The "Version" Problem in Bach's Preludes and Fugues for Organ

David Schulenberg (Wagner College and The Juilliard School)

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Table 1. J. S. Bach's organ *praeludia* (preludes and fugues) in chronological order

Dates are approximate at best; places of composition are highly provisional.

BWV	key	place and date of origin	chief nature of revision(s) by Bach
551	a	not by JSB? before 1700?	(no substantial revision)
549a	d	Ohrdruf, 1700–3?	C-minor version BWV 549 produced shortly afterward?
536	A	Arnstadt, 1703–7?	(no substantial revision by JSB)
533	e	Arnstadt, 1703–7?	originally as BWV 533a, revised shortly afterward?
531	C	Arnstadt, 1703–7?	(no substantial revision)
535*	g	Arnstadt, 1703–7?	revised repeatedly, at Weimar, ca. 1714–17, and later?
566	E	Arnstadt? Mühlhausen? Weimar? 1703–8?	C-major version produced at Weimar, ca. 1714–17?
532	D	Weimar, 1708–14?	fugue expanded while at Weimar?
550*	G	Weimar, 1708–14?	minor revisions after 1714?
543	a	Weimar, 1708–14?	revised at Weimar, 1714–17?
545	C	Weimar, 1714–17?	several distinct versions produced at Weimar and later? some not by JSB, after 1750?
546	c	Cöthen? Leipzig? after 1717?	prelude substituted for fantasia BWV 562/1?
541*	G	Leipzig? after 1723?	no substantial revision unless a 3-mvt. version is Bach's
548*	e	Leipzig? after 1723?	the "Wedge" (no substantial revision)
544*	b	Leipzig, after 1727?	(no substantial revision)
547	C	Leipzig, after 1730?	(no substantial revision)
534	f	not by JSB? after 1750?	(no substantial revision)

*sources include autograph material

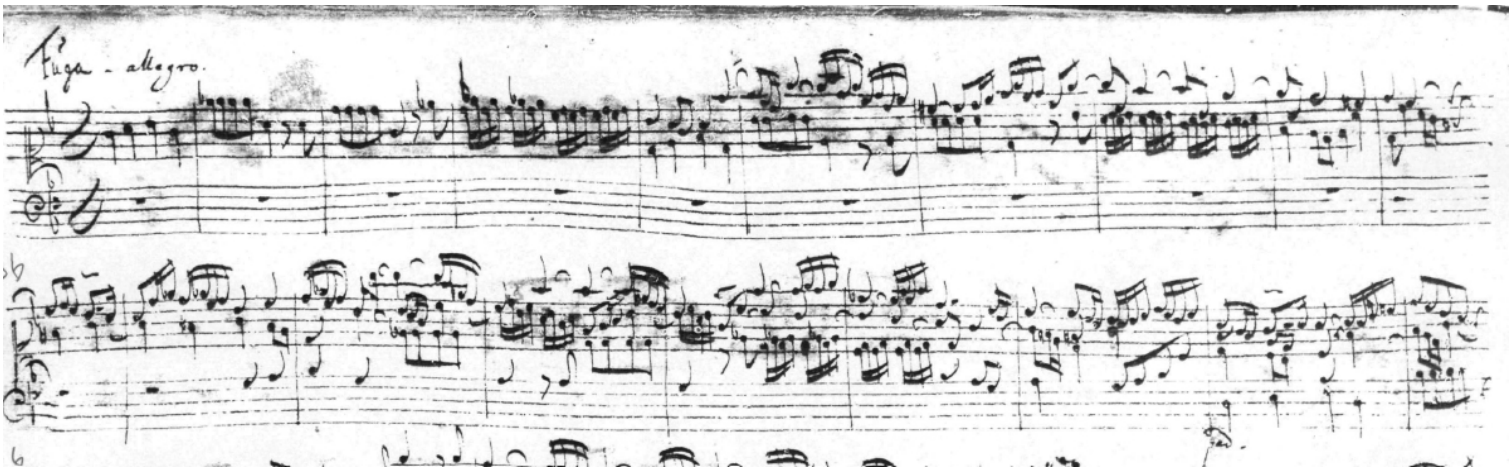
Table 2. J. S. Bach's organ *praeludia* (preludes and fugues) listed by chief type of revision

Within each group the order is roughly chronological.

