

Understanding Counterpoint

Elizabeth Colpitts



***Understanding Counterpoint* by Elizabeth Colpitts - an overview**

This overview of *Understanding Counterpoint* features brief extracts from the 330 page book, including:

- **part of the Notes to Teacher (below)**
- **Table of Contents**
- **Introduction**
- **Chapter One: first page only**
- **Chapter One Review: all**
- **Chapter Two: first two pages**
- **Chapter Three: first two pages**
- **Chapter Four: first two pages**
- **Chapter Five: first two pages**
- **Chapter Six: first two pages**
- **Chapter Seven: first two pages**
- **Chapter Eight: first two pages**
- **Chapter Eight Review: all**
- **Chapter Nine: first two pages**
- **Chapter Ten: first two pages**

Understanding Counterpoint was developed to help students prepare for the Counterpoint examination offered by the Royal Conservatory of Music of Canada and the National Music Certificate Program in the U.S.A. This edition is based on the requirements of the 2009 Theory Syllabus.

What's in the Book?

Understanding Counterpoint is divided into four parts:

Part One : Writing Counterpoint - Chapters One to Three: teaches the basic skills for writing counterpoint.

Part Two: Writing Contrapuntal Dances - Chapters Four to Six: builds on the basic skills as the student learns to complete a contrapuntal dance.

Part Three: Analyzing and Writing Fugues - Chapters Seven to Nine: prepares the student to analyze and compose a fugue exposition.

Part Four: The Art of Figured Bass - Chapter Ten: prepares the student to write a figured bass realization and compose a melody above a given figured bass line.

Chapter Notes

Chapter One: Writing Melodies

This chapter is about writing melodies in Baroque style. Much of the material also applies to bass lines, usually to a lesser extent. If you can write an effective Baroque melody, a bass line should not present new challenges.

Chapter Two: Writing 1:1 Counterpoint

This chapter introduces the simplest type of counterpoint, 1:1 counterpoint. The principles learned here form a foundation for future composition in more elaborate styles.

Chapter Three: Writing 2:1 Counterpoint

This chapter introduces 2:1 counterpoint, a ratio of counterpoint that appears frequently in Baroque dances. The guidelines for writing 2:1 counterpoint are also applicable to the other types of counterpoint in the rest of the text, including free counterpoint.

Chapter Four: Other Types of Counterpoint

This chapter introduces 3:1, 4:1 and free counterpoint. It includes information about characteristics of dances, some of which is review from rudiments and harmony courses. (This chapter will also be a useful resource for students later on if they go on to prepare for the Advanced Harmony examination.) By the end of this chapter, students should be well prepared for the composition assignments in the following chapter.

Chapter Five: Writing Dances

This chapter guides students through the process of completing a partly composed dance. The current syllabus requires the student to complete a bass line below a given melody, so most of the questions take that form. However, in the figured bass portion of the exam, the student may be asked to complete a melody. Thus, the last two questions have a given bass line and the assignment is to complete the melody.

In this chapter only, the simple instructions come first and the more detailed instructions follow afterwards. After the information about dances in Chapter Four, students may be ready to try writing a dance with a minimum of assistance.

Chapter Six: Handling Accidentals

This chapter expands the student's ability to handle notes with accidentals in the given line in an exam question. In a complete dance, the reasons for accidentals are usually not too difficult to figure out. In an exam question where only part of a dance is given, it can be tricky to figure out the reason for an accidental. Developing skill in this area will help students work efficiently in an exam setting.

Chapter Seven: Invertible Counterpoint

A knowledge of invertible counterpoint will be useful when students study fugue in Chapters Eight and Nine.

Chapter Eight: The Fugue

This chapter introduces the analysis of a fugue exposition, using fugues from *The Well-Tempered Clavier* as examples. (Students will also find this chapter useful when they prepare for the Analysis exam.)

Chapter Nine: Writing Fugues

This chapter describes how to finish a partly written fugue exposition.

Chapter Ten: Figured Bass Accompaniment

This chapter contains guidelines for writing a realization of a figured bass. Figured bass realization is primarily about adding chords above a given bass line. Many of the elements of figured bass will already be familiar to students from their study of harmony. Students will likely find figured bass easier if they think of it as re-visiting the concepts learned for writing four-part harmony rather than an entirely new subject.

Appendices

Use Appendices One, Two and Three for review and reference as needed.

