

PERFORMANCE CONSIDERATIONS ON BACH'S FIRST BOOK OF THE *WELL-
TEMPERED CLAVIER*

by

DIEGO SUAREZ

(Under the direction of Evgeny Rivkin)

ABSTRACT

This document accompanies a recording of the complete first book of the *Well-Tempered Clavier* (1722) by Johann Sebastian Bach and surveys a variety of performance issues found throughout the preparation of the author's work. Such issues include relevant aspects of performance such as tempo, articulation, dynamics, ornamentation, and the use of pedals. The results demonstrate the variety of performance possibilities in the *Well-Tempered Clavier*. Background information is provided to demonstrate the historical context and relevance of the composition. Sources are used to support, as well as to show differences in perspectives among the issues discussed.

INDEX WORDS: Music, Baroque, Keyboard, Johann Sebastian Bach, *Well-Tempered Clavier*, Piano Performance, Performance Issues, Music Interpretation

PERFORMANCE CONSIDERATIONS ON BACH'S FIRST BOOK OF THE *WELL-*
TEMPERED CLAVIER

by

DIEGO SUAREZ

B.A., College of Charleston, 2014

M.M., Shenandoah University, 2018

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2024

© 2024

Diego Suarez

All Rights Reserved

PERFORMANCE CONSIDERATIONS ON BACH'S FIRST BOOK OF THE *WELL-*
TEMPERED CLAVIER

By

DIEGO SUAREZ

Major Professor: Evgeny Rivkin

Committee: Evgeny Rivkin
Liza Stepanova
Stephen Valdez

Electronic Version Approved:

Ron Walcott
Vice Provost for Graduate Education and Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
August 2024

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express gratitude to my teachers and mentors at the University of Georgia, who took part in the realization of this project. Their warm support, as well as helpful insight, guided and inspired me to accomplish this challenging work.

I am very thankful for the instruction from my organ teacher last semester, Dr. John Coble, who introduced me to and contributed in my understanding of the organ and its performance. Because of this, I was able to experience this music through the lens of one of the most important instruments of Johann Sebastian Bach's time.

I am also very appreciative for the pertinent and helpful feedback from my committee members, Dr. Liza Stepanova and Dr. Stephen Valdez, whose careful comments and suggestions guided me in the right direction for the completion of this project.

Finally, I'm deeply grateful for the trust and support of my piano professor, Dr. Evgeny Rivkin, who not only supervised and guided this project from the early stages, but also accompanied me and influenced me greatly through his exceptional artistry and teachings over the three years of my doctoral studies at the University of Georgia.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
LIST OF FIGURES.....	vi
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
<i>The Well-Tempered Clavier Book I: General Background</i>	2
2 PERFORMANCE CONSIDERATIONS.....	7
Tempo.....	9
Articulation	10
Dynamics.....	13
Ornamentation.....	14
Use of Pedals.....	15
3 CONCLUSION.....	17
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	18
APPENDIX	
RECORDING.....	20

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Example 1.1: Bach, Fugue in C-Sharp Minor, mm. 1-4, <i>Well-Tempered Clavier I</i>	4
Example 1.2: Bach, Fugue in C-Sharp Minor, mm. 70-73, <i>Well-Tempered Clavier I</i>	4
Example 1.3: Bach, Fugue in B Minor, mm. 1-3, <i>Well-Tempered Clavier I</i>	4
Example 2.1: Bach, Prelude in G Major, m. 1, <i>Well-Tempered Clavier I</i>	11
Example 2.2: Bach, Fugue in A-Flat Major, mm. 1-3, <i>Well-Tempered Clavier I</i>	12
Example 2.3: Bach, Fugue in A Major, mm. 1-3, <i>Well-Tempered Clavier I</i>	12
Example 2.4: Bach, Prelude in B Minor, mm. 1-4, <i>Well-Tempered Clavier I</i>	12
Example 2.5: Bach, Fugue in A Minor, mm. 83-87, <i>Well-Tempered Clavier I</i>	16

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This doctoral capstone project consists of a recording of the complete first book of the *Well-Tempered Clavier* by Johann Sebastian Bach, accompanied by this written document. Throughout the years, I have developed an interest in studying and performing complete collections by composers of different styles and periods. I have come to appreciate the broader perspective gained after having gone through such learning processes. My intention is to experience and explore this work on the modern piano and consider performance aspects that are crucial for its execution. Such aspects include tempo, articulation, dynamics, ornamentation, and the use of pedals.

