

# The Preludes of J. S. Bach's WTC Book II

## - Juxtaposition of Old and New

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Between 1738 and 1740, almost two decades after the compilation of the first book of the Well-Tempered Clavier (1722), Bach assembled the second set of twenty-four preludes and fugues. During this time, Bach was interested in developing the latest styles as well as exploring music of *stile antico*. In 1738, when Bach was compiling the second book of the WTC, Lorenz Minzler, once Bach's pupil, remarked on his teacher's composition, stating that it was "written entirely in accordance with the latest taste, and was approved by everyone."<sup>1)</sup> The two volumes of WTC differ greatly in style, as the preludes of WTC book 2 are generally longer. Ten of the preludes display the sonata structure with two repeated halves, while only one prelude of the first book (B minor) shows such a form. The binary sonata structure displayed in these preludes is, according to David Ledbetter, based on the ritornello aria, as the first idea is re-run and ends in the dominant while the second half moves back to the tonic from the dominant, developing and

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1) David, Hans T. and Arthur Mendel, ed., *The New Bach Reader*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1998, p.350.

extending the ideas.<sup>2)</sup> The nine preludes in book 2 do not have the central double bar repetition, but as David Schulenberg suggests, they still show elements of the sonata form with a division into two or three main sections, as well as the clear recapitulation of the opening material.<sup>3)</sup> The adaptation of the new sonata movement form to the preludes of book 2 obviously exhibits what Minzler meant by “the latest taste.” Bach was well-acquainted with new musical trends at the time since his sons Carl Philipp Emanuel and Wilhelm Friedmann had already composed their sonatas as early as in 1731.<sup>4)</sup> In addition to adapting the sonata form, Bach also modeled some of the preludes after works from the past, namely the *Ariadne musica* by Baden composer and Kapellmeister Johann Kaspar Fischer (1656-1746). Some of the preludes are reminiscent of Bach’s own works. The comparison of the preludes of book 2 with Fischer’s *Ariadne musica*, as well as Bach’s other works for keyboard that are associated with the preludes, clearly indicates that Bach’s preludes of WTC 2 shows a combination of ideas of old and new, such as the emerging galant - sonata style.

One of the most apparent examples displaying the galant - sonata style is the D major prelude, BWV 874 (example 1).

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2) Ledbetter, David, *Bach’s Well-Tempered Clavier: The 48 Preludes and Fugues*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002, p.63.

3) Schulenberg, David, *The Keyboard Music of J.S. Bach*. New York: Schirmer Books, 1992, p.198.

4) *Ibid.*, p.411, no.3.

⟨Ex.1-⟩ J.S. Bach- Prelude in D major, BWV 874 from WTC II, mm.1-18

The opening material presented in mm.1-2 is immediately repeated in the lower voice in the next two measures. Worth noting is the contrasting character the first two measures present: m.1 presents the spirited opening as it outlines the D major triad which ascends to the A<sup>4</sup>, but in the next measure, the pairs of slurred eighth notes provide a “sigh” figure. Both Schulenberg and Marshall argue that the full three-part sonata form - exposition - development - recapitulation - is clearly demonstrated in this prelude, and that it resembles the style of some of the sonatas by C.P.E. and Wilhelm Friedmann.<sup>5)</sup> Ledbetter calls the prelude a “large-scale

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5) Ibid., p.207/ Marshall, Robert L. ed., *Eighteenth-Century Keyboard Music*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, New York and London:

version of the galant sonata-type structure based on the aria ritornello.”<sup>6)</sup> It follows Bach’s usual harmonic scheme described earlier, and the apparent evidence of the sonata structure comes in m.41, where the opening material (mm.1-7) returns in the tonic. Although Bach seemed to be aware of the sonata structure, he does not exactly repeat the opening measures. Instead, the opening melody is now heard in the lower register, and Bach reverses the intervals of the sigh figures, which first appear in sixths, then in thirds (example 1a).

〈Ex.1a-〉 J.S. Bach- BWV 874, mm.39-45

In m.43, there is a stretto entrance which is inverted, and then it moves to the subdominant in m.45. While m.41, where the opening material comes back in the tonic, is certainly a “move towards Classical structure”<sup>7)</sup> as Ledbetter puts it, the recapitulation still shows that Bach did not yet fully incorporate the galant sonata structure as he avoids the literal return of the opening material and reverses it. Also, the double time signature of the prelude, the cut-time and 12/8 apparently reflect the presence of both duple and triple rhythmic figurations in the piece, and

Routledge, 2003, p.106.

