

The UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music  
Department of Music presents

# 18 From '20: Preludes and Fugues

by Composer David S. Lefkowitz



Sunday, May 16, 2021, 3pm

**PROGRAM**

*Prelude No.1 (C)*  
*Fugue No.1 (C)*

Stefano Greco, piano

*Prelude No.2 (D)*  
*Fugue No.2 (D)*

Ryan MacEvoy McCullough, piano

*Prelude No.3 (E)*  
*Fugue No.3 (E)*

Ryan MacEvoy McCullough, piano

*Prelude No.4 (F)*  
*Fugue No.4 (F)*

Meriette Saglie, piano

*Prelude-and-Fugue No.5 (F-sharp)*

Nadia Shpachenko, piano

*Prelude No.6 (G)*  
*Fugue No.6 (G)*

Neal Stulberg, piano

*Prelude No.7 (A)*  
*Fugue No.7 (A)*

Thomas Feng, piano

*Prelude No.8 (B-flat)*  
*Fugue No.8 (B-flat)*

Video by David S. Lefkowitz

*Prelude No.9 (B)*  
*Fugue No.9 (B)*

Video by David S. Lefkowitz

*Prelude-and-Fugue No.10 (C)*

David Kaplan, piano

# Program Notes

A *fugue* is a piece in which a melody or motive is immediately “chased” by another statement of that same melody—the first voice thus “fleeing” from the second (*fugue* refers to both fleeing and chasing). Typically, that first pair of voices will be joined by another voice or pair of voices, leading to a brief moment of repose (a cadence). Beyond that, there is little that is common to all fugues from all eras, or even to all fugues by a single composer. The relationship of an introductory *prelude* to the fugue itself is even less well established. In this set of preludes and fugues, the preludes serve primarily to introduce and establish the mode, although material from some of the preludes also show up in the corresponding fugue.

The ten Preludes and Fugues are written in a total of six different “modes,” or scale patterns. Eight of the Preludes and Fugues are paired, working with the same mode: Nos. 1 and 6, 2 and 7, 3 and 8, and 4 and 9. Nos. 5 and 10 each use a unique mode. Nearly all of these modes were created for this set; only the tenth Prelude and Fugue uses a pre-existing mode.

Nos. 5 and 10 are also unusual in that the Prelude flows into and continues during the Fugue. Since two of the ten Preludes and Fugues are combined into single pieces, rather than 20 pieces there are only 18—hence the <18 From 20> of the title. The number of voices in these two fugues are also unique in the set: only two voices in Prelude-and-Fugue No.5, and five in Prelude-and-Fugue No.10. All of the other Fugues are either three- or four-voice fugues.

Each Prelude and Fugue is dedicated to a composer or friend who has had an influence on my music, and for a pianist whom I have admired. Prelude-and-Fugue No.10 is again unique in this regard: written toward the end of a tumultuous year which has been particularly difficult in the United States, it is dedicated “To a Convalescing Nation,” in the hope that we will speedily recover from the malaise that has been 2020 (and hence, again, the <20> of the title). The Lydian mode, used in this pair of pieces, is associated with convalescing and healing (for instance, the third movement of Beethoven’s String Quartet, Op.132). Because Prelude-and-Fugue No.10 is meant to continue without a break after the end of No.9, they are both written for the same pianist.

As with Bach’s *Well-Tempered Clavier*, the central pitch of each subsequent prelude and fugue is arranged in a scalar pattern. These central pitches are shown in parentheses following the number in the program notes, below.

## **Prelude and Fugue No.1 (C)**

The mode for this Prelude and Fugue is an arithmetic scale: after starting with a semitone, each interval is one semitone larger than the previous. Portions of this scale may sound quite consonant while others may sound dissonant. The prelude focuses on the most consonant portions of the scale: the triads. These triads are then overlaid with those from a transposition of the scale. As the prelude progresses the segments from the scale get longer, generating sweeps across the keyboard as much as five and a half octaves in size. The end of the prelude reverses that progression,

ending on a narrow-register C-major triad.

In contrast to the prelude, the subject of the fugue highlights more dissonant intervals. Nevertheless, the fugue is structured in quite traditional ways: the subject and answer are paired together, followed by the third voice, leading to a cadence. Subsequent sections feature stretti (sections in which the successive fugal voices enter before the previous subject is completed). In between the fugal sections are episodes drawn from material from the prelude.

