

The fugue

What is a fugue?

Fugue is a contrapuntal compositional technique, based on the idea of imitation, in which a theme (or themes) is extended and developed mainly by imitative counterpoint.

A fugue can be instrumental, orchestral or choral and is usually written in 3 or 4 voices. Even if a fugue isn't choral we still refer to different parts as voices (SATB).

The fugue consists of a series of expositions and developments with no fixed number of each. At its simplest, a fugue might consist of one exposition followed by optional development. A more complex fugue might follow the exposition with a series of developments, or another exposition.

Sections of the fugue

1. **Exposition-** Part of the fugue consisting of subject with at least one answer, and possibly countersubject. the subject must appear in all voices and answers must be tonal or real to subjects. The exposition normally concludes immediately after the subject appears in the last voice.
 - **Re-Exposition:** An exposition, following the initial exposition, in which the voices enter in the same order as the first exposition.
 - **Counter Exposition:** An exposition following the initial exposition in which the voices enter in a different order than they did in the first exposition, or the subject of the new exposition is a contrapuntal variation of the original.
 - **Double Exposition:** Exposition with new subject, this is called a double fugue. Or if three subjects then it is called a triple fugue.

2.Development: motifs from the exposition are developed.. Episodes are usually ended by cadence and may follow one after the other. Developmental episodes usually begin from the subject, vary it in some way, but gradually building up to a restatement of the subject in at least one voice.

3.Coda or Codetta: Concluding segment of a section (codetta) or of the entire fugue (coda). Codas and codettas sound like they are something added after the end of the section or work. The function of codettas is often modulatory. Not all fugues have these.

Parts of the fugue

1. **Subject:** Melody that states the melodic/rhythmic material of the fugue. Subjects typically have two parts: the "head" is used to attract attention either by unusual rhythmic or intervallic emphasis, while the "tail" is typically more rhythmically uniform, and sometimes modulatory.
2. **Answer:** Subject imitation which immediately follows the first statement of the subject: in a different voice and usually fifth higher..
 - **Tonal Answer:** An answer that typically stays in the same key as the subject. To do this it is necessary for the intervals of the subject to change.
 - **Real Answer:** An answer that is a transposition of the subject to another key, usually the dominant.
3. **Countersubject:** sometimes comes in after the subject or answer (in the same voice). Countersubjects serve as counterpoint to subjects (or answers) sounding simultaneously in a different voice. Not every fugue will have a countersubject. Some fugues may have more than one countersubject.

Compositional techniques

Tonal

1. **Modulation:** Repetition of a motive in another key.
2. **Mutation:** Statement of the subject or answer (or any other primary material) in the opposing mode. A subject first stated in minor and later stated in major is said to have "mutated."

Contrapuntal

1. **Stretto:** Entry of a motif in a second voice before the first voice has finished its statement. Motive can mean subject, answer, countersubject,
2. **Augmentation/Diminution:** Statement of a motive in rhythmic durations that are proportionately doubled or halved.
3. **Pedal Point:** Suspension of one pitch, often the bass, Fugues often conclude with episodes of pedal point.
4. **Retrograde:** Statement of the motive's pitches in reverse order.
5. **Melodic Inversion:** (Contrary Motion) Statement of a motive where interval directions have been made to move in the opposite direction of the original motive.
6. **Sequence:** Repetition of a motive at another pitch level, usually up or down a step.