Jon S. Entwistle MUS707 – Analysis in Relation to Performance Spring 2014

#### J. S. Bach French Suite #4 in Eb major, BWV 815 Form analysis

"My method of teaching, briefly, consists of ensuring that the player should as early as possible ... grasp what we call 'the artistic image', that is: the content, meaning, the poetic substance, the essence of the music, and be able to understand thoroughly in terms of theory of music (naming it, explaining it), what it is he is dealing with. A clear understanding of this goal enables the player to strive for it, to attain it and embody it in his performance; and that is what 'technique' is all about."

Heinrich Neuhaus, "The Art of Piano Playing"

#### **History of the Suites**

Although this paper is primarily about form analysis, a brief review of Baroque dance suites is appropriate, since an understanding of the types of dances will aid the performer in establishing suitable tempos and character.

By the time of J.S. Bach, the Baroque dance suite had become somewhat standardized, and typically included an Allemande, Courante, Sarabande and Gigue (ACSG), along with possibly a Prelude (or other introductory movement) before the Allemande and other dances immediately preceding the Gigue. For Bach the meter, tempo and character of these four dances were most commonly:

Allemande -	4/4, moderate, serious/stately
Courante -	3/2 or 3/4, quick (as in the Italian Corrente), "running"
Sarabande -	3/4, slow, ornate (highly ornamented)
Gigue -	6/8, fast, lively

The French Suite #4 features the following movements: Allemande, Courante, Sarabande, Gavotte, Air, and Gigue. The meter, tempo and character of the two additional movements were most commonly:

Gavotte -	4/4 or 2/2, moderate, somewhat light
Air -	4/4, moderate, song-like, lyrical

# Form Analysis

Allemande	e (*): Moderate, serious/stately
	Simple Binary Form   : A :  : B :   in 4/4 time A moving from I (Eb major) -> V (Bb major), B moving from V -> I 3-part free counterpoint
Courante (	*): Quick (Italian Corrente), "running" Simple Binary Form   : A :  : B :   in 3/4 time A moving from I (Eb major) -> V (Bb major), B moving from V -> I 2-part free counterpoint
Sarabande	(*): Slow, ornate (highly ornamented) Simple Binary Form   : A :  : B :   in 3/4 time A moving from I (Eb major) -> V (Bb major), B moving from V -> I 2-part free counterpoint with chords
Gavotte:	Moderate, somewhat light Simple Binary Form   : A :  : B :   in 2/2 time A moving from I (Eb major) -> V (Bb major), B moving from V -> I 2-part free counterpoint
Air:	Moderate, song-like, lyrical Simple Binary Form   : A :  : B :   in 4/4 time A moving from I (Eb major) -> V (Bb major), B moving from V -> I 2-part free counterpoint
Gigue (*):	Fast, lively Simple Binary Form   : A :  : B :   in 6/8 time A moving from I (Eb major) -> V (Bb major), B moving from V -> I 2-part free counterpoint

\* - Standard Baroque dance movements (ACSG)

# **General considerations**

All the dances are written in free counterpoint and not imitative counterpoint (although there is plenty of imitation in many of the dances), so the fugal terms subject, answer, countersubject, and episode do not apply. Instead, the various *motives* – whether rhythmic or melodic – provide the crucial unifying features of the dances. These motives are identified for each individual dance movement below. (Perhaps it should go without saying that these motives are as I see them – I am sure other musicians could argue legitimately for different ones.)

Additionally, sequences are used extensively throughout the dances. In the descriptions, the parenthetical note movements refer to the first note of each occurrence of the sequence.

In the descriptions, "lines" and "voices" are used interchangeably.

For complete score markups, refer to Appendix A on pp. 18-23 for motivic analysis, and to Appendix B on pp. 24-29 for harmonic analysis.

# Allemande

# General considerations

There are three independent voices throughout the piece, with only a couple of exceptions:

- M.6, first two beats a brief fourth voice is added
- Mm.17-19 in two voices only.

At m.10 (end of A) and m.20 (end of B), Bach enriches the perfect cadence by having 4note chords. Additionally in mm.17-18 there are 4-note chords, and in m.14 and m.16 there are 5-note chords!

