

Music 231

Second 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

- Dissonant and consonant passing tones.
- Consonant (ONLY!) neighbor tone.

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I. Rhythmic organization

- A. Two half notes against each cantus whole note, except:
 1. Counterpoint may begin with a half rest and half note (preferred, as it favors independence of parts) or two half notes
 2. Last bar always contains a whole note
 3. Penultimate measure may contain a whole note (or two half notes)
- B. The two half notes create a strong beat (first) and a weak beat (second)

II. Uses of the second half note

- A. Passing tone
 1. Moves stepwise in the same direction between two consonant verticals
 2. May be consonant (CPT) or dissonant (DPT)
 - B. Neighbor (auxiliary) tone
 1. Moves stepwise away from and back to the same consonant note.
 2. Use only the consonant neighbor tone (limitation only for second species)
 - C. Leaping to and from a consonant vertical
- N.B.: The counterpoint may leap only from and to a consonance

III. Parallel and hidden perfect intervals

- A. Are not permitted:
 1. On consecutive downbeats (strong beat to strong beat)
 2. From the second half note to the downbeat (weak beat to strong beat)
 3. An exception can be found in example 2-7 of S&S
 4. Also note example 2-9e, the *ottava battuta*, which should be avoided
- B. Are permitted:
 1. From second half note to second half note (weak beat to weak beat)

IV. Melodic organization

- A. All of the rules of cantus firmus and first species writing apply except:
 2. Because you have more notes, the melodic curve can be more complex
 3. A subsidiary climax or two is often planned

V. Other uses of the second half note

- A. Described in detail in the text, pages 43-47. The terms will not be used in class.
- B. Remember: leaps occur only from and to a consonance!
- C. Specific variations on II.C., above
 1. Skipped passing tone: filling in a gap of a fourth on down beats with a third
 2. Transfer of register: large skip to the second half note (fifth, sixth, octave) and it is better to leap within the bar than across it
 3. Substitution: skip of a fourth to replace a passing tone in same direction
 4. Subdivision: two small consecutive leaps in the same direction with the first leap taking place within the bar, must be prepared and resolved
- D. Can be used for a unison if left by step in the opposite direction

VI. Procedures of work

A. In addition to procedures for first species:

1. Plan a more complex musical curve that contains at least one sub-climax.
2. While using first species may sometimes be helpful in a sketch, it usually does not allow for sufficient passing tones

VII. Beginning and ending

A. Counterpoint may begin with a half rest and half note (preferred, as it favors independence of parts) or two half notes

B. Last bar always contains a whole note

C. Penultimate measure may contain a whole note (or two half notes)

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

