

Chapter 9

**CONNECTING
INTERVALS IN
NOTE-TO-NOTE
COUNTERPOINT**

Species Counterpoint

- ⦿ Counterpoint
 - When 2 or more different melodic lines are combined and harmony is formed
 - When individual voices in a succession of harmonies make good melodic lines
- ⦿ Voice-leading—the process of connecting harmonic and melodic intervals between triads and seventh chords

Species Counterpoint

- ⦿ Writing in counterpoint dates back hundreds of years before the tonal era
- ⦿ Species method of counterpoint dates back to the Baroque era (1600-1750)
 - Builds in steps, beginning with 2 part writing
 - Starts with a simple framework which might later get embellished

Species Counterpoint

- ⦿ Cantus Firmus (CF)—a given line of music that is not to be changed
- ⦿ First-species—matches each note of the cantus firmus with a note of the same duration
 - Also called note-to-note or 1:1

Connecting Melodic Intervals

- Melodic intervals should be connected by step, skip, or leap
 - Either a half or whole step is considered a step
 - A third is considered a skip
 - A fourth or larger is considered a leap

Connecting Melodic Intervals

- ◎ To write a good contrapuntal line in strict style, use primarily steps with a few skips or leaps for variety
- ◎ Melodic skips or leaps should be consonant
 - M3, M3, P4, P5, m6, M6, and P8
- ◎ Dissonant melodic intervals larger than a M2 aren't allowed
 - A2, A4, d5, m7, M7

Connecting Melodic Intervals

- ⦿ Aim for a line with good shape
 - One or two high or low points
 - Avoid repeating one or two notes excessively
- ⦿ A melodic line that moves primarily by step is conjunct
- ⦿ A melodic line that moves primarily by skip or leap is disjunct

Connecting Melodic Intervals

- ◎ You can use one leap larger than a 4th in a first-species counterpoint melody
 - Where possible, approach the leap by step in the opposite direction, i.e. descending step then ascending leap
 - After the leap change direction and fill in the space with smaller intervals (ex.9.2—CF2 starts with an ascending 5th. After this, the line descends by step filling in the space of the 5th)

Connecting Melodic Intervals

- ⦿ Avoid leaps preceded or followed by a skip in the same direction
- ⦿ Avoid two skips in a row
- ⦿ Avoid a mix of steps and more than one skip in the same direction
- ⦿ Both the CF and the counterpoint should start and end on tonic and should end with stepwise motion towards the tonic (often $7 \rightarrow 1$ in the CPT and $2 \rightarrow 1$ in the CF)

Connecting Melodic Intervals

- Generally, both the CF and CPT should remain in the key.
 - Exception 1: In minor keys, raise the 7th degree in the CPT to create a stronger close
 - Exception 2: If a lowered 6 is present in stepwise motion toward the tonic, raise it as well. This avoids an A2 with the leading tone. However, this can't create a harmonic dissonance with the CF.

Connecting Melodic Intervals

- If the lowered 6 and 7 are in the CF at the approach to the close, it can create a clash between the raised 6 and 7 in the counterpoint. This is called a **cross relation**.
- Avoid following a lowered 6th by a raised 6th in the same part. Chromatic half steps are not allowed in this style.
- See Ex. 9.3 for both good and bad

Connecting Harmonic Intervals

- ⦿ As you write a counterpoint exercise, label the harmonic intervals between the staves.
 - Intervals larger than a 10th get labeled as a simple interval rather than a compound (4 rather than 11)
 - Label sizes, and only label segmented or diminished intervals (not Major or minor)

Types of Contrapuntal Motion

- ⦿ Contrary (C)—the two parts move in opposite directions. Preferred because it gives the most independence and balance.
- ⦿ Parallel (P)—Both parts move in same direction by the same interval; allowed between imperfect (but not between perfect) consonances

Types of Contrapuntal Motion

- ⦿ Similar (S)—Both parts move in same direction but not by same interval; allowed except when approaching a perfect interval and then only acceptable when the upper part moves by step.
- ⦿ Oblique (O)—One part repeats or sustains a pitch while the other moves by leap, skip, or step; acceptable but not desirable because 1 part remains static
- ⦿ See Ex. 9.4 for examples.

Consonant Harmonic Intervals

- ⦿ PU, P5, P8 (perfect)
- ⦿ M3, m3, M6, m6 (imperfect)
- ⦿ P4 is treated as a dissonance when appearing harmonically between lowest voice and any upper voice and as a consonance when between 2 upper voices when there are 3 or more parts
- ⦿ For CPT in 2 parts, treat a harmonic P4 as a dissonance

Perfect Consonances

- ◎ PU is the most stable and should only appear at beginning or end of an exercise. Too many unisons:
 - makes 2 parts sound like 1.
 - Stops the sense of forward motion
- ◎ P8—can be used at beginning and end and *occasionally* in the middle. Too much use will make it sound empty.

