inventions 4, 8, 10, & 14
Sinfonias 3 & 12

Metabasis/Transgressio

“The *metabasis* (or...*transgressio*) occurs when one voice crosses over the other.”
 (Mauritius Vogt, *Conclave thesauri magnae artis musicae*, 1719)

Syncopatio/Ligatura

“The *syncopatio*, which some call *ligatura*, occurs when a rhythmically shifted note stands against a consonance and a dissonance.” (Christoph Bernhard, *Tractatus compositionis augmentatus*, c. 1660)

“The *syncopatio*...is thus called because the notes are expressed and sung against the *tactus* in such a manner as if to strike against or assail the measured beat.” (Tomáš Janovka, *Clavis ad Thesaurum magnae artis musicae*, 1701)

Inventio 6.

The image shows a musical score for 'Inventio 6'. It consists of two staves: a treble staff and a bass staff. The time signature is 3/8. The key signature has three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The music is characterized by syncopated rhythms and ligatures, particularly in the treble staff where notes are often beamed together and placed on off-beats.

See also: Invention 1
 Sinfonia 1, 2, 3, 4, 11, & 12

Fuga

“*Fugae* are nothing else but frequent successive repetitions of the same theme in diverse voices.... This definition refers to flight, because one voice chases the other thereby producing the composition.”

(Johannes Nucius, *Musices poeticae sive de compositione cantus*, 1613)

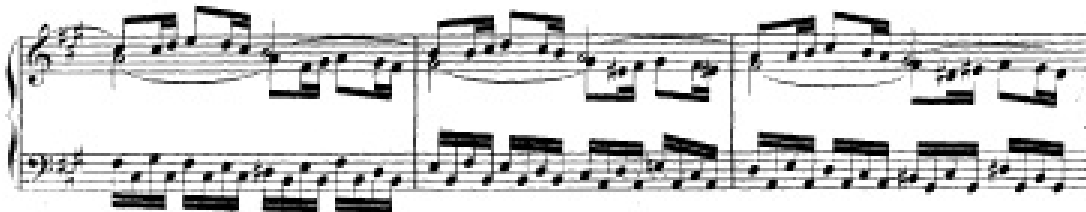
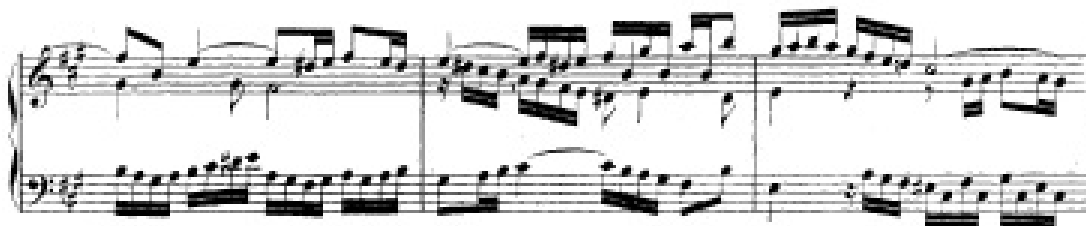
Mimesis/Imitatio

“An approximate rather than strict imitation of a subject at different pitches.”

(Bartel, *Musica Poetica*)

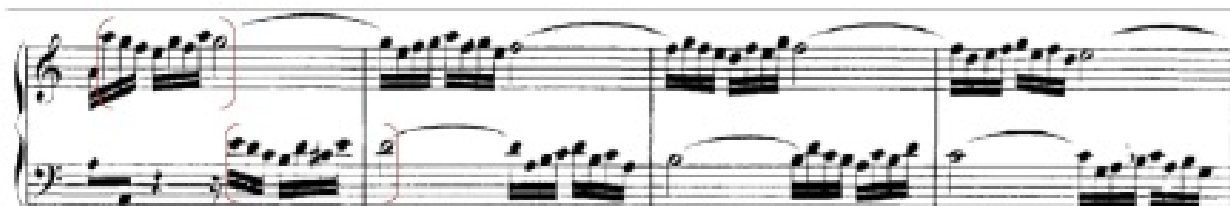


Mimesis/Imitatio, cont.



Hypallage

The *hypallage* occurs when a *fuga* introduces an inverted order of the intervals.” (Burmeister, *Musica Poetica*)



Repercussio

“*Repercussio* signifies the particular interval which the *dux* and *comes* of a *fuga* form in opposition to each other, according to the *modus*. In this example in the Dorian mode, the *dux* leaps from the *finalis* to the fifth; in the contrast, the *comes* leaps only a fourth, proceeding out of the A below the *finalis*.” (Walther, *Musicalische Lexicon*)



Paronomasia

“The *paronomasia* does not repeat a passage just as it already occurred but rather with new and powerful additions. These additions might apply either to single notes or can also be effected [*sic*] through a stronger or a weaker delivery.” (Johann Nikolaus Forkel, *Allgemeine Geschichte der Musik*, 1788)

Inventio 6.

Paronomasia, cont.

See also: Sinfonias 9 & 13

Invention No. 13 in A Minor, BWV 784

Inventio 13.

Messanza

Inchoatio Imperfecta

Repercussio

- *Messanza*: A mixed figure consisting of four rapid notes of which either some remain stationary while others move or some leap while others move by step. (Printz, *Phrynis Mytilenaeus*)

Sinfonia No. 12 in A Major, BWV 798

Sinfonia 12.

