

ผลงานพรีลูด ฟิวก์ และวาริเอชันของซีซาร์ แฟรงก์ และอิทธิพลจากเจ.เอส. บาค

J.S. Bach's Influence on César Franck's "Prélude, Fugue et Variation"

แพรววนิต กองมงคณ*¹ ไคลร์ เพียร์²Praewwanit Gongmongkon*¹ Kyle Fyr²

บทคัดย่อ

บทความวิจัยฉบับนี้เป็นการศึกษาบริบททางประวัติศาสตร์และชีวประวัติของซีซาร์ แฟรงก์ ซึ่งเป็นนักแต่งเพลงยุคโรแมนติกในช่วงคริสต์ศตวรรษที่ 19 (ค.ศ. 1822-1890) และศึกษาวิเคราะห์อิทธิพลงานของโยฮันน์ เซบาสเตียน บาค ที่มีต่อผลงานพรีลูด ฟิวก์ และวาริเอชัน หมายเลข 18 ของแฟรงก์ โดยผู้วิจัยเลือกศึกษางานบางชิ้นจากชุดพรีลูดและฟิวก์สำหรับออร์แกน และพรีลูด และฟิวก์จากหนังสือเวลเทมเพอร์คลาเวียร์ของบาคมาเปรียบเทียบกับงานผลงานพรีลูด ฟิวก์ และวาริเอชัน หมายเลข 18 เพื่อหาความคล้ายคลึงกันของนักแต่งเพลงทั้งสองคนในแง่ของแนวคิดและสไตล์ทางดนตรีที่มาจากยุคทางดนตรีสองยุค คือ ยุคบาโรคและยุคโรแมนติก และในแง่ของเทคนิคการแต่งเพลงที่แฟรงก์น่าจะได้รับอิทธิพลมาจากงานของบาค รายงานวิจัยฉบับนี้จะเป็นประโยชน์ต่อการสร้างความรู้ความเข้าใจในการศึกษาประวัติและผลงานของแฟรงก์ และการศึกษาเปรียบเทียบบริบททางดนตรีที่แตกต่างกันของยุคทั้งสองยุค โดยเป็นการศึกษาวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพและผู้วิจัยเลือกใช้กระบวนการทางดนตรีวิทยาใช้ในการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูล

คำสำคัญ: ซีซาร์ แฟรงก์ / พรีลูด / ฟิวก์ / วาริเอชัน / เจ.เอส. บาค

* Corresponding author, email: 24p.pgmk@gmail.com

¹ นักศึกษาปริญญาโท แผนกวิชาดนตรีวิทยา วิทยาลัยดุริยางคศิลป์ มหาวิทยาลัยมหิดล

¹ Master's Degree candidate of Musicology, College of Music, Mahidol University

² อาจารย์ที่ปรึกษา ภาควิชาดนตรีวิทยา วิทยาลัยดุริยางคศิลป์ มหาวิทยาลัยมหิดล

² Advisor, Lecturer at Department of Musicology, College of Music, Mahidol University

Abstract

This research is about to examine the historical context during the life and times of César Franck in the nineteenth century (1822-1890) and to analyze some traces of Johann Sebastian Bach's influence on one of the César Franck's prelude and fugue works which is *Prélude, Fugue, et Variation in B minor, Op.18*. By choosing some of J.S. Bach's compositions including prelude and fugue for organ and prelude and fugue from *The Well-Tempered Clavier* to study and compare with *Prélude Fugue et Variation Op.18*. The researcher used an analysis method to find the similarities in both of the composers' works in terms of musical styles and ideas from Baroque and Romantic periods and musical techniques that César Franck tends to apply from Bach. The research result will be useful for a better understanding of life and works of César Franck and for analytical study of musical context from different two periods. This research was conducted in qualitative research design and the researcher choose the musicological method to analyze the data.

Keywords: César Franck / Prélude / Fugue / Variation / J.S. Bach

Significance of the Study

Johann Sebastian Bach was one of the most significant composers throughout the music history. His works and compositions have influenced and inspired many other prolific composers including Mozart, Chopin, Beethoven, and Liszt. However, there was a movement called "Bach Revival" that helped emphasize the importance of J.S. Bach. Since his works and his fame were almost forgotten after his death, some composers especially Mendelssohn sparked this phenomenon to make the public realized Bach's abilities. He performed some of Bach's compositions and other composers such as Schumann gathered Bach's work to publish. Since then the

importance of Bach was spread to many European countries and other several Bach-like compositions were released after the movement including works of César Franck.