For performance, these 4- and 5-note chords can be slightly emphasized by pausing a moment before continuing the line, as if starting a new phrase. Also, pedal adds resonance to a chord, so even in a "dry" performance it would not be inappropriate to pedal the last chords of A and B – but not to apply the pedal until the base line changes up an octave to its last note.

There is a constant flow of 16<sup>th</sup> notes, always in one of the two upper voices (but never both), keeping a dynamic pulse going. The bass line is usually in 8<sup>th</sup> notes, with the exception of the half notes in the four first measures each of A and B.

Allemande (cont.)

# Motivic analysis

For this movement there are two related motives for the 16<sup>th</sup> notes, and one motive for the bass line 8<sup>th</sup> notes.

The first and most prevalent a-motive appears in its original form as a 4-note group of three  $16^{th}$ s and a (possibly longer) fourth note, starting just after the beat, with a step then skip (usually a  $3^{rd}$ ) in the same upward direction, followed by a downward skip. In this form, it can be seen at the beginning of both A and B as the first of several occurrences. It also occurs in the final chords of both A and B – specifically the first note is played, then the last three notes form the spelling of the cadence as 3-5-1. It occurs in mm.16-18, also as part of chord spellings. And the chord spelling in m.14 can be seen as a variant, where for voice leading reasons the last note is an octave higher, so moving in the same upward direction as the first three notes.



Allemande a-motive

The a-motive appears in altered form in mm.3-5, played in inversion, where the skip downwards from the second to the third note is followed by a step upwards:



Allemande a'-motive

Allemande – Motivic analysis (cont.)

A somewhat similar 4-note group is the b-motive, with the same note values as the amotive. It appears in mm.6-8 – the first time introduced as a fourth voice – where the upward step from the first to the second note is followed by two downward skips for the third and fourth notes, usually forming a triad.



Allemande b-motive

This b-motive also appears in m.13 in the last seven 16<sup>th</sup> notes as two occurrences, the final one lacking its fourth note, for which the listener hears the bass half note Ab in the next measure as its "resolution".

In the bottom voice 8<sup>th</sup> notes, the c-motive can be seen in mm.7-9, and again in mm.17-18, and is a 5-note group with the first note followed by a lower neighbor, back up by step (usually back to the first note), then a jump by a 3<sup>rd</sup> downward, and a jump by perfect 4<sup>th</sup> upward. Its significance is its having a strong cadential V-I feeling from the last two notes, and the second-third-fifth notes giving the melodic feeling of 6-7-8(=1).



Allemande c-motive

Harmonic analysis:

Key of A-section: Eb major, moving to Bb major (V)

Mm 1-3. The upper voice in 16ths moves in an ascending sequence (Bb to C to D to Eb) using the a-motive, above a rising bass line which moves from Eb to Bb and reaches a Allemande – Harmonic analysis (cont.)

I 6/4 tonality in the last beat of m.3. The middle voice parallels the bass line until m.3, after which it becomes an independent line moving in quarter notes. At the third beat of m.3 the upper voice begins an 8-note descending sequence (D to C to Bb to Ab, leading to G) using the a'-motive.

M 4. The bottom voice Bb acts as a pedal point, while the upper voice continues its descending sequence and the middle voice fills in supporting harmonies.

M 5. The sequence ends with the harmony of IV-V6-I in beats 1-3. The bass line then changes to 8<sup>th</sup> notes which, combined with the 16<sup>th</sup> notes, gives the effect of increasing intensity, and continues to the end of A.

M 6. The harmony is IV-V-I in beats 1-3(4), while the upper voice ascends to an Eb, beginning a slow descent Eb-D-C-Bb-Ab-G-F-Eb-D in subsequent measures to the end of A.

Mm 7-9. The bottom voice begins a 5-note descending sequence (Bb (B) to G to D) using the c-motive. The upper voices alternate between  $16^{th}$  notes and quarter notes, giving an antiphonal effect. In m.8 the descending line is picked up by the middle voice while the upper voice ascends above it to a high F, then coming down to a Bb (top of the Bb chord ending).

M.10. The last measure of A reaches a cadence on Bb major, now the ending key. The harmony changes as V 6/5–I- IV- V7-I in the new key.

Key of B-section: Bb major, moving back to Eb major

Mm.11-13. The first two bars are similar to the opening measures, while being in the key of Bb major, and with the bass line acting as a pedal point. B then diverges from A in its modulation to the key of C minor in m.13.

