Dancing with the Toes

A Workshop Presentation by David Dahl

with musical examples played by Paul Tegels

and assistance from Thomas Clark

to the Tacoma Chapter of the
American Guild of Organists

Saturday, October 26, 2024
Christ Episcopal Church

Educational Objectives

- To understand the historical and musical context of the Eight Little Preludes and Fugues
- To learn how and why to play selected pedal lines with toes only
- To highlight the connection of pedal choreography and dance

Announcements

- Note locations of emergency exits
- Bathrooms located through door at rear of sanctuary
  - Door from narthex will be locked
- Please hold questions until the question-answer session at the end of the presentation

Music

- Organized sound
- Manifests itself as either song or dance
  - Style periods tend to alternate between the two
    - Renaissance period of song
    - Baroque period of dance
    - Romantic period of song
  - Eight Little Preludes and Fugues, ca. 1730, fall into the later Baroque period

Eight Little Preludes and Fugues

- Formerly attributed to J. S. Bach but more likely composed by one of his pupils or sons
  - Johann Ludwig Krebs is the leading candidate
- Varied keys and diverse styles
  - C d e F G g a B-flat
  - Praeludium, Concerto, Ricercare, Sonatina, Toccata
- Likely used as instructional pieces

Performance Practice Evolution

- Since the 19th century, organists were taught to play pedal as legato as possible
  - Can yield false accents in Baroque music
- Performance practice enlightenment took place in the late 1960s and early 1970s
  - Enunciated legato
    - The note is fully released before next note is sounded
    - Variable enunciation like a strand of pearls with different sized knots between the pearls

Enunciated Legato Technique
in Eight Little Preludes and Fugues

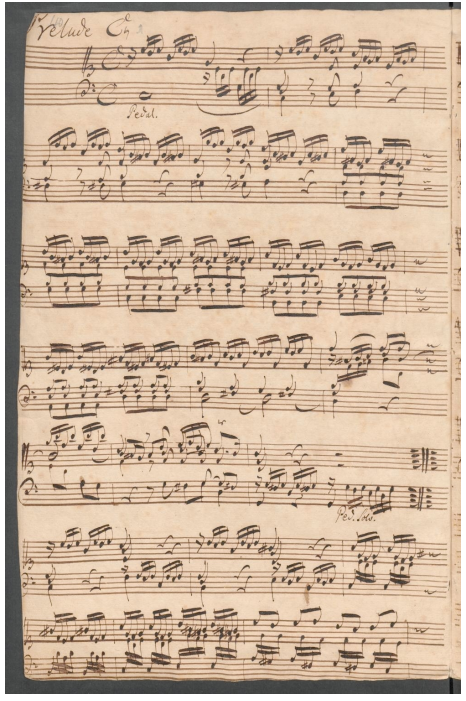
- Articulation based on rhythmic patterns of strong and weak beats
- Can be played with toes only
  - Can slide the foot to adjacent notes
- Should result in an experience of dancing
- Proper shoes
  - Light weight with leather soles

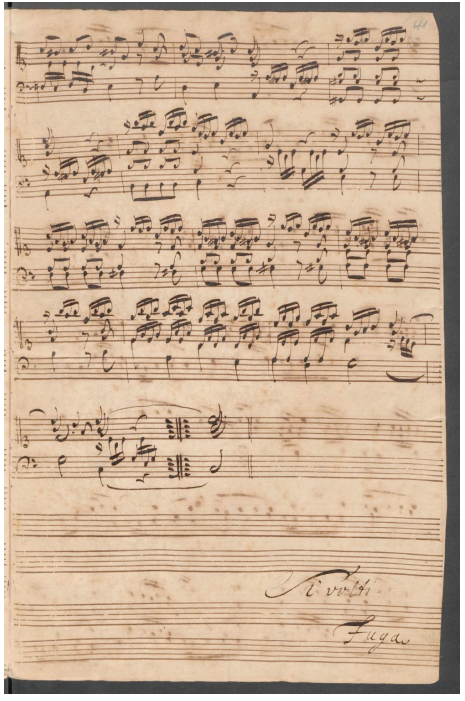
Evolution of Pedalboards

- Two builders at the forefront of the revolution
  - Charles Fisk and John Brombaugh
- Flat pedalboards, unequal temperament, flexible wind, sensitive key action in manual and pedal
- Pedal springs not too stiff, with pluck point near the top

