

Well-Tempered Clavier beyond the *Well-Tempered Clavier*. Creative Reception in Italy

Research on the reception of Bach's works and his persona is becoming an increasingly important component of contemporary Bach studies. This acknowledges the unique reputation of the *Thomaskantor* and his works within the larger framework of Western music and culture. By analysing how Bach and his compositions have been interpreted, performed, dissected, edited, but also rewritten, more or less radically (in the form of arrangements, transcriptions, original works, or pieces where these definitions overlap), a larger picture emerges. Its significance goes beyond the boundaries of "Bach studies" per se, and substantially contributes to the history of music and culture writ large.

As Maria Borghesi punctually summarises, Bach reception studies may focus on Bach's "influence on one or more composers", "the reception history of a single work by Bach", and "the reception of Bach and his work in a specific nation and age".¹ The present contribution focuses on the Italian reception of Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* (WTC); therefore, it may be considered to encompass all three areas, in spite of the obvious limitations due to an article's length. In the course of this article, I will discuss Bach's influence on the composers who creatively engaged with him and his WTC, writing new works that are both tightly or loosely connected with it. This, along with other elements, will contribute to the reception history of this particular masterpiece and my research's main focus will be on Italy and its specificity.

This mirrors and parallels research by other scholars who have dedicated their attention to specific aspects of the reception of the WTC. Among these are numerous

¹ MARIA BORGHESI, *Italian Reception of J. S. Bach (1950-2000)*, Köln, Dohr, 2021, pp. 13-26.

contributions by Yo Tomita, many of which focus on textual and editorial issues;² studies on the overall reception of the WTC;³ research specifically aimed at the Romantic era,⁴ particularly Chopin⁵, or which discuss other composers and musical styles;⁶ studies on the spiritual dimension of the WTC;⁷ and works on specific performances of the WTC.⁸

Studies on the Italian reception of Bach began to appear in the twenty-first century and reached scholarly maturity in the last decade.⁹ This is due to the pioneering

² YO TOMITA, *Bach Reception in Pre-Classical Vienna. Baron van Swieten's Circle Edits the "Well-Tempered Clavier" II*, «Music & Letters», LXXXI, 3 (2000), pp. 364-391; Id., *Most Ingenious, Most Learned, and Yet Practicable Work. The English Reception of Bach's the "Well-Tempered Clavier" in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century as Seen through the Editions Published in London*, «Bach Notes», VII (2007), pp. 1-12; Id., *Veiled Aspects of Bach Reception in the Long Nineteenth Century Exposed through a Macro-Examination of Printed Music. With Particular Focus on the Well-Tempered Clavier*, «Understanding Bach», VII (2012), pp. 29-53; Id., *Revisiting the Reception of J. S. Bach's "Well-Tempered Clavier II" in Pre-Classical Vienna*, Dublin, Four Courts Press, 2017.

³ UDO ZILKENS, *Johann Sebastian Bach, zwischen Zahlenmystik und Jazz. Die Eröffnung des Wohltemperierten Klaviers im Spiegel ihrer Interpretationen durch Musiktheoretiker und Musiker*, in *Kunstwerken und Bearbeitungen*, Köln, Tonger, 1996.

⁴ JASPER JACOBUS SAAYMAN, *The Influence of J. S. Bach's Contrapuntal Style in the "Well-Tempered Clavier" on Selected Piano Fugues by Romantic Composers*, MA thesis, Cape Town University, 2010-2011; MEEBAE LEE, *Schumann's Romantic Transformation of Fugue. "Fugengeschichte", "The Well-Tempered Clavier", and "Vier Fugen" op. 7*, «Acta Musicologica», LXXXVI (2014), pp. 75-99.

⁵ SARAH GRAY, *Prelude Forms. A Comparative Analysis of Preludes from J. S. Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier and Frederic Chopin's Preludes op. 28*, PhD dissertation, Wellesley College, 1981-1982; EUNICE J. TAVAGLIONE, *The Influence of the Preludes from the "Well-Tempered Clavier" of J.S. Bach on the "Preludes" and "Etudes" of Chopin*, MA thesis, North Texas State University, 1983-1984; DANIEL SAKARI MAHLBERG, *The Baroque Continuum. The Influence of the "Praeludien" from Bach's Well-tempered Clavier on Chopin's Preludes op. 28*, MA thesis, California State University, 2006-2007; RUTH TATLOW, *Symmetry and a Template. Bach's "Well-Tempered Clavier", and Chopin's "Preludes" op. 28*, in *Bach and Chopin. Baroque Traditions in the Music of the Romantics*, ed. by Szymon Paszkowski, Warsaw, The Fryderyk Chopin Institute, 2019, pp. 51-85; YO TOMITA, *Aspects of the Reception of Bach's "Well-Tempered Clavier" in Chopin's Time. An Overview of Print and Manuscript Sources*, in *Bach and Chopin*, cit., pp. 171-199.

⁶ ZANE ERNEST WILLIAM PAUTZ, *A Comparison of Hindemith's Ludus Tonalis with Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier*, MA thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1953-1954; HANS TISCHLER, *Hindemith's Ludus Tonalis and Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier. A Comparison*, «The Music Review», XX (1959), pp. 217-227; MARIANNE STOELZEL, *Ordnungssysteme und Ausdruckshaltung in Engelbert Humperdincks Bearbeitungen aus J. S. Bachs "Wohltemperiertem Klavier" I und II für zwei Klaviere zu vier Händen*, Kassel, Bärenreiter, 1981, pp. 513-521; EDWARD STRICKLAND, *The Well-Tempered Keyboards of Bach and Jarrett*, «Fanfare», XV (1991), pp. 46-59; FUNG-YIN HUANG, *Bartók's Contributions to Piano Pedagogy. His edition of Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier and Impressions of Former Students*, PhD dissertation, Ohio State University, 1994; TIMOTHY J. BOWLBY, *The Influence of Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier on the opp. 34 and 87 of Piano Pieces by Dmitri Shostakovich*, «Ex Tempore», X (2000), pp. 118-140; PETER D'ELIA, *Clementi's Bach. The "Well-Tempered Clavier", "Gradus ad Parnassum", and the Prelude*, MA thesis, Tufts University, 2008-2009; RUSSELL STINSON, *Bach in Bayreuth. Richard Wagner and the Well-Tempered Clavier* in Id., *Bach's Legacy. The Music as Heard by Later Masters*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2020, pp. 100-126.

⁷ TIMOTHY A. SMITH, *Fugues Without Words. A Hearing of Four Fugues from "The Well-Tempered Clavier" as Passion Music*, «Bach. Journal of the Riemenschneider Bach Institute», XL (2009), pp. 45-66.

⁸ DANIEL BAROLSKY and PETER MARTENS, *Rendering the Prosaic Persuasive. Gould and the Performance of Bach's C-minor Prelude (WTC I)*, «Music Theory Online», XVIII (2012), pp. 1-8.

⁹ A comprehensive overview of Italian scholarship on this subject is found in CHIARA BERTOGLIO and MARIA BORGHESI, *Bach e l'Italia. Un momento di svolta*, in *Bach e l'Italia. Sguardi, scambi e convergenze*, ed. by Eadem, Lucca, LIM, 2022, p. VII.

work by Francesco Scarpellini Pancrazi,¹⁰ Emiliano Giannetti,¹¹ and Gaia Bottoni,¹² followed by Maria Borghesi¹³ and myself,¹⁴ and by two international conferences¹⁵ organised by the Italian Bach Society (JSBach.it).

Interestingly, several of these studies are concerned with the Italian reception of the WTC, arguably the most played, studied, performed, and edited work by Bach in Italy.¹⁶ A comprehensive study of how the WTC was received in Italy should include discussions of instructive editions, frequently prepared in view of the requirements for conservatory exams; treatises with technical and/or compositional analyses; pedagogical and preparatory works; arrangements; original compositions inspired by the WTC; musical parodies; and creative works in other artistic domains (such as visual arts, poetry, cinema, and advertisement). Together, they all bear witness to the crucial importance of the WTC as a cultural object, to be observed with reverence or irony, but certainly representing a cornerstone of musical culture, not only among the specialists. Whilst what follows here does not aim at comprehensiveness, I will provide evidence of the continuing interest of Italian musicians, critics, and artists of the WTC, and will focus on a few selected case-studies which poignantly embody the diversity of this reception history.

¹⁰ FRANCESCO SCARPELLINI PANCRAZI, *Edizioni a confronto. Il "Clavicembalo ben temperato" di Johann Sebastian Bach. Parte prima: il Primo volume (BWV 846-869)*, «Musica Testo e Didattica, Quaderni del Conservatorio "Corelli" di Messina», II (2004), pp. 39-194.

¹¹ EMILIANO GIANNETTI, *Il "Clavicembalo ben temperato" (I) nella revisione di Bruno Mugellini*, MA thesis, Università di Roma Tor Vergata, 2004-2005.

¹² GAIA BOTTONI, *Le opere per tastiera di J. S. Bach nelle edizioni italiane tra Otto e Novecento*, MA thesis, Università di Roma Tor Vergata, 2006-2007.

¹³ See, among others, MARIA BORGHESI, *Le "Invenzioni a due voci" nelle edizioni italiane tra Otto e Novecento. Elementi di prassi esecutiva nelle revisioni pianistiche (1850-1985)*, MA thesis, Università di Pavia, 2014-2015; EAD., *L'Invenzione a due voci n. 1 di J. S. Bach nelle edizioni italiane d'inizio Novecento: un modello per l'analisi della prassi esecutiva*, «Rivista Italiana di Musicologia», LIII (2018), pp. 117-148, and EAD., *Lo studio delle edizioni pratiche: metodologie e prospettive. Il caso delle "Invenzioni a due voci" di J. S. Bach in Italia*, in *Scripta Sonant. Contributi sul patrimonio musicale italiano*, ed. by Tiziana Grande, Annalisa Bini, and Federica Riva, Roma, IAML, 2018, pp. 105-112.

¹⁴ CHIARA BERTOGLIO, *Instructive Editions and Piano Performance. A Case Study. Bach's "Wohltemperirtes Klavier" in Italy between 19th and 20th Century*, PhD dissertation, University of Birmingham, 2011-2012; EAD., *Instructive Editions and Piano Performance. A Case Study. Bach's "Wohltemperirtes Klavier" in Italy between 19th and 20th Century*, Saarbrücken, Lambert Academic Publishing, 2012; EAD., *Italian Instructive Editions of the Well-Tempered Clavier. A Useful Resource for Performance Practice Studies*, «Understanding Bach», IX (2014), pp. 49-74; EAD., *Nearly Unplayable. Giuseppe Martucci's Interpretations of Bach's Orchestral Suites*, «Musica/Realtà», XL (2019), pp. 123-158; EAD., *From Bach's Violin to Italian Pianos: the "Sei Solo" in the Italian Piano Transcriptions*, in *Forms of Performance. From J. S. Bach to M. Alunno (1972-)*, ed. by Michael Maul and Alberto Nones, Wilmington DE, Vernon Press, 2020, pp. 17-25.

¹⁵ "Bach e l'Italia", online conference, 2020; "CBT 300 anni dopo", 2022.

¹⁶ Of course, complete performances of the forty-eight preludes and fugues are relatively uncommon in Italy as elsewhere, but individual preludes and fugues are the object of countless performances and unrelenting interest.

Instructive Editions

One aspect of this phenomenon is certainly that of instructive editions; however, having addressed the history of Italian instructive editions of the WTC in much greater detail elsewhere,¹⁷ I will limit myself to a brief summary of the matter here.

Following the innovative instructive edition issued by Czerny in 1837, which had unparalleled success and factually established a paradigm for instructive editing, pianists and teachers from many countries and backgrounds proposed their own written interpretations of the WTC. In Italy, the production of instructive editions was encouraged by conservatory examination requirements. Even after the first reform (1899) of conservatory programmes following Italy's unification (1861), there remained striking differences concerning the number of preludes and fugues which piano candidates had to prepare for their exams. For instance, the Conservatory of Milan required only six preludes and fugues whilst forty-one pieces by Bach had to be prepared for the same exam at the Conservatory of Naples. In 1930, a reform, the outcome of which persists today, established that twenty-four preludes and fugues from the WTC I and II were required for the *compimento medio* piano exam.

