

Music 231

Third 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

- Double passing tones
- Dissonant neighbor tone
- Double neighbor tone
- Nota Cambiata

I. Rhythmic organization, accents, and dissonance

- A. Four quarters against each whole note
 1. The first measure may contain four quarters or a quarter rest and three quarters
 2. Three notes against one is also possible, but not used in this class
- B. Accents: two levels of rhythmic differentiation

BEAT	ACCENT
1	strong
3	less strong
2 & 4	weak

- C. All beats except the first may be dissonant
 1. Of the remaining beats, the third (since it is somewhat accented), is most often consonant

II. Dissonant passing tone

- A. May occur on beats 2, 3, and 4 (but not on all three in the same measure)
- B. Double passing tone
 2. Two dissonant PTs can occur consecutively on either beats 2 & 3 or 3 & 4
 3. They will always be the d5 and P4

III. Dissonant and Consonant Neighboring Tone

- A. May be used on beats 2, 3, and 4, although relatively rare on beat 3 (the "accented" neighbor)
- B. Used to slow the forward motion

IV. Double Neighboring Tones

- A. An idiom used to prolong a pitch over four beats
- B. Upper and lower neighbor tones (in either order) are prepared on beat 1 and resolved on beat 4
 1. The "fifth" note (downbeat of next bar) should step away in the same direction as the last two notes of the double neighbor
- C. Greatly slow the forward motion
- D. The smoother version is to put the upper neighbor first (on beat two) so it coincides with the weaker beat...even smoother when one of the neighbor tones is a half step away from the ornamented tone

V. Nota cambiata

A. Descending

1. Idiomatic ornamentation of descending second on consecutive downbeats
2. The first and third beats of the counterpoint must be consonant
3. The following melodic pattern should be memorized:



B. Ascending

1. Idiomatic ornamentation of ascending second on consecutive downbeats
2. The first and third beats of the counterpoint must be consonant
3. The melodic pattern is the inversion of the above:



- C. May begin on beat three (not preferred)

VI. Unisons may occur on the second, third, and fourth quarters

VII. Perfect intervals

- A. Parallel and hidden perfects are not allowed from beats 3-1 or 4-1
- B. Parallel perfects are allowed from beats 1-1 in a limited manner:
 1. The same perfect interval can occur on two but not three consecutive downbeats
 2. When possible, motion contrary to the downbeat-to-downbeat motion should occur from beats 4-1
- C. Hidden perfects are allowed on consecutive downbeats, but not more than twice in a row

VIII. Melodic leaps

- A. Because of the greater speed, large leaps should be used more sparingly
- B. Leaps are even more sensitive to proper preparation
 1. Two small consecutive leaps are possible when the direction changes
- C. Subdivision is not allowed
- D. After a series of conjunct notes (more than three), do not leap in the same direction-change direction
- E. *Embellishing Tone*: ornamenting a tone by leaping a 3rd (best) or 4th away and then back within the bar is possible (see example 3-11)–should occur within the bar, not across it

IX. Melodic shape

- A. Climax should occur on a strong beat (1 or 3)
- B. Subsidiary climaxes should be planned (before the main one)
- C. An upper climax may be decorated with a lower neighbor

X. Beginning and ending

- A. Begin with four quarter notes or a quarter rest and three quarter notes (preferred)
- B. End with four quarter notes in the penultimate bar and a whole note in the last bar
- C. See example 3-40 for a number of cadential (ending) formulas

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