

COUNTERPOINT

Supplement 2

Second Species (two parts)

A counterpoint in second species is written as two notes against one. The cantus firmus continues to move in whole notes, while the counterpoint moves in halves. In general, the faster the notes of the counterpoint move (i.e., the smaller their rhythmic values), the more stepwise and smooth should be the line of the counterpoint. If you aren't sure if your line is too "leapy," try singing it as a melisma at $\text{♩} = c. 120$ and see if it feels awkward. Or, if it feels too easy and lumpy, it may be too steppy.

Melodic shape: you should strive for sweeps of nonredundant stepwise motion, hopefully with successive arches, each of them higher, reaching toward the high point fairly near the end. Don't tread water, and strive never to harmonize a tone repeated in the cantus firmus with the same perfect consonance.

In this species you get your first dissonance, which is strictly regulated. The rules are as follows: Every thesis (downbeat) must be consonant with the cantus firmus; the anacrusis (upbeat or second half note of the measure) may be consonant or dissonant, but if it is dissonant, it **MUST** be approached by step and it **MUST** be resolved by step in the same direction. E.G. if C is dissonant and it was approached from D, the next tone **MUST** be B (or B \flat in Dorian).

Chromatic tones: in this species you were given B \flat in Dorian and E \flat in Mixolydian. In each case the notes must immediately move down by semitone, respectively, to A and D.

Ending: for counterpoint written above the cantus firmus, the modal scale degrees should be $\hat{6}-\hat{7}-\hat{8}$, where $\hat{6}-\hat{7}$ are expressed as half notes in the penultimate measure and $\hat{8}$ is a whole note forming an octave with the cantus firmus. The 7th degree should be raised in Dorian, Mixolydian and Aeolian modes. The 6th degree in Aeolian must also be raised for this cadence (f should become F \sharp). The 7th degree must **NOT** be raised in Phrygian mode. The ending of the counterpoint if written below should be $\hat{5}-\hat{7}-\hat{8}$ of the mode, and the 7th degree should be raised, as above. The ending in Phrygian mode is $\hat{4}-\hat{7}-\hat{8}$. See these three formulas below:



Dorian above



Dorian below



Phrygian below

The counterpoint must not be all steps, and may not outline a diminished or augmented interval by motion in the same direction. If the same perfect interval is sounded on successive downbeats, it is considered parallel motion to a perfect consonance. Any line that contains a skip may not go farther than a minor sixth before turning around, preferably by step. You may repeat a note only once per exercise, but never may both halves in a measure be the same note (octaves included). You may skip an octave, but this takes care of your repeated-note distribution for the exercise, and of course you must immediately turn, hopefully by step, in the opposite direction.

Don't segment the line registrally and don't turn it into segments of repeated motives. Otherwise you shall surely die. The rule of consecutive sixths, tenths or thirds applies for successive downbeats. You can't do more than four.