During the last year, I underwent a learning process that culminated in the recording sessions and the writing of this document. My main focus here is to share my experience and discuss some aspects of my interpretation and performance of this work. The bibliographical sources gave me a richer understanding of this music, such as performance practices during Bach's time. These sources will be used to provide general background information, as well as to show contrasting perspectives. The observations made will be beneficial to other pianists or musicians studying this work.

I am grateful for the opportunity of having worked on the *Well-Tempered Clavier* as the main focus of my concluding doctorate project at the University of Georgia. After recording these works, I am confident that the learning process is far from over. Despite the amount of published research available on performance practice from Bach's time, there are still many unanswered questions. Although it is not possible to speak directly to the composer, or to listen

to his performances, it is still feasible to keep on delving into this music and continue developing an interpretation.

Despite the large amount of recordings that have been made of this work, I consider it valuable to share my own experience. It is important for performers and teachers to consider that the many variables and unknown details about this work offer a wide variety of possibilities for interpretation. Johann Sebastian Bach himself lived in a time that characterized itself for the constant change and experimentation. During Bach's era, new music styles, instruments, and even tuning systems were being experimented with and developed. This element of experimentation is also an inherent part of this music.

While bearing in mind what we do know about this music, it is perhaps better to see the gaps in information as an opportunity to regain some of the freedom that has been lost by the practice of rigidly following the score. As an interpreter and performer, it is my goal to continuously develop a deeper understanding of the music and the intentions of the composer. Using such a versatile instrument as the modern piano, I would like to view this project as an exploration of music that continues to fascinate and intrigue musicians around the world.

The *Well-Tempered Clavier Book I*: General Background

The first book of the *Well-Tempered Clavier* was completed by Johann Sebastian Bach in 1722. It is a collection of 24 preludes and fugues in all major and minor keys composed for solo keyboard. As David Ledbetter asserts, these pieces grew out of Bach's teaching activity.¹ However, in spite of the didactic nature of these pieces, one of the main goals of the *Well-Tempered Clavier* is to demonstrate the possibility of composing and performing in all 24 major and minor keys.

¹ David Ledbetter, *Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier: The 48 Preludes and Fugues* (Yale University Press, 2002), 2.

In the *Well-Tempered Clavier*, Bach compiled different types of styles and genres available to him. Some of the different styles in this collection include Baroque dances, such as the *bouree*, the *passepied*, the *loure*, genres like the *invention*, and virtuosic pieces that resemble the *toccat*a. This work is, in a way, a sophisticated catalogue where it is possible to survey many aspects of Baroque keyboard music. The composer treated musical elements in an original and inventive way, finding new possibilities and exploiting the material in new ways. It is an achievement that places Bach among the leading intellects of European history.

According to Rachel Lowrance, the *Well-Tempered Clavier* has a threefold role of instruction, devotion, and affection.² Lowrance expands on how many of the pieces in this work came from Bach's teaching pieces which, after being revised and developed, were included in the collection. The composer would then use the preludes and fugues to teach composition as well as keyboard technique and ornamentation.

