

In 1723, Bach was appointed Director of Music in the bustling trade city of Leipzig, though he was not favored by the Town Council rulers, because he had no university training or degree. Bach was glad that his sons would have an opportunity to attend the university in Leipzig.

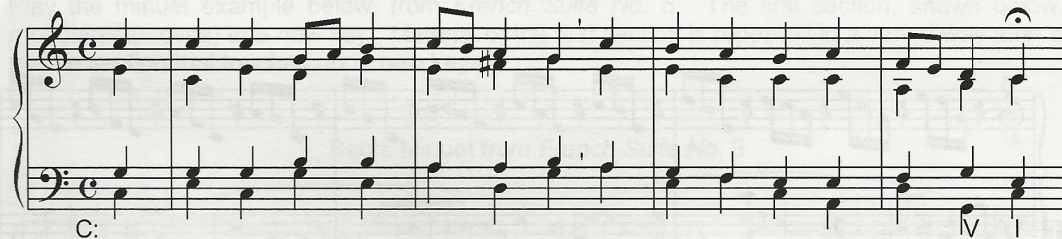
There were many duties assigned to Bach in his contract from the Town Council. He was responsible for the music of four large Lutheran churches. The church music must not "last too long" and must not "make an operatic impression," according to the contract. Bach was also a cantor (teacher) at the St. Thomas Church School for Boys. He was required to instruct the pupils in singing, playing instruments, Latin, and religion. He also conducted the student choirs.

Bach was always deeply religious, expressing his faith in beautiful sacred music for choir and instruments. Weekly religious services and holidays required much new music. Bach wrote over 300 sacred cantatas for the Leipzig churches. The word cantata indicates a piece to be sung. It can be sacred or secular and the vocalists and chorus are usually accompanied by a small orchestra. Among the greatest choral works by Bach are the *St. John Passion* and the *St. Matthew Passion*. They tell about the life and death of Christ. Other famous choral works are the *Mass in B Minor* and the *Christmas Oratorio*. Solos and choral numbers from these works are often performed at Christmas and Easter services today.

Bach also harmonized (set chords to) many traditional hymn melodies, known as chorales. His settings provide interesting melodic shape and active rhythm for the parts in the lower register. In fact, congregational singers complained about the complicated contrapuntal texture that was common in Bach's choral settings. Bach improvised music on the organ between the sung verses of the chorales. This further confused the congregation.

Compare the examples below from the hymn, "A Mighty Fortress is Our God." The first setting is easy to play or sing. The texture is homophonic (one melody line with accompaniment). Bach's setting of the same melody has contrapuntal or polyphonic texture (two or more independent lines sounding at the same time).