Online Appendices in the Extras Section at counterpoint.duetsoftware.net

The “Inventions” Appendix is available in the Extras section at our website. It is included because inventions are a type of contrapuntal piece that students usually encounter before they play fugues. As well, a question about inventions might appear on a counterpoint exam.

The “Game Cards” Appendix includes the game cards from the ends of each chapter and some additional game cards to use when students play *Contrapunctus* with non-counterpoint students.

A Final Word

Understanding Counterpoint provides clear and comprehensive instruction in counterpoint and figured bass. The text includes useful techniques and helpful guidelines as well as rules to abide by.

It’s hard to overestimate the importance of playing the work and using the ear as a guide to revision. Students who combine application of the rules and guidelines with attention to how the music sounds will achieve excellent success in counterpoint.

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Online Appendices are available in the Extras section at counterpoint.duetsoftware.net.

To obtain the password for the Extras section, email your request to
extras@counterpoint.duetsoftware.net.

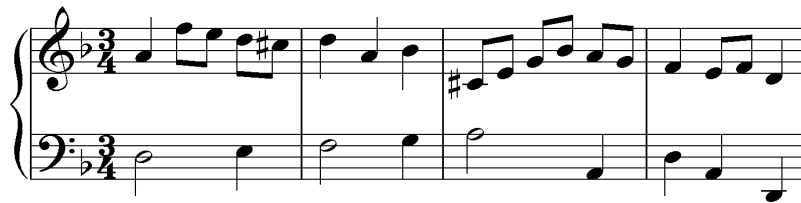
Introduction

Counterpoint is music written as a combination of two or more melodic lines.

During the Baroque era (1600 – 1750), composers became highly skilled at combining melodic lines as counterpoint. We will use the style of that time as our model.

In effective counterpoint, each individual line sounds good and the lines complement each other when played together. For example, in the following phrase from “Minuet in D Minor” the melody and bass line are well-shaped lines. Each line sounds good when played alone. When they are played together, the lines form beautiful counterpoint.

Minuet in D Minor attr. to J. S. Bach



Did you play the phrase from “Minuet in D Minor” ? As you go through this book, it is important to play the music. Play both the given examples and the music that you compose.

The more examples of counterpoint you play, the better you will become at hearing contrapuntal music in your head just by looking at the score. Soon, you will be able to use this skill of inner hearing to help you compose good counterpoint in situations where you cannot play the music on an instrument, such as on a counterpoint exam.

Play everything!



What’s the point of learning counterpoint? By the end of this course you will be able to:

- compose contrapuntal music in Baroque style
- better understand the contrapuntal pieces by Baroque composers that you play
- apply much of what you learn about Baroque counterpoint to the music that you play and compose in other styles
- succeed on counterpoint exams.

Chapter One: Writing Melodies

Before we begin combining two lines as counterpoint, we will look at some characteristics of melodic lines in Baroque style.

Steps and Leaps

We describe melodic movement by a semitone or tone as movement by step. For example, the following melody moves entirely by step:

Example 1



Stepwise movement is also called **conjunct** movement.

We describe melodic movement by a third or more as movement by leap. For example, the following melody moves entirely by leap:

Example 2



Movement by leap is also called **disjunct** movement.

A good melody usually has a mix of steps and leaps and may also include some repeated notes.



1. For the following melodies, identify the type of movement between the notes.
 - a. Write **s** for step, **l** for leap, or **r** for repeated note.
 - b. Count the steps, leaps, and repeated notes. The first one is done as an example.

Example:

Minuet in G Major

Petzold

l s s s s l r l l s s s s l r

8 steps
 5 leaps
 2 repeated notes

Minuet

J. S. Bach

A.

____ steps
 ____ leaps
 ____ repeated notes

* Each exercise will be indicated by this picture in the left margin.

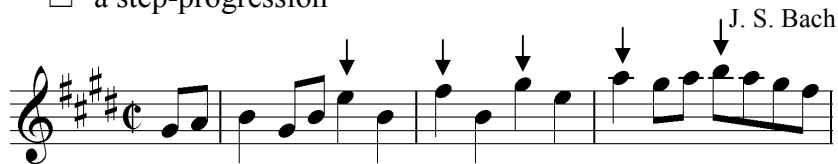


Chapter One Review

/40

1. (Check the box for the correct answer.) In the following melody, the notes under the arrows outline:

