

# Workbooks for undergraduate counterpoint 1-4

by Alan Belkin

[alanbelkinmusic@gmail.com](mailto:alanbelkinmusic@gmail.com)

<http://alanbelkinmusic.com/>

*© 2015, Alan Belkin. All rights reserved. This document may be shared freely, but may not be altered without written permission from the author.*

**Workbook**  
for  
**Counterpoint I**  
by  
**Alan Belkin**

web site: [www.alanbelkinmusic.com](http://www.alanbelkinmusic.com)  
email: [alanbelkinmusic@gmail.com](mailto:alanbelkinmusic@gmail.com)

© 2015, Alan Belkin

# Course plan

## Prerequisite

- at least one semester of tonal harmony

## Objectives

- mastering species counterpoint in 2 and 3 parts
- mastering elementary vocal writing

## Criteria

- quality of the melodic lines
- vocal ease
- clear harmonic basis and direction
- musicality of the solutions, given the constraints

## Correction codes

These are codes for common problems; they also can be used by the student as a checklist in evaluating his/her own work.

- > = inappropriate accent
- ? = unsatisfactory resolution of a dissonance or an active note (e.g. the leading tone)
- 8d (5d, 7d, etc.) = direct 8ve (5th, 7th, etc.)
- p8 (p5) = parallel octaves (fifths)
- C = cluster
- D = a dissonance problem (preparation and/or resolution)
- E = empty sound, a gap in the texture
- FR = false relation
- H = harsh (often due to doubling an active note)
- H? = harmony unclear
- INV = illogical inversion in the bass line
- L = an awkward melodic leap, weakness in the melodic line
- LM = loss of rhythmic momentum (in 5th species)
- N = notation problem (stems, etc.)
- SM = sudden modulation, badly prepared
- ST = static harmony, a dead spot
- UT = unbalanced texture, e.g. 3 voices very high and one very low
- V = a problem in the vocal writing
- WP = weak harmonic progression

*N.B. This is a workbook, and therefore contains very little explanation. For more in depth discussion about counterpoint, see my (free) online counterpoint book, at: <http://alanbelkinmusic.com/bk.C/index.html>. Note that the online book was **not** written as a textbook to accompany this workbook. However it does explain the guiding principles of applied counterpoint. To really learn the craft of counterpoint the student will need a qualified teacher.*

### Some general observations

There are two kinds of rules in counterpoint. First, there are the rules of musical reality, like the range of a given voice or instrument. These are not negotiable. The other kind of rule is pedagogical, like avoiding dissonances on the beat during your first exercises. Obviously there is plenty of real music with dissonances on the beat; this “rule” is really just a way of focusing on one thing at a time, e.g. the shape of your lines. This second kind of rule will evolve as you progress.

Knowing what is easy or hard to sing is very important: aim for lines which are comfortable to sing. You are writing for real human voices!

The student should aim at independence of contour between the parts. Do not move for more than three notes in parallel motion, and do not peak all the voices at the same time.

Once we combine lines, we create harmonies. The harmonies in elementary counterpoint can be tonal and/or modal, but their voice leading and progressions have to make sense.

Here are the (choral) ranges of the basic four human voices. These ranges are for untrained singers; trained singers' ranges are larger. For the most comfortable vocal writing, each voice should spend most of its time in the **middle** of its range.

The image displays four musical staves, each representing a different human voice range. From top to bottom, they are labeled: SOPRANO, ALTO, TENOR, and BASS. Each staff is in 4/4 time. The Soprano staff uses a treble clef, the Alto and Tenor staves use alto clefs (C-clefs on the middle line), and the Bass staff uses a bass clef. Each staff shows a range of notes from a whole note to a half note, with a fermata over the final note.

The goal of species counterpoint is fluency and sensitivity to line and to dissonance. Species counterpoint is not intended to teach any given style of music; it is simply a useful pedagogical progression to attain the desired fluency and sensitivity. Quantity matters; doing two exercises in each species is simply not worth the trouble.

All the exercises start with a given line in whole notes, the cantus firmus. The student should sometimes do multiple (successive) counterpoints to the same cantus. The latter can be transposed at will, and assigned to any voice. This encourages finding more than one solution to a given musical situation, which is an important goal of elementary counterpoint study. I call it "making friends with the notes".

In first species no dissonances are allowed; the focus is just on the lines. The student will write one note for each note of the cantus, trying to create an independent line.

From second species on, dissonances are permitted, but on the weak beats only. Since dissonances must be approached and left by step, this means that the only kinds of dissonance possible for now are passing tones and neighbour notes. In second species the student writes two notes for every one note of the cantus. The last bar finishes with a whole note.

In third species the student will write four notes for each note of the cantus. It is also useful to do some exercises in 3/4 time (three notes to one). Avoid entire bars of arpeggiation, without any non-harmonic tones.

The fourth species is the only time dissonance will occur on the strong beat in species counterpoint, in the form of a suspension. Given the limited number of suspensions available, in fourth species it is permitted to break the species rhythm once per exercise. Otherwise the rhythm is syncopated from start to finish, excluding the last bar of course.

The fifth species introduces rhythmic variety and a few elementary forms of ornamented dissonance. In the fifth species, usually rhythmic momentum will increase slightly overall during each exercise, to avoid stagnation.

