

COUNTERPOINT

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the study of counterpoint is to learn to listen to and conceive of music in terms of its linear structure, as opposed to its progression of chords. To write a contrapuntal line is to write a beautiful musical line which combines with at least one other musical line with certain restraints on the possible vertical combinations.

A beautiful contrapuntal line has the following qualities: it is singable by the human voice; it is balanced in its use of steps and skips, being dominated by neither; it has a well-conceived design; it agrees in mode with the other contrapuntal lines; and it differs in design from all other contrapuntal lines with which it is combined. To achieve these qualities, the following rules are to be observed:

Rules of thumb:

A cantus firmus, usually derived from the hymn and chant literature, forms the basis of all counterpoint exercises and is to be considered immutable.

Any "white note" is available to the counterpoint.

Dissonant harmonic (vertical) combinations are not allowed.

The counterpoint and cantus firmus should have different climaxes. The climax may not be the last note, but may be the first note.

The climax of the line should be heard only once.

Counterpoint above the cantus firmus must begin on a unison, perfect fifth, or octave.

Counterpoint below the CF must begin on the unison or octave.

The counterpoint must end on a unison or octave, and in two parts it is preceded by the seventh degree of the modal scale. In Dorian, Mixolydian and Aeolian modes, the seventh degree must be chromatically raised to form a leading tone here.

No parallel or direct motion to a perfect consonance is allowed.

There must be variety in the use of harmonic intervals; all sixths, all thirds, etc. is bad.

No more than three consecutive sixths, thirds, or tenths.

Relentless upward motion or relentless downward motion, particularly when there are skips, is not allowed.

Two skips in one direction should be followed by motion in the other direction.

Melodic skips of an octave are permitted; otherwise, no skip may be larger than a minor sixth.

Any skip larger than a fourth must be followed by motion in the opposite direction.

The use of skips and steps should be balanced both statistically and over the course of the counterpoint — i.e., the counterpoint should not begin with all skips and end with all steps.

No melodic leap of an augmented interval or of a tritone is allowed; similarly, an augmented or diminished interval (especially a tritone!) must not be outlined in two, three or four consecutive tones moving in the same direction.

The interval between two adjacent voices must not exceed a tenth. In two parts, enforcement of this rule is not strict.

Consecutive semitones in the same direction are not allowed.

Avoid repetitious motivic structure or other interruptive articulation of the line (into antecedent/consequent, ABA, etc.). The line must be heard as a single unit and not a combination of several units.

The counterpoint should not “mirror” the CF.

Do not return to a single note too frequently.

Take care that the opening sonority is not repeated in the middle of the exercise (e.g., if the CF returns to its opening note, harmonize it differently); similarly, avoid more than one instance of exactly the same perfect consonance, except at the extremes.

Any chromatically altered tone must immediately move by step in the same direction of the chromatic alteration (flatted tones must go down, sharped tones must go up).

The voices may not leap simultaneously in direct motion more than once per exercise.

(When two consecutive melodic intervals are both rising, the larger (if any) should come first; if they are both falling, the larger should come second. In first species, this rule may be violated by one diatonic degree.) Enforcement of this decree will be somewhat lax at first.

efinitions

Perfect consonances: Unison, perfect fifth, octave.

Imperfect consonances: Any third, any sixth, any tenth.

Dissonances: Second, Perfect fourth, tritone, seventh, ninth, any augmented or diminished interval.

ules particular to first species:

A tone may be repeated, but only once, and only once per exercise. A leap of an octave counts as a repeated tone.

Chromatic tones allowed are B \flat in Dorian mode, G \sharp in Aeolian mode, F \sharp in Mixolydian mode, C \sharp in Dorian mode. The last three may only be used as the penultimate notes in the counterpoint. (Later their use will be freer.) E \flat will soon be added to this list.

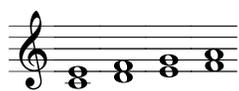
The long list of rules will evolve as we progress from species to species. In general, the faster your line moves, the more stepwise it should be. Rules for outlining tritones and dissonant intervals will differ depending on the overall speed of the counterpoint line.

