An Old Look at Schumann’s Organ Works

Robert August

This is a work that has occupied me for many years, in particular the period 1842–1846. The search for the old Schumann biographies, as well as the Four Fugues on the Name of Bach, op. 72, while John Wroth wrote: “In the year 1842 he began writing his Six Fugues on the Name of Bach, op. 72, at the organ, with pedal which included a pedal piano— pedale at as he had his friend’s pedal piano—in order to become familiar with the technique involved.”

Although Schumann was by no means an organist, he was able to compose his first published work in 1845, an unfolding of terribly thoughtful efforts. He brought the pedal piano at to take his troubles. The very fact that Schumann’s interest in the nature of music made impossible for him to give of his time, his formal style for example, his power of understanding the instrument, as is evident in his music in regards to his own date 29 May 1832. Schumann describes Bach’s in- expression of emotion and melody which had the work on finis to exhaustion. The fugal music could be worked out logi- and theoretically, within its own context, is ex- worse, omitted from Schumann biogra- phies, therefore neglected, and misunderstood, as a result of careless research. It is undoubtedly the most disputed cycle of Schumann ever con- posed. Despite a number of favorable ar- ticles, a few of negative writings remains consistent.”

A musical cure or misconception of Schumann’s organ works seems to have carried well into the 20th and 21st century, as the most recently Schumann biographers merely refer to the organ. It would be helpful to present a way of approaching a dialogue or deeper discussion. Schumann’s organ works are neglected in biographies and articles, often misrepresented as the Four Fugues on the Name of Bach, op. 72, while John Wroth wrote: “In the year 1842 he began writing his Six Fugues on the Name of Bach, op. 72, at the organ, with pedal which included a pedal piano—pedale at as he had his friend’s pedal piano—in order to become familiar with the technique involved.”

Appendix 1. Selection of Schumann’s contrapuntal exercises and studies

1817. Piano studies with Gottfried Dieckmann, in Breslau. The Major and Minor,
The Well-Tempered Clavier was part of this study. * 18 February 1829. .. Bach preludes with

6 June 1829. .. Bach’s a mode. *

1833–32 Counterpoint studies with Heinrich Dohm. The Organ works, dealing with harmony and counterpoint. * 1838. Studies in Markgraf’s Abhandlung on the Art of Fugue. * 1837. Studies in the Art of Fugue and Mar- sung’s “dry as dust” Allegro non troppo con fal-

October 1838. Review of Marquart’s treatise on fugue. Analysis of Bach’s organ fugaces.


4 May 1817. Piano studies with Gottfried Dieckmann, in Breslau. The Major and Minor,
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Schumann's interest in the organ was certainly stimulated by Bach. In the April 1842 issue of the Neue Zeitschrift für Musik Schumann wrote:

"But it is only at his organ that he [Bach] appears to be at his most sublime, most audacious, in his own element. Here he was an organist, a composer of organ fugues, thus, are not a byproduct of neutral exercises. They are carefully crafted works, based on a long tradition. Approaching fugal composition from a new perspective, Schumann felt that he had created works that were truly unique. Like Bach himself, Schumann understood the old and new, resulting in six spectacular character pieces.

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Appendix 2. Bach organ works in Schumann’s library

Title given by Schumann

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Title of print</th>
<th>Date of print</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BWV 599-630, 632-44</td>
<td>Orgelbäckchen</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BWV 61-63, 667, 740</td>
<td>(Great Eighteen Chorales)</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BWV 614, 633-34, 645-50, 668-74, 675-84, 691-93, 709-71, 704-8, 716-11, 749, 759, 760a</td>
<td>Choralvorspiele für die Orgel, 4 Heft</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BWV 532, 533, 539, 542, 550, 565, 566, 569</td>
<td>Choralvorspiele für die Orgel, 3 Bde.</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teil III</td>
<td>Choralvorspiele für die Orgel</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nr. 2</td>
<td>BWV 549</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nr. 3</td>
<td>BWV 538</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BWV 562(?)</td>
<td>Fantasy for Organ</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fugues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of print</th>
<th>Date of print</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BWV 522, 689-88, and 802-5</td>
<td>Choralvorspiele für die Orgel, 3 Bde.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fantasy in C Major, BWV 906</td>
<td>Choralvorspiel für die Orgel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fantasy in G Major, BWV 572</td>
<td>Fantasy für die Orgel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toccata in D Minor, BWV 903</td>
<td>Toccata für die Orgel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toccata and Fugue in M Major, BWV 541</td>
<td>Toccata und Fuge für Orgel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toccata and Fugue in G Major, BWV 555</td>
<td>Toccata und Fuge für Orgel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toccata and Fugue in G Minor, BWV 556</td>
<td>Toccata und Fuge für Orgel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toccata and Fugue in D Minor, (Dorian) BWV 538</td>
<td>Toccata und Fuge für Orgel</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Schumann fugue No. 1, mm. 38-43

