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How does Jacques Loussier’s interpretation of Toccata and Fugue in D Minor differ from its original arrangement for organ?

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Attached Music Sample Reference (CD):

Sample / CD Tracks	CD Tracks	Arrangement	Reference
1	1-2	Jacques Loussier	9
2	73-85	Jacques Loussier	9
3	95-102	Jacques Loussier	9
4	22-27	Jacques Loussier	9
5	30-40	Jacques Loussier	9,12
6	45-51	Jacques Loussier	9

7	103-109	Jacques Loussier	9
8	N▲	Jacques Loussier	9,12
9	74-80	Organ arr.	10,13
10	16-17	Jacques Loussier	12
11	2-3	Organ arr.	13

12	FULL	Organ arr.	Whole ▲ppendix 1
13	FULL	Jacques Loussier	Whole ▲ppendix 1

~~Extended Essay Music:~~
A comparative essay between two different arrangements of
Tocatta and Fugue in D Minor by JS Bach

Research Question:

How does Jacques Loussier's interpretation of Tocatta and Fugue in D Minor differ from its original arrangement for organ?

Introduction

This aim of this Extended Essay is to see how a piece of Baroque music can be adapted into a modern jazz style. Whilst some composers and jazz combos such as Stravinsky or the Modern Jazz Quartet have ventured into third stream jazz (combining classical and jazz components in a piece), few artists have completely reinterpreted classical music as written. Furthermore, those that do so tend to focus on Baroque pieces by Bach. So why is Bach's music so open to interpretation in so many different styles?

In order to narrow down the scope of such a research topic, I will focus on a comparison between two arrangements of the piece ~~Tocatta and Fugue in D Minor~~ MV 565 by J.S. Bach. I have chosen this piece as it is frequently associated with horror movies and also unquestionably one of the best known of organ works. The first version is the original Baroque arrangement for pipe organ, and the second is an arrangement is a jazz interpretation by the ~~Jacques Loussier Trio~~. By seeing how this piece from the Baroque Period is rearranged into a contemporary jazz style, perhaps we can see why Bach's works and other pieces from the Baroque period are so often "jazzed up" by modern artists.

Background


Tocatta and Fugue in D Minor is a piece written by Johann Sebastian Bach for organ during his seven year tenure as court organist in Weimar sometime between 1703 and 1717. Because the earliest surviving copy of the piece is by a pupil of one of Bach's pupils, the exact date of composition is unclear. Beside's Loussier's arrangement, other variations of this piece include Vanessa Mae's dance remix and Stotowski / Ormandy's orchestral arrangement in 1927, which was also featured as the opening music in Walt Disney's 1940 *Fantasia*. The opening melody, as shown in , is now a classic horror theme associated with gothic elements and horror movies.



Figure 1: The opening of *Tocatta and Fugue in D Minor* BWV565 by J.S. Bach²

The word "toccata" is derived from *toccare*, Italian for "to touch"³. It is a complex piece of music intended to show off a keyboardist's virtuosity. In *Tocatta and Fugue in D Minor*, Bach combines the idea of a toccata with the structure of a fugue. The result is a structurally complex and highly virtuosic piece written for the organ. The word *fugue* is derived from the word "flight", giving an idea of voices chasing each other as they enter with the subject (the main melody). A fugue normally contains predictable structural elements in comparison to a toccata. As a radio program puts it, "If you think about a *toccat* as a free-flowing conversation, careening from one idea to the next, a

¹ **Bach / Stokowski, Tocatta and Fugue in D Minor**, Leon Botstein (webpage)
² **Tocatta and Fugue in D Minor – Bach, Johann Sebastian**, Opus Digital Scores (web-image)
³ **Bach / Stotowski: Tocatta and Fugue in D Minor**, Geoff Kuenning (webpage)

fugue is a formal debate."⁴

So what exactly is a fugue? A fugue can be defined as "a type of contrapuntal composition for a particular number of parts or "voices", each entering successively and in imitation of each other."⁵ A fugue generally consists of two or three sections divided into different episodes, each with their own characteristics and function in a piece. Compositional techniques commonly found in fugues consist of augmentation/diminution, melodic inversion, sequence and various contrapuntal inversions.