All combinations of voices are common in two parts, except soprano + bass, which can sound empty if the voices are too far apart. It is sometimes a good idea to try doing an exercise with two of the same voice, e.g. soprano #1 + soprano #2.

**Canti (given melodies)**

These first canti are non-modulating. However the student can use secondary dominants, to the extent that the cantus allows, provided that they resolve normally



## Summary

- 1<sup>st</sup> species: note against note
- 2<sup>nd</sup> species: 2 notes against 1
- 3<sup>rd</sup> species: 4 (or 3 notes, in  $\frac{3}{4}$  time) against 1
- 4<sup>th</sup> species: note against note, but syncopated (suspensions)
- 5<sup>th</sup> species: florid counterpoint (varied rhythms, see below)

Note that repeated notes are not used in species counterpoint, with one minor exception in 5th species.

In the 5<sup>th</sup> species, the rhythms of the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> species are all available, as well as several others:



## Suspensions (fourth species)

Here is a list of the classical suspensions used in species counterpoint:

Suspensions above the cantus

9-8      7-6      4-3      2-1

Suspensions below the cantus

7-8 (N.B. sounds crude in 2 parts)      4-5      2-3

**Workbook**

for

**Counterpoint II**

by

**Alan Belkin**



# Course plan

## Prerequisite

- Counterpoint 1

## Objectives

- continue the discipline of strict vocal counterpoint in 2 and 3 parts; mixed species
- counterpoint with modulation to closely related keys
- counterpoint without a cantus firmus

## Program

- mixed species, exercises with two florid (i.e. 5th species) parts
- exercises with modulating canti
- exercises with florid canti, variable harmonic rhythm
- exercises using harmonic progressions as a starting point instead of canti
- motives, in imitation and in stratified texture
- simple canons

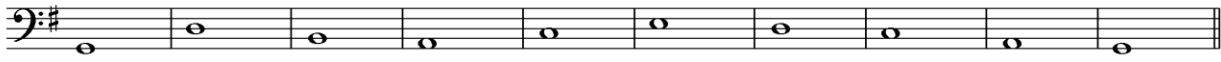
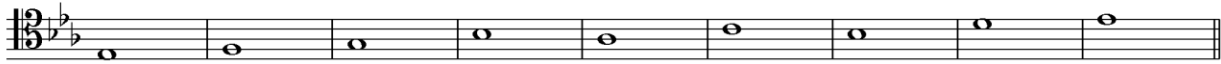
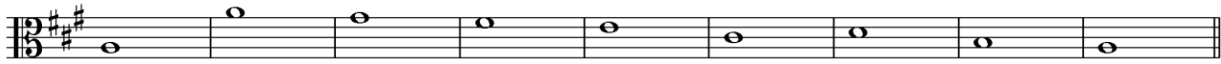
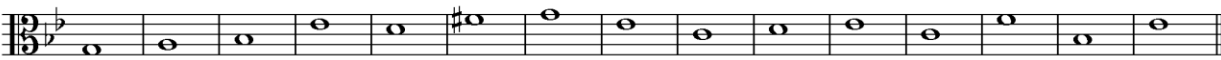
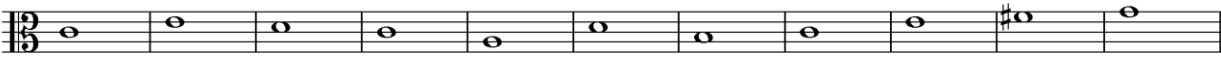
## Criteria

- quality of the melodic lines
- vocal ease
- clear harmonic basis and direction
- musicality of the solutions, given the constraints


**Correction codes.** These are codes for common problems; they also can be used by the student as a checklist in evaluating his/her own work.


- > = inappropriate accent
- ? = unsatisfactory resolution of a dissonance or an active note (e.g. the leading tone)
- 8d (5d, 7d, etc.) = direct 8ve (5th, 7th, etc.)
- p8 (p5) = parallel octaves (fifths)
- C = cluster
- D = a dissonance problem (preparation and/or resolution)
- E = empty sound, a gap in the texture
- FR = false relation
- H = harsh (often due to doubling an active note)
- H? = harmony unclear
- INV = illogical inversion in the bass line
- L = an awkward melodic leap, weakness in the melodic line
- LM = loss of rhythmic momentum (in 5th species)
- N = notation problem (stems, etc.)
- SM = sudden modulation, badly prepared
- ST = static harmony, a dead spot
- UT = unbalanced texture, e.g. 3 voices very high and one very low
- V = a problem in the vocal writing
- WP = weak harmonic progression


*N.B. This is a workbook, and therefore contains very little explanation. For more in depth discussion about counterpoint, see my (free) online counterpoint book, at: <http://alanbelkinmusic.com/bk.C/index.html>. Note that the online book was **not** written as a textbook to accompany this workbook. However it does explain the guiding principles of applied counterpoint. To really learn the craft of counterpoint the student will need a qualified teacher.*


**Canti for mixed species****Modulating canti**


### Florid canti, with mildly varied harmonic rhythm


1. 

2. 

3. N.B. This cantus finishes on the third of the tonic harmony, so it cannot appear in the bass, 

4. 

5. 

6. 