Mm.13-15. The voices continue in C minor, setting up an expectation of a tonic chord in the first beat of m.15. This expectation is not met, rather a V 4/3 in F minor resolving to its tonic occurs in the first three beats of m.15.

M.16. A strong V7-I cadence ends the C minor tonality on the fourth beat.

Mm.17-18. A descending sequence (G to E) using the c-motive in the lower voice (and sequential-like upper voice 16<sup>th</sup>s) leads through the tonal centers of Ab major and F minor before heading back to the key of Eb major.

Mm.19-20. The beginning key of Eb major is arrived at, and the last bar gives a final cadential progression of I 6/4-II6-V7-I.

# <u>Courante</u>

#### General considerations

There are two independent voices throughout, the only exception being a third voice added in mm.1-2. Given the "running" character of the dance, the two lines should be played with a light quality.

### Motivic analysis

There are two motives, one melodic in the upper voice and one rhythmic in the lower voice.

The a-motive for the upper voice includes four notes, the first three as 8<sup>th</sup> note triplets, the first note always on the beat, with a skip between the first and second notes, and a step in the opposite direction between the second and third notes. Because the triplet always lead to a fourth note on the next beat, several variations are possible:

- a-motive  $4^{th}$  note skips in the same direction as the  $2^{nd}$  to  $3^{rd}$  notes
- a'-motive  $4^{th}$  note skips in the opposite direction as the  $2^{nd}$  to  $3^{rd}$  notes
- a''-motive 4<sup>th</sup> note repeats the 2<sup>nd</sup> note, so giving the 3<sup>rd</sup> note the function of a neighbor note (and is used cadentially at the end of A and B)
- a'''-motive  $4^{th}$  note continues the stepwise motion from the  $2^{nd}$  to  $3^{rd}$  notes
- a'''-motive 4<sup>th</sup> note repeats the 3<sup>rd</sup> note.



Courante a-motive (see Appendix A-2 on p. 19 for other variations)

The b-motive for the lower voice is the pattern, always starting on the beat, of dotted 8<sup>th</sup> note followed by 16<sup>th</sup> note, best played as a light skipping rhythm.



Courante b-motive

Courante (cont.)

#### Harmonic analysis

Key of A-section: Eb major, moving to Bb major (V)

Mm.1-5. The upper voice has a steady progression of triplets up to the first beat of m.5, apart from the first two notes, and the quarter note in m. 2 which makes up the end of an a-motive. The lower voice proceeds with the rhythmic b-motive as accompaniment. The last beat of m.4 has the a''-motive, with its cadential feeling, leading to a high G at the beginning of m.5.

Mm.5-8. A two-measure descending sequence (G to F) marks the upper voice. The lower voice also employs a descending sequence (Eb to D) in m.5 and m.7.

Mm.9-11. The upper voice changes to an ascending sequence (G to Eb to A) for the three measures. The harmony moves toward the key of Bb major, with its dominant V7 chord heard in m.11.

Mm.12-16. The key of Bb major is reached on the first beat of m.12, and cadences V-I in the third beat of m.12 and first beat of m.13. A 6-note ascending sequence (G to Bb, leading to D) follows in the top voice in mm.14-15, leading to a V-I cadence in mm.15-16 (end of A).

Key of B-section: Bb major, moving back to Eb major

Mm.17-20. The key changes to C minor, with its dominant in m.18 (actually a 9<sup>th</sup> chord with the top Ab) and tonic in m.19, which continues through m.20.

Mm.21-27. The key of Ab major is visited briefly in mm.21-22, then F minor is modulated to on the first beat of m.24. This key is continued through to its V-I cadence in mm.27-28. The melodic high note Bb of the section in F minor is reached in m.26. This extended section in F minor is the high point of B and so should be given appropriate emphasis (such as with a crescendo up to its melodic high note).

M.28. The cadence of F minor is reached.

Mm.29-36. A measure-long ascending sequence (D to G, leading to C) in the upper voice is heard in mm.29-30, leading to the return of Eb major, emphasized by its dominant V7 in m.32. The dance concludes with a 6-note ascending sequence (C to Eb, leading to G) in mm.34-35, similar to that in A in mm.14-15, followed by the final V-I cadence in mm.35-36.

