The MAYRON COLE PIANO METHOD

Two-Part Invention No. 13

Johann Sebastian Bach 1685 – 1750



Johann Sebastian Bach was born in Eisenach, Germany into a huge musical family. He was the eighth child, and his father was Johann Ambrosius Bach, the director of all of Eisenach's musicians. Almost every relative of Johann Sebastian's was a professional musician. Johann's father taught his young son to play the viola, violin, and harpsichord, and young Johann Sebastian eagerly absorbed all of that musical instruction. Young Bach was happily surrounded by relatives who took seriously the art of learning, composing, and performing music.

When Johann Sebastian was ten, his mother died. Eight months later his father died. Little Johann Sebastian moved into the home of his older brother, Johann Christoph Bach. While there, the child often copied music that his older brother had written. This insubordinate act was frowned upon by Johann Christoph because staff paper was extremely scarce and valuable, and no child should be allowed access to it, he reasoned. Regretfully, Johann Sebastian secretly copied the music at night using only the flickering light of a candle. His eyesight was forever damaged from this experience.

While living with his brother he was taught how to play the clavichord and organ. His older brother also introduced young Johann Sebastian to German composers such as Johann Pachelbel. (Years earlier, Johann Christoph had been a student of Pachelbel's.) At the local gymnasium ("school" is referred to in Germany as "gymnasium") Bach also studied theology, Latin, Greek, French, and Italian.

When Bach was fourteen, he was awarded a choral scholarship to study at the prestigious St. Michael's School in Luneburg, Germany. Bach probably walked to this neighboring town to enroll in that great School although that fact is not confirmed. While studying at the School, Johann Sebastian was exposed to a wider facet of European culture. He also made friends with the sons of noblemen who were students at that same school.

Bach graduated from St. Michael's School when he was eighteen and immediately was appointed court musician for Duke Johann Ernst's chapel in Weimar. Most probably Bach was also the janitor for the chapel. But while he was there, his reputation as a great organist was spreading over that part of Germany. Because of the acclaim for his musical skills, Bach was invited to inspect a new organ at St. Boniface's Church in Arnstadt. He stayed there after the inspection and performed an inaugural organ recital. Well, that did it! He was immediately hired to be the organist at St. Boniface's. He received a nice salary and did not need to also be the janitor of the church.

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After several years as organist at St. Boniface's, things began to go wrong for Bach. He was rather headstrong, it appears, and would voice his complaints about the really awful singers in the church choir. Then, whenever he so desired, Bach would leave Arnstadt and set out on unauthorized journeys.

On one of these journeys, Bach was gone for several months. He had walked (Yes! He walked!) to the northern Germany city of Lubeck to visit with a great organist and composer named Buxtehude.

While he was on this walking tour, he ran out of funds and suddenly found himself in a village without enough money for food. Bach walked past a small café and peered into the window at the patrons who were eating. Evidently, Bach's desperate expression caught the eye of one of those diners for suddenly a cooked fish was tossed out the window. The fish still had its head attached, and Bach could see something stuck inside the fish's mouth. It was a gold coin! And that little miracle gave Bach a good evening meal and enough money to continue his solitary journey to Buxtehude's home.

Buxtehude's style of composing music influenced Bach's later compositions. Bach was so enchanted with Buxtehude's musical knowledge that he wanted to be Buxtehude's assistant and successor. But the condition for the job was too great: Buxtehude demanded that Bach marry his daughter. Bach declined the offer of marriage and the job and walked back to Arnstadt.

The next year, 1706, Bach was offered the job as organist at St. Blasius's Church in Muhlhausen, Germany. The pay was higher, conditions were improved, and at last Bach had a better choir with which to work.

Four months later, Bach married Maria Barbara Bach, his second cousin. They had seven children, but only four of these children lived long enough to reach adulthood. Two of the children, Wilhelm Friedemann and Carl Philipp Emanuel, grew up to become important composers.

During his tenure at St. Blasius's Church, Bach convinced the church and the city government to fund an expensive renovation on the church organ. When the renovation was completed, Bach wrote a beautiful cantata to celebrate the occasion. This cantata was published by the city council, and it was a huge financial success.