There was mutual influence between conservatory programmes and music publishing. Examination programmes obviously fostered the creation of new editions of certain pieces, with commentaries in Italian; on the other hand, the appearance of fundamental publications influenced the elaboration of conservatory programmes. A clear example of this phenomenon is represented by the requirement of three Scarlatti Sonatas for the *compimento medio*, mirroring Alessandro Longo's organisation of the sonatas in groups of three in his famous complete edition (1906-1910).¹⁸

The abundant presence of Bach's WTC in the teaching and examination programmes of most institutes for higher musical education in Italy is well documented.¹⁹ Nevertheless, the idea of publicly performing more than a handful of preludes and fugues (preferably just one) was almost unconceivable. For instance, when Joseph Rubinstein (1847-1884) publically performed the complete WTC for the first time ever in Berlin, an Italian review reported the extraordinary feat with sarcasm:

¹⁷ C. BERTOGLIO, *Instructive Editions*, cit.; EAD., *Italian Instructive Editions*, cit., pp. 49-74.

¹⁸ ALESSANDRO SCARLATTI, *Sonate*, ed. by Alessandro Longo, Milano, Ricordi, 1906-1910.

¹⁹ For a more thorough discussion, see C. BERTOGLIO, *Italian Instructive Editions*, cit., pp. 183, 188-193 etc.

Joseph Rubinstein, not to be mistaken for Anthony and Nicholas, gave four recitals²⁰ performing only preludes and fugues excerpted from Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*. What fun!²¹

In Italy, as elsewhere in Europe, the WTC was therefore music for musicians, by a composer for composers. The educational value of the WTC, which was recognised many decades before its first complete performances, prompted the publication of instructive editions, mirroring the requests of the Italian market. The first Italian edition of the WTC (Book One only) appeared in 1844, published by Francesco Ricci in Rome at the press of Pittarelli and Santinelli. As the titlepage proudly affirms, this was the «first Roman fingered edition» (*Première édition doigtée romaine*), dedicated to Bach-enthusiast Ludwig Landsberg. Nearly twenty years later, the epoch-making Czerny edition was reissued by the Lucca company based in Milan.²²

According to a notice found in the writings of Vincenzo Vitale,²³ Sigismund Thalberg might have edited a version of the WTC during his residence in Posillipo (1864-1871), and then had it published by the Stabilimento Musicale Partenopeo. However, as I have elsewhere demonstrated,²⁴ it is more likely the edition referenced by Vitale was one issued by Francesco Lanza (1856).²⁵ In 1874, Ricordi offered a new, partial edition of the WTC. It was edited by Edoardo (Edouard) Bix, a Hungarian-born musician who had studied in Vienna and later settled in Venice and Trieste. His *Scelta sistematica e progressiva*²⁶ comprised four volumes of selected keyboard works by Bach, providing footnotes, fingerings, and metronome marks. Volumes two and three of his *Scelta* include twenty-four preludes and fugues selected from both volumes of the WTC; significantly, the 1930 examination programmes would require students to prepare precisely this quantity of WTC pieces. Bix's *Scelta* enjoyed great success (as testified by the presence of vols. I-II in Liszt's *Nachlass*), and Clescovich²⁷ suggests that it had been young Busoni's textbook; it is

²⁰ He actually gave six recitals. See STINSON, *Bach's Legacy*, cit., p. 101.

²¹ *Cronaca musicale e drammatica*, «Roma Artistica», VI, 2 (28 January 1880), p. 16.

²² G. BOTTONI, *Le opere per tastiera*, cit., p. 159.

²³ VINCENZO VITALE, *Il pianoforte a Napoli nell'Ottocento*, Napoli, Bibliopolis, 1983, p. 23.

²⁴ C. BERTOGGIO, *Instructive Editions.*, cit., pp. 197-198.

²⁵ JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH, *Il Cembalo ben temperato. Preludi e Fughe in tutt'i toni e semitoni maggiori e minori. Edizione riveduta e diteggiata da Francesco Lanza*, Napoli, Stabilimento Musicale Partenopeo, [1856] (PN 12426/7, publication number 15534).

²⁶ EDOARDO BIX, *Scelta sistematica e progressiva delle composizioni per pianoforte di G. S. Bach*, 4 vols., Milano, Ricordi, 1874.

even possible that Bix had taught Busoni during the latter's childhood in Trieste.²⁸ Bach was also the protagonist of nine volumes among those constituting Beniamino Cesi's *Method*,²⁹ issued by Ricordi in the 1890s. If many Italian publications in the 19th century favoured a selective approach to Bach's works (anthologies, compilations, etc.), in the twentieth century there was an increasing number of monographic collections edited by pianists and pedagogues;³⁰ their editing criteria, however, are influenced by those of the preceding generations.³¹ The most important of these, in the first half of the twentieth century, were those edited by Mugellini,³² Boghen,³³ Longo,³⁴ Tagliapietra,³⁵ Bustini,³⁶ and Casella.³⁷ To these, of course, should be added the Busoni edition, published in 1894 (vol. I)³⁸ and 1916 (vol. II),³⁹ and whose editorial principles include the concept of volume I as a school of piano technique, and of volume II as a compositional model. I have discussed in my doctoral thesis⁴⁰ the editorial choices of some of them, and highlighted that several of them were dependent on the model represented by Czerny's edition.

²⁷ ELENA CLESCOVICH, *L'infanzia di Ferruccio Busoni a Trieste*, web article on <http://www.triesterivista.it/musica/busoni.html>, 5 February 2000 (last accessed on August 3, 2023). Abstract from a paper presented by Elena Clescovich at the International Conference «Ferruccio Busoni e il pianoforte del Novecento», Empoli, 12-14 November 1999.

²⁸ GIUSEPPE RADOLE, *Ricerche sulla vita musicale a Trieste, 1750-1950*, Trieste, Edizioni Italo Svevo, 1988, p. 87.

²⁹ BENIAMINO CESI, *Metodo per lo studio del pianoforte. Programma d'insegnamento preceduto da precetti e consigli per l'insegnante coscienzioso e per lo studente diligente*, Milano, G. Ricordi & C., 1890.

³⁰ G. BOTTONI, *Le opere per tastiera*, cit., p. 155.

³¹ E. GIANNETTI, *Il Clavicembalo ben temperato*, cit., pp. 61-63.

³² JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH, *Das wohltemperierte Klavier. Instruktive Ausgabe von Bruno Mugellini*, Leipzig, Breitkopf & Härtel, 2 vols., c. 1908, 1909.

³³ JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH, *Il clavicembalo ben temperato [di] Bach. Revisione ed illustrazione di Felice Boghen. Traduzione francese di E. Marcault*, Parigi, Hamelle – Firenze, Mignani, 1920.

³⁴ JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH, *Il clavicembalo ben temperato, ossia preludii e fughe in tutti i toni e semitoni nei modi maggiori e minori. Edizione riveduta e diteggiata da Alessandro Longo*, 2 vols., Milano, G. Ricordi, c. 1923, E.R. 190-191.

³⁵ JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH, *Il clavicembalo ben temperato, edizione riveduta da Gino Tagliapietra*, 2 vols., Milano, G. Ricordi, 1928-1929, E.R. 807-808.

³⁶ JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH, *Il clavicembalo ben temperato, preludi e fughe (Alessandro Bustini)*, Roma, De Santis, 1935-1937.

³⁷ G[IOVANNI] S[EBASTIANO] BACH, *Il clavicembalo ben temperato. Edizione critico-tecnica di Alfredo Casella*, Milano, Curci, 1946, E4036C.

³⁸ JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH, *Busoni-Ausgabe. Das Wohltemperierte Klavier. Erste Teil. Heft 1: BWV 846-853. Bearbeitet und erläutert mit daran anknüpfenden Beispielen und Anweisungen für das Studium der modernen Klavierspieltechnik von Ferruccio Busoni*, Wiesbaden – Leipzig – Paris, Breitkopf & Härtel, 1894, EB 4301.

³⁹ JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH, *Busoni-Ausgabe. Das Wohltemperierte Klavier. Zweiter Teil. Heft 1: BWV 870-876. Bearbeitet und erläutert, mit daran anknüpfenden Beispielen und Anweisungen für das Studium der modernen Klavierspieltechnik von Ferruccio Busoni*, Wiesbaden – Leipzig – Paris, Breitkopf & Härtel, 1916, EB 4302.

⁴⁰ C. BERTOGLIO, *Instructive Editions.*, cit.

Along with these complete editions, the first four Preludes and Fugues from WTC I were included in a multi-volume publication by Ricordi (1878ff.), under the title *L'arte antica e moderna*. This collection comprised forty-four volumes from Frescobaldi to Schumann, and in its original plan may have included the complete first volume of the WTC. The works' selection was operated by Stefano Golinelli, who taught piano at the Conservatory of Bologna, and by composer and publisher Giulio Ricordi.⁴¹

A brief mention should also be made of manuals offering listening or performance guides.⁴² They represent a fundamental element in the history of reception of the WTC, since they convey a precise idea of what the author considered particularly important in the interpretation and performance of Bach's masterpiece.

Busoni: creative reception

On many occasions, though, advice was offered to the performers within the framework of instructive editions (in the form of Prefaces, footnotes, etc.). Ferruccio Busoni was probably second to none in his ability to transmit his view of Bach's music through both music notation and writings.⁴³ In Busoni's case, the boundaries between edition and arrangement, arrangement and transcription, or transcription and original work are frequently difficult to define.⁴⁴

⁴¹ *L'arte antica e moderna*, ed. by Stefano Golinelli, Milano, Ricordi, 1878ff.

⁴² While this falls outside the scope of this article, which focuses on artworks rather than on written works such as treatises, the following monographs need to be cited here: LUIGI PERRACHIO, *Il clavicembalo ben temperato di Giovanni Sebastiano Bach*, Torino – Parma, Edizioni Palatine, 1947; RENATA BORGATTI, *Osservazioni intorno al "Clavicembalo ben temperato" di Bach*, Siena, Ticci, 1949; ALBERTO PIRONTI, *Bach, Il "Clavicembalo ben temperato"*. *Note illustrative*, Roma, Eurosia, 1960; GUGLIELMO BARBLAN, *Guida al "Clavicembalo ben temperato" di J. S. Bach*, Milano, Curci, 1961; GINO STEFANI, *La ripetizione in Bach. I preludi ad "arpeggio" del "Clavicembalo"*. *Documento di lavoro*, Urbino, Università degli studi di Urbino, 1973; ANGELA ANNESE, *Intorno al "Clavicembalo ben temperato" di Johann Sebastian Bach*, Bari, Edizioni B. A. Graphis, 1998; CARLO DE INCONTRERA and ALBA ZANINI, *Johann Sebastian Bach, "Das Wohltemperierte Klavier"*. *Guida all'ascolto*, Monfalcone, Teatro Comunale di Monfalcone, 2000; CIRO RAIMO, *Metodo sistematico per ben eseguire i preludi del libro primo del "Wohltemperirte Klavier"*, Bologna, CLUEB, 2005; PATRIZIA PAOLILLO, *Il "Clavicembalo ben temperato" e il problema degli stili nel secolo dei Lumi*, Salerno, Setticlavio, 2009; ENNIO COMINETTI, *Introduzione all'ascolto e alla interpretazione del "Das Wohltemperierte Klavier" ("Il clavicembalo ben temperato") di Johann Sebastian Bach*, Varenna, Eurarte, 2012; DONATA BERTOLDI, *Un testo, mille versioni. Alcune edizioni del "Clavicembalo ben temperato" a confronto*, Panzano in Chianti, Feeria, 2015. There is also a pedagogical publication aiming to provide a preparatory itinerary for the performance of the WTC: REMO VINCIGUERRA, *Il mio primo "Clavicembalo ben temperato". Preludi e fughe in trascrizione facilitata per lo studio del pianoforte, nelle tonalità di do, fa, sol e relative minori*, Milano, Curci Young, 2009. Here, selected Preludes and Fugues are offered in easy transcriptions, simplified in their compositional structure and tonality. For another example of preparation to the WTC see *Bach. Piccoli preludi e fughette per pianoforte*, ed. by Giuseppe Buonamici, Firenze, Genesio Venturini, 1906; reprint (Preface added), Milano, Carisch, 1969, n. ed. 3184.