The second version is an arrangement by Jacques Loussier, a contemporary jazz pianist famous for his interpretations of Bach's music. He demonstrated musical ability at an early age, starting to play the piano at the age of ten and entering the Conservatoire de Musique in Paris at sixteen and eventually graduating at the top of his class. In 1958, Loussier came upon the idea to combine his interest in jazz and with his love for Bach's music, thus he formed the *Les 3 Loussier* with Pierre Michelot and Christian Garros.

Since Bach himself was also one of the best keyboardists and improvisers of his time, Loussier feels that Bach's music is naturally suited to his own style. "There is already jazz in the music of Bach, and my music shows respect for Bach's original,"⁶ says Loussier. The Play Bach Trio became an icon of popular music during the 1960s by using Bach's compositions as a basis for improvisation. Their music appealed not only to the jazz avant-garde, but also to classical die-hard listeners who found his style refreshing." Whilst others such as John Lewis and the Modern Jazz Quartet have had their attempts in swinging the classics, few were as successful as the trio. Their first album "Play Bach No.1" sold more than 6 million copies in 15 years until the trio broke up in 1978. In fact, Loussier describes the Modern Jazz Quartet as one of his early influences: "...The most interesting people I met in Jazz Circles were the Modern Jazz Quartet. They gave me the idea to form a trio to explore

⁴ **Evening at Pops: Toccata and Fugue in D Minor**, E. Meyer, B. Fleck, M. Marshall (webpage)

⁵ **Oxford Concise Dictionary of Music (Fourth Edition 1996)**, Michael Kennedy (OUP)

⁶ **Cover of Vivaldi The Four Seasons**, Alyn Shipton (SACEM)

my own improvisations."⁷

Years later in 1985, Loussier reformed the Jacques Loussier Trio with Vincent Charbonnier and André Arpino. The second arrangement of *Bach's Goldberg Variations* in this Extended Essay is featured on their 1993 album *Les Variations de Bach*. In a review by Les Line on the album, he says "This recording is 24 years better. Without leaving the true sentiment of Bach, Jacques Loussier brings out the jazz feeling that has always been present in Bach's music and makes it obvious."⁸ Loussier himself also comments on his new trio:

"I think I'm improving on my improvisations. My new trio gives me so many different options. The original group was very much a jazz trio, but now we have other influences which allow us to work together in different ways, which so much more freedom."⁹

With this in mind, it should be interesting to see how his interpretation of *Bach's Goldberg Variations* differs from the original.

⁷ Jacques Loussier Exclusive Interview, Paul Briggs (webpage)

⁷ Jacques Loussier Exclusive Interview, Paul Briggs (webpage)

⁸ Review: Jacques Loussier Plays Bach, Les Line (webpage)

⁹ Cover of Jacques Loussier Plays Bach, Alyn Shipton SACEM

Analysis:**A comparative study of the two arrangements:**

Since both arrangements of *Toccata and Fugue in D Minor* are derived for the same piece, both pieces should theoretically sound quite similar. However whilst the notes are much the same, the two versions sound entirely different. By analyzing different elements in the music, we can see where this difference lies.

Toccata and Fugue in D Minor

As the name suggests, Toccata and Fugue in D Minor is a piece combining both forms. Whilst the whole piece can be said to contain elements of both a toccata and a fugue, in my opinion, the first section of music is the toccata, whilst the rest is the fugue. Only after 30 bars does the main subject of the fugue appear. The fugal section can be subdivided into the following sections.

- ▶ **Exposition:** (Bars 30-57): The purpose of the exposition is to expose the subject and countersubjects in all the voices. In *Toccata and Fugue in D Minor*, each voice enters in turn with the subject and then weaves together polyphonically. This gives the music a thick texture consisting of subjects and countersubjects. The exposition ends after the fourth voice enters on the pedal board in Bar 57.
- ▶ **Developmental Episodes:** (Bars 57-132): This section is where the motives from the exposition are developed. The subject also reappears in the music, such as the pedal solo in bars 109-111. A range of fugal techniques such as contrapuntal and melodic inversions (bars 115-119), articulation and modulation are employed in this section. For example in bars 86-94, Voice 4 reenters with the subject and a stretto effect is created. A stretto is when a voice enters before the previous voice has finished its statement. The long trills and highly contrapuntal structure helps to create a thick texture. Imitations of the

subjects are played by all three voices in bars 86, 88 and 91, with occasional examples of contrapuntal inversions such as in Bar 93-94. The final Recitative episode carries little relation to previous sections. It serves as a display of a keyboardist's virtuosity and as a codetta (ending to a section).

