

## CHAPTER THREE

### THIRD SPECIES 3:1, 4:1, 6:1, Etc.

Once you have developed proficiency in First and Second Species, Third Species will come relatively easily. All of the Guidelines for Second Species apply, so be sure to review them. The faster moving part now has more space to move in, such that you will have a wider range of choices – more elbow room to work in. Simply put, your choices will be chord tones and NCTs. Whatever harmony you choose, let your choice of tones support that choice of harmony. One of the most frequently committed errors by students is to do damage to the intended harmony by poorly chosen nonharmonic tones or tones that do not clearly help to define the intended chord.

One more NCT may be introduced here: the Changing Tone figure. In its most usual form, this is the movement away from a chord tone to both of its neighbor tones before returning to the original chord tone. The examples below show the Changing Tone Figure in both 3:1 and 4:1 counterpoint. Notice that the Changing Tone figure may include chromatic tones as well as diatonic tones:

The following variants of the changing tone figure, though usable, should be used sparingly:

There is a very important melodic principle that must be brought in at this time. It is generally a characteristic of Baroque melodic practice that stepwise motion in a particular direction (up or down) should not be followed by a leap to a strong beat in the same direction. Here is a melodic shape that you now have to be very aware of and do your best to avoid the kinds of melodic configurations shown below. There is no established name for this principle, so let us call it the Melodic Rule.

## SHAPES TO AVOID

Key of C

However, the following are quite acceptable. In these instances, the leap is to a weak beat. This makes all the difference in the world in the musical experience! Try to develop a sensitivity to this difference, for it will greatly influence your results.

All this further points up the necessity for you to examine your melodic lines very carefully. Ask yourself these questions:

1. Does my line have an interesting melodic contour?
2. Does it have a single high point?
3. If it has two or more skips in the same direction anywhere, do the pitches in the skips add up to all or part of a triad, or dominant 7th or supertonic 7th chord?
4. Does the melody have enough span?
5. Did I break the Melodic Rule?
6. Does my melody have a good distribution of stepwise motion and skips?
7. Have I established a good sense of the tonic key at the beginning and at the end?
8. Does my melody hover around a single pitch too much?
9. Do I have too many octave leaps?
10. Did I write any repeated tones other than the Anticipation?
11. Did I approach and resolve my chosen NCTs properly?

Remember to use 3rds and 6ths as the principal harmonic intervals on main beats, or if you choose to place a nonharmonic tone on the beat, the best effects will be obtained if these NCTs resolve to 3rds or 6ths. The matter of 5ths and octaves needs further discussion:

#### PARALLEL FIFTHS AND OCTAVES IN THIRD SPECIES (3:1, 4:1, etc.)

Just as in second species, if a perfect 5th (or octave) is placed on a principal beat, there must be NO perfect 5th (or octave) ANYWHERE in the previous beat. There is only one possible exception to this, and that involves 4:1. It may be all right to place a perfect 5th (or octave) on the SECOND 16th note of a group of 4. Examine the following passages very carefully to understand the principles operation here:

The image shows three musical examples in 2/4 time, illustrating the rules for parallel fifths and octaves in third species counterpoint. Each example consists of a treble and bass staff.

- Example 1:** Labeled "no 5th allowed anywhere here". The treble staff has notes G4, A4, B4, C5. The bass staff has notes G3, A3, B3, C4. The interval between G4 and G3 is a perfect fifth. A downward arrow points to the first measure with the text "no 5th allowed anywhere here". Below the treble staff are the numbers (5 5 5) 5.
- Example 2:** Labeled "5th O.K. anywhere here". The treble staff has notes G4, A4, B4, C5. The bass staff has notes G3, A3, B3, C4. The interval between G4 and G3 is a perfect fifth. A downward arrow points to the first measure with the text "5th O.K. anywhere here". Below the treble staff are the numbers (5 5 5) 3 5.
- Example 3:** Labeled "USABLE". The treble staff has notes G4, A4, B4, C5. The bass staff has notes G3, A3, B3, C4. The interval between G4 and G3 is a perfect fifth. Below the treble staff are the numbers 5 5.

The very important principle regarding two or more skips in the same direction must never be forgotten! In any case, too many skips are to be avoided. Strive for a balanced mix of stepwise motion and melodic skips. True, there are numerous examples from the works of J. S. Bach that focus on music for keyboard that is heavy with continuous arpeggiations. Well and good. But now is the time to write music that has more of its roots in vocal style. Let the arpeggiations come later!

As in first and second species, that problematic unequal 5<sup>th</sup> situation needs to be remembered and avoided. Do not move to a strong beat perfect 5<sup>th</sup> if there is either a perfect OR diminished fifth anywhere in the previous beat. And be sure not to overuse the octave leap, as useful as it is in music, contrapuntal or otherwise!

Before proceeding to instruction in 6:1, study carefully the examples on the next page. Intervals on the strong beats, and NCTS on strong beats, have been labeled along with their resolution intervals. Notice the preponderance of 3rds and 6ths – very important!

EXAMPLES FOR STUDY

**A**

Key of *dm*    i    i<sub>6</sub>    iv    V<sub>3</sub>/V    V    V<sub>2</sub>    V<sub>6</sub>/iv    iv    i<sub>6</sub>    V<sub>5</sub>    i

**B**

Key of *G*    I    V    I<sub>6</sub>    ii    I<sub>4</sub>    V<sub>7</sub>/vi    vi    V    I

**(C)**

Key of C I V<sub>6</sub> vi vi<sub>6</sub> ii V I<sub>6</sub> vii<sup>°</sup><sub>6</sub>/iii

iii<sub>6</sub> vii<sup>°</sup><sub>6</sub>/V V<sub>6</sub> I ii<sup>°</sup><sub>4</sub> V I

**(D)**

Key of F I<sub>6</sub> V<sub>6</sub> I IV<sub>6</sub> V<sub>7</sub>/V V<sub>6</sub> vi V/vi

V/ii ii<sub>6</sub> I<sub>4</sub> I<sub>6</sub> IV<sub>6</sub> V<sub>2</sub> I<sub>6</sub> I

COUNTERPOINT in 6:1, 8:1, etc. Nothing new needs to be added here – merely the reminder to be careful about the approach to a principal beat perfect 5th or octave: there should be no 5th or octave near the principal beat. If you do have a 5th or octave in the previous beat, place it on a relatively weak portion of the beat and near the beginning of the beat. Select chord tones and NCTS that support the chosen harmony. For 6:1, a good meter is 6/8 (or any of the compound meters). A single example should suffice:

Key of *am*    i    V<sub>5</sub><sup>6</sup>    V<sub>7</sub>/vi    iv<sub>6</sub>    ii<sub>5</sub><sup>6</sup>    V<sub>7</sub>    i

A fair amount of renaissance keyboard music uses 6:1 and 8:1 from time to time. An example of the latter follows.

Key of C    I    V<sub>6</sub>    vi    IV    V    I

Be sure to review this chapter before doing the Exercises in the back of the book. You will then be ready for the next step – Fourth Species – which will suddenly throw you into the real world of living counterpoint in two voices!