

SPECIES COUNTERPOINT

Counterpoint is created when two or more different melodic lines are combined so that the lines form harmonies.

Voice-leading- the process of connecting harmonic and melodic intervals between triads and seventh chords.

Species- learning counterpoint in steps. (1st species, 2nd species, 3rd species, 4th species)

Cantus Firmus- a “given line” that is not to be changed.

First Species- a voice above the given line (also called note-to-note or 1:1).

Steps- whole or half steps as in major 2 and minor 2.

Skips- thirds as in triads and 7th chords in root position.

Leaps- all other intervals.

Conjunct- melody that moves primarily by step.

Disjunct- melody that moves primarily by skip or leap.

Consonant intervals- m3, M3, P4, P5, m6, M6, P8

Dissonant intervals- A2, A4, D5, m7, M7

A2- (augmented 2nd, although sounding like a minor 3rd, is considered **dissonant** in minor).

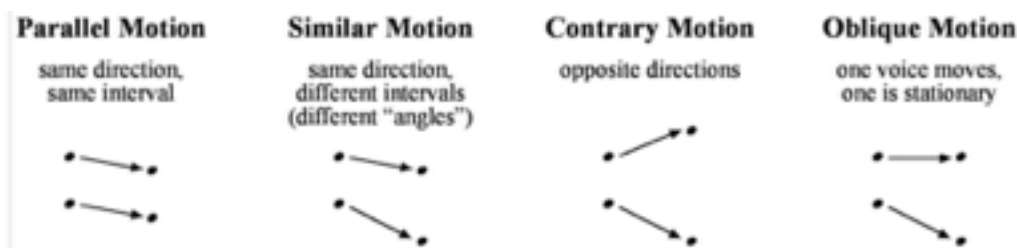
P4- considered dissonant when it appears between the lowest voice and any upper voice; consonant melodic interval; and a consonant harmonic interval between upper voices of 3 or more parts.

Contrary motion- (C) Two parts move in **opposite direction** (preferred motion).

Parallel motion- (P) Both parts move in **same direction** by the **same interval** for **imperfect consonances**. (No parallel motion between perfect consonance like P5 and P8)

Similar motion- (S) Both parts move in the **same direction but not the same interval**. Use freely except when approaching a perfect interval, where it is acceptable only if the upper parts move by step.

Oblique motion- (O) **One** part **repeats a single pitch**, the **other** moves by **leap, skip or step**.

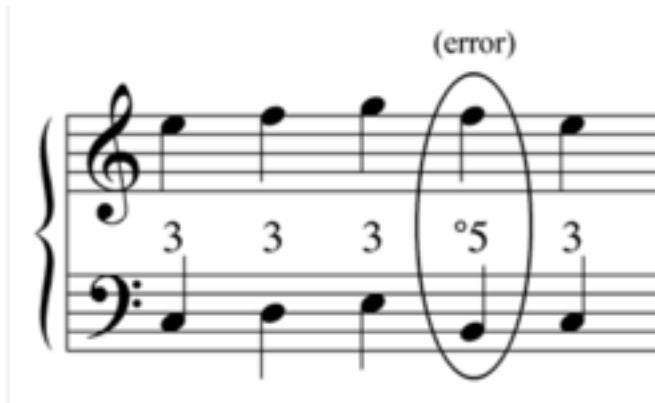


Guidelines for writing 1st Species Counterpoint

For every note of the cantus firmus there is one note in the counterpoint.

Label harmonic intervals between staves. Size only. (No dim 5ths allowed)

Intervals larger than a tenth should get the simple number (4 rather than 11 and 3 rather than 10)



Begin and end on tonic.

For the upper harmonic interval, write P8 or PU.

Use small intervals (mostly steps and few skips and leaps) primarily in contrary motion.



You may include one leap larger than a fourth.

Approach the leap by step in the opposite direction when possible.

After the leap, change direction and compose the next note with a smaller interval.



Skips and leaps should be consonant. (m3, M3, P5, m6, M6, P8)

Intervals larger than a M2 that are **dissonant** (A2, P4, A4, D5, m7, M7) are prohibited.

Shape the line with one or two high and low points (no more than one leap).



You are allowed to make two leaps in the same direction if it spells a triad.