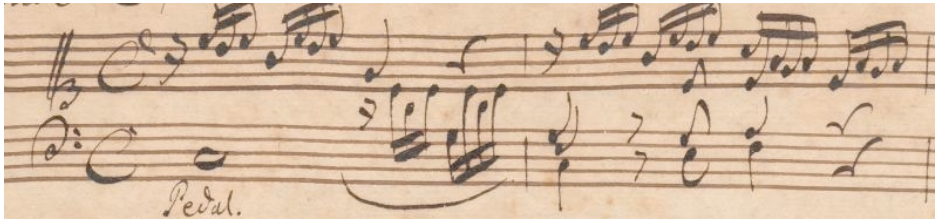
Mid-eighteenth Century Manuscript Copy of Eight Little Preludes and Fugues

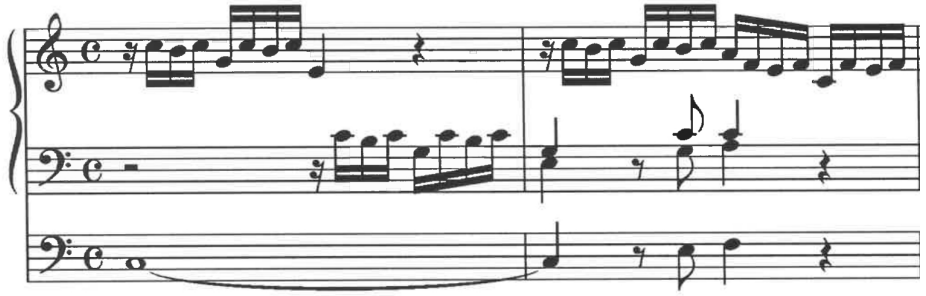
Example pages





From Quill to Computer

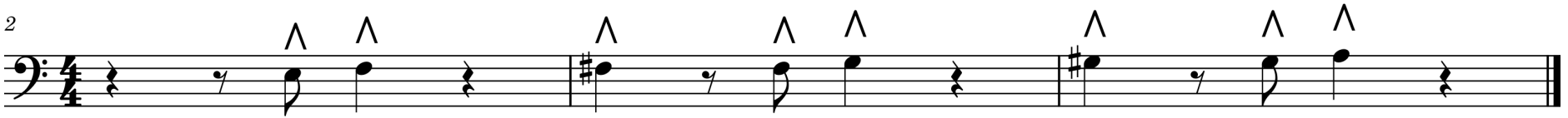




- Manuscript is written on 2 staves
- Sometimes pedal is marked, sometimes it isn’t
- Editors make decisions

