

**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.

<u>BWV</u>	<u>key</u>	<u>place and date of origin</u>	<u>chief nature of revision(s) by Bach</u>
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 *preludia* (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)



This image shows the first system of the handwritten musical score for the Fugue in G minor, BWV 535a/2. The score is written on two staves. The first staff begins with the tempo marking "Fuga - allegro." in cursive. The music is in G minor, 3/4 time, and features a complex, rhythmic melody with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes. The second staff continues the piece, showing the beginning of the second voice entry.

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



This image shows the first system of the handwritten musical score for the Fugue in G minor, BWV 535/2. The score is written on five staves. The first staff begins with the tempo marking "Fuga Allegro." in cursive. The music is in G minor, 3/4 time, and features a complex, rhythmic melody with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes. The second staff continues the piece, showing the beginning of the second voice entry. The third staff continues the piece, showing the beginning of the third voice entry. The fourth staff continues the piece, showing the beginning of the fourth voice entry. The fifth staff continues the piece, showing the beginning of the fifth voice entry. The word "pedal" is written at the bottom of the fifth staff.

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

Praeludium in c

BWV 549

The image displays the first two systems of the musical score for the Praeludium in C minor, BWV 549. The score is written for piano and consists of two staves per system. The first system shows the beginning of the piece, with the right hand playing a series of chords and the left hand playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The second system continues the piece, with the right hand playing a series of chords and the left hand playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The key signature is C minor (three flats) and the time signature is common time (C).

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

The image shows a page of handwritten musical notation for the Prelude and Fugue in D minor, BWV 549a, by Johann Christoph Bach. The title at the top of the page reads "Praeludium & Fantasia. Pedaliter ex Dt. i. Johanne Seb. Bach." The notation is written on two staves, with the right hand playing a series of chords and the left hand playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The key signature is D minor (two flats) and the time signature is common time (C). The page is numbered "4" in the left margin.

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



6. Fuga 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

Praeludium et Fuga in c

BWV 546

Praeludium

The image shows the first system of the Praeludium from BWV 546/1. It consists of three staves: a treble staff, a bass staff, and a pedal line. The treble staff begins with a series of chords in the left hand and a melodic line in the right hand. The bass staff provides harmonic support with chords and a few moving lines. The pedal line is marked with a 'Ped.' symbol and contains sustained bass notes. The key signature is C minor (three flats) and the time signature is common time (C).

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?)

*Fantasia pro Organo cum pedali obligato.*

The image shows the first system of the handwritten manuscript for the Fantasia in C minor, BWV 562/1. The title is written in cursive: "Fantasia pro Organo cum pedali obligato." The score is written on multiple staves, likely representing different parts of the organ. The notation is dense and characteristic of 17th-century manuscript notation, with many accidentals and complex rhythmic patterns. The key signature is C minor and the time signature is common time.

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

Praeludium et Fuga in C

BWV 545

Praeludium



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

Praeludium  
Pedaliter





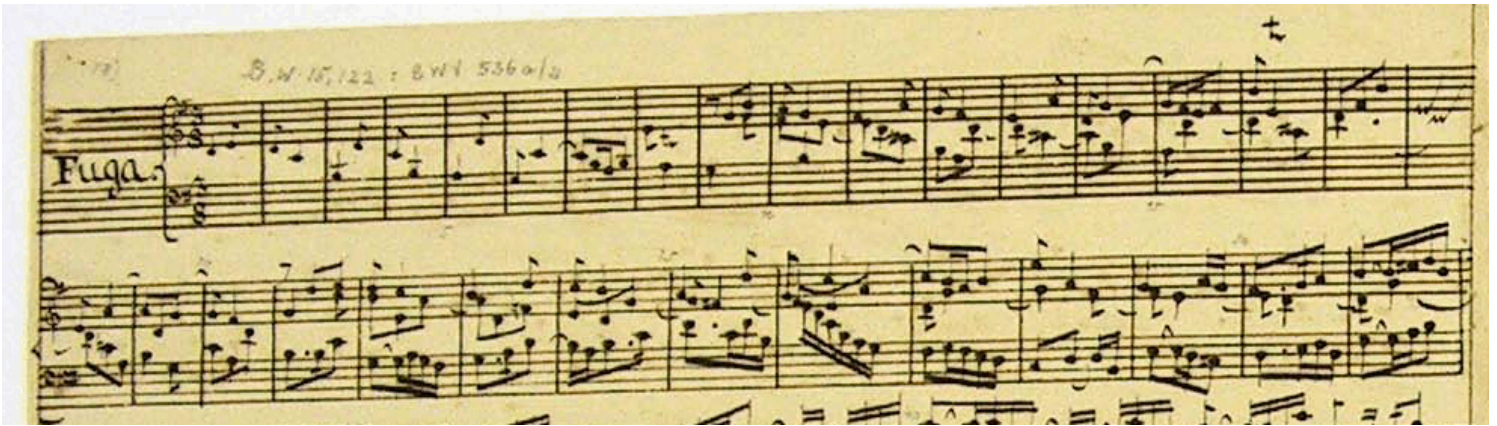
14. Fugue in D, BWV 532/2, from Stuttgart, Württembergische Landesbibliothek, II, fol. 288 (Lorenz Sichart, dated 1740)



15. Fugue in D, BWV 532/2, end, with rubric "Nota bey dieser Fuge muß man die Füße recht strampfen lassen"

The image shows the ending of the Fugue in D, BWV 532/2, by Sebastian Bach. It consists of three systems of two staves each. The first system has a small number "134" above the first staff. The second system has a small number "135" above the first staff and the word "pedal" written below the first staff. The third system ends with a double bar line and a fermata. Below the staves, there is a rubric in cursive: "Nota bey dieser fuge muß man die füße recht strampfen lassen." To the right of the rubric, the word "Fine" is written in a decorative cursive script.

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

A printed musical score comparing two versions of a fugue in G minor. The score is organized into three systems. The first system starts at measure 17 and is labeled "BWV 535". It shows two staves with a treble clef and a bass clef. The second system is labeled "Ped." and "BWV 535", indicating a pedal point and the second version of the piece. The third system starts at measure 20 and also shows two staves. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and accidentals, with some measures containing complex rhythmic figures.

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

The image displays a musical score for the end of the Prelude in C, BWV 545/2, from mm. 24 to the end. The score is presented in three systems, each with three staves (treble, middle, and bass clefs). The first system begins at measure 24, marked with a double bar line and a repeat sign. The second system starts at measure 27, and the third system starts at measure 29. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and phrasing slurs. The piece concludes with a final cadence in the third system.