Prelude and Fugue No.1 is dedicated to Richard Danielpour, and was written for Stefano Greco.

## **Prelude and Fugue No.2 (D)**

The mode for this Prelude and Fugue is built out of a three-octave scale based largely upon perfect fourths and seconds, repeated up three octaves and a note, before returning to the starting note six octaves higher than the first note. The principal figure for this prelude is a narrow trill, bracketed by a larger, slower, rhythmic oscillation. Since the slower oscillations sometimes accelerate to the rate of the trills, and since the trills sometimes decelerate to the rate of the oscillations, it seemed appropriate to build the idea of rhythmic flexibility and freedom into the notation itself, with only approximate rhythms indicated.

The rhythmic freedom of the Prelude continues in this Fugue. Not only is that freedom built in to the notation, however, but it is built into the structure of the fugue: while the main fugue subject is eight-notes long, it is not uncommon for subsequent entrances of the fugue subject to start with after sixth or seven of those notes, thus blurring the line between the end of the subject and the beginning of the countersubject (the melody that is played against the subsequent entrances of the subject).

Notwithstanding those unusual features of this fugue, the characters of the subject and its two countersubjects are maintained throughout: the subject is forlorn and sustained, the first countersubject focuses on oscillations (thus continued from the Prelude), while the second countersubject is like a mournful repeated two-note bird-song.

Prelude and Fugue No.2 is dedicated to George Crumb, and was written for Gloria Cheng.

## **Prelude and Fugue No.3 (E)**

The mode for this Prelude and Fugue features an interval pattern consisting entirely of major and minor seconds, and minor thirds: 1-2-3-2-1-2-3-2-1. This creates a 10-note scale that repeats at the twelfth; four- and one-half successive transpositions of the scale up a twelfth cover nearly the entire piano.

This prelude is the most traditional in texture of the set (if J.S. Bach’s *Well-Tempered Clavier* is the standard) featuring a fast-moving, arpeggiational line in sixteenth-notes against a slower line in quarter-notes. The arpeggiational lines develop into overlapping downward lines that cover the range of the piano, leading to a return of the original texture. This process repeats until it returns to the opening one last time. Where the prelude is relatively traditional in texture, the fugue is far from Bach in style. After a rapid burst of

seven repeated notes, the subject wedges out higher and lower, while the notes speed up and slow down. The fugue ends with a last statement of the subject which, after wedging out, wedges in to a closing E.

Prelude and Fugue No.3 is dedicated to Eric Tanguy, and was written for Suzana Bartal.

#### **Prelude and Fugue No.4 (F)**

The mode for this Prelude and Fugue is a symmetrical 5-4-5 - 4-3-4 - 3-2-3 - 2-1-2 - 3-2-3 - 4-3-4 - 5-4-5 series of intervals, creating a “frozen register” presentation of 22 notes spread over five and a half octaves. In addition to the intervallic larger-at-the-outer-edges vs. smaller-in-the-middle character, this mode is interesting in that every note is a sixth away from at least one other note.

The prelude uses those sixths to harmonize the opening minor-third rocking motive. As the motive gets enlarged it turns into larger and larger scalar segments, harmonized in sixths. Since some of the sixths are above and some below the main note, the scalar line is not always obvious. In a middle, contrasting section, the mode is transposed up a minor third — leaving many of the original notes intact. The same two notes that served as the “pivot notes” moving from the first transposition to the second serve again to return us to the original transposition of the mode.

Many aspects of the structure of the fugue are quite traditional. In the first section the first two voices are paired together, and after a brief transition the third voice enters, leading to a cadence; the second section is much the same, albeit in inversion. A brief episode leads to the third section featuring three different speeds of the subject in stretto (the first half-notes and quarter-notes, the second whole-notes and half-notes, the third quarter-notes and eighth-notes). The next three sections also feature stretti and different speeds. Finally, the coda actually contains two overlapping and partially-disguised presentations of the subject, in stretto, with the second in inversion.

Prelude and Fugue No.4 is dedicated to Roger Bourland, and was written for Anthony Bonamici.

#### **Prelude-and-Fugue No.5 (F#)**

As with Prelude and Fugue No.3 (E), the mode for this Prelude-and-Fugue features an interval pattern consisting entirely of major and minor seconds, and minor thirds (albeit a slightly different one: 3-2-1-2-3-2-1-2-3), creating a 9-note scale that repeats at the twelfth. Because of the pattern of intervals in this mode, minor thirds are plentiful, as are perfect fourths, allowing for an abundance of major or minor triads.

