Counterpoint is the study of melodic lines; how they are constructed, how they move, and how they interact with each other. It lays an important and strong foundation for understanding principles of harmony, voice leading, composition, orchestration, and much more. The study of counterpoint plays to the subconscious mind in music. It generates natural, organic instincts in composers, theorists, conductors, and performers alike. These instincts inform important musical choices that ultimately differentiate compositions and interpretations in performance between individuals. It is an indispensable part of any comprehensive education in music and should never be overlooked as part of a well-rounded training. There are five different species of counterpoint, each dealing with a particular melodic treatment.

Modal Species Counterpoint is the most primitive of several branches of counterpoint studies. There are many authoritative treaties and books written about the practice of species counterpoint, but arguably, among the most important are:

- The Study of Counterpoint (from Johann Joseph Fux's *Gradus ad Parnassum)*
  translated and edited by Alfred Mann (W. W. Norton)

- Counterpoint: The Polyphonic Vocal Style of the Sixteenth Century
  by Knud Jeppesen (Dover)

- Counterpoint in Composition
  by Felix Salzer and Carl Schachter (Columbia University Press) - Note: This book uses key signatures.

General Rules of Species Counterpoint Practice:
The rules of writing counterpoints place limitations on how melodic lines can move horizontally, and also what intervals they may form vertically. Knowing the rules by heart makes it more fun and musically satisfying to break them later in one's own modern compositions. As human beings, we long the most for what we cannot have. Disciplining ourselves, as musicians, to follow rules such as these when we practice or analyze counterpoint helps us to engrain the most musical sensibilities into our minds, and later, operate with these sensibilities as second nature. There are some basic rules for species counterpoint practice, which remain the same across all five species:

- ➡ No parallel fifths or octaves
- ➡ Never outline the tritone melodically in one direction (forming this interval harmonically is possible in certain species, but not all)
- ➡ Never outline the interval of a 7th melodically in one direction (forming this interval harmonically is possible in certain species, but not all)
- ➡ Never make any alterations to the Cantus Firmus (given line), except to move it up or down by octaves for the purposes of repositioning it
- ➡ **Special Rule for Three-Voice Counterpoints:** Triads may only be formed in root position or 1st inversion. The diminished triad is allowed in three-part counterpoints, but ONLY in 1st inversion. Also, in three-part, you can break species once in each voice (reverting to an earlier species and temporarily following its rules)

Modality:
This practice of Species Counterpoint will be modal, meaning that there will be no use of key signatures. Key signatures, which were invented well after initial practices of counterpoint, are an artificial means of re-creating (or transposing) modes - mainly Ionian (Major Scale) and Aeolian (Natural Minor). The reason for not using them is to preserve the fundamental nature of each of the church modes in its most primitive state (C Ionian, D Dorian, E Phrygian, G Mixolydian, and A Aeolian). We will not compose counterpoints in F Lydian or B Locrian modes, as these modes are dominated by the tritone, and are thus far less stable than the other five.

- ➡ In addition to these rules, there are rules which are specific to each of the five species.

Species-Specific Rules

First Species Practice - 1:1 (Whole Note to Whole Note)

This species studies consonance only. There is no dissonance at all in First Species.

DO:

- Form intervals of 3rds, 6ths, 5ths and 8ves harmonically between adjacent parts
- Move melodically by intervals of a 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th or 8ve
- BEGIN counterpoints above the cantus with an 8ve, 5th, or M3rd (Major Modes only); BEGIN counterpoints below the cantus with an 8ve or Unison
- END counterpoints above the cantus with an 8ve or 5th; END counterpoints below the cantus with an 8ve or Unison
- If leaping *a 4th or larger* in any one direction, the next move should be in the opposite direction by step

DON'T:

- Harmonically form the 2nd, 4th, tritone or any diminished or augmented interval, or the interval of a 7th
- Move melodically by any augmented or diminished interval or by 7th
- Harmonically form MORE than three consecutive 3rds, 6ths (or 10ths) *in any combination*. Once you hit your limit of 3, the next interval *must be* a 5th or 8ve.
- Leap consecutively more than once in the same direction (i.e. never have two leaps in a row)

Second Species Practice - 2:1 (Two Half Notes to each Whole Note)

This species studies dissonance on the weak beat of the measure.

