Eighteenth Century Counterpoint H. Gilbert Trythall

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY COUNTERPOINT

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PREFACE

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

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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*, 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.

- Exercises require extended cadential patterns.
- Non-chord tone patterns and small leap requirements govern melodic motion.
- 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.

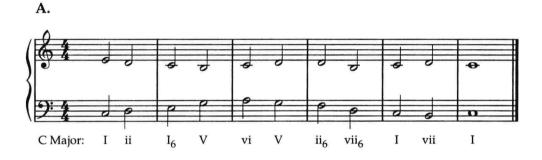
FIRST SPECIES: 1:1 PATTERNS IN 4 METER

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 4 meter consists of simultaneous half notes on beats 1 and 3.

All tones are chord tones.

EXAMPLE 1-1 First Species Counterpoint





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;

CHAPTER 1 3

2. deceptive cadence: a V or vii° chord followed by a submediant chord of the same or parallel scale;

 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.

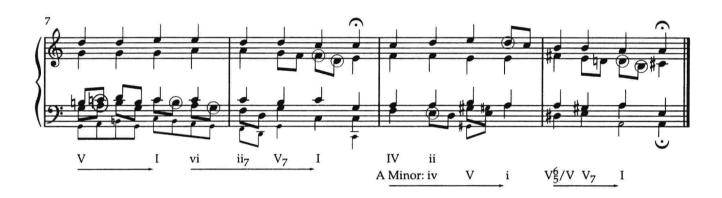
There are two to eight chords in an extended cadential pattern, rarely more.

EXAMPLE 1-2 Extended cadential patterns



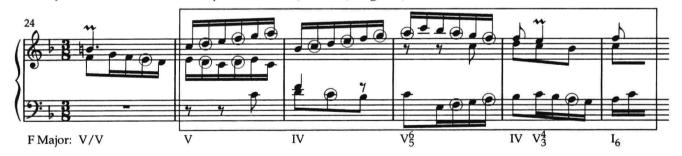
Extended cadential patterns

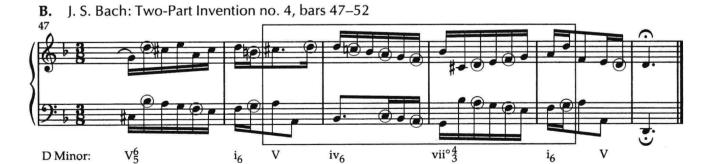




EXAMPLE 1-3 Extended cadential patterns with retrogression and cadence

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



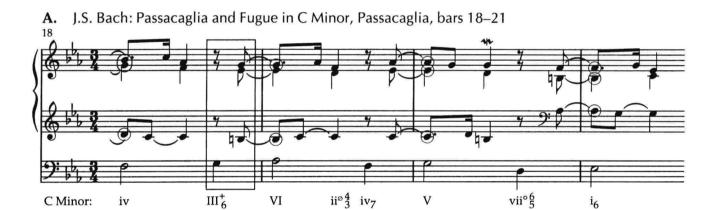


DIATONIC CHORD ORDER IN EXTENDED CADENTIAL PATTERNS

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

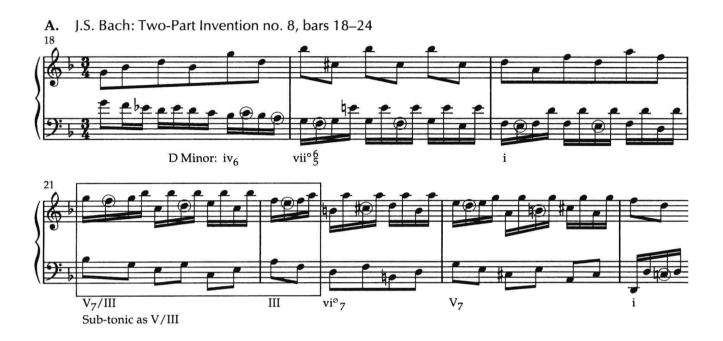
- 1. I or i, ii or ii°, iii or III, IV or iv, vi or VI chords may precede the concluding V or vii° of an extended cadential pattern in any order.
- 2. The mediant chord in major, iii, may follow a V or vii° chord. The mediant chord in the melodic minor ascending or harmonic minor scales, III⁺, may follow 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).

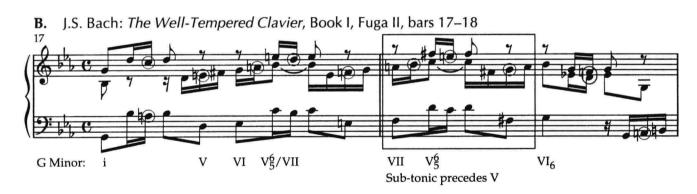
EXAMPLE 1-4 III + in extended cadential patterns





EXAMPLE 1-5 Subtonic triad in extended cadential patterns





CHAPTER 1 7

GUIDELINES FOR FIRST SPECIES

- 1. Compose only chord tones.
- 2. Every chord must include the chord root.
- 3. Compose triads only in root position or first inversion.
- **4.** Indicate the root and inversion of each chord by Roman and Arabic numerals below the staff.
- 5. Lead voices by step when possible.
- **6.** Compose voices in contrary motion when possible, but include some parallel and oblique motion.
- Do not cross voices.
- 8. Conclude exercises with an authentic cadence resolving to tonic unison or octave or to tonic and third (or tenth) in root position.
- 9. Do not compose parallel perfect fifths, octaves, or unisons between voices. Parallel fifths that include a diminished fifth are acceptable.
- **10.** Avoid parallel motion to a perfect fifth or octave in two voices.
- 11. Change chord root over each bar line. Metrical and harmonic rhythm coincide on the first beat of the bar in eighteenth century counterpoint.
- 12. Do not use rests.
- 13. Do not write above treble G or below bass F.
- 14. Do not exceed two octaves between voices.
- 15. Do not double an accidental.

EXERCISE 1-1 1:1 patterns: chord tones. Chords must have root.

Complete a second voice with Roman numeral analysis.





C Major:

CHAPTER 1 9



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.