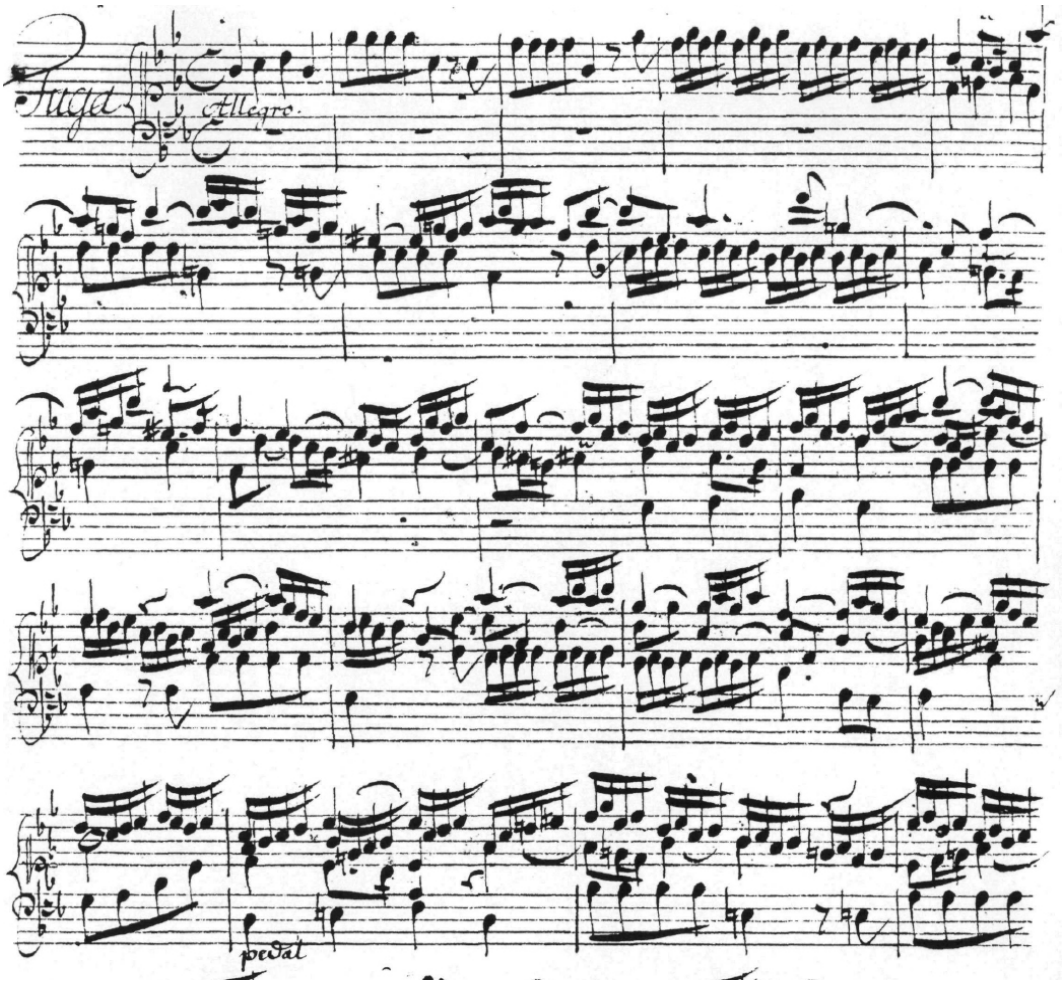
BWV	key	comment
No distinct alternate versions		
531	C	
547	C	
534	f	probably not by JSB
551	a	probably not by JSB
Revision limited to addition of ornament signs, refinement of voice leading, and the like		
533	e	the "Little" prelude and fugue in e, revision of an earlier version for manuals only (BWV 533a)?
535	g	intermediate version with new prelude includes extensive revision of fugue, but chordal passage in prelude uses abbreviated notation
		late version with arpeggiation of chords written out in prelude
550	G	alternate version adapted (not by JSB?) for an instrument without pedal e"
		late (?) version with additional ornaments, divided into 2 distinct movements
545	C	late version with additional ornaments (not by JSB?)
541	G	the familiar version includes small revisions present only in fair-copy autograph ms
548	e	the "Wedge," ms copies include minor revisions absent from part-autograph ms
544	b	the familiar version includes small revisions from ms copies (not in autograph ms)
One or more movements expanded (or abbreviated?)		
536	A	5 simplified arrangements including BWV 536a, all probably by Leonhard Scholz
532	D	fugue either expanded to form BWV 532/1 or abbreviated to yield BWV 532a
543	a	prelude expanded by several measures from version of BWV 543a
545	C	prelude expanded from early version of BWV 545a (also small changes in fugue)
Transposition		
549	c	from earlier version in d (BWV 549a)? small additional changes?
566	C	from earlier version in E (the latter only in late ms copies)
545	C	prelude and fugue transposed to B-flat, probably not by JSB (BWV 545b)
Addition or substitution of one or more movements		
535	g	new prelude substituted in intermediate and late versions, with other revisions
532	D	most ms copies give only one movement; pairing of prelude and fugue not by JSB?
545	C	intermediate version includes trio BWV 529/2 as 2d mvt.
		transposed version in B-flat (BWV 545b, not by JSB?) includes trio (version of BWV 1029/3) and two other unique movements
546	C	one ms copy has the fantasia BWV 562/1 in place of the prelude BWV 546/1
541	G	one ms copy has rubric indicating insertion of trio BWV 528/3 after the prelude

Examples

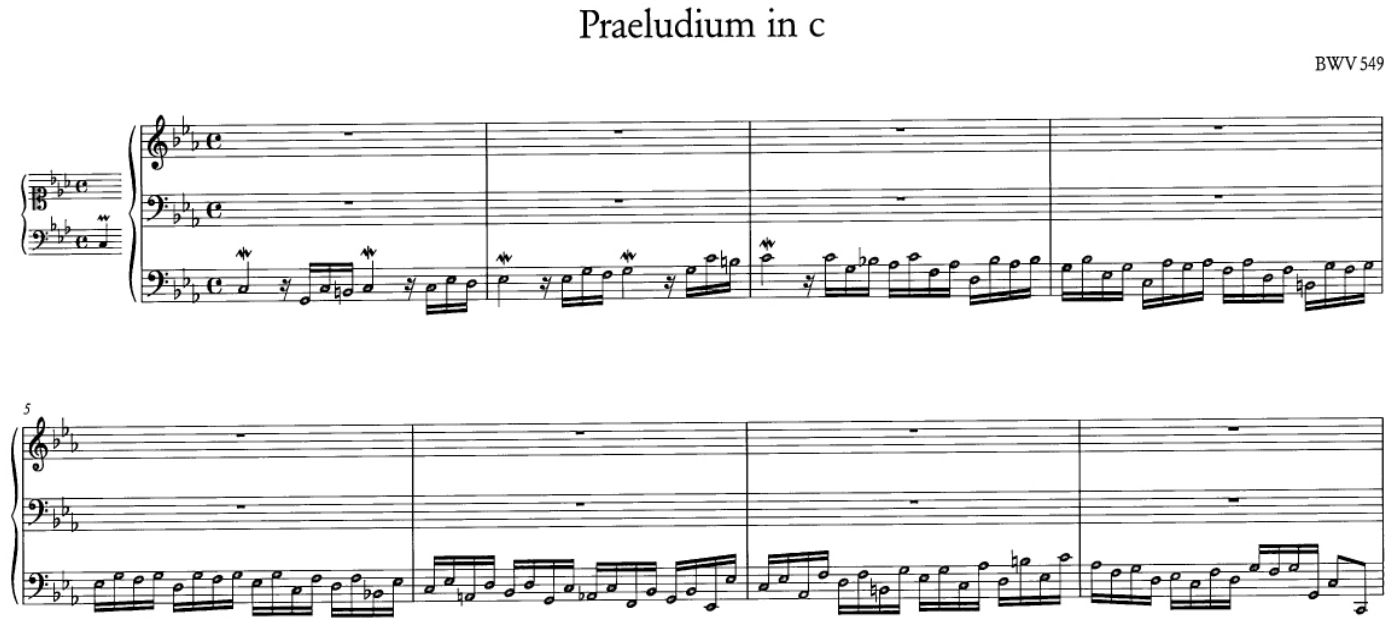
1. Fugue in G minor, BWV 535a/2, from Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Mus. ms. 40644 (autograph)