# <u>Sarabande</u>

#### General considerations

There are two independent voices throughout, with the addition of chordal notes to mark the cadences at the ends of A and B (similar to the Allemande), and other chords, always on the second beat as a half note (or notes). One other occurrence is in m.16, which marks an important cadential point and occurs on the third beat.

This movement gives the player an opportunity to be freely ornamental, adding trills, turns, mordents etc. One suggestion would be to play the first time through A and B with very few ornaments, and on the repeats be highly ornamental, to maximize the contrast between initial and repeated sections.

# Motivic analysis

There are two prominent motives used, one a specific 5-note group and the other a scalar passage of indeterminate length (apart from musical logic).

The a-motive consists of five notes, starting on the first beat as an 8<sup>th</sup> note followed by two 16<sup>th</sup> notes, the three notes ascending by step, and in the second beat as (usually) a half note. In most cases additional notes are added to form a chord.



Sarabande a-motive

The second motive is perhaps better described as a feature – that is, a slow stepwise progression of 8<sup>th</sup> notes (slow because of the courtly character of the dance). Not counting groups of just a few notes, the shortest example in mm.12-13 has six notes, while the longest example in mm.1-2 has no fewer than 12 notes!



Sarabande b-motive

Sarabande (cont.)

#### Harmonic analysis

Key of A-section: Eb major, moving to Bb major (V)

Mm.1-8. The music proceeds in a slow stately fashion, the two voices alternating in their use of the a- and b-motives, with a fairly strong Eb major cadence V7-I in mm.4-5, before modulating to Bb major in mm.6-8 using a V7-I progression. This is followed by the cadential progression II7-V-I in mm.7-8. As mentioned above, the slow 8<sup>th</sup> note progressions (b-motive), gives the performer many opportunities to embellish the texture with trills or other ornaments, especially when repeating the section.

The 16<sup>th</sup> notes in mm.7-8 (end of A) are an additional unifying feature of the dance, since they appear again in mm.15-16 and mm.23-24 (end of B), in all cases leading to a cadential V-I.

Key of B-section: Bb major, moving back to Eb major

Mm.9-16. The initial key of Bb major quickly moves to F minor by way of VII-I in mm.10-11, then reinforced by the V7-I progression in mm.12-13. This tonality continues to a strong cadence in mm.15-16. The section and its cadence have an increased tension due to the steady 16<sup>th</sup> notes in the upper voice in mm.14-16, similar to the endings of A and B.

Mm.17-24. The initial key of Eb major is quickly established in mm.17-18 by way of a V7-I progression. The dance continues with various 16<sup>th</sup> note figures in the upper voice, underpinned by the 8<sup>th</sup> notes in the lower voice, leading to the final cadential progression I-II-V7-I in mm.23-24.

# **Gavotte**

#### General considerations

There are two independent voices throughout, the only exception being a single chord note added in m.20. As with the Courante, this dance should have a light quality to it; its couplets and quick imitation between the voices suggest a playful feeling.

#### Motivic analysis

There is one prominent melodic/rhythmic feature used throughout, in both voices. This is a group of five notes, the first four as 8<sup>th</sup> notes:

- 1<sup>st</sup> note to 2<sup>nd</sup> note descent by skip,
- 2<sup>nd</sup> note to 3<sup>rd</sup> note ascent by step,
- 3<sup>rd</sup> note to 4<sup>th</sup> note descent by skip.

Gavotte – Motivic analysis (cont.)

The pattern is thus down-up-down. The effect of the two skips is to give a feeling of two groups of two notes each. (This edition emphasizes the grouping into couplets by its use of slurs, but other editions do not have them.) The fifth note, longer than an 8<sup>th</sup> note and so having a feeling of arrival, is always a descent by step in A, but can jump up or down in B, such as in m.8 (second ending of A and start of B).



Gavotte a-motive

Two variations are seen on this. The a'-motive is distinguished from the a-motive only by the last (fifth) note also being an 8<sup>th</sup> note. It is used to continue the melodic line while relating it to the a-motive.



Gavotte a'-motive

The a''-motive of four notes has the same pattern as the first four notes of the a-motive, but in inversion, so also skip-step-skip, but up-down-up rather than down-up-down.





