

The background of the cover is a repeating pattern of musical staves with notes, rendered in a light, golden-brown color. A large, semi-transparent rectangular area in the center contains the title and author's name. A solid black horizontal bar is positioned above the title.

Eighteenth Century Counterpoint

H. Gilbert Trythall

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY COUNTERPOINT

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P R E F A C E



Polyphonic tonal music consists of simultaneous melodies that create chord successions ordered according to the principles of tonal harmony. Counterpoint, the combining of simultaneous melodies, and harmony, the ordering of chord succession, are like the warp and woof in a piece of cloth; pattern requires the organization of both. This text integrates the principles and practice of counterpoint *and* harmony.

The text is in two parts. In Part 1, each chapter begins with the definition and explanation of a contrapuntal process followed by definitions and explanations of musical resources required for that process. “Process” in this text refers to writing or analyzing music. “Resources” are musical principles, conventions, rules, and constraints of the style.

“Process” precedes “resources” as a problem precedes its solution. The problem is to practice a specific musical process; the solution is to understand the musical principles fundamental to that practice.

Part 1, chapters 1 through 8, is a species approach to two-voice counterpoint with graduated exercises that provide a simultaneous review of the principles of chord spelling and organization in tonal harmony.

In Part 2, each chapter is about process—melodic transformation and variation in chapter 9, invertible counterpoint in chapter 10, imitation and canon in chapter 11, and the analysis and guided composition of two-part inventions in chapter 12. Chapter 13 begins the process of three-voice counterpoint with the analysis and guided composition of chorale preludes. Concluding chapters offer analysis and guided composition of three- and four-voice fugue, passacaglia, and double fugue forms.

The instructor may select between later chapters for course organization. I do not cover the complete text in a one-semester course. Omitted chapters provide additional information and exercises for the student who seeks to go beyond class requirements.

The instructor who prefers a direct approach to two-voice counterpoint may begin with later chapters. The previous chapters are available for student review.

This text is the culmination of eleven years of class development at West Virginia University. I am deeply grateful to the many students who made significant contributions. Their questions, responses, and suggestions improved the book in countless ways. The support,

friendship, and ideas of my colleagues in music theory and composition, John Beall, Jack Crotty, and Gerald Lefkoff, have been invaluable. The Division of Music Chairman, C. B. Wilson, gave continual support and encouragement. I am also grateful to the following reviewers of the manuscript for their thoughtful insights and suggestions: James S. Hiatt (James Madison University); Warner Hutchison (New Mexico State University); Paul Paccione (Western Illinois University); and Andy J. Patterson (Hardin-Simmons University). Above all, my wife Carol makes thoughtful and continued work possible.

Gilbert Trythall
West Virginia University, 1992
Morgantown

CONTENTS

xi **PREFACE**

PART ONE

1 **CHAPTER ONE**

Process: Definition, Species Patterns, First Species: 1:1 Patterns in $\frac{4}{4}$ Meter

Resources: Cadences, Extended Cadential Patterns, Diatonic Chord Order in Extended Cadential Patterns, Guidelines for First Species

11 **CHAPTER TWO**

Process: Non-Chord Tone, Non-Chord Tone Pattern, Second Species: 2:1 Patterns in $\frac{4}{4}$ Meter

Resources: Sixth and Seventh Scale Step Accidentals in Minor, Cross Relation, Seventh Chords, Seventh Chords in Extended Cadential Patterns, Chord Inversion, Guidelines for Second Species

29 **CHAPTER THREE**

Process: Second Species: 2:1 Patterns Continued

Resources: Chromatic Chords, Transposed Cadences, Secondary Dominant, Spelling and Indicating a Secondary Dominant, Secondary Dominant Chain, Spelling and Indicating a Secondary Dominant Chain, Guidelines for Second Species with Secondary Dominants and Secondary Dominant Chains

43 **CHAPTER FOUR**

Process: Second Species: 3:1 Patterns in Compound Meter

Resources: Modulation, Pivot Chord Modulation, Spelling and Indicating a Pivot Chord Modulation, Guidelines for 3:1 Patterns

53 **CHAPTER FIVE**

Process: Third Species: 4:1 Patterns in $\frac{4}{4}$ Meter, Third Species Expanded

Resources: Borrowed Chords, Augmented and Neopolitan Sixth Chords, Guidelines for Third Species, Guidelines for Third Species Expanded

67 **CHAPTER SIX**

Process: Fourth Species: 2:1 Syncopated Patterns in $\frac{4}{4}$ Meter, Fourth Species Expanded