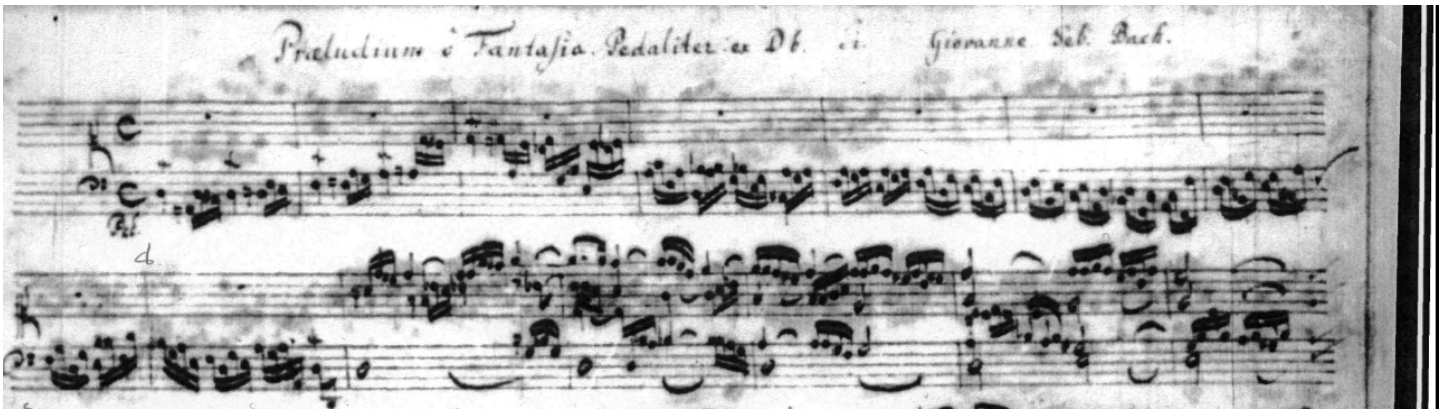
2. Fugue in G minor, BWV 535/2, from Leipzig, Bach-Archiv, MS Varia 1 (owned by Johann Christian Bach)



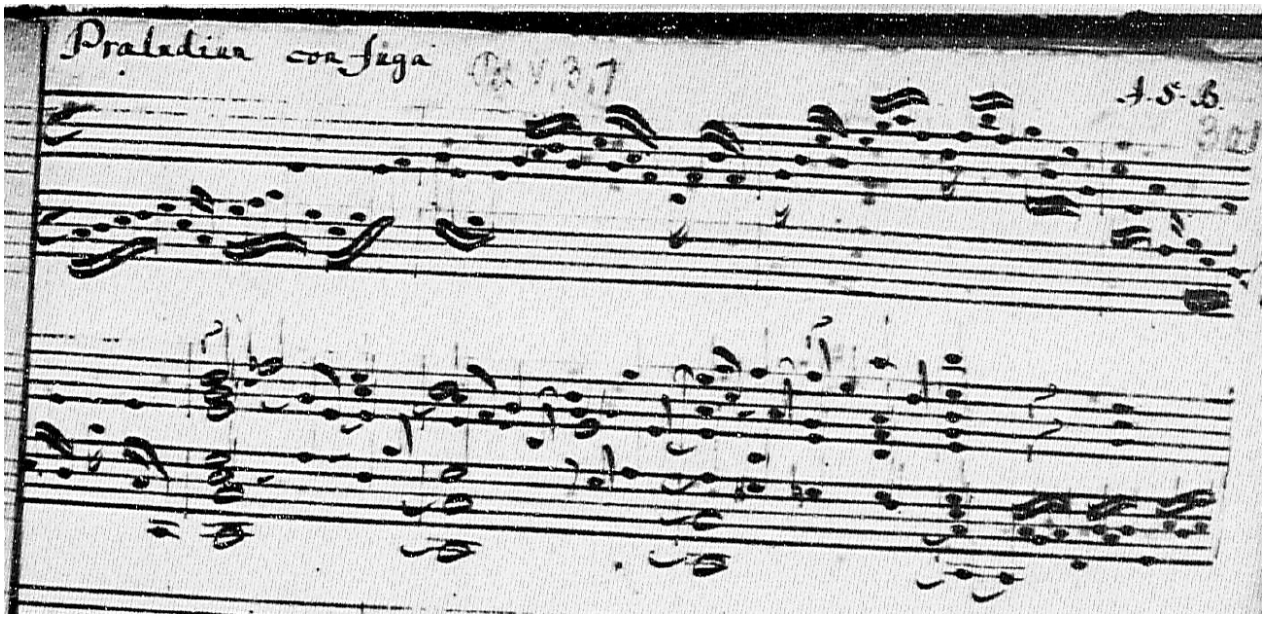
3. Praeludium in C minor, BWV 549, from the new Breitkopf edition



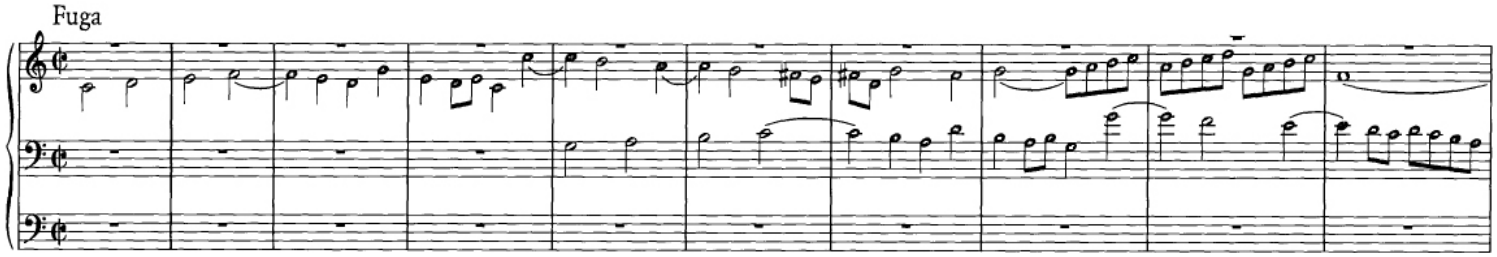
4. Prelude and Fugue in D minor, BWV 549a, from Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Mus. ms. 40644 (Johann Christoph Bach)



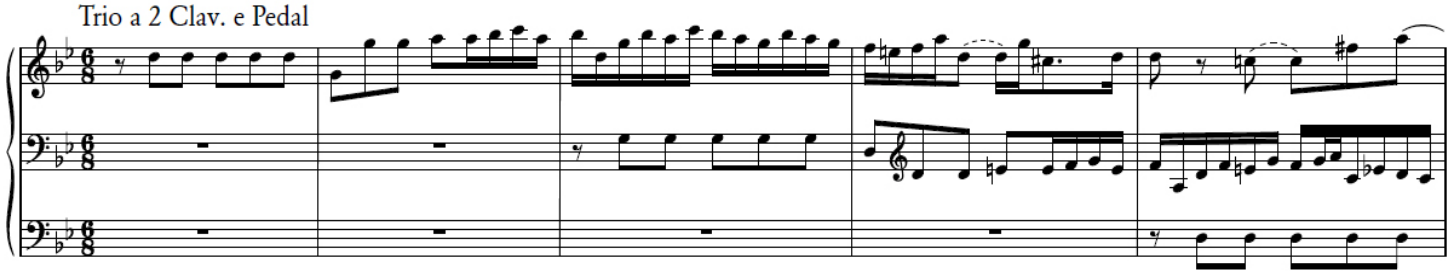
5. Praeludium in C, BWV 566(a), from Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Mus. ms. Bach P 803/15 (Johann Tobias Krebs, sr.)