### Motives for imitations (the value of the last note can be changed as required)

1. 

2. 

3. 

4. 

**Workbook**

for

**Counterpoint III**

by

**Alan Belkin**

web site: [www.alanbelkinmusic.com](http://www.alanbelkinmusic.com)  
email: [alanbelkinmusic@gmail.com](mailto:alanbelkinmusic@gmail.com)

# Course plan

## Prerequisite

- Counterpoint II

## Objectives

- intensive work in four part vocal counterpoint

## Contents of the course

- strict vocal counterpoint in 4 parts
- florid counterpoint up to 4 parts with and without cantus firmus
- motives, exercises without cantus firmus: cadences, modulations
- imitation

## Criteria

- quality of the melodic lines
- vocal ease
- clear harmonic basis and direction
- musicality of the solutions, given the constraints

### Correction codes.

These are codes for common problems; they also can be used by the student as a checklist in evaluating his/her own work.

- > = inappropriate accent
- ? = unsatisfactory resolution of a dissonance or an active note (e.g. the leading tone)
- 8d (5d, 7d, etc.) = direct 8ve (5th, 7th, etc.)
- p8 (p5) = parallel octaves (fifths)
- C = cluster
- D = a dissonance problem (preparation and/or resolution)
- E = empty sound, a gap in the texture
- FR = false relation
- H = harsh (often due to doubling an active note)
- H? = harmony unclear
- INV = illogical inversion in the bass line
- L = an awkward melodic leap, weakness in the melodic line
- LM = loss of rhythmic momentum (in 5th species)
- N = notation problem (stems, etc.)
- SM = sudden modulation, badly prepared
- ST = static harmony, a dead spot
- UT = unbalanced texture, e.g. 3 voices very high and one very low
- V = a problem in the vocal writing
- WP = weak harmonic progression

*N.B. This is a workbook, and therefore contains very little explanation. For more in depth discussion about counterpoint, see my (free) online counterpoint book, at: <http://alanbelkinmusic.com/bk.C/index.html>. Note that this online book was **not** written as a textbook to accompany this workbook. However it does explain the guiding principles of applied counterpoint. To really learn the craft of counterpoint the student will need a qualified teacher.*

## Strict 4 Part (Vocal) Counterpoint

*N.B. Never do two exercises in a row with the same cantus in the same voice. Work in various keys, since they fall in different parts of the vocal ranges. The canti (on the following page) should be transposed as needed.*

### Sequence of the exercises:

1. 1st species: 4 voices in whole notes
2. 2nd species: 1 voice in half notes, 3 other voices in whole notes
3. 3rd species: 1 voice in quarter notes, 3 other voices in whole notes
4. 4th species: 1 voice in suspensions (half notes), 3 other voices in whole notes
5. 5th species: florid counterpoint in 1, then 2, and then in 3 voices, with the other voices in whole notes.
6. florid counterpoint in 2 voices, over a cantus also in florid style
7. mixed species
8. florid counterpoint in 3 voices, over a cantus also in florid style

### Pedagogical constraints for strict counterpoint

*N.B.: These constraints apply only to strict counterpoint; they will gradually be loosened as the student progresses.*

#### Chords:

- only major and minor 3 note chords, in root position or 1st inversion; diminished chords only in first inversion.
- 7th chords and cadential 6/4 chords will gradually be introduced, *provided that they are used correctly according to the principles of tonal harmony, and providing they fit well into the exercise.*
- 1 chord per bar. Certain exceptions will be discussed in class.

#### Dissonances:

- no leaps to or from a dissonance. Exceptions (to be discussed in class): 7ths by octave displacement, in a scale passage and in some V7 chords, the double neighbour, certain ornaments when resolving suspensions.
- no dissonance is ever attacked on the strong beat.

Parallel octaves and fifths: must be separated by more than one bar. Exceptions to be discussed in class.

Direct octaves and fifths: generally permitted between inner voices. Also between outer parts, provided the top voice is conjunct.

#### Melody:

- In addition to the intervals already in use, we now add augmented and diminished intervals, as well as the 7th by octave displacement (in a scale passage), *as long as they are used in accordance with normal practice in tonal harmony.*
- avoid creating motives (by repetition or sequence), since these short exercises do not provide enough time for their proper development.

#### Rhythms (in 5th species) :

- whole note, only in the final bar.
- half notes
- dotted half notes, on the 1st and 3rd beats (in 4/4 time)
- syncopated 1/2 note (quarter note suspension) at the cadence only
- quarter notes
- eighth notes: no more than two, conjunct and on the weak beat



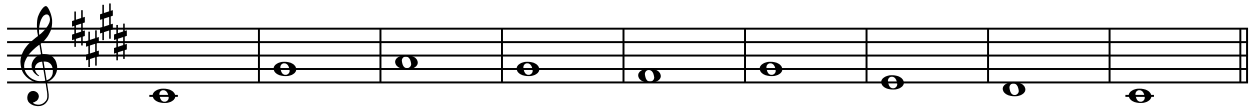
## Canti for strict counterpoint

These canti can be used in major or in minor. In minor, alter the 6th and seventh scale degrees as required, according to the melodic minor scale.

1.



2.



3.



4.