- ▶ **Coda:** (Bars 133-143): The coda is a section added to end a piece of music. In this case, tension is built up in the Presto section by the long sequence of demisemiquavers. The piece comes to a majestic finale in *Mesoso*, comprising of a series of double accented notes linked by an arpeggio and finishing slowly with a minor plagal cadence. ▲ minor plagal cadence is a subdominant chord (minor fourth) is followed by the tonic (chord I). In this case, G minor (iv) on bar 141 changes into D Minor (I). ▲ plagal cadence gives the piece a sense of conclusion, but not as strong as a perfect V-I cadence ending¹⁰.

Whilst both arrangements of the piece follow roughly the same sections – exposition, development and coda, Loussier's version differs to what is written down.

Loussier explains that the structure of Bach's music and jazz are very much alike: "...The construction of the music, depending on the pieces is 8, 16 or 32 bars, this is the same as the repost of the jazz standard... ▲ Also the fact that most of the time he uses a walking bass line. Some pieces really look like jazz. He was the jazzman of the period..."⁷ The walking bass line is well adapted to playing the motor rhythms (a steady driving rhythm constant throughout a section or a piece), which is again a common feature in Baroque music. ▲ Although Loussier retains the original structure of the piece; some parts are new or entirely different, described below:

⁷ Jacques Loussier Exclusive Interview, Paul Briggs (webpage)

¹¹ Cadential Forms, Andrew Milne (webpage)

Sections which follow the notes of the original:

- **Bars 1-2** (Scope 1). Because a piano cannot sustain notes, the same notes in the opening melody do not sound as powerful as when played on an organ. Hence the melody created is entirely different and far less dramatic effect
- **Bars 0-85** (Scope 2). Loussier plays the notes as notated while Charbonnier plays a supporting bass riff. Drums are added for effect but the melody remains the same.
- **Bars 95-102** (Scope 3). The piano plays the notes as notated and the bass substitutes the pedal board. It is embellished with a few drum ornaments, yet the notes played remain the same as those written down.

Sections which are a development of an original element

- **Bars 22-27** (Scope 4). Whilst the piano part is played as written, Charbonnier churns out a rhythmic ostinato on the bass. This is interesting because the bass becomes the focal point in the music whilst the piano becomes the accompaniment.
- **Bars 30-40** (Scope 5). The piano starts off playing the subject and follows by adding a swing rhythm to it. It improvises around the notated melodies in bar 34 before returning to the main subject. Loussier does this by embellishing the melodies by adding ornaments in between the notes based around jazz scales. This affixes a jazzy touch to the melodies of the piece.
- **Bars 45-51** (Scope 6). The notated melody in bars 49-52 are played by the bass whilst the piano improvises over it, similar to the method described above in Bars 30-40.

Sections which appear to be entirely new

- **Bars 103-109** (Scope 7). Both the piano and bass improvises loosely based on the melody before launching into a series of downward scales. This is a fill-in in the music leading up to the breaking section of improvised solos.
- **Solo Break** (Scope 8). This is break comprising of nearly 2 minutes of new material based around the theme. The piano breaks away with a series of harmonic chords accompanied by the bass before developing into a series of steady upward moving pattern. As this happens, the drums develop from a swinging ride cymbal

into a solo which gradually fades after a minute. The piano takes over with a soulful improvised solo in D natural minor as the bass ad-libs and the drum kit accompanies with cymbal effects. The piano melody gradually changes to D harmonic minor (with a C#) and fades off until a drum fill picks up the subject again.

2. ~~Instrumentation~~ Dynamics

There have been arguments over whether Bach originally wrote ~~Toccata & Fugue~~ for organ, or for another instrument instead. There are many points in the piece that are uncharacteristic of Bach, which lends itself to suggest that the arrangement for organ may have been by another hand¹². An example of this is the subject appearing as a pedal solo in bar 109, the only one to be found in Bach's fugues. However, there is still insufficient evidence for us to find out if the piece was originally composed as an organ solo.

