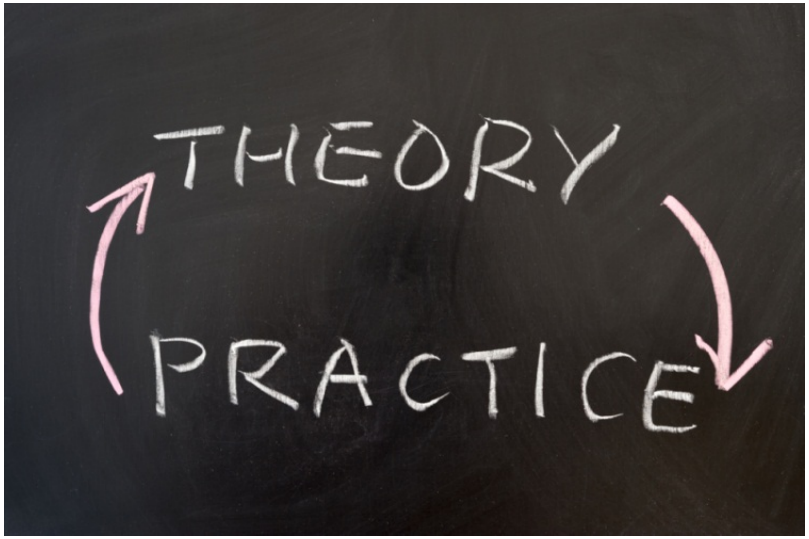


Voice Leading

28 Nov 2018

Voice Leading

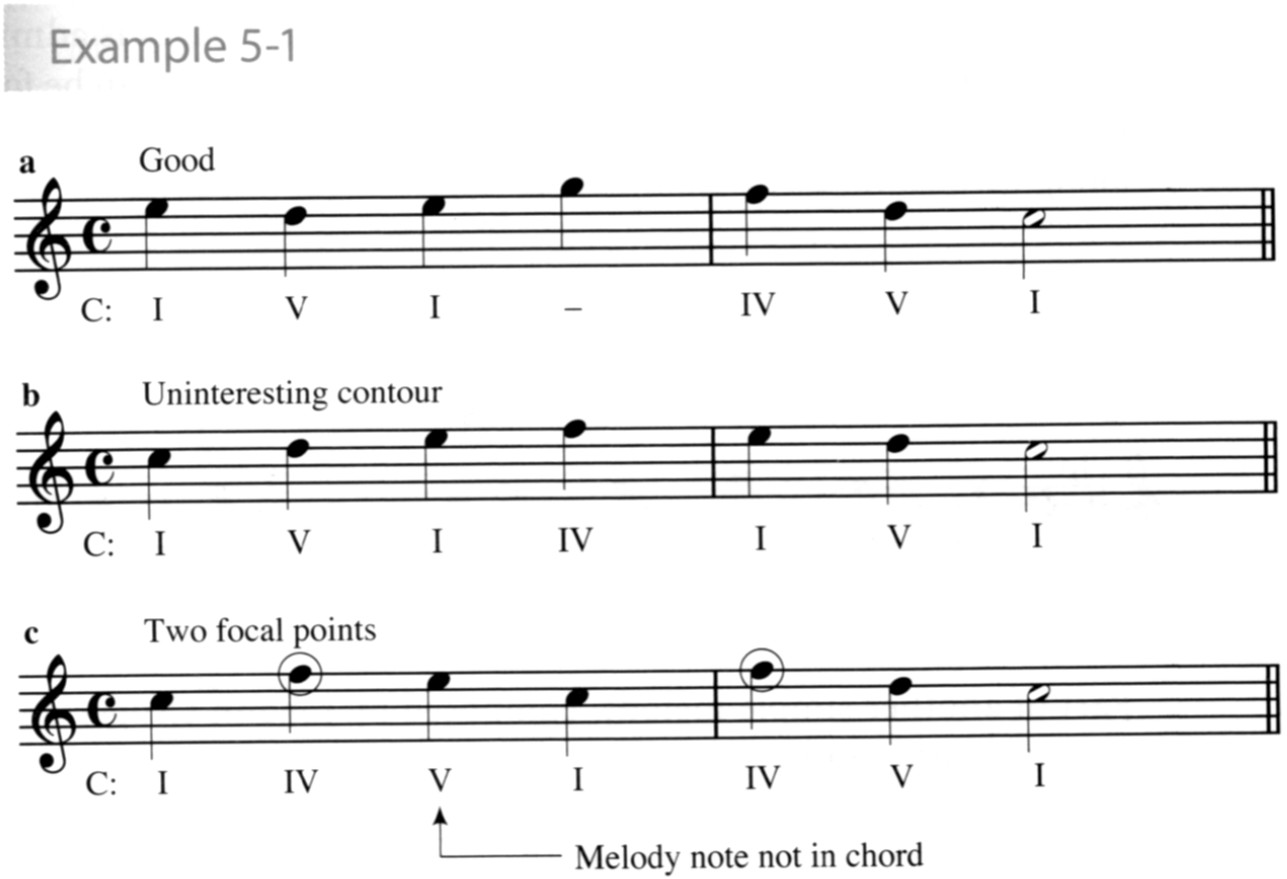
- Music is a linear, time-based art form
- When more than one voice sounds at the same time, **harmony** is created
- A **harmonic progression** is a series of harmonies over time.
- **Voice leading** is the way each voice approaches and leaves its note in the harmonic progression.
- **Tonal harmony** is constructed around triads, seventh chords, and scales (often we include non-chord tones)
- **Part Writing** is the process of writing 4-part SATB chorales in the style of Bach (or a simplified version thereof)
  - Generally **homophonic** — each voice has the same rhythm
  - Sometimes in **counterpoint** — independent polyphonic lines (different rhythm)