COUNTERPOINT

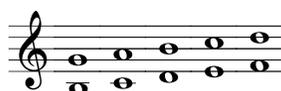
Consonance and dissonance rules

CONSONANCES

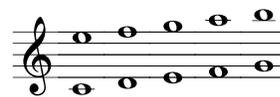
I. Imperfect consonances



Thirds



Sixths

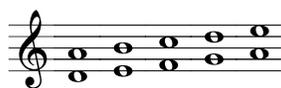


Tenths

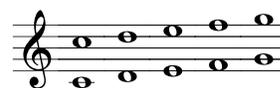
II. Perfect Consonances



Unisons



Perfect fifths

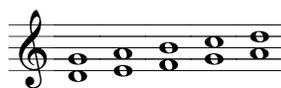


Octaves

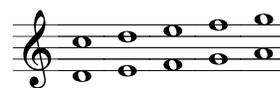
DISSONANCES



Seconds



Fourths



Sevenths



Ninths



Diminished fifths



Any augmented or diminished interval

COUNTERPOINT

Cantus Firmi

Ionian (C-mode)

The Ionian (C-mode) Cantus Firmi is presented in two systems. The first system consists of two staves: the top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. Both staves contain a sequence of eight quarter notes: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, and C5. The second system also consists of two staves in treble and bass clefs, containing the same sequence of notes. A third, single staff in bass clef is shown below the second system, also containing the same sequence of notes.

Dorian (D-mode)

The Dorian (D-mode) Cantus Firmi is presented in two systems. The first system consists of two staves in treble clef, containing a sequence of eight quarter notes: D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, and D5. The second system also consists of two staves in treble clef, containing the same sequence of notes. A third, single staff in bass clef is shown below the second system, containing the same sequence of notes.

Mixolydian (G-mode)

The Mixolydian (G-mode) Cantus Firmi is presented in two systems. The first system consists of two staves: the top staff is in bass clef and the bottom staff is in treble clef. Both staves contain a sequence of eight quarter notes: G3, A3, B3, C4, D4, E4, F4, and G4. The second system also consists of two staves in treble and bass clefs, containing the same sequence of notes.

Cantus Firmi, page 2

Phrygian (E-mode)



Aeolian (A-mode)



COUNTERPOINT

Supplement 2

Second Species (two parts)

A counterpoint in second species is written as two notes against one. The cantus firmus continues to move in whole notes, while the counterpoint moves in halves. In general, the faster the notes of the counterpoint move (i.e., the smaller their rhythmic values), the more stepwise and smooth should be the line of the counterpoint. If you aren't sure if your line is too "leapy," try singing it as a melisma at $\text{♩} = c. 120$ and see if it feels awkward. Or, if it feels too easy and lumpy, it may be too steppy.

Melodic shape: you should strive for sweeps of nonredundant stepwise motion, hopefully with successive arches, each of them higher, reaching toward the high point fairly near the end. Don't tread water, and strive never to harmonize a tone repeated in the cantus firmus with the same perfect consonance.

In this species you get your first dissonance, which is strictly regulated. The rules are as follows: Every thesis (downbeat) must be consonant with the cantus firmus; the anacrusis (upbeat or second half note of the measure) may be consonant or dissonant, but if it is dissonant, it **MUST** be approached by step and it **MUST** be resolved by step in the same direction. E.G. if C is dissonant and it was approached from D, the next tone **MUST** be B (or B \flat in Dorian).

Chromatic tones: in this species you were given B \flat in Dorian and E \flat in Mixolydian. In each case the notes must immediately move down by semitone, respectively, to A and D.