Aside from the variety of styles in the *Well-Tempered Clavier*, which range from the old cantus firmus to the newer arioso-type of melodies, Bach permeated the *Well-Tempered Clavier* with a religious purpose. He believed that all music should glorify God, and his music was infused by his personal religious mantra: Soli Deo Gloria ("to God alone be the glory"). Bach used musical symbols in many of his works, including the *Well-Tempered Clavier*, to express his religious belief. The Fugue in C-Sharp Minor is a clear example of Bach's use of symbols. According to Timothy Smith, this fugue represents passion music, where the composer codifies a lament, the sign of the cross, and Bach's own name spelled in pitch letters, among other things, through musical symbols.³

² Rachel A. Lowrance, "Instruction, Devotion, and Affection: Three Roles of Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*," *Musical Offerings* 4, no. 1 (May 1, 2013), 15.

³ Timothy A. Smith, "Fugues without Words: A Hearing of Four Fugues from The *Well-Tempered Clavier* as Passion Music," *Bach: Journal of the Riemenschneider Bach Institute* 40, no. 2 (2009), 46.

Example 1.1: Bach, Fugue in C-Sharp Minor, mm. 1-4, *Well-Tempered Clavier I*⁴

Example 1.2: Bach, Fugue in C-Sharp Minor, mm. 70-73, *Well-Tempered Clavier I*⁵

Example 1.3: Bach, Fugue in B Minor, mm. 1-3, *Well-Tempered Clavier I*⁶

The examples above demonstrate the symbolic nature in some of the pieces of the *Well-Tempered Clavier*.⁷ Example 1.1 shows that the theme of the Fugue in C-Sharp Minor is, at the

⁴ Johann Sebastian Bach, and Alfred Dürr, *Das Wohltemperierte Klavier I: BWV 846-869* (Kassel; New York: Bärenreiter, 1989), 20.

⁵ Johann Sebastian Bach, and Ernst-Günter Heinemann. *Das Wohltemperierte Klavier I. Neue verb. Ausg.* (G. Henle, 2007), 20.

⁶ Bach, and Dürr, *Das Wohltemperierte Klavier I*, 118.

⁷ Smith, "Fugues without Words", 64.

same time, Bach's symbol for the cross. This symbol appears in other sacred works by Bach, such as the Mass in B Minor. In measures 70 to 73 of the same fugue (see Example 1.2), there is a five-semitone chromatic descending line in the soprano part. Italians in Bach's time refer to this as a lament. Example 1.3 shows that the B Minor Fugue not only contains the symbol of the cross, but also transposed versions of Bach's own name in pitch letters.

The *Well-Tempered Clavier*, as a treatise on composition and performance in all keys, was derived from the Doctrine of Affections. In the Baroque period, this was an established theory which dictated that music should serve to incite different emotions and affections. Thus, Bach also designed these pieces to arouse different emotions in the listener.

In terms of tuning, "well-tempered" does not imply a specific system. It should be understood as a type of tuning which makes it possible to play in all keys. However, it is reasonable to suppose that each key retained some subtle inequality in which there is certain sensitivity to particular keys based on unequal tuning.⁸

Regarding the instrument intended for this work, it is unclear what Bach meant with the term "clavier." The concept of clavier is not specific and, in the context of the *Well-Tempered Clavier*, it probably refers to any instrument with a fully chromatic keyboard, without split keys, and tuned so that all 24 keys are usable as tonics. The harpsichord was perhaps the best instrument for the composition, able to cope with the demands of all the pieces of the first book of the *Well-Tempered Clavier*. This does not mean that other keyboard instruments were not imagined by the composer. Besides the harpsichord, the most common keyboard instruments would include the organ, clavichord, and lute harpsichord, among others.

Hermann Keller points out that the clavichord, despite having the capacity for dynamic gradations, was more suitable for private practice due to its weak sound. On the other hand, the

⁸ Ledbetter, *Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier*, 49-50.

harpsichord was the preferred instrument for larger rooms and public performances.⁹ Perhaps Bach intended a wide variety of keyboard instruments that, with their advantages and disadvantages, serve as a medium for the music. In this way, the question of performing this music on the modern piano is not entirely different from that of the keyboard instruments of his time. The piano simply presents a different set of challenges to musicians in order to effectively express the music.

