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Transcribing: between listening, memory, and invention

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Citation
Bracci, G. (2024, November 20). *Transcribing: between listening, memory, and invention*. Retrieved from https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4139206

Version:	Publisher's Version
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Chapter 2
Webern Transcribes Bach

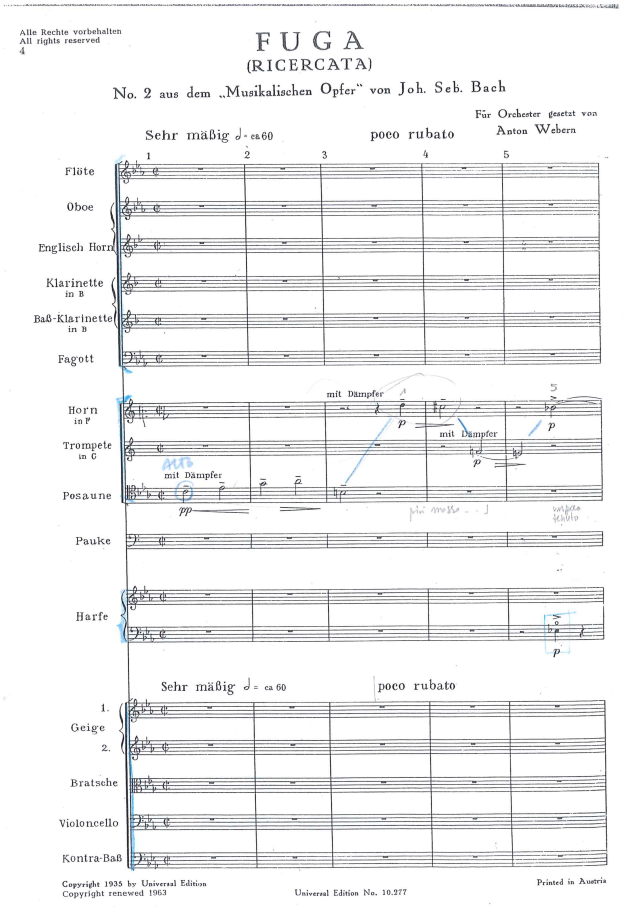


Figure 1. Webern, *Fuga Ricercata,* first page of the score

Before working on *Une petite fleur bleue*, my transcription for string quartet of a piece from Girolamo Frescobaldi's *Fiori Musicali*, I studied Anton Webern's *Fuga (Ricercata)* (1935), a transcription for orchestra – an orchestration – of Johann Sebastian Bach's "Ricercar a 6" from the *Musikalisches Opfer*, BWV 1079 (1747). Webern disaggregated and fragmented the single voices of Bach's fugue, distributing them among the different instruments of the orchestra. In doing so, he contradicted the usual and expected homogenous sound of the single voices of a polyphonic work; instead, he isolated different motives and highlighted new relations across the single voices.

Webern's work presents a musical situation in which Bach's work and Webern's own intervention as orchestrator remain distinguishable and in tension with each other: It gives rise to a musical space where the relation between the original and the transcription remains audible. How is this musical space articulated, and with what kind of musical logic is it imbued? How does this happen concretely?

I see my *Une petite fleur bleue* as a double homage to both Frescobaldi and Webern, and by investigating the relationship and tension between Webern's transcription and Bach's work, I found possible tools and insights for my own transcribing practice.

Slowness

In chapter 1, I have addressed the slowness of writing that is implied in the practice of copying and transcribing, which allows for a qualitatively different relation with a text, particularly an intensification of attention. In order to understand how Webern transcribed Bach's work, I did not copy Webern's transcription, but I highlighted the six voices of Bach's fugue throughout the entire orchestral score, marking them with different colors. I followed Webern's path in reverse, going back, note by note, to the unity of the voices that he disaggregated, fragmented, and distributed throughout the orchestra. I assigned one color to each of the six voices: soprano I–red; soprano II–green; alto–blue; tenor I–orange; tenor II–purple; bass–yellow. Figure 2 shows an example of my markings on a page of Webern's score where all six voices are present.

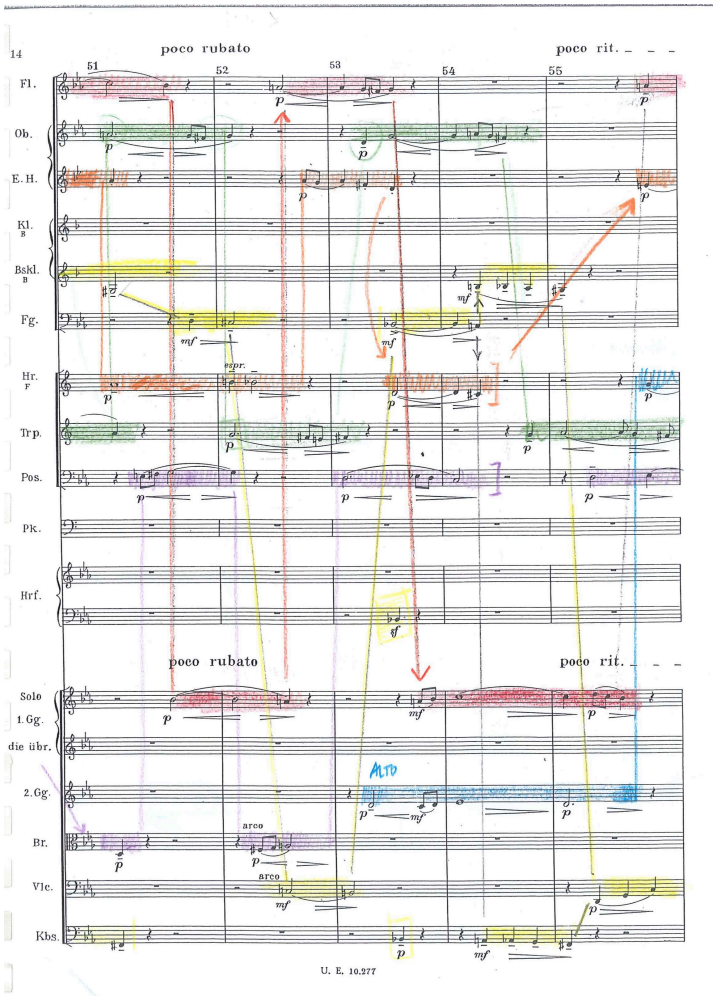


Figure 2. Webern, *Fuga Ricercata,* bars 51-55

Highlighting and checking what happened to each note of the original within Webern's orchestral score shaped my relationship with his transcription: The visual aspect of the score – looking at it, reading it, slowly reconstructing the single voices, and listening to it with my inner ear – was more important for me, both in terms of quality and quantity of time, than listening to a recording of the piece. My reading gave priority to an analytic-compositional perspective rather than to a perceptual-auditory one: In the colored score, the fragmentation of the voices throughout the whole orchestra stands clearly in the foreground compared to other musical elements that have a strong perceptual importance, such as the harmonic flow and the tonal context that remained unaltered from Bach's original. Furthermore, as mentioned in chapter 1, in Webern's transcription the pitches of the original stayed intact, and since there are no additions or subtractions, the number of bars and the form of the piece also remained the same.