Traditional Hymn: A Mighty Fortress Is Our God



Bach's Arrangement: Ein' feste Bürg ist unser Gott

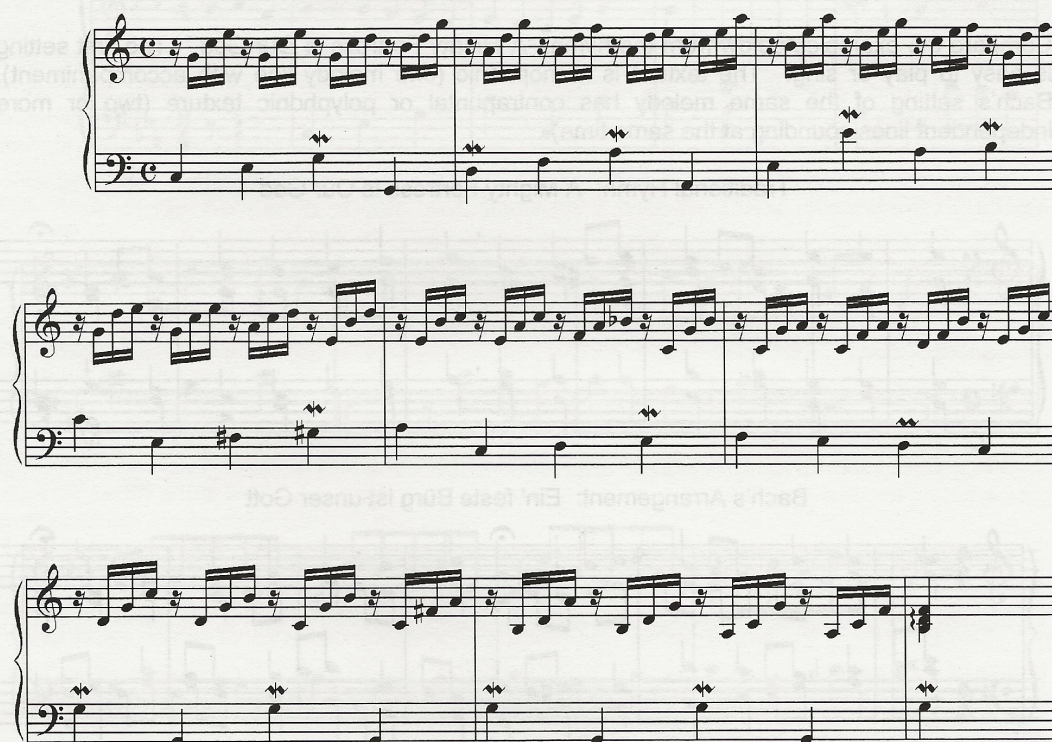


The Bach family rapidly increased in size. Thirteen children were born to Anna Magdalena and Johann Sebastian Bach, in addition to the seven he already had. They were a very musical family. Older children helped with copying music, giving lessons, and playing the organ at religious services. Wilhelm Friedemann Bach, the oldest Bach son, was a very talented musician. He put together a collection of pieces by Johann Sebastian Bach and other composers. The *Little Keyboard Book for W.F. Bach* contains many pieces that are played today.

The music example below shows a popular kind of free-style piece called a prelude. This prelude shows an ornamented bass line. Melodic ornaments (different kinds of melodic turns and trills) are very common in Baroque music. They are important expressive devices in both vocal and instrumental music. They also provide a continuous flow of sound on Baroque instruments such as the organ (pictured at right), harpsichord, and lute.



Bach: Prelude in C Major



Bach composed many works for his advanced harpsichord students. Favorite works today are the six *English Suites* and the six *French Suites*. Extra dance pieces appear in many suites in addition to the basic allemande, courante, sarabande, and gigue movements.

The example below shows the slow tempo and triple meter of the traditional sarabande dance. The two-part texture has lines of independent melodic shape and different rhythm. The upper line is ornamented and richly chromatic. Dissonant intervals (intervals that cause tension and need to be resolved) between the treble and bass lines occur often, urging along the movement of the music. They are marked "DI" in the example below.

Bach: Sarabande from *English Suite No. 6*

Play the minuet example below, from *French Suite No. 6*. The first section, shown below, modulates (moves) to a new key. Material of the first section is repeated in a varied way after a middle section that touches upon new keys.

Bach: Minuet from *French Suite No. 6*

Identify which example above has contrapuntal texture and which has homophonic texture.

"Sarabande" has _____ texture. "Minuet" has _____ texture.

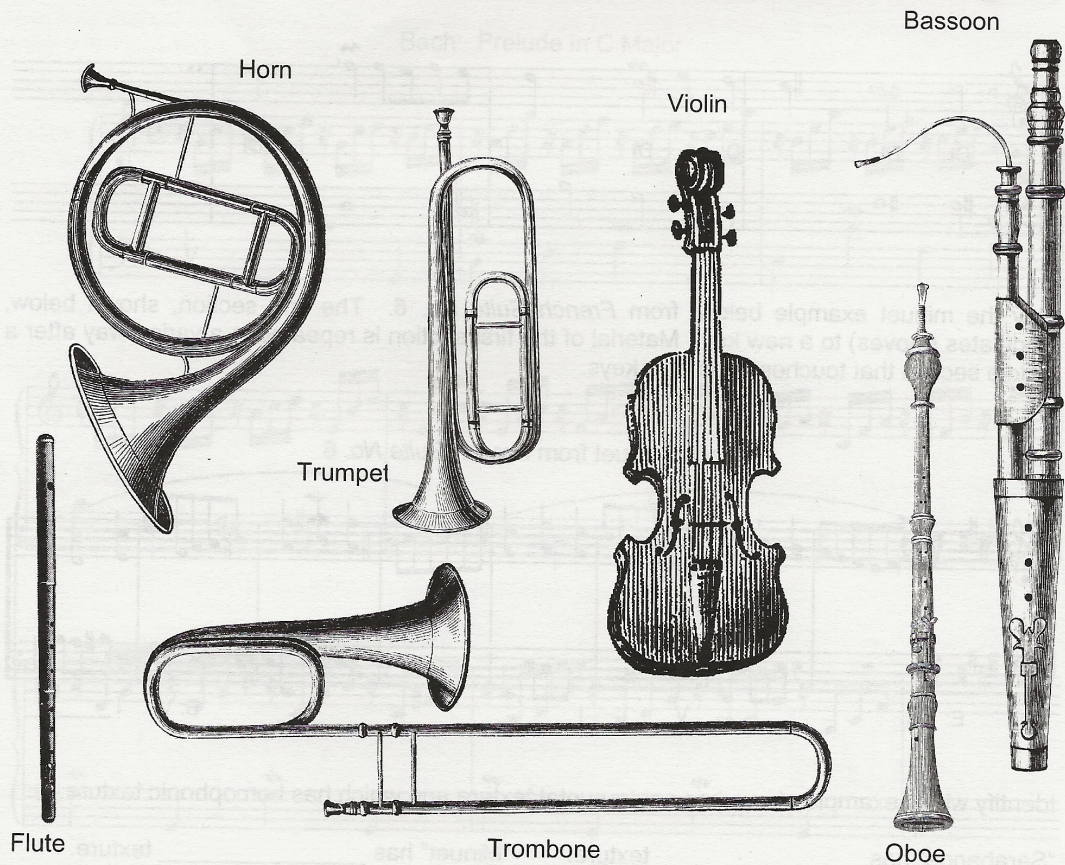
Bach composed four suites for orchestra, which he called "Overtures." Flutists of today enjoy the *Suite in B Minor*, written for solo flute and stringed instruments with basso continuo.