⁹ Hermann Keller, *The Well-Tempered Clavier by Johann Sebastian Bach*. Edited by Leigh Gardine. 1st American ed. (W.W. Norton, 1976), 24.

CHAPTER 2

PERFORMANCE CONSIDERATIONS

The process of preparing the first book of the *Well-Tempered Clavier* presented issues related to the intentions of the composer. Primarily, the lack of performance indications by Bach has left performers with many questions regarding how he or his contemporaries envisioned this work. This issue has prompted many scholars and performers to look for an ideal or authentic way of performing these works, which would bring understanding to the music in question.

As David Schulenberg claims, for this type of music which was created over 300 years ago, authenticity is one of the main performance issues.¹⁰ Regardless of the large amount of research available, some of which can even complicate and obscure the issue further, it is not possible to assure or recreate a fully authentic performance. We cannot know what Bach meant to express with each piece or how Bach's contemporaries felt when they heard them.

Furthermore, our current perception of music has considerably changed over time and is burdened with our familiarity with centuries' worth of different musical styles. In summary, we hear and perceive with a mind which is differently oriented from that of the musician of Bach's time. Because of this, it must be recognized that true authenticity in the modern performance of old music is unattainable. Performers can only approximate this elusive authenticity.

Nevertheless, even if a performance cannot be fully authentic, it is still possible to follow documented performance conventions or work within historically documented ranges for individual parameters such as tempo or dynamic level. Research into historical instruments and practices has led to the development of ideas on how this music should be performed, opening possibilities of interpretation.

¹⁰ David Schulenberg, *The Keyboard Music of J.S. Bach*. 2nd ed. (Routledge, 2006), 9.

Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach's *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments* is an example of a valuable resource that brings understanding of performance practice of his time.¹¹ As the author claims, he had his father as his only teacher of performance and composition, making this a reliable source. Thus, performers may acquire this knowledge in order to make informed choices.

I have drawn personal conclusions from the available information, which helped me determine certain boundaries on how various aspects of performance may have operated. These boundaries, instead of limiting interpretations, open doors for new possibilities and space for individual creativity.

In light of this, it is possible to reach a balance between the information available to us and the indispensable unique artistry of performers. Francesco Maria Veracini indicated in his treatise *Il Trionfo della pratica Musicale* (ca. 1740) that many composers would like to give the interpreter the exact prescriptions for the performance of their works, but this would provoke a very dry execution. This would deprive the artist of the natural and indispensable freedom to play according to their own knowledge and feeling.¹² This could be another reason why Bach left few indications as to how to perform his works. Musicians were not only following a certain tradition in these performance aspects, but part of that tradition involved more freedom than we usually imagine. Even with composers after Johann Sebastian Bach, notation has not been fully precise, which makes essential for performers to develop interpretation as a skill.

¹¹ Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments*. Edited by William J. Mitchell. First edition (W.W. Norton & Company, 1949), 5.

¹² George A. Kochevitsky, "Performing Bach's Keyboard Music: Dynamics—A Postscript," *BACH: The Quarterly Journal of the Riemenschneider Bach Institute* 7, no. 1 (January 1976), 8.

Tempo

Bach rarely wrote tempo indications for his keyboard works. In the first book of the *Well-Tempered Clavier*, such indications appear only in three preludes and in one fugue. As George Kochevitsky claims, even when tempo markings do appear in the Baroque period, terms such as *allegro*, *andante*, *adagio*, or *grave*, served to characterize a mood, rather than to dictate an exact tempo.¹³

Tempo was determined by convention and Bach relied on the performer's knowledge of the style. Essential for choosing the tempo is the metric unit, which gives information about the main pulse of the piece. The smaller notes or ornaments in a piece also play an important role in selecting an appropriate tempo. In other cases, a dance title or dance rhythm embedded in a movement could serve as the clue in choosing tempo.