Though the Canonus and Sketches display a more intimate, subjective side of Schumann’s composing style, the six fugues demonstrate a stronger balance between head (Eusebius) and heart (Florestan). Daverio and Von Wasilewski’s points of view are supported by the great variety of character in Schumann’s mid-1840s compositions.

Six Fugues on the Name of BACH

Schumann’s Six Fugues on the Name of BACH are the product of a carefully planned blueprint. Modeled after Bach’s examples, one might expect various Baroque elements in these pieces. Indeed, the fugues were conceived as a set of six, similar to many of Bach’s cycles (including many of his organ works). Such systematic arrangements of cycles containing six pieces was common in the Baroque era and, as Piet Kee points out, is rooted in numerology that goes back as far as Pythagoras. The use of number symbolism in music diminished substantially after the rise of the age of the Enlightenment; despite Schumann’s use of numerology, and despite Schumann’s use of numerology, there is no evidence that points to the composer’s knowledge or intentional use of number symbolism. Schumann’s fugues, however, do reveal a consistent observation of the Golden Ratio. This number (0.61803398874989484820458683436563811772030917983...) is found in nature, music, and the Golden Ratio (0.61803398874989484820458683436563811772030917983...). Schumann’s knowledge of the Golden Ratio is not recorded anywhere, but based on the many examples found in his and his contemporaries’ music, it seems plausible that he was familiar with the concept. The use of the Golden Ratio is a creation that is so closely related to nature, seems to have prevailed throughout the Romantic period into our time. A close examination of the Six Fugues on the Name of Bach reveals Golden Ratio (0.61803398874989484820458683436563811772030917983...) proportions (often multiple times) in each of the six fugues. These examples are often found within a measure of the exact G.R. When applying the G.R. to the number of measures in each fugue we see the following outcome:

Fugue I: The first fugue totals 64 measures, which is exactly the G.R. to these 64 measures, we come to 64 x 0.618 = 39, or measure 39. This measure contains two consecutive subject entries in the pedals. A ‘reversed’ G.R. (counting measures from the end) is found in its 25, located between two more subject entries (the second being a false entry) in the pedals. The second fugue is exactly this size, containing two double-pedal entries, each clearly defined by the Golden Ratio. In addition, the apex (x5) is reached in its 40, one measure after G.R. measure 39.

Fugue II: The second fugue is 174 measures long, 174 x 0.618 = 106. In its 106 new material is presented (ascending octaves/scales). This ‘reversed’ G.R. leads us to its 68, where the subject appears in the pedals (in its entirety) for the first time. Like several Bach compositions, this fugue contains Golden Ratio within Golden Ratio. The second fugue has been separated into three separate divisions.
At m. 74 we see a clear separation in the music where the dynamic changes (from forte to piano), while the texture changes from choral homophony to short phrase with the BACH motive in stretto. An inverted G.R. within that section suggests the m. 74 where the exposition is stirred up by a repeat of the subject in the alto voice. This entry starts on the second pedal, then the very first entry (slightly modified for harmonic purposes), but there is a sudden shift from a due to a comes entry, the first four notes of the subject appear in ditto form, while the remainder of the entry is presented in comes fashion. It is the only fugue in the cycle where Schumann applied (uniform) dynamic markings to each voice entry in the exposition, as to point out the exposition’s irregularity. Federhofer and Nauhaus point out that “... Schumann probably regarded the treatment of the ‘comes’ (different in each case) as depending on the character of the subject.” Min. 75–121 mark the beginning of the ‘comes’ (different in each place; 75 x 0.61 = 46; in m. 46 the subject appears in retrograde. Schumann probably regarded the treatment of the ‘comes’ (different in each case) as depending on the character of the subject.63 Min. 75–121 mark the beginning of the ‘comes’ (different in each case) as depending on the character of the subject.”