- ☐ a sequence
☐ a compound melody
☐ a step-progression



2. Which of the following melodies has a more effective shape and use of rhythm? (Circle A or B.)



3. Which of the following melodies features a high point later in the phrase? (Circle A or B.)



4. Which of the following melodies features quicker rhythms on weak beats to propel the rhythm forward? (Circle A or B.)



5. Check the box for the correct answer:

/4

- a. When a melody leaps by a seventh it should leap:
 - ☐ a minor seventh
 - ☐ a major seventh
- b. True or False: When the melody moves between the leading note and the subdominant note, the interval may be an awkward augmented fourth or an acceptable diminished fifth.
 - ☐ True
 - ☐ False
- c. If a melody is in a minor key, avoid melodic augmented seconds between the submediant and the leading note by:
 - ☐ using notes from the harmonic minor scale
 - ☐ using notes from the melodic minor scale
- d. In the key of B Minor or B Major, avoid leaping an augmented fourth from:
 - ☐ G# to C#
 - ☐ D to G
 - ☐ E to A#
 - ☐ F# to B

6. The following melodies contain augmented seconds and augmented fourths. For each one:

/8

- a. name the key
- b. circle each pair of notes that forms an augmented interval and mark it wrong with an x. There may be more than one augmented interval in an example.



Key: _____



Key: _____



Key: _____



Key: _____

7. Fill in the following keys chart:

/14

Key Signature	Major Key	Minor Key
No sharps or flats	C Major	A Minor
1 sharp		
2 sharps		
3 sharps		
4 sharps		
5 sharps		
6 sharps		
7 sharps		
1 flat		
2 flats		
3 flats		
4 flats		
5 flats		
6 flats		
7 flats		

/10 8. Learn to play this Gigue.*

Gigue

Telemann

The musical score for the Gigue by Telemann is presented in three systems. Each system consists of a grand staff with a treble and bass clef. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 8/8. The first system contains 6 measures. The second system contains 6 measures, with a repeat sign after the 4th measure. The third system contains 6 measures, ending with a double bar line. There are three square boxes at the beginning of the first staff line of each system for bar numbers.

/1

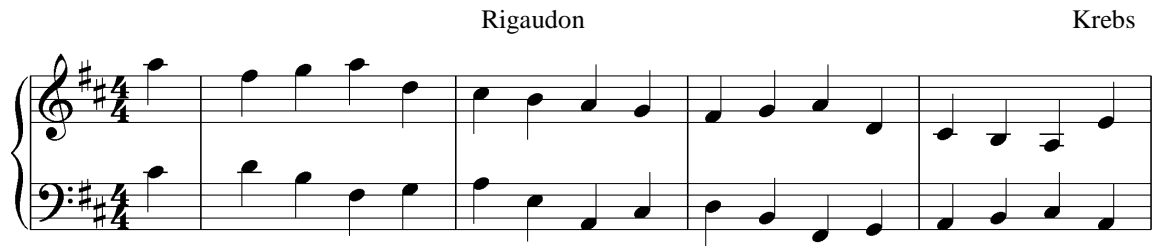
Bonus question: In “Gigue” in question 8, write bar numbers in the boxes on the score.

* One of the ways to learn to write counterpoint is to play contrapuntal pieces, observing and absorbing the style. At the end of each chapter review, there will be a contrapuntal piece to learn.

Chapter Two: Writing 1:1 Counterpoint

When both lines have the same rhythm, it is called 1:1 (“one against one”) counterpoint or counterpoint in 1:1 ratio. Short passages in 1:1 ratio occur in many Baroque dances (see Example 1).

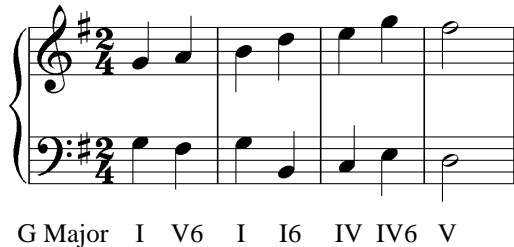
Example 1



In Chapter One, we saw that melodies are based on the chord progressions learned in four-part harmony. When two or more melodic lines are combined, the resulting counterpoint is also based on these chord progressions.

Example 2 shows a phrase in 1:1 counterpoint with the underlying chords identified with Roman numerals. The chords reflect the pattern of “tonic - pre-dominant - dominant - tonic”.^{*} They change at appropriate times, forming convincing harmonic rhythm.

