PRELUDES AND FUGUES

from *The Well-Tempered Clavier, Books I and II*

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)

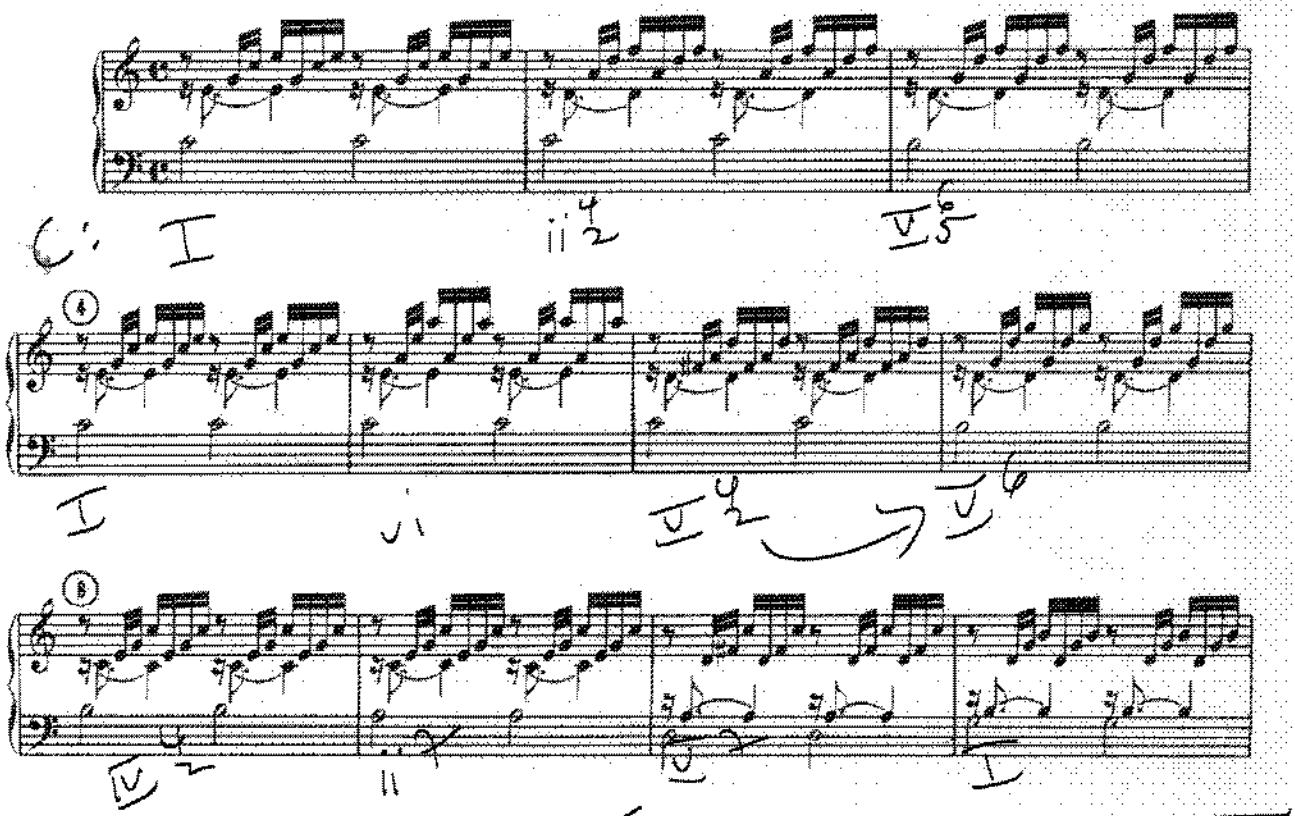
Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier,* two cycles of preludes and fugues in all twenty-four major and minor keys, is not only a supreme technical achievement, but also displays the widest possible expressive and emotional range. The following selection gives a glimpse of this remarkable variety and provides examples of the chief types of fugue and fugal device. Study might begin with the lively F major or noble G minor fugue (pages 106 and 107), which exhibit many standard characteristics.

The idea for a collection of preludes and fugues in many keys grew out of seventeenth-century experiments with new systems of tuning and was actually first realized by a predecessor of Bach, Johann Kaspar Ferdinand Fischer (c. 1665–1746), who published in 1702 his *Ariadne Musica,* a set of short preludes and fugues for organ in nineteen keys plus the Phrygian mode. (The mythological title denoted that the work was a guide through the "labyrinth" of keys, as Ariadne's ball of thread had guided Theseus.) Bach borrowed not only the plan of Fischer's work, but also a few of Fischer's fugue subjects, writing new and much more elaborate fugues on them. We give here one such example. Fischer's and Bach's E major fugues are placed side by side to facilitate comparison.