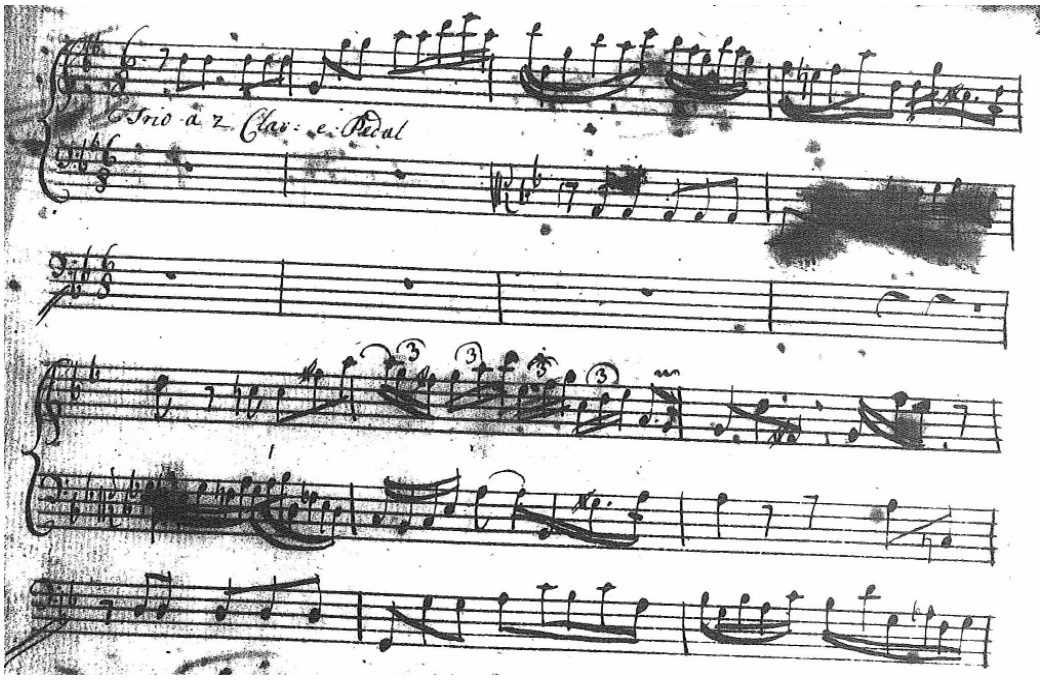
6. Fugue in C, BWV 545/2, from new Breitkopf edition



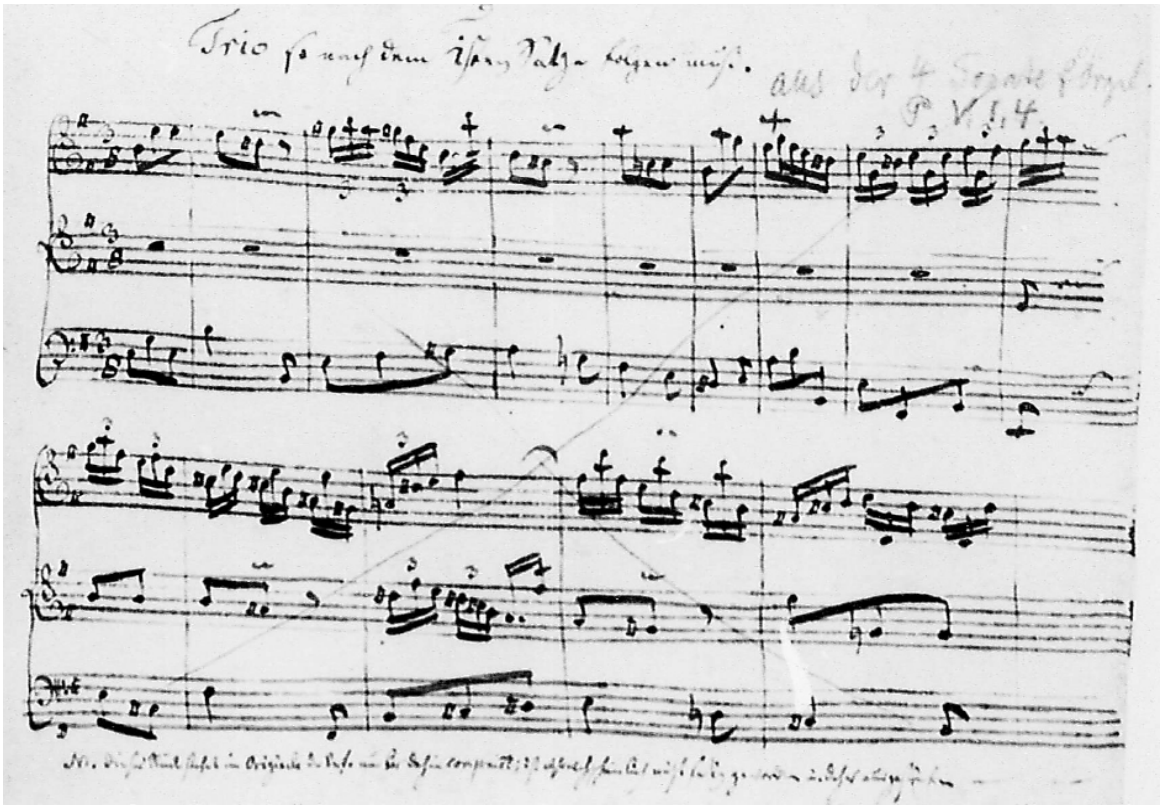
7. Praeludium in B-flat, BWV 545b, trio (movement 3), from new Breitkopf edition