According to Meredith Little and Natalie Jenne, this is the case for the Fugue in C-Sharp Major, which has characteristics of a *bouree*: duple meter, one-pulse upbeat, simple harmonies, and joyful affect that justify a moderately fast tempo. The Prelude in E-Flat Minor presents some features of a *sarabande*, such as triple meter, serious, noble, and passionate character, with complex harmonies, and characteristic rhythmic patterns that fit best in a moderately slow tempo. These authors also make mention of the F Major Prelude as having traits of a *passepied* and the C-Sharp Minor prelude, which resembles a *loure*.¹⁴ The Prelude in B-flat Major is like a *toccata*, which is free in structure and improvisatory in style. I chose a fast tempo that allows the display of virtuosity with more freedom in the cadenza-like passages.

¹³ George A. Kochevitsky, "Performing Bach's Keyboard Music: Tempo," *BACH: The Quarterly Journal of the Riemenschneider Bach Institute* 4, no. 2 (April 1973), 22.

¹⁴ Meredith Little, and Natalie Jenne, *Dance and the Music of J.S. Bach* (Indiana University Press, 2001), 207, 236, 255.

Choosing a tempo is still a very subjective matter. There are other circumstances and aspects that play a role, such as the texture of the composition, acoustics of the room or hall, and the performance instrument.

Articulation

With few exceptions, Bach did not mark articulation in the *Well-Tempered Clavier*. Schulenberg states that 18th century keyboard treatises show that articulation leaned towards non-legato playing¹⁵, as opposed to the more legato playing from the 19th and 20th centuries.

Articulation is similar to clear diction and enunciation in speech and the way to make a performance more rhetorical is by clearly articulating notes or motives. The acoustic nature of keyboard instruments in Bach's time allowed for a rich articulation. Harpsichords, clavichords, or organs heavily rely on articulation for expressive purposes. In the modern piano, too much articulation could result in the fragmentation of Bach's overall line. Pianos, particularly when the sustaining pedal is not used, are much dryer instruments and the dampers spoil the richness of overtones which are present in harpsichords, for example. Also, a location such as a church or cathedral provides much more resonance, making it almost a necessity to articulate notes in a more pronounced way, in order to bring clarity and liveliness to the music.

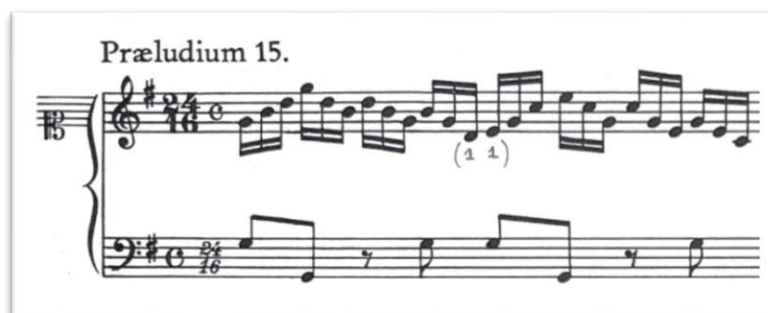
Quentin Faulkner supports the idea that the fundamental or ordinary type of articulation in Bach's time was one that is neither legato nor detached.¹⁶ Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach makes mention of this normal type of playing.¹⁷ Fingering from the time also suggests a manner of playing that is more detached than the modern legato. It is important to consider that the increased use of thumbs for scales and other patterns was new during Johann Sebastian Bach's time. The older type of fingering avoided excessive finger substitutions on the same key, and the

¹⁵ Schulenberg, *The Keyboard Music of J.S. Bach*, 21.

¹⁶ Quentin Faulkner, *J.S. Bach's Keyboard Technique: A Historical Introduction* (Concordia, 1984), 39.

¹⁷ Bach, *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments*, 157.

use of the same finger on two or more successive notes was encouraged. This fingering is helpful particularly in polyphonic passages, where finger substitution can result in tension and uncomfortable hand positions. Example 2.1 is a case of the use of the same finger on two successive notes, avoiding tension and allowing the right hand to remain in a comfortable position.