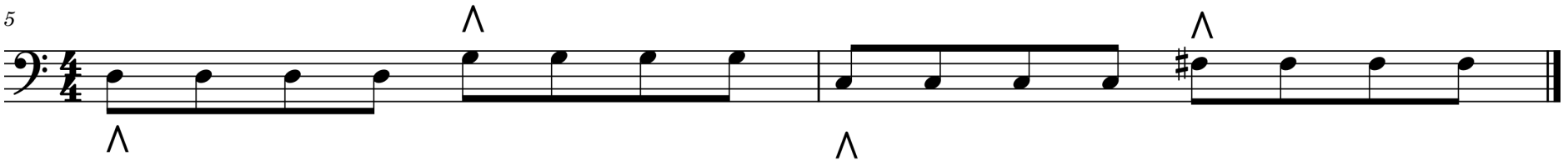
Prelude 1, C Major, m. 2-4

- Example of weak-strong articulation



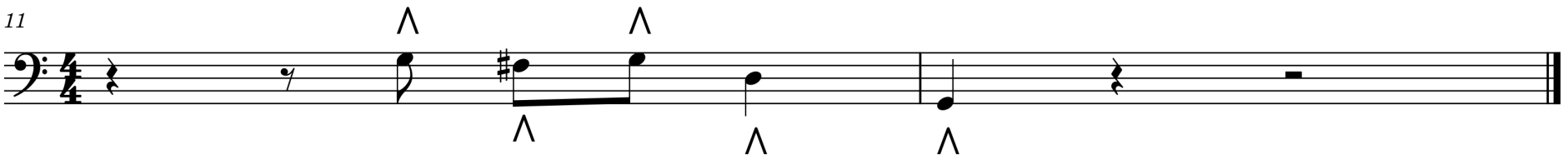
Prelude 1, C Major, m. 5-6

- Articulation is
  - Detached
    - toe riding pedal action and avoiding slurs where inappropriate
  - Constant across pitch changes



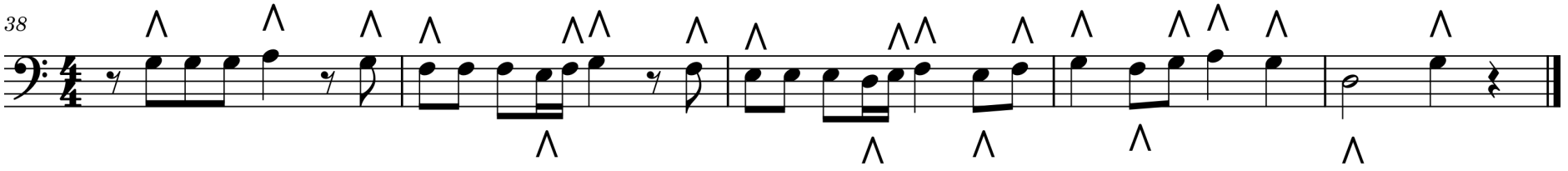
Prelude 1, C Major, m. 11-12

- Strong articulation on every eighth note
- Fast harmonic rhythm
- Legato articulation would soften the cadence and would be more typical of Romantic performance



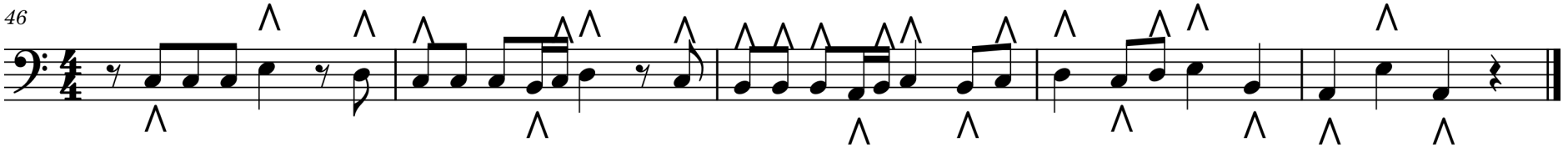
Fugue 1, C Major, m. 38-42

- Playing first 4 notes with right foot
  - Assures an articulation between G and A in first measure
  - Reinforces rhythmic accent of the dance
    - Weak, weak, weak, strong



Fugue 1, C Major, m. 46-50

- Interval of a third between notes 3 and 4
  - Easier to play with two feet, although possible with only right
  - Danger is slurring the third by using two feet