César Franck (1822-1890) was born in Liège, Belgium. He was known as a gifted pianist since he was young and later became an organist. While he was studying, he had a chance to study Bach Baroque music such as prelude and fugue and his admiration towards Bach made him compose an outstanding fugue in the competition. In his adult life, his life pattern was somehow similar to Bach too, as he embarked on a career as teacher, composer, organist, and pianist. He gained a reputation as a great improviser which led him work for the church and finally became professor at the Paris Conservatoire in 1872. During his years at the Conservatoire, Franck composed many pieces including symphonic, chamber, and keyboard works. Until his last year in 1890, his works were influenced by many composers' model including Bach's. Plus, he was considered the greatest composer of organ music after Bach as well. So, there are some similarities between these two composers that should be studied although they lived in different eras.

Objectives

- 1) To examine the historical context during the life and times of César Franck
- 2) To analyze the traces of J.S. Bach in César Franck's *Prélude, Fugue, et Variation*

Scope of the Study

For the scope of the research, the researcher will focus on César Franck's *Prélude, Fugue, et Variation in B minor, Op. 18* and some compositions composed by J.S. Bach such as The Well-Tempered Clavier Book I and II, Prelude and Fugue for Organ, Christmas Oratorio, Suite, etc. The data will be collected from books, thesis, and documents related to the topics.

Methodology

This research was conducted in qualitative research design

1) Document Data Gathering

The researcher gathers the data from historical documentation, documents, articles, journals, books, and related thesis which collected from many sources such as Jiew Bangsue Library, College of Music at Mahidol University, Centre Library at Chulalongkorn University, and Internet.

2) Data Treatment

- Arrange and translate the documentary data in Thai and foreign language
- Grouping data into the different topics
- Verify the accuracy and completeness of data
- Check and patch incomplete issues of data
- Reprint and edit the musical scores for manuscript analysis and study

3) Data Analysis

After the data was collected, the researcher transcribed and arrange text data. Then, the researcher reads through all of data, marking, and dividing the data into parts by hand. The next process of analyzing was categorizing data into categories and segments. Then the content of all of the documents will be analyzed.

César Franck's Musical Style and Idea of Bach's Influence

Franck should never have been considered as a French artist although he always considered himself a Frenchman. Not only because of his Belgian birth, but because neither his aesthetic doctrine nor his technical method, show the relation to those features that distinguish the true French spirit and character³. Instead, his compositions were rather affected by German's composers such as Bach, Beethoven, and Liszt⁴. Especially, his techniques including chromaticism, cyclic form, and

³ Robert J. Stove, *César Franck His Life and Times* (United Kingdom: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2012), 173.

⁴ Nicholas Hester, "César Franck – A New French Unity" (D.M.A. diss., University of York, 2015), 7.

sequential writing were inspired by J.S. Bach. Chromaticism and cyclic form are usually cited as the two salient characteristics of Franck's style. His chromaticism is often the result of melodic chromaticism in many parts rather than a functional or coloristic harmony⁵.

The reason behind many of his compositions was that he tried to explore the possibility of the new organ called "Cavaillé-Coll", which was invented during his times. Therefore, the concept of organ especially influenced by Baroque tradition became the factor that inspired his work such as *Prélude Fugue et Variation in B minor, Op.18* which was firstly composed and published in 1868 in a set of *Six Pièces* and later was remade for piano and harmonium in 1873.

An expanded pedal division was one of the most important Cavaillé-Coll's contributions to the symphonic organ Franck invented. Usually, Classical French organ had a board of small pedals controlling only two or three stops. These pedals were used for plainsong melodies on the trumpet or for a soft lower voice. The sound of a sixteen-foot reed could appear in the pedal with a help of Great-Pedal coupler. However, Cavaillé-Coll expanded the pedal division by adding a full chorus of foundation and reed stops which develop pedal parts in their improvisations and made it possible for French organists to play the music of Bach for the first time⁶.

Since then Franck started to compose the *Six Pièces* between 1860-1862. He performed the complete set at Sainte-Clotilde. The pieces treated different genres and textures and probably stem from Franck's improvisations in exploring his new organ. One of Franck's most popular works was the Bach-inspired piece No.3 *Prélude, Fugue et Variation in B minor, Op.18*

In *Prélude Fugue et Variation in B minor, Op.18*, the *Prélude* was developed as a form of introduction in the music for organ where the thought of Bach is mingled with a quite modern tenderness. In his *Prélude*, Franck introduces an

⁵ Rey M. Longyear, *Nineteenth-Century Romanticism in Music* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1969), 150.