#### Harmonic analysis

Key of A-section: Eb major, moving to Bb major (V)

Mm.1-8. This movement has the strongest imitative quality among the six dances, with both voices employing the a-motive, the lower voice following the upper voice a half measure later, and in many cases followed again by the upper voice another half measure later etc. This gives the movement a delightful "back and forth" antiphonal quality. The initial key of Eb major modulates to Bb major in mm.5-6 with a (VII)-I progression (implied by its tritone resolution), which is then reinforced by the V-I progression in mm.7-8 (end of A).

Key of B-section: Bb major, moving back to Eb major

Mm.8-12. The initial key of Bb major quickly modulates to C minor in mm.10-12 by way of a VI-V-I cadence. The upper voice uses a 4-note descending sequence (G to F to Eb, leading to C) in mm.10-11.

Mm.13-16. The key of C minor continues, ending with the V-I cadence in mm.15-16.

Mm.16-18. The dance moves briefly through F minor on its way to Eb major, with its V7-I cadence in mm.17-18. The upper voice has an 8-note descending sequence (C to Bb, leading to Ab).

Mm.18-22. The dance ends in the original key of Eb major, with a V7-I-V-I progression in the last two measures. The upper voice utilizes a 4-note descending sequence (Ab to G to F, leading to Eb) in mm.18-19 – a fairly close inversion of the sequence in mm.10-11. The lower voice proceeds in lock step with its own descending sequence (C to Bb to Ab).

# <u>Air</u>

# General considerations

There are two independent voices throughout, without exception.

#### Motivic analysis

The most obvious feature of the movement is the continuous stream of 16<sup>th</sup> notes, usually in the upper voice, and typically accompanied by steady 8<sup>th</sup> notes in the lower voice. These 16<sup>th</sup> notes proceed without any breaks, apart from the cadences in the last measures each of A (second ending) and B.

Air – Motive analysis (cont.)

In keeping with a song-like or lyrical character, the 16<sup>th</sup>s should be played with a relaxed feeling, just "rolling off" the notes.

In addition to this major feature, one characteristic motive begins both A and B (B in inversion). This a-motive skips from the first note upwards to the second note, which is the start of a descending scale continuing to its tonal root. Another occurrence is in mm. 16-17, identical to m.1 and its upbeats, when the key of Eb major is reestablished.



Air a-motive

One variation is the a'-motive in which the scale ascends rather than descends, and which occurs only in B.



Air a'-motive

# Harmonic analysis

Key of A-section: Eb major, moving to Bb major (V)

Mm.1-6. The upper voice starts with the a-motive, closely followed by the lower voice in imitation. (This also occurs at the start of B and in mm.16-17, but otherwise there are no other imitative parts in the movement.) One feature of A is the 13-note ascending sequence (G to A) in mm.2-3, leading towards the modulation to Bb in mm.5-6 with its V-I cadence.

Key of B-section: Bb major, moving back to Eb major

Mm.6-12. As mentioned above B starts with the a'-motive (inversion of the a-motive) in the upper voice followed closely by imitation in the lower voice. The harmony quickly Air – Harmonic analysis (cont.)

changes from Bb major to C minor, with V and I tonal centers in mm.7-8 and mm.11-12. (Since no chords are involved, the harmonic changes are deduced from the melodic 16<sup>th</sup> notes as well as the longer held notes.)

Mm.13-16. The harmony moves through D major in m.13 to return to Eb major in m.14. The arrival of the original material in mm.16-17 is preceded by the V7-I cadence in m.16. The upper voice has an 8-note ascending sequence (Bb to D, leading to G) in mm.13-14, helping to move the harmonic texture back towards Eb major.

Mm.16-22. After the repeat of the initial a-motive in mm.16-17, the dance proceeds to its conclusion in mm.21-22 with a final cadence V-I. Along the way the upper voice has a 13-note ascending sequence (C to D), similar to that used in mm.2-3, and so providing unity between the endings of A and B.

# <u>Gigue</u>

#### General considerations

There are two independent voices throughout. A third voice (or chordal note) is added in a few places to fill in harmonic details: in mm.5-6, m.16, m.18, and m.26 (final cadence of A). A third voice is used expansively in mm.39-44, where it serves to intensify the character of the movement, and so should be considered a high point, leading to its cadence in m.44. Finally, extra chordal notes are added in m.33.