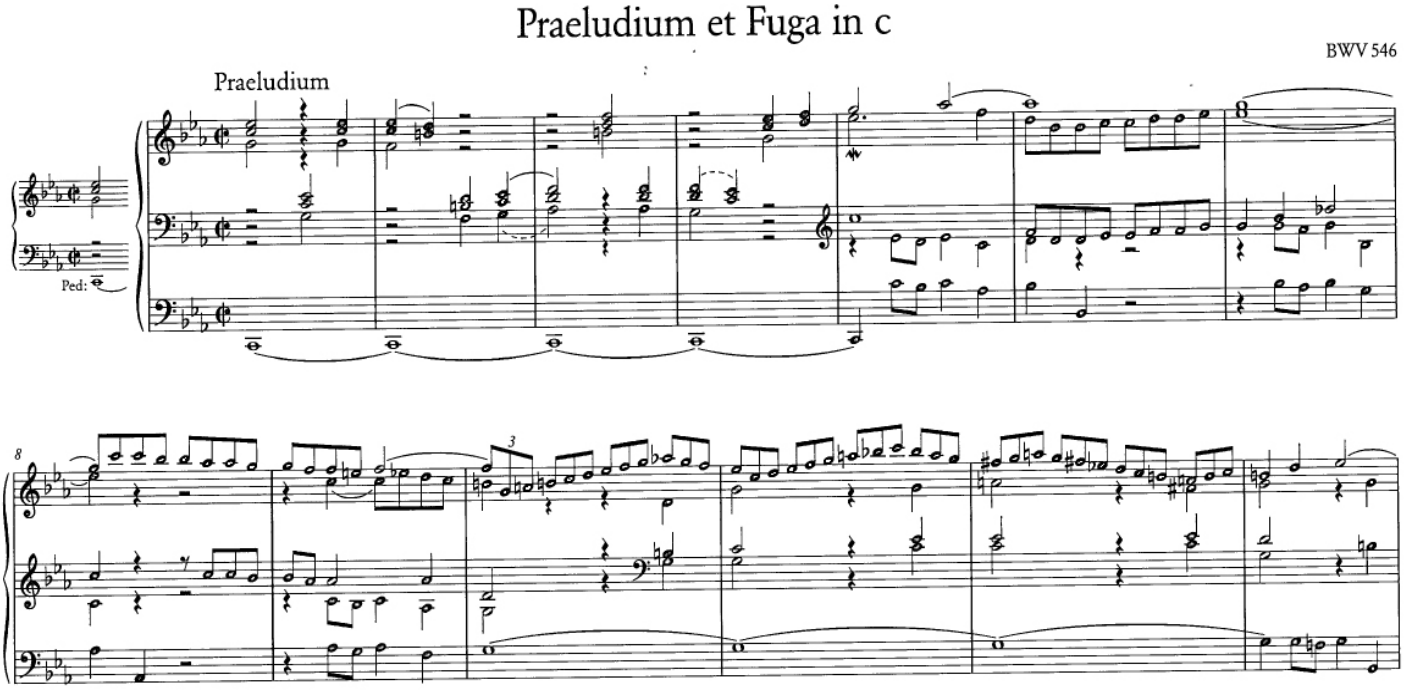
8. Praeludium in B-flat, BWV 545b, movement 3, from London, British Library, RCM 814 (Benjamin Cooke, jr. and sr.)



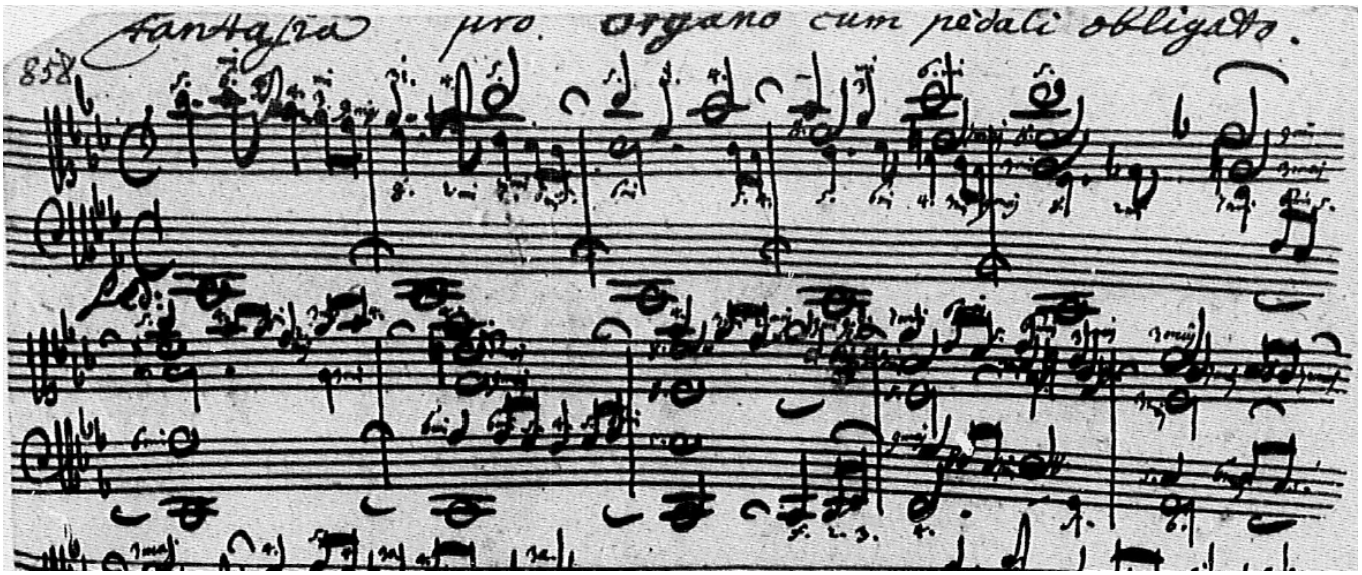
9. Prelude and Fugue in G, BWV 541, last page of copy in Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Mus. ms. Bach P 288, with heading “Trio so nach dem 1sten Satze folgen muß” and beginning of BWV 528/3 (in the hand of Johann Christian Westphal)



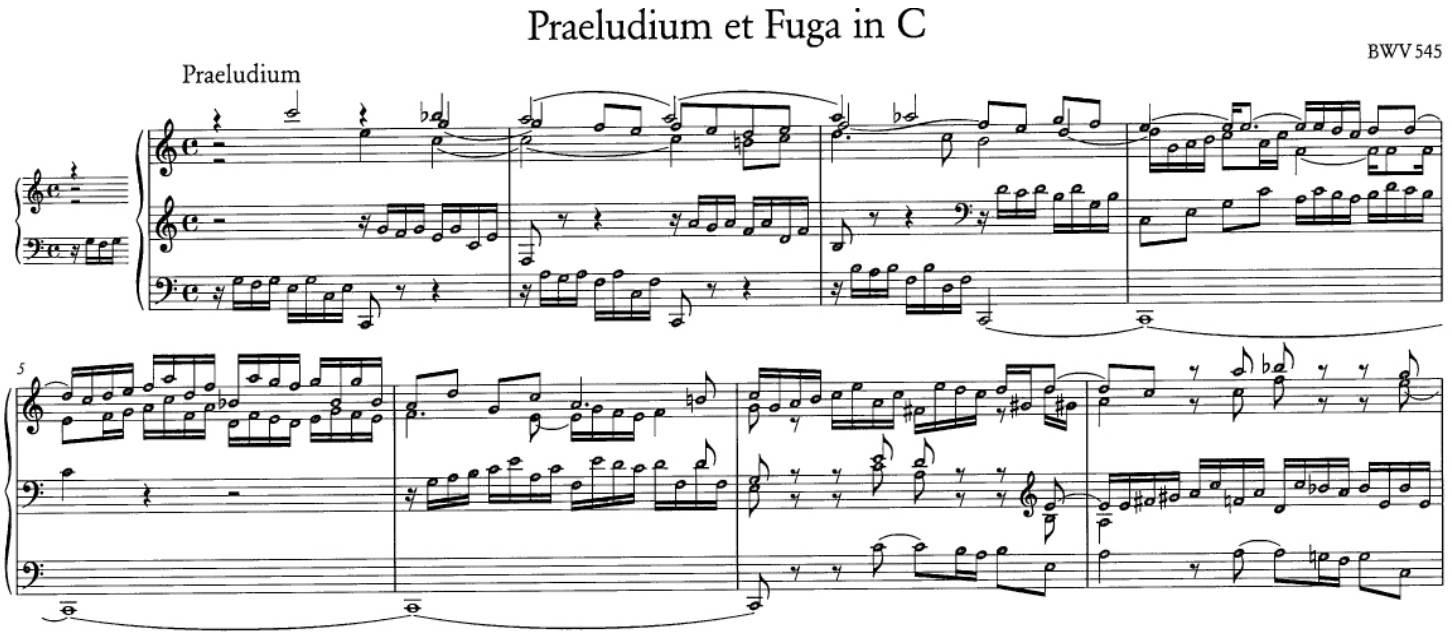
10. Prelude in C minor, BWV 546/1, from new Breitkopf edition