Not only does this prelude-and-fugue not share its mode with any other piece in the set, it is unique and quite unusual in other ways, as well. First off, the prelude begins as a quasi-minimalist exploration of minor third oscillations and triads. Next, following a descent from the F# almost at the geographic center of the keyboard down well into the bottom octave of the piano, the minimalist texture continues while the fugue subject starts. This is thus an accompanied fugue—one of only two in the set—with the dividing lines between Prelude and Fugue deliberately erased.

At four full measures, this subject is one of the longest in the set;

by the time the second statement of the subject enters, the original voice, presenting the countersubject, may seem to have been woven back into the minimalist accompaniment. Since this is only a two-voice fugue, these features reduce the fugal character of the piece.

The passages between the first and the second, and between the third and the fourth fugal sections introduce a leaping motive reminiscent of the slow oscillation motive in Prelude No.2. But it is in the brief passage between the second and third fugal sections that the most important (and unique) feature of this piece is revealed: the entire prelude-and-fugue is the same upside-down and backward. The “center point” of this retrograde inversion occurs in the middle of m.56, with the repeated F#. From there, the entire structure is repeated (upside down and backward); eventually we learn that even the fugue subject is a retrograde inversion of itself.

Prelude-and-Fugue No. 5 is dedicated to Ian Krouse, and was written for Nadia Shpachenko.

#### **Prelude and Fugue No.6 (G)**

The mode for this Prelude and Fugue is the same as that for Prelude and Fugue No.1 (C). The prelude is built around four-note chords built from segments of the mode. These chords range in total span from a perfect fourth (at the narrowest) to two-and-one-half octaves (at the widest). Each successively larger (or smaller) four-note-chord is transposed so that it contains the G above middle C.

Most of the resulting sonorities struck me as the type of harmonies that Messiaen would use; emulating him I therefore arranged these chords as a repeating series of chords and a repeating series of rhythms that don't line up — except that there are two different repeating series of chords and two different repeating series of rhythms. The overall effect is one of a Messiaen-like series of chords with a sense of an underlying logic that is, somehow, imperceptible, and which projects a sense of G as “tonic.” On top of this harmonic series is played snatches of a melody, part of which is reminiscent of Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time*.

Gesturally, the subject of the fugue recalls the subject of the D major fugue from the first book of Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*: a sudden burst of notes as the start (“head”) of the subject, followed by a constrained melodic line. The head is, at times, detached from the rest of the subject and overlapped with itself, creating a series of as many as 24 rapid notes one after another.

Prelude and Fugue No.6 is dedicated to and was written for Neal Stulberg.

#### **Prelude and Fugue No.7 (A)**

The mode for this Prelude and Fugue is a transposition of the mode used for Prelude and Fugue No.2 (D). The opening scale of the prelude presents the entire six-octave mode. Parts of the same scales are similarly presented, beginning with the same note as one played in a higher (earlier) presentation of the mode. These subsequent scales start earlier and earlier in the preceding scale, always on a different starting note. When the starting point of the scale returns to the original opening low A, it ends this section. The next two sections are similarly structured. Once the scale starts again on the low A, the piece is over.

The inspiration for the subject of this fugue was originally a

particular combination of perfect and augmented fourths. Once I arrived on a starting motive, though, I realized that the melodic pattern was very similar to the song of the hermit thrush. I (as well as so many of us throughout the world!) having been a hermit during much of 2020, I figured this would be suitable material for both the subject and the countersubject, so I set to work transcribing the hermit thrush's song.

In a traditional four-part fugue, the fugal voices enter in pairs: a leader and a follower, possibly followed by a short transitional passage, then another leader and follower, leading to a cadence. In this fugue, the fourth fugal voice is present in the first section, but then disappears in the subsequent sections. In the third and final section, the third voice continues, alone, as if waiting for the fourth voice to enter. Rather than a four-part fugue, then, it is termed a "three-part fugue plus a straggler." In this *oiseaux indigènes*, however, it is not clear if the straggler is the *fourth* bird, who disappears, or the *third*, who sticks around, waiting for the supposed mate.

Prelude and Fugue No.7 is dedicated to Samuel Adler, and was written for Thomas Feng.

### **Prelude and Fugue No.8 (Bb)**

The mode for this Prelude and Fugue is a transposition of that for Prelude and Fugue No.3 (E). In this particular transposition of the mode black keys are heavily represented: 25 of the 45 tones across the piano are black keys (as compared to the piano's 88 keys, of which only 36 are black).

