

## **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; never consecutively [in a series])
- 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 [in a series])
- 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*

# 4th Species Examples

The first example shows a 4th species counterpoint exercise. The upper voice (treble clef) consists of a single melodic line of half notes: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. An asterisk is placed above the B4 note. The lower voice (bass clef) consists of a single melodic line of half notes: C3, D3, E3, F3, G3, A3, B3, A3, G3, F3, E3, D3, C3. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1 through 6. An asterisk is placed below the staff.

The second example shows a 4th species counterpoint exercise. The upper voice (treble clef) consists of a single melodic line of half notes: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. An asterisk is placed above the B4 note. The lower voice (bass clef) consists of a single melodic line of half notes: C3, D3, E3, F3, G3, A3, B3, A3, G3, F3, E3, D3, C3. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1 through 6. An asterisk is placed below the staff.

The third example shows a 4th species counterpoint exercise. The upper voice (treble clef) consists of a single melodic line of half notes: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. An asterisk is placed above the B4 note. The lower voice (bass clef) consists of a single melodic line of half notes: C3, D3, E3, F3, G3, A3, B3, A3, G3, F3, E3, D3, C3. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1 through 6. An asterisk is placed below the staff.

# 4th Species Examples

Based on work from 3/14/08

Two upper 4th species against the same cantus

8 4 3 4 3 1 6 7 6 8 10 8 6 7 6 7 6 8

- This example uses consonant suspensions and a breaking of the species to move the line up.
- Notice there is a downbeat unison (arrived at as a consonant suspension).
- The consecutive strong beat octaves are OK because one is tied-to, and they are both separated by a consonant interval.
- This version has a subsidiary climax on C and then (of course) a higher one on D, making for a shapely line.

8 4 3 4 3 1 6 7 6 8 6 5 6 7 6 7 6 8

- This example begins the same as the top one above, but hovers more around the G shortly after the climax—it still sounds good.
- This example also uses consonant suspensions to move the line up.
- This example does not break the species at all.

*A few important points to keep in mind as you start to write 4th species exercises:*

- Don't forget the leading tone (only at the end) in minor key exercises.
- Your upper counterpoint penultimate measure will end in a 7-6 suspension.
- Your lower counterpoint will end in a 2-3 or 9-10 suspension.
- You should begin with a half rest and a tie.
- Do NOT tie FROM a dissonance
- A dissonant suspension will ALWAYS resolve down by step.
- Make sure you have at least two dissonant suspensions in each exercise.
- Watch out for dissonant outlines, especially when the leading tone is involved.