My interest lay in the coexistence of a radical musical operation driven by a particular sound concept, and the simultaneous preservation of the original, even if, in Bach's unaltered tonal context, the result of Webern's transcribing process might remain an effect that stays in the background from a perceptual perspective. It is difficult to make general statements about the musical perception of a piece, as it is a very subjective matter, but I can say that the study of Webern's transcription, and especially my visual analysis of it, strongly informed my listening and set off specific aspects of it. I believe that Webern's transcription can allow the listener to move their attention between the polarities of Bach's original and its transformation. But how might a listener make those same shifts of attention without a score? Is sound alone sufficient? Or is additional information necessary? The answer to these questions may lie in the development of curatorial thinking, as "how music is presented defines how it is heard, performed, and talked about" (Amaral 2022, in "Propositions").

Terminology

In this chapter, I use the terms "orchestration" and "arrangement" as interchangeable with the term "transcription." Grove Music Online defines an arrangement as "the reworking of a musical composition, usually for a different medium from that of the original" (Boyd 2001). An orchestration is then an arrangement, or a transcription, for orchestra. Bach's "Ricercar a 6" has no original instrumental indication, nor indications of dynamics or tempo markings; Webern indeed considered it as an abstract conception that he could make concrete by transcribing it. The term "instrumentation" also describes Webern's work and indicates more explicitly the absence of a specific set of instruments in the original. Webern himself refers to his work in his letters using different terms: instrumentation, orchestration, and arrangement.

Webern's *Fuga Ricercata*

Webern's orchestration has already been studied and analyzed in depth (Straus 1986; Zenck 1989; Dahlhaus 2000; Davies 2003; Malvano 2008). I will focus on my own study of Webern's work and on the answers that it gives to my research questions: What happens to the original work? And how is it transformed? Furthermore, I will reflect on and describe the tools that I found meaningful for my own practice.

Studying Webern's thoughts about his own work, it is important to notice how, in a letter to the Swiss painter Franz Rederer, he made explicit reference to the concept of *Klangfarbenmelodie*,[1] and referred to transcribing as an act of transformation:

> Among the works [performed at a concert in London in 1935 by the BBC Orchestra, conducted by Herman Scherchen] was the first performance of my orchestral arrangement of a fugue of Johann Sebastian Bach, a totally unknown and wonderful work. Abstractly notated in the original, as are later the fugues in the Art of Fugue, it is unspecified as to whether it should be sung or played, whether it should be performed fast or slow. It is without tempo markings, includes no dynamics, in short, nothing by which one normally indicates how things are to be understood or performed. And now I have transformed this abstract conception into a Klangfarbenmelodie. (Webern 1935b, quoted in Zenck 1989: 311-314)

The unspecified instrumentation and the absence of tempo and dynamic indications gave Webern room to radically transform Bach's piece. Webern also presented his orchestration as an homage and a way to reveal and give concreteness to elements that were already implied in Bach's counterpoint techniques – in other words, to actualize some of the virtualities already present in the original. This idea follows Webern's position towards tradition: In his lectures "Wege zur neuen Musik" (1933), he indeed insisted on the historical necessity of dodecaphony, and, in this perspective, Bach was one link in a logical development that can be traced from Gregorian chant through the Franco-Flemish School to the Second Viennese School. Webern saw his own music as the further step in this musical tradition, a step that provided a continuity and a development, not a break with the past. Webern's homage reflects a specific position within a musical tradition: He reshaped Bach's work in the direction of post-tonal concerns, and honored him as a predecessor and a key figure of the

[1] See footnote 2 of chapter 1.

historic development of that tradition of which the Second Viennese School was the present heir (Auner 2004).[2]

In his seminal analysis from 1969, Carl Dahlhaus described Webern's orchestration as an analytical process, an operation that made the compositional and motivic structure of the original piece by Bach explicit (Dahlhaus 2000). Webern applied a dodecaphonic technique, but, paradoxically, he did not intervene on the pitches. On the one hand, one can look at this operation as an anticipation of total serialism with an emphasis on timbre as a parameter. On the other hand, Webern's transcription preserved the original, but also gave to the piece – because of the large orchestra and the use of agogics – a late-romantic expressivity, one that is neither baroque nor related to Webern's contemporaneity.

The fugue's subject
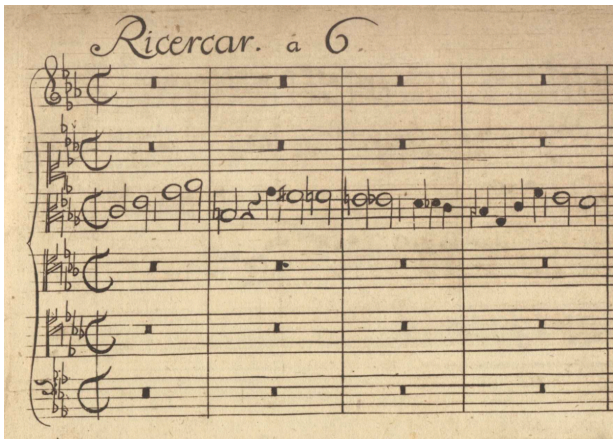


Figure 3. Bach, "Ricercar a 6" (*Musikalisches Opfer*), first appearance of the fugue's subject.

[2] From the late 1920s on, in the years that precede the orchestration of the *Fuga Ricercata*, there are constant references to Bach in Webern's writings related to his own works. For Webern's relation to Bach in his studies, see Martin Zenck's "Tradition as authority and provocation: Anton Webern's confrontation with J. S. Bach" (1989). Webern developed a closer relation with Bach's music through his activity as a conductor, which increased considerably from 1927 on: He conducted the Konzert für vier Cembali, BWV 1065; the Konzert für Cembalo, Traversflöte und Violine, BWV 1044; the premiere of Arnold Schoenberg's transcription of the Präludium und Fuge in Es-Dur, BWV 552; the *Kreuzstab Cantata,* BWV 56, in Busoni's edition; the third "Brandenburgisches" Konzert, BWV 1048; the Konzert in C für 2 Cembali, BWV 1061; the *Actus Tragicus,* BWV 106, and the *Johannes-Passion,* BWV 245**.** About Webern's activity as a conductor and organizer, see Piero Violante's *Eredità della musica. David J. Bach e i concerti sinfonici dei lavoratori viennesi 1905-1934* (2004). Webern and Schoenberg both made a strong effort to place their own music, along with that of the whole Second Viennese School, into the line of a precise German tradition. To make this connection clear is possibly one of Webern's reasons for writing this transcription. For more information, see Auner's "Proclaiming a mainstream: Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern" (2004).