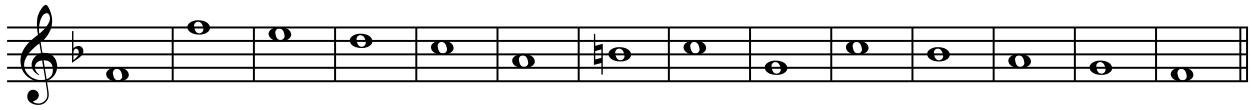


with V/V

5.

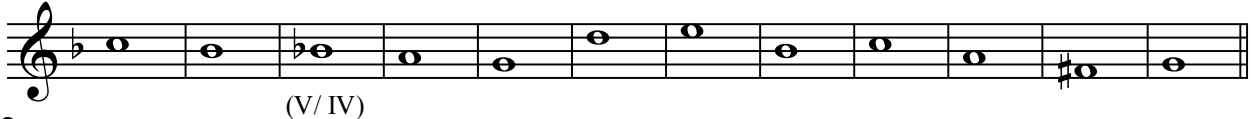


6.



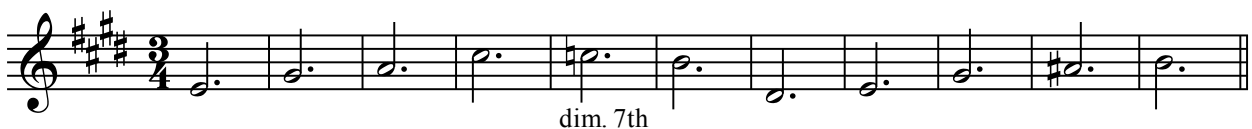
modulating

7.



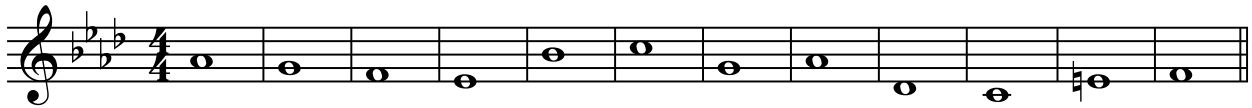
(V/IV)

8.



dim. 7th

9.



## Florid Counterpoint in 4 voices

*N.B. As usual, the canti can be transposed at will.*

Instead of the cantus being in whole notes, now it is also in florid style.

### Changes, compared to strict counterpoint:

#### Rhythm:

- 1/8 notes are a bit more frequent, but they remain always conjunct, except for an occasional leap to the first 1/8 note, which *must* be a chord tone. At the cadence only, to create extra momentum, occasionally 2 voices can be in 1/8 notes at the same time. *However, the unit of pulsation remains the 1/4 note.*
- the harmonic rhythm is more flexible, and sometimes includes 2 or 3 chords per bar.

#### Harmony:

- All 7th chords are now permissible, as long as the voice leading conforms to the principles of tonal harmony.

#### Melody:

- Leaps of a 7th, as well as diminished and augmented intervals are now permitted, as long as the underlying harmony makes sense. Normally after a leap, the line will change direction.

### Procedure:

- 1) analyse the harmonic implications of the cantus
- 2) note any possible suspensions
- 3) if the cantus is not in the bass, take note of any essential harmonic movements in the bass line
- 4) fill in the other voices

### Example:

(cantus in the soprano)

*cantus = alto*

The first system of music consists of two staves. The upper staff is a vocal line in treble clef, and the lower staff is a piano accompaniment in bass clef. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is common time (C). The vocal line begins with a whole rest, followed by a sequence of quarter notes: G4, A4, B4, C5. The piano accompaniment starts with a half note G3, followed by quarter notes A3, B3, C4, and a half note D4. The system concludes with a double bar line.

The second system of music continues from the first. The vocal line (treble clef) starts with a half note G4, followed by quarter notes A4, B4, C5, and a half note D5. The piano accompaniment (bass clef) begins with a half note G3, followed by quarter notes A3, B3, C4, and a half note D4. The system concludes with a double bar line.

## Canti for florid conterpoint in 3 or 4 voces

Treat the cantus like the other florid voices. **Do not introduce any new motives.**  
Transpose as desired.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

## Cadences and Modulations

1) Cadences: Continue each beginning in florid style for 7-8 bars. Make sure the tonality is solidly established and that there is a clear cadential direction.

2) Modulations: Continue each beginning in florid style for 7-8 bars. Firmly establish the first key, and then modulate clearly, and cadence strongly in a new (closely related) key.

1.

4.



# Tonal Answer

Definition: In the exposition of a fugue, entries alternate between tonic and dominant. If the head of the subject melodically emphasizes the tonic/dominant relationship, in the answer this will lead to emphasizing II (V of V = II). To avoid this problem, we can subtly modify the theme to point back to the tonic instead. Here are a few examples of such "mutations":

ex. a

instead of becomes

ex. b

instead of becomes

Procedure:

- 1) transpose the subject as is to the dominant
- 2) If the head of the subject melodically emphasizes the tonic/dominant relationship, modify the answer as subtly as possible.

Find the tonal answers for the following subjects:

1.

2.

3.

# Imitation

These exercises constitute preparation for fugue.