Melodic Line

(PS–these restrictions only apply to part writing for theory class)

- Rhythm — keep it simple (1 beat or longer) + end on strong beat
- Harmony — every melody note must belong to a chord
  - Don't use non-chord tones
- Contour — primarily conjunct (stepwise) motion
  - Interesting, but clear (an arch with some squiggles) with a single **focal point**, or high note

Example 5.1 (pg. 67)



Melodic Line

(PS–these restrictions only apply to part writing for theory class)

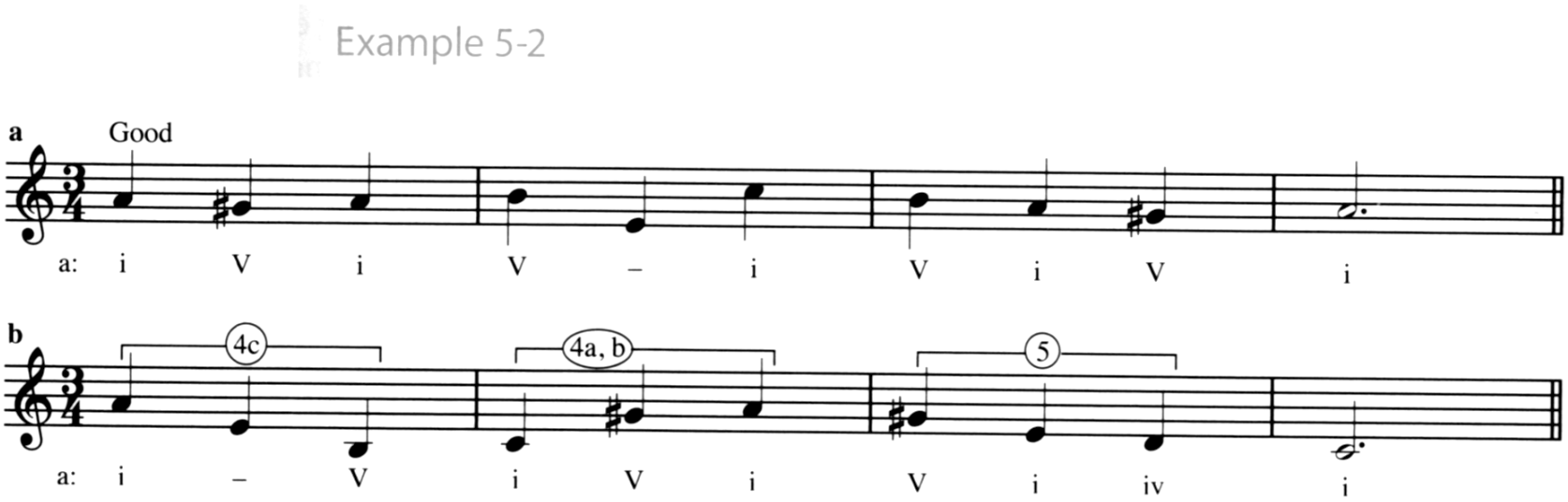
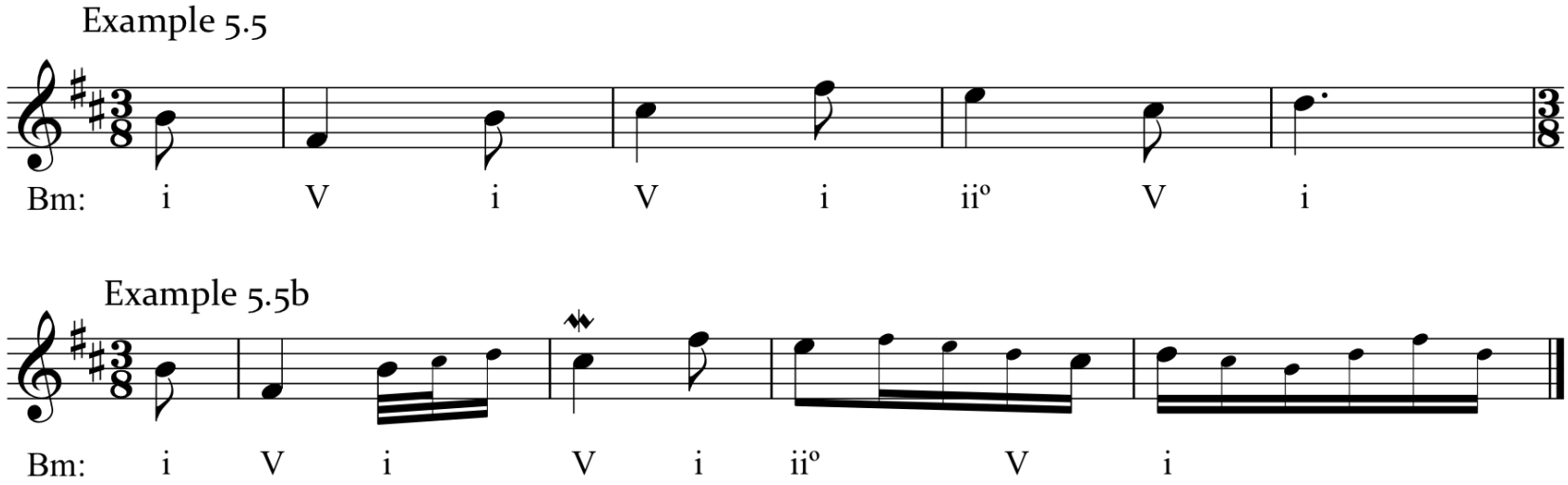
- Leaps
  - Avoid augmented intervals, 7ths, anything >P8
  - Diminished intervals only ok if followed by contrary stepwise motion
  - Leaps >P4 best approached and left by contrary motion
    - leaping up? step/skip down into it and down after it
  - When 2+ smaller leaps in a row in same direction, outline a triad

Melodic Line

(it's all about the leading tone)

- Tendency tones
  - Half steps create tension in tonal music (make the exciting stuff happen!)
  - Often they create dissonance that needs to resolve.
  - Leading tone (^7) **always always always** resolves UP to the tonic (^1)
    - Except if it's part of a descending scale (1-7-6-5)
  - ^4 **very very often** resolves DOWN to ^3
    - Especially as the 7th in a V7 chord
    - Except if it's part of an ascending scale (1-2-3-4-5)

Example 5.2 (pg. 68)



Example 5.5 (pg. 68–69)