

INTRODUCTION TO SPECIES COUNTERPOINT

Notes on Exercises

The rules in this handout are the ones we will follow. Rules in italics will not be strictly enforced. The discussion in the textbook (ch. 9 & 10) is very good and will be useful reading, but the rules there differ from ours in some details.

For first species you will be graded by the 5 best exercises you turn in. Schedule and deadlines will be given in class and posted on the website.

Any exercise turned in past the unit deadline for that species will be marked down a point (10%) for every calendar day late. I will usually grade your exercises and email scans back to you within 24 hours so you can benefit from my feedback before your next attempts.

!! Leave one or two blank staves after each exercise for my commentary and corrections.

Continual production is key. Turn in the required minimum number of exercises at each announced deadline. You may always turn in more.

Use the *canti firmi* in the handout.

Hand in only one exercise for any single CF in each species.

Be sure to try exercises in all the modes.

Make your exercises fairly balanced between counterpoints “above” the CF (i.e. that cadence an octave above) and counterpoints “below” the CF (cadencing at the unison or lower octave).

There is no requirement to use C-clefs. However, these simple, two-voice exercises provide an excellent opportunity for you to familiarize yourself with the alto and tenor clefs. If your melody has lots of ledger lines above or below the treble or bass staff, at least **copy it over** into an appropriate C-clef before turning it in. Sing along, note by note, as you copy (using letter-names to underscore your clef-reading) and sing over the whole line once you have copied it.

Test your 2-voice exercises by singing one part while playing the other; then switch. This is excellent ear-training, and will help you remember that these are compositions of **two lines**, not successions of “2-note chords”. This practice will also help you catch most of the grosser errors (for example, a vertical diminished 5th where you intended a consonance).

NOTES AND MELODIC INTERVALS WITHIN THE COUNTERPOINT LINE

1. Use only white notes except as necessary, i.e. in order to avoid breaking other rules.
2. The counterpoint line must end with a rising minor second up to the tonic note of the mode, except in Phrygian, in which it must end with a rising major second from D to E.
3. The following melodic intervals (MI's) are allowed within the counterpoint line:
 - (a) Half and whole steps and all consonant skips/leaps up to an 8ve, i.e. m/M 3, m/M 6, p4, p5, p8.
 - (b) perfect unison (creating a sustained or repeated note), but only once per exercise. Like all dissonant leaps, augmented seconds are also forbidden. For melodic purposes, the p4 is treated as consonant (but not for harmonic purposes!). Remember to check the quality of all melodic 4^{ths} and 5^{ths} (they must be perfect!).
4. The melody must be predominantly stepwise; at the very minimum, steps must account for at least half of all melodic motions.
5. Skips and leaps are allowed as per rules 3 and 4 above, but must be preceded and/or followed by a change in melodic direction.
6. Large leaps must be both preceded **and** followed by a change in direction. The sixths and the p8 and are “large” leaps. The p5 is borderline: it's preferable to frame it with a change of direction both before and after, but only one is strictly required.
7. You may write two successive skips or leaps in the same direction, but only if:
 - (a) the leaps outline a major or a minor triad, or an octave; **and**
 - (b) the pair of leaps is framed by changes of direction both before **and** after.

LARGE SHAPE OF THE LINE (see also “GLOBAL RULE” below)

8. Zenith (upper climax)
 - (a) the line must contain one unique highest tone, the “zenith”.
 - (b) the zenith may not sound together with the zenith of the cantus firmus.
 - (c) the zenith may not occur on a sustained or repeated tone.
 - (d) ideally, the zenith should not be the last note, but we will allow it.
 - (e) in the case of a CP that lies below the cantus, you may optionally substitute a unique “nadir” (low point) which must follow the same four criteria (a)-(d) above.
9. Avoid returning too frequently to any one note, especially the tonic. In particular, avoid returning too often to the melody’s lowest tone (the “nadir”). This is along the lines of the zenith rule above, but is not as strict.