⁶ Anna Sung, "The Cavaillé-Coll Organ and César Franck's *Six Pièces*" (D.M.A. diss., Arizona State University, 2012), 7.

expressive melody and he finishes the piece with a Variation that used the same theme with an embellished accompaniment. The Fugue that connects them is based on a subject that is related to the opening and closing melody so that the overall work has a structural unity.

To build the connection to Bach, Franck must draw some elements out of his music that related to Baroque tradition and a few unique characteristics that represent J.S. Bach. One of the mutual traits that both Franck and Bach have in common was their devotion to the faith in God. Since writing music was an expression of faith to Bach, his every composition was “in the name of Jesus” and “to the glory of God⁷” linked to the main idea of most of Franck’s compositions.

Another aspect we found in Bach’s works is his abilities to create pictorial music. Bach was able to use music to paint the stories through word and tone as well as his musical languages. So did Franck⁸. It can be found later that Franck used this piece to reflect what Bach usually did in his works and make it suitable in the romantic context that he could picture Bach like in a program music.

The piece was divided into four movements which are Prélude, Transition or a link, Fugue, and Variation. Each movement could represent the idea of Bach’s faith in God and has the same unity of structure, ideas, and styles. Franck was able to connect his ideal of J.S. Bach to his romantic techniques that made him succeed in painting the master of Baroque to revive in the aftermath of Bach revival like Mendelssohn, Schumann, Liszt, Brahms and others did.

Prélude, Fugue, et Variation in B minor, Op.18

In Prélude, it has a well-structure plan of using figurative theme throughout the whole section. Instead of using long phrase sentences, Franck chose to focus on small motives and grouping figures to form musical language which is similar to Bach’s

⁷ Malcolm Boyd, *J. S. Bach* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 174.

⁸ Dorothy Cheung, “Selected Piano Works of Franck, Haydn, and Chopin” (D.M.A. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1992), 7.

in his Well-Tempered Clavier. So, the phrases could not be divided equally but depends on the melodic organization in each group. There are three segments divided as ABA' in the key of Bm, Dm, and F#m.

There was interesting point about the number of measures using in the piece. Some Bach scholars have discovered that Bach's works are filled with numerical associations, and his use of symbolic numbers has specific meaning, especially in his signature name "BACH". There was a method called "gematria" that referred to number word symbolism corresponded to the number alphabet⁹. Each letter has a numerical value, and so all words can be expressed as a total of the letter numbers (A=1, B=2, C=3, ...H=8, ...).

It is possible that Franck applied this theory to his work as well. The total number of Bach's name letters is equivalent to the number of measures Franck used for the length of Segment A ($B + A + C + H = 2 + 1 + 3 + 8 = 14$) and the total number of the word "Credo" he used to finish Segment B ($C + R + E + D + O = 3 + 17 + 5 + 4 + 14 = 43$) was also implied in the measure 43 of the Prélude. Later, in the Transition or a link, the transition was finished in measure 59 which implied the word "Gloris" as well as in the Fugue, it will be finished in measure 140 which implied the word "In nomine Iesu" according to some significant words that are commonly employed in Bach's use of number symbolism¹⁰. So, this is one of the evidence that Franck was influenced by Bach's idea and technique in composing his music and showed his Christian belief that he dedicated the piece to God like Bach always did.

It should be noted that Franck concerned with the shape of melody or melodic contour as well. He tried to balance the motion of up and down movement from descending line to reach the culminate point and back to ascending line again within a theme like Bach usually did in his many compositions. So, the melodic shape came out like a detail of convex and concave shaping in Baroque architectural

⁹ Jihye Oh, "Number Symbolism in J. S. Bach's Keyboard Music" (D.M.A. diss., Claremont Graduate University, 2016), 18.

¹⁰ Ibid, 19.

façade¹¹. This is one of examples that Franck used musical tools to create pictorial music like works from Bach.

Figure 1 Franck's Prélude (mm.1-2)



In many of Bach's compositions, he often used broken chords and arpeggio as important elements to indicate triads. As shown in his famous Prelude and Fugue in C major, BWV 846, the inversion of triads was fully used throughout the whole piece. So, Franck chose to use these techniques to represent Bach's style in his Prelude. In measures 3 and 4, the descending 7th chords of C# dim and A# dim arpeggio were used, followed by descending triads of A# dim and G# dim to paint the downward movement.

