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SUMMARY OF THE TERMS AND RULES OF COUNTERPOINT

Definitions:

Perfect Concords are perfect Unison, Fifth, and Octave

Imperfect Concords are Thirds and Sixths

Discords are Seconds, Fourths, and Sevenths.

Direction of Motion refers to the relative movement between notes of any two voices either by Step or Skip. In **Contrary motion**, the voices move in opposite directions; in **Oblique motion**, one voice stays on the same note while the other moves either up or down. When both voices move in the same direction at once, it is called **Similar or Parallel** motion.

The term '**gradual progression**' used in this context means a passing tone.

Accented beats of a measure in binary time means the first quarter and the third quarter. **Unaccented** beats are the second and fourth quarters.

First Species is note against note. (These notes are traditionally whole notes for the exercises.) Only Concords are used.

Second Species is two half notes against a whole note. Mostly Concords are used but a Discords may occur as a passing note on the second half note.

Third Species is four quarter notes against one whole note. Mostly Concords are used but Discords may occur on the second or fourth quarters of a measure.

Fourth Species is the Syncopation of half notes in suspension against a whole note. Two half notes are set against a whole note. Both accented and unaccented parts of a measure may be Concords. If Discord is used, the unaccented part must be Concord and the next accented beat must be the Discord. The Discord must resolve down one step to a Concord.

The **Canto fermo** is the given melody and does not change.

Nota cambiata is a special situation in Third Species where a skip and Discord on the third beat is allowed.

Ligature means 'a tie'.

Rules:

- 1 Contrary and Oblique motion may be used in any Progression: but the Similar (or Parallel) motion, only from a perfect Concord to an imperfect, or from an imperfect to an imperfect: in the Sense only the 8th and 5th are deemed perfect Concords, but the 3rd and 6th imperfect.
- 2 Avoid movement to an Eight or Unison by a Skip, that is when the Lower Part ascends one degree and the upper descends by a Skip though it be in the contrary motion.
- 3 An imperfect Concord is to be used preferably to a perfect, as the former is more harmonious than the Latter.
- 4 The Notes must be conformable to the nature of the Key.
- 5 The Inharmonic Relation in **Mi** against **Fa** is to be avoided as much as Possible.
- 6 Regularity, Variety and good Melody must continually be kept in View.
- 7 Every note of the Canto fermo must have its particular Concord. If it is in the lower part the Intervals must be taken upwards, and if in the upper part, then the Intervals must be reckoned downwards.
- 8 We must **begin** and **end** by a perfect Concord.
- 9 If the Canto fermo is in the lower part, the interval of the next-to-last note requires a major Sixth, and if in the upper part, a minor Third.

General Observations:

The Tritone is generally avoided in skips and in the span of a melodic line. The tritone and chromatic intervals are to be avoided and not generally allowed when learning this style of counterpoint. Leaps of a Fourth or greater are usually preceded and followed by step or skip in the opposite direction. Use of more than three consecutive Thirds or Sixths are to be avoided.

Voices should not cross or overlap.

Do not repeat a perfect interval.

Perfect intervals are generally preceded by contrary motion.

In four voices, the Eighth or the the Third is most often the note doubled, rarely the Fifth.

Triads are used for the most part.

Inversion may be used near the beginning or near the end, or to avoid parallel movement or other problematic situation.

Second Counterpoint

- 10 Here the first Half Note is to be Concord, and the second may be either Concord or Discord. The Discord therefore only is used as a passing tone from Concord to Concord; but in Skips the Concord only should be used.
- 11 If the canto fermo is in the lower part, the two notes in the next-to-last Bar must have a Fifth for its first note and a major Sixth for its second note; but if in the upper part, the first note requires a Fifth and the other a minor Third.
- 12 Skips of Thirds in a Similar motion following one another must be avoided, as it would create a forbidden progression of Fifths and Eights. Greater Skips as those of a Fourth, Fifth and Sixth are allowed.
- 13 When the Canto fermo is in the upper part, a Half Rest is to be placed at the beginning of the Counterpoint instead of the first note.
- 14 If the Parts should meet so close together as not to leave sufficient room for the notes to move in the contrary way, then in such Case a Skip of a Sixth or Eight is allowed to be used.

15 In **Triple Time** when one note is set against three, the middle note may be Discord, provided it be in a passing tone.

Third Counterpoint

16 When five quarter Notes follow one another gradually either rising or falling, the first, third and fifth note are to be Concords, and the second and fourth Discords. But this is not always the Case, as sometimes the second and fourth note may be Concords, and the third a Discord by way of filling up the space of a third as in the *Nota Cambiata*.

Fourth Counterpoint

- 17** Syncopation may be either of Concords or Discords. If of Concords, both the accented and unaccented Part of the Measure are Concords. But if of Discords, the unaccented note is to be Concord and the next accented note Discord.
- 18** Discords must resolve into the next succeeding Concord by falling one Degree. If the *Canto fermo* is in the lower Part, the Second resolves into the Unison, the Fourth into the Third, the Seventh into the Sixth and the Ninth into the Eight.
- 19** If the *Canto fermo* is in the upper part, then the Second resolves into the Third, the Fourth into the Fifth, the Seventh into the Eight, and the Ninth into the Tenth.
- 20** If the *Canto fermo* is in the lower part, the Seventh resolving into the Sixth, is to be used in the next-to-last Bar; but if in the upper part, the Second which resolves into the Third and passes afterwards into the unison.
- 21** Syncopation is to be introduced in every Bar, as often as possible, and as far as is consistent with regular Progression, Variety and Melody.

Composition in 3 or more Parts

- 22** The Triad is to be introduced in every Bar, unless for certain reasons it should prove impracticable; for sometimes another Concord as the Sixth or Eight is chosen instead of it, for sake of better Melody, or for sake of avoiding the wrong Progression of two Eights or Fifths immediately following on another.
- 23** When the Bass ascends gradually, sufficient Room must be left between the Parts, in order to meet in the contrary motion.
- 24** The Rules concerning the different Motions are to be applied here likewise. This only is to be added, that the same rules must be observed in the middle parts as well as the extreme. Yet in Composition of more Parts, in order to avoid greater Irregularities, those Rules cannot Always be so strictly observed.