Ending: for counterpoint written above the cantus firmus, the modal scale degrees should be $\hat{6}-\hat{7}-\hat{8}$, where $\hat{6}-\hat{7}$ are expressed as half notes in the penultimate measure and $\hat{8}$ is a whole note forming an octave with the cantus firmus. The 7th degree should be raised in Dorian, Mixolydian and Aeolian modes. The 6th degree in Aeolian must also be raised for this cadence (f should become F \sharp). The 7th degree must **NOT** be raised in Phrygian mode. The ending of the counterpoint if written below should be $\hat{5}-\hat{7}-\hat{8}$ of the mode, and the 7th degree should be raised, as above. The ending in Phrygian mode is $\hat{4}-\hat{7}-\hat{8}$. See these three formulas below:



Dorian above



Dorian below



Phrygian below

The counterpoint must not be all steps, and may not outline a diminished or augmented interval by motion in the same direction. If the same perfect interval is sounded on successive downbeats, it is considered parallel motion to a perfect consonance. Any line that contains a skip may not go farther than a minor sixth before turning around, preferably by step. You may repeat a note only once per exercise, but never may both halves in a measure be the same note (octaves included). You may skip an octave, but this takes care of your repeated-note distribution for the exercise, and of course you must immediately turn, hopefully by step, in the opposite direction.

Don't segment the line registrally and don't turn it into segments of repeated motives. Otherwise you shall surely die. The rule of consecutive sixths, tenths or thirds applies for successive downbeats. You can't do more than four.

COUNTERPOINT ONLINE

SUPPLEMENT 2A

In second species counterpoint, bear in mind that the counterpoint is now moving twice as fast as the cantus firmus, and as such it can and should range further in register than in first species. If your counterpoint spends most of its life within the range of a fourth, then it is timid and uninteresting. On the other hand, since the counterpoint is moving faster, and is considered to be a "vocal" line, it should contain more stepwise motion than in first species; any passage with three consecutive leaps in the same direction is bad, and any passage with four consecutive leaps in mixed directions is also bad. Consider the second type of passage to be a yodel.

The usual caveats regarding parallel and direct motion hold in second species. They look less obvious on the page, however. The following are all examples of bad direct motion to perfect consonances:



In addition, if the *same* perfect consonance is repeated on consecutive downbeats, then it is a bad parallelism, as well (Consider an octave and a unison *equivalent* in this regard). All of these examples are as bad as it gets:



The *sproinggg* melodic rule comes into force in second species and carries over into third species. The *sproinggg* rule is as follows: you may not leap *up* from an anacrusis to a downbeat if the anacrusis had been approached from below. The *sproinggg* rule is a *melodic* rule. Here are a few examples:



Also, you may not write successive downbeats that are a tritone (or an augmented or diminished interval) apart, whether or not the offending interval is "outlined." Remember that if the first cantus tone is returned to, then the downbeat note in the counterpoint should not be the same note with which it began.

Normally, you should avoid using the same note on successive downbeats, but it is not wrong to do so. However, it is considered extremely weak to begin the second bar of the counterpoint with the same note on



which the counterpoint began; in music of any period, it is usually considered weak or boring to begin an exposition with music that stays in one place (another reason your professor is not partial to Bruckner).

Remember that you have a choice for your beginning: you may begin either with two half notes or a half rest followed by a half note. Even if you begin with the rest, the first note must still be a unison, fifth or octave for counterpoint above, and an octave for counterpoint below.

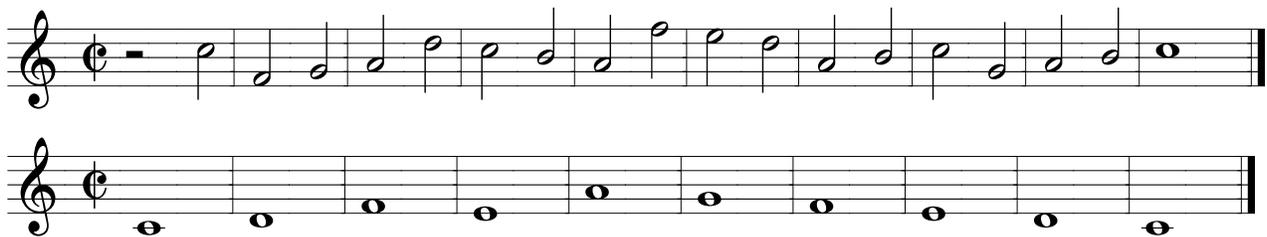
Be careful about long melodic sweeps in the same direction in second species, particularly when they contain leaps. Although context and musicality should be the best judges of just when you've gone too far relentlessly in one direction, the following easy pointers should serve as a guide: ☞ Any sweep of six notes in one direction should subsequently move in the opposite direction. ☞ After any sweep of four notes in one direction that contains a leap you should change direction. ☞ You should change direction after two leaps in the same direction. ☞ You should not leap twice in the same direction if it is preceded by two stepwise moves in that direction. ☞ If you have four notes that move by step in the same direction, you should not follow them with a leap in the same direction. In third species, long stepwise sweeps are greatly encouraged. You probably can't wait, can you?