Resources: Guidelines for Fourth Species, Guidelines for Fourth Species Expanded

77 **CHAPTER SEVEN**

Process: Fifth Species: Florid Counterpoint, Non-Chord Tone Preparation, Consonant and Dissonant Intervals, Equal-Duration Tones in Successive Dissonant Intervals, Equal-Duration Non-Chord Tones in a Single Dissonant Interval

Resources: Single Non-Chord Tone Pattern Summary, Two Successive Non-Chord Tones, Composing Non-Chord Tones, Chromatic Non-Chord Tones, Guidelines for Fifth Species

95 **CHAPTER EIGHT**

Process: Fifth Species in all Meters, Combined Successive Duration Patterns

Resources: Beat Division and Subdivision, Extended Cadential Patterns and Rhythm in Polyphonic Compositions, Guidelines for Fifth Species in all Meters

P A R T T W O99 **CHAPTER NINE**

Process: Melody, Melodic Contour Points, Melodic Contour Point Step-Progression Analysis, Thematic Transformation and Variation, Modulating Sequences, Composing Modulating Sequences

115 **CHAPTER TEN**

Process: Invertible Counterpoint, Counterpoint Invertible at the Octave or Fifteenth, Counterpoint Invertible at the Twelfth, Counterpoint Invertible at the Tenth

127 **CHAPTER ELEVEN**

Process: Imitation, Canon, Canon at the Unison, Canon at the Octave, Canon at the Fifth, Canon by Inversion, Retrograde Canon, Canon by Augmentation, Composing a Canon in Two

	Voices, Composing a Canon at the Octave, Composing a Canon at Other Intervals, Composing a Canon by Inversion, Composing a Retrograde Canon, Composing an Infinite Canon
143	CHAPTER TWELVE
	Process: Two-Part Invention, Two-Part Invention Analysis, Composing a Two-Part Invention, The First Exposition, First Episode, Planning the Completed Two-Part Invention, Middle Exposition and Episode, Closing Exposition and/or Episode
171	CHAPTER THIRTEEN
	Process: Chorale Prelude, Chorale Prelude Analysis, Fifth Species in Three or More Voices, Composing a Chorale Prelude
181	CHAPTER FOURTEEN
	Process: Fugue, Three-voice Fugue Analysis, Three-voice Invertible Counterpoint
219	CHAPTER FIFTEEN
	Process: Stretto Exposition, Composing a Stretto
225	CHAPTER SIXTEEN
	Process: Composing a Fugue First Exposition, The First Episode
231	CHAPTER SEVENTEEN
	Process: Composing Middle and Final Expositions and Episodes, Transposing Countersubjects, Working Sketch for a Complete Minor Fugue, Model Fugues in Major
247	CHAPTER EIGHTEEN
	Process: Passacaglia and Chaconne, Passacaglia Analysis, Double Fugue, Double Fugue Analysis, Composing a Passacaglia, Composing a Double Fugue
279	APPENDIX: Roman Numeral Analysis
285	SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY
287	GLOSSARY
293	INDEX OF MUSICAL EXAMPLES
295	INDEX

CHAPTER 1



Process

DEFINITION

Counterpoint is the combination of simultaneous melodies.

Eighteenth century counterpoint consists of chord tones in extended cadential patterns and non-chord tones in non-chord tone patterns.

Chords and melodies consist of tones of the major or minor scale defined by the immediate cadence. There are occasional chromatic non-chord tones.

SPECIES PATTERNS

A species pattern is a fixed relationship of durations and accent in simultaneous voices.

Exercises in species patterns are a traditional method of counterpoint instruction. Joseph Fux employs the following five species in a classical counterpoint text, *Gradus ad Parnassum*,¹ published in 1725:

first species: 1:1, note against note in simple meter

second species: 2:1, two notes against one in simple meter, and 3:1, three notes against one in compound meter

third species: 4:1, four notes against one in simple meter

fourth species: 2:1 syncopated, the second note of each pair tied to the first of the next

fifth species: florid counterpoint; combines all previous species

This text makes the following modernizations.

1. Exercises require extended cadential patterns.
2. Non-chord tone patterns and small leap requirements govern melodic motion.
3. Exercises use modern notation.

4. Third and fourth species *expanded* include most eighteenth century non-chord tone patterns.
5. The duration of the chord provides the long duration in fifth species.

FIRST SPECIES: 1:1 PATTERNS IN $\frac{4}{4}$ METER

First species 1:1 patterns require a chord tone in the chord duration in one voice simultaneous with a chord tone in the chord duration in the other voice. The chord tones receive a metrical accent.

First species in $\frac{4}{4}$ meter consists of simultaneous half notes on beats 1 and 3.

All tones are chord tones.

EXAMPLE 1-1 First Species Counterpoint

A.