6) Ledbetter, p.257.

7) Ibid., p.257.

the combination of complex rhythm, as Bach's other works such as the c minor adagio for harpsichord and violin (BWV 1017) displays, is one of the characteristics of the late Baroque/galant style (example 1b).<sup>8)</sup>

〈Ex.1b〉 J.S. Bach- Sonata for Violin and harpsichord in c minor, BWV1017, iii)

**Adagio.**

The F minor prelude, BWV 881 (example 2), is another example that shows elements of the galant sonata style. Like the D major prelude, it is also in three-part form, and the opening eight measures are divided into two four-bar phrases, like a question-and-answer phraseology. The appoggiaturas or the sigh motives in thirds and sixths in the first four measures convey the expressive quality, and then the second group of the next four measures presents a contrasting character in sixteenth notes, with both hands in the same register. Measures 9 - 19 repeats and further develops the opening material of the first eight measures, and a new theme of the closing material enters, whose sustained notes in the left hand are reminiscent of Couperin.<sup>9)</sup> The appoggiaturas then begin to appear in tenor and bass from m. 24 and on. By using the descending second sequence, it arrives in its relative key of A-flat major. The expressiveness of the opening material reminds

8) Ibid.,

9) Williams, Peter, "J.S. Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* : A New Approach 2. Early Music vol,11, no,7: Oxford University Press, July 1983, p.337.

the listener of the *empfindsam* style, with which the music of Emanuel Bach was closely associated. Schulenberg's explanation of the *empfindsam* style, "the gently expressive melodic line broken up by rests into many small motives, including 'sigh' figures,"<sup>10)</sup> matches the description of the opening eight measures of the F minor prelude. Another prelude from WTC book 2 that shows the *empfindsam* character is the C sharp minor prelude (BWV 873), with ornamentations in all three voices and the use of *appoggiaturas*. Also, its trio-sonata texture is modelled after the trio sonatas of C.P.E. Bach.<sup>11)</sup>

〈Ex.2-〉 J.S. Bach- Prelude in f minor BWV 881 from WTC II, mm.1-32

"Sigh" figures in the RH

Appoggiaturas in the LH imitating the sigh figures in the RH.

10) Marshall, Robert L, ed., p.193.

11) Schulenberg, p.206.

〈Ex.2a-〉 J.S. Bach- BWV 881, mm.33-37



〈Ex.2b-〉 J.S. Bach- BWV 881, mm.40-46

As in the D major prelude, Bach develops the motives from the opening material in the second half of the F minor prelude. Peter Williams argues that Bach, “with a learned composer’s taste for figural contrast...is playing with motifs and figures, contrasting one with another, running one into another, creating fluency from subtle contrast.”<sup>12)</sup> The second half is an integration of the two motives presented in the opening eight measures. After inserting four measures of the opening appoggiaturas in A-flat major in mm.29-32, he now places the figurations in sixteenth notes which first appear in the right hand in mm.5-8 and in the left hand in mm.32-35 (example 2a). The dissonances created by ties and appoggiaturas in the right hand

12) Williams, p.337.

create tension and nervous atmosphere.

This eventually leads to the cadence in B-flat minor in m.40. The sigh motives appear constantly in the sequential passages of mm.41-46, two of which are especially slurred (example 2b). After the imitation of the opening appoggiaturas in the left hand in mm.49-52, the reprise comes back in m.56, and it is a little shorter than the opening measures in length, but Bach extends the closing phrase in mm.66-70, which is very expressive.