⁴³ FERRUCCIO BUSONI, *Lo sguardo lieto. Tutti gli scritti sulla musica e le arti*, ed. by Fedele D'Amico, trans. by Laura Dallapiccola, Luigi Dallapiccola and Fedele D'Amico, Milano, Il Saggiatore, 1977.

In conformity with the intended purpose of his edition, i.e. to provide a comprehensive technical training, WTC I of Busoni's influential edition includes several piano studies built on Bach's Preludes. In many cases, Busoni proposes technical exercises which can be played using the notes of Bach's original, but with altered hand disposition, (presumed) articulation, and so forth. For instance, Prelude No. 1 in C major becomes an exercise for the lightest staccatissimo, while Prelude No. 2 in C minor can be played holding the external notes for half a bar each. However, this same Prelude can become a real Etude to be played in parallel sixths and thirds by both hands together; similarly, Prelude No. 3 in C sharp major is offered in a version with numerous note doublings, in both hands, «to be played as faithfully as possible in the tempo and character of the original piece».⁴⁵

An idea found in Busoni's edition became a piece in its own right in the *Preludio, Fuga e Fuga figurata (Studie nach J. S. Bach's wohltemperiertem Clavier)*, found within the collection *An der Jugend* BV 254 (Fig. 1). The Prelude of this small Suite substantially coincides with Bach's Prelude No. 5 in D major from WTC I; however, interestingly, the added interpretive indications here do not coincide with the version found in Busoni's edition. For instance, in his edition the tempo indication is "Allegro con spirito e molto scorrevole (Quasi 'alla breve')", whereas in the *Preludio, Fuga e Fuga figurata* it is "Allegro non troppo". Other indications are similar but not identical (e.g. *leggiero/leggermente, granulato/perlato*), and the articulation is much less defined in the *Preludio, Fuga e Fuga figurata* in comparison with his edition. At the Prelude's end, in Busoni's edition, a double option is offered: a version of Bach's original, in Adagio (with several added indications, particularly dynamics), or an «execution, without changing the tempo (*sempre allegro*)». The latter is reproduced, with minor changes, in the transition between *Preludio* and *Fuga* preceding the *Fuga figurata*.

Highlighting the continuity in *tactus* between Prelude and Fugue, Busoni does not explicitly mark the transition between the two in the *Preludio, Fuga e Fuga figurata*⁴⁶ and reproduces Fugue No. 5 in D major with changed rhythmic values (e.g. semiquavers

⁴⁴ Ciro Raimo recently discussed some aspects of Busoni's editing and of the Etudes he wrote after Bach's Preludes (WTC I) in his contribution to a *Festschrift* in honour of Alberto Basso: CIRO RAIMO, *Considerazioni di un didatta di pianoforte sulle "rielaborazioni" (Bearbeitungen) busoniane del "Wohltemperiertes Clavier"*, in *Helicon Resonans. Studi in onore di Alberto Basso per il suo 90° compleanno*, ed. by Cristina Santarelli, Lucca, LIM, 2021, pp. 125-150.

⁴⁵ These Etudes, along with the others created by Busoni for his edition of Bach's WTC I are recorded (some of them in a world premiere) in a CD box published in the Fall of 2023 by Da Vinci Classics, in anticipation of the centennial anniversary in 2024 of Busoni's death (1924).

instead of demisemiquavers). In the freer version, he also occasionally inserts an added imitative part. As is usual for him, towards the end of the Fugue (in both versions) he adds doublings. However, in the *Preludio, Fuga e Fuga figurata* he omits the solemn conclusion of Bach's original, and, introduced by a short passage quoting the pattern of the Prelude, he adds a figured Fugue in which elements from both the Prelude and the Fugue are superimposed upon each other, mostly following the structure of the Prelude. An interesting element appears here. At the beginning of the *Fuga figurata*, Busoni is forced to render the dotted rhythm found in Bach's original as a double-dotted rhythm in order to obtain a satisfactory layering of the contrapuntal parts. This is a meaningful intuition: thanks to performance practice studies, we now know that the "correct" performance of the dotted rhythm, as found in Bach's Fugue No. 5 in D major from WTC I, is with double dotting; Busoni seems to have musically perceived what the musicology of his times did not know, and to have – albeit occasionally – adopted it in his *Fuga figurata*.



Fig. 1: Busoni, *Preludio, Fuga e Fuga Figurata* BWV 254, mm. 85-88.

Occasionally, the indications provided by Busoni for the realisation of his Etudes after Bach's Preludes are incomplete; the editor/arranger describes how to transform the original pattern of modules into the new one, but without providing precise directions for doubtful situations. This, in my opinion, is part of the recurring concept of "open work" which one frequently finds in Busoni's oeuvre.⁴⁷

As an example of how creative reception and editing intertwine in Busoni's view, one should further mention his *Widmung*, found as the opening piece of the *Bach-Busoni Gesammelte Ausgabe*.⁴⁸ Here, Busoni skilfully weaves the B-A-C-H motif into the texture of the opening bars of Bach's Fugue No. 1 in C major from WTC I. This aphoristic piece,

⁴⁶ Was he mirroring a practice which was possibly much more common and widespread than we may think? Joseph Rubinstein (the first pianist to perform the complete WTC in Berlin) was reproached for this habit by critic Wilhelm Tappert (WILHELM TAPPERT, *Einige Worte über "Das wohltemperirte Clavier"*, «Allgemeine Deutsche Musik-Zeitung», VII, 7 [13 February 1880], pp. 49-51).

⁴⁷ When recording these Etudes, I had to decide in such passages where no indication was provided by Busoni whether to revert to Bach's original or to hide the transition between Busoni's indications and the parts lacking them. As a performer, I opted for a «Busoni-like» completion of the musical texture in order to make the gaps go unnoticed, but, of course, choosing the other option would have been equally legitimate.

faithful to its title (*Dedication*) thus represents Busoni's motto, and even a declaration of allegiance, found at the very beginning of his monumental work.

Early reception of the WTC by Italian musicians

Busoni is probably the Italian musician who engaged the most deeply, thoroughly, and creatively with Bach's oeuvre, but he was by no means the first. Already in 1833 an Italian musician living in London presented a manuscript copy⁴⁹ of Bach's WTC realised for him by Vincent Novello. The fortunate receiver of this valuable gift was Domenico Carlo Maria Dragonetti (1763-1846), a legendary double-bass player. His copy displays a touching dedication:

I had this beautiful Manuscript Copy, of the Bass part to Sebastian Bach's «48 Preludes and Fugues», made on purpose to present to my beloved friend, Signor Dragonetti. It was his favorite book for study, being scarcely ever off his music-desk, during the last years of his life. On his lamented death, in April, 1846, the Volume reverted to me, and I have now consented to part with it to my esteemed friend Mr Whittaker, of Barming, for careful preservation in his tasteful Musical library, as a memorial of the greatest performer on the Double Bass that ever lived, and as being the finest Copy extant of the Double Bass part to the finest Fugal Counterpoint ever written.⁵⁰

Dragonetti could certainly be counted among the early Bach enthusiasts. In 1836, the Coventry and Hollier publishing company started issuing volumes advertised as:

John Sebastian Bach's Grand Studies for the organ, consisting of Preludes, Fugues, Toccatas, and Fantasias never before published in this country. These Studies may be played on the Piano Forte by one or two performers. A separate part for the Double Bass, or Violoncello, arranged from the Pedale by Signor Dragonetti, is added to this edition.⁵¹

These publications were reprints of editions printed on the Continent, and their printing had been at Dragonetti's expense. The Italian musician famously played the Pedal

⁴⁸ FERRUCCIO BUSONI, *Bearbeitungen, Übertragungen, Studien und Kompositionen für das Pianoforte nach Johann Sebastian Bach von Ferruccio Busoni*, 6 vols., Leipzig, Breitkopf & Härtel, 1916. See JÜRGEN KINDERMANN, *Thematisch-chronologisches Verzeichnis der Werke von Ferruccio B. Busoni*. Studien zur Musikgeschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts, Regensburg, Gustav Bosse Verlag, 1980, XIX, pp. 465-466; MARC-ANDRÉ ROBERGE, *Ferruccio Busoni. A Bio-Bibliography*, New York, Greenwood Press, 1991, pp. x and 49-52; LARRY SITSKY, *Busoni and the Piano. The Works, the Writings, and the Recordings*, Hillsdale, Pendragon, 2008², p. 179.

⁴⁹ Currently in the holdings of the Riemenschneider Bach Institute at Baldwin Wallace University. Digitised online at <https://digital.opal-libraries.org/digital/collection/p16708coll9/id/67/> (last accessed on July 3, 2023).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Cfr. *The Musical World. A Weekly Record of Musical Science, Literature, and Intelligence*, London, Novello, 1836, I, p. 46. This review bears witness to Dragonetti's fame: «The work contains a separate part for the double-bass or violoncello, arranged from the pedale, by a man as remarkable in his walk, as the author himself – the inimitable Dragonetti».

part of the Organ fugues on his double-bass, with occasional adaptations due to range limitations⁵². The WTC copy that Novello had made for him included the bass line only; therefore, the possibility that Dragonetti participated in the performance of WTC Preludes and Fugues on the double-bass is tantalizingly likely.

London was certainly an ideal stage for musicians wishing to propose creative appropriations of Bach's works. Along with double-bassist Dragonetti, another Italian musician took the city by storm with his Bach transcriptions. Guitarist and concertina player Giulio Regondi (1822-1872) performed a prelude and fugue by Bach on the concertina (similar to an accordion) at the Hanover Square Rooms on May 21st, 1868:

Signor Giulio Regondi's concert at the Hanover Square Rooms on Thursday, was in every respect a success. The attendance was excellent, and so, also, were the programme and its performance. Of Signor Regondi's share in the last we cannot speak too highly. He played (with Signor Li Calsi⁵³) Mozart's Sonata in B flat, Spohr's «Concerto Dramatico», a prelude and fugue by Bach, and an adapted movement from Mozart's Fifth Mass, in admirable style, showing most clearly the extensive resources of the concertina when in the hands of a master.⁵⁴

Regondi frequently played melodic parts originally written for string instruments on the concertina; however, given the paucity of information about the concert referenced here, we cannot know which Prelude and Fugue by Bach Regondi performed,⁵⁵ and, consequently, whether his part was an added melody or derived directly from Bach's original.

The harmonic skeleton of Bach's preludes, frequently articulated by repeated patterns, could in fact be understood as an "accompaniment" for an implicit melodic line. In Moscheles' *Melodisch-Kontrapunktische Studien*,⁵⁶ op. 137 a/b (existing in versions for two pianos and piano/organ and cello), Bach's original is enriched with added part(s), continuously wavering between capricious tunefulness and serious polyphony.

The idea of adding contrapuntal and melodic lines to the WTC reached the highpoint of its success with Charles Gounod's *Méditation*, first published in 1853 without lyrics (to be

⁵² Cfr. F. G. E., *Bach's Music in England (Continued)*, «The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular», XXXVII, 645 (1 November 1896), pp. 722-726 (here 724-725). See also FIONA M. PALMER, *Domenico Dragonetti in England (1794-1846). The Career of a Double Bass Virtuoso*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997, pp. 197-198. See also pp. 32 and 59-60.

⁵³ Giuseppe Li Calsi (1825-1898) was a pianist, conductor, and accompanist who worked in London for years in the service of the Duchess of Cambridge and at the Royal Opera House.

⁵⁴ *The Musical World. A Weekly Record of Musical Science, Literature, and Intelligence*, London, Duncan Davison & Co., 1868, XLVI, p. 353.

⁵⁵ It is likely, but by no means certain that this pair was excerpted from the WTC.