Example 2



A Three-Part Method

“Simple Minuet” is a typical question in a counterpoint exercise in which one line is given and the assignment is to write another line.

Sample Question: Complete this phrase of counterpoint in 1:1 ratio by writing a melody on the treble staff.

Simple Minuet



^{*} The pre-dominant may be omitted.

In this section, a three-part method for doing this type of question will be demonstrated. In Part One, the harmony is planned. In Part Two, the counterpoint is completed. In Part Three, the work is checked and revisions are made.*

Part One: Plan the Harmony

To plan the harmony:

- a. name the key
- b. write a chord chart for the key in the margin
- c. write Roman numerals under the bass line:
 - create good harmonic rhythm
 - often choose root position or first inversion triads
 - choose chords that reflect the pattern “tonic - pre-dominant - dominant - tonic”
 - choose chords for a perfect or imperfect cadence at the end of the phrase.

Here’s “Simple Minuet” with Part One completed:

Example 3

Simple Minuet

F Major I viio6 I V6 V V6 I V6 I V

5

Chord Chart
F Major

I	FAC
ii(7)	GBD(F)
iii	ACE
IV	BDF
V(7)	CEG(B)
vi	DFA
vii	EGB

L.N.= E

Part Two: Complete the Counterpoint

To write the melody:

- a. use notes from the chords you named with Roman numerals
- b. write the same rhythm as the bass line
- c. for any seventh chord, resolve the seventh down by step to the next melody note
- d. usually avoid repeated notes (in this ratio).

Here’s “Simple Minuet” with Part Two completed.

Example 4

Simple Minuet

F Major I viio6 I V6 V V6 I V6 I V

5

Chord Chart
F Major

I	FAC
ii(7)	GBD(F)
iii	ACE
IV	BDF
V(7)	CEG(B)
vi	DFA
vii	EGB

L.N.= E

* This method of “prepare, compose, check and revise” is the suggested procedure throughout the book. The instructions will be modified to suit the type of question but the basic procedure will be the same.

Chapter Three – Writing 2:1 Counterpoint

In 2:1 (“two against one”) counterpoint, there are two notes in one line for each note in the other line. Passages in 2:1 counterpoint are very common in Baroque dances. Either line may have the faster moving notes, as shown in Examples 1a and 1b.

Example 1a

Handel

D Minor i viio6 i6 i iv6

Example 1b

Sperletti

A Minor i i6 V V6 V6 V
4

In 1:1 counterpoint, both lines consist of chord notes. In 2:1 counterpoint, the slower moving line consists of chord notes and the faster moving line includes both chord notes and non-chord notes*.

In the faster moving line, the first note of each pair is typically a chord note written on the beat. The second note of the pair is either another chord note or a non-chord note. In Examples 1a and 1b, the non-chord notes are circled.

In Examples 2a and 2b, the fragments from Examples 1a and 1b are shown again with the non-chord notes identified as passing notes and accented passing notes.

Example 2a

Handel

D Minor i viio6 i6 i iv6

* Some theorists use other terms such as “nonharmonic tones” to refer to the notes that are not from the underlying chord.

Example 2b

Sperletti

A Minor i i6 V V6 V6 V
4

1. For these fragments of 2:1 counterpoint, circle the non-chord notes and identify them as passing notes and neighbour notes*.

A.

D Major I V I V7

B.

G Minor i i6 i V6 V V4
2

Vertical Intervals in 2:1 Counterpoint

In 2:1 counterpoint, each vertical interval is formed either between two chord notes or between a chord note and a non-chord note.

Vertical intervals formed between two chord notes should reflect the principles learned for 1:1 counterpoint. For example, there should be lots of thirds and sixths, a smaller number of perfect octaves and perfect fifths in appropriate places, and so on.

Vertical intervals formed between a chord note and a non-chord note are less important than intervals between two chord notes. In general, the guidelines for the use of vertical intervals do not apply to these less significant vertical intervals.

We put the numbers for vertical intervals involving a non-chord note in parentheses to show that we are less concerned about them (see Example 3).

* The non-chord notes in counterpoint are the same types as those learned in harmony. To review, see the Non-Chord Notes Appendix on page 320. There are no universally agreed upon names for the non-chord notes. In this text, I use the names for non-chord notes recommended in the 2009 RCM syllabus, except that I use our Canadian spelling of “neighbour”.