Looking closer at Webern's instrumentation of the first appearance of the fugue's subject, shown in figure 3, we can see in figure 4 how it is fragmented and divided among three different instruments – horn, trumpet, and trombone – sometimes doubled by the harp.

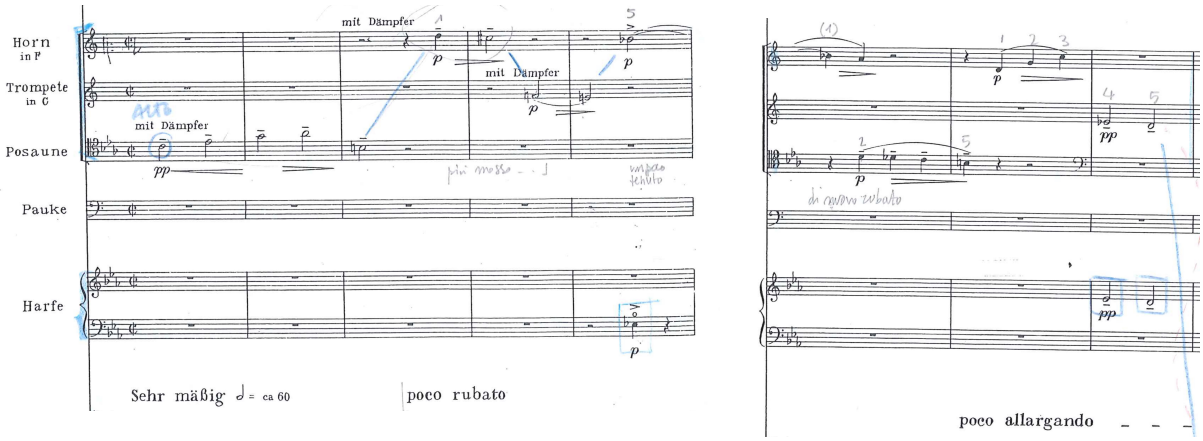


Figure 4. Webern, *Fuga Ricercata*, bars 1-8, first appearance of the subject

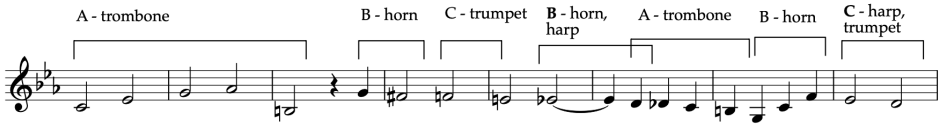


Figure 5. Synthesis of Webern's instrumentation of the fugue's subject

Audio 1. Webern, *Fuga Ricercata,* bars 1-8, performed by the Münchener Kammerorchester and Christoph Poppen (conductor): http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/01-Webern_-Subject-1.mp3

Figure 4 and audio example 1 present the beginning of the piece and the first appearance of the subject (highlighted in blue in figure 4), which is in the alto voice in Bach's original. The subject appears twelve times throughout the entire work, and it is always fragmented in the same way: The seven fragments of the subject stay the same, but they are played each time by a different combination of three instruments. This orchestration of the fugue's subject contradicts the listener's expectation of the subject as an isolated and recognizable element among the other melodic material. However, Webern supplies repetition through "a recurrent timbrical scheme" (Malvano 2008: 11-12). The fragmentation among the instruments of the orchestra indeed follows a stable scheme: ABC/**B**AB**C**, where every letter corresponds to an instrument, while the letters in bold correspond to the doubling of the harp, which underlines the

middle note of the subject and the last two notes. This structure is shown clearly in figure 5, a synthesis of Webern's instrumentation of the fugue's subject. The sixth and the twelfth appearance of the subject are the only exceptions to this scheme and are the only cases in which the strings (cellos and double basses) take part in the subject. They mark the end of the exposition and the end of the whole fugue respectively: the sixth appearance follows the scheme ABC/**B**AC**B**, and in the twelfth one – the conclusion of the piece – the same instruments play *unisono* without any fragmentation for the first and only time in the entire transcription (see figure 6).
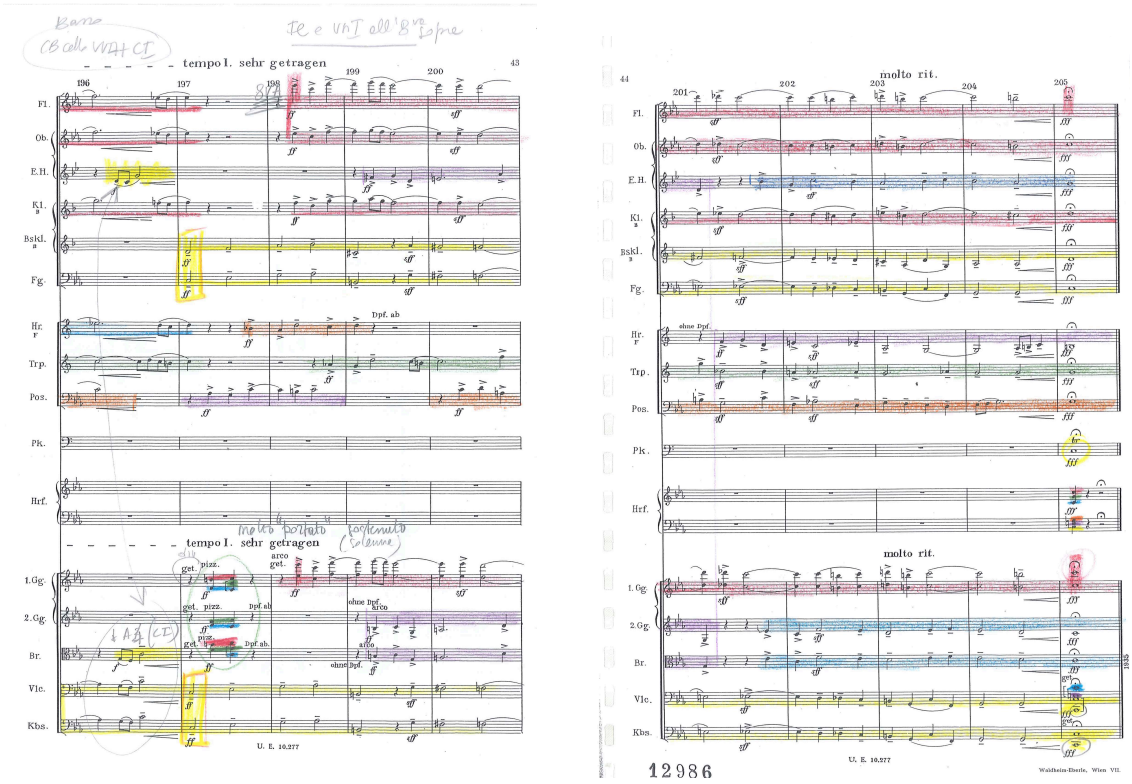


Figure 6. Webern, *Fuga Ricercata*, bars 197-205. The twelfth and last entrance of the subject, without any fragmentation, is marked in yellow.