Two years later, he was offered the position of Director of Music at the court of a duke in Weimar. This opportunity was a good one for Bach, because he could work with well-paid and talented professional musicians. Bach moved his family to an apartment close to the duke's palace. His unmarried sister-in-law came to live with the family and help with the children. The small apartment was filled with children and other assorted relatives. Bach seemed to thrive on the cacophony.

While he and his family lived in Weimar, Bach spent a large amount of time composing for keyboard and orchestra. He also began to write the preludes and fugues for which he is famous. Bach also began writing the *Little Organ Book* for his son Wilhelm Friedemann Bach. This opus turned traditional Lutheran hymn tunes into complex musical forms. It became a great teaching tool for organists.

Bach eventually let his headstrong personality get the best of him while employed in Weimar. He had a rousing argument with the people who had hired him. He wanted to leave Weimar for a better job

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opportunity and did not want to follow the rules for terminating his position. It was obviously a great argument because the disagreement landed Bach in jail for almost a month.

His wife brought him staff paper and pens, and Bach used the jail time as a great opportunity to compose. On December 2, 1717 Bach was freed from arrest and given notice of his discharge from the duke's employ. He did not get a glowing letter of recommendation to take with him!

But a better job opportunity was waiting for him! Within days, Prince Leopold of Kothen hired Bach to be his director of music. The prince was a musician and truly appreciated Bach's talents. Bach was paid well and given time to compose and perform at the organ.

The prince, a Calvinist, did not require elaborate organ music for church services at his church. So during this portion of Bach's life, Bach wrote mostly secular music including the Brandenburg Concertos.

In 1720, Bach was traveling with Prince Leopold when word came to him of his wife's sudden death. Bach was stunned, but he was also grateful that his sister-in-law was there to take care of the Bach children who were now motherless.

The next year Bach married a young woman who was seventeen years his junior. She was a talented soprano who sang with the chorus at Prince Leopold's court; her name was Anna Magdelena. For her Bach compiled *Anna Magdelena's Notebook* to help her learn to play a keyboard instrument. Many of Bach's relatives wrote small compositions for the book, including Johann Sebastian himself. The little book was given to her on her birthday as a surprise.



Together the couple had thirteen children, but only six of them survived into adulthood. Three of those children became important musicians.

In 1723 Bach was appointed director of music for all the principal churches of Leipzig. Bach held this job for twenty seven years until his death. Bach's duties basically required him to provide original music every week for the large churches' Sunday services. Bach spent a great deal of his time composing the much-needed religious music. Many of his compositions were inspired by the Gospel readings prescribed for every Sunday Lutheran service.

But Bach was also active in secular ensemble performances. In 1729, Bach took over the directorship of an ensemble, the Collegium Musicum, that had been started by Georg Philipp Telemann, another great German composer. Leipzig had several active musical societies that were filled with college students who were studying music. Becoming the director of the Collegium Musicum was a good move for Bach. Year-round, under Bach's direction, the young musicians performed in various venues in

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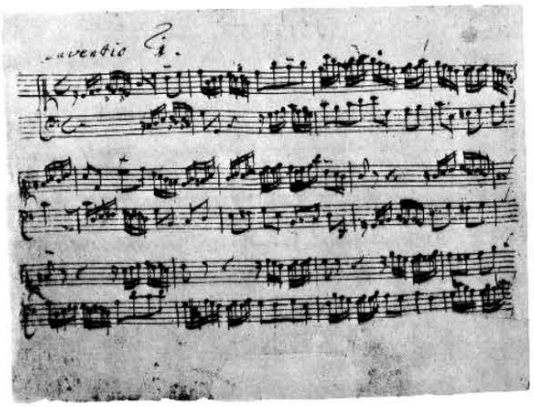
Leipzig including coffeehouses. Many of Bach's compositions were written during this time for the Collegium Musicum members to perform.