⁵⁶ IGNAZ MOSCHELES, *Melodisch-kontrapunktische Studien. Eine Auswahl v. zehn Präludien a. J. S. Bachs "Wohltemperiertem Kl." m. einer hinzukomponierten Vcl. St.*, Leipzig, Kistner und Siegel, 1863.

performed on the violin or cello), later with lyrics by Alphonse de Lamartine, and in 1859 with the Latin words of the *Ave Maria*.⁵⁷ Gounod's success prompted countless imitations throughout Europe. Among them are the two *Méodies*⁵⁸ for violin «with piano accompaniment on Preludes by Bach», issued in the second half of the nineteenth century by Eligio Mariani,⁵⁹ who had been a former student of operatic composer Alfredo Catalani. Out of the two *Méodies*, the first is built on the Prelude in C minor BWV 999 (and thus falls outside the scope of this article), whereas the second adopts the Prelude No. 2 from the WTC I for the piano part. The indications found on the piano part (which reproduces Bach's original as faithfully as was common at the time) correspond, on many occasions, to those found in Czerny's edition. For instance, the metronome indication is identical (144 for the semiminim), as are the dynamic indications on the first page. Later, Mariani's indications become more independent, but the cadenza and coda are again clearly inspired by Czerny's interpretive concept. In spite of the obvious difference in musical style between this *Méodie* and Gounod's *Méditation*, it is curious to observe that Mariani almost quoted a fragment from Gounod's model (see Fig. 2):



Fig. 2: Eligio Mariani, *Mélo die* No. 2, mm. 5-8.

⁵⁷ CHARLES GOUNOD, *Méditation sur le 1er Prélude de piano de S. Bach, composée pour piano et violon solo avec orgue ad lib. par Ch. Gounod*, Paris, Heugel, 1853; *Id.*, *Le Livre de la Vie. 1er Prélude de Bach, transcrit pour piano, orgue et violon par C. Gounod, arrangé pour le chant, paroles de Lamartine*, Paris, Mayaud, 1853; *Id.*, *Méditation sur le 1er Prélude de S. Bach for solo piano*, Paris, Heugel, 1853; *Id.*, *Méditation "Benedictio et claritas" for piano, orchestra, and six-part choir*, Paris, Heugel, 1855; *Id.*, *Méditation pour orchestre et chœur avec violon principal composée par Ch. Gounod, adaptée du 1er prélude de clavecin de J. S. Bach*, Paris, Heugel, 1856; *Id.*, *Ave Maria... Mélo die religieuse adaptée au 1er prélude de J. S. Bach par Charles Gounod. Paroles françaises de Paul Bernard*, Paris, Heugel, 1859.

⁵⁸ ELIGIO MARIANI, *Due melodie per violino con accompagnamento di pianoforte di Preludi di G. S. Bach*, Trieste, Schmidl e Tedeschi, n.d. [c. 1890]. I am grateful to Dr Elisabetta Buffulini of the Civico Museo Teatrale "Carlo Schmidl" of Trieste for her kind and generous help in finding this score, which is currently in the holdings of the same Museum. Another notable example of this approach is found in ALFONSO RENDANO, *Due melodie su Preludi di Bach per pianoforte*, Milano, Curci, 1975. Here the piano's left hand performs an arrangement of the Preludes from Bach's Cello Suites Nos. 1 and 4, whilst the right hand plays a new melody. The result has no pretence of «(fake) Baroque-ness», and instead is proudly late Romantic by all viewpoints.

⁵⁹ Mariani was awarded an honourable mention at a competition organised by the Accademia of the Istituto Musicale di Firenze in 1896, and the symphonic suite he had composed for his graduation in 1893 was favourably reviewed on «Signale für die musikalische Welt», CL, 38 (1893), p. 596.

Mariani's *Mélodie* is passionate and dramatic, in keeping with the performance tradition of Bach's original Prelude in piano teaching. As we will now see, the practice of adding melodies to the WTC Preludes would find other interesting declinations in the vocal field.

Italian Literature and the WTC

In those same years, in fact, there appeared some interesting forms of creative appropriation of Bach's WTC, within the milieu of the *fin-de-siècle* "Scapigliatura", a cultural movement whose aesthetic ideals would at first seem at odds with those normally associated with Bach.

The first example of this reception is found in a collection of *Tre Melodie*⁶⁰ issued by pianist, conductor, and composer Vittorio Maria Vanzo (1862-1945). Vanzo was an appreciated interpreter of Bach's music. In 1905 and 1906 he performed Bach's Concerto for three keyboards BWV 1063 with Adolfo Skolek and Eusebio Curelich (or Curelli)⁶¹ in Trieste, and with Mario Ferrari and Adele Dall'Armi in Milan.⁶² Again in 1905, Arrigo Boito suggested Vanzo as the conductor of a planned performance of *Christ lag in Todesbanden* BWV 4, for the Società del Quartetto of Milan. The organisation of the concert was already advanced, and there is documental evidence of the discussion between Count Francesco Lurani Cernuschi (another Bach devotee), in charge of the organisation, and Vanzo himself concerning performance details.⁶³ The concert was first postponed to November 1906, and then annulled. In early 1907, Lurani wrote to Ermanno Wolf-Ferrari; in his letter, he affirmed that the planned performance was still being considered (it actually never took place), and discussed some highly interesting points concerning performing forces, stylistic considerations, and the budding conflict between historical "authenticity" and musical effectiveness.⁶⁴ Vanzo himself was probably attracted by both approaches, as is testified by yet another concert (May 31st, 1906) where he conducted an orchestral transcription of a *Prelude, Chorale and Fugue* by Bach realised by J. J. Abert.

⁶⁰ VITTORIO MARIA VANZO, *Tre melodie per canto e pianoforte sopra tre celebri preludi di G. S. Bach da Vittorio Maria Vanzo*, Milano, Fantuzzi, 1898.

⁶¹ Cfr. «Rivista Musicale Italiana», XII, 4 (1905), p. 862; VITO LEVI, *La vita musicale a Trieste. Cronache di un cinquantennio*, Trieste, All'insegna del pesce d'oro, 1968, p. 54; RADOLE, *Ricerche sulla vita musicale*, cit., p. 183.

⁶² CARLO VANBIANCHI, *La Scala. Studi e ricerche di Guido Marangoni. Note storiche e statistiche (1906-20)*, Bergamo, Istituto Italiano d'Arti Grafiche, 1922, p. 177.

⁶³ Cfr. FULVIO BERTI, *Francesco Lurani Cernuschi. Una vita per la musica tra fede e cultura*, in *Bach e l'Italia*, cit., pp. 89-112: 92.

⁶⁴ F. BERTI, *Francesco Lurani Cernuschi*, cit., p. 93.

As a composer, Vanzo created the three *Melodie* under discussion, which are dedicated to Arrigo Boito, hailed as a «supreme artist». (Interestingly, Mugellini's edition of the WTC is dedicated to Boito too). They consist of added sung melodic lines with lyrics, performed over the keyboard part of three Preludes from the WTC. The first song, *Ci rivedrem lassù*, employs anonymous lyrics, probably by Vanzo himself; the Bach original underlying the added line is Prelude No. 15 from the WTC I. The poetry describes, in rather pathetic terms, the premature death of a young patriot as seen by his fiancée. Still, their parting is not an adieu, but rather a farewell: in Heaven, they will belong forever to their beloved.⁶⁵

The second poem is signed by Remigio Zena, aka Marquis Gaspare (Ippolito) d'Invrea (1850-1917), who was a close friend of Arrigo Boito, and who represented the Catholic component of the Scapigliatura. In this case, the *Melodia* is sung over Prelude No. 5 from the WTC I. The poem suggests the story of a betrayed lover who became a hermit. A "good angel" invites him to forgive – in God's name – his unfaithful fiancée, who will come to him shortly before her death.⁶⁶

The third and last poem is signed by "Gibus", a penname usually employed by Matilde Serao (1856-1927), one of the most important poetesses of the era. Although she reportedly likened Bach's music to the mechanism of a sewing machine,⁶⁷ she was doubtless an expert in the musical field; moreover, she was a close friend of Boito. Her lyrics are superimposed on Prelude No. 3 from the WTC I and represent the yearning of a lover parted from his beloved; he sees her with his mind's eyes and sweetly portrays her

⁶⁵ Lyrics: «Morto a vent'anni! / O patria, patria! Per te trafitto ei giace. / Di ridonarti l'anima / Cerca con mille baci. / Ma... ahimè! Purtroppo! Palpiti / Il core non ha più. / Ma non ti dico, o esanime garzon: / per sempre, addio! / Nelle regioni eteree / Io tua, tu sempre mio / Nell'ineffabil gaudio / Ci rivedrem lassù». Transl.: «Dead at twenty! / O fatherland, fatherland! He lies, pierced, for you. / I tried, with a thousand kisses / to give your soul back to you. / But... alas! Sadly... / The heart beats no more. / But, o lifeless boy, I do not say / adieu, forever! / In the heavenly regions / I will be yours, you forever mine / in the ineffable joy / we will see again there, in heaven». Translation mine.

⁶⁶ Lyrics: «Io son la voce dell'angelo buono, / Porgimi ascolto come a una sorella; / Colei che t'ha lasciato in abbandono / Nel deserto verrà della tua cella / Verrà pentita a chiederti perdono / In ginocchio a' tuoi piè come un'agnella / Anima e corpo recandoti in dono / Sempre fascinatrice / E sempre bella. / Io son la voce dell'angelo buono: / Quando colei verrà forse domani / Non negarle il rifugio ultimo e santo. / Innanzi al Crocifisso e senza pianto / Purché facciano il gesto del perdono / La morte accetterà dalle tue mani». Transl.: «I am the voice of a good angel; / listen to me as to a sister. / She who left you and forsook you / will come to the desert of your cell. / She will come, repented, asking for forgiveness, / on her knees, at your feet, like a lamb. / She will offer you her body and soul, / fascinating as always, / beautiful as always. / I am the voice of a good angel. / When she will come, perhaps tomorrow / do not deny her this last and holy haven. / Before the Crucifix, without tears / she will accept death from your hands / if they trace the gesture of forgiveness». Translation mine.

⁶⁷ GIOVANNI ARTIERI, *Napoli scontraffatta (ieri e oggi)*, Milano, Mondadori, 1984, p. 382.

in fairy-tale fashion.⁶⁸ The first two poems, therefore, have an explicitly religious connotation, thus embodying the spiritual component characterizing the reception of Bach's works in Italy as elsewhere (and this also concerns his "secular" output).

From the compositional viewpoint, the piano part is a rather faithful reproduction of Bach's originals (though at times the codas are expanded). The first piece, an *Andantino con sentimento*, displays an impressive array of dynamics, articulation, expression, and interpretive indications; the piano part includes a generous use of the pedal and of legato articulation. The dynamics indicated in both the vocal and the piano parts rather closely mirror the performance tradition of coeval instructive editions, but also the content of the lyrics. The second piece opens with an unaccompanied vocal recitative, which is repeated with the Bach's Prelude as accompaniment on the piano. After a long suspension, the piano begins Prelude No. 5 in D major from the WTC I, on a very light and legato *pianississimo* (see Fig. 3). Vanzo's pedalling indications are both surprising and fascinating, since they impart an almost "impressionistic" colour to Bach's music. In the concluding section, the intertwining of the voice's exclamations with the rests in the piano part is particularly intriguing. The third and last piece transposes Bach's Prelude No. 3, originally in C sharp major, to D flat. Here too the most interesting aspect is phrasing, normally created over complete bars. Dynamics, articulation, and agogic marks abound. The proposed pedalling suggests a typically Romantic interpretation of the piano part. Performance of this song with two different singers has made it clear, for me, that the tempo imagined by the composer is much slower than that usually adopted by solo keyboardists. This could be an interesting element to consider in relation to the evolution of Bach performance practices in the twentieth century. Interestingly, moreover, the emotional/affective content of Serao's added lyrics perfectly matches the harmonic wanderings of Bach's Prelude. Arguably, the poetess conceived her poetry in close dialogue with Bach's music, and not in abstraction from it.

⁶⁸ Lyrics: «Io ti penso, / Io ti vedo, / Io ti desio / O fanciulla sì bella e sì fiorente, / Qual mi passavi accanto sorridente. / Dimmi, ove sei? Forse in lontana riva, / in una casa di pietre lucenti, / Dove un coro di fate / Ti addormenti. / Forse a celarti / O bella creatura, / Viene, viene dal cielo / Dal vento portata, / una fila di nuvole rosata. / Intanto nel mio core è la tempesta / E innanzi agli occhi la sua bruna testa». Transl.: «I think of you, / I see you, / I yearn for you, / young lady so beautiful and so blooming, / as you used to pass me by smiling. / Tell me, where are you? Possibly on a far shore, / in a home of shining stones, / where a fairy choir / sings you a lullaby. / Possibly to hide you, / o beautiful creature / a line of rosy clouds / comes from heaven, / brought by the wind. / At the same time, a storm is in my heart / and before my eyes her dark head». Translation mine.