On the one hand, Webern's operation dissolves the unity of the subject, but on the other, the unity of the subject is maintained by the repetitiveness of the alternation of the timbre: Without changing any note, Webern transforms the subject's melodic distinctiveness into a repetitive scheme of orchestral colors, "a purely timbral way of developing musical themes" (Malvano 2008, 10). It is exclusively through choices of instrumentation that he concretely intervenes on Bach's polyphony, dissolving the unity of the voices and letting emerge some of the elements that were only virtually present in the original. His choices of instrumentation concern structural musical elements, and, in this sense, timbre proves to be a parameter entirely more than a superficial one.

The next two tables summarize and highlight some aspects of Webern's instrumentation. Table 1 shows the twelve different instrumentations of the fugue's subject.

	Bars	**Voice in Bach**	**A**	**B**	**C**	**Doublings**	**Dynamics of the subject**
1	1-8	contralto	trombone (mute)	horn (mute)	trumpet	harp	*pp-p-pp*
2	9-16	soprano II	flute	clarinet	oboe	harp	*pp-p-pp*
3	17-24	tenor II	bass clarinet	trombone (mute)	bassoon	harp	*pp-p-pp*
4	25-32	tenor I	English horn	horn	bass clarinet	harp	*pp-p-p*
5	37-44	soprano I	trumpet (mute)	oboe	clarinet	harp	*p-mp-p*
6	49-56	bass	bass clarinet, double basses (*pizzicato*)	bassoon	celli	harp, double basses	*p-mf-p*
7	95-103	tenor II	bassoon	bass clarinet	trombone	harp	*pp-p-pp*
8	115-123	contralto	trumpet	English horn	horn (mute)	harp	*mf-mf-f*
9	131-138	soprano I	oboe	flute	trumpet	harp	*pp-p-pp*
10	145- 152	tenor I	horn (mute)	trombone	trumpet	harp	*pp-p-p*
11	171-178	soprano II	clarinet (2nd time with vln I *pizzicato*)	trumpet	horn (mute)	harp, celli	*p-mp-f*
12	197-205	bass	bass clarinet, bassoon, celli, and double basses				*ff-sff-fff*

Table 1. Webern's different instrumentations of the fugue's subject

Table 2 lists the instrumentation of the single voices throughout the whole exposition of the fugue (bars 1-56) and makes clear how they are spread out through the whole orchestra. For each entry of the six voices (playing the subject) and for the two episodes, which precede the last two entries, there is a column. The entries are each eight bars long, as is the subject of the fugue.

Voice	**Bars 1-8**	**9-16**	**17-24**	**25-32**	**Episode (33-36)**	**37-44**	**Episode (45-48)**	**49-56**
Soprano I						**S** tr-ob-cl	**vnI**-fl	**vnI**-fl
Soprano II		**S** fl-cl-hn	**CS** vle-**vnI**	fl-ob-cl	fl-cl	fl-**vla**	fl-ob-cl/ eh-ob-tr	ob-tr
Alto	**S** tbn-hn tr-hp	**CS** vnII-**vla**	hn-vniII **vcl**	**vla**-bs-tr	**vnI**	**vnI**-vniII-eh-vle	hn-vle	vle-hn-vniII
Tenor I				**S** eh-hn-cl	vniII-**vcl**	vniI-vniII-timp-tbn	vniI-vniII timp	timp-eh-hn
Tenor II			**S** clb-tbn-bs	**CS** vcl-tbn	tbn-timp	vcl-clb hn-bs	tbn-bs	bs-tbn-vle
Bass								**S** clb-bs-vcl-cb

Table 2. Webern's instrumentation of each voice

Abbreviations:

S: subject
CS: countersubject

fl: flute
ob: oboe
eh: english horn
cl: clarinet
clb: bass clarinet
bs: bassoon

hn: horn
tr: trumpet
tbn: trombone

timp: timpani
hp: harp

vni: violins
vle: violas
vcl: celli
cb: double basses

Strings in **bold** are *soli*

The fugue's subject is transcribed with different timbres each time. This permutation technique is closely connected with serialism, and with Webern's method of writing his own music. Whereas in a traditional orchestration each voice is usually maintained through a constant timbre, Webern's orchestration disaggregates the unity of the individual voice into isolated fragments, highlighting in this way these motives and their relationships across the voices. The linear character of the single voices is not completely lost, and the "imposition of a new source of musical coherence does not eradicate the old one" (Straus 1986, 327). The unity within one voice is substituted by the structural unity of the instrumentation – that is, by the fixed and stable pattern that governs the fragmentation of the voices and their instrumentation. The musical coherence is further maintained by the presence of all the notes that also keep their original pitches and duration, guaranteeing the original tonal context.

Webern's subtle orchestration invites the listener to focus their attention on its unusual amount of timbral detail and to come – metaphorically – closer. A closer proximity and a focus on the details are asked in order to appreciate and discern all the instrumental changes. This proximity corresponds to the analytic-compositional perspective mentioned earlier in this chapter. By contrast, the original features in Bach's work emerge through moving one's focus of attention and listening as if from a distance or from behind a closed door so that tiny details cannot be perceived. From a distance, the melodic and harmonic contours indeed survive in Webern's orchestration, while their fragmentation becomes less evident.
Continuing with this metaphor, distance plays a similar role in Dieter Schnebel's *Schubert-Phantasie*, discussed in chapter 1. In both situations, it is only possible to perceive the original from a distance. Both transcriptions give concrete existence to the distance that separates us from the original. However, while Schnebel creates a veil, Webern does quite the opposite: His orchestration is timbrically hyper-detailed, so that the listener has to modulate their attention, moving further away to perceive the original, or coming closer to focus on the timbral details. Webern's transcription creates a musical space where the listener can orient themselves between these two poles – Bach's original and its transformation – calibrating the distance in their listening attention.

Connections between fragments of different voices
One of the main features of Webern's orchestration is that it highlights the motivic relations among the single voices. Coming closer to the details, an example of how Webern connects musical fragments belonging to different voices is seen in his use of *pizzicato* throughout the exposition (bars 1-56).