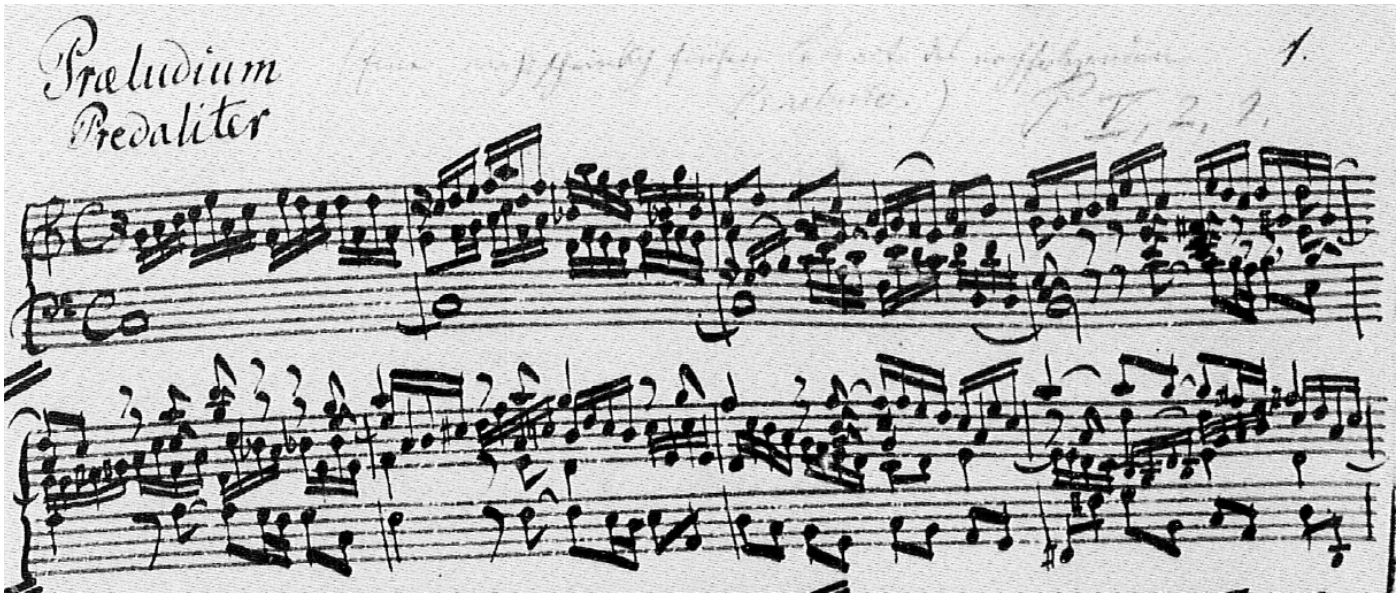
11. Fantasia in C minor, BWV 562/1, paired with BWV 546/2 in Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Mus. ms. Bach P 1104 (Anonymous O, after 1750?)



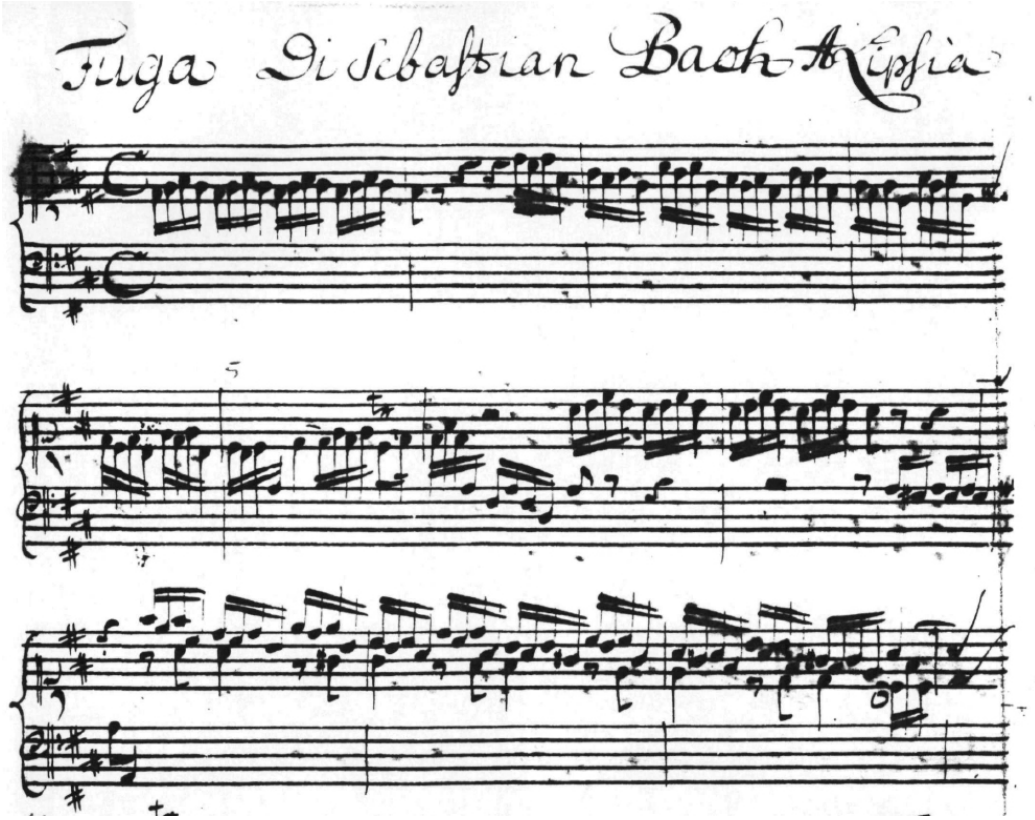
12. Prelude in C, BWV 545/1, from new Breitkopf edition