The dance should be played in a lively manner, and more openly exuberant than the preceding dances, appropriate to its being the ending movement of the suite.

# Motivic analysis

Three motives predominate in the dance. The a-motive is a rhythmic feature, four notes in a single measure grouped as two occurrences of quarter note then 8<sup>th</sup> note with a skip between, typically an interval of perfect 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup>. The first two notes are often repeated in the second group (e.g. in m. 1), but since the rhythmic element is primary, there are many exceptions, noted as the a'-motive: in m.4, m.16, m.21 etc.



Gigue a-motive

Gigue – Motivic analysis (cont.)



Gigue a'-motive

The b-motive is a melodic feature, six 8<sup>th</sup> notes in a single measure, in two groups of three, each group ascending or descending (both in the same direction) by step. In its most common form the first note of the second group starts one step (in the opposite direction) from the last note of the first group, which is a sequence.



Gigue b-motive

One variation is the b'-motive, where both groups are identical (e.g. m.7, m.9). Another variation is the b"-motive, where the first note of the second group repeats the last note of the first group, as in m.14.



Gigue b'-motive



Gigue b"-motive

Gigue – Motivic analysis (cont.)

(One is tempted to see a b-like motive everywhere, such as in the scalar passage in m.8, or in m.21 where one 3-note group descends by step but the other group does not. The three b-motives mentioned above are the most obviously recognizable examples.)

The c-motive is a group of six notes, one 8<sup>th</sup> note, ascending by skip to four 16<sup>th</sup> notes descending by step, then an 8<sup>th</sup> or longer note as the arrival point of the 16<sup>th</sup>s. These first appear in m.19, but then recur in mm.23-25 and mm.57-59, in both cases leading up to the final cadences of A and B. The c-motive thus has the function of accelerating the lively character of this suite's concluding dance.



Gigue c-motive

# Harmonic analysis

Key of A-section: Eb major, moving to Bb major (V)

Mm.1-14. Similar to the Gavotte and Air, the first measures feature one voice followed closely in imitation by the second voice. In this case, and different than the Gavotte and Air, the first entrance comes in the lower voice. This is a bit tricky for the performer, since the voice is shown starting in the treble clef – but it should still be played by the left hand to make visually clear the distinction between the lower and upper voices.

These two lines make extensive use of the a-motive and b-motive in combination, especially in the first seven measures. The upper voice features a two-measure descending sequence (Eb to D to C to Bb) in mm.7-14, while the lower voice also features a two-measure descending sequence (G to F to Eb to D) in the same measures.

Mm.15-26. The tonality moves towards Bb major, and is first established by the V7-I progression in mm.20-21, then by the V-I progression in mm.21-22. The next measures continue in the new key to the final chord in m.26 (end of A), while not having a cadential progression, but simply staying on and embellishing Bb major. The c-motive is used in mm.23-25 to mark the end of A.

Gigue – Harmonic analysis (cont.)

Key of B-section: Bb major, moving back to Eb major

Mm.27-34. As in the beginning of A, the first measures feature the two voices in close imitation – in this case with the upper voice leading. The key of Bb major continues through to mm.33-34, where Eb major is reached with its V7-I cadence. The upper voice has a two-measure ascending sequence (G to Ab, leading to Bb).

Mm.34-44. A two-measure descending sequence (Eb to C to B) moves the tonality toward C minor, which it reaches via the V7-I progression in mm.38-39. Note that the sequence is not exact – the first three notes are scalar in the first occurrence but not in the next two occurrences (although the last two have the same intervals), and the third occurrence only continues to the first note of m.39. The key of C minor continues through to mm.43-44, where it reaches a strong V-I cadence. As mentioned above, these measures should be considered a high point of B, especially with their addition of a third voice to intensify the section.

Mm.45-60. The dance quickly moves back to Eb major from C minor, being clearly established by the V7-I progression in mm.45-46. It continues in this key through to the end of the movement, with several occurrences of the a-motive and b-motive. Similar to the last measures of A, and so unifying the two sections, the c-motive appears in mm.57-59, and the last two measures end on a V7-I cadence, bringing the suite to a convincing close.





B. W. XLV. (1)

A-2



A-3



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A-4



A-5



A-6

APTENDIX B





B-2



B. W. XLV. (1)



B-4



B-5



B. W. XLV. (1)

B-6

ETT

2