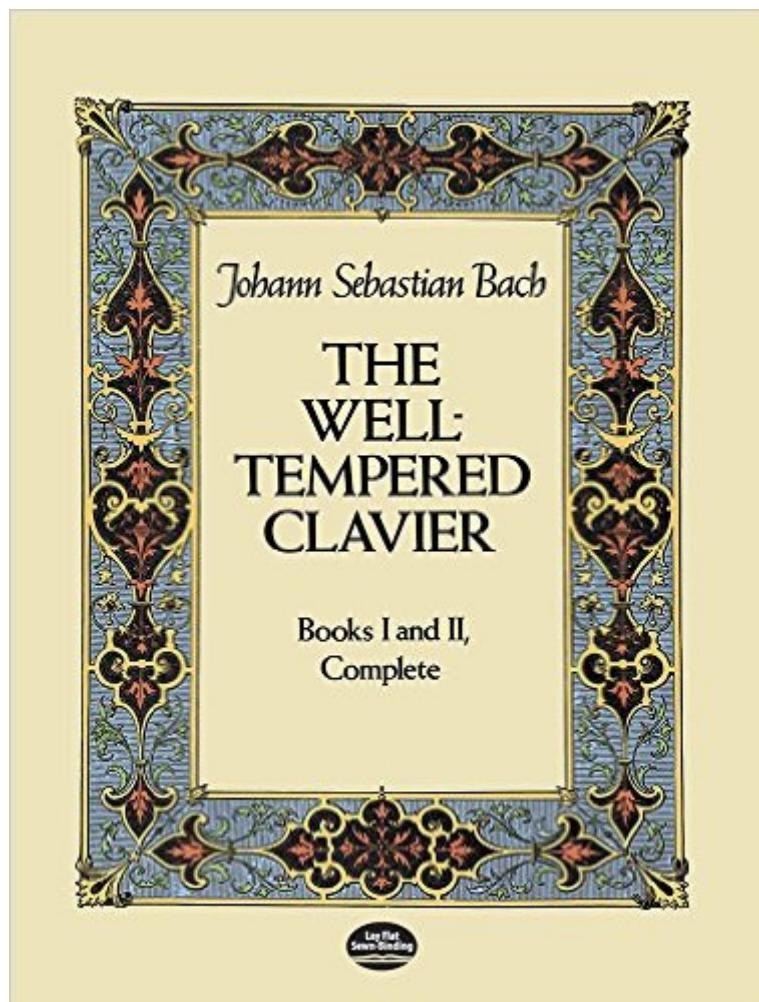


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# The Well-Tempered Clavier: Books I And II, Complete (Dover Music For Piano)



## Synopsis

"His art was of an encyclopedic nature, drawing together and surmounting the techniques, the styles, and the general achievements of his own and earlier generations and leading to a new perspective." â " Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians. This informed assessment of the genius of Bach's works can be applied with greatest accuracy to The Well-Tempered Clavier. This highly influential work is monumental in the history of Western music. It represents not only the culmination of Bach's own maturation process, but also the galvanization of the emerging style and structure of modern keyboard music. The grace and fecundity of The Well-Tempered Clavier have thrilled audiences, musicians, and composers for centuries. Mozart, when rapidly advancing to the height of his mastery, had but to read a manuscript copy of The Well-Tempered Clavier and his style developed a new polyphonic richness and depth of harmony. Beethoven studied all the accessible works of Bach profoundly (including The Well-Tempered Clavier) and frequently quoted them in his sketchbooks, often with direct bearing on his own works. Chopin is nowhere more characteristic than when he shows his love of The Well-Tempered Clavier in his Etudes and Preludes. It was Schumann who, in a series of maxims for young musicians, said "Make The Well-Tempered Clavier your daily bread." This remarkable volume contains all 48 preludes and fugues, from Books I and II, in all major keys, reproduced directly from the authoritative Bach-Gesellschaft edition. The fine engraving is beautiful, clear, and easy to read. These elegant pieces, which vary in difficulty, are available complete in one low-cost, convenient Dover edition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Another incredible bargain from Dover. Although I think their edition of the Beethoven complete string quartets (in a single volume!) is probably the best buy in all of music, this edition of The Well Tempered Clavier is a strong competitor. (If only it had included The Art of Fugue!) This is the edition I recommend for my students because of the clarity, absence of artificial or misleading editorial markings, ease of page turns, and cost. It is not perfect; what edition EVER is--in this case, one of my quibbles is that of all the minor key fugues, only ONE (g# minor) ends without a picardy (raised) third--it simply must be an oversight, and interestingly the accidental already present in the key signature is repeated unnecessarily. Surely B natural should have been B sharp in the final measure. Regardless of the slight problems, this is the single best tool to learn Baroque counterpoint in general and fugue specifically. No textbook I know of is capable of demonstrating the fluidity of form, nor describing the sophistication of melodic and contrapuntal writing that Bach employs. Every book I know of oversimplifies or even avoids the issues that Bach so admirably handles. The answers are here, in the music, not in a text. Absolutely invaluable for the serious music student.