Corta

Tirata

Syncopatio

Corta

Syncopatio

Syncopatio

Corta

Tirata

Sinfonia No. 13 in A Minor, BWV 799, mm. 15-28

- *Parembolo*: a supplementary voice in a fugue which fills in the harmony by proceeding parallel to one of the fugue's regular voices. (Bartel, *Musica Poetica*)
- "The *Salti composti* consists of four rapid notes [in] three leaps." (Printz, *Phrynis Mytilenaeus*)

Invention No. 8 in F Major, BWV 779

- "In instrumental music, [the *salto semplice*] consists of two eighth or other rapid notes.... It is either *intendens* or *remittens*, the former ascending, the latter descending.... Every leap occurs either to the third, fourth, fifth, sixth, or octave." (Printz, *Phrynis Mytilenaeus*)
- *Noema*: a homophonic passage within a contrapuntal texture (Bartel, *Musica Poetica*).

Invention No. 4 in D Minor, BWV 775

Inventio 4. Saltus
durusculus

Tirata Consonantiae Impropriae

- *Consonantiae impropriae*: false consonances, such as certain fourths, diminished or augmented fifths, augmented seconds, and diminished sevenths (Bartel, *Musica Poetica*)

Invention No. 11 in G Minor, BWV 782

Inventio 11.

Tirata

Inchoatio imperfecta Catabasis, Pathopoeia

- The *catabasis*...is a musical passage through which lowly, insignificant [*sic*], and disdainful things are represented." (Walther, *Musicalische Lexicon*)

Invention No. 1 in C Major, BWV 772, mm. 15-22

15

Hypallage Syncopatio Hypallage Syncopatio

19

Pallogia Hypallage

Pallogia

- “The *pallogia* is a continual repetition of the structure of the *melos* [melody] but not at the same pitch.” (Burmeister, *Hypomnematum*)

Sinfonia No. 1 in C Major, BWV 787

Sinfonia 1.

Groppo Fuga Syncopatio Syncopatio

Tirata Repercussio

Inchoatio Imperfecta Syncopatio Syncopatio Syncopatio

Hypallage Hypallage Syncopatio

Invention No. 6 in E Major, BWV 777

Inventio 6.

Syncopatio Pleonasmus Cotta
Inchoatio Imperfecta Parrhesia Paronomasia

- “The *parrhesia* is an intermixing of a certain dissonance with the other harmonizing voices. It is placed in the middle of a beat in order that the other voices can resolve it within the beat.” (Burmeister, *Musica Poetica*)
- “The *pleonasmus* is forged out of a *symblema* [passing dissonance] and *syncopa* [suspension]....” (Burmeister, *Hypomnematum*)

Sinfonia No. 6 in E Major, BWV 792, mm. 28-39

28

Syncopatio Fuga
Hypallage Tirata
Aposiopesis

32

36

- “In music the *aposiopesis* refers to a *pausa generalis*, or a complete silence in all voices and parts of the composition simultaneously. (Walther, *Lexicon*)

Sinfonia No. 3 in D Major, BWV 789

Sinfonia 3.

Saltus duriusculus

Inchoatio imperfecta

Syncopatio

Heterolepsis

Tirata

- *Heterolepsis*: the intrusion of one voice into the range of another. (Bartel, *Musica Poetica*)

Invention No. 14 in B-flat Major, BWV 784

Inventio 14. Messanza

Hypallage

Inchoatio Imperfecta

Palilogia

- *Messanza*: A mixed figure consisting of four rapid notes of which either some remain stationary while others move or some leap while others move by step. (Printz, *Phrynis Mytilenaeus*)
- “The *palilogia* is a continual repetition of the structure of the *melos* [melody] but not at the same pitch.” (Burmeister, *Hypomnematum*)

Sinfonia 5.

Salto Semplice

Fuga

Inchoatio Imperfecta

Interrogatio

Repercussio

Salti Composti

Invention No. 10 in G Major, BWV 781

Inventio 10.

Interrogatio

Epizeuxis

Epizeuxis

Noema

Fuga

Repercussio

- *Epizeuxis*: an immediate and emphatic repetition of a word, note, motif, or phrase. (Bartel, *Musica Poetica*)
- *Interrogatio*: a musical question rendered variously through pauses, a rise at the end of the phrase or melody, or through imperfect or phrygian cadences. (Bartel, *Musica Poetica*)
- *Noema*: a homophonic passage within a contrapuntal texture (Bartel, *Musica Poetica*).

Sinfonia No. 9 in F Minor, BWV 795

Sinfonia 9.

Labels in the score: Inchoatio Imperfecta, Anticipatio, Catabasis, Pathopoeia, Saltus Duriusculus, Fuga, Saltus Duriusculus.

- *Anticipatio*: an additional upper or lower neighboring note after a principal note, prematurely introducing a note belonging to the subsequent harmony or chord. (Bartel, *Musica Poetica*)
- “The *catabasis*...is a musical passage through which lowly, insignificant [*sic*], and disdainful things are represented.” (Walther, *Musicalische Lexicon*)

Sinfonia No. 8 in F Major, BWV 794

Sinfonia 8.

Labels in the score: Sinfonia 8., Accentus, Fuga, Gropo, Inchoatio Imperfecta, Corta, Syncopatio, Palilogia, Parembole.

- “The...*accentus* occurs when a note is placed a step higher next to a consonance or dissonance. This usually occurs when the notes should naturally fall by a second.” (Bernhard, *Tractatus*)
- “The *palilogia* is a continual repetition of the structure of the *melos* [melody] but not at the same pitch.” (Burmeister, *Hypomnematum*)
- “The *parembole* is an interjection...of certain notes through an additional voice, emulating the fugal structure without being a part of the *fuga*.” (Burmeister, *Hypomnematum*)

Finis: the End

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