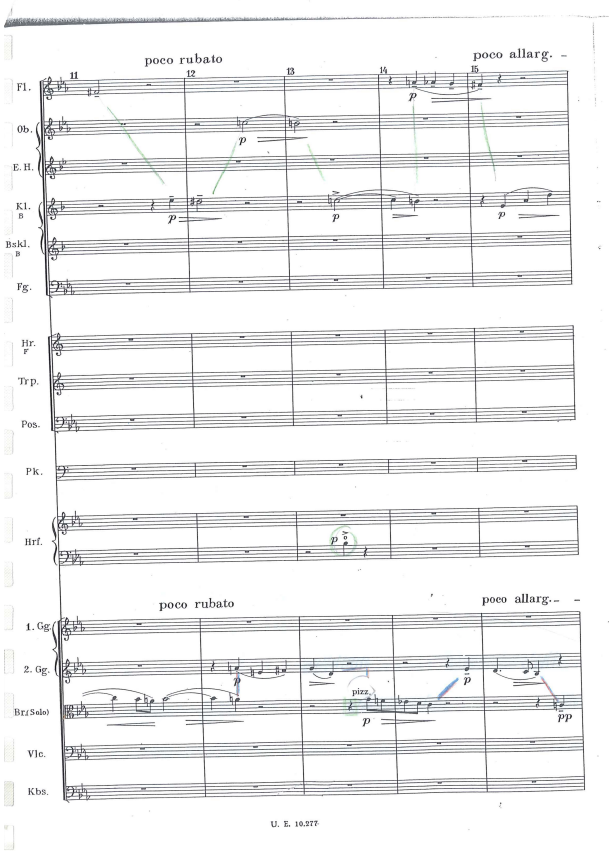


Figure 7. Webern, *Fuga Ricercata*, bars 11-15

Audio 2. Webern, *Fuga Ricercata*, bars 11-15:
http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Webern_11-15.mp3

He uses pizzicato to create a relationship between the central note of the subject and the five-note motif of the countersubject. As shown in figure 7, the middle note of the subject in the soprano II line (highlighted in green) – a sounding B♭ – is played by the clarinet and the pizzicato harp in bar 13. The pizzicato continues into the five-note motif of the countersubject in the alto voice (highlighted in blue), this time played by the violas in bars 13-14. You can hear the effect in audio example 2.

This association through pizzicato is repeated and confirmed in the third appearance of the subject, where the five-note motif is performed by the solo first violin in bars 21-22 (as presented in figure 8 and audio example 3).

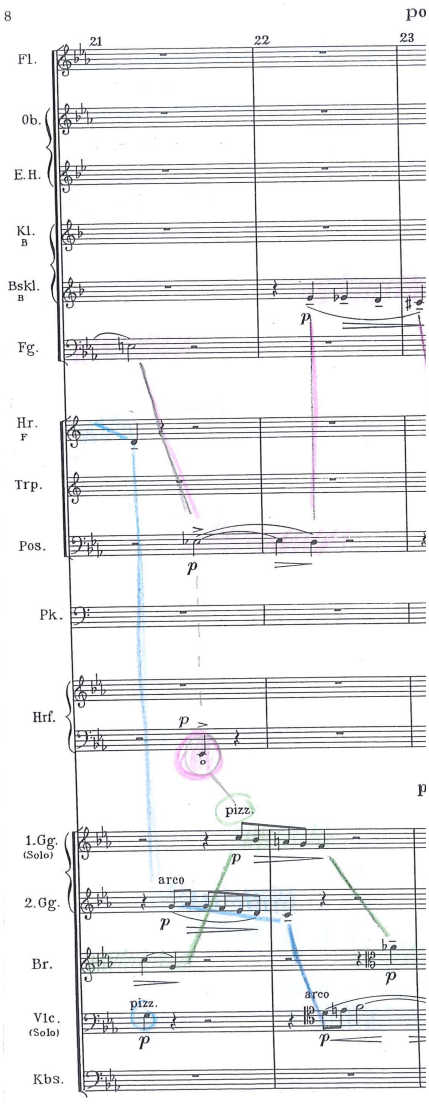


Figure 8. Webern, *Fuga Ricercata*, bars 21-22

Audio 3. Webern, *Fuga Ricercata*, bars 21-22:
http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Webern_21-22.mp3

The pizzicato timbre connects the central note of the subject (from the tenor II line, highlighted in purple: E*b* played by the harp and the trombone in bar 21) to the five-note motif of the countersubject (from the soprano II line, highlighted in green: solo first violin in bars 21-22).
For the fourth appearance of the subject (bars 29-30, presented in figure 9 and audio example 4), instead of a pizzicato in the countersubject, we find the trombone playing *portato*, highlighted in purple at the end of bar 29 and going into bar 30. In this context we can consider, and hear – if we come closer – the *portato* as a timbral development and a variation of the previous pizzicati.

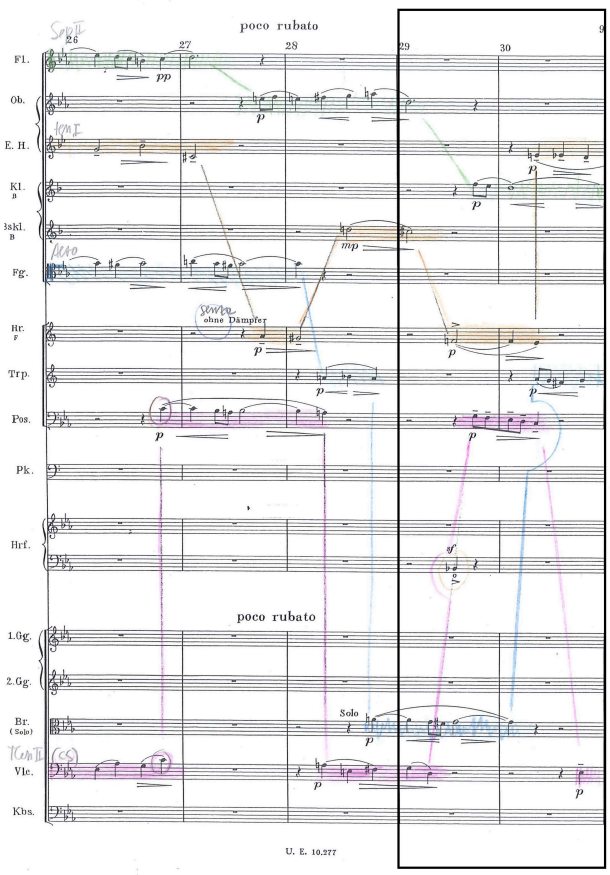


Figure 9. Webern, *Fuga Ricercata*, bars 26-30

Audio 4. Webern, *Fuga Ricercata*, bars 29-30:
http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Webern_29-30.mp3

The sixth entry of the fugue's subject – played by the bass – concludes the exposition. Here, for the first time, we find an octave doubling: The double bass, playing pizzicato, doubles the bass clarinet and highlights the first notes of the subject, the middle note of the subject with the harp, and the countersubject's descending motif. Here the harp shares its role with the double bass. The subject's middle note and the descending motif are even more explicitly connected (see figure 10 and audio example 5, bars 53-55), and this element will be the main building block for the following section of the fugue's development.

Webern's use of pizzicato in the fugue exposition is a clear example of how he employs timbre as a binding element to actualize and make audible implicit connections between different musical fragments of Bach's original. His orchestration has been relevant to my research as it provided a concrete example of how to delimit a challenging space to transform the original and intervene as a transcriber on specific parameters (timbre and instrumentation, in this case) without changing others (pitch and duration).