## Changes compared to 4 part florid counterpoint:

- all 7th chords are permitted, if prepared and resolved correctly.
- all melodic movements are permitted, with the same conditions as in tonal harmony
- occasional silences are permitted, in one voice at a time. The voice which stops should come to a melodic point of rest before dropping out.

## Procedure:

Analyse the theme from a motivic point of view: contour, rhythm, dissonance formulas, use of leaps, note values, etc.

- 1) the first voice presents the theme as is
- 2) the next voice imitates the theme at the tonic or the dominant
- 3) the other voices are made out of motives derived from the theme, in various combinations
- 4) the cadence is in 4 voices, either in the main tonality, or in a neighbouring key.



## Free imitation in 4 voices

The first system of the musical score consists of four staves. The top two staves are in treble clef, and the bottom two are in bass clef. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The music begins with a whole rest in all staves for the first four measures. In the fifth measure, the first voice (top staff) enters with a quarter note G4, followed by eighth notes A4, B4, and C5. The second voice (second staff) enters in the same measure with a quarter note G4, followed by eighth notes A4, B4, and C5. The third voice (third staff) enters in the fifth measure with a quarter note G3, followed by eighth notes A3, B3, and C4. The fourth voice (bottom staff) enters in the fifth measure with a quarter note G3, followed by eighth notes A3, B3, and C4. The music continues with various rhythmic patterns and intervals across the remaining measures of the system.

The second system of the musical score begins at measure 7. It consists of four staves in the same key signature and time signature as the first system. The music continues with complex rhythmic patterns and intervals across all four voices. The first voice (top staff) features a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together. The second voice (second staff) also features intricate rhythmic patterns, including some rests. The third voice (third staff) continues with a steady flow of eighth and sixteenth notes. The fourth voice (bottom staff) provides a rhythmic foundation with similar note values. The system concludes with a double bar line.

## Themes for imitations

*These themes can be transposed as desired. The rhythmic value of the last note can be modified freely.  
For #1 and #4, use the tonal answers provided.  
Do not add new motives!*



5ths and 8ves, for discussion

Musical notation for measures 1-9. The treble clef contains whole notes, and the bass clef contains eighth notes. Measures 1-2: Treble has two whole notes (G4, A4); Bass has eighth notes (G3, A3, B3, C4). Measures 3-4: Treble has two whole notes (B4, C5); Bass has eighth notes (D4, E4, F4, G4). Measures 5-6: Treble has two whole notes (D5, E5); Bass has eighth notes (A4, B4, C5, D5). Measures 7-8: Treble has two whole notes (F5, G5); Bass has eighth notes (E5, F5, G5, A5). Measure 9: Treble has a whole rest; Bass has a whole note (B5).

10

Musical notation for measures 10-16. The treble clef contains quarter notes, and the bass clef contains eighth notes. Measures 10-11: Treble has quarter notes (G4, A4); Bass has eighth notes (G3, A3, B3, C4). Measures 12-13: Treble has quarter notes (B4, C5); Bass has eighth notes (D4, E4, F4, G4). Measures 14-15: Treble has quarter notes (D5, E5); Bass has eighth notes (A4, B4, C5, D5). Measure 16: Treble has a quarter rest; Bass has a whole note (A5).

17

Musical notation for measures 17-23. The treble clef contains eighth notes, and the bass clef contains whole notes. Measures 17-18: Treble has eighth notes (G4, A4, B4, C5); Bass has whole notes (G3, A3). Measures 19-20: Treble has eighth notes (D5, E5, F5, G5); Bass has whole notes (B3, C4). Measures 21-22: Treble has eighth notes (A5, B5, C6, D6); Bass has whole notes (E4, F4). Measure 23: Treble has eighth notes (E6, F6, G6, A6); Bass has whole notes (G4, A4).

24

Musical notation for measures 24-29. The treble clef contains quarter notes, and the bass clef contains whole notes. Measures 24-25: Treble has quarter notes (G4, A4, B4, C5); Bass has whole notes (G3, A3). Measures 26-27: Treble has quarter notes (D5, E5, F5, G5); Bass has whole notes (B3, C4). Measures 28-29: Treble has quarter notes (A5, B5, C6, D6); Bass has whole notes (E4, F4).

30

Musical notation for measures 30-36. The treble clef contains quarter notes, and the bass clef contains chords. Measures 30-31: Treble has quarter notes (G4, A4, B4, C5); Bass has chords (G3, A3) and (B3, C4). Measures 32-33: Treble has quarter notes (D5, E5, F5, G5); Bass has chords (D4, E4) and (F4, G4). Measures 34-35: Treble has quarter notes (A5, B5, C6, D6); Bass has chords (A4, B4) and (C5, D5). Measure 36: Treble has quarter notes (E6, F6, G6, A6); Bass has chords (E5, F5) and (G5, A5).

## Dissonances, for discussion

Alan Belkin

Measures 1-5 of the piece. The music is in common time (C) and consists of two staves: a treble staff and a bass staff. Measure 1 shows a C major triad in the treble and a C bass note in the bass. Measures 2-5 show various dissonant chords and intervals, with the bass staff providing a simple accompaniment of quarter notes.