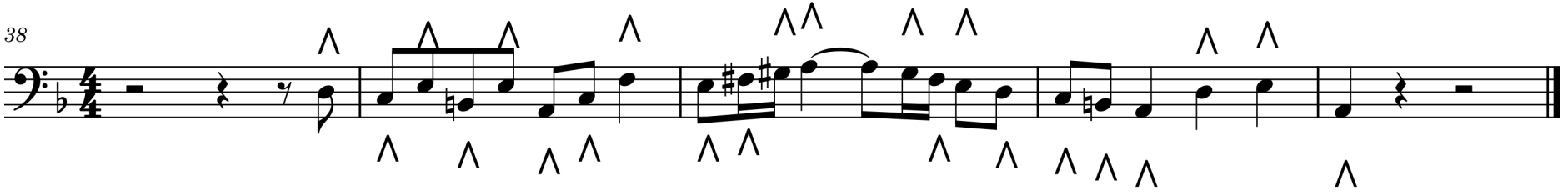


Prelude 2, D Minor

- Concerto style
  - Ripieno, concertino
  - Opportunity to practice changing manuals

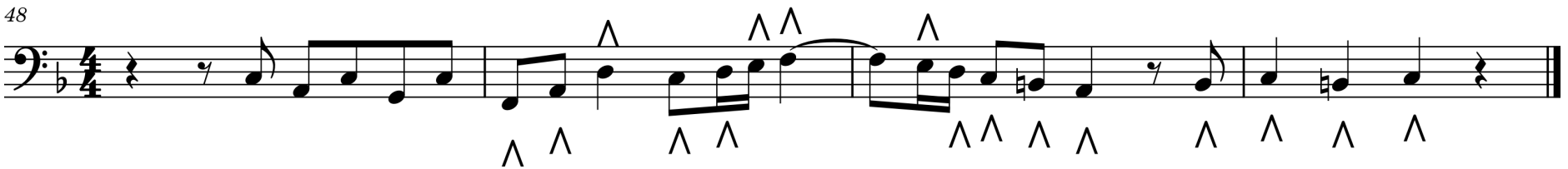
Fugue 2, D Minor, m. 38-42

- Challenging fugue subject to play in pedal
  - Awkward jumps and fast changes with one foot
  - More than one stylistically correct solution



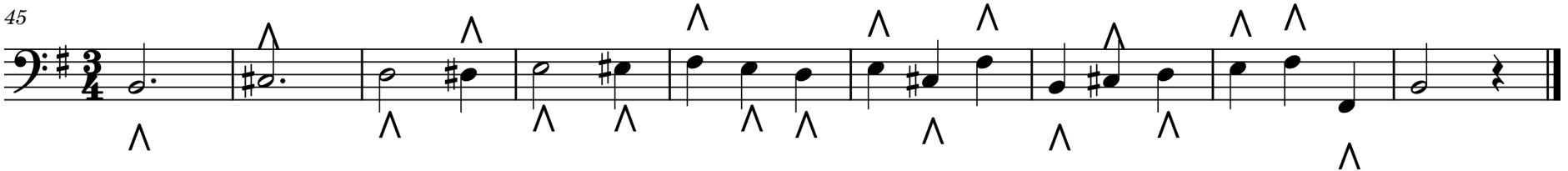
Fugue 2, D Minor, m. 48-51

- Different notes, but same solution as m. 38-42



Fugue 3, E Minor, m. 45-53

- Suggests the form of a ricercare
- Example of two-plane pedaling as one solution
  - Requires crossing left foot under right foot
- Could also be played with right foot only on first 4 measures

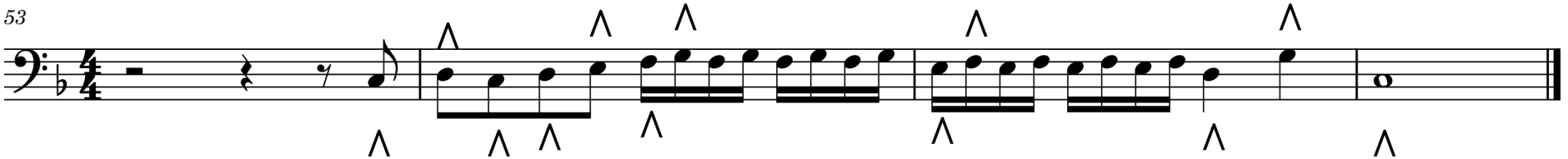


Prelude 4, F Major

- Galant style
- Meter change of ⅜ to Common
  - Eighth note of prelude = Eighth note of fugue
  - Final hemiola at end of prelude sets up “pseudo” Common rhythm to facilitate transition to fugue