DO:

- ALWAYS have a consonance on the strong beat of the measure
- Use dissonant intervals, but ONLY on weak beats (2nds, tritones, and 7ths allowed)
    - NOTE: All dissonances MUST be both approached and left by step-wise motion!
    - You DON'T HAVE TO use dissonance on all the weak beats (or any for that matter!) It's up to you.
- BEGIN (both above and below) with either two half notes, or a half rest followed by a half note.
  NOTE: IF you begin with a half rest, you may leap across the barline between the first and second bars
- If you BEGIN counterpoints above with two half notes, the first must be a 5th, Unison, or 8ve (or M3rd for Major Modes only).
- If you BEGIN counterpoints below with two half notes, the first must be Unison or 8ve
- END counterpoints above with a whole note in the last measure - 5th, Unison or 8ve
- END counterpoints below with a whole note in the last measure - Unison or 8ve

DON'T:

- Use dissonances on the strong beats
- Leap to or from a dissonance
- Leap across any barlines (except from measure 1 to 2, IF you begin with a half rest)
- Outline tritones or 7ths

NOTE: In this counterpoint practice, the study of Second Species is followed, first, by Fourth Species, before beginning Third and Fifth.

Fourth Species - 2:1 with Suspensions

This species studies dissonance on the strong beat of the measure.

DO:

- Suspend from a consonance on beat two of the previous measure onto any dissonance on beat one
    - NOTE: you are not required to always use dissonant suspensions. Suspensions may also be consonant.
- Feel free to break species one time during the course of your solution (break to Second only). This does not include the last bar, which must be a single whole note. You must abide by the rules of Second Species if you do so.
- BEGIN all counterpoints with a half rest, followed by a half note, tied into the next bar. THIS IS NOT OPTIONAL.

Possible Dissonant Suspensions for Counterpoints Above are: 7-6, 4-3, and 9-8 (Major only)
Possible Dissonant Suspensions for Counterpoints Below are: 2-3, and 4-5

DON'T:

- Use dissonance on the weak beat of the measure
- Use any 7-8 suspensions, as this will automatically create *rather unfortunate sounding* consecutive dissonances
- Tie into the last bar - the penultimate bar must have a half note on beat 2, which is NOT tied into the last bar
- Use more than one 4-5 (consonant) suspension in a row, or you will automatically create parallel fifths
- Use more than one 9-8 suspension in a row, or you will automatically create parallel octaves

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Third Species - 4:1 (Four Quarter Notes to One Whole Note)

This species studies other non-chord tones, such as passing tones, neighbor tones, and the cambiata. It also examines the hierarchy of duple rhythm.

DO:

- Only use leaps as a tool to find a new ascending or descending scalar motion in the line.
- Follow the metric division of STRONG weak STRONG weak
- ALWAYS use consonances on the strong beats - and WITHOUT EXCEPTION on beat 1 of every measure.
    - NOTE: Beat 3 of each measure may have a dissonance on it IF it is surrounded by scalar motion of at least four notes in the SAME direction. This is allowed because it implies a decorated version of Second Species.
- Approach and leave all other dissonances by step-wise motion only.
    - EXCEPTION: THE NOTA CAMBIATA
- Use dissonance (if desired) on beats 2 and/or 4 of the measure
- LEAP ONLY BETWEEN BEATS 1 and 2 of the measure
- Separate 8ves and 5ths by AT LEAST FOUR quarter notes
- Feel free to break to Second Species once per solution (following the rules of Second Species for that bar)
- BEGIN with: four quarter notes, or quarter rest followed by three quarter notes, or three rests followed by one quarter note (in this case, you may treat this quarter note on beat 4 as a pick-up and leap across the first barline)
- END with a whole note
- Use any of the following in the penultimate measure: four quarters, half and two quarters, or two half notes