The prelude in B-flat major, BWV 890 (example 3) is also one of the five preludes with central double bars in the WTC book 2 that shows the sonata structure. It begins with a descending scalar passage in the right hand, which is immediately followed by the left hand in the next measure. The B-flat pedal tone and the opening material suggest pastoral, peaceful atmosphere. Also, the opening measures of the prelude is undoubtedly reminiscent of Fischer's prelude in G major from the *Ariadne musica* (example 3a), with the long pedal tone in the tonic, and the unfolding of the upper voices in descending scales, which, according to Ledbetter, was a "common improvisation formula in organ preludes."<sup>13)</sup> Another piece which bears resemblance to the B-flat major prelude that both Ledbetter and Schulenberg mention is Bach's C minor fantasy BWV 906 (example 3b), which is also in a sonata form. Both the B-flat major prelude and the C minor fantasy not only have the same formal design, but these two pieces also introduce the technique of hand-crossing, which appear in each half in the fantasy (hand-crossing reappears in the development, in mm.37-41 in the prelude). There are two fair copies for the C minor fantasy, as Bach wrote it out in two occasions - the first between 1726 and 1731, and the second between 1738 and 1740. Robert Marshall argues that the first copy might have been intended to be used as the opening movement of the C minor partita, BWV 826, as the *giga*, last movement of the

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13) Ledbetter, p.317.



preceding B-flat major partita, also exhibits the hand-crossing technique, which would be presented in succession to the B-flat major *giga* had the C minor fantasy was used as the first movement of BWV 826.<sup>14)</sup> As for the second copy of 1738-1740, it might have been intended to replace the C minor prelude in WTC 2, as the fugue BWV 906/2 suggests, but it is not clear why the C minor fantasy did not replace the existing C minor prelude in the end.<sup>15)</sup>

〈Ex.3-〉 J.S. Bach- Prelude in B-flat major, BWV 890 from WTC II, mm.1-16

The image shows a musical score for J.S. Bach's Prelude in B-flat major, BWV 890, measures 1-16. The score is in B-flat major, 12/16 time, and features a hand-crossing technique in measures 10-15. The score is written for piano and consists of four systems of two staves each. The first system shows measures 1-4, the second system shows measures 5-8, the third system shows measures 9-12, and the fourth system shows measures 13-16. The hand-crossing technique is indicated by a box labeled "Use of hand-crossing technique" in measures 10-15.

Use of hand-crossing technique

14) Marshall, p.108.

15) Ibid., p.108.

〈Ex.3a-〉 Fischer- Prelude No.13 in G major from *Ariadne Musica*

The image displays a musical score for Fischer's Prelude No. 13 in G major, from the collection *Ariadne Musica*. The score is presented in four systems, each consisting of a treble and bass staff joined by a brace. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 3/4. Measure numbers 1, 6, 11, and 16 are indicated at the beginning of their respective systems. The notation includes various rhythmic values such as eighth and sixteenth notes, as well as rests and slurs. The piece concludes with a double bar line at the end of the fourth system.

〈Ex.3b-〉 J.S. Bach- Fantasy in c minor, BWV 906, mm.1-10

Unlike the C minor fantasy, which is fast-moving and almost frantic in character, the opening of the B-flat major prelude conveys a calm, more peaceful mood, despite the time signature of 12/16 which indicates a faster tempo. Also, while the reprise of the C minor fantasy is rather brief, the outer sections of the B-flat major prelude are quite expansive and substantial. As in the D major prelude, the B-flat major prelude consists of several materials (seven in total according to Ledbetter<sup>16)</sup>) and throughout the piece, though there is no stark contrast, there is the equivalent

of “theme-groups of Classical sonata form” found in both halves, as Schulenberg comments, in mm.21 and 65.

The opening of the E major prelude, BWV 878 (example 4), with the tonic pedal tone which sustains for two full measures as well as shows an unfolding of the upper voices, resembles that of the B-flat major prelude. The beginning of the F major prelude of WTC 2 also shows long, smooth lines over the tonic pedal as well (mm.1-2.) Over the long E bass pedal, the soprano descends B-A-G#-F# in mm.1-4, (and it eventually moves to E in m.5) and in the following four measures the alto imitates the  $\hat{5} - 4 - 3 - 2 - \uparrow$  descending five-note motive, which is repeated in the soprano (see ex.4, mm.1-8), although the last note C#, is rather “imaginary” and hidden in the passing sixteenth notes in the left hand.