In 1733, Bach wrote a *Mass in B Minor* and gave it to the King of Poland, August III. Bach was desirous of being appointed the king's Royal Court Composer. And his wonderful gift paid off! He secured that position! Although still employed and living in Leipzig, Bach felt that he had greater bargaining power with the city council of Leipzig now that he was also King August III's Royal Court Composer.

In 1747, Bach visited the King of Prussia, Frederick II. The king thought of himself as a good musician and thoroughly enjoyed Bach's visit. While there, the king played a short theme for Bach and challenged him to improvise a fugue on that theme. King Frederick owned a pianoforte, which was a novelty at that time, so Bach sat at the piano and easily improvised a three-part fugue. Obviously, King Frederick was impressed. Later, Bach wrote a collection of fugues, canons, and a trio using the king's theme. Bach titled the collection of music *A Musical Offering* and gave it to the king.

Bach's last composition was a choral prelude for organ which he dedicated to his son-in-law.

By 1749, Bach's health began declining and he became blind. He always had poor eyesight which he thought was from his efforts to copy by candlelight his older brother's music. An English eye surgeon who was visiting Leipzig operated on Bach's eyes in April. Three months later, Bach died at the age of sixty-five. Newspapers reported that the cause of death was the unsuccessful eye operation. But most probably, Bach died from a stroke or from pneumonia.



Bach was buried originally in Old St. John's Cemetery in Leipzig, Germany. For 150 years, his grave was unmarked. His coffin was finally found in 1894 and was moved to a vault in St. John's Church. Regretfully, this church was destroyed by bombing in World War II. In 1950, Bach's remains were taken to Church of St. Thomas in Leipzig (shown here: grave in center).

In the 1800s, another German composer, Felix Mendelssohn, did much to collect and promote Bach's music. Mendelssohn was extremely wealthy and spent a great deal of time and money searching for Bach's original manuscripts. In 1829 Mendelssohn staged and conducted in Berlin a moving performance of Bach's *St. Matthew's Passion*. Mendelssohn later remarked that it took the son of a Jew (Mendelssohn) to bring back to life one of the greatest of Christian compositions.

When spaceship Voyager was sent into outer space, J.S. Bach's music was represented as a sample of what the people on earth could create. Two asteroids are named after Bach: 1814 Bach and 1482 Sebastiana.

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The MAYRON COLE PIANO METHOD

Two-Part Invention No. 13

Theory and Thoughts

According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, a **Two-Part Invention** is a composition that has two distinct melodies weaving their way through a single thought.[1] You're going to love playing this invention; it is one of Mayron Cole's favorites!

Look at the first two measures of **Two-Part Invention No. 13**. You see something that looks incongruent, don't you? You see staccato dots ***and*** slur marks over those same notes. How can this be? In this case, the staccato dot is ***not*** functioning as a staccato but as a slight accent to be given to each note while still slurring the notes. You will depress slightly harder each key but will not release the key until you strike the next key. This gives you the effect that is called for.

More Thoughts on Baroque Music



As you know, JS Bach lived and composed music during the Baroque Period. The piano was being invented in Italy by Cristifori, but was not widely available for use at that time. Bach wrote his music for the harpsichord and for the pump organ because those were the keyboard instruments at his disposal.

When Mayron Cole was a young pianist, contest judges would become irate if the performing student even dared to use a sustaining pedal when playing Baroque Music. Why the righteous indignation? The judges thought, since the harpsichord did ***not*** have a damper pedal that usage of a pedal was forbidden when playing Bach's music.

Here's the irony of such thinking: we are performing on a ***piano***, not a harpsichord. If Bach had owned a piano, it is most probable that he would have indicated usage of the damper pedal. We have progressed from harpsichords to pianos. Times have changed! Also incongruent, harpsichords could not play soft and loud, yet many editions of Bach's music have dynamic markings!

So what is a pianist to do when playing music that shows no dynamics because it was written for the harpsichord? Answer: Add dynamics by simply following the melodic line. When the melody progresses ***up*** the staff gradually play ***louder***. When the melody moves ***down*** the staff, gradually play ***softer***. Easy!