RESTRICTIONS ON VERTICAL INTERVALS

10. Use only consonances. The following dyads (vertical intervals, or VI’s) are allowed: unison, but at the beginning and end only; 8^{ve} (sparingly: maximum of one appearance beyond the beginning and/or end intervals); otherwise m or M3rd, p5th, m or M6th, m or M10th, an p12th. **Remember that the p4th is treated as a vertical dissonance** in 2-part writing in this style. Remember to **check the quality of all 5^{ths}** as well (they must be perfect).
11. The counterpoint must end either 8^{va} above, at unison with, or 8^{va} below the cantus.
12. The counterpoint must open either 8^{va} above, 5th above, at unison with, or 8^{va} below the cantus. Note: do not open a 5th below the cantus, because that obscures the mode, and do not end at the fifth.
13. The vertical interval between the two voices should not exceed a p12th.

Note: Identify all vertical intervals on the page to facilitate checking rules 10-17.

RULES RESTRICTING DIRECT MOTION

14. Parallel 5^{ths} and 8^{ves} are strictly forbidden, as are // 12^{ths}.
15. Additionally, a vertical 5th or 8^{ve} or 12th may not be approached in direct motion, unless the upper voice moves by step (so-called “horn fifths”).
16. So-called “consecutive” p5^{ths}, 8^{ves}, and unisons (e.g. 5-12, 8-1, 8-15) are forbidden.
17. The two voices may not move in consecutive vertical 3^{rds} for more than three consecutive notes; similarly for consecutive vertical 6^{ths} and vertical 10^{ths}.
18. The voices may not leap simultaneously in direct motion more than once per exercise.
19. Voice-crossing is contrary motion may occur once per exercise. *Overlap is forbidden. Overlap occurs when the lower voice ascends to a note higher than the previous note in the upper part, or vice-versa, when the upper voice descends to a note below the previous note in the lower part. A consequence of this rule is that a unison must be left in oblique or contrary motion.*

THE RESOLUTION OF MELODIC CHROMATICISM

20. When a raised or lowered (“black”) note is used, an appropriate tone of resolution must appear in the line at some point thereafter (though not necessarily immediately). B^b resolves to A, E^b to D, C[#] to D, G[#] to A, F[#] to G or G[#]. The tone of resolution must appear in register.
21. When a raised or lowered tone is used, its unaltered form may not be used in the line until after the tone of resolution has appeared. E.g., once B^b has been used, Bⁿ may not appear in the line until some A has first appeared in the line (in register).

The GLOBAL RULE (GR)

For every note of the counterpoint line lying above (below) the cadence tone, some note lying one step lower (higher) than this note must appear in the line at some point subsequent to it.

This rule is stricter than practice (though not by much), and you are not required to follow it strictly. However, it is a useful guide in learning how to create a melody that “holds together” and has a sense of directed motion to a goal (cadence). Melodies that sound “random” or “unmusical” will usually exhibit significant violations of the Global Rule. In general, I will allow small violations of the G.R., but only by one step (i.e. leaving an unfilled registral “gap” of a third), and only 1-2 such gaps per exercise.

Dorian

1 2 3 4 5

Measures 1-5 of the Dorian scale in bass clef, 3/4 time. Measure 1: D4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), F4 (quarter). Measure 2: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter). Measure 3: C5 (quarter), B4 (quarter), A4 (quarter). Measure 4: G4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), E4 (quarter). Measure 5: D4 (quarter), C4 (half).

Phrygian (remember, Phrygian CP's will end with the rising MAJOR second D-E)

6 7 8 9 10

Measures 6-10 of the Phrygian scale in bass clef, 3/4 time. Measure 6: D4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), F4 (quarter). Measure 7: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter). Measure 8: C5 (quarter), B4 (quarter), A4 (quarter). Measure 9: G4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), E4 (quarter). Measure 10: D4 (quarter), C4 (half).

Mixolydian

11 12 13 14

Measures 11-14 of the Mixolydian scale in bass clef, 3/4 time. Measure 11: D4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), F4 (quarter). Measure 12: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter). Measure 13: C5 (quarter), B4 (quarter), A4 (quarter). Measure 14: G4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), E4 (quarter).

Aeolian

15 16 17 18

Measures 15-18 of the Aeolian scale in bass clef, 3/4 time. Measure 15: D4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), F4 (quarter). Measure 16: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter). Measure 17: C5 (quarter), B4 (quarter), A4 (quarter). Measure 18: G4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), E4 (quarter).

Ionian

19 20 21 22

Measures 19-22 of the Ionian scale in bass clef, 3/4 time. Measure 19: D4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), F4 (quarter). Measure 20: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter). Measure 21: C5 (quarter), B4 (quarter), A4 (quarter). Measure 22: G4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), E4 (quarter).