Also, though it is not a direct influence, one can notice a similarity between the G major prelude in Fischer’s *Ariadne musica* and the E major prelude. As for a connection between the E major pair of WTC 2 and *Ariadne musica*, Bach took the first six measures from Fischer’s fugue in the same key, and it was quoted more directly in the E major fugue.<sup>17)</sup> In fact, besides the opening pedal tone on tonic, it immediately moves to the dominant in m.5 like Fischer’s prelude. The E major prelude faithfully follows Bach’s customary harmonic scheme used in binary forms, and Bach’s conventional technique for the binary sonata form - the amalgamation of different materials - is apparent as well. After the first eight measures with pedal tones on the tonic and dominant, the second idea begins in m.9, whose motive is derived from the opening eight measures. Then it reaches the dominant pedal in m.18, and finally the cadential point in m.21. In the second half, as Ledbetter observes, the writing becomes more a style of a keyboard sonata.<sup>18)</sup> More scalar passages are found in the second half, and these, along with the chords in thirds in the left hand (mm. 34-36, 53), are an example of idiomatic keyboard writing.

16) Ledbetter, p.318.

17) Schulenberg, p.213.

18) Ibid., 277.

The chords in thirds in the left hand are quite often found in Bach's other works: the c minor fugue from WTC book 1, the prelude in f sharp minor from WTC book 2 are a few examples. In addition, in mm.34-36, the soprano in the right hand first sings alone while the left hand supports with the chords in the thirds,

⟨Ex.4⟩ J.S. Bach- Prelude in E major, BWV 878 from WTC II, mm.1-24

The musical score for J.S. Bach's Prelude in E major, BWV 878, measures 1-24, is presented in a grand staff format. The key signature is E major (one sharp) and the time signature is 3/4. The score includes several annotations:

- Chord Symbols:**
  - Measure 1: B- (B)
  - Measure 2: A-
  - Measure 3: G#
  - Measure 4: F#- (E-)
  - Measure 5: (D#)
  - Measure 6: E-
  - Measure 7: D#
  - Measure 8: (C#)- (B)
- Measure Numbers:** 10, 15, and 20 are marked at the beginning of their respective systems.
- Performance Directions:**
  - "E: I" is placed above the first measure.
  - "V" is placed above measure 10.
  - "V ped." is placed below measure 15.
  - "Extended candence" is placed below measure 20.

then the alto answers as it takes the melody. The brief dialogue between the two parts then leads to sequential passage in the next three measures.

〈Ex. 4-〉 J.S. Bach- BWV 881, mm.34-36, 53-54

Imitative passage between soprano (mm.34-35) and alto(m.36) in the right hand

35

〈Ex.4a-〉 J.S. Bach- Praeludium in d minor, BWV 899, mm.1-6

d: i (tonic) pedal

RH in m.1 imitated in LH

## (Ex. 4b-) J.S. Bach- Praeludium in G major, BWV 902, mm.1-6

The image displays the musical score for the first six measures of J.S. Bach's Praeludium in G major, BWV 902. The score is written in G major (one sharp) and common time. It consists of two systems of two staves each. The first system shows measures 1-3, and the second system shows measures 4-6. The music features a long tonic pedal in the bass line and a gentle, flowing melody in the treble line.

As for other pieces associated with the E major prelude, two of Bach's earlier prelude, the D minor, BWV 899 (example 4a) and the G major, BWV 902/1 (example 4b), are also reminiscent of the E major prelude for their long pedal tones and gentle characters. The D minor prelude also begins with the five-measure-long tonic pedal, and the opening melody in the right hand is repeated an octave lower in the tenor in m.4. More similarities are found with the D minor prelude with Fischer's G major prelude as the opening material is repeated over the dominant pedal after the opening pedal on the tonic. The G major prelude BWV 902/1 resembles the E major prelude not only because it is in binary sonata form like the E major, but also because it displays a syncopated rhythm and an imitation between voices in the opening measures.

The F sharp major prelude, BWV 882 (example 5) is quite different from the four preludes discussed so far, in the way that it is not set with repeated halves but still shows a formal design of several different materials linked together. Both Marshall and Schulenberg argue that the F sharp major prelude is in a three-part sonata form.<sup>19)</sup> Like the D major and F minor preludes, the opening of the F sharp major prelude presents two contrasting ideas, the first in mm.1-3 which prominently

features the use of dotted rhythm, followed by the second idea, which consists of sixteenth note figurations in the next five measures. Unlike the F minor prelude, whose first eight measures are divided equally, the opening eight measures of the F sharp major prelude shows an irregular division of 3+5.<sup>20)</sup> In the next six measures in mm.8-14, all three figures from the opening measures appear and reach the cadence in the dominant in mm.15-17. One notices that there is re-transition in this prelude starting in m.45 (example 5a), which begins in the relative minor key of D sharp minor. This and the reprise at m.57 are the exact same restatement of the opening, except for the more embellishment on the first beat of the measure. The coda at m.68 uses the same material from mm.4-6. The two-voice texture of the