The Baroque concerto (concerto grosso) usually featured a small group of solo instruments playing different musical lines than those played by the full orchestra. This produced a contrast of sound. Bach wrote six *Brandenburg Concertos* for orchestra. His *Brandenburg Concertos* were dedicated to a royal ruler, the Margrave of Brandenburg.

Baroque concertos had three long movements arranged in contrasting tempos: Fast – slow – fast. Violinists of today often play Bach's two concertos for solo violin and orchestra.

It is amazing that orchestras and ensembles of Bach's time could play the difficult music that he wrote. Only the violin and trombone had their modern shapes and playing techniques during Bach's lifetime.

Baroque flutes, oboes, and bassoons had finger-holes and only a few keys. Modern instruments have an extensive and complicated key system that improves tuning and provides alternative fingerings for certain notes. Baroque trumpets and horns had no valves, in contrast to modern instruments. The sound of all orchestral instruments was softer and mellower than heard today.



After 1735, Bach had more leisure time. He traveled to royal courts at Dresden, Potsdam, and Berlin. King Frederick II of Prussia invited Bach to Potsdam to play and improvise for him. Different rooms of the palace had pianos built by the famous pianoforte builder, Silbermann. Bach moved from room to room, trying out the new pianos.

Bach returned to Leipzig in failing health. Two operations for blindness weakened him greatly. He died in July of 1750.

Very few of Bach's compositions were published during his lifetime, and his music was neglected for half a century after his death. Opera and new types of instrumental music captured the interest of the music-loving public. Bach's music was labeled "old-fashioned."

Later on, his music was appreciated as innovative in regard to modern keyboard fingering techniques. Bach's compositions used the thumb freely, in contrast to compositions of earlier composers and teachers.

During his life, Bach favored the "tempered" system of tuning keyboard instruments. With that system, the piano is tuned with slight adjustments to each interval size that make music written in all major and minor keys sound in tune. The *Well-Tempered Clavier* is a collection of keyboard preludes and fugues systematically written in all major and minor keys.

Students of today often play Bach's *Two and Three Part Inventions* as preparation for playing the difficult preludes and fugues. They have contrapuntal texture, as do fugues. Rhythmic articulation and phrasing are a challenge to both performers and listeners.

Bach: Invention in A Minor

The image displays the musical score for Bach's Invention in A Minor, organized into two systems. Each system consists of a treble staff and a bass staff. The first system includes phrasing brackets labeled 'a', 'a'' (free imitation), and 'a'' (strict). The second system includes a phrasing bracket labeled 'b'. The notation includes various note values, rests, and articulation marks, typical of Baroque keyboard music.

ANALYSIS ACTIVITY

Analyze a composition by J.S. Bach or a different Baroque composer that you perform or know. Fill in the blanks or circle the correct choice below with information about your composition. The "Glossary of Music Terms" and "Formal Design" pages in the appendix may help you.

