

Canon

TERMS & CONCEPTS

Canon (Greek. <i>kanōn</i>) ‘Rule’, or ‘precept’ Strict vs free canon Subject (Lat. <i>soggetto</i>) Imitation Leader and follower (Lat. <i>Dux & comes</i>) Pitch and time intervals (see below) Canonic imitation Time interval between entries At the measure, at two measures, at the half note, etc. Pitch interval between entries At the unison, at the octave, at the fifth, at the second, etc.	Transformations of the subject Inversion, or by contrary motion Augmentation/diminution Retrograde Retrograde inversion Types of canons Simple canon Multiple canon - Double canon (e.g., four in two) - Triple canon (e.g., six in three) - etc. Accompanied canon Proportional canon Hofstadter, Gödel, Escher, Bach Strange loop M.C. Escher, <i>Waterfall</i> (1961) Canon as function Canon as geometrical space - Möbius strip	Puzzle canon Puzzle, riddle, or enigmatic canon Dedicatory/honorific canon Perpetual, or circular, canon Unresolved vs. resolved canon Facsimile Enigmatic notation Clues: e.g., title; historical clef, key signature, accidental placement, etc. Solution ¹ Modern transcription/arrangement Special Symbols <i>Presa</i> - ♯^2 <i>Corona</i> - \curvearrowright Advanced Contrapuntal inversion (inv. cpt.) Crab canon (Lat. <i>cancrizans</i>) Mirror canon (Lat. <i>per rectus et inversus</i>) Spiral canon (Lat. <i>per tonos</i>)
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CANONS FOR STUDY

Puzzle Canons

BWV 1072: *Canon trias harmonica*, a 8
BWV 1073: *Canon a 4 perpetuus*
BWV 1074: *Canon a 4*, dedicated to M. Houdemann
BWV 1075: *Canon a 2 perpetuus*
BWV 1076: *Canon triplex a 6*³
BWV 1077: *Canone doppio sopr' il soggetto a 5*⁴
BWV 1078: *Canon super fa mi a 7 post tempus musicum*
BWV 1086: *Concordia discors*

Puzzle Canons (cont.)

14 Canons, BWV 1087 (c. 1747-48)
The 10 canons of the *Musical Offering*, BWV 1079 (1747)

Other Important Canon Collections

The 9 accompanied canons of the *Goldberg Variations*, BWV 988 (1741)
The 5 *Canonic Variations on Vom Himmel hoch da komm' ich her*, BWV 769 (c. 1749)
The 4 canons of the *Art of Fugue*, BWV 1080 (c. 1750)

References

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Smith, Tim. 1996. “Anatomy of a Canon,” and “Why did Bach write Canons, from *The Canons and Fugues of J.S. Bach*.” Available online at: <<https://www.kunstderfuge.com/theory/smith/canon.htm>>.
Wolff, Christoph and Walter Emory. 2001. J.S. Bach, “20. Canons....” In *Grove Music Online*. New York: Oxford University Press.

¹ A puzzle canon with multiple solutions is called a *polymorphous canon*.

² See also: *Signum congruentiae* (Lat. ‘sign of congruence’).

³ See also: 14 Canons, BWV 1087.13.

⁴ See also: 14 Canons, BWV 1087.11.