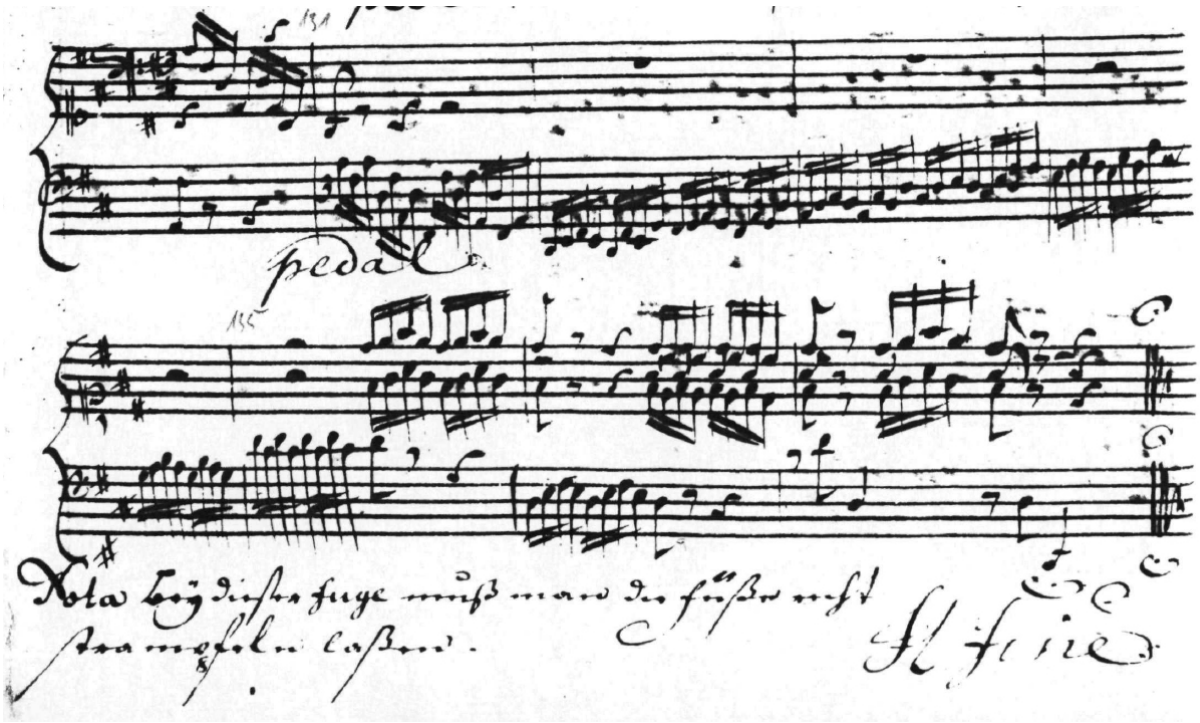
13. Prelude in C, BWV 545a, from Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Mus. ms. Bach P 290 (Anonymous 303, after 1750)



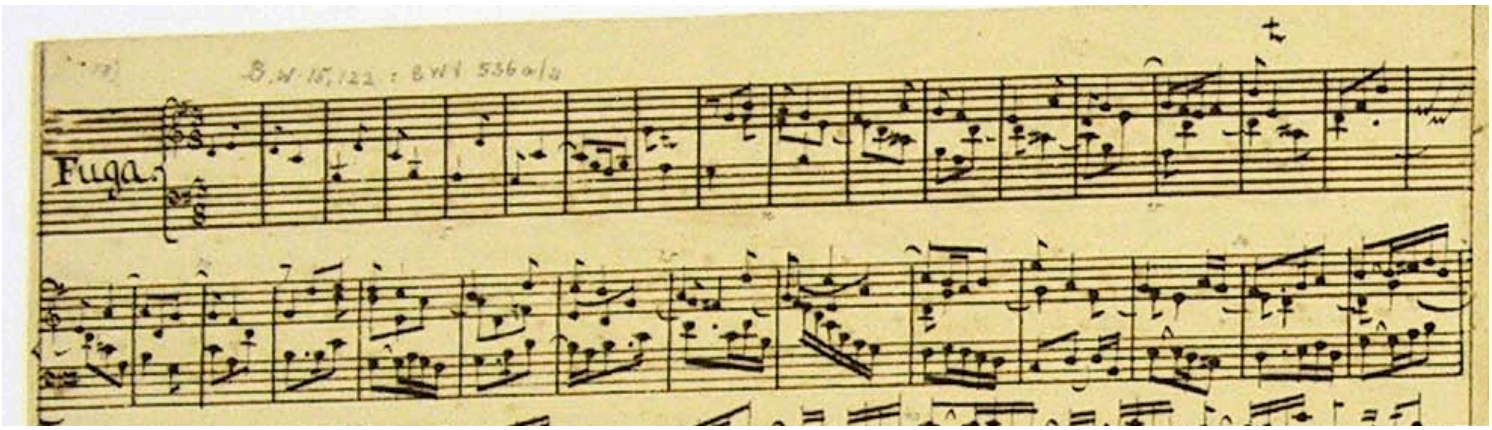
14. Fugue in D, BWV 532/2, from Stuttgart, Württembergische Landesbibliothek, II, fol. 288 (Lorenz Sichart, dated 1740)