Although there are no dynamic marks found in this organ piece, the arranger on the organ employs different voices to create a terraced dynamic effect within sequences (bars 74-80 – ~~Score~~ 9), which is a common feature in Baroque music.

Whilst the organ has less control over dynamics, its sheer size is capable of producing tones at very loud volumes. This greatly contributes to the mood of the piece. Whilst Loussier's version is much softer it still has a great dynamic range. As the piano substitutes an organ to play the main melody, it cannot sustain notes like an organ. Loussier compensates this by adding ornamentations such as trills and appoggiaturas in his melodies. The additions of the drums and bass mainly serve to accompany the piano. The lack of pedal-board on the piano is usually substituted by the bass, at the same time creating its own riffs and ostinatos.

Award winning jazz drummer Simon Chui, who has been playing and teaching the drums for over 15 years, explains the role of the drummer, "In modern drumming, we use the drums to define the time

¹² **Toccata & Fugue in d – not by Bach!?** Tom Parsons (webpage)

and to create the flow (groove) in jazz music. It is important as a solo instrument and also as a part of the jazz performance." In this piece, I believe the drums serve both as a timekeeping device and also to enrich the texture by adding special effects such as cymbal rolls and fill-ins.

3. *Rhythm Groove*

Boccherini's Minuet contains many tempo markings which is unexpected of Bach as his organ works which normally contain very few. In contrast however, the fugal section of the piece carries few notations such as *accelerando* and *ritardando*. Motor rhythms are frequent, both in the melody (voices) and the accompaniment. The use of pedal point (e.g. bars 13-15) creates a driving rhythm, an attribute in many pieces by other Baroque composers. An example would be *Four Seasons – Spring* by Vivaldi.

Whilst both versions follow the tempo markings for each section as noted (e.g. *Presto*, *Adagio* etc), in my opinion the arrangement on pipe organ abides to the notes much more closely than Loussier's version. Loussier occasionally changes tempo in the middle of a bar to suit the mood, such as the *accelerando* in Bar 8, and this gives the music a less restricted quality.

The use of a swing tempo in Loussier's piece, notated as () is another trait found in nearly all jazz music. For instance, the mood of the rising and falling melodic inversions in bars 115-119 becomes much more jovial simply because of the change in rhythm.

Chabonier also employs bass riffs over the piano melody. As part of the rhythm section in jazz, the bass has an important role in Loussier's arrangement, both as a supporting accompaniment and also as a melodic voice. From my point of view, I see the walking bass line in bar 48 rivaling the piano improvisation.

In *Boccherini's Minuet*, Andre Arpino adds a "percussive layer to Bach's written rhythmic structure, reinforcing time and meter, while

adding to the trio's textural resonance."¹³ He constantly switches between a swing rhythm and back to create a contrasting effect (e.g. bars 30-32 – [Score 5](#)). His use of improvisation and syncopation (offbeat accents) is a common jazz characteristic, such as in bars 16-17 ([Score 7](#)) with the descending arpeggios followed by punctuating chords.

4. Melody and accompaniment

The use of techniques such as inversion, sequencing and counterpoint in the melody is characteristic of Bach's fugues, many of which are carried in Loussier's piece. This is best demonstrated by the opening of the fugal section in Bar 30 onwards. The exposition begins with Voice 1 introducing the subject. Voice 2 answers a fifth higher in Bar 32 whilst Voice 1 plays a countersubject. The use of imitation and sequencing is also demonstrated by the countersubject in bars 5-6. It is imitated in bars 6-7 an octave higher. This is then inverted in descending parallel octaves 8-10, followed again by the countersubject in bar 10 and an imitation of the subject in bar 11.

However, the piece is simple both contrapuntally and harmonically in comparison to Bach's other fugues. For example, the piece opens in octaves (Bar 1), which is both unusual and rare for Bach's pieces. The scholar Peter Williams also termed the replicating arpeggios in bars 74-81 as "naïve"¹⁰. In effect, this allowed the trio more room for improvisation such as in the section mentioned above.