Fig. 3: Vittorio M. Vanzo, *Melodia No. 2* “Io son la voce”.

The reception of these songs was by no means uniformly positive, despite the considerable admiration Vanzo enjoyed as a composer and performer. A review in «Rivista Musicale Italiana» makes the critic’s stance very clear: «The *Melodies* on Bach’s Preludes, which we received just now, belong to a fake genre of art. It destroys the poetical imagination, enchanting in its indeterminacy, which each of us had already formed».⁶⁹ Although this judgment may be regarded as rather harsh, it does contain a grain of truth. Roman Ingarden argued that musical works consist of the score’s scheme and the many possibilities contained within its indeterminacies (although the composer may have thought of only a few of them).⁷⁰ Revisions such as the addition of performing indications by an editor (as is the case of instructive editions), or, even more dramatically, of lyrics and melodies as is the case of Vanzo, *de facto* limit those “spaces of indeterminacy” and change the work’s ontology.⁷¹

As with Eligio Mariani, here too the obvious model for these works is Gounod’s *Méditation/Ave Maria*, in its instrumental version (for Mariani) and its vocal version (for Vanzo). Still, Vanzo’s dedication of these three pieces to Arrigo Boito should not be overlooked. In 1882, Boito had written the lyrics for a transcription that he had realised himself after Bach’s Partita BWV 766 for organ. Boito’s version, *Trascrizione per canto d’una Partita di Giovanni Sebastiano Bach*, probably influenced the reception of this particular work by Bach in Italy, transforming it into a dirge for the dead⁷² (and it was in this form that even Busoni understood it).⁷³ Not only did Boito’s transcription influence the overall

⁶⁹ *Elenco della musica*, «Rivista Musicale Italiana», V, 4 (1898), p. 901. Translation mine.

⁷⁰ ROMAN INGARDEN, *The Work of Music and the Problem of Its Identity*, Berkeley - Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1987, pp. 34-40, 116-122, 137-158.

⁷¹ C. BERTOGGIO, *Instructive Editions*, cit., pp. 17, 33 etc.

⁷² CHIARA BERTOGGIO, *The Italian Reception in Bach’s Keyboard Works and Passions. Intersections of the Sacred and the Secular*, in *Sacred and Secular Intersections in Music of the Long Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Eftychia Papanikolaou and Markus Rathey, Lanham, Lexington Books, 2022, pp. 207-227: 214.

⁷³ Busoni chose the same Partitas selected by Boito for a piece in memory of his deceased father, notwithstanding the fact that the original German lyrics have very little to do with death. Cfr. C. BERTOGGIO, *The Italian Reception in Bach’s Keyboard Works*, cit., p. 214.

interpretation of this piece, it also set a model for the narrative or dramatic interpretation of Bach's music. Giuseppe Giacosa, Puccini's librettist, wrote to Antonio Fogazzaro, one of the most important Italian authors of the era, relating an incident that had occurred at Boito's place. Boito had played two pieces by Bach (one of which was arguably the *Partita*) for Giacosa, asking him to imagine a "scene" while listening to it; and Giacosa had happened to guess the dramatization Boito had devised for these pieces.⁷⁴ Giacosa admitted to Fogazzaro that Boito had «made him fall in love» with Bach, and Boito's apostolic zeal was undeniable. Fogazzaro, in turn, undertook a similar activity when providing lyrics for Prelude No. 6 in D minor from WTC I (see Fig. 4); in this case, the lyrics had to be spoken rather than sung. (Giacosa remarked on the different attitudes of the two authors, Boito and Fogazzaro, in his letter to the latter). Fogazzaro's poem is dedicated to pianist Cesare Pollini, a Bach enthusiast and pianist and himself a composer. It belongs in a series of «poetic versions after music», where works by several classical composers receive a verbal exegesis. However, the resulting poem fits (almost perfectly)⁷⁵ only in the piece by Bach (*Discorso della signora Cleofe a sua figlia*,⁷⁶ written in a perfectly imitated Goldoni-like Venetian dialect), and can therefore be read over the original Prelude. The sparkling, ironic poem is a tirade by a certain Lady Cleofe to her overenthusiastic daughter, who accepts courtship by too many men, and, in particular, by an elderly gentleman who happens to be also her widowed mother's lover.⁷⁷ The poem's pace is unrelenting, its irony abundant, and Fogazzaro's ability to imitate the style of Carlo Goldoni's Venetian theatre is superb. In spite of this, arguably few musicians today would characterize this Prelude as witty, chatty, and humorous. However, this was probably Busoni's perspective on it: in his edition of the WTC I, Busoni prescribes to play it "non legato throughout", and "Un poco agitato, non allegro". Here too, as happened with

⁷⁴ Giuseppe Giacosa quoted in MARIANO RUMOR, *Giuseppe Giacosa. Saggio*, Padova, CEDAM, 1940, p. 174.

⁷⁵ In fact, there is not a perfect correspondence: the poem is longer than the piece. I have checked the poem's manuscript: the published edition does contain an error (*andrieu* instead of *andrien*), but apart from that it corresponds to the handwritten original.

⁷⁶ ANTONIO FOGAZZARO, *Bach, "Wohltemperirtes Klavier" (Preludio VI). Discorso della signora Cleofe a sua figlia (Venezia, secolo XVIII)*, in *Id.*, *Le Poesie*, Milano, Baldini & Castoldi, 1912², pp. 360-364.

⁷⁷ An excerpt from this poem and its translation reads: «Scoltème, sorela; / Sior'àmia, anca ela / Sentì sta petegola / Che dise che brontolo / Che dise che predico / Perché no me comoda / Che andemo sui ventoli»; Transl.: « Listen, my sister, / My aunt, you too, / Hear this gossip / Who says I grumble / Who says I preach / Because I don't like / We go on the balconies» Translation mine. A complete translation is found in a video where Fogazzaro's poem is recited over Bach's Prelude: <https://youtu.be/cRZpxp-TGeM> (last accessed on July 3, 2023).

Vanzo, if one wishes to read the lyrics in parallel with a keyboard performance, the tempo must be much slower than is usual today (corresponding to Busoni's "non allegro").



Fig. 4: J. S. Bach, *Prelude No. 6* in D minor from WTC I with added lyrics by Antonio Fogazzaro.

In this interpretation, Goldoni's late-eighteenth-century Venice meets Bach, who had died several decades earlier; Rococo and Baroque intertwine, and a temporal sort of exoticism seems to surface. According to Fogazzaro's biographer, the author used to test his rhymes via a live performance of this Prelude, played for him by his daughter Maria.⁷⁸ When it was finished, Fogazzaro sent it to Boito, who promptly replied and praised the author for his brilliant creation. Boito affirmed that «Your *Discorso della Sig. Cleofe* has been gladdening my memory for a couple of days now. I know it all and amuse myself when comparing it with J. S. Bach's Prelude».⁷⁹

A couple of decades after Boito, another major Italian poet, Umberto Saba (1883-1957), joined the creative dialogue with Bach's WTC. In 1928, he issued a collection⁸⁰ of poetry, which clearly references Bach's WTC from its very title, *Preludio e fughe*. The collection consists of one Prelude and twelve Fugues (the number twelve is evidently deliberate⁸¹). The poetical fugues imitate, in their conceptual and structural form, the principles of the musical fugue. Each is written in two parts (except for the sixth, which is in three parts), implying, in poetical terms, the alternation and dialogue between two contrasting "voices". In the author's words:

⁷⁸ GAETANO TROMBATORE, *Fogazzaro*, Imola, Manfredi, 1970, p. 8. In this case too it is rather unclear how to fit the final chords with the text. They certainly must be interpreted as the «pun pon | [...] pun pan», onomatopoeically signifying Cleofe slapping her daughter. As concerns the presence of Bach's fugues in the Fogazzaro household, see also PIETRO NARDI, *Fogazzaro*, Milano, Mondadori, 1945.

⁷⁹ «Il discorso della Sig.[no]ra Cleofe, da un pajo di giorni, rallegra la mia memoria. Lo so tutto quanto e mi diverto a confrontarlo col preludio di J. S. Bach». Letter from Arrigo Boito to Antonio Fogazzaro, 18 May [1905]. ARRIGO BOITO, *Lettere. Raccolte e annotate da Raffaello de Rensis*, Milano, Lampi di stampa, 2004, p. 200.

⁸⁰ UMBERTO SABA, *Preludio e Fughe*, Florence, Solaria, 1928. See also ILARIA COMAR, «Preludio e Fughe» di Saba. *La strada verso la significazione*, «Italianistica», XXVII, 2 (1998), pp. 199-219.

⁸¹ In a later edition, issued by Einaudi in 1945, two *Congedi* («Partings») were added to the collection.

The Fugues are voices speaking with each other; they chase each other to say things which are at times contrasting, at times concordant. But their contrasts (just as life with its struggles would appear unified to one who could look at it from a sufficient height) are only superficial. The voices are, in reality, Saba's voice; the expression – turned poetry – of the yes and no he spoke to life, to “warm life”, was loved and hated at the same time and by the same person. One voice is glad, the other is melancholic; one, when facing life, is “optimistic” and the other “pessimistic”. In a manner of speaking, they exchange parts; they penetrate the one into the other.⁸²

Saba's collection was actually inspired by a Fugue from one of Bach's Sonatas for solo violin. Saba was an amateur violin player, who once attempted to perform one of Bach's violin Fugues, but, predictably, was frustrated by its difficulty. Then (unknowingly imitating an undertaking practised by Bach himself) he had the idea of playing it on the piano. His experience of «playing the violin on the piano» soon translated into a literary work, i.e. *Preludio e fughe*. Although Saba's immediate inspiration came from a violin work, it seems rather transparent, in my opinion, that Saba also wished to allude to the WTC, given the numerical allusions and the experience of piano playing. Moreover, as observed by Marta Marchetti,⁸³ the very contrast between the poet's optimistic and pessimistic voices seems to represent, in verbal terms, the contrast between major and minor keys found throughout the WTC.

Fugues, Flights, Runaways

Along with these examples from the literature, there are some notable instances of visual artworks by Italian painters and cartoonists who engaged creatively with Bach's WTC. Many of them, as we will see, are characterised by an ironic stance, similar to that adopted by Fogazzaro in his *Discorso della signora Cleofe*.

Already in 1881, a group of nonconformist artists from Milan, the *Famiglia artistica*, had organised an exposition intended to be a desecrating counterpart to the *Esposizione nazionale*, which was concurrently taking place. The exposition's very name, *Indisposizione nazionale*, mocked that of its august competitor. In this context, Luigi Conconi (1852-1917), a member of the Scapigliatura, and a respected painter in his own right, exposed a *Fuga di Bach*. This graphic work, attributed to a non-existent “Conte Luigi Coni” (with a wordplay on “Conconi”) in the exposition's catalogue, represents a «bugs' flight» (“bugs” translated

⁸² UMBERTO SABA, *Tutte le prose*, Milano, Mondadori, 2001, p. 247. Translation mine.

⁸³ MARTA MARCHETTI, “*Preludio e fughe*” di Umberto Saba. una raccolta “polifonica”, MA Thesis, Università di Pisa, 2018-2019, pp. 69-70.

from the Italian *bachi*⁸⁴). It is unknown whether Conconi intended to mock the WTC fugues or Bach's fugues generally, but certainly his idea did not go unnoticed by the coeval press. Whilst it has been impossible to find this artwork, its very existence demonstrates that, in 1881, Bach was commonly known in Italy for his fugues, otherwise Conconi's joke would have been irrelevant.

In the following centuries, this identification would remain common. For instance, Nina Marocco (b. 1966) created an artwork combining visual art and poetry, called *Il cavallo che amava Bach*,⁸⁵ where the spontaneous freedom of a wild horse, symbolising Bach's music, is bridled and subjected to the requirements of horse races. This horse lives in the world of music, and is captured by enchanting sounds during its run, which ends tragically. The horse, upon its death, is joyfully united with Bach in heaven; its *flight* («fuga») ends in music.