It is very easy and tempting to create segmented lines in second species, particularly those of the following type:



So, just don't do it!!!!™

Second species gives you the time to develop a line with more peaks and valleys and with more tonal information in it. So you will be able to attempt a well-shaped line that resembles good lines in Western music composed as recently as this morning. The most well-shaped line will have a climax that is leapt to on a syncopated part of the measure (in second species, this means the anacrusis) and which is "resolved" by stepward motion down; the climax ideally should be preceded by one, two or three (or in Wagner's case, dozens of) sub-climaxes which are progressively higher on the way to the ultimate climax. For gravy, get some other sub-climaxes on the way down to the cadence. Remember, a syncopated climax that is leapt to is the most dramatic and likely to get you that NEA grant. A syncopated climax also guarantees that it is not coincidental with the cantus firmus.



Composer: Ruth Spevack, October, 1992

Endeavor to avoid writing "upper neighbor" notes in second species; do not follow a downbeat note with an anacrusis a second higher, and then follow that with the original note on the next downbeat. In many cases, it saps energy from the line; it is not *specifically* prohibited until third species, however.

COUNTERPOINT

Supplement 3

Third Species (two parts)

It is during the study of third species counterpoint that the less hardy souls decide to change their major to economics, or are found weeks later in a dark alley sucking their thumbs. At this point it is helpful to remember that the whole pedagogic method for teaching counterpoint is meant only to strengthen various contrapuntal "muscles." Each species concentrates on a particular problem and beats it into the ground until you REALLY get it. Leg lifts, situps, pushups, etc. strengthen only certain muscles, but have no real practicality in everyday life — but the next time you need to use all those muscles, say in moving a couch into a dorm room, you are thankful for the strength you have developed through those exercises. Just as real life physical tasks require development in dozens of muscles, so does real music require strength in all the various aspects of counterpoint. Just remember: in fifth species you get to use everything, and you'll be surprised how close you come to writing actual music.

The third species of counterpoint pits four notes, expressed in quarters, against the cantus firmus, which still moves in whole notes. As this is the fastest of all species, this is where you must strive for the smoothest lines. Strive for a mostly stepwise line, which reaches natural high points, each successive high point of which is even higher in the last, culminating in THE high point, near the end of the counterpoint.

If you move by step in the same direction, you may go as far as you want, providing the line is within the voice range. Any line which contains a skip may not go further than a sixth before turning around. With certain exceptions, you may not skip farther than a fourth, and then you must reverse direction and fill in the unused space by step. You may not repeat tones in third species. You may skip an octave, but you must reverse direction and fill in at least a fourth by step before changing direction. It is rare, but you may skip twice providing you outline the first and fifth degrees of the modal scales, e.g. in Dorian the following lines are permitted:



In third species, the first and third quarters are defined as strong rhythmically, and the second and fourth quarters are defined as "weak." You may not leap UP from a strong quarter, but you may leap DOWN. In other words, all of the following are prohibited:



The following, however, are acceptable:



Consonance and dissonance: The same rules apply for strong and weak quarters as applied for strong and weak halves in second species: all strong quarters must be consonant, and weak quarters may be consonant or dissonant. A dissonant quarter must be approached by step and must be resolved by step in the same direction.