This black/white balance sets up the start of the prelude. It begins by playing through the black keys in increasingly large scalar segments. Slowly the white keys start infiltrating the black; the scales get longer and start overlapping themselves, eventually creating a three-part texture that highlights the mode's major and minor sixths. As the texture then thins out, the rhythmic density increases, featuring a direct contrast and tension between the white and the black keys of the mode. Falling white-key arpeggios eventually return us to the black-key sound of the opening. The black/white division of notes in the mode disappears in most of the fugue, although scales in or jumps of sixths in the mode connect it to the prelude. Different fugal sections start on different modal scale degrees, producing diatonic transpositions that change the sound of the subject.

The colors in the "moving score" videos for Prelude and Fugue No.8 show how each individual melodic line moves through the music. Since these lines constantly overlap each other in the Prelude, there is no significance to the specific colors used. In most of the Fugue, however, the colors correspond to specific ranges: green is the soprano (highest), blue is the alto (medium high), purple is the tenor (medium low), and red is the bass (lowest)...until the Fugue starts imitating the Prelude, as it exaggerates (almost to the point of ridiculousness!) the last motive in the fugal subject, and each of the voices can be found traversing the highest and lowest ranges.

Prelude and Fugue No.8 is dedicated to Mark Carlson, and was written for Inna Faliks (who will record it in June of this year).

### **Prelude and Fugue No.9 (B)**

The mode for this Prelude and Fugue is a transposition of that used for Prelude and Fugue No.4 (F). Unlike its use in Prelude No.4, however (in which the mode is scarcely transposed), in this prelude the mode is transposed with every new entrance of its scalar presentation. In some ways, this prelude is similar to Prelude No.7 (A): each new scalar presentation of the mode begins with the same note as a note in a previous (lower) scale, and the point in the scale where these simultaneous notes are found occur earlier and earlier in the preceding scale. The prelude ends by repeating B and the note a perfect fourth above it (E).

The colors in the videos for Prelude and Fugue No.9 are similar to that of Prelude and Fugue No.8, except that rather than showing melodic *lines* they show melodic *ideas* or *motives*. This is clearest in the Fugue: the main subject is purple, the first (syncopated) countersubject is dark green, the second countersubject (rapid arpeggios) is orange, and the third countersubject (oscillations) is dark blue. This Fugue is unique in this set of preludes-and-fugues in that there are two fugal subjects; the second subject, a paraphrase of the opening melody of the song "Pretty Ring Time" by composer Peter Warlock (the pen name for Philip Heseltine), is shown in light blue, and its countersubject is shown in light green. Finally, the two subjects and some of the countersubjects are brought together at the end (making this a *double fugue*).

Where Fugue No.8 takes the fugal subject and exaggerates it *ad absurdum*, the main fugal subject of Fugue No.9 is nothing if not overeager (or—arguably—impatient). Not only does it consistently start an eighth-note too early, but it even starts before Prelude No.9 ends. And, if it and Prelude-and-Fugue No.10 are performed together, the overeager fugal subject of Fugue No.9 insists on sticking around *longer* than it should, as well, starting one final time at the end of the fugue and continuing into the beginning of Prelude-and-Fugue No.10. (Since these two preludes and fugues were not played by the same pianist, that final, insistent-but-false, entrance is eliminated here.)

Prelude and Fugue No.9 is dedicated to Kay Rhie, and was written for David Kaplan (who will also record it in June of this year).

### **Prelude-and-Fugue No.10 (C)**

No.10 is the only one in the set to use a traditional mode. Raised scale degree four of the Lydian mode changes the V7 chord from a dominant seventh (which leads strongly to the tonic) to a major seventh chord, identical in quality to the I7 tonic seventh chord. This relationship can give the music a sort of frozen, or non-directional quality. The prelude's use of non-directional, parallel seventh chords creates a sedate, hopefully-transcendental quality. The use of retrograde inversions also increases the sense of timelessness.

The material of the prelude continues into the fugue, temporarily creating an accompanied fugue (as with Prelude and Fugue No.5; hence the ten preludes and fugues are actually a total of only 18 pieces). Once the (five-voice) fugue itself gets underway the accompaniment disappears...until it returns as the coda.

Prelude and Fugue No.10 is dedicated to a Convalescing Nation and was written for David Kaplan.