Chapter Four: Other Types of Counterpoint

3:1 Counterpoint

In 3:1 (“three against one”) counterpoint, there are three notes in one line for each note in the other line. Counterpoint in 3:1 ratio is written in compound time (see Example 1a) or in simple time as triplets (see Example 1b).

Example 1a



Example 1b



The faster moving line may be the melody or the bass line.

Example 2



Each three-note group in the faster moving line will have either all chord notes or a mix of chord notes and non-chord notes.



1. For each of these phrases of 3:1 counterpoint:
 - a. name the key
 - b. write Roman numerals under the bass line
 - c. circle and identify the non-chord notes
 - d. name the vertical intervals, putting parentheses around the numbers for intervals involving non-chord notes.



Key: ____ I

B.

Key: _____

Writing 3:1 Counterpoint

To write 3:1 counterpoint, we use the same techniques that we use in 2:1 counterpoint, as outlined on page 101.

- Base each group of notes in the faster moving line on one chord. (In this ratio, they are groups of three notes.)
- Write chord notes and non-chord notes. Often write chord notes on beats.
- Create vertical intervals between chord notes according to the guidelines.
- Resolve non-chord notes correctly. Most types resolve by step.
- Either begin with a 1:1 framework and convert it to 3:1 counterpoint or write 3:1 counterpoint directly, without reference to a 1:1 version.

Using Perfect Intervals in 3:1 Counterpoint

In 3:1 counterpoint, we follow the guidelines from page 101 for the use of perfect intervals.

1. Approach each perfect unison, fifth and octave by contrary or oblique motion. You may approach the perfect fifth or perfect octave by similar motion if the melody moves by step.
2. Don't use two perfect unisons, fifths or octaves in a row. For example, these are wrong:

3. If a beat starts with a perfect unison, fifth or octave, don't use that interval anywhere in the preceding beat.

Chapter Five: Writing Dances

On a counterpoint exam, you may be asked to complete a dance that is partly composed. Question 1 is a typical question in which you are asked to complete the bass line below a given melody.

Two sets of instruction are given for the completion of this type of question. Use as your guide either the concise instructions on page 162 or the full instructions on pages 163 - 166.



1. Complete this dance by finishing the bass line.

- i. Name the key.
- ii. Write an Italian term for the tempo.
- iii. Name each cadence (type and key).
- iv. Name the form.
- v. Complete the bass line.

Minuet

Form: _____

Tempo: _____



Key: _____



Completing the Bass Line for a Dance (Concise Instructions)

Part One - Prepare

- a. Name the key and tempo.
- b. Make a chart of related keys. (Omit this step if the modulation is obvious.)
- c. Mark the phrases.
- d. Name the cadences (type and key).
- e. Name the form.
- f. Write chord charts for the keys used in the dance.
- g. Write Roman numerals for the dance. Include pivot chords* for mid-phrase modulations.
- h. Observe the given music (rhythmic and melodic motives, imitation/repetition).

Part Two - Compose the Line

- a. Create appropriate vertical intervals.
- b. Create a variety of motion between the lines.
- c. Handle simultaneous leaps in both lines well. (Contrary motion is often a good choice.)
- d. Write a zig-zaggy bass line.
- e. Handle melodic intervals in the bass line well. (Approach/leave large leaps well. Avoid intervals larger than an octave, major sevenths and augmented intervals.)
- f. Add accidentals for modulation as needed.
- g. Add accidentals for a minor key as needed.
- h. Write a line that interacts well rhythmically with the given line.

Part Three - Check and Revise

- a. Name all vertical intervals. Fix any errors in their use.
- b. Use Dance Checklist One on page 167 as a guide to checking and revision.
- c. Re-read the instructions for the question and check off each item.

* A pivot chord is a chord common to both keys that is used in a modulation. It is usually a pre-dominant chord in the new key.

Chapter Six: Handling Accidentals

Most Baroque dances include notes with accidentals. For example, in the following “Gavotte”, there are eight notes with accidentals.