In an entirely different style, Tullio Pericoli (b. 1936), a painter and caricaturist of international standing, realised a caricature⁸⁶ of Johann Sebastian Bach, portrayed on a landscape reminiscent of the Tuscan hills, and sitting at a small portative organ. The organ's pipes pour forth a musical score, beautifully reproducing the handwritten appearance of Prelude No. 9 in E major from the WTC II. This choice is interesting, since obviously the organ is considered "Bach's instrument", but, at the same time, the WTC seems to embody the composer's music.⁸⁷

Ironic attitudes to Bach's Fugues are also found in other musical reinterpretations of his works.⁸⁸ In 1947, Primo Galassi composed the lyrics and music of a Swing titled *Studiando Bach*⁸⁹ (Practising Bach). Its introduction quotes the first bars of Fugue No. 2 in C minor from the WTC I (properly labelled "Fuga", although with a modified time

⁸⁴ LUIGI CHIRTANI, *L'Indisposizione di Belle Arti*, in *Milano e l'Esposizione Italiana del 1881. Cronaca illustrata della Esposizione Nazionale-Industriale ed Artistica del 1881*, Milano, Fratelli Treves, 1881, p. 306. Cfr. *Serata all'osteria della Scapigliatura. Trent'anni di vita artistica milanese attraverso le confessioni e i ricordi dei contemporanei*, ed. by Eugenio Gara and Filippo Piazzi, Milano, Bietti, 1945, p. 258.

⁸⁵ NINA MAROCCO, *Il cavallo che amava Bach*, in EAD., *La rivoluzione degli eucalipti*, Casamarciano, Disvelare edizioni, 2021, pp. 86-87. I am grateful to Plinio Perilli and Nina Marocco for kindly sharing this artwork with me.

⁸⁶ This caricature can be viewed online at <https://bit.ly/Tullio-Pericoli-Bach>, (last accessed on July 3, 2023).

⁸⁷ Other visual reinterpretations of Bach's music in the ironic style of caricature were realised by Riccardo Guasco (<https://bit.ly/Riccardo-Guasco-Bach>: here *fuga* is represented as a cycling breakaway) and Massimo Presciutti (<https://bit.ly/Massimo-Presciutti-Bach>: here *fuga* means flight).

⁸⁸ See also Pier Emilio Bassi's *La fuga di Bach*, with a foxtrot telling the story of "la fuga di Bach". In fact, we are later told that Bach is the protagonist's dog, a Great Dane, who fled from his owner. The protagonist claims that he will find consolation only in jazz music, which will comfort him for "Bach's flight". GIAN CARLO TESTONI and PIER EMILIO BASSI, *La fuga di Bach. Fox moderato*, Milano, Fono Enic, 1958.

signature). Then a syncopated transition leads to the vocal part. The couplet complains that «this C-minor fugue» makes one sweat: «I've been rehearsing it for two hours, and still can't play it». In the subsequent refrain, the protagonist laments being unable to learn «the fugues and preludes by Bach and Chopin» (is the choice of these two composers coincidental, considering what Chopin's Preludes owe to Bach's WTC?). The speaker proclaims that he or she will study this kind of music no more: «I will only play light music, I will only play rhythm, and I'll listen to [Gorni] Kramer [1913-1995], [Beppe] Moietta [aka Mojetta, 1905-1979], [Alberto] Semprini [1908-1990], and learn syncopation».⁹⁰ The piece, however, ends with an abridged version of the Coda from Bach's Fugue. Interestingly, the articulations found in the excerpts from Bach's original quoted by Galassi are almost the same as those found in Mugellini's instructive edition.

Transcriptions and arrangements

Having cited Fugue No. 2 in C minor from the WTC I leads us to the subject of arrangements and transcriptions, which can be approached through a brief discussion of a very special and celebrated version of precisely that piece. In 1967, in fact, this Fugue was famously performed on TV by an exceptional duo: flautist Severino Gazzelloni and singer Mina. Gazzelloni was a classically trained flautist, whose reputation was partly owed to the legendary golden flute he played. He was a Bach enthusiast and realised several transcriptions which contributed to the popularisation of Bach (or at least of some works by him) in Italy.⁹¹ Their duet basically follows the musical text of Bach's Fugue, accompanied by a drum set and the bass voice sung by a choir. – Neither Mina nor the choir sing words to the Fugue, but, similar to The Swingle Singers, they adopt scat-like onomatopoeias. That performance became famous and is still widely remembered, more than fifty years after its creation.⁹²

More “traditional” transcriptions abound, but it is impossible to provide a comprehensive survey here. I will limit my discussion to a few symbolic examples.

⁸⁹ PRIMO GALASSI, *Studiando Bach. Swing*, Milano, Edizioni Leonardi, 1947. Original lyrics: «Ma questa fuga / in do minore / come mi fa sudar... / La sto provando / da un paio d'ore / e ancor non la so far. // Studio la lezione al pianoforte / ma non le riesco ad imparar, / le fughe e i preludi di Bach e di Chopin, / maestro non voglio più studiar. / Solamente musica leggera / solamente ritmi suonerò, / e Kramer, Moietta, Semprini ascolterò / i sincopati imparerò!».

⁹⁰ Translation mine.

⁹¹ Cfr. CHIARA BERTOGGIO, “Quark's Jingle”. *Reception of Bach's “Air” BWV 1068 in Italy*, in *Helicon Resonans*, cit., pp. 151-174: 154-155.

⁹² See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bt3jFtIKQuU> (last accessed on August 6, 2023).

Frequently, transcriptions are realised from pairs of preludes and fugues excerpted from Bach's WTC, and the preludes are often transcribed in isolation from their corresponding fugue. For instance, Prelude No. 8 in E flat minor was excerpted from the WTC I but was deprived of its majestic Fugue in a fascinating transcription by Riccardo Zandonai (1883-1944), a composer and conductor whose version is for an unusual ensemble of strings, harp, and harmonium. The Prelude's melodies are entrusted to the strings, while the harmonium is in charge of the harmonic texture, supported by the harp performing the arpeggiated chords of Bach's original. Zandonai's instrumentation emphasises the doleful expressivity of Bach's Prelude; the result is varied as concerns timbre, thanks to the diversity of the instruments' colours. The sound is markedly late-Romantic, and is reminiscent of Mahler's and Schönberg's transcriptions of Bach.⁹³ Zandonai's version requires an interpretation of Bach's original with an intense and solemn mysticism; in conformity with the tradition of piano instructive editions, Zandonai prescribes "Lento"⁹⁴ as the tempo indication for this Prelude. Zandonai's metronome indication corresponds to those generally provided by pianists⁹⁵. However, Zandonai's performance suggestions seem influenced by, but not subservient to, those found in Busoni's edition. Zandonai may have been inspired by Busoni, even though the transcriber's indications might simply refer to a performance tradition going beyond Busoni himself and possibly dating back to Czerny.

The harp is also the protagonist of a transcription of six preludes and fugues realised by Gabriella Consolini (1892-1964), whose father, Angelo, had transcribed Bach's *Sonatas and Partitas* for the viola (in an arrangement which is still frequently used in the Conservatory programmes for viola players today). Gabriella Consolini issued a collection of Bach transcriptions in four volumes, the last of which⁹⁶ focuses entirely on the WTC; the pairs it includes are Nos. 2 in C minor (see Fig. 5), 5 in D major, and 21 in B flat major from WTC I, and Nos. 6 in D minor, 15 in G major, and 24 in B minor from WTC II. Her transcription is faithful not only to Bach, but also to Mugellini (see Fig. 6); indeed, the

⁹³ Cfr. SIMONE ZUCCATTI, *Booklet for the CD Da Vinci Classics C00307, Riccardo Zandonai. Rarities & Surprises. Art Songs, Transcriptions and Chamber Music*, Spettro Armonico Chamber Orchestra, cond. Simone Zuccatti (2020). I am grateful to Simone Zuccatti for kindly sharing the score of Zandonai's work with me.

⁹⁴ C. BERTOGLIO, *Instructive Editions*, cit., p. 231 and fn. 180.

⁹⁵ C. BERTOGLIO, *Instructive Editions*, cit., p. 232.

⁹⁶ GABRIELLA CONSOLINI, *Raccolta scelta dalle "Suites Francesi", "Inglese", dalle Sonate per Violino, dalle Cantate, dai Preludi e Fughe del "Clavicembalo ben temperato" di G. S. Bach trascritte e diteggiate per arpa*, Milano, Ricordi, 1916.

indications of articulation, tempo, dynamics, and expression found in Mugellini's instructive editions are reproduced in her transcription.



Fig. 5: Bach/Consolini, *Prelude No. 2 in C minor*, WTC I, mm. 1-2.



Fig. 6: Bach/Mugellini, *Prelude No. 2 in C minor*, WTC I, mm. 1-3.

Consolini's work had a clear pedagogical purpose, as is revealed by the numerous indications for performance (e.g. in the performance of embellishments), but also by its assumption of the pianists' interpretive tradition.

A selection of sixteen WTC fugues was transcribed by Bruno Rudan (1898-1978), born in Fiume (currently Rijeka), who later moved to Italy's mainland and taught there. In 1931, he realised his pedagogical version of these fugues for performance as a four-hand piano duet.⁹⁷ Rudan's purpose was declaredly educational, as he explicitly stated in his short Preface:

⁹⁷ BRUNO RUDAN, *Fughe dal "Clavicembalo ben temperato"*. *Riduzione didattica per pianoforte a quattro mani*, Trieste, Schmid, 1931.

This arrangement aims at facilitating and, at the same time, deepening the understanding of Bach's polyphony, and to ease its study through a practice-based preparatory stage. A piano pupil studying the four-part fugues from the *Well-Tempered Clavier* should study and elaborate on them not only by playing them with two hands, but also as four-hand duets, with his or her teacher or a fellow student. This would give them an exact perception of their contrapuntal structure; but, especially, by giving each single part to just one hand, they would easily display every detail with the greatest evidence and plasticity, reaching a perfect development of sound. Having thus formed an exemplary model of the Fugue, the pupil will derive valuable help from it for better highlighting elements and realising effects in his or her individual practice.⁹⁸

Rudan's transcription is actually closer to an edition (and to a rather sober one) than to a transcription proper; changes in Bach's texture are minimal, and added indications for dynamics, articulation, and agogics are much less profuse than in several contemporary editions.

A similar approach to transcription/editing is found in Cesare Serafini's eight volumes of Bach's keyboard works "transcribed" (or rather adapted) for performance on the electric organ.⁹⁹ After collections of Minuets, Inventions, and pieces excerpted from the French and English Suites, he dedicated vols. 7 and 8 respectively to the WTC I and II. The pieces he selected are prevalingly preludes, with a significant presence of fugues. Serafini added scanty indications about registration (only a few verbal suggestions in the opening "advice"). He also specifies that only a few expression marks are found in his edition, «in order to leave to the performers the quest for their own feeling»; similarly, metronome marks are to be considered "elastic" and not binding. (Interestingly, the editor suggests the metronome tempo from which one should start his or her practice; for example, he notes that Prelude I should be played with a bpm of 4/92, but starting from 60). Serafini's educational intent is clear; a similar perspective is found in Walter Farina's *The Well*,¹⁰⁰ a transcription of Fugue No. 16 in G minor from the WTC I for oboe, clarinet in B flat, flute, and bassoon. On the transcription's title page, the arranger specifies that this

⁹⁸ «Questa riduzione si propone di facilitare e nel medesimo tempo di approfondire la comprensione della polifonia bachiana e di agevolarne lo studio mediante una fase preparatoria su base pratica. L'allievo di pianoforte che suona le fughe (a 4 voci) del *Clavicembalo ben temperato* dovrebbe studiarle ed elaborarle, oltrecchè a due mani, a 4 mani, col proprio insegnante o con un compagno di studio, e ciò per rendersi esatto conto della loro struttura contrappuntistica, ma specialmente perché, affidando ogni singola delle "voci" ad una sola mano, esse troveranno facile modo di manifestarsi in ogni dettaglio con la massima evidenza e plasticità, raggiungendo un perfetto sviluppo fonico. Formato così un esemplare modello della fuga, l'allievo ne trarrà valido ausilio per meglio valorizzare elementi e realizzare effetti nello studio da solo». Translation mine.

⁹⁹ CESARE SERAFINI, *Bach per organo elettronico*, Ancona, Bèrben, 1976.