DON'T:

- Use dissonances on beats 1 or 3 (unless beat three is part of the Nota Cambiata)
- Outline the tritone or the interval of a 7th in any one direction
- Leap between beats 2 and 3, 3 and 4, or 4 and 1 (except if starting with a quarter note pick-up in the first bar)
- Leap to or away from any dissonance (unless done in the context of the Nota Cambiata)

Fifth Species - Florid Counterpoint

The purpose of this species is to combine all previous species' of counterpoint and create more diverse polyphonic compositions based on the Cantus.

From Fux's *Gradus ad Parnassum:*
"As a garden is full of flowers, so this species of counterpoint should be full of excellences of all kinds, a plastic melodic line, liveliness of movement, and beauty and variety of form. Just as we use all the other common species' of arithmetic - counting, addition, multiplication and subtraction - in division, so this species is nothing but a recapitulation and combination of all the preceding ones. There is nothing new that need be explained, except that one should take the utmost care to write a singable, melodic line - a concern I beg you always to keep in mind."

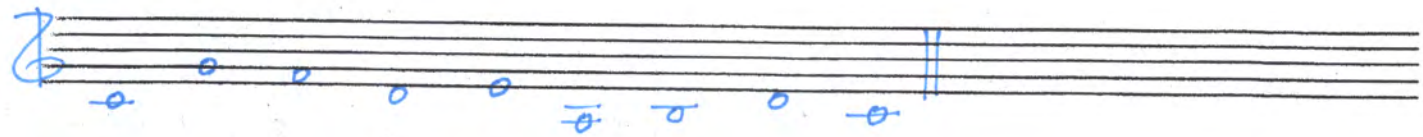
DO:
-write a singable line which uses all of species 1-4, each at least once or twice in the course of the solution
-follow the rules of whatever species you happen to be in at each moment in the line

DON'T:
-Overanalyze
-Over-think
-forget to play and sing through these and all of your counterpoints to make sure they feel natural and organic to your ear; after all, this is the best and most useful tool you have.

CANTI FIRMI (1)

Ionian:

1



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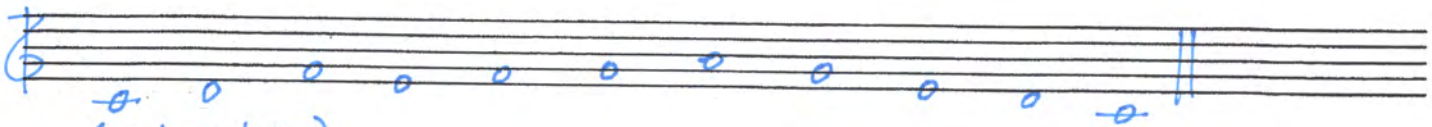
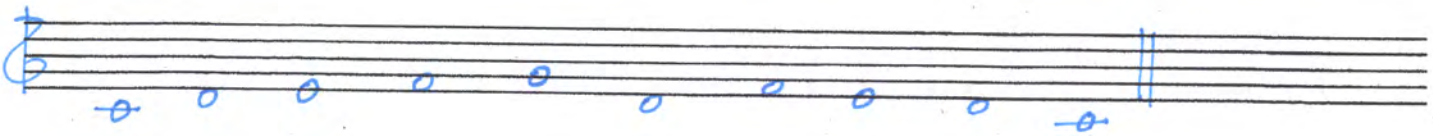
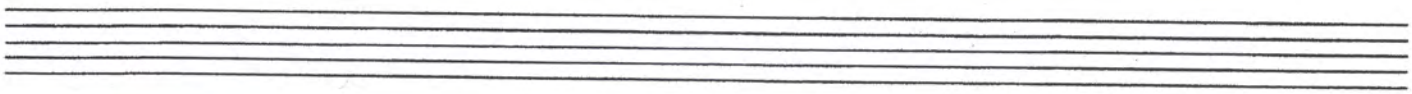