Figure 2 Franck's Prélude (mm.3-4)



In the bass part, Franck used a simple descending scale-like passage from tonic (B) as a counter line to accompany the downward movement in the right-hand part which is similar to what Bach did in his Prelude and Fugue in F sharp major, BWV 858.

Figure 3 Franck's Prélude (mm.1-4)



¹¹ Ronald L. Fishbaugh, "Elements of Romantic Tendency in Selected Keyboard Works of J.S.Bach: A Study with References to the Visual Arts" (D.M.A. diss., New York University, 1978), 148.

The significant motive of ascending intervals Franck used in Segment B derived from many of Bach's works. He might be inspired from the theme of the chorus "Herr, wenn die stolzen Feinde toben" in the Christmas oratorio in which its widely spread intervals symbolized strength, pride, and defiance¹². Here Franck treated leaps carefully. He moved from steps to bigger leaps from second interval to third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, and to an octave in a row like a stepwise progression. So, the sound was not jumpy but well-ordered and smoothly climbed up like Bach's style.

Figure 4 Bach's Herr, wenn die stolzen Feinde toben in Christmas oratorio



Figure 5 Franck's Prélude (m.16)



Then he gradually resolved the passage by using sequences which was the most important characteristic of Bach. From measure 36 he developed the sequence by employing the linear progression of descending scale 5-4-3-2-1-7 from F#-E-D-C#-B-A at the first note of each measure which was similar to Prelude and Fugue in E minor BWV 855 before he reached back to the theme in F# minor in measure 44.

In the Transition or a link between Prélude and the upcoming Fugue, Franck used these nine measures as a connective passage to prepare the audiences for the subsequent section in which he introduced the motives of fugue here in this part. In the piano version, Franck gave a written down of an improvisation-like passage to keep the character of the prelude that provided us an improvisatory feel as well.

¹² Albert Schweitzer, *J.S. Bach* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1966), 89.

Then Franck foreshadowed the melodic contour of the fugue here in the transition part. On one hand, he might get the idea from Bach's Prelude and Fugue in E flat major, BWV 876 about the contour of the melody but he changed to the opposite direction. In Bach's work, it started from the ascending triad to the descending scale but in Franck's piece, he started with the descending triad before he moved to the ascending scale.

Figure 6 Bach's Prelude and Fugue in E flat major BWV 876



On the other hand, the shape of melody was also like the melody in Gavotte from Bach's French Suite No.5, BWV 816. It started with the descending triad then changed to the ascending scale which was similar to what Franck did in the Transition.

Figure 7 Bach's French Suite No.5 BWV 816 in Gavotte



Figure 8 Franck's Transition (mm.57-59)



There was a relationship between the opening figures of Fugue and the short Transition which acted like Bach's prelude that introduced the theme of fugue. One can find such motivic connection between the beginning of prelude and its accompanying fugue in many works of Bach, for example, in Prelude and Fugue in A

minor, BWV 865. So Franck also applied this kind of motivic connection in his work at the opening figures of the fugue and its transition too.

Figure 9 Franck's Transition and Fugue (mm.51-52) and (mm.60-62)



In terms of the form of Fugue, Franck followed the formal structure of Bach's Fugue in the Baroque tradition which consisted of subject, answer, countersubject, and some of other devices such as fragmentation and stretto. Franck wrote this Fugue in four parts writing and started the first subject in the tenor part at the dominant (F \sharp). Then the answer was introduced in the alto part begun with the tonic (B) and developed to dominant key by raising G to G \sharp moving from B minor to F \sharp minor. It is a tonal answer in which the first note of the answer is altered to stay within the key.

After the exposition was finished in measure 93, followed by the dominant pedal point in the bass part in measures 94-97 then the short episode was introduced. Here the ideas from prelude were developed again. This is similar to the idea of Bach in his Prelude and Fugue in B minor, BWV 893. However, Franck changed it to the opposite direction. He brought the theme of ascending intervals back but changed to turn it backward or retrograde it by starting from spreading the interval first before returning to the group of repeated notes.