This edition is certainly the most inexpensive on the market. True, it is "no frills" Bach--without the help of fingerings and phrasing--but I found the edition very useful. For instance, the Alfred edition takes up six pages for the Fugue in C# Maj, Book I, whereas this Dover edition only takes two. I found this very useful when playing from this edition because page turns are impossible with Bach!!

No doubt we should be pleased with this edition, stripped clean of editorials, phrasings, and fingerings, it seems very close to the "source," as Bach wrote it without the frills and boxes of an "expert" interpretation. For a basic manuscript, this is the one, complete and clear. It elucidates how much room Bach left us to find ourselves in his music, rather than finding Czerny or Tovey. In this edition, Bach's assurances as a great teacher shine through: solve it yourself, but know that it is all possible.

When I saw that The Well-Tempered Clavier had only received four and half stars, I asked myself "if one of the supreme masterworks of one of the greatest composers of all times only gets four and a half stars, what the heck gets five stars?" I love this music, and I like the Dover edition. It's true, it's

not quite as legible as the Henle Urtext edition (what ever is?), but it's as good a version of the score, there are fewer page turns, it contains both books in one volume, and, since it's a fraction of the price of the Henle edition, you can afford to buy two copies, one for writing in, and one for when you want to look at a clean score.'s current price comes out to less than five cents a page. You can't photocopy it for less! I've bought several copies over the years, so that I could give them away to people I thought would enjoy them. No single work of music, by any composer, has brought me as much enjoyment. I'm buying another copy today so that I can have one in my office and one at home. I'll stop raving now ...

Dover's strategy of reprinting venerable old editions of classical masterworks has been a godsend for musicians everywhere. Many of their reprints are of critical editions that were the best available at the time. Kroll's edition of Bach works for the Bach Gesellschaft, the source of this particular Dover volume, dates from the mid-nineteenth century, but his Well-Tempered Clavier holds up well scholarship-wise. Although the editors of the modern Henle publication had the benefit of being able to access Bach's autograph of Book II, the differences for the most part are not crucial, and the readings in the Dover volume are entirely defensible even today. Having both books of this cornerstone of the keyboard literature together in one easy-to-read volume makes this a bargain hard to pass up for performers, scholars and serious listeners alike. The one disadvantage for those interested in the many variant readings of these pieces is that only the editor's choice is given. For a comprehensive survey of the former, the Hans Bischoff edition is worth digging up--it has been reprinted both by Kalmus and G. Schirmer. Incidentally, I feel compelled to respond to some textual comments on the work itself from other reviewers: 1) The minor ending of the G-sharp minor Fugue from Book I is the reading generally accepted as correct; 2) The extra measure found in some editions of the C major Prelude from Book I is spurious, the product of an overzealous editor of the one of the early printed editions of the WTC, Schwenke. Unfortunately Gounod included it in his Ave Maria based on this prelude, which has ensured its continued existence.

I got this book when I just learned to play the prelude 1 c major, and thought I would look into others later, even though the majority of those preludes and fugues are far beyond my ability to play. Since then I have tried to play prelude 2 (I) and prelude 24 (II) that is extremly beautiful though not easy to play, and I have listened all preludes and some fugues from CD or midi files with this book opened in front of me. I realized how great Bach's music is. Only complaint is that the cover of the book isn't glued strong enough, which is now seperated from the content pages already after only a short

period use. Also, the prelude 1 (book I) is probably the correct version, but I have seen from some other books the other version with an extra measure between bar 22 and 23. I now play it with the extra measure since it seems making sense to me.

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