Example 2.1: Bach, Prelude in G Major, m. 1, *Well-Tempered Clavier I*¹⁸

The time signature, combined with the character of the piece, plays an important role in determining articulation. For instance, Example 2.2 shows the beginning of Fugue in A-Flat Major in 4/4 meter. Depending on its execution, it is possible to accidentally play the first note of the piece as a strong beat. Thus, adding slurs on the strong beats can clarify this issue and avoid confusion as to where the strong beats are. Example 2.3 shows the first three measures of the A Major Fugue in 9/8 meter. Here, slurs may be added on the strong beats in order to emphasize the dance character in the piece. In this way, the character of the music is enhanced by giving greater regard to the notes on the strong beats.

¹⁸ Bach and Dürr, *Das Wohltemperierte Klavier I*, 72.



Example 2.2: Bach, Fugue in A-Flat Major, mm. 1-3, *Well-Tempered Clavier I*¹⁹

Musical score for Fuga 19, mm. 1-3, in A Major, Well-Tempered Clavier I. The score is in 3/8 time and features a 'walking bass' in the left hand, consisting of a steady eighth-note pattern. The right hand has a more complex melodic line with some sixteenth-note passages.

Example 2.3: Bach, Fugue in A Major, mm. 1-3, *Well-Tempered Clavier I*²⁰

A typical feature of baroque slow movements is the ‘walking bass’, usually in even eight notes. It is usually played detached, as a cellist or viola da gamba player would render it. The Prelude in B Minor (Example 2.4) is a representation of this type of expressive melodic line in the bass:

Musical score for Præludium 24, mm. 1-4, in B Minor, Well-Tempered Clavier I. The score is in 4/4 time and marked 'Andante'. It features a 'walking bass' in the left hand, consisting of a steady eighth-note pattern. The right hand has a more complex melodic line with some sixteenth-note passages.

Example 2.4: Bach, Prelude in B Minor, mm. 1-4, *Well-Tempered Clavier I*²¹

¹⁹ Bach and Dürr, *Das Wohltemperierte Klavier I*, 84.

²⁰ Bach and Dürr, *Das Wohltemperierte Klavier I*, 93.

²¹ Bach and Dürr, *Das Wohltemperierte Klavier I*, 116.

In contrast with the ordinary detached manner of playing are several statements supporting the impression of smoothness and connection of notes. These statements are backed by J.S. Bach's recommendation on the title page of the *Inventions* (1723) which promotes the development of a singing style of playing.²² Badura-Skoda even calls Bach "primarily a legato composer."²³ In the *Well-Tempered Clavier*, this author advises legato playing in pieces that are vocal in character, such as the C-Sharp Minor or B-Flat Minor Fugues. Kochevitsky also states that composers of the Baroque period intended slow pieces to be played with a thin singing legato, without overlapping sounds that are more characteristic of the Romantic period.²⁴

Dynamics

There are no dynamic marks in the first book of the *Well-Tempered Clavier*. Here, again, the character of the piece is a deciding factor of the main dynamic choice. Hermann Keller warns about extreme dynamics or the choices made by editors of Bach's music, as they are out of style.²⁵ It is advised to think of dynamics structurally, rather than following the emotional approach used by most editors.

Richard Troeger recommends subtle dynamic changes when inflecting musical phrases.²⁶ In instruments such as the harpsichord, dynamics changes are not possible. With this in mind, performers can notice how the musical texture can create dynamics, giving the impression of a crescendo when the texture is thicker, particularly at the close of pieces, and diminuendo when it is thinner.²⁷ Harpsichords with more than one keyboard are capable of creating dynamics,

²² George A. Kochevitsky, "Performing Bach's Keyboard Music: Articulation," *BACH: The Quarterly Journal of the Riemenschneider Bach Institute* 4, no. 1 (January 1973), 21.

²³ Paul Badura-Skoda, *Interpreting Bach at the Keyboard* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 117.