Figure 10 Franck's Fugue (mm.94-97)



Then the stretto part was introduced in measure 119. Here Franck applied the mode change to the melody. The Phrygian tetrachords of E-D-C natural-B and A-G-F natural-E were used like in many compositions from earlier period. For example, in the opening theme of Bach's Chaconne in D minor, BWV 1004, we can hear the Phrygian tetrachord in the bass part and it was used as an ostinato bass throughout the Chaconne. In the music of the Baroque period, this tetrachord was widely associated with the symbol of death.¹³

Figure 11 Franck's Fugue (mm.120-121, mm.123-124)



Franck loved to use a diminished seventh chord throughout the whole piece and many times he used it as a substitute chord for a dominant chord. This made the tone color of the piece turn to a sorrowful and dramatic one which was similar to many of Bach's works. That Bach used diminished seventh chords in the circumstances which relayed emotions of grief¹⁴. It was how he created chromaticism in his compositions which proved that Bach was ahead of his time. Chromaticism was also one of the most used compositional devices Franck applied in his romantic works. In this piece, for example, he occasionally used A#, E#, G# and C# diminished seventh chord to substitute for the dominant chord in the Prélude, the Transition, and some other places in the Fugue to add color and variety of sound to the piece.

In Variation, after Franck reached the climax point in the Fugue which could represent the picture of reaching the transcendence of God's realm, he changed the

¹³ Marina Fabrikant, "Bach-Busoni Chaconne: A Piano Transcription analysis" (D.M.A. diss., University of Nebraska, 2006), 24.

¹⁴ Ibid., 47.

mood by using the passage with semiquaver notes to paint a release after tension. The device he brought from Baroque tradition to apply here was “lamento”. It is a descending chromatic line used as a symbol of affliction which was associated with the Doctrine of Affections – an aesthetic theory of Baroque period that hold certain musical devices linked with specific emotion¹⁵. Grief or pain, for example, could be represented by this dissonance descending chromatic line. It started from D then chromatically moved down to C[#]-C-B-A-G-F[#]-E[#]-E along with the accompaniment in the right hand to give a feeling of sadness before returning to the Prélude theme.

Figure 12 Franck’s Variation (mm.145-146)



In this section, there were an embellished accompaniment in the middle inner line accompany until the ending. The accompaniment created a static mood that keep returning to the unity of the piece. Plus, the idea of three note motive from the beginning of the prelude and fugue, broken chords, and ascending scale which represent Bach’s style that were employed before in the preceding section was used again in the accompaniment throughout this section. Then it was closed with the Picardie third on B major chord which was another trait that derived from Bach.

Conclusion

As a Romantic composer who admired Johann Sebastian Bach, César Franck was able to capture his style in the composition. He brought the elements that represented Bach’s works including number of measures, up and down melodic contour, broken chords, stepwise motion, sequences, Phrygian tetrachords, lamento,

¹⁵ Daniel S. Mahlberg, “The Baroque Continuum: The Influence of the “Praeludien” from Bach’s Well-Tempered Clavier on Chopin’s Préludes, Op.28” (D.M.A. diss., California State University Dominguez Hills, 2007), 112.

and Picardie Third to show his musical idea of how to bring back the Baroque traditions through the style of Bach. Franck simplified the techniques that Bach usually applied in his works such as fragmentation, stretto, and retrograde and developed them to his compositional devices. *Prélude Fugue et Variation in B minor, Op.18* shows that it has some salient characteristics derived from Bach and proved that Franck use the Bach's model as an inspiration to compose this piece.

Bibliography

- Boyd, Malcolm. *J. S. Bach*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Cheung, Dorothy. "Selected Piano Works of Franck, Haydn, and Chopin." D.M.A. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1992.
- Fabrikant, Marina. "Bach-Busoni Chaconne: A Piano Transcription Analysis." D.M.A. diss., University of Nebraska, 2006.
- Fishbaugh, Ronald L. "Elements of Romantic Tendency in Selected Keyboard Works of J.S. Bach: A Study with References to the Visual Arts." D.M.A. diss., New York University, 1978.
- Hester, Nicholas. "César Franck – A New French Unity." D.M.A. diss., University of York, 2015.
- Longyear, Rey M. *Nineteenth-Century Romanticism in Music*. Englewood Cliff, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969.
- Mahlberg, Daniel S. "The Baroque Continuum: The Influence of the "Praeludien" from Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier on Chopin's Préludes, Op.28." D.M.A. diss., California State University Dominguez Hills, 2007.
- Oh, Jihye. "Number Symbolism in J. S. Bach's Keyboard Music." D.M.A. diss., Claremont Graduate University, 2016.
- Schweitzer, Albert. *J.S. Bach*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1966.
- Stove, Robert J. *César Franck His Life and Times*. United Kingdom: Scarecrow Press, 2012.
- Sung, Anna. "The Cavaillé-Coll Organ and César Franck's Six Pièces." D.M.A. diss., Arizona State University, 2012.