〈Ex.5-〉 J.S. Bach- Prelude in F# major, BWV 882 from WTC II, mm.1-21

3+ (mm.1-3)	5+ (mm.4-8) phrasing structure
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19) Schulenberg, p.217/ Marshall, p.106.

20) Ledbetter, p.291.



prelude, except for the last three measures, conveys a poignant atmosphere, and the trills and ornaments bring a *galant* quality to the piece.

⟨Ex.5a-⟩ J.S. Bach- BWV 882, mm.45-47



⟨Ex.5a⟩ (continued) - J.S. Bach- BWV 882, mm.48-57



The B major prelude BWV 892 (example 6), the penultimate of the WTC 2, is perhaps the most virtuosic of all the preludes in this volume. The free, improvisatory central section of the prelude suggests that it is in the concerto style, and the prelude is full of keyboard effects, to which Ledbetter compares the opening movement of the G major Partita, BWV 829 (example 6a).<sup>21)</sup> The praeambulum of the G major Partita also displays the similar kind of keyboard

21) Ibid., p.326.

technique to that of the B major prelude. As for the formal plan of the prelude, it is similar to those of the preludes previously discussed before, such as D major, F minor, and F sharp major, with the two contrasting materials presented in the opening and reused later.

〈Ex.6-〉 J.S. Bach- Prelude in B major, BWV 892, from WTC II, mm.1-22,

Ex.6b- J.S. Bach- BWV 892, mm.17-22

Use of chromaticism in right hand

Ex.6b- pattern of *roulade*

<Ex.6a-> J.S. Bach- Partita No.5 in G major, BWV 829, Praeambulum

Praeambulium.

The prelude begins with the energetic B major scale in the right hand, to which the left hand immediately responds with the descending scale (m.1), and then in the next measure, the trills in the dotted rhythm, which first appears in the right hand, is imitated in the left hand. From m.3 and until the modulation to the dominant in m.12, Bach introduces a contrasting material in the broken triads in the left hand, while the right hand has sixteenth note figurations. The first eleven measures are the equivalent of the opening section of a sonata movement, as Schulenberg suggests.<sup>22)</sup>

In my opinion, the chromatic scales in the right hand in mm.12-14, though transitory in its character, are an example of the “new” elements in Bach’s preludes. Composers of later generation, notably C.P.E. Bach and others often display the use of chromaticism. As the chromatic scales are imitated in the soprano and alto voices and give a sense of instability in harmony, although the dominant had been already established in m.12.

After reaching in the dominant in m.12, several changes of texture occur. First, the third voice is introduced in the third beat of m.12 while the left hand is moving in scalar motion, the trio-sonata texture is displayed. Then from m.17 one sees passages of the soloistic arpeggiation often found in Bach’s keyboard concertos<sup>23)</sup> (example 6b), or a pattern of *roulade*, which is, according to Ledbetter, a “seventeenth-century method of fingering scale passages without pivoting the thumb, in which successive groups of three or four notes are alternated between the hands.”<sup>24)</sup> Measure 23 shows another example of the trio-sonata texture with material from the first eleven measures, and finally another passage of *roulade* appears from m.29 to 32. Near the end of the middle section in mm.33-34, the material used is from the first section, in mm.3-8. Measure 35 is an interesting

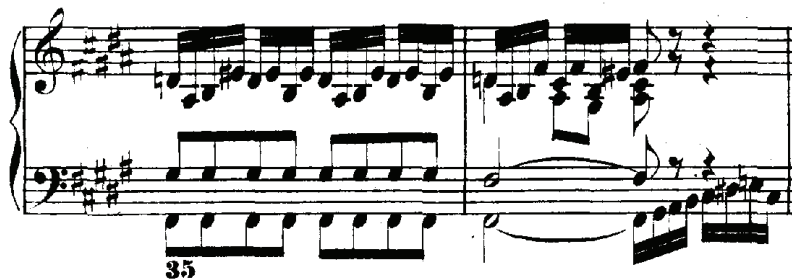
22) Schulenberg, p.228.

