

Invention Assignment

Write a Two-Part Invention in the Baroque style that lasts 8 – 12 measures.

Follow these steps:

1. Write the Theme (T) in the upper part, using a few distinct motives. It should have obvious harmonic implications and be easily fragmented or sequenced. In the example below, it is one measure long.
2. Copy the Theme in the lower part in the next measure at the octave.
3. Write a contrasting Countertheme (CT) in the upper part to accompany the Theme in the lower part, using primarily 3rds and 6ths between the voices. Follow the guidelines for tonal counterpoint, avoiding dissonances on strong beats and parallel 8ves and 5ths.
4. In the upper part, copy the Theme transposed to the dominant key area, up a fifth or down a fourth.
5. In the lower part, write the Countertheme or a variation of it to accompany the Theme in the dominant key area. Often, the rhythmic identity of the Countertheme is more important than the pitches.
6. In the lower part, continue with the Theme transposed to the dominant key area, up a fifth or down a fourth.
7. Plan a harmonic progression that will contain a set of sequences of the Theme, or variations on it. End in the dominant key area if the tonic is major, or in the relative major if the tonic is minor. The strongest progressions are down a fifth, up a second, and down a third.
8. Follow the plan by sketching statements of the Theme, with fragments and inversions, on each harmonic area. Quote from the Theme in the upper part and in the lower part.
9. Accompany these Theme statements with counterpoint drawn from the Countertheme.
10. Arrive at a strong cadence with some rhythmic and motivic contrast to the Theme.

Other considerations:

A two-part invention is an exercise in double, or invertible counterpoint. The two parts must be interchangeable at any time. There should be sufficient rhythmic and intervallic contrast between the Theme and Countertheme to differentiate them when motives are inverted and sequenced. A strong harmonic plan is essential. Study and emulate Bach's two-part inventions to acquire familiarity with the style and his tactics.

Invention Assignment Example

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Measures 1-5 of the musical score. The key signature is one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 4/4. The score is annotated with rhythmic patterns: (T) for triplet, (CT) for crotchet triplet, and (CT) Varied for varied crotchet triplet. The first measure is labeled 'F: I'. The second and fourth measures are labeled 'I' and 'V' respectively. The fifth measure is labeled 'I' and 'C: IV'. The final measure is labeled 'Linking Fragments'.

Measures 6-10 of the musical score. The key signature changes to two flats (B-flat and E-flat) in measure 6. The score is annotated with rhythmic patterns: (CT) Varied, (T) Varied, (T) Sequence, (CT) Varied, (T) Inverted, (CT) Varied, (CT) Sequence, (T) Varied, and (Cadence Figure). The first measure is labeled '6'. The second and fourth measures are labeled 'I'. The third measure is labeled 'ii'. The fourth measure is labeled 'V'. The fifth measure is labeled 'I'.