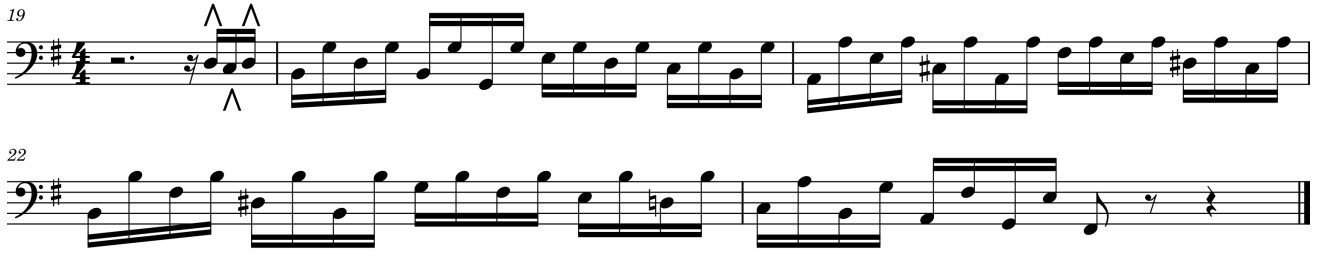
Fugue 4, F Major, m. 53-56

- Alternate pedaling could involve playing first 5 notes with left foot
  - Would guarantee articulation and avoid left under right



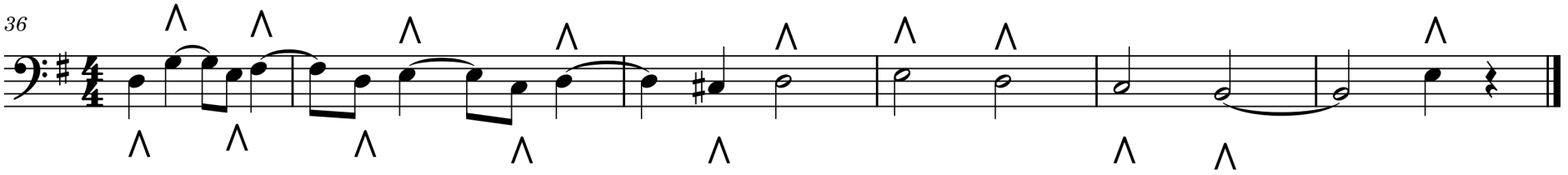
Prelude 5, G Major, m. 19-23

- First example of a pedal solo in this collection
- Played with alternating toes
  - Left foot is actually playing an articulated melody