Measures 6-11 of the piece. The music continues with dissonant chords and intervals. Measure 6 features a G major triad in the treble and a G bass note. Measure 7 has a G major triad in the treble and a G bass note with a flat (F) in the bass. Measure 8 has a G major triad in the treble and a G bass note. Measure 9 has a G major triad in the treble and a G bass note. Measure 10 has a G major triad in the treble and a G bass note. Measure 11 has a G major triad in the treble and a G bass note.

Measures 12-17 of the piece. The music continues with dissonant chords and intervals. Measure 12 has a G major triad in the treble and a G bass note. Measure 13 has a G major triad in the treble and a G bass note. Measure 14 has a G major triad in the treble and a G bass note. Measure 15 has a G major triad in the treble and a G bass note. Measure 16 has a G major triad in the treble and a G bass note. Measure 17 has a G major triad in the treble and a G bass note.

# Common harmonic problems

Alan Belkin

The first system of music consists of six measures in 4/4 time. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The melody in the treble clef starts with a quarter rest, followed by quarter notes G4, A4, B4, and C5. The bass line starts with a quarter note G2, followed by quarter notes A2, B2, and C3. The harmony includes a D4-F#4 dyad in measure 2, a G4-B4 dyad in measure 3, and a C5-G4 dyad in measure 4. Measure 5 features a D4-F#4 dyad and a G4-B4 dyad. Measure 6 ends with a D4-F#4 dyad and a G4-B4 dyad.

The second system of music consists of six measures in 3/4 time. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#). The melody in the treble clef starts with a quarter rest, followed by quarter notes G4, A4, B4, and C5. The bass line starts with a quarter note G2, followed by quarter notes A2, B2, and C3. The harmony includes a D4-F#4 dyad in measure 2, a G4-B4 dyad in measure 3, and a C5-G4 dyad in measure 4. Measure 5 features a D4-F#4 dyad and a G4-B4 dyad. Measure 6 ends with a D4-F#4 dyad and a G4-B4 dyad.

**Workbook**  
for  
**Counterpoint IV**  
by  
**Alan Belkin**

Courriel : [alanbelkinmusic@gmail.com](mailto:alanbelkinmusic@gmail.com)  
Site web : <http://alanbelkinmusic.com/f.index.html>

© 1997, 2002, 2008, 2013 Alan Belkin

© 2015, Alan Belkin

# Course plan

## Objectives:

- preparation for fugue
- composition of small contrapuntal forms, in instrumental style

## Contents of the course:

1. instrumental counterpoint in 4 parts
2. contrapuntal sequences
3. stratified counterpoint
4. basic notions of invertible counterpoint and countersubjects
5. canons
6. composition in small contrapuntal forms:
  - binary form (a dance) in 2 voices in instrumental style
  - 3 part invention in instrumental style

## Bibliography:

- Belkin, Alan, *Principles of Conterpoint*, <http://alanbelkinmusic.com/bk.C/index.html>
- Benjamin, Thomas, *Counterpoint in the Style of J.S. Bach*
- Schoenberg, Arnold, *Preliminary Exercises in Counterpoint*

### Correction codes.

These are codes for common problems; they also can be used by the student as a checklist in evaluating his/her own work.

- > = inappropriate accent
- ? = unsatisfactory resolution of a dissonance or an active note (e.g. the leading tone)
- 8d (5d, 7d, etc.) = direct 8ve (5th, 7th, etc.)
- p8 (p5) = parallel octaves (fifths)
- C = cluster
- D = a dissonance problem (preparation and/or resolution)
- E = empty sound, a gap in the texture
- FR = false relation
- H = harsh (often due to doubling an active note)
- H? = harmony unclear
- INV = illogical inversion in the bass line
- L = an awkward melodic leap, weakness in the melodic line
- LM = loss of rhythmic momentum (in 5th species)
- N = notation problem (stems, etc.)
- SM = sudden modulation, badly prepared
- ST = static harmony, a dead spot
- UT = unbalanced texture, e.g. 3 voices very high and one very low
- V = a problem in the vocal writing
- WP = weak harmonic progression

*N.B. This is a workbook, and therefore contains very little explanation. For more in depth discussion about counterpoint, see my (free) online counterpoint book, at: <http://alanbelkinmusic.com/bk.C/index.html>. Note that this online book was **not** written as a textbook to accompany this workbook. However it does explain the guiding principles of applied counterpoint. To really learn the craft of counterpoint the student will need a qualified teacher.*



# Instrumental Counterpoint

## Comparison with vocal counterpoint:

Instrumental counterpoint makes use of the enlarged possibilities of instruments, compared to voices.

Here are the main principles behind instrumental counterpoint:

- All the techniques found in vocal counterpoint are also found in instrumental counterpoint
- It is essential to respect the registers of each instrument. Generally speaking, instruments allow for:
  - faster figuration
  - more chromaticism and accented dissonances, e.g. appoggiaturas
  - more leaps
    - note that leaps need to have some motivic coherence if they are not to sound arbitrary. It is especially important to have a clear idea of the harmonic background when leaping.
    - When a melody continually leaps between two or more registers ("compound line"), it is essential to organise each of the component lines in a coherent way. They must be well directed, and active notes should be resolved in the following harmony.

## How to proceed:

1) Always clearly establish the harmonic framework *around the important notes in the line* before working out melodic details.