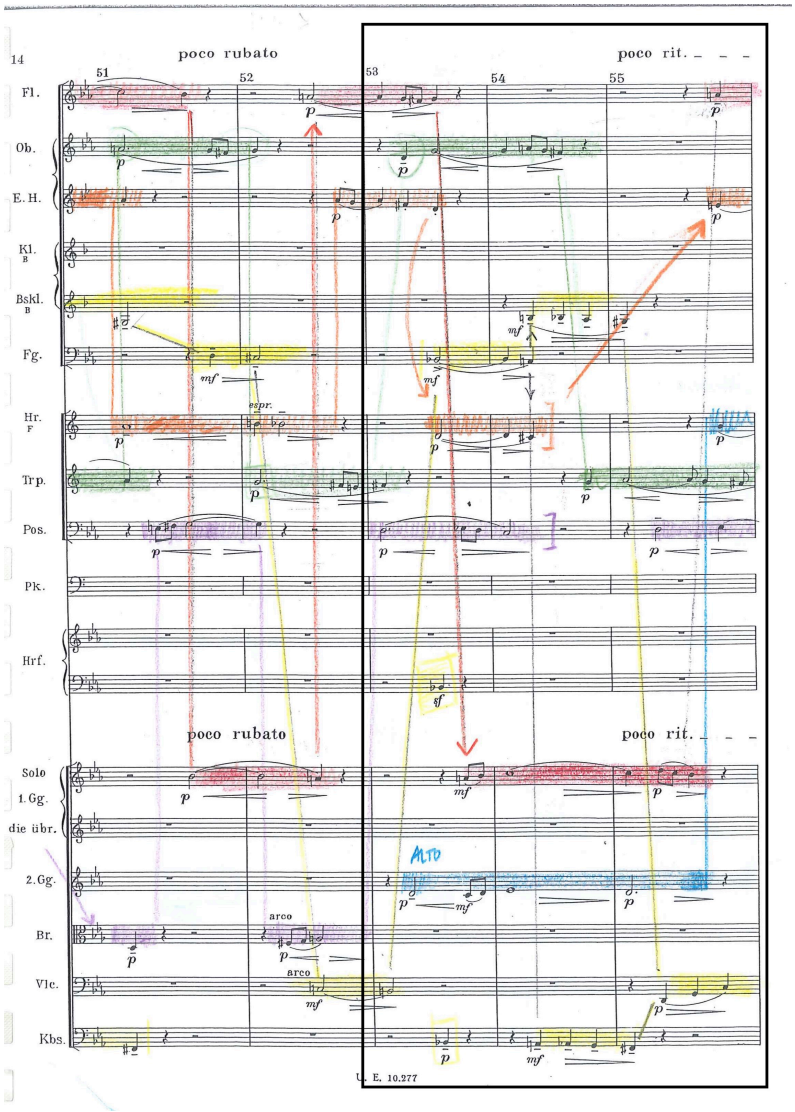


Figure 10. Webern, *Fuga Ricercata*, bars 51-55

Audio 5. Webern, *Fuga Ricercata*, bars 53-55:
http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Webern_53-55.mp3

Insights and tools

My aim for looking in depth at the *Fuga Ricercata,* was to understand Webern's way of working, not in order to reproduce his characteristic aesthetic but to find and develop specific tools to use in my own practice.

I have reflected on Webern's peculiar orchestration of the fugue's subject as an example of his approach to Bach's original for the whole transcription. In the previous examples, I have also shown how Webern's transcription, through the use of timbre, is able to highlight the connections among different fragments in regards to the unity of the single voices. Webern's choices of instrumentation are not simply superimposed as an orchestral garment on top of the original;

rather, they are in dialogue with Bach's music, and, importantly, they reveal and embody Webern's analytic listening of Bach's work in a practice that might be called analyzing-through-transcribing.
The listener can come closer and listen to Webern's *Klangfarbenmelodie*, and, at the same time, they can listen to Bach's "Ricercar a 6" as if from a distance through Webern's instrumentation, focusing on the aspects of the original that are preserved – i.e., the pitches, and therefore the tonal context and the harmonic flow. The coexistence of the original work and the aesthetic freedom inherent in the practice of transcribing is an important element that I have tried to include in my own practice.

One further particular effect of Webern's instrumentation, connected with the disaggregation of the voices, is that it is able to actualize melodies that were only virtually present in Bach's original.

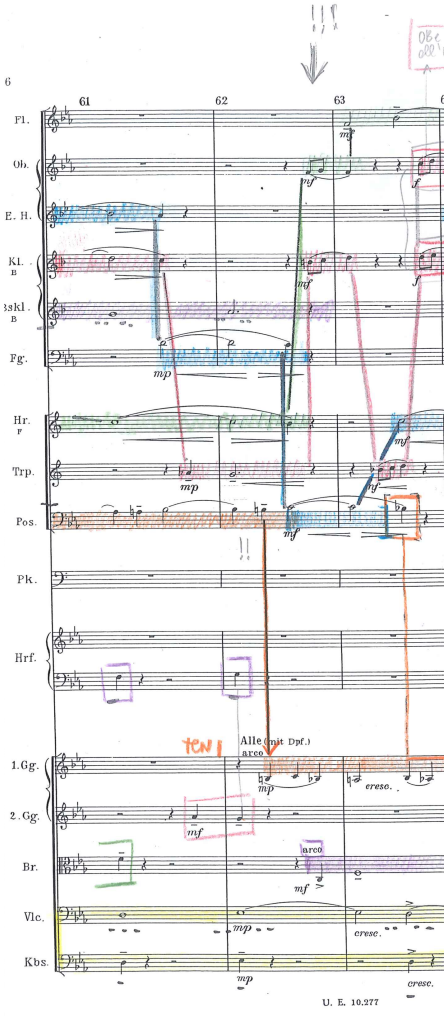


Figure 11. Webern, *Fuga Ricercata,* bars 61-63

Audio 6. Webern, *Fuga Ricercata,* bars 61-63: http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Webern_61-63.mp3

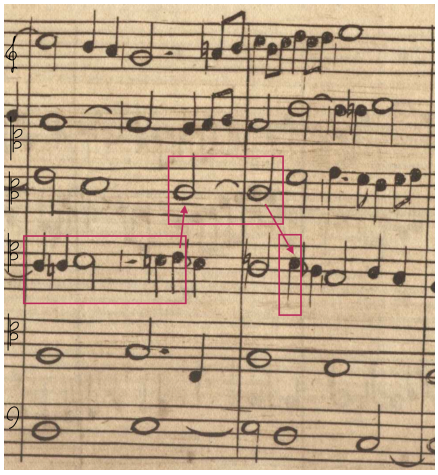


Figure 12. Bach, "Ricercar a 6," bars 61-64, the same passage as in figure 11. I have outlined in red the part that in Webern's transcription is played by the trombone.