The fugue's second two sections are separated by a quarter note rest and a double bar line, as well as a dynamic increase (piano). In addition, Schumann writes lebhafter (livelier). When we apply the G.R. formula to the first part of the fugue (the first 58 measures) we come to 58 x 0.61 = 35. One measure earlier the subject occurs in the relative minor key (G minor). Similar Golden Ratio divisions are found in the second part of the fugue (97 measures long): 97 x 0.61 = 59 (m. 117). In m. 116, just one measure earlier, Schumann clearly defines the break in the music after two (!) four-measure pedal points, where the BACH theme is played in homophonic to a polyphonic texture. Regardless of Schumann’s intentions, the number of G.R.s is remarkable and cannot be denied.

### Styles

Schumann's organization of the cycle reveals a fascinating blend of Baroque and Romantic principles. Burkhard Meichirns points out the cycle’s sonata-like layout:

- **Fugue I**: Slow introduction
- **Fugue 2**: Faster section
- **Fugue 3**: and 4: Cantabile, slower section
- **Fugue 5**: Scherzo
- **Fugue 6**: Exciting, intensely growing finale

Interestingly, Schumann’s Classic outline is not unlike Bach's symmetrical organization of larger collections. Notice, for example, the symmetry in time signature, tempo, dynamics and texture (see Appendix 4).

The six fugues are based on the famous BACH theme that Bach himself had used in the final (incomplete) fugue of *The Art of Fugue*. As Daverio points out, “Though all the fugues incorporate the BACH theme, some of them use this theme merely as a starting point for a larger subject (see the subject of the second and fifth fugues).”64 Stinson discusses the many motif similarities between Schumann’s opp. 56 and 60 and Bach’s organ works. The second fugue on BACH, for example, has occasionally been ridiculed for its elongated subject, but it is analogous to BWV 575, which was published by Schumann in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* in February 1830.65 In *Abhandlung von der Fuge*, Marpurg discusses the proper treatment of fugue subjects.

I myself once heard him [Bach], when during my stay in Leipzig I was discussing with him certain matters concerning the fugue, pronounced the works of an old and hardworking contrapuntist dry and woodsy, and certain fugues by a more modern and no less great contrapuntist—that is the form in which they are arranged for clavier—prodigious: the first because the composer stuck continuously to his principal...
At m. 74 we see a clear separation in the music; there is a sudden dynamic change (pianissimo to piano). The figure is repeated at the break in the music after two (!) four-measure pedal points, when the BACH fugue appears in the middle voice, while the original BACH theme is presented in the pedals. A reversed Golden Ratio points to m. 23; the end of the first 58 measures (livelier). When we apply the G.R. formula to the first part of the fugue (the first 58 measures) we come to 58 x 0.61 = 35. One measure earlier the subject is first introduced in the relative minor key (G minor). Similar Golden Ratio divisions are found in the second part of the fugue (97 measures long): 97 x 0.61 = 59 (m. 117). In m. 116, just one measure earlier, Schumann clearly defines the break in the music after two (!) four-measure pedal points, when the BACH motive is re-introduced—this time in block chords. A reversed Golden Ratio is found at m. 95 from the end, rather than the beginning! In m. 95, after a three-measure pedal point, the fugue's first subject appears first in the second part of the (double) fugue. Other changes involve a dynamic increase and the introduction of both subjects simultaneously.

The number of Golden Ratios in Schumann's fugues is overwhelming, yet the question remains if they were intentionally placed or if they are a mere compositional byproduct. Schumann's organ compositions are an unusual blend of styles, which could easily generate an over-analytical approach. Fechter's and van Houten's previously mentioned findings are prime examples of such "determined research," and one needs to be careful not to attribute music's every single detail to a genius mind. In regards to Golden Ratio, perhaps the truth lies somewhere in the middle. Regardless of Schumann's intentions, the number of G.R.s is remarkable and cannot be denied.

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**Schumann Fugue No. 5, mm. 103-107**

