

Music 231

Fourth Species Counterpoint, Two Parts

These notes are a distillation (with supplements and editorials, in red) of Salzter/Schacter's Counterpoint in Composition. It is in no way a substitute for reading and working through the actual text book.

New Material

- Suspensions

I. General observations

- A. Fourth species consists of tied half notes
 1. Always begins with a half rest
 2. The second half note is never tied in the penultimate measure
- B. The rhythmic and melodic activity is on the second pulse, rather like a displaced first species
- C. This displacement creates the syncopation characteristic of fourth species

II. Dissonant suspension

- A. Three phases
 1. Preparation: tie from a consonance on the weak beat
 2. Suspension: dissonance on the strong beat
 3. Resolution: stepwise and down to the weak beat (also a decrease in melodic tension)
- B. Dissonance treatment
 1. Second half note of the measure must be consonant
 2. First half note is dissonant (only by suspension) or otherwise consonant

III. Four possible dissonant suspensions in the upper counterpoint

- A. 7-6 (good)
- B. 4-3 and Aug4-3 (good) (same for 11-10, +11-10)
- C. 9-8 (avoid whenever possible)
- D. 2-1 (not used)

IV. Four possible dissonant suspensions in the lower counterpoint

- A. 2-3 (good)
- B. 9-10 (good)
- C. 4-5 (less good and never consecutively)
- D. 7-8 (not used)

V. Consonant suspensions

- A. Consonance on the first beat allows movement upward or by disjunct motion
- B. Four possible consonant suspensions
 1. Upper counterpoint
 - 5-6 ascending
 - 6-5 descending
 2. Lower counterpoint
 - 5-6 descending
 - 6-5 ascending
- C. Should not occur frequently

VI. Suspensions in series

- A. Upper counterpoint
 - 7-6
 - 4-3 (11-10)
 - 5-6 (less good)
 - 6-5 (avoided)
- B. Lower counterpoint
 - 2-3
 - 9-10
 - 5-6 (less good)
 - 6-5 (avoided)
- C. Use no more than three of the same suspension in a series (consecutively). Consecutive suspensions of the same interval classification are known as a *chain* of suspensions

VII. Fifths and octaves

- A. Parallel perfects separated by a dissonance are not allowed (weak beat to weak beat)
- B. Parallel perfects separated by a consonance are allowed (weak beat to weak beat)
 - Less desirable if one of the perfects is emphasized by a leap
- C. Hidden perfects occur only when breaking into second species (see below)

VIII. Unisons

- A. Occur somewhat freely
 - Contrary to the text, a unison as the resolution of a 2-1 suspension is not allowed
- B. Will occur regularly in the lower counterpoint as a preparation (weak beat) for a 2-3 suspension

IX. Melodic line

- A. A general downward motion is unavoidable
- B. Find opportunities to use upward leaps to counteract falling motion

X. Interruption of syncopation (using second species or *breaking the species*) is used to:

- A. Curtail a suspension series of more than three statements
- B. Provide melodic relief from steady downward motion
- C. Prevent other errors

XI. Beginning and ending

- A. First measure of the counterpoint will start with a half rest and (ideally) a suspension
 - Choose a cantus that will allow for a consonant or dissonant suspension to be implemented
- B. Last measure of the counterpoint will be a whole note
- C. Penultimate measure will usually have a 7-6 suspension above or a 2-3 suspension below the cantus
 - A cantus ending 4-2-1 will not permit a suspension in the lower counterpoint

Please note: the information on this page has been supplied by Dr. Ronald Caltabiano