2) Aim for motivic coherence, especially in the way dissonances are used (appoggiaturas, suspensions, neighbour notes, etc.)

## Instrumental Counterpoint: preparatory exercises

Analyse the harmonic implications of the bass, then complete the right hand in the same style as the beginning. Do NOT add new motives.

harpsichord

First system of the exercise. The right hand (treble clef) begins with a sixteenth-note rest, followed by a melodic line of sixteenth and thirty-second notes. The left hand (bass clef) plays a line of eighth and quarter notes.

Second system of the exercise. The right hand (treble clef) is empty. The left hand (bass clef) continues with eighth and quarter notes.

Third system of the exercise. The right hand (treble clef) is empty. The left hand (bass clef) continues with eighth and quarter notes.

Fourth system of the exercise. The right hand (treble clef) has a whole note chord. The left hand (bass clef) continues with eighth and quarter notes, ending with a quarter note.

Fill in pitches for the "x" notes, following the harmony and the existing motives.

The musical score consists of four systems, each with three staves. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats) and the time signature is 4/4. The first system begins with a treble clef staff containing a melody. The second staff is a grand staff with a bass clef staff containing several 'x' marks indicating missing notes. The third staff is a separate bass clef staff. The second system continues the melody and accompaniment. The third system shows a more complex accompaniment with sixteenth notes. The fourth system concludes the piece with a final cadence.

# Sequences (in counterpoint)

## Definition

A sequence consists of transposed repetitions of a pattern. In counterpoint, sequences are usually enriched by imitation.

## The basic unit

The unit of sequence can be as small as two or three notes or as large as a complete phrase. Usually the most compact sequences occur before a climax. Harmonically the beginning and the ending of the sequence must be solidly anchored, whereas during the sequence the linear pattern suffices for coherence. If the sequence has more than three repetitions, it is a good idea to start varying them.

## Harmonic pattern

There are many possible harmonic patterns for sequences. Here are a few very common ones.

- the circle of fifths
- III I II VII I VI ...
- I<sub>6</sub> II<sub>6</sub> III<sub>6</sub> IV<sub>6</sub> ...

## How to write an imitative sequence

- a) Decide the harmonic pattern.
- b) Distribute the imitation of the main motive.
- c) Fill in the gaps in contrapuntal style, taking care to leave the imitation clearly audible.

(See the examples on the following page)

## Exercises

Create 3 voice imitative sequences on each of the harmonic progressions listed above, using one of the following motives (on the next page).

a. b.

Section a: Treble clef, 3/4 time. Bass clef, 3/4 time. Treble staff: five measures of chords. Bass staff: five measures of rests.

Section b: Treble clef, 3/4 time. Bass clef, 3/4 time. Treble staff: five measures of eighth-note patterns. Bass staff: five measures of eighth-note patterns.

c.

Section c: Treble clef, 3/4 time. Bass clef, 3/4 time. Treble staff: five measures of eighth-note patterns. Bass staff: five measures of eighth-note patterns.

1. 2. 3.

1. Treble clef, 4/4 time. Bass clef, 4/4 time. Treble staff: eighth-note pattern. Bass staff: eighth-note pattern.

2. Bass clef, 4/4 time. Treble staff: eighth-note pattern. Bass staff: eighth-note pattern.

3. Treble clef, 6/8 time. Bass clef, 6/8 time. Treble staff: eighth-note pattern. Bass staff: eighth-note pattern.

## Stratified Counterpoint in 4 parts

In stratified counterpoint, the parts have independant motives, instead of being in imitation.

Continue the given beginnings for 6-8 mesures, in the same style. Include slurs, dynamics, etc.  
Do not add new motives.

String quartet

2 cls., 2 bns.

organ

(pedals)

String quartet

2 tpts., 2 tbns.

fl., cl., 2 bns.

# Canon

## Definition:

A canon is the complete, exact imitation of one line by another. The leading part is called the "dux" and the following part the "comes".

There are canons corresponding to each kind of imitation (inversion, augmentation, etc.).

Canons are named according to the interval of time and the interval of pitch between the first notes of the respective parts, e.g. "canon at the 10<sup>th</sup> above, at 2 bars".

Canons at intervals other than the octave can be done using diatonic intervals (e.g. a major second will become a minor second, because it falls on a different scale degree) or exact chromatic intervals. The latter is quite difficult, since it can engender odd modulations.

The ending of the canon can be done first in the dux, which stops and allows the comes to finish alone. However, more frequently the canon will be broken to allow a convincing cadence in two (or more) parts.

Sometimes the composer will add a free bass under a canon, in order to complete and enrich the harmony. Bach does this in the Goldberg Variations.

It is possible to write two canons at the same time (double canon).

See the examples on the following page.

Continue these canons for at least 10 bars, as directed. Specify instruments, tempo, etc.

1. lower 8ve 2. uppr 8ve

3. 4. 5th above

5. 7th lower 6. 5th higher, by inversion



## Canons

Complete the (free) bass for this canon, in the same style as the beginning, clarifying and enriching the harmony. Do not introduce any new motives.

hautbois

*p*

violon

*p*

basson

*p*

The first system of the musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is for the hautbois, the middle for the violon, and the bottom for the basson. All staves are in a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and a 9/8 time signature. The music begins with a rest for two measures, followed by a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, some beamed together. The dynamics are marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic.