The appearance of a new melody that was only virtually present in the original (shown in figure 12) happens for the first time when the trombone connects the lines of the alto voice (highlighted in blue in figure 11) and the tenor I voice (highlighted in orange), in bars 62-63. This technique becomes more frequent in the second exposition of the fugue, where the fragmentation of the voices increases.

In bar 61, the trombone plays the tenor I line, and in the following bar, it shares the B♮ and the C with the first violins, who then continue playing the line of the tenor I (highlight in orange). At that point, the trombone stops playing the line of the tenor and plays the long C of the alto, taking it over from the bassoon. The melody of the trombone ends with a B♭ in bar 63. This note is also part of the tenor I voice, and it is again shared with the first violins. Here, the trombone plays a new melody that is the combination of melodic fragments of the alto voice and the tenor I voice. This melody was not actualized in the original, but it was virtually present in the sense that Webern could assign it to the trombone without adding any new note. Webern's intervention thus opens a door and allows new ways of looking at polyphonic textures: It is not only a sum of individual voices, but a net of points that can be connected and reconnected in different ways. In chapter 1, I used the starry sky as a metaphor to explain this relation between notes and new melodies: We can contemplate the single stars in the sky as individual points, or use our imagination to recognize familiar constellations by connecting them. However, we can also devise new patterns and envision entirely new constellations by linking the stars in different ways. These new linear connections are already virtually present in the polyphonic texture of the original, and the transcriber can imagine and actualize them, making them audible.

I suggest that this is what is happening in bar 62: Bach's two constellations (alto and tenor I) are connected by Webern, which gives rise to a new constellation – i.e., the trombone's melody – as can be heard in audio example 6.
Listening to a polyphonic piece, we enter into a space inhabited by voices. These voices have a certain behavior, but the notes they consist of can be connected differently so as to form new aggregates. The stars (the notes) are already there, but the constellations that Webern draws – connecting the stars in a new way – make some of their hidden relations visible and audible.

Through the practice of transcribing, Webern actualized and created these virtual constellations through timbral relations – i.e., his choices of orchestration. The stars – to stick with the metaphor – can be connected in new and different ways with intentions that are independent of their origin, but these new configurations were nevertheless always already present in the original work. What is relevant and fruitful for my practice is to look at transcribing as a way of inhabiting a polyphonic space, transforming it by actualizing some of its virtual constellations. With figure 11, I have shown how Webern connected two fragments that belong to different voices, making a single melody out of them. Now I would like to point out two other sorts of new constellations that arise in Webern's transcription.

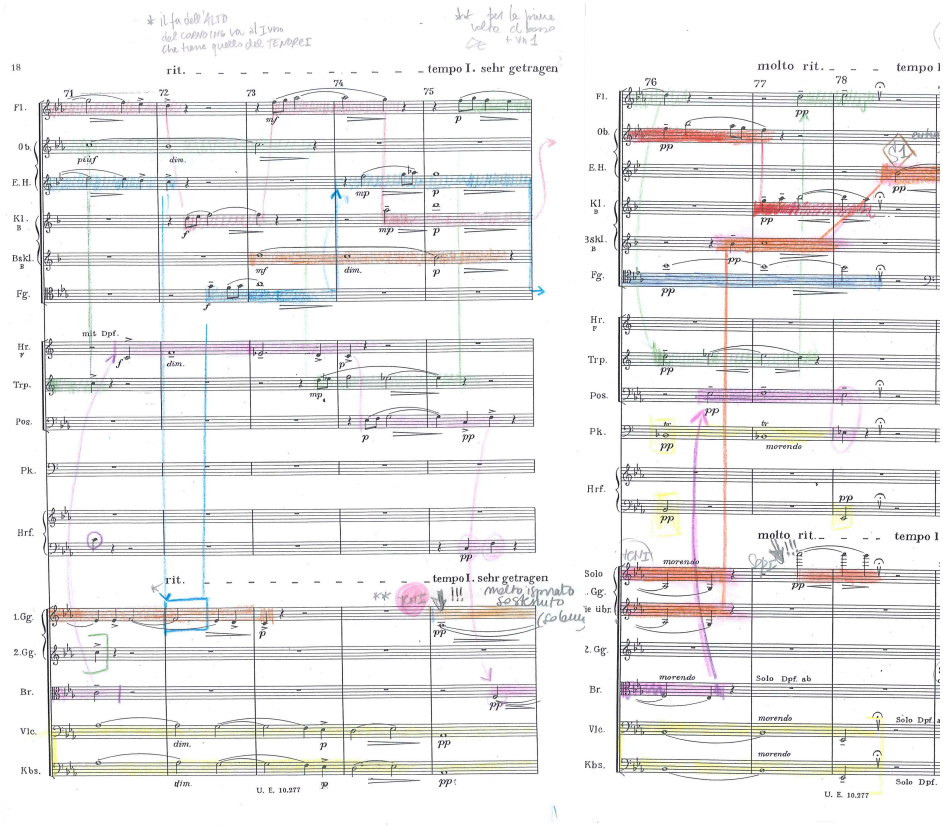


Figure 13. Webern, *Fuga Ricercata*, bars 71-78

Audio 7. Webern, *Fuga Ricercata*, bars 73-78:
http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Webern_violino-acuto_73-78.mp3

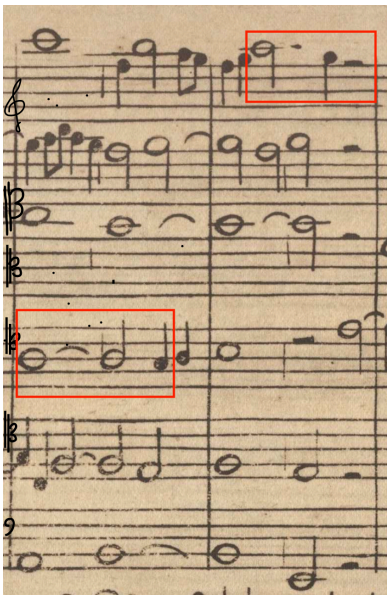


Figure 14. Bach, "Ricercar a 6," bars 73-78. I have outlined in red the two fragments played by the first violin in Webern's transcription (figure 13).

The end of the fugue's development is marked by a remarkable musical gesture: The first violin highlights and isolates the two-note motif Ab-G (from the soprano I line, outlined in figure 14 in red), playing it one octave higher and doubling the clarinet (bars 77-78). If we look at the first violins from bar 75, we find that this motif is isolated and repeated twice, once *tutti* and then *solo* three octaves above. Here again Webern connects in one phrase two fragments that belonged to two different voices, namely tenor I (highlighted in figure 13 in orange) and soprano I (red).

As can be heard in audio example 7, this new individual gesture of the violin stands out for its lyrical character, and it is Webern's first intervention of this kind. It does not sound out of context here, as it would have at the beginning of the fugue. The context has gradually changed and now it allows a new musical gesture – a solo violin's three-octave jump that isolates a two-note motif in the high register.