Perfect Consonances

- ⦿ P5 creates sense of stability but less than PU or P8. P5 if overused will also sound empty and will stand out if not approached carefully.
- ⦿ RULE—Don't move from one perfect interval to another of the same size. Parallel octaves, fifths, or unisons are big No No's

Perfect Consonances

- ⦿ Another rule—don't use contrary motion between 2 perfect intervals of the same size (known as parallel octaves or 5ths by contrary motion or contrary octaves or 5^{ths})
- ⦿ Avoid approaches to perfect intervals by similar motion, as it creates “hidden” 5ths or octaves (ex.9.5).

Perfect Consonances

- ⦿ Perfect harmonic intervals are best approached by contrary motion, often with the upper voice leading by step, while the lower part might step or skip.
- ⦿ Look at Ex. 9.6 as an example of a poor counterpoint exercise

Imperfect Consonances

- ⦿ In strict species counterpoint, aside from the opening and closing intervals, most of the intervals will be imperfect, with occasional perfect ones to provide contrast.
- ⦿ We can use “parallel” imperfect consonances, but keep it to 3 or less in a row to avoid monotony and a loss of independent lines.

Imperfect Consonances

- Example 9.7 is a good example of counterpoint
- Ex 9.8 starts the same but then uses stepwise contrary motion to set pitches
- Voice exchange—when pitch classes in the upper voice exchange places with pitch classes in the lower voice (see m.5-7 in ex. 9.8)

Imperfect Consonances

- It's all about tradeoffs—something that works well in one part may create problems in another part; no exercise is perfect.
- Experiment! Write and then play. See which way it sounds better.

Imperfect Consonances

- ⦿ Ex. 9.8 is good but there are still issues...m.3-5 are a little repetitive, there are 2 skips followed by a step at the end
- ⦿ Compare Try It 1 and Ex. 9.4:
 - Both are good, but the weakness of 9.4 is the overall shape
 - Try It 1 has 3 distinct sections (m1-3, m4-6, m7-11) whereas the best lines will have flow from beginning to end

Writing— Beginning and Ending

1. Set a PU or P8 against the first note of the CF. A P5 is possible but only if the CF is the lower part.
2. Pick the beginning interval that will allow the CPT to stay within a 10th of the CF without causing lines to collide or cross.
 - If CF is lower part and moves down, a PU would work well.
 - If CF is higher part and moves up, a P8 would work well.

Writing— Beginning and Ending

3. Write a close of 6-7-8 for upper voice or 3-2-1 for lower voice.
4. If in a minor mode, raise the 7th before the close to create a leading tone. The lowered 6th may also be raise when it precedes the leading tone.
 - Make sure altering these notes doesn't create cross relations or chromatic half steps.

Writing—

Completing the Middle

1. Look at the overall shape of the CF and determine where the steps, skips, and leaps are. The shape of the CPT should complement the CF and provide contrary motion if possible.
2. Consecutive skips that cause voice exchange sounds good as long as surrounded by steps.

Writing—

Completing the Middle

3. Consider overall shape of CPT line; if oblique motion is used, limit it to one or two instances and only one of these can involve the tonic.
4. Use a mix of perfect and imperfect consonances (more imperfect than perfect)

Writing— Completing the Middle

5. Use at least one P5 or P8 somewhere in the middle
 - The 6-8-10 (or 10-8-6) voice exchange is good!
 - Always approach perfect intervals by step in the upper voice
 - Avoid a leap into a perfect interval.
6. Don't write 2 perfect harmonic intervals in a row.

Writing—

Completing the Middle

7. Keep lines within a 10th of each other and don't let voices cross or overlap (see ex. 9.9); crossed or overlapped voices often show up in combination with other errors
8. Avoid any melodic or harmonic dissonances (watch out for harmonic P4)

Writing— Completing the Middle

- ⦿ Make a table like Ex. 9.10.
 - Fill in the bottom row with the CF letter names to show the octave related notes
 - The first left hand column should be 6,5,3,8
 - In remaining boxes fill in the notes a 3rd, 5th, and 6th above the CF notes.
 - If the CF is the other part, flip the table
- ⦿ Rule out notes that shouldn't be used, i.e. notes that would violate rules.

Non-Negotiables

- ⦿ Under no circumstances can you change the CF!!!!
- ⦿ Start with a PU, P5 (in some cases), or P8 and end with 7-8 or 2-1.
- ⦿ Don't write parallel 5ths or octaves.
- ⦿ Write only consonant harmonic intervals.
- ⦿ Avoid dissonant melodic intervals larger than a 2nd.