¹⁰⁰ JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH, *The Well (Dal "Clavicembalo ben temperato")*, transcribed by Walter Farina, Roma, GDE, 2019. I am thankful to Walter Farina for kindly sharing his work with me.

version was conceived for use in chamber music classes for winds at music high schools and conservatories. The transcription includes abundant phrasing and articulation marks, and some dynamic indications; these, however, are conceived in the style of “terraced dynamics”, with scanty use of crescendo/decrescendo or tension/distension marks.

Several interesting transcriptions have been realised for the guitar; in turn, these are mostly partial (frequently involving preludes only, and mainly individual excerpts) but there are also attempts to transcribe the complete work. Two preludes were transcribed by Luigi Schininà (1906-1993) in 1964.¹⁰¹ Schininà was a violinist and violist in numerous orchestras, but he also left an important oeuvre for the guitar. The two preludes he transcribes are No. 8 in E flat minor (transposed to E minor) and No. 22 in B flat minor (transposed to A minor) from the WTC I. In this case, the added dynamics seem not to have been obviously derived from any Italian instructive edition. They certainly mirror the established piano performance tradition, but without simply imitating any given model. Schininà’s dynamics are comparatively scanty, and the most important performance indications concern playing technique (fingerings, positions, strings, etc.). Both Benvenuto Terzi (1892-1980) and Carlo Carfagna (b. 1940) transcribed the first Prelude of the WTC I for the guitar; in Carfagna’s version¹⁰² it remains in the original key of C major, whilst Terzi¹⁰³ transposed it to G major and combined it with the Sarabande from the Lute Suite in G minor BWV 995 (in the original key). Both transcribers evidently strived to maintain as many of Bach’s original “notes” as possible. Occasionally, however, they were forced by the guitar’s range limitations to modify some patterns. Both indicate few dynamics, and both try, as frequently as possible, to let the bass resonate for the entire duration of the original note. Curiously, Terzi adds a repeat sign four bars before the end, thus doubling the Prelude’s length.

The same Prelude was transcribed for two guitars by Miguel Ablóniz, who, at first glance, might seem not to belong in the story of the *Italian* reception of the WTC. Ablóniz was neither a Spaniard nor an Italian, but rather a Greek (Michelis Ablonitis, 1917-2001), who later acquired Italian citizenship and who transcribed many works by Bach for the

¹⁰¹ JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH, *Due preludi dal “Clavicembalo ben temperato”*. *Trascrizione di Luigi Schininà*, Ancona, Bèrben, 1964.

¹⁰² JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH, *Preludio n. 1 dal “Clavicembalo ben temperato”*. *Tonalità originale. Trascrizione per chitarra di Carlo Carfagna*, Ancona, Bèrben, 1974.

¹⁰³ JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH, *Preludio e Sarabanda*. *Trascrizione per chitarra di Benvenuto Terzi*, Milano, Ricordi, 1957.

guitar. In his transcription,¹⁰⁴ transposed to E major, the first guitar performs the semiquaver arpeggios originally played by the keyboardist's right hand, whilst the second guitar plays the tenuto notes assigned to the left hand. Here too the added performance indications are remarkable for their paucity; in the autograph manuscript,¹⁰⁵ currently in the holdings of Archivio Ricordi, the metronome indication of 104 for the crotchet is deleted.

Another version for two guitars, this time of the entire WTC I, was issued in the twenty-first century; it has not been published in written form, but only as a recording realised through overdubbing by the arranger himself. The musical interests of guitarist Marcello Peghin lie mostly in the field of jazz music; however, moved precisely by his love for Bach's music, Peghin underwent classical conservatory training. Between 1998 and 2000 he recorded his own transcription of Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, and in subsequent years he focused on the WTC and the Cello and Lute Suites. His transcription came to light due to his enthusiasm for Segovia's Bach performances, and the idiosyncratic sound of Keith Jarrett's harpsichord in his performance of the *Goldberg Variations*. In Peghin's version (2003), the parts of the two ten-stringed guitars basically coincide with the two staves of the keyboard original. Interestingly, the arranger is not considering the possibility of a live performance of his version. He was moved to transcribe by his desire to «listen to how that music, which I so loved when played by the harpsichord and piano, could sound on the guitar».¹⁰⁶ As had happened with the *Goldberg Variations*, Peghin wished to maintain all the notes of Bach's original, without sacrificing anything. On the other hand, he was at times forced to transpose some pieces to other keys when they were too unidiomatic for the guitar. This panorama by no means exhausts the Italian transcriptions of Bach's WTC, but merely aims at providing a significant overview.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH, *Preludio n. 1 dal "Clavicembalo ben temperato"*. *Trascrizione per due chitarre di Miguel Ablóniz*, Milano, Ricordi, 1957.

¹⁰⁵ <https://www.digitalarchivioricordi.com/en/partiture/7642> (last accessed on July 3, 2023).

¹⁰⁶ Marcello Peghin, personal communication, 12 May 2022. I am grateful to Marcello Peghin for his time and for kindly sharing information about the origins and aesthetical principles of his transcription with me.

¹⁰⁷ Other significant examples include: LUCIANO BETTARINI, *18 Preludi e 34 Fughe dal "Clavicembalo ben temperato"* (1970), manuscript, for string or wind ensemble; ROBERTO CABERLOTTO, *Sei preludi e fughe*, Ancona, Bèrben, 1999, for accordion; CARMELO CASTORINA, *Preludi n. 12 e 22*, Bergamo, Carrara, 2012, for the organ; ENZO DI LEO, *Fuga in do diesis minore a cinque voci*, Ancona, Bèrben, [n.d.], for four-hand piano duet; DAVIDE DISTEFANO ET AL., *Fughe BWV 855, 856, 876, 878*, Catania, Centro Magma, 1996, for winds; WALTER FARINA, *The Well*, Roma, GDE, 2019, for wind quartet; PASQUALE LA ROTELLA, *Fuga II a 3 (BWV 847)*, manuscript, for string orchestra; GERVASIO MARCOSIGNORI, *Preludio 8 dal Primo Libro del Clavicembalo ben temperato*, Ancona, Bèrben, [n.d.], for the accordion; PASQUALE SCAROLA, *Preludio e Fuga BWV 846*, Mottola, Salatino, 2006, for guitar quartet.

Elaborations and original works

The last, but perhaps most meaningful example of appropriation of Bach's WTC by Italian artists is represented by original musical works inspired by it. Here too a detailed and comprehensive census is virtually impossible to realise, since the WTC has been the daily bread of keyboardists and composers for three centuries. In Italy, it is commonly known that Padre Martini was given some excerpts from the WTC by Wilhelm Friedemann Bach, in his handwriting, and that the WTC was studied in depth by many musicians already in the nineteenth century.¹⁰⁸ The influence of the WTC on Chopin's creation of his 24 *Préludes* is also well known and documented, as is the importance of Bach's model for other international composers, from Debussy to Shostakovich, to name but two. In Italy, we have cycles of 24 piano preludes¹⁰⁹ by Federico Bertocchi,¹¹⁰ Ferruccio Busoni,¹¹¹ Stefano Golinelli (two sets),¹¹² Francesco Lanza,¹¹³ Franco Mannino,¹¹⁴ and Luca Mosca.¹¹⁵ However, the connection between these cycles and Bach's WTC is not always clear; in many cases, these preludes are clearly intended as transitions or introductions for concert pieces. The discourse is slightly different as concerns the *Venticinque Preludi per pianoforte* by Luigi Perrachio (1883-1966),¹¹⁶ even though here there are twenty-five rather than twenty-four pieces. However, the last one is intended as a homage to Bach, with the label «*in nomine Johannis Sebastiani*» toward the end, and a Gospel quote (Jn 8:32) to conclude both the piece and the series.

One of the best-known examples of such a creative approach is represented by *Les guitares bien tempérées* composed in 1962 by Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco (1895-1968). This majestic collection of 24 Preludes and Fugues was commissioned by a married couple of guitarists, Ida Presti and Alexandre Lagoya. Having composed his *Sonatina Canonica*, op. 196 for them in 1961, the following year he embarked on the composition of this monumental oeuvre. It represents a return to the fugue, a genre which

¹⁰⁸ C. BERTOGGIO, *Instructive Editions*, cit., pp. 174-206.

¹⁰⁹ There is also a cycle of 24 pieces for the saxophone, titled *Il saxofono ben temperato*, written by Antonio Marangolo and published both as a score and an audio compilation. ANTONIO MARANGOLO, *Il saxofono ben temperato*, Acireale and Rome, A & B, 2011.

¹¹⁰ FEDERICO BERTOCCHI, *24 Preludi per pianoforte op. 45*, Bologna, Trebbi, [n.d.].

¹¹¹ FERRUCCIO BUSONI, *24 Preludi per pianoforte op. 37*, Milano, Ricordi, 1927.

¹¹² STEFANO GOLINELLI, *24 Preludi*, op. 23, Milano, Ricordi, 1845; Id., *24 Preludi op. 69*, Milano, Ricordi, [n.d.].

¹¹³ FRANCESCO LANZA, *24 Preludi in tutti i toni maggiori e minori*, Napoli, Stabilimento musicale Partenopeo, 1874.

¹¹⁴ FRANCO MANNINO, *24 Preludi per pianoforte op. 379/402*, Milano, Curci, 1991.

¹¹⁵ LUCA MOSCA, *24 Preludi per pianoforte op. 16*, Milano, Suvini Zerboni, 1986.

¹¹⁶ LUIGI PERRACHIO, *25 Preludi per pianoforte*, Milano, Ricordi, 1954.

Castelnuovo-Tedesco had neglected for a while after his student years. As a pupil of Pizzetti at the Florence Conservatory, the composer had made the unheard-of request of his teacher to be allowed to stay one year longer in his class, in order to fully master this polyphonic form. During that year, he strenuously occupied himself with writing one fugue each day; while the result of this titanic effort was a complete mastery of polyphony, it also ended up nauseating the composer who remained at a safe distance from the fugue for years. In his monumental collection in 1962, though, a reconciliation is accomplished: Castelnuovo-Tedesco nonchalantly adopts varied languages and influences, mixing them with the rigour of counterpoint, but also without renouncing irony and a healthy dose of lightness.

A similar approach marks the attitude of Paolo Marchettini (b. 1974), who published his own cycle of *24 Preludes and Fugues for piano* in 2021.¹¹⁷ The composer's interest in polyphony has deep roots and dates back to his student years in Rome, particularly under the guidance of Claudio Dall'Albero, whose teaching strongly focused on counterpoint. Marchettini had always been fascinated by the fugue and its structure, but only in 2019-20 did he conceive the idea of writing a whole cycle. It was not a planned undertaking, at first; the need to write a fugue, the C-major Fugue which now opens the series, was mainly an interior prompting. Through this work, Marchettini wished to study his relationship with tonality and explore the possibility of writing in the tonal language of today. His fugues follow Bach's model explicitly, but the subjects clearly belong in today's world and display a vast array of influences. These include American minimal music, the medieval technique of the *hoquetus*, but also funky or East Asian suggestions, and African rhythms. The tonal plan literally mirrors Shostakovich's, since the Russian composer followed the circle of fifths upwards, and the Italian musician downwards; he believes that the interval of the fourth is particularly well suited for modal influences. Bach's influence is clearly perceivable, though direct quotations are missing. However, for instance, Prelude No. 1 alludes to Bach by employing the same hand position as that found in the opening Prelude of the WTC. Other allusions regard the fugues' scoring: paying homage to Bach, there are only two five-part fugues, and just one in two parts.¹¹⁸ Doubtlessly, Marchettini's undertaking is a major achievement in today's musical

¹¹⁷ PAOLO MARCHETTINI, *24 Preludes and Fugues for Piano*, Milano, Curci, 2021.

¹¹⁸ The content of this paragraph is derived from a private interview with Paolo Marchettini (June 7, 2022), to whom I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude.

panorama, and bears witness to the lasting importance of Bach's model for today's composers.