²⁴ Kochevitsky, "Performing Bach's Keyboard Music: Articulation", 21.

²⁵ Keller, *The Well-Tempered Clavier by Johann Sebastian Bach*, 40.

²⁶ Richard Troeger, *Technique and Interpretation on the Harpsichord and Clavichord* (Indiana University Press, 1987), 72.

²⁷ Kochevitsky, "Performing Bach's Keyboard Music: Dynamics—A Postscript", 4.

however it seems like Bach intended the *Well-Tempered Clavier* for a single-manual keyboard instrument.

Ornamentation

Embellishments are indispensable in the music of Johann Sebastian Bach. They have different functions such as connecting or enlivening tones, as well as imparting stress and accent. Ornaments make music pleasing and enhance musical expression. There is the risk of improper use, which is the reason why some composers prefer to write out their ornaments.

Bach is known as a composer who wrote out ornaments and embellishments. He even adopted the practice of including an ornament table for the publication of the *Clavier-Buchlein* in 1720 for his son, Wilhelm Friedemann, which explains the proper execution of the ornaments on the manuscript. In the case of the *Well-Tempered Clavier*, ornamentation is sporadic. In this instance, the composer must have expected the performers to supplement their own ornaments. It is not fully known how Bach treated all musical embellishments apart from those explained in the *Clavier-Buchlein*, but it is reasonable to assume that he followed documented consensuses.

Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach states that it is not sufficient to play a piece solely in a technically correct manner. Adding ornaments is essential in portraying the proper affect. He also claims that embellishments are better suited to slow or moderate tempos and to long notes to avoid hurried performances where the brilliance of an ornament can be dulled. He divided ornaments into two categories: the ones indicated by conventional signs and the ones which lack signs and consist of many short notes. The latter relates to performance of *fermate*, which allowed the inclusion of short material that would serve as bridge connecting sections.²⁸

In general, performance of ornaments presents the particular challenge of bringing out the expressive implications of the dissonances, by giving them extra time or a slight dynamic

²⁸ Bach, *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments*, 143.

impulse, without losing track of the underlying beat. The pieces in the *Well-Tempered Clavier* offer the possibility for further embellishment, enhancing the character of the music.

Use of Pedals

Due to the rather dry quality of the modern piano, I consider the use of the sustain pedal necessary to enhance the sound and evoke more interesting sonorities. The idea of not using the pedal because older instruments lack one seems unreasonable. Older keyboard instruments such as harpsichords are not equipped with dampers that create the dryness of tone characteristic of modern pianos. Therefore, with careful application and attention to the character of the music, the use of the sustaining pedal can be very helpful and effective.

In regards to the *sostenuto* pedal, I found only one section in the entire first book where it may be beneficial to use. I am referring to the coda of the Fugue in A Minor, where it is not possible to hold the long, sustained ‘a’ with fingers alone. This is one of the reasons why many musicians attribute this particular fugue to the organ, where the pedal keyboard facilitates its execution, while sustaining the sound for the entirety of its duration. Example 2.5 shows the possible use of this pedal in the A Minor Fugue.

In broad terms, and in the context of the *Well-Tempered Clavier*, Nikolaus Harnoncourt mentions that music from 1600 to 1800 “speaks,” while subsequent music “paints.”²⁹ Even though this author referred mainly to articulation, I can relate this idea to the use of the *una corda* pedal, which smoothens out the sound in a way that is most useful when “painting” in music. Needless to say, this is a matter of personal taste. Pedals are available resources that could be seen as the substitutes for the many stops that harpsichords and other keyboard instruments in Bach’s time had.

²⁹ Nikolaus Harnoncourt, *Baroque Music Today: Music as Speech: Ways to a New Understanding of Music*. Edited by Reinhard G. Pauly (Amadeus Press, 1988), 39.

83

(Sostenuto pedal)

85

Example 2.5: Bach, Fugue in A Minor, mm. 83-87, *Well-Tempered Clavier I*³⁰

³⁰ Bach and Dürr, *Das Wohltemperierte Klavier I*, 103.

CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSION

I would like to conclude by mentioning that these are only some of the main issues that I dealt with prior to the recording. Of course, the search for a deeper understanding and the exploration of these and other performance aspects is never finished. I value the experience and knowledge gained over the last year, focusing on such a rich and complex work. The process of preparation was a motivation for me to explore the performance of the *Well-Tempered Clavier* in other instruments like the harpsichord and, mainly, the organ. Each keyboard instrument presents different challenges, and the experience of listening and performing these pieces unveils captivating perspectives. It is fascinating to see the wide array of possibilities in interpretation and performance that the *Well-Tempered Clavier* entails.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bach, Carl Philipp Emanuel. *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments*. Edited by William J. Mitchell. First edition. W.W. Norton & Company, 1949.
- Bach, Johann Sebastian. *The Well-Tempered Clavier I*. Edited by Johann Sebastian Bach, et al. An Alfred Masterwork Edition. Alfred Pub. Co., 1981.
- Bach, Johann Sebastian, and Alfred Dürr. *Das Wohltemperierte Klavier I: BWV 846-869*. Kassel; New York: Bärenreiter. 1989.
- Bach, Johann Sebastian, and Ernst-Günter Heinemann. *Das Wohltemperierte Klavier I*. Neue verb. Ausg. G. Henle, 2007.
- Badura-Skoda, Paul. *Interpreting Bach at the Keyboard*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993.
- Engels, Marjorie W. *Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier: An Exploration of the 48 Preludes and Fugues*. McFarland, 2006.
- Faulkner, Quentin. *J.S. Bach's Keyboard Technique: A Historical Introduction*. Concordia, 1984.
- Harnoncourt, Nikolaus. *Baroque Music Today: Music as Speech: Ways to a New Understanding of Music*. Edited by Reinhard G. Pauly. Amadeus Press, 1988.
- Keller, Hermann. *The Well-Tempered Clavier by Johann Sebastian Bach*. Edited by Leigh Gardine. 1st American ed. W.W. Norton, 1976.
- Kochevitsky, George A. "Performing Bach's Keyboard Music: Articulation." *BACH: The Quarterly Journal of the Riemenschneider Bach Institute* 4, no. 1 (January 1973): 21–25.
- _____. "Performing Bach's Keyboard Music: Dynamics—A Postscript." *BACH: The Quarterly Journal of the Riemenschneider Bach Institute* 7, no. 1 (January 1976): 3–11.
- _____. "Performing Bach's Keyboard Music: Tempo." *BACH: The Quarterly Journal of the Riemenschneider Bach Institute* 4, no. 2 (April 1973): 22–24.
- Ledbetter, David. *Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier: The 48 Preludes and Fugues*. Yale University Press, 2002.
- Little, Meredith, and Natalie Jenne. *Dance and the Music of J.S. Bach*. Indiana University Press, 2001.

Lowrance, Rachel A. "Instruction, Devotion, and Affection: Three Roles of Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*." *Musical Offerings* 4, no. 1 (May 1, 2013): 15–30.

Schulenberg, David. *The Keyboard Music of J.S. Bach*. 2nd ed. Routledge, 2006.

Smith, Timothy A. "Fugues without Words: A Hearing of Four Fugues from *The Well-Tempered Clavier* as Passion Music." *Bach: Journal of the Riemenschneider Bach Institute* 40, no. 2 (2009): 45–66.

Troeger, Richard. *Technique and Interpretation on the Harpsichord and Clavichord*. Indiana University Press, 1987.

APPENDIX
RECORDING

The link below is my recording of the complete first book of the *Well-Tempered Clavier* by Johann Sebastian Bach, recorded on March 27th, 28th, and April 2nd of 2024 in Edge Hall at the Hugh Hodgson School of Music, University of Georgia.

[Suarez - J.S. Bach - The Well-Tempered Clavier, Book 1](#)