The melody is played by all three instruments in Loussier's arrangement. Although a piano does not have the range of voices an organ can produce, it has dynamic variation. The bass supports the piano even when no notation is written for the pedal board. This is done either by a riff based around chords or as a second voice. Occasionally, the bass and drums also take over as the main musical focus. Drummer Chui describes the drum solo break ([Score 8](#)) as a chance for the drummer "to express his own interpretation of the piece" and "to make a piece more colorful."¹⁴

¹³ CD Review: Bach's Goldberg Variations, *Flibbert J. Goosty* (webpage)

¹⁰ Toccata & Fugue in d – not by Bach!? *Tom Parsons* (webpage)

Improvisation takes place on all instruments in Loussier's version, notably on the piano (over the main melody), which incorporates common jazz techniques such as appoggiaturas, trills and glissandos. Many jazz harmonies are incorporated such as bars 103-109, where Loussier substitutes the countersubject for chord changes. The bass ad-libs a walking bass based around the same chords which is a common method employed by jazz bassists. The addition of these jazz techniques enriches the melody and changes the tone of the music.

5. Texture of the Overall Music Effect

▲ combination of both homophonic (such as bars 74-84) and polyphonic (bars 32-40) textures can be found in *Wachet am Abend*. Bach's use of compositional techniques such as imitation, inversions and weaving of voices are familiar fugal traits.

Loussier's arrangement has a greater textual range due to the greater number of instruments, each with their own distinctive timbres. ▲ At the same time however, a piano cannot compare with an organ in creating the same volume and power in the music. Since the piano has a limited range of timbres, it relies on the bass and drums to enrich the texture. In contrast, the organ also has a large range of different voices which are used in the piece to give a "call and response" impression within the piece (such as bars 74-80 – *Score 9*)

In my opinion, the original arrangement for the pipe organ is much more dramatic and sinister compared to Jacques Loussier's version in terms of overall music effect. This is most evidently displayed by the dominant 9th chord in the second bar of music (*Score 2*) which adds to the haunting atmosphere. On the other hand, Loussier's piano flourishes and improvisations stand out over the other voices more than individual voices on the organ, notably in the developmental episodes and the break. The trio retains the tense atmosphere in the preposition (i.e. the opening theme) of the piece, and then the rest becomes much more relaxed and subtle.

Conclusion

Jacques Loussier and his trio have managed to synthesize the core structure of the original version with their own improvisations. The resulting work is a ~~vocal~~ *Baroque* which encapsulates the central elements of the original piece whilst subtly adding their own jazz harmonies.

Nearly all the initial characteristics which make ~~vocal~~ *Baroque* typically Baroque, from the motor rhythms and its polyphonic texture to the use of imitation and articulation - are incorporated into Loussier's arrangement. In fact many of these elements lend themselves to jazz interpretation so well that they were not changed. This may be the reason why artists tend to "jazz-up" Baroque music instead of music from another period. However, this essay is only a comparison of one piece of music; therefore we cannot simply assume all pieces from the 18th century are so accessible to jazz interpretation.

Jacques Loussier manages to skillfully improvise around the melody as well as subtly incorporating jazz harmonies into the music. The break towards the end of the piece is a fine example of a completely new episode based around the theme. In my opinion, the tone of the piece is altered from being tense and dramatic in the original to mellow and melodious in Loussier's piece. The jazzy elements from the 21st century build upon those from the 18th Century to form an entirely refreshing and innovative approach to a piece of Baroque music.

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Unquoted references and other supporting material:

ANNOTATED SCORE (appendix 1):
J.S. Bach: Toccata and Fugue in (BWV 565) for organ solo
(Online music score)
Virtual Sheet Music
www.virtualsheetmusic.com

SUPPORTING SCORE:
Bach-Busoni: Toccata and Fugue in D minor For the Piano vol.1629
(Music score)
Ferruccio Busoni
Schirmer's Library of Musical Classics

RECORDING SAMPLE 1:
Toccata and Fugue in D Minor (pipe organ)
Unknown artist
Unknown producer

RECORDING SAMPLE 2:
Jacques Loussier Plays Bach
(Compact Disc)
Jacques Loussier: Piano
Vincent Charbonnier: Bass
André Arpino: Drums
Arrangements by Jacques Loussier
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