5

The second system of the musical score starts at measure 5. It consists of three staves. The top two staves (hautbois and violon) continue with their melodic lines, while the bottom staff (basson) remains empty, indicating the area for the student's completion.

8

The third system of the musical score starts at measure 8. It consists of three staves. The top two staves (hautbois and violon) continue with their melodic lines, while the bottom staff (basson) remains empty, indicating the area for the student's completion.

# Invertible Counterpoint

## Definition:

Invertible counterpoint is counterpoint where any of the lines can appear as the melody or the bass, without harmonic problems. *It is mainly useful for contrasting themes, which will appear in various voices in turn.*

## 2 parts:

### - at the 8ve (or the 15th)

1	2	3	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	6	7	8
8	7	6	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	3	2	1

- do not exceed an 8ve (or a 15th) between the voices
- treat the 5th as a dissonance (since when inverted it becomes a 4th)
- no 4-5 suspensions

### - at the 10th

<b>1</b>	2	<b>3</b>	4	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	7	<b>8</b>	9	<b>10</b>
<b>10</b>	9	<b>8</b>	7	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	4	<b>3</b>	2	<b>1</b>

- do not exceed a 10th between the voices
- no parallel movement between the parts
- no 4-3 suspensions. The preparation of the suspension must not be the same interval as the resolution (to avoid parallelism)

### - at the 12e

1	2	3	4	5	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	8	9	10	11	12
12	11	10	9	8	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	5	4	3	2	1

- do not exceed a 12th between the voices
- treat the 6th like a dissonance
- no 7-6 suspensions

*N.B. When transposing invertible combinations to other scale degrees, accidentals may be changed as desired.*

## 3 voices and more:

- do not exceed an 8ve between adjacent voices
- treat the 5th of a triad as the bass of a 6/5 chord
- 7th chords allow for many more invertible possibilities than simple triads

Bach G- Fugue  
invertible counterpoint  
variants of the countersubject

theme

m. 5: tonal answer + CS (Note: intervals all named within one 8ve)

m. 13: inv at 8ve

m. 37: inv at 10th

m. 28: inv at 12th

m. 59: inv at 10th w. added 3rds

m. 32: inv at 10th and then at 8ve (note that this version requires an added bass part)

## 3 part invertible counterpoint

The image shows a musical score for Viola in 4/4 time, illustrating 3-part invertible counterpoint. The score is written on a grand staff with a treble clef and a bass clef. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The music consists of six measures. The first measure has a whole rest in the treble and a quarter note G4 in the bass. The second measure has a quarter note A4 in the treble and a quarter note G4 in the bass. The third measure has a quarter note B4 in the treble and a quarter note F#4 in the bass. The fourth measure has a quarter note C5 in the treble and a quarter note E4 in the bass. The fifth measure has a quarter note D5 in the treble and a quarter note D4 in the bass. The sixth measure has a quarter note E5 in the treble and a quarter note C4 in the bass. The word "Viola" is written below the treble clef.

## Suspensions in invertible counterpoint

### inv. at the 8ve

2-3

4-3

4-5

7-6

9-8

*N.B.: inv. not  
dissonant*

*N.B.: must be conjunct  
res. with change of bass*

*N.B.: unusable*

### inv. at the 10th

*N.B.: don't prepare  
with a 3rd*

*N.B.: unusable*

*N.B.: must be conjunct*

### inv. at the 12th

*N.B. don't prepare  
with a 6th*

*N.B.: inv. not dissonant, continue  
conjunctly or resolve with change  
of bass*

## Themes for invertible counterpoint

Compose countersubjects in invertible counterpoint, as directed. The countersubject should add new motives and enhance the subject with good contrasts.  
(These themes can be transposed as desired.)

### A) in 2 parts

1. at the 8ve



2. at the 8ve



3. at the 8ve (modulating)



4. at the 8ve



5. at the 15th



6. at the 10th



7. at the 12th



### B) in 3 parts (at the 8ve)

8.



9.



**Short themes for cadences and modulations**

## Themes for instrumental imitation exercises

*Always specify instruments, tempo, articulation, etc.*

1.



2. (N.B. appoggiaturas)



3. (suspensions!)



4.



5.



6.





## Projects

*N.B. Always include all necessary performance information (e.g. tempo, articulation, etc.).*

1) A baroque binary dance form, for keyboard, in 2 real parts, minimum 24 bars long, on the following theme:



Model: Bach French Suite #5, Gavotte.

- 1st section: presentation of the thematic material, leading to a cadence on the dominant, (double bar, repeat).

- 2nd section: longer, on the same motives, modulating through a few related keys, then finishing solidly in the tonic. The final phrase should recall the end of the first section.

2) An invention for keyboard, in 3 real parts, minimum 24 bars long, on the following theme:



Model: Bach Sinfonia #11, in G minor.

- presentation of the theme in free imitation, leading to a mild cadence in a related key.
- modulations (including sequences) to other closely related keys
- preparation of the final return to the tonic, using a short dominant pedal.
- Recall the subject at the end

3) Final project: An organ passacaglia, in 4 parts, including at least 6 variations on the following theme. The theme can move from one voice to another. The last variation should be strongly conclusive.

