



# 16<sup>th</sup> Century (Species) Counterpoint

8 Nov 2017

# What is counterpoint?

- Two independent melodic voices that when combined create harmony either in...
  - Homophony (melodies have same rhythm)



- Polyphony (melodies have different rhythms)



# Cantus Firmus

- A melody over (or under) which we will write a second melody to create counterpoint
- Remember to leave it as is! (*firmus*)
  - If the intervals don't work out, you must change the contrapuntal line, not the cantus firmus
- Do all of this in C major (keep it simple)

# Let the rules begin!

- CANTUS FIRMUS (fixed melody)
  - Always written in whole notes, usually 8–12 notes long
  - Always begins on  $\hat{1}$  and ends with  $\hat{2}$  resolving to  $\hat{1}$ 
    - \*hint\* fill in the first and last two measures first
  - Has single high (or low) point
  - Mostly stepwise motion
- CONTRARY MOTION — moving opposite direction, up or down

# Leaps

- Must be ( $\leq 5^{\text{th}}$ ) unless P8 or rare m6 upward
- Leaps are often filled in/counterbalanced by scale in contrary stepwise motion (leap up, step down)
- 2 consecutive leaps are only OK if outlining a major or minor triad, never more than 2 in a row
- NEVER leap a TRITONE! (or you'll conjure the devil...)
- Leaping P4 — contrary stepwise motion before OR after
- Leaping P5 — contrary stepwise motion before AND after
- Leaping 3<sup>rd</sup> — not as strict, contrary motion good, but not required

# First Species

- Melody written above/below CF is also in whole notes
- Start with perfect interval — U, 5, or 8 (C or G) if above CF; U or 8 (C only) if below CF
- End with  $\hat{7}$  to  $\hat{1}$
- Only consonant intervals allowed between voices (harmonic)
  - unison, 3<sup>rds</sup>, perfect 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>ths</sup>, and octaves
  - NO P4 — it's dissonant!
  - No TRITONE (+4/ $^{\circ}$ 5)
- Never use two 5ths or 8ves consecutively!
  - These are called parallel 5ths and octaves and they will haunt you for years to come.
- Strings of 3rds and 6ths ok, but more than 3 in a row gets boring...
- Unison only allowed on first and last notes, never in the middle (P8 ok)
- Approach perfect intervals (U, 5+8) by contrary motion, with at least one voice moving stepwise.
- Never let the voices cross / overlap from one note to the next.