While Marchettini's cycle is, to my knowledge, the only cycle of 24 preludes and fugues for the piano by an Italian composer, many others were inspired by Bach's WTC for their own creations. Pianist and composer Alfonso Rendano (1853-1931) wrote an impressive four-part Fugue based on the subject of Bach's Fugue No. 14 in F sharp minor from the WTC I.¹¹⁹ Materials excerpted from Bach's model are also found in other works, such as, for instance, Alessandro Longo's *Mosaici musicali*, a collection of twelve pieces (see Fig. 7).¹²⁰ The first two pieces focus respectively on the preludes and fugues of the WTC 1. In Prelude No. 1 in C major, short thematic fragments or motifs from each of the 24 Preludes are juxtaposed with each other (transposed and slightly adapted, though still recognisable). In Prelude No. 2 in C minor, the same is done with Fugue subjects.



Fig. 7: Alessandro Longo, *Mosaici musicali*, No. 1.

The other “mosaics” apply this idea to works by Clementi, Beethoven, Chopin, and Schumann, but originally this creative concept came to Longo precisely from his study of Bach, as he recounts:

The idea, or rather the temptation, to put together a small mosaic with themes, fragments, or thematic lines from all 24 preludes of the *Well-Tempered Clavier*, first volume, came to me from an almost fortuitous connection among the themes of the first Preludes by Bach. Those who will carefully observe the beginning of this mosaic – the first one in this series – and will realize the presence of no less than eight thematic fragments within just four measures, following each other seamlessly, and instead proceeding with a surprising spontaneity, will have to concede that, once the first nucleus was formed, there was already an element for baiting the soul of (I won't say an artist) an artisan mastering the building matter. [...] What is the practical aim of these mosaics? None. What is their artistic interest? Curiosity, at most.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ I am grateful to my friend and colleague Giovanni Battista Romano for alerting me to the existence of this Fugue. The autograph manuscript is held at the Biblioteca Civica di Cosenza, Fondo Rendano.

¹²⁰ ALESSANDRO LONGO, *Dodici mosaici musicali per pianoforte su temi o frammenti di temi di alcune opere di cinque grandi autori. Bach, Clementi, Beethoven, Chopin, Schumann. Elaborati da Alessandro Longo*, Napoli, L'arte pianistica, 1936.

¹²¹ ALESSANDRO LONGO, *Prefazione*, in A. LONGO, *Dodici mosaici musicali*, cit., pp. 1-2.

These mosaics grew from the soil of the Conservatories, where the tiles of Longo's mosaics were daily played. Their ironic component is a perhaps a surprising, but by no means unique, trait of the reception of the WTC, as we saw when discussing poetry and visual art, or the pop versions of some preludes or fugues.

Similar to Longo, however, other classically trained composers adopt a nonconformist stance with respect to the WTC. For instance, Girolamo De Simone (b. 1964) wrote a piece called *Preludio stemperato* [lit. Diluted Prelude] in 2005.¹²² It begins by citing explicitly Bach's Prelude No. 1 in C major from the WTC I, but with important differences: the low notes are not held, and each bar is repeated twice. Starting at b. 9, Bach's pattern is maintained but the harmonies are changed; moreover, lopsided accents are added. B. 12 is in 2/4 instead of common time, and gradually the piece diverges more and more from Bach's original in terms of texture, harmony, and style.

In an analogous fashion, Gianluca Cascioli (b. 1979) built the thirteenth (and last) movement of his Third Piano Sonata (2017) upon the general idea of Bach's first Prelude. This movement is titled *Carillon (Omaggio a J. S. Bach)*,¹²³ and, as the subtitle explains, it consists of an «intervallic reduction» of the Prelude's first measure. This technique was created by Franco Donatoni,¹²⁴ and is employed faithfully by Cascioli. The intervals of the first measure of Bach's Prelude are gradually "squeezed" or reduced from both sides, and when a unison is reached, one of the two notes is transposed one octave higher. Already in Cascioli's first measure, however, Bach's arpeggio is found one octave higher, and has to be played «mechanically», but still «flowing», calmly but inexorably, and at the same time «with sweetness, in a mysterious and transcendent fashion».¹²⁵ Gradually, the pattern is transposed and deformed, following Donatoni's technique, and climbs to starry heights of pitch and transparency. The flow of the semiquavers is at times broken, through a skilful use of rests, corresponding to the moments when the intervallic reduction would require pitches exceeding the keyboard's range.

¹²² Online at <http://www.konsequenz.it/composizioni%203/Preludio%20stemperato.pdf> (last accessed on August 6, 2023).

¹²³ Finished on June 11th, 2017. I am grateful to the composer for explaining his technique to me and for pointing out Donatoni's influence on him.

¹²⁴ Cfr. ENZO RESTAGNO, *Donatoni*, Torino, EDT, 1990, p. 99.

¹²⁵ «Allegretto meccanico. Spirituale, misterioso e trascendente». «Sempre *pp*, dolcissimo, fluido ma estremamente calmo, inesorabile».

A similar principle is adopted by Renzo Gardinali (1935-2010), whose *Preludio e Fuga per pianoforte (Omaggio a J. S. Bach)*, op. 410,¹²⁶ written in 1986, departs much more quickly from Bach's original, and wanders through keys and chords in a seeming aimless fashion. The pattern established in Bach's model is also disrupted, but the Prelude's ending cites, albeit in a deformed fashion, the conclusion of Bach's piece. Similarly, the Fugue adopts the same subject as Bach's original, but quickly develops a high degree of chromaticism, which contrasts with the prevalingly original diatonic character.

The same fugue is adopted by Carlo Pedini (b. 1956) as his model. His *Fuga in do da Bach* (2015) begins with a faithful quotation of Bach's original, although it is played three octaves lower; the composer prescribes a very slow tempo (46 for the semiminim) with an imperceptible accelerando leading to an Andante at b. 15. A pattern of accents is developed in the Andante, where Bach's original subject is given a chromatic shape through the interpolation of alterations. The Fugue can be optionally repeated, even more than once, «until one gets bored» (*fin quando non ci si stufa*), as the composer prescribes. This piece, in the composer's own words,

is the fruit of [my] transcription of the various entries of the Fugue's subject in the first Fugue from Bach's *Wohltemperierte Klavier*, book I, starting from the lowest register up to the highest, and imagining, at the end, a reprise of the Fugue from the beginning, following a virtually inexhaustible process.¹²⁷

This Fugue opens a cycle of twelve fugues, closed by an addendum; a thirteenth fugue, again in C major, citing the first fugue in its final measures, opens up the possibility of repeating the whole cycle. This cycle of fugues follows another cycle of twelve preludes; initially, the composer had thought of pairing them, but he ended up creating two separate series instead.

The first pairing of Prelude and Fugue No. 1 in C major from WTC I also inspired a *Preludio* and *Fugato* written by Fabrizio Puglisi (b. 1962) in 2021.¹²⁸ The Prelude is an elaboration of Gounod's *Méditation* on Bach's Prelude. At the beginning of Puglisi's version,

¹²⁶ Autograph manuscript; Library of the Conservatory "G. F. Ghedini" in Cuneo (Italy); signature OCC.GARD.108.

¹²⁷ «La fuga n° 1 è frutto della trascrizione delle diverse entrate dei soggetti della fuga n°1 del primo libro del *Wohltemperierte Klavier* di Bach, partendo dalla regione più grave fino all'acuto, immaginando alla fine una ripresa della fuga dall'inizio, secondo un processo virtualmente inestinguibile». CARLO PEDINI, *12 Fughe con una appendice per pianoforte (2015-2017)*, online at [https://imslp.org/wiki/12_Fughe_con_una_Appendice_\(Pedini%2C_Carlo\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/12_Fughe_con_una_Appendice_(Pedini%2C_Carlo)) (last accessed on July 3, 2023); translation mine.

¹²⁸ Manuscript, courtesy of the composer.

the pianist's right hand performs the entire texture of Bach's original Prelude, whilst the left hand enters, after an introduction, with Gounod's melody. The arrangement also includes some added voices and embellishments, as well as octave doublings and passages in parallel sixths. The Prelude may be combined with a *Fugato*, built on the inversion of the subject of Bach's Fugue. The imitative structure is complex but, faithful to its title, the *Fugato* does not strictly obey the rules of fugue-writing. It is rich in chromatic alterations and fragments of *passus duriusculus*, and does not eschew very "pianistic" passages in parallel octaves or powerful chords. Towards the conclusion, a *Cadenza ad libitum* leads to a reminiscence of Bach's subject, this time in its original form (but on the dominant).

Lastly, in this perforce limited survey, I would like to mention the *Prélude à une fugue imaginaire* by Gian Francesco Malipiero (1882-1973). Written in 1932, it was first published within a special issue of *La Revue musicale*, paying homage to Bach and his name. In fact, the B-A-C-H motif features prominently in this piece by Malipiero, and indeed constitutes the main motivic material of the whole composition. Later (in 1937), this *Prélude* was collected, together with *Due Ritmi* and *Quattro Canti gregoriani*, to constitute a suite. Whilst the homage to Bach could not be more explicit, this piece seems not to be clearly linked to the WTC; still, Malipiero's hint that this Prelude introduces an "imaginary" Fugue unfailingly leads us to consider the indissoluble pairings of the WTC.

Conclusions

Throughout this survey, it has become increasingly clear that the WTC represents, in Italy as elsewhere, an iconic element of the Western cultural panorama. This is clearly observed, for instance, if one considers the number of non-musical books in Italy alluding to the *Clavicembalo ben temperato* in their titles.¹²⁹

As elsewhere, the reception of the WTC in Italy took the form of literary, visual, and musical works, ranging from the devout homage to the desecrating vignette, from the ironic piece of sung swing to the serialist elaboration, from the instructive edition to the creative elaboration of fragments and ideas, without forgetting transcriptions, arrangements, and performance guides.

¹²⁹ For instance: ROMANO PRODI, *Il capitalismo ben temperato*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1995; PIER LUIGI CELLI, *Breviario di cinismo ben temperato*, Roma, Fazi, 2002; CARLO DELFRATI, *Il maestro ben temperato. Metodologie dell'educazione musicale*, Milano, Curci, 2009 (this is one of the few books in this survey which does have explicitly musical content); FELICE CIRO PAPPARO, *Un narcisismo ben temperato. Paul Valéry e la riforma di sé*, Pisa, ETS, 2012; ANTONINO CALECA, *Lo storico dell'arte ben temperato*, Ospedaletto, Pacini, 2013; PAOLO MATTERA, *Il conflitto ben temperato. Le assicurazioni sociali in Francia negli anni Venti tra riforme e lotta politica*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2018; ALESSIA MISITI and GINO PANTALEONE, *Per un corpo ben temperato*, Palermo, Ex libris, 2019; BRUNO VOGLINO, *L'esondante ben temperato*, Roma, Castelvecchi, 2022.

The pedagogical dimension is particularly pronounced in Italy, and this has been fostered by the comparatively early adoption of the WTC as a compulsory work for State exams in piano and organ. The WTC has been considered, from a relatively early date, as a fundamental work in the education of keyboardists. On the other hand, the WTC – frequently seen as a “preparation” for something else, i.e. as part of a curriculum leading a pupil to artistic maturity – seems to require, in turn, some form of preparation. The bare look of its pages, written in “work-notation”, the complexity of its Fugues, and the technical challenges of its Preludes ceaselessly confront young musicians and demand a thorough understanding. This prompted the flourishing of Italian instructive editions, particularly when National Conservatory programmes started to require the preparation of twenty-four preludes and fugues for the *compimento medio* exam. This requirement made it virtually impossible to impart adequate instruction to all of them during conservatory terms, and therefore the need for “instructive” editions was widespread, common, and shared.

The educational dimension also influenced the other forms of reception of the WTC; some original works inspired by it explicitly allude to the WTC’s presence in Italian teaching programmes (this is evidently the case with Longo); liminal works such as some of Busoni’s elaborations (Etudes) are artworks in their own right but also have a declared pedagogical function; even satirical works of “light” music, such as *Studiando Bach*, involve an ironic perspective on the massive presence of the WTC in Italian musical education.

In spite of this, the greatness of this collection which vastly exceeds its pedagogical value (while encompassing it) has successfully demonstrated its fecundity as a stimulus for other forms of creative reception, as shown in this article. Together, they bear witness to how the Italian reception of the WTC intertwines with comparable phenomena: on the one hand, by displaying several common features with what happened elsewhere in Europe and outside its borders, and on the other, by offering some unique, idiosyncratic traits which contribute to the history of Bach reception in Italy.

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