

Music 232

Chapter 5, Voice Leading

These notes are a distillation of Kostka/Payne's Tonal Harmony. They are in no way a substitute for reading and working through the actual text book.

Overview

- The melodic line
- Four-part notation
- Motion between chords
- Parallel motion

I. Voice Leading (according to K/P)

A. VOICE LEADING: the way chord progressions are produced by the motions of individual musical lines (i.e. counterpoint)

II. The Melodic Line – see example 5-1 for examples

- A. Rhythm: should be simple with durations equal or larger than the duration of the beat. The final note should be on a strong beat
- B. Harmony: chords tones only
- C. Contour: mostly conjunct interesting shape, but clear with a single focal point (climax)
- D. Leaps:
1. avoid augmented intervals, 7ths, 9ths and higher
 2. diminished intervals ok if resolved by step in the opposite direction
 3. resolve leaps greater than a P4
 4. Small consecutive leaps in the same direction are ok if they outline a triad
- E. Tendency tones:
1. leading tone resolves up to the tonic; exceptions are the 1-7-6-5 melody line, or when the leading tone is in the alto or tenor and resolved by an adjacent upper voice
 2. scale degree 4 usually goes to scale degree 3 (not as strict as the leading tone tendency)

III. Notating chords on the grand staff

- A. Four-part textures, SATB
1. top voices (soprano or tenor) stems up
 2. bottom voices (alto or bass) stems down
- B. Can represent a reduced score

IV. Voicing

- A. How the chord is distributed in space (see example 5-7)
1. CLOSE STRUCTURE: less than an octave between the soprano and tenor
 2. OPEN STRUCTURE: an octave or more between the soprano and tenor
- B. Voice crossing: no voice crossing with the outer voices, but occasional crossing of the inner voices is possible to avoid more severe voice-leading problems
- C. Spacing:
1. adjacent upper parts (but NOT the bass) should be within an octave of each other
 2. between the tenor and the bass more than an octave is fine
 3. Range: Soprano C-G; Alto G-D; Tenor C-G; Bass E-C

V. Moving from chord to chord

- A. Parallel motion
1. no parallel perfects
 2. no anti-parallel perfects
- B. Unequal fifths
1. P5 to \circ 5 or \circ 5 to P5: ok unless \circ 5 to P5 is with the bass and another voice
- C. Hidden/Direct perfects
2. forbidden if only between the outer voices
 3. ok with an outer voice and an inner voice, or just with inner voices
 4. ok in outer voices if the soprano moves by step
 5. generally easier to have in instrumental textures