

COUNTERPOINT

SECOND SPECIES

A counterpoint in second species is written as two notes against one. The cantus firmus (CF) 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 non-redundant 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 CF 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 CF;

The anacrusis (upbeat or second half note of the measure) may be consonant or dissonant, but if it is dissonant,

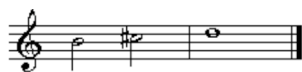
it MUST be approached by step and it MUST be resolved by step in the same direction. For example, if C is dissonant and it was approached from D, the next tone MUST be B (or B^b in Dorian).

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

Ending: for counterpoint written above the CF, the modal scale degrees should be 6-7-8, where 6-7 are expressed as half notes in the penultimate measure and 8 is a whole note forming an octave with the CF. 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[#]). The 7th degree must NOT be raised in Phrygian mode.

The ending of the counterpoint if written below should be 5-7-8 of the mode, and 7th degree should be raised as above. The ending in Phrygian mode is 4-7-8. 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; 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.

Normally, you should avoid using the same note on successive downbeats, but it is not wrong to do so. However, it is considered extremely weak to begin the second bar of the counterpoint with the same note on which the counterpoint began; in music of any period, it is usually considered weak or boring to begin an exposition with music that stays in one place (another reason your professor is not partial to Bruckner).

Remember that you have a choice for your beginning: you may begin either with two half notes or a half rest followed by a half note. Even if you begin with the rest, the first note must still be a unison, perfect fifth or octave for counterpoint written above the CF, and an octave for counterpoint written below the CF.

Be careful about long melodic sweeps in the same direction in second species, particularly when they contain leaps. Although context and musicality should be the best judges of just when you've gone too far relentlessly in one direction, the following easy pointers should serve as a guide:

Any sweep of six notes in one direction should subsequently move in the opposite direction.

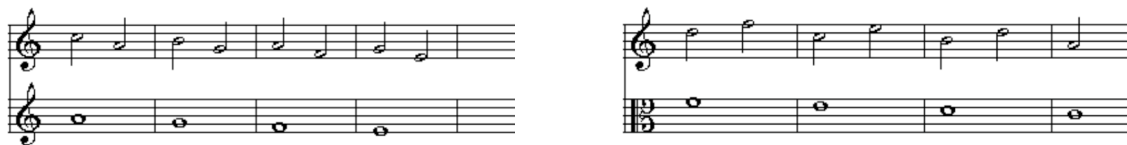
After any sweep of four notes in one direction that contains a leap you should change directions.

You should change direction after two leaps in the same direction.

You should not leap twice in the same direction if it is preceded by two stepwise moves in that direction.

If you have four notes that move by step in the same direction, you should not follow them with a leap in the same direction. In **THIRD SPECIES COUNTERPOINT**, long stepwise sweeps are greatly encouraged. You probably can't wait, can you?

It is very easy and tempting to create segmented lines in second species, particularly those of the following type:



So, just don't do it!!!!

Second species gives you the time to develop a line with more peaks and valleys and with more tonal information in it. So you will be able to attempt a well-shaped line that resembles good lines in Western music composed as recently as this morning. The most well-shaped line will have a climax that is leapt to on a syncopated part of the measure (in second species, this means the anacrusis) and which is "resolved" by stepward motion down; the climax ideally should be preceded by one, two or three (or in Wagner's case, dozens of) sub-climaxes which are progressively higher on the way to the ultimate climax. Fro gravy, get some other sub-climaxes on the way down to the cadence. Remember, a syncopated climax that is leapt to is the most dramatic and likely to get you that good grade you want. A syncopated climax also guarantees that it is not coincidental with the CF.



Endeavor to avoid writing "upper neighbor" notes in second species; do not follow a downbeat note with an anacrusis a second higher, and then follow that with the original note on the next downbeat. In many cases, it saps energy from the line; it is not specifically prohibited until third species, however.