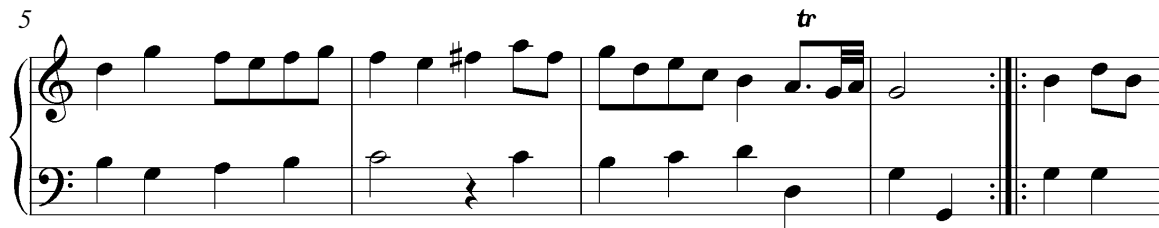
Example 1

Gavotte

Samuel Arnold



C Major



Sometimes, accidentals reflect the fact that the passage is in a minor key. Another common reason for accidentals is to reflect modulation. However, in “Gavotte”, there are no passages in minor keys and the modulation to G Major accounts for only two of the eight accidentals, the F#’s in bar 6 and bar 9. Why did the composer write the other accidentals?

This chapter looks at how to interpret notes with accidentals when you encounter them in a dance on a counterpoint question.

Notes with Accidentals - Overview

Here are six common reasons for the addition of accidentals:

- accidental for modulation to another key
- accidental for the sixth or seventh scale degree in a minor key
- accidental for a chromatic non-chord note
- accidental to restore the note to normal for the key, after an accidental earlier in the bar
- cautionary accidental as a reminder of the key signature
- accidental for an applied dominant chord.*

Here is an example of each:

Example 2a: Accidental for modulation to another key

Gavotte Telemann

F Major

Perfect Cadence
in C Major

Example 2b: Accidental for the sixth or seventh scale degree in a minor key

Minuet J. S. Bach

G Minor

* These six are common, but they are not the only possible reasons for accidentals. Other possibilities include viio7 in major keys (needs an accidental on the seventh) and the picardy third (the raised third that creates a major triad as the last chord of a piece in a minor key).

Chapter Seven: Invertible Counterpoint

Sometimes, composers write in a style called **invertible counterpoint**. Invertible counterpoint is counterpoint written so that the lines can switch places. Either line works well as the melody line or the bass line.

Here's a fragment written in invertible counterpoint:

Example 1a



Here's the same fragment, inverted:

Example 1b



In Example 1b, the melody line was written an octave lower on the bass clef staff and the bass line was written an octave higher on the treble clef staff. To invert counterpoint, we move the melody line lower, the bass line higher, or both.

Invertible Counterpoint - What's the Point?

Recently, I bought a reversible hat. It's blue denim on one side and red plaid on the other side. The denim side will go with my blue jeans and, when I turn the hat the other way out, the plaid side will match my kilt. It's like getting two hats for the price of one.

Similarly, invertible counterpoint is a practical choice for composers because they can use either line as the melody line or the bass line at different times in the piece. Invertible counterpoint gives composers more options.

How to Write Invertible Counterpoint

Writing invertible counterpoint is similar to writing the counterpoint that we've been composing in Baroque dances. For the most part, the inversion of counterpoint works out naturally because most vertical intervals invert to other intervals that are used similarly. For example, thirds invert to sixths, and sixths invert to thirds.

Here are Example 1a and its inversion, 1b, with the vertical intervals named (see Examples 1c and 1d).

Example 1c

Example 1d

How to Invert Counterpoint

We've seen that one common way to invert counterpoint is to write the melody line an octave lower and write the bass line an octave higher. Here's another demonstration:

Example 2a A phrase written in invertible counterpoint

In this inverted version of the phrase, the lines have each moved an octave and changed places.

Example 2b The inverted phrase

Bass line written an octave higher on the treble clef staff.
Melody line written an octave lower on the bass clef staff



1. Invert this phrase of counterpoint.
 - a. Write the bass line an octave higher on the treble clef staff.
 - b. Write the melody line an octave lower on the bass clef staff.

Chapter Eight: The Fugue

The fugue is a type of contrapuntal composition that flourished during the Baroque era. The most famous collection of fugues is *The Well-Tempered Clavier* by J. S. Bach.

In this chapter, we will learn about the elements of fugue, using fugues from *The Well-Tempered Clavier* as examples. Then, in Chapter Nine, we will apply this knowledge to composing part of a fugue.

Voices

The lines of a fugue are called voices. We name the voices after the singing ranges: soprano, alto, tenor and bass. Most fugues are written in three or four voices.

Four-voice Fugues

In a four-voice fugue, the two higher voices, the soprano and alto, are usually written on the top staff and the two lower voices, the tenor and bass, are usually written on the bottom staff (see Example 1).