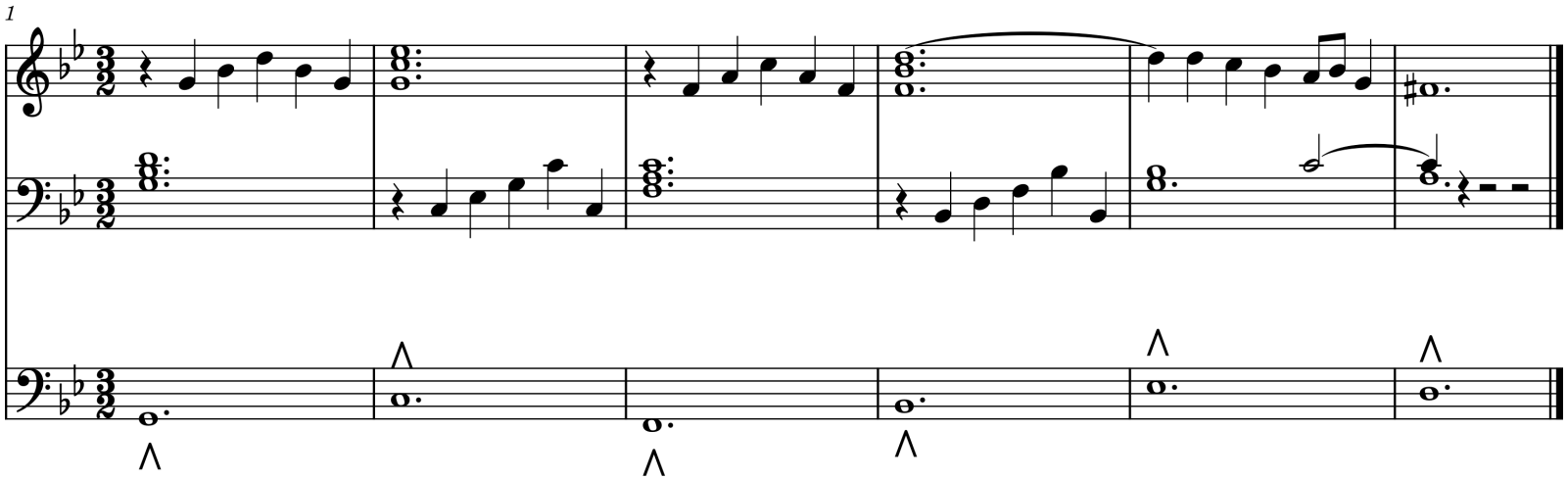
Fugue 5, G Major, m. 36-11

- Left-right pedaling following tied notes allows for resolution of the suspension
  - Played with a slur to maintain suspension



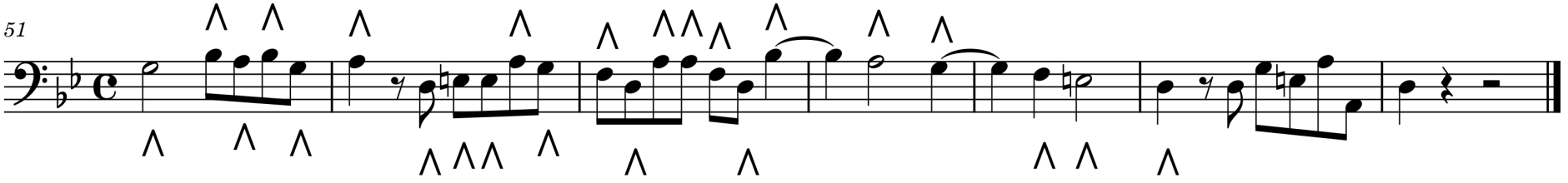
Prelude 6, G Minor, m. 1-6

- Example of “enunciated legato” strand of pearls concept
- Half note of prelude becomes quarter note of fugue



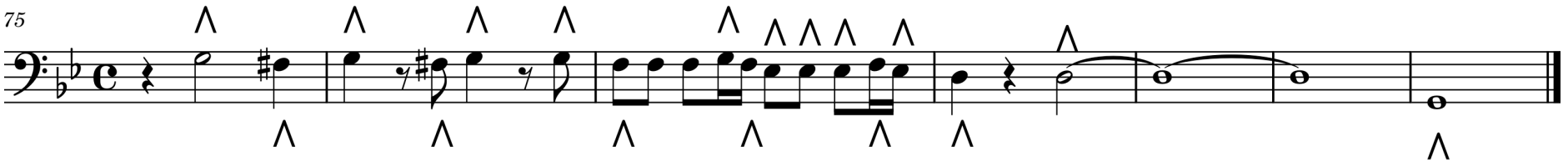
Fugue 6, G Minor, m. 51-57

- In the past would have been taught as toe-heel on half-step figures
  - Would lead to less lively articulation



