

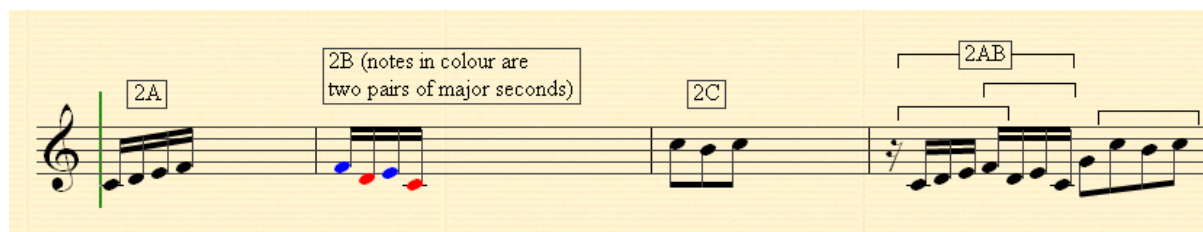
## Motivic development: Lesson 2

In this lesson we shall be looking at Bach's two-part Invention in C, BWV 772. I'm almost certain that you will have a copy of this music, but if not, it can be found on IMSLP. This simple but exquisitely crafted piece demonstrates how to construct an entire piece from essentially a single idea. Of particular interest is that Bach provides two versions of this Invention; the second in which he 'fills in' thirds with a passing note in triplet rhythm, and if you can see at this triplet version as well it will be of interest.

The first bar-and-a-beat sets out three different strata: 1. the basic intervals used to create motifs; 2. the motifs built from them; and 3. the combination of motifs to form a melodic phrase. In this case:

1. = a major second
2. = a) an ascending scale-like figure of four notes b) descending interlocked thirds and c) a 'bowl-shaped' fall and then rise of a second. The first two of these ideas are almost always found in succession for the remainder of the music and will be referred to as '2AB'.
3. = the seamless combination of all these ideas to form a complete idea, highly suitable for contrapuntal treatment. It also spans the interval of a ninth if we include the first semiquaver of the next bar, which re-enforces the importance of the second as well as providing a convincing move to the dominant in the second bar.

In note form, they look like this:



Every bar of the piece is dominated by these figures and variants of them. Thus we can see that at the most basic level, the entire composition is built from a major second and variants thereof<sup>1</sup>.

We shall now briefly go through the piece and examine the different combinations these motifs appear in, as well as how they are fitted into commonly found textural and harmonic ideas. It may be helpful to mark a copy of the score with each motif every time it appears.

Having heard the 2AB motif without accompaniment, the left hand imitates the motif verbatim when it enters. The right hand's 'filling in' (idea 2c) is designed to avoid intruding on this entry whilst still being built from the interval of a second (one can also argue that the trill on this fourth beat is also a derivation of this idea). In the second bar both instances of the 2AB motif, indeed the entire first bar, are transposed into the dominant which preserves the motif's intervallic pattern.

In the third bar Bach decides to do something different. If we may speculate for a moment, it is conceivable that this piece could be continued by repeating this tonic-dominant progression, either with a new idea or with the contrapuntal entries switched between the hands. Alternatively the

<sup>1</sup> It is of interest to me whether trills, turns and mordents should be considered 'structural' in music that uses much scalar material, as all these ornaments are based on seconds.

imitative idea could be used to modulate to another key (a device common in Vivaldi). However, this would necessitate four repetitions of the same basic idea, and as a result would not be as musically satisfying as what actually happens. What Bach does is a far more skilful continuation, introducing two techniques of variation at once. He inverts the 2AB motif, but instead of the imitation between hands already heard the right hand plays the motif in a sequence, moving from a slightly disguised tonic through A minor. At the same time, the left hand's accompaniment figure turns out to be an augmentation of motif 2a. Bach cleverly merges these figurations with motif 2B to fill out a cadence bringing the music to the dominant.

In bar 7 the opening idea (2AB) is repeated for two bars– but in a different key and with the hands entering in the opposite order. In bar 9 the motif starts to be heard in inversion, and in addition, the sequence of imitations between the hands is greatly extended in order to modulate to various intermediate keys before eventually reaching the minor in bar 15. Before this several new inventions based on the motif appear. In bar 13 the right hand alternates between 2AB the 'right way up' and in inversion, whilst the left hand plays a harmonisation that is not quite an exact canon. Again Bach fits the motivic fragments around a standard cadential formula.

After bar 15 another standard technique is used – imitation over a pedal. Actually, the pedal is only *implied*, but the music is clearly still in A minor until bar 19, and one could add a pedal A without creating any ill effect. Above this is a new version of the imitation between hands previously heard. Finally, a (longer) closing cadence. Bach is able to fit motivically related material around standard harmonic devices with ease because his building-blocks are so fundamental –scales and thirds. Of course, this is within the overall harmonic context of his style. If Bartok or Hindemith had written this piece, the constraints on what harmonies could be considered 'correct' would be much wider, although it would still be an equal challenge to present music that was so unified and satisfying as this, whatever the style. To summarise the basic techniques Bach has used in the work is the following table:

Bar	1-2	3-6	7-8	9-10	11-12	13-14
	Exposition of motif; imitation	Sequence; augmentation	Imitation through chord sequence	Inversion of motif; imitation	Inversion of ideas in b.3-6	Several techniques – augmentation, different combinations of motifs
Bar	15-18	19-20			21-22	
	Similar to 9-10 ; imitation of inversion	Similar to 3-4; sequence of inversion			Motif follows cadential chord sequence	

Bach's resources of invention are used to great effect in all his music. Of course, his starting material is judiciously crafted to provide maximum potential for development, but it is how he manages to keep the same material sounding fresh that is the attraction. As we mentioned in the last lesson, context and contrast is key – many different backgrounds and textures are used, sometimes with all of the material, sometimes focussing on only a small part. One last question remains: why does Bach do what he does? Why not write the piece with a homophonic texture, or just one part of the motif, or have different motifs in each hand, or use the variants of it described above in a different order? It is simply a matter of personal taste and choice, and what makes Bach's composition so

great is that his choices are coherent and musically satisfying, providing a sense of continuity. At the same time, many elements of the piece are clearly recognisable as existing formulae and devices without ever seeming over-used.

Assignment:

Compose a short (max 1.5 minutes) composition for two instruments or solo keyboard based on a motive you wrote in the last lesson. It should demonstrate different variations and combinations of your basic material based on the examples in the Bach invention, whilst also possessing structural rigidity. Although writing in the style of Bach is not a requirement, I would encourage you to use a broadly contrapuntal style in order to utilise the techniques he does.

If you have time...

Analyse another of the Bach 2-part Inventions or 3-part Sinfonias, explaining how the motifs are constructed from intervals and the different ways they are combined to form the work.