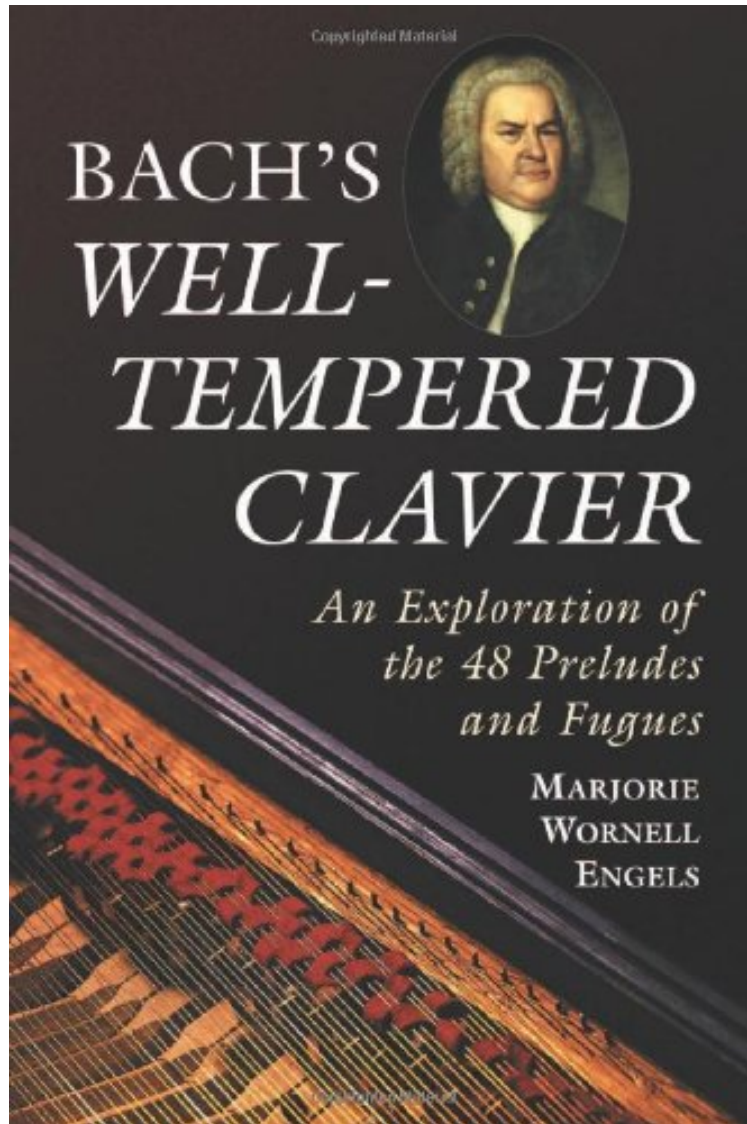


Bachs "Well-Tempered Clavier": An Exploration of the 48 Preludes and Fugues

Marjorie Wornell Engels

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before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Bachs "Well-Tempered Clavier": An Exploration of the 48 Preludes and Fugues:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A Good Choice for Your Bach ShelfBy Mark T. HowardThis is a great little handbook for students, teachers and listeners. It covers a good deal of material that is not readily available