**Schumann Fugue No. 6, mm. 59-61**

**Schumann Fugue No. 6, mm. 95-97**

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**Appendix 4. Symmetry in the Six Fugues on the Name of BACH**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fugue</th>
<th>Time Signature</th>
<th>Number of Measures</th>
<th>Tempo/Dynamics</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>F (C 4, 4th Antic.)</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>Langsam, mf</td>
<td>5-part. “Nacht und Schatten,” starting at m. 34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>Lebhaft, f</td>
<td>Dynamic changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>Mit saufsen</td>
<td>No Tempopolydynamic changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>Lebhaft, f</td>
<td>Dynamic changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>6/8</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>Lebhaft, mf</td>
<td>Increasingly louder towards the end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>C (B 4, 4th Antic.)</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>Millig, nach und schneller, mf</td>
<td>Same order of entries as fugue no. 1.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fugue III. The third fugue appears to be a double fugue, but the second subject is never fully developed. Derived from the main subject, it might be conceived as a melodically and rhythmically weak countersubject. Undermining the second subject may have been intentional, as Schumann’s focus seems to be mainly on the principal subject. Whereas the first two fugues were written in the key of B-flat major, the third is in G minor. Bound by the initial BACH motive (centered around B-flat), Schumann may have used the counterpoint mainly as a way to establish the fugue’s tonality. This thought also explains the countersubject’s lack of development, as Schumann’s focus is on the principal subject. Of the six fugues, the third maintains the strictest counterpoint throughout, and never resorts to a homophonic texture.

Fugue IV. In the fourth fugue, Schumann for the first time deviates from the established BACH motive. Though still etching the same motive, the notes are ordered in a new manner, incorporating the interval of a third. There is a number of similarities between the fourth fugue and Schumann’s second symphony, which was written 1845–1846. The symphony’s Adagio exhibits chromatic elements of the second fugue, and even incorporates a (semi) exposition, starting at m. 62, using two subjects. The Adagio’s harmonic progression of m. 82 also appears in m. 38 of the first fugue, even though they have been fond of the chord progression, repeating it several times (consecutively) in both pieces. Like the fugue, the Adagio reveals a striking G. R. (130 measures in m. 82, where the music is marked by a double bar line)—suddenly shifts from C minor to C major.

Fugue V. The fifth fugue, the scherzo of the cycle, maintains a strictly polyphonic texture. The independent voices are leading, combined with fast-moving eighth notes, makes for some demanding technical writing. The first phrase on B-flat, while the second part (continuous sixteenth notes) follows at the sixth, on G. This relationship is consistent until m. 30, where Schumann separates the two motives by abandoning the inter- melodic connection. The two motives still appear together throughout the fugue, but the second part of the subject (its starting pitch) is modified for the sake of variety.

Fugue VI. Schumann ends the cycle with a playful, five-part double fugue. Simultaneous use of duplet and triple meter, combined with a gradual buildup of tension and grandeur creates a sense of climactic resolution. Simultaneously claims the fugue, based on Bach’s Fugue in G flat Major, BWV 552, pointing out the similarities between the two fugues. Schumann, however, once again deviates from the Bach models and moves towards a homophonic texture before the end of the exposition. In the second exposition (starting at m. 59), Schumann’s approach is uncharacteristically tonal, but not without its ironies. As the second theme is introduced, Schumann holds off on the expected pedal entry of m. 67. Instead, he omits the pedals until much later, in m. 92, with a three-measure pedal point. The gradual transition, leading to the first pedal point, comes at the end of the first fugue. But before the pedals introduce the first subject, the second subject is played in the manuals, thus combining the fugue’s two themes. Towards the end of the fugue, starting at m. 124, the pedal shifts gradually faster. Diverging points out the motivic resemblance to Schumann’s second symphony.92 "Culminating in a choral peroration on the B-A-C-H theme, the fugue’s coda at times prefigures a coda of the final fugue’s sonata form in the Final (mm. 343f.) of the sonata form.93" Just like the first fugue, the final fugue concludes with a coda. In the first fugue, at m. 54, Schumann introduces a full four-part homophonic texture. Gradually faster and louder, the final fugue he specified. "Moderate, then faster." While a Hunsberger’s proposed texture of the first coda seems to suggest a sudden quieting down of the music, the sixth fugue’s coda, undoubt- edly calls for full organ, ending the cycle in a grand, majestic manner.

Schumann and the pedal piano. In the reformed 19th century, Schumann’s main purpose for hiring a pedalboard was to modify the organ. He found it surprising, however, that the pedal piano had much potential and that it might develop as a separate independent instrument. But even if the pedal piano was plausible, then, that Schumann’s output of DASV was conceived for pedal piano, organ, or both. Though op. 56 and 58 are clearly written for the pedal piano, Schumann (for the Pedal Piano, respectively), there seems to be a discrepancy in regards to op. 60, which is labeled Six Fugues on the Name of B-A-C-H without any further specification. To see in regards to the instrument of choice. The cover of the 1996 Henle (erst) edition of op. 56, 58, 60 reads “for Organ or Pedal Piano.” Organ or Pedal Piano? Walcker in any further specification. In its preface, Schumann explains that the first publication op. 60 is referred to as an organ work.