[1] http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/292270/invention

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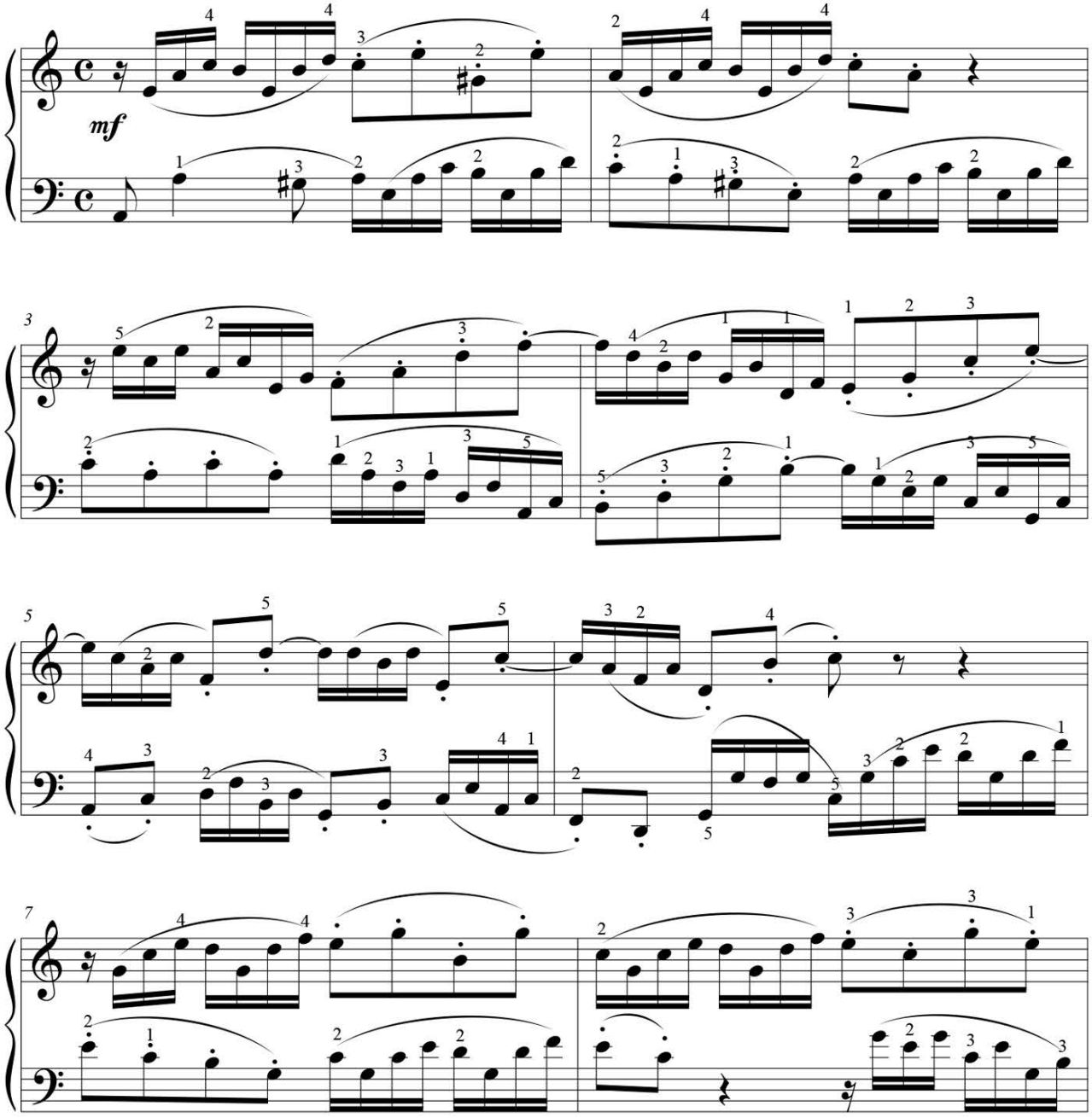
Two-Part Invention No. 13