In the long final section, a second fugue exposition, I have found more individual gestures in the string section: From bar 79 to 99, solo strings play *glissandi* to connect contiguous notes, and close to the end, strings play *acciaccature* that in a single gesture condense more voices. A clear example is the solo viola in bar 180, shown in figure 15 (and based on the notes outlined in red in figure

16): the D belongs to the soprano II line (highlighted in green), but the two notes of the *acciaccatura*, B and F, belong to the alto (highlighted in blue) and the tenor II (purple).[3] This effect can be heard in audio example 8.

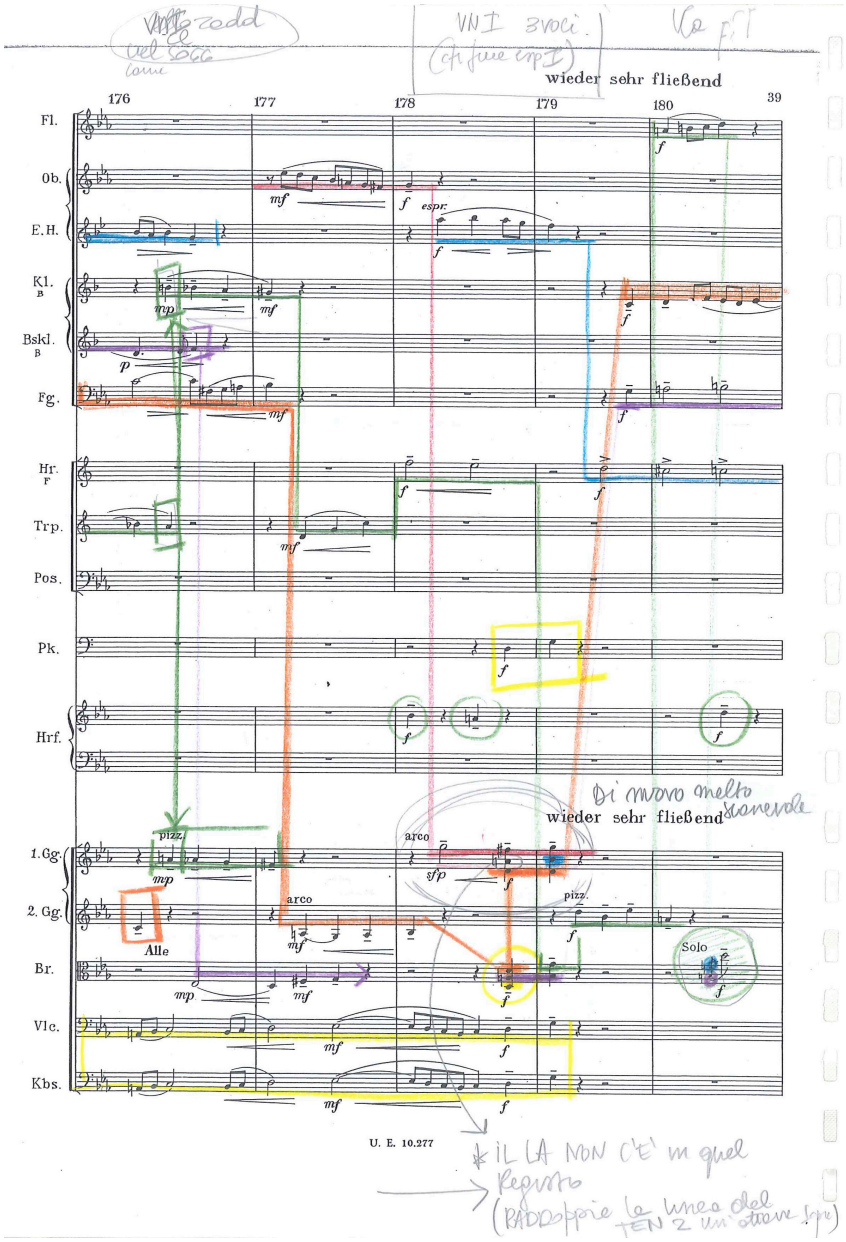


Figure 15. Webern, *Fuga Ricercata*, bars 176-180

Audio 8. Webern, *Fuga Ricercata*, bars 177-180:
http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Webern_177-180.mp3

[3] Similar examples are found in the violin and viola parts in bars 178-179 (figure 15); the violin II part in bar 184; the solo cello part in bar 185; the violin II and viola parts in bar 194. The *acciaccatura* and the main note of violin I part in bar 190 both belong to the soprano I line.

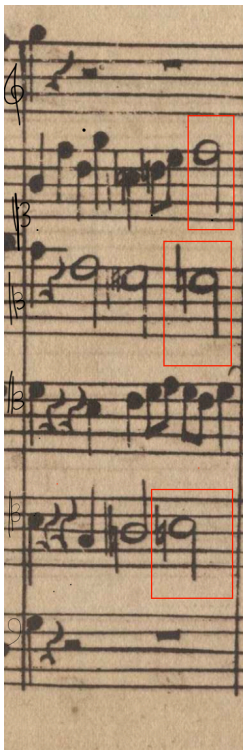


Figure 16. Bach, "Ricercar a 6," bars 179-180. I have outlined in red the three notes played by the viola in Webern's transcription (see figure 15).

I look at these instrumental gestures as well as the emergence of new melodies as Webern's creation of new constellations within the polyphonic space of Bach's work. Without changing any of the original notes, he deeply transforms Bach's work through his orchestration.

Conclusion

Webern's *Fuga Ricercata* was an inspirational model for writing *Une petite fleur bleue* and for my practice of transcribing in general. Studying it allowed me to think of transcribing as a practice that in the first place could allow for a qualitatively different relationship with an original work, a practice that could be a way of attentively listening to a work. Second, Webern's work was a model in showing how this very relationship transforms an original work and actualizes some of its virtualities. Beyond giving me the understanding of transcribing as a creative practice, Webern's *Fuga Ricercata* provided me with concrete tools for my own practice in writing *Une petite fleur bleue* and my further transcriptions. It gave me the idea of looking at the polyphonic texture of a piece as a net of individual points that could be connected in new ways, thereby actualizing virtual constellations and giving rise to melodies or instrumental gestures that may emerge thanks to the encounter between the transcriber and the original.

Furthermore, Webern's almost exclusive work on instrumentation was an example of how using timbre can be a way to deeply transform a musical work. As I wrote in chapter 1, in *Une petite fleur bleue*, I worked exclusively on the timbral

parameter, creating a sound layer on top of Frescobaldi's original work without changing or adding any notes, and slowing down the tempo in order to make room for articulating – and perceiving – the constant and very detailed changes of sound.

Webern's work has therefore been the starting point for me to think about transcribing as a way to reinvent and transform musical works from the past, and for making further explorations with this practice, exploring and forcing its borders, experimenting with different approaches and possibilities of artistic freedom, and, finally, extending the concept of what transcribing can be.