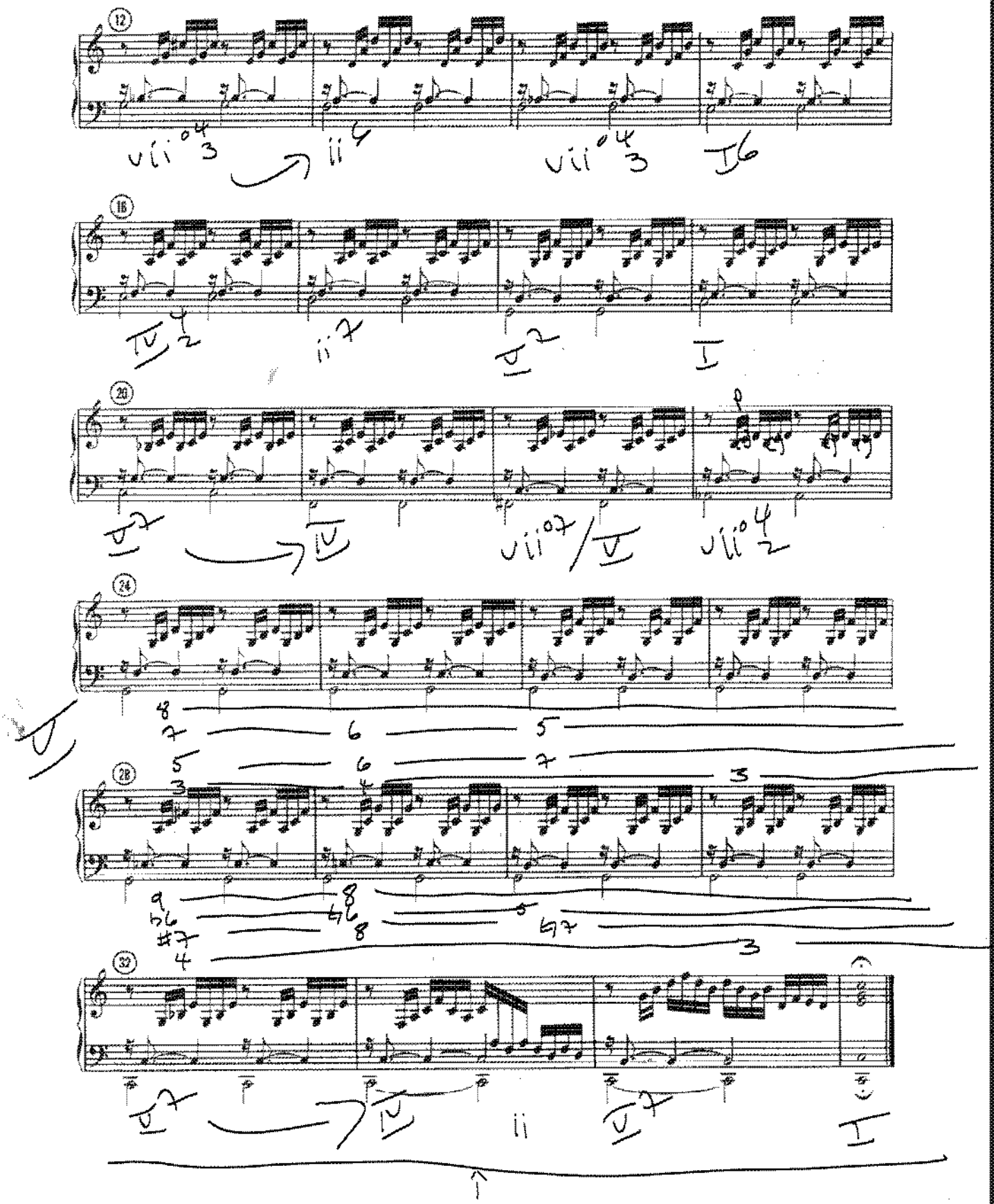
For further comparison of fugues in other styles and from other periods, see pages 80, 157 (at bar 189), 452, and 490.

PRELUDE 1 IN C MAJOR, BWV 846[10] from Book I (1722)

The *Well-Tempered Clavier* opens with this simple prelude in an improvisatory style. It is followed by a rather slow four-voice fugue of great dignity.



[10] Heinrich Schenker's famous analysis is in *Five Graphic Music Analyses,* ed. Felix Salzer (New York: Dover, 1969, pp. 36–37).


12
vii°4 3
ii 6
vii°4 3
I 6
16
IV 4 2
ii 7
V 7
I
20
V 7
IV
vii°7 / V
vii°4 2
24
8
7
6
5
5
6
7
3
3
28
9
8
♭6
♮6
5
#7
8
♮7
4
3
32
V 7
IV
ii
V 7
I