(orchestrated accompaniment has a 2 measure count-in)

JS Bach

Allegro MM Quarter Note = 80



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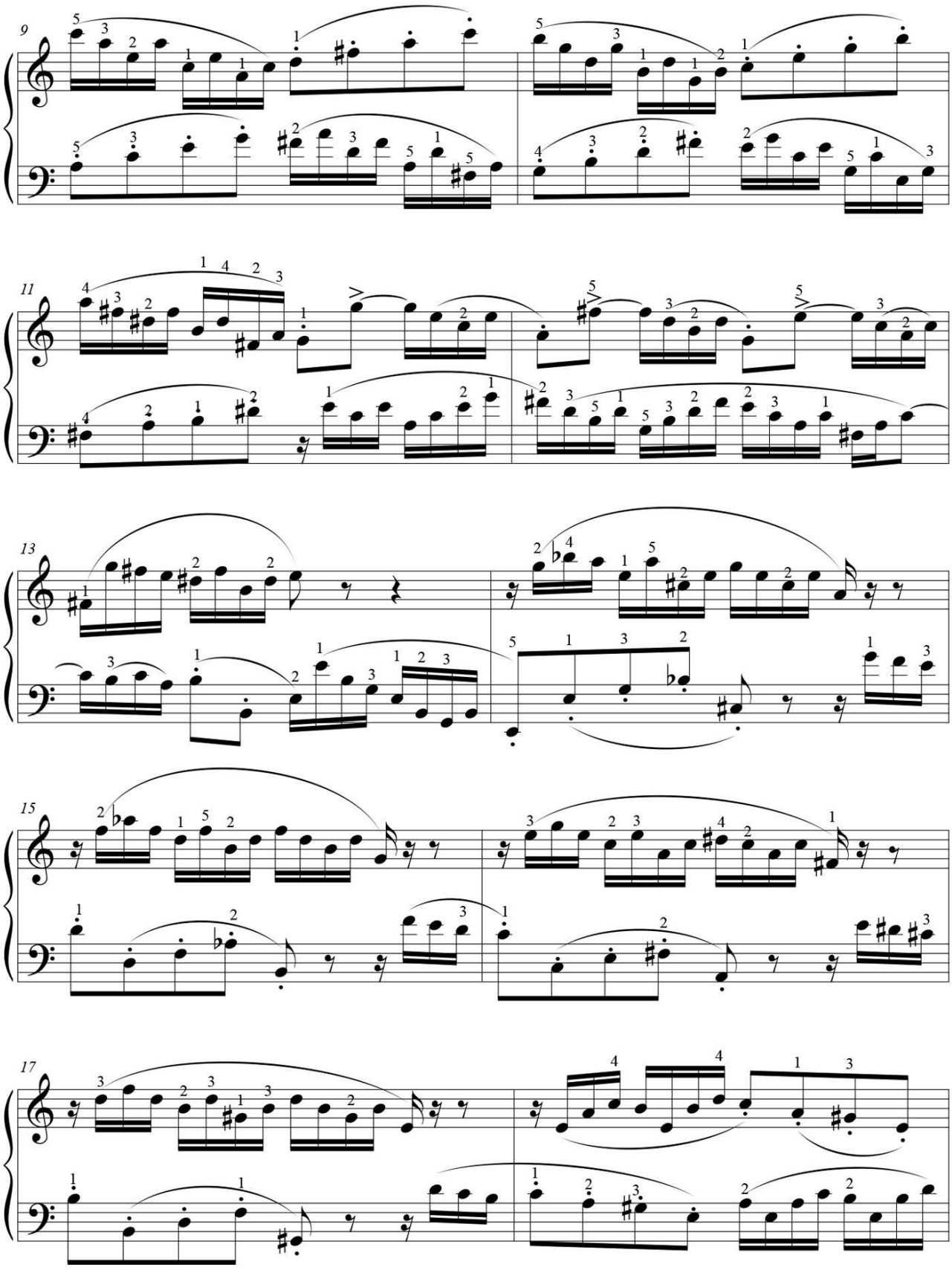

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