23) Ibid.

24) Ledbetter, pp.325-326, p.372.

point, as the same kind of moment is also found in the C minor fantasy, BWV 906 (m.9), which was mentioned earlier. In the B major prelude, Bach repeats the dissonant chords in the left hand eight times before arriving on the dominant, and perhaps here he wanted to maximize the tension before it is resolved and desired to further emphasize the 9-8 resolution (example 6c). Another possible interpretation for this measure is the concerto style that the prelude suggests, and the repeated eighth notes in the bass can be heard in the orchestra. The reprise in measure 37 brings the opening phrase in the left hand, and is mostly scalar passages.

⟨Ex.6c-⟩ J.S. Bach- Prelude BWV 892, mm.35-36



As for the tension of the 9-8 resolution in the left hand in mm.35-36, similar spots can be found in Bach's D minor Ksyboard Concerto, BWV 1052, near the end of the first movement: In the short cadenza which begins in m.152, while the left hand with the D octaves provides a long pedal point, the right hand presents a series of 7-6 suspensions (mm.153-157) and its inversions (mm.158-161.) The dissonances over the tonic pedal point, as in the aforementioned B major prelude, bring dramatic tension to the listener.

〈Ex.6d-〉 J.S. Bach- Keyboard Concerto no.1 in d minor, BWV 1052, i, mm. 153-161

7-6 Suspensions (mm,153-157)

7-6 suspension inverted (mm,158-161)

Tonic(i)

The use of B major scale, the “modern” scale in the opening measure, as well as the old seventeenth-century technique of roulade, shown in the middle section of the prelude, clearly demonstrate the mixture of old and new keyboard techniques.<sup>25)</sup> The Chromatic scales and the dramatic orchestral passages with dissonances which reminds of the concerto style are also experimental in my opinion.

Six of the preludes from WTC 2 discussed in this paper all illustrate a combination of old and new ideas. The D major prelude displays the full three-part sonata form, although the recapitulation is not the exact restatement of the opening. The F minor prelude, also in the galant-sonata form, shows the *empfindsam* style- it is in minor

25) Ibid., p.325

key and the use of dissonances and two-note slurs, the “sigh” figures create sorrowful mood. Also, it is very expressive in character with its use of appoggiaturas. With the B-flat major prelude, one sees more obvious combination of old and new, as it shows the influence from the G major prelude from Fischer’s *Ariadne musica*, as well as one of Bach’s earlier works for keyboard, the C minor fantasy, BWV 906. The opening of the B-flat prelude, with the tonic pedal tone in the bass and the descending scales in the right hand, is reminiscent of organ preludes by Bach and other composers of the past. The B-flat major prelude also shows the elements from the sonata form, and it displays the new keyboard technique of hand crossing. The E major prelude is another example that illustrates this influence from the past, as the long pedal tone in the opening links the prelude with that of Fischer’s from *Ariadne musica*, as well as Bach’s other preludes with similar features. The harmonic structure of tonic pedal tone followed by the dominant as in the Fisher’s preludes may look simple, but one cannot overlook the imitation of descending scales which outlines a five-note motive in the right hand.

The Prelude in F sharp major, although it does not have a central double bar, still is in the sonata form. The B major prelude displays juxtaposition of old and new ideas, with different keyboard techniques- use of the thumb in the opening B major scale in the right hand and the use of *roulade*. As for structure, it employs sonata form, which soon became popular genre from the around 1730s. It is worth noting that the B major prelude presents a number of new elements, while the following four-part B major fugue, which is written in the style of motet, can be viewed as an example of *stile antico*. The amalgamation of old and new, the use of sonata form and influences from his other compositions as well as from earlier composers created the second book of Well-Tempered Clavier, and it truly demonstrates Bach’s genius.