1. Title of composition: _____
2. Composer (last name and country): _____
3. Large-scale design (binary, ternary, rondo, etc.): _____
 - a. Number of measures in the composition: _____
 - b. Number of sections in the composition: _____
4. Tonal design:
 - a. Key signature (number of sharps or flats): _____
 - b. Home key (letter name, major or minor): _____
 - c. The music is (non-modulating or modulating).
5. Melody:
 - a. The melodic range is (wide, narrow, or medium).
 - b. The melody progresses mostly by (steps or skips).
6. Rhythm:
 - a. Is the piece based on a Baroque dance meter and tempo? _____
 - b. The rhythm is (strongly metric or more flowing).
 - c. The rhythm patterns are (repeated often or constantly varied).
7. Harmony:
 - a. The harmony is (diatonic, slightly chromatic, or richly chromatic).
8. List other Baroque pieces that you have performed or heard:

Composition

Composer

| | |
|-------|-------|
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |

COMPOSING ACTIVITY

Play the four-measure phrase below. Notice that the phrase ends in a half cadence (I to V).

Bach: Minuet and Trio

G: I V

On the staff below, compose a second four-measure phrase to follow Bach's phrase. Complete your phrase with an authentic cadence (V to I). Use melody shapes and rhythm patterns similar to Bach's.

Now compose a different second phrase to follow Bach's phrase. Emphasize contrast of melody shapes and rhythm patterns this time. Use a concluding authentic cadence, as before.

REVIEW ACTIVITY

1. The strings of the harpsichord, a favorite keyboard instrument of the _____ Era, are _____ rather than struck by hammers like the modern piano.
2. To _____ is to create music during a performance.
3. The Bach family worked in Germany as _____ and _____ musicians.
4. Johann Sebastian Bach received lessons on the _____ from his father.
5. At the Eisenach Latin School, Bach moved up to the _____.
6. In Ohrdruf, Johann Sebastian received _____ and _____ lessons from his older brother.
7. Johann Christoph became _____ of his brother's great musical talent.
8. To learn composing, Johann Sebastian made new arrangements of old _____ by other composers.
9. Johann Sebastian became a professional church singer at the early age of _____.
10. At court concerts, Bach accompanied the court orchestra on the _____.
11. The Baroque "basso continuo" accompaniment part is played by a harpsichordist and a _____ or _____.
12. At Weimar, Bach worked as a court _____ and _____ of Instrumental Music.
13. Bach composed many works for _____ while at Weimar.
14. For Prince Leopold at Cöthen, Bach composed _____ and _____ music.
15. Anna Magdalena Bach _____ much music for her husband.
16. In the *Little Notebook for Anna Magdalena Bach*, there are _____ pieces, such as minuets and polonaises, _____, and _____.
17. The Baroque suite is a _____ of _____ pieces.
18. A contrast of _____ and _____ is found between movements of a Baroque Suite.
19. In 1723, Bach became Director of Music in the trade city of _____.
20. Bach was responsible for the music in four large _____.

21. Bach was also a _____ (teacher) at the St. Thomas Church School.
22. Bach composed over _____ sacred choral cantatas.
23. Bach also harmonized, or set _____ to, many traditional hymn melodies, known as _____.
24. Bach's choral settings usually have _____ texture.
25. _____ texture has one melody line with accompaniment.
26. Contrapuntal or _____ texture has two or more independent lines sounding at the same time.
27. _____, different kinds of melodic turns and trills, are important expressive devices in Baroque music.
28. Ornaments provide continuous sound on Baroque instruments such as the _____, _____, and _____.
29. The Baroque Concerto features a _____ of solo instruments, playing with the _____ orchestra.
30. Bach composed _____ concertos for solo violin and orchestra.
31. Baroque woodwind instruments had _____ - _____ and only a few _____.
32. Baroque trumpets and horns had no _____.
33. Baroque orchestral instruments sounded _____ and _____ than heard today.
34. While visiting King Frederick II of Prussia, Bach tried out new _____.
35. For many years after his death, Bach's music was labeled as "_____".
36. A _____ cadence moves from I to V.
37. An authentic cadence moves from _____ to _____.

Compositions by Johann Sebastian Bach covered in the text:

Melody with basso continuo realization
 "Courante"
 Arrangement of "Ein' feste Bürg ist unser Gott"
 "Prelude in C Major"
 "Sarabande"
 "Minuet"
 "Invention in A Minor"
 "Minuet and Trio"