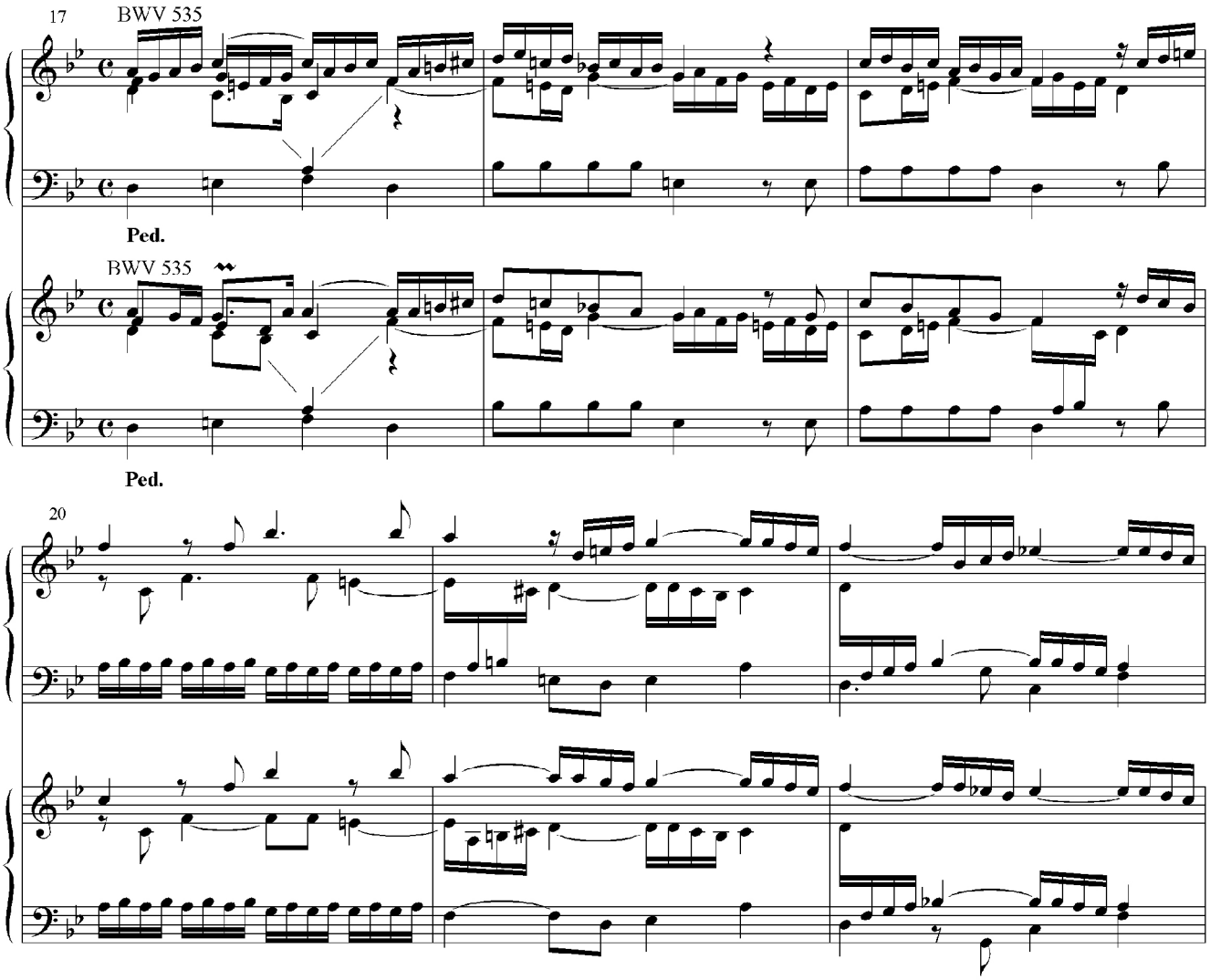
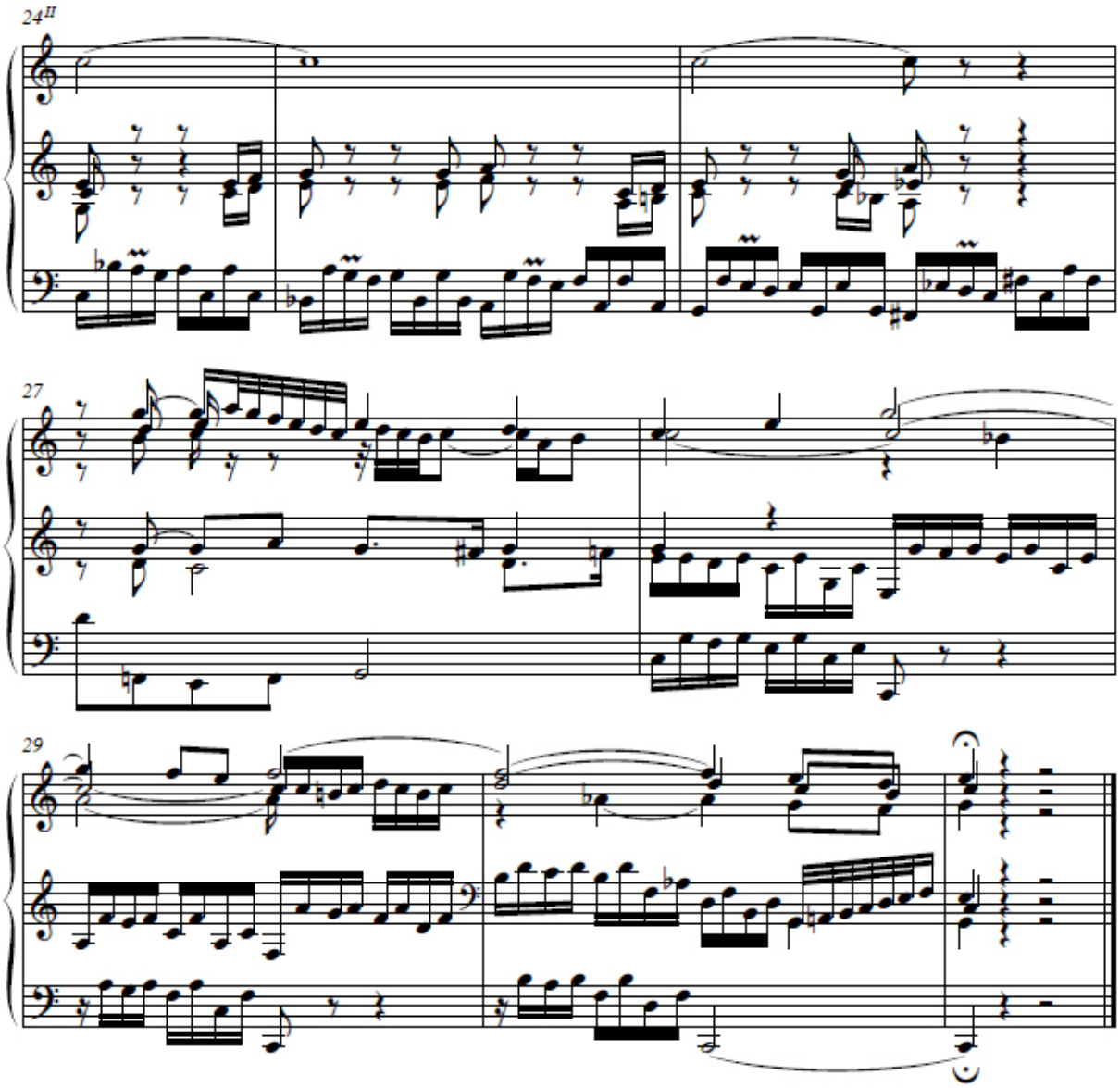
15. Fugue in D, BWV 532/2, end, with rubric “Nota bey dieser Fuge muß man die Füße recht strampflen laßen”



16. Fugue in G, arrangement of Fugue in A, BWV 536/2, from Leipzig, Bach-Archiv, ms. Scholz 4.6.3 (Leonhard Scholz, after 1750?)



17. Fugue in G minor, early and late versions (BWV 535a/2, BWV 535/2), mm. 17–22, compared



18. Prelude in C, BWV 545/2, mm. 24–end, as given in the lost “Clauss” manuscript (supposedly autograph)