Towards the end of the cycle, the 1866 Schott edition of the cycle adds the composer’s dedication. The editor, internationally renowned organist Jean Guillou, writes: “Schumann composed these pieces in a hurry. As a pianist and he wrote them for the piano, allowing the possibility that they might have been performed on the organ, but not really envisaging the precise manner in which an organist might ‘translate’ them for the instrument.”94 Guillou’s edition for performer with registration and tempo markings that go well beyond the original. As useful as a performer’s edition, it seems, one needs to keep in mind that such is the interpretation of one person, and one needs to be mindful of the composer’s intentions. Notwithstanding the usefulness of such an edition, Guillou seems to have overlooked an important issue; unlike the Studies and Sketches, the Six Fugues on the Name of BACH were written for Henle Wie- gan, not for the piano.

The Preface of the Henle edition Weingartner explains that the first edition refers to the six fugues as organ works. As we see, the fugues are stylistically quite different than the other cycles. This, for example, the very progressive, as found in the second and third canonic studies. Also, there is a great difference in the use of pedal points; Schumann employs practical dynamic changes, easily handled through registration or by pedals. Schumann employed the peda- of evidence lies in the treatment of the pedal point. A deeper understanding of the pedal point will be essential to understanding the piece. Schumann’s approach to the pedal point is more restrained and balanced than the treatment of chord. In the pedal cycles, Schumann employs pedal points in both the piano and organ cycles. In the piano cycles, Schumann generally uses the pedal point to a pedal points. In the organ cycles, Schumann uses pedal points so often to maintain a continuous sound that the pedal point is sustained longer than two measures.95

In the organ fugues Schumann writes pedal points at or near the end of the composition. Also, unlike opp. 56 and 58, op. 60 never includes pedal points. However, Hermann Mendelssohn preferred older organ types. For his famous Sonatas for Organ, Mendelssohn chose an older instrument (Franz and Johann Michael H. Stumm, 1770). While a modern instrument (a large Walcker organ) was available, Mendelssohn’s dedication on Schumann as a composer and organist suggests that Schumann too may have favored older organ types, as is evidenced in Schumann’s comments in the prefaces.96 Bruch also points out that the organ music was not the organ music of the 18th century. These instruments were often made of pipes, which were generally closed to produce a more uniform sound. Crescendos therefore were realized by manual changes and/or adding stops.

Schumann the organist. In the 19th century, Schumann took great pride in the six fugues. Rooted in a long tradition, stemming from his primary example. The pedal piano that Schumann had contributed an important work that could stand the test of time. A more pressing issue was, however, that the pedal piano had much potential and that it might develop as a separate independent instrument. But even if the pedal piano was plausible, then, that Schumann’s output of DASV was conceived for pedal piano, organ, or both. Though op. 56 and 58 are clearly written for the pedal piano, Schumann (for the Pedal Piano, respectively), there seems to be a discrepancy in regards to op. 60, which is labeled Six Fugues on the Name of B-A-C-H without any further specification. To see in regards to the instrument of choice. The cover of the 1996 Henle (erst) edition of op. 56, 58, 60 reads “for Organ or Pedal Piano.” Organ or Pedal Piano? Schumann explains that the first publication op. 60 is referred to as an organ work.
4. In a discussion (ca. 1995) about the Pas- sages for C major, Schumann expressed that German organists consider this a holy 4th. See Ralf Kaestle, Schumann’s Orgelauführung von der Fuge nach den Grundsätzen des Bachschen Orgelbuches, Bologna/Ferrara/Parma 1987, III Free Congresso della società internazionale di musica antica e storia musicale 1987, II. 
5. Schuster and Wibskie published the organ parts for the Productive Organ (including detailed analyses and performance suggestions). They identified musical qualities in the preludes, fugues (several of which were published in the same volume as the Passagen), and several others seems to have never warmed up to the Passagen, as is evidenced in the lack of positive feedback in the performance suggestions.
6. Compare, for example, articles and biographies by Robert Schaufuß, Peter Ostwald, and Georg von Dardenell. A lack of quality in Schumann's German output is the subject of various historical assumptions. A more detailed discussion will be offered below.
19. Ibid., 12.
23. Ibid., 26.
24. Ibid., 51.