in one place elsewhere and is accessible reading for quick reference or deeper study. It's nicely organized by key which I like it a lot and am using it in conjunction with listening and keyboard practice. A good choice that I would recommend to be on your Bach shelf. 7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. The author shares her personal experiences and lifetime of connection with these works to help the general reader and student. By Craig Matteson This book is full of the love of music, and especially Bach's music. Marjorie Wornell Engels is a lifelong music teacher and has taught at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto. I could not find what her training was or what subjects she taught. Is she a keyboardist? A musicologist? A music historian? I don't know. My guess is that she is likely a long experienced keyboard teacher (harpsichord? piano? organ? I don't know.) and performer and taught at the Conservatory because of all she had accomplished during the first half of her career. But this is only a surmise on my part. I could not find anything on the web either. I am not saying the information is not there, but that I could not find it. She is focused on Bach's music and provides us with her views, thinking, study, and approach to this music. As I read the book, it seems a book more for the general reader and music student trying to get a handle on Bach's music beyond becoming familiar with how it sounds. Her approach is very personal, but informed by her own long experience with it. This is not a book aimed at the music specialist or someone who already has an expert's understanding of Bach and the music of this era. Not that there aren't gems to pick up, but that the ground covered will be very familiar and the issues that are of concern to experts are not covered here. The author is intensely focused on things like Bach's seeming obsession with numerology. She is convinced that numbers have religious symbolic meaning for Bach and she finds them everywhere and in everything. For me, I cannot figure out why the number of notes in a fugue theme should make me think of the apostles or of some other Christian topic, but she tells us that it was common to that era and mattered to Bach. She does not really demonstrate that Bach did anything more with the numerological symbols than their mere presence or combination into sums. Do we really hear that? I don't. But if this matters deeply to you, this is a very valuable resource! But numerology is hardly the main focus of the book. She focuses on finding the way the musical elements connect to other Bach works. She focuses on what the various keys seemed to mean to Bach. Of course, in the days when each key was tuned slightly differently (even in Well-Tempered) this individual characteristic can really mean something. However, in our age of equal temperament, what tells us one key from another? Its tessitura? For the few that have perfect pitch, it could matter. But we know that different musicians and towns and locales tuned at different pitches, so what good would perfect pitch do? She organizes the book just like the WTC itself. C Major, c minor, and then up by half-steps. The difference is that she covers both volumes of the WTC at each pitch. The musical examples are all hand drawn, I assume by the author. The calligraphy is clear if not as perfect as a professional engraver. I think it gives the book a wonderfully personal touch. Unless you have already mastered these works, I think her brief instruction on each work will spark insights for you and invite you to deeper consideration of the elements she shows you in all of Bach's music and in the music of other composers. Remember, Bach is an incredibly influential artist and the WTC is among his most important works. This book is not intended as a compendium or a final word or magisterial treatment of the WTC. It is meant to help you think more about the music, to see more and hear more in the music, and to energize you in making your study of Bach and these works more thorough and thereby enrich your life. This is NOT a theoretical book of analysis of the various subjects and counter subjects in the fugues or a detailed analysis of the contrapuntal and harmonic techniques of Bach. Not that she doesn't elucidate on various subjects, countersubjects, or episodes, but that it is not systematic or complete. Nor is it an abstract work of keyboard performance practice in Bach's era. This is a more emotional and practical guide. While it wasn't exactly what I was looking for when I bought it, that isn't the author's fault. And I am glad to have the book. So, if this book sounds interesting and useful to you, I am sure you will be pleased with it. Reviewed by Craig Matteson, Saline, MI

Through a musical language involving symbols, numbers, and tonality, J.S. Bach created emotional dimension in the preludes and fugues of The Well-Tempered Clavier. This book explores the use of that musical language, revealing how Bach used harmonic design and melodic and rhythmic motivic formulas to adhere to the basic doctrine of the Theory of Affects--i.e., that one mood will govern one piece. The book examines the significance of key and the emotional dimension Bach discerned in each tonality; the symbolism of melodic and rhythmic motifs; and the symbolism of numbers. It considers the thematic and rhythmic links between a prelude and its companion fugue in each book, and between a prelude and fugue in Book One and those in the same key in Book Two. It also includes reference to other instrumental works by Bach in the same key and melodic patterns.

"Buy this book...this is a gem." --B.C. Registered Music Teachers Association Provincial Newsletter About the Author Marjorie Wornell Engels taught music professionally for 40 years, including 12 years on the faculty of the Royal Conservatory of Music of Toronto. She now lives in Campbell River on Vancouver Island.