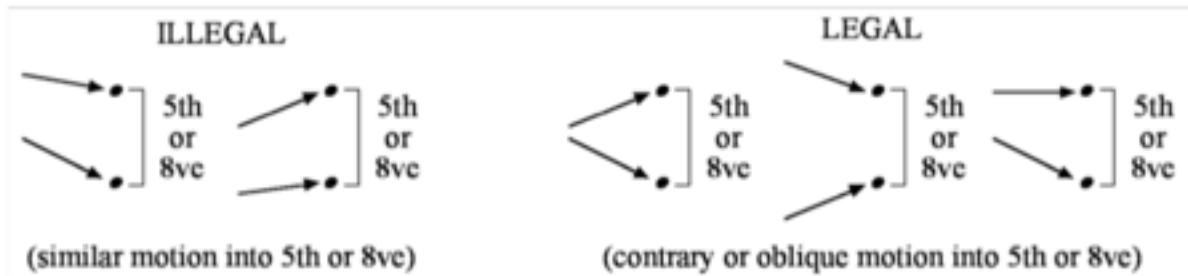
Perfect Consonance (PU, P5, P8)

PU is most stable (used only for the beginning and ending note)

It is prohibited to move from one perfect interval to another of the same size whether by parallel, similar or contrary motions. It destroys the independence of the line due to the hollowness of the sound.



You cannot approach a 5th by similar motion either! That's called a **direct 5th**.

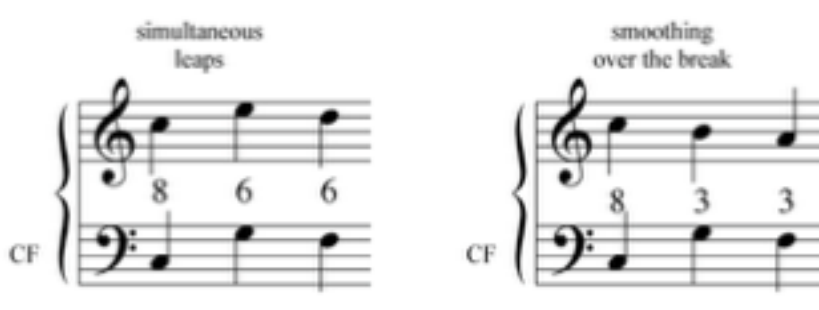


6ths can move along in **parallel motion**. As many as three thirds or three sixths in a row is considered good technique, but four in a row is considered too much.



Simultaneous leaps

It is very weak counterpoint if both lines break at the same time (especially if they leap in the same direction). Try to smooth over leaps in the CF with a step in your counterpoint.



Approach the **tonic at the cadence** by a step.

You need to end your counterpoint with a proper cadence. The last note must land on tonic. The preceding note may be scale degree 2 or 7, or, if your counterpoint is on the bottom of the texture, it may go 5-1. There are therefore just a few cadential combinations that you can create.

In minor, raise b7, and raise b6 if it precedes 7 (to avoid an A2) but don't use 6 if it creates a **cross relation**. For example Bb in the CF and the next measure is B in the counterpoint.

A **strong contrapuntal technique** is the use of **contrary motion**. Perhaps the most basic technique is the **“voice exchange,”** in which the two parts seem to simply swap notes. Say you've got a CF that features a skip of a third:

It turns out you can also create a filled-in voice exchange any time you see three steps in a row. Again, just reverse the order of the three steps in the new part

No overlapping or crossed voicing.

Ex. 7	Ex. 8
	
Overlapping voices	Motion to crossed voices

The hard rules:

- 1) For every note of the cantus firmus there is one note in the counterpoint
- 2) No accidentals may be used unless raising the 7th in minor
- 3) All harmonies must be consonant (a perfect fourth is considered a dissonance)
- 4) The first interval must be any perfect harmony and the last an octave or unison
- 5) The last interval must be approached by motion of a minor second upwards
- 6) All perfect intervals must be approached by contrary motion
- 7) Motion can proceed by step or leap but steps and leaps of augmented and diminished intervals and leaps of any seventh are forbidden. Leaps greater than a sixth are forbidden except for leaps of an octave which should be rare
- 8) The counterpoint may not outline an interval of a tritone or seventh except for an augmented fourth that is fully, stepwise outlined and precedes an inwards step

The soft rules:

- 1) No note may be repeated successively more than three times
- 2) No two successive leaps in the same direction may total more than an octave
- 3) While ascending, in the case of two successive steps or leaps, the larger one should precede the smaller; while descending the smaller should precede the larger
- 4) No successive leaps in opposite directions; leaps should be followed by inward, stepwise motion
- 5) The same harmonic interval should not repeat more than three times
- 6) There should be no more than two successive leaps
- 7) The range of the counterpoint should be limited to a tenth and all notes in the chosen mode should appear in the counterpoint