Example 1 Excerpt from a four-voice Fugue



1. Answer these questions about Example 1:

- a. What are the first three notes in the tenor voice? _____
- b. What note is a unison shared by the soprano and alto voices? _____

Three-voice Fugues

In a three-voice fugue, the soprano voice is written on the top staff and the bass voice is written on the bottom staff. The middle voice, the alto, is written on the top staff when it has higher notes and on the bottom staff when it has lower notes (see Example 2).

Example 2 Excerpt from a Three-voice Fugue

When there are two voices on a staff, the stems of the notes in the higher voice go up and the stems of the notes in the lower voice go down. When there's only one voice on a staff, the basic stem rules apply.



2. Complete this assignment:

- a. In Example 2, use a highlighter (or pencil) to highlight the alto voice.
- b. In the first bar of Example 2, the alto voice is written on the _____ (treble/bass) clef staff. In the second bar, it is written on the _____ (treble/bass) clef staff.

The Exposition

The first section of a fugue is called the **exposition** (see Example 3). During the exposition, the main themes of the fugue are introduced.

Example 3 A Fugue Exposition

Fugue VI
in 3 voices

J. S. Bach
BWV 851

The Subject

A fugue features a main theme called the **subject**. The subject is first heard at the beginning of the fugue in a solo statement in one of the voices. By introducing the subject in this dramatic way, the composer ensures that we will recognize this important melody when it recurs throughout the fugue.

Chapter Eight Review

/40

/16

1. a. The first section of a fugue is called the _____.
- b. The first statement of the main theme of a fugue is the subject in the tonic key. It is followed by a second statement in the dominant key which is called the _____.
- c. A recurring melody that is heard at the same time as entries of the main theme is called a _____.
- d. (Check **all** correct answers.) What is a typical function of a contrapuntal link?
 - ☐ linking
 - ☐ modulating
 - ☐ stating the main theme as the subject or the answer
- e. True or False:
 - _____ A fugue subject typically ends on a strong or medium beat.
 - _____ A fugue subject may end a bit before the answer comes in or a bit after the answer comes in.
- f. True or False:
 - _____ The countersubject is usually first heard in the tonic key.
 - _____ Every fugue has at least one countersubject.
 - _____ Some fugues have more than one countersubject.
 - _____ Occasionally, a countersubject is shared between two voices.
- g. If the first statement of the subject of a fugue is in B-flat Major, in what key will we hear the main theme next, as the answer? _____
- h. In the exposition, there is at least one entry of the main theme for each voice of the fugue. If there is an extra entry, it's called a _____ entry of the subject or answer.
- i. If the answer is a slightly altered version of the main theme we call it a _____ answer.
- j. If a fugue includes a passage in which entries of the subject and answer overlap, that passage is called a _____.
- k. What is a counter-exposition? _____

- l. If a composer re-states a melody in notes that are twice as long, the technique is called _____ (augmentation/diminution).

/10

2. Answer the questions following this fugue exposition:

J. S. Bach

C Minor

3

- a. How many voices does this fugue have? _____
- b. Name the voice that introduces the subject in the first bar: _____
- c. The fugue is in C Minor. What key is the answer in? _____
- d. The answer is tonal. We know this because if it were a real answer the first note of the answer would not be C. It would be ____.
- e. In the answer, the first note that conveys the dominant key is the _____ in bar _____ in the _____ voice.
- f. Does this fugue exposition have a countersubject? _____
- g. Is there a link? _____
- h. Does this fugue exposition have a redundant entry of the subject or answer? _____

/4

3. Answer the following review questions:

- a. What vertical interval between chord notes is acceptable in most counterpoint but should be avoided in invertible counterpoint? _____
- b. In invertible counterpoint, to determine the minimum distance to move the lines we round up the distance between the lines to the nearest _____.

c. (Check the correct answer.) A Baroque dance in a minor key typically modulates to:

- ☐ the relative major
- ☐ the dominant minor
- ☐ the tonic major

d. (Check the correct answer.) A Baroque dance in C Minor will typically modulate to:

- ☐ C Major
- ☐ G Minor
- ☐ E-flat Major

4. Learn to play this fugue exposition:

/10

Fugue X
In 2 Voices

J. S. Bach
BWV855



Bonus Question: What is the general term used for a statement of the subject or answer of a fugue? _____

/1

Chapter Nine: Writing Fugues

In this chapter, you will learn to complete the exposition of a two-voice fugue.

