

Ex. 2-5

English Suite III, Gavotte I (mm. 1-8)

General Observations

DIRECTED STUDY

Based on what you hear and see in the music above, what would you say it is, in general terms, that makes this good counterpoint?¹ Are the voices individually satisfying? Do they make sense as independent musical lines? Are they always of equal interest and importance, or are there moments when one voice seems merely supportive? If so, under what conditions does this happen? In what ways do the voices relate, in terms of the musical materials they share? In what ways, generally speaking, are they kept distinct from each other?

DISCUSSION

The music of Bach embodies all the fundamental principles of good counterpoint. These include:

1. *Integrity* of the individual voices. Each voice is a satisfying line with the characteristics of melody discussed in Chapter 1. Each is coherent motivically, well-shaped, and clear in meter and harmony.
2. *Equality* or near-equality of both voices. There are times at which one voice will dominate because of its rhythmic activity, but there is little feeling overall that the lower voice is merely harmonic or figurative support. This will of course vary to some degree with the movement under discussion.

1. As suggested on p. xiii, the Directed Study materials can be omitted or deferred until a later point in each chapter, at the discretion of the instructor.