Fugue 6, G Minor, m. 75-81

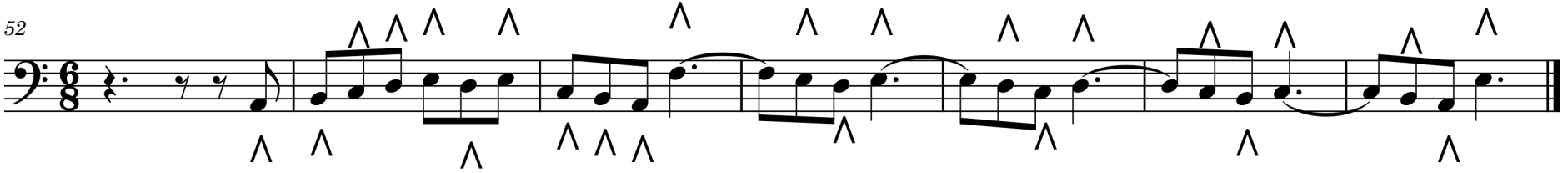
- Countersubject in pedal
- Another example of two-plane pedaling



Fugue 7, A Minor, m. 52-58

Style of lyric baroque dance (*eg* Bach)

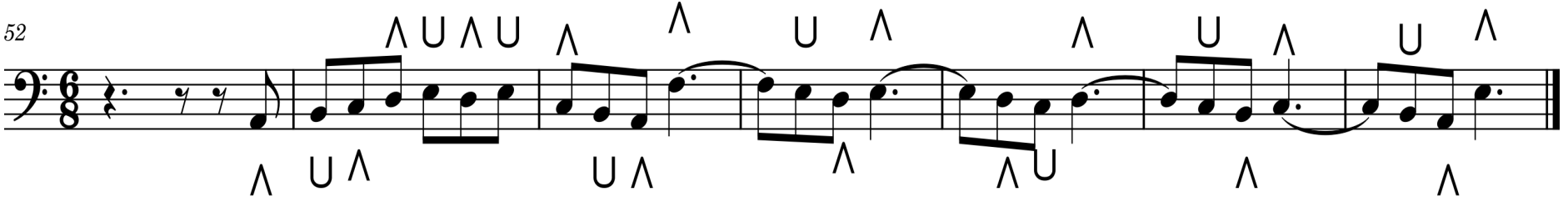
- Tied note does not become a suspension
  - Should be articulated
  - Played with same foot



Fugue 7, A Minor, m. 52-58

Style of legato lyric song (*eg* Reger or Dupré)

- Toe-heel pedaling allows for legato in keeping with late 19th-century trio style
- More like a song than a dance

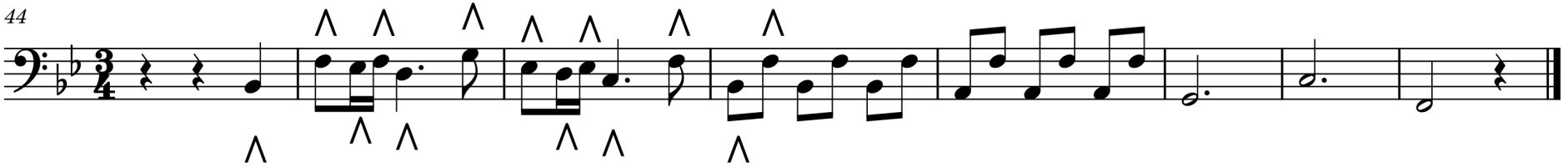


Prelude 8, B-flat major

- Form of toccata and fugue
- Quick harmonic rhythm
- Last piece in series
  - Has the longest pedal solo for the “graduating student”

Fugue 8, B-flat Major, m. 44-51

- A century ago, heel would have been used on 16th-note figures
- Enunciated technique
  - Enlivens character of the fugue
  - Leads to lively articulation



May All Your Fugues be Merry and Dance-like