Example 1 shows a two-voice fugue from Book One of *The Well-Tempered Clavier*. This fugue begins with a statement of the subject in the soprano voice. In bar 3, the bass voice responds with the answer in the dominant key, B Minor. Along with the answer, there is a countersubject in the soprano voice.*

Example 1

Fugue X
In 2 Voices

J. S. Bach
BWV 855

Subject in E Minor (soprano)

E Minor

Countersubject (soprano)

Answer in B Minor (bass)

In a two-voice fugue, the soprano voice is written on the top staff and the bass voice is written on the bottom staff. Since there is only one voice per staff, we use the basic stem rules.

A Typical Question

In a typical question on a counterpoint exam, the assignment is to complete a fugue exposition such as the one in Example 2a.

The given material usually consists of:

- the subject
- the answer
- one line of a link
- a redundant entry of the subject or answer.

* This exposition is very short. It's over before we have a chance to confirm that the melody in the soprano in Bar 3 is a countersubject. We know that it is a countersubject because it recurs with other entries later in the fugue.

Example 2a A Sample Question

1. Complete the exposition of this two-voice fugue, including an invertible countersubject.
2. Label the components of the exposition.



Key: _____



Example 2b shows a student's completion of the exposition in Example 2a. In the completed version:

- the countersubject was composed in the dominant key
- the other line of the link was composed
- the countersubject was re-written in the tonic key above the redundant entry of the subject.
- all components of the fugue exposition were bracketed and labelled.

Example 2b

Real Answer in C Major (soprano)

Link

F Major

Subject in F Major (bass)

Countersubject (bass)

Countersubject (soprano)

Redundant Entry of Subject in F Major (bass)

Chapter Ten – Figured Bass Accompaniment

Figured Bass During the Baroque Era

During the Baroque era, accompaniments for vocal and instrumental music were created using a system called **figured bass**. Example 1a is an excerpt from a **figured bass score**. It shows the format used for a typical Baroque piece for solo instrument and accompaniment.

Example 1a

Partita in E Minor - Aria 3 G. P. Telemann

6 6 6 6 6 6 #

In figured bass style, the accompaniment was usually played on a keyboard instrument such as a harpsichord. The accompanist played the written bass line and improvised an upper part, using the numbers and signs below the bass line, the **figures**, as a guide.

An accompanist reading from the score in Example 1a would play something like the bottom two lines in Example 1b. The complete accompaniment, the bass line and the chords, was known as a **realization** of the figured bass.

Example 1b

Partita in E Minor - Aria 3 G. P. Telemann

6 6 6 6 6 6 #

In figured bass style, each time a piece was played the bass line was the same but the improvised upper part of the accompaniment was different because the accompanist would play different voicings of the chords and sometimes add ornaments and bits of melody.

Lost and Found

After the eighteenth century, the art of improvising an upper part above a figured bass line was virtually lost. Then, during the twentieth century, musicians began to play from figured bass lines again, as part of the renewed interest in playing Baroque music as it was played during the Baroque era.

Today, many accompanists play Baroque accompaniments by reading from a figured bass score such as the one in Example 1a. They play the written bass line and improvise an upper part, just as players did during the Baroque era.

Other accompanists prefer to play from a written-out realization such as the one in Example 1b. In this chapter we will learn to write a realization for a figured bass score.

A Typical Question

A typical figured bass question will be in the format shown in Example 1c. The assignment will be to complete the realization by writing chords on the blank staff. Presented with a question like Example 1c, the student will write something like the middle line of Example 1b.

Example 1c Sample Question: Complete the realization of this figured bass accompaniment.

Personnel

Figured bass style is used to accompany singers and instrumentalists. The solo part(s) may be for a single voice or instrument, a small chamber group, or a larger group.

The figured bass accompaniment is typically played on two instruments, an instrument that can play the chords, such as a harpsichord, and a bass instrument, such as a cello. The harpsichordist plays the written bass line and improvises an upper part. The bass instrumentalist plays the bass line in unison with the harpsichord.

Other instruments are also used. Instead of the harpsichord, an organ (for sacred works), lute, harp or guitar may be used. Instead of the cello, a viola da gamba or bassoon may be used. If the group of instruments and/or singers is a large one, a number of these instruments may play the accompaniment.*

* The viola da gamba is a fretted stringed instrument that is similar to a cello. It originated in the sixteenth century.