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## 국문초록

### J.S. 바흐 <평균율 클라비어곡집 제 2권>의 프렐류드 - 새로운 양식과 옛 스타일의 병치

남희정

1722년 <평균율 클라비어곡집 제 1권>을 작곡한 지 거의 20년 만인 1738~40년, 바흐는 24개의 프렐류드와 푸가으로 이루어진 <평균율 클라비어곡집 제 2권>을 완성한다. 이 시기 바흐는 당시 유행하던 최신 작곡 양식을 stile antico라 불리던 이전 양식을 접목하는 시도를 하였는데, 후일 바흐의 제자 민즐러(Minzler)는 평균율 제 2권은 가장 최신의 작곡 양식을 보여주고 있으며 널리 인정받았다고 평가하기도 했다. 평균율 제 1권과 2권은 구성 면에서 뚜렷한 차이점을 보이는데, 제 2권의 프렐류드가 일반적으로 길고, 이 중 10개의 프렐류드는 반복되는 두 부분으로 이루어진 소나타 형식을 취하고 있는 반면 제 1권의 프렐류드 중 같은 형식으로 된 곡은 마지막 곡인 B단조 뿐이다. 음악학자 데이빗 레드베터(David Ledbetter)에 따르면 순환2부분 소나타 형식을 보여주는 제 2권의 프렐류드들은 리토르넬로 아리아 형식에 기반하여 첫 번째 주제가 딸림음에 도달하고, 이어 두 번째 주제가 딸림음에서 다시 으뜸음으로 돌아오면서 주제가 더 발전되고 확대된다. 평균율 제 2권의 다른 9개의 프렐류드는 앞서 언급한 반복되는 두 부분의 순환 2부분 형식은 아니나 두 개 혹은 세 개의 주요 부분으로 나뉘어지고, 후에 처음 오프닝 주제가 소나타의 재현부 부분처럼 다시 등장한다. 소나타 형식은 민즐러가 앞서 언급한 “최신 작곡 양식”이었으며 바흐는 그의 아들들인 C.P.E.바흐나 W.F.바흐가 이미 1731년경 소나타를 작곡했다는 사실도 잘 알고 있었다.

프렐류드를 소나타 형식을 사용하여 작곡한 점 외에도 평균율 제 2권의 프렐류드는 요한 카스파르 피셔 (Johann Kaspar Fischer) 의 <아리아드네 무지카> (Ariadne Musica)로 대표되는 이전 시대의 작품의 영향을 보여주고 있다. 몇몇 프렐류드는 바흐 자신의 다른 작품들을 연상시키기도 한다.

<평균율 클라비어곡집 제 2권>의 6개 프렐류드를 피셔의 <아리아드네 무지카>나 바흐의 다른 키보드를 위한 작품들과 비교해 보면, 평균율 제 2권은 이전 시대의 영향과 떠오르는 갈랑

트-소나타 스타일 같은 새로운 양식의 조합을 나타낸다고 할 수 있겠다.

프렐류드 5번 D장조는 비록 오프닝의 재현 부분이 완전히 시작 부분과 같지는 않으나, 온전한 세 부분으로 이루어진 소나타 형식을 보여주는 한 예다. 12번 f단조 프렐류드 역시 갈랑트-소나타 형식이고, 당시 떠오르는 민감 양식 (empfindsamer stil)의 영향을 보여준다. 아포지아투라를 사용함으로써 풍부한 감정 표현을 드러낸다. 프렐류드 21번 B플랫 장조 역시 소나타 형식의 요소를 보여주고 있으며, 이 곡에서 이전 양식과 새로운 스타일의 접목은 더 분명하게 나타나는데, 피셔의 《아리아드네 무지카》 중 프렐류드 G장조와 바흐 자신의 이전 작품인 판타지 c단조 BWV 906의 영향을 받은 점이 그것이다.

평균율 제 2권의 프렐류드 9번 E장조 역시 시작 부분의 긴 페달 톤이 《아리아드네 무지카》의 프렐류드를 비롯해 비슷한 특징을 가진 바흐 자신의 이전 작품들과 연관되어 있다. 프렐류드 13번 F#장조는 역시 소나타 형식의 영향을 보여주고 있다. 프렐류드 23번 B장조는 여러 가지 건반 악기 테크닉을 비롯해 이전 시대 작품의 영향과 새로운 아이디어가 병치되어 있다.

《평균율 클라비어곡집 제 2권》은 기존의 형식과 당시 새롭게 부상하던 소나타 형식의 사용, 그리고 이전 시대 작곡가들의 작품과 바흐 자신의 초기 작품들의 영향을 골고루 보여주고 있다.