(Schenker)

3

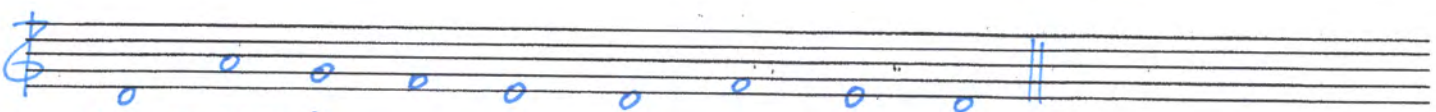




Dorian:

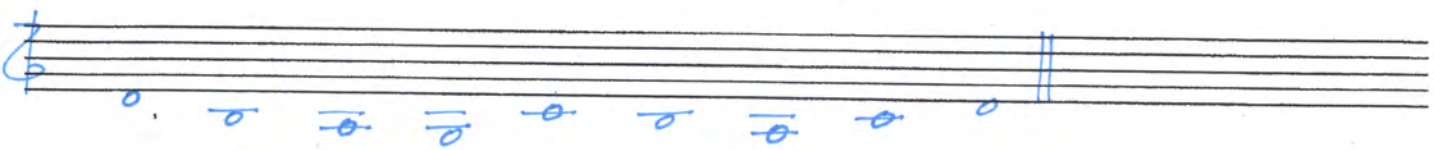
1

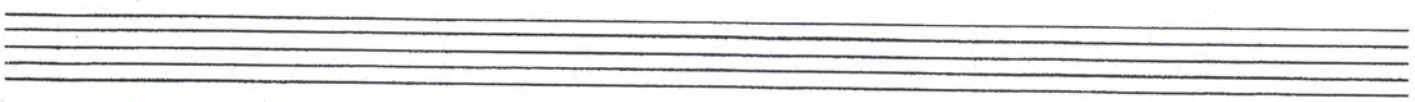
2



(Jeppesen)

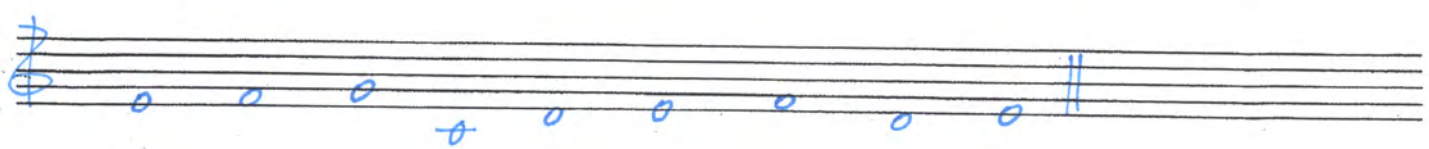
3





Phrygian:

1



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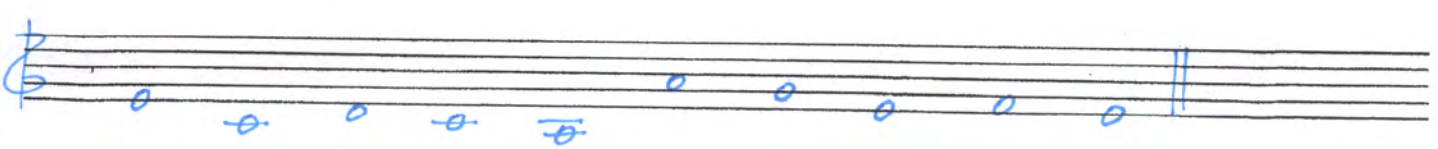

CANTI FIRMI (2)

3

Mixolydian:

1

(Jeppesen)

2

3

Aeolian:

1

2

3