C Major: I ii I₆ V vi V ii₆ vii₆ I vii I

B.

C Minor: i' V VI iv ii vii° I V₆ i V i

Resources

CADENCES

There are three cadences:

1. authentic cadence: a V or vii° chord followed by a tonic chord of the same or parallel scale;

2. deceptive cadence: a V or vii° chord followed by a submediant chord of the same or parallel scale;
3. retrogression and cadence: a V or vii° chord immediately followed by a subdominant or supertonic chord of the same or parallel scale immediately followed by a required authentic or deceptive cadence. Successive retrogressions occur but are infrequent.

Each cadence defines the immediate scale at that point in the music.

A plagal cadence is a major subdominant chord followed by a major tonic chord at the conclusion of a hymn or similar composition. Elsewhere in a composition, succession from a subdominant to a tonic chord is not a plagal cadence.

The plagal cadence does not contain a leading tone and does not define the immediate scale.

“Cadence” does not include the plagal cadence in this text.

EXTENDED CADENTIAL PATTERNS

An extended cadential pattern is:

1. an authentic cadence, deceptive cadence, or retrogression and cadence alone; or
2. a V or vii° chord with or without resolution preceded by chords (other than V or vii°) spelled in the scale or parallel scale of the V or vii° chord. An extended cadential pattern may also include secondary dominants, secondary dominant chains, or an augmented or Neapolitan sixth chord.

There are two to eight chords in an extended cadential pattern, rarely more.

EXAMPLE 1-2 Extended cadential patterns

J.S. Bach: *Ach wie flüchtig, ach wie nichtig*

A Minor: i V_6 i i V/III III III i V_5^6/VII vii° i

Extended cadential patterns

4

ii°_5 V_7 I
D Minor: V

V i VI ii_7 C Major: V/V I
 V_7 I

7

V I vi ii_7 V_7 I IV ii
A Minor: iv V i V^{\flat}_5/V V_7 I

EXAMPLE 1-3 Extended cadential patterns with retrogression and cadence

A. J. S. Bach: *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, Book I, Fuga XI, bars 24–29

24

F Major: V/V V IV V^{\flat}_5 IV V^{\flat}_3 I_6

B. J. S. Bach: Two-Part Invention no. 4, bars 47–52

47

D Minor: V^{\flat}_5 i_6 V iv_6 vii°_3 i_6 V

DIATONIC CHORD ORDER IN EXTENDED CADENTIAL PATTERNS

Diatonic chord order in an extended cadential pattern is as follows.

1. I or i, ii or ii[°], iii or III, IV or iv, vi or VI chords may precede the concluding V or vii[°] of an extended cadential pattern in any order.
2. The mediant chord in major, iii, may follow a V or vii[°] chord. The mediant chord in the melodic minor ascending or harmonic minor scales, III⁺, may follow or substitute for a V or vii[°] chord. The III⁺ chord is not frequent in eighteenth century harmony (see example 1-4).
3. The subtonic chord in minor, VII, is a major triad on the seventh scale step of the natural minor or melodic minor descending scale. It immediately precedes V or vii[°] or III, the mediant chord in the natural minor scale (see example 1-5).

EXAMPLE 1-4 III⁺ in extended cadential patterns

A. J.S. Bach: Passacaglia and Fugue in C Minor, Passacaglia, bars 18–21

18

C Minor: iv III⁺₆ VI ii[°]₃⁴ iv₇ V vii[°]₅⁶ i₆

B. G.F. Handel: Suite in D Minor, Sarabande II, bars 21–24

21

D Minor: iv III⁺ i V i

EXAMPLE 1-5 Subtonic triad in extended cadential patterns

A. J.S. Bach: Two-Part Invention no. 8, bars 18–24

18

D Minor: iv_6 vii_6 i

21

V_7/III III vi_7 V_7 i

Sub-tonic as V/III

B. J.S. Bach: *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, Book I, Fuga II, bars 17–18

17

G Minor: i V VI V_6/VII VII V_6 VI_6

Sub-tonic precedes V

B.

Bb Major:

C.

E Minor:

vi°

D.

G Minor:

vi°

E.

Eb Major:

F.

C Major:

G.

D Minor:

H.

B \flat Major:

I.

G Major:

J.

F Major

K.

B Minor:

vi $^{\circ}$

NOTE

1. Johann Joseph Fux, *Steps to Parnassus*, translated and edited by Alfred Mann, (New York: W. W. Norton, 1943). Fux was not the first to employ species exercises for instructional purpose. Banchieri's *Cartella* of 1614 uses a species approach. See Knud Jeppesen, *The Style of Palestrina and the Dissonance*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1946), 6.