Cambiata: the "cambiata" figure gives you the only exception to the above rule: This is a cambiata figure:



You will note that the 'C' forms a 7th with the cantus firmus and is thereby dissonant. It is not resolved by step, however, until the next quarter. This figure is considered to be equivalent to

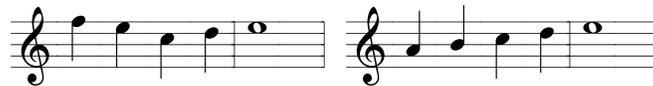


with the "B" delayed by a quarter. The cambiata figure as demonstrated here is acceptable ONLY when the first, third and fourth quarters are all consonant with the cantus firmus. (Hint: this only happens when the first quarter is an octave above the cantus firmus).

Ending formulas: above you may use either of the following melodic formulas: $\hat{2}-\hat{1}-\hat{6}-\hat{7}-\hat{8}$; or $\hat{4}-\hat{5}-\hat{6}-\hat{7}-\hat{8}$. (These are expressed as four quarters and a whole note) As before, $\hat{7}$ must be raised in Dorian, Mixolydian and Aeolian modes and $\hat{6}$ must be raised in Aeolian mode. In Aeolian mode, these various endings look like this:



In Phrygian mode, these are the endings:



Below, you must end with the formula $\hat{7}-\hat{5}-\hat{6}-\hat{7}-\hat{8}$, as in the first example below for Dorian. In Phrygian, the suggested counterpoint ending is the second example:



As before, try singing your counterpoint as a melisma at $\text{♩} = 120$ to see if it is too jumpy, too painful to sing, or too segmented or motivic.

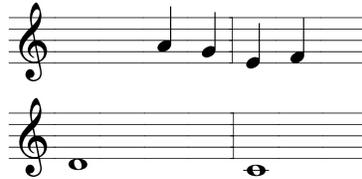
Chromaticism: since the line is moving very fast now, you are given the option of using E^b , B^b , F^\sharp , G^\sharp and C^\sharp in all modes. The same rules apply as to their melodic resolutions, but now you need not resolve them right away, providing their correct resolutions are provided, in register, somewhere along the line.

COUNTERPOINT

Supplement 3A

More on Third Species (two parts)

The cambiata figure (See Supplement 3) is also useable in third species beginning on the third quarter. Remember that it is in using a cambiata that you have your only opportunity to leap from a dissonance, and that this only works when the third quarter of the figure is consonant! A cambiata beginning on the third quarter might look like this:



Note that the 4th quarter, a dissonant quarter on a weak beat, leaps down to E, which is consonant on the downbeat with the new note of the cantus firmus, C. (N.B. if the new cantus firmus note had moved down to A, this figure would make us guilty of a direct fifth!). In order to justify the leap from the dissonant G (to the consonant E), the line must immediately move to F to complete the cambiata figure. Note that moving to F here, which is dissonant with the CF, forces the line to G on the next quarter.

If you have been following along in Fux, you may have noted that he allows the third quarter in third species to be dissonant, if the second and fourth quarter are consonant. Ignore this. In fact, repudiate it; all third quarters *must* be consonant. This is more in line with the sixteenth century practice.

You may not write upper neighbor notes. An upper neighbor is defined as a weak quarter a step higher than the strong quarters that precede and follow it. In other words, the following line is bad:



The F in the first bar and the A in the second bar are upper neighbors. This is a *melodic* rule, not a contrapuntal one, so this rule applies *even when the upper neighbor is consonant with the cantus firmus*. Lower neighbors, both consonant and dissonant ones, are allowed. (Remember that by definition, the lower neighbor must occur on a weak quarter).

Remember. Never leap *up* to a weak quarter, even if it "sounds right."

COUNTERPOINT

Supplement 4

Fourth Species (2 parts)

The last muscle to develop before getting into "free" counterpoint is the suspension muscle. Dissonant suspensions imbue a counterpoint line with an sense of urgency and forward motion not approached in the first three species;. The need for a dissonant tone to resolve in the correct direction supercedes any larger scale melodic considerations, at least at the particular moment of resolution. It is for this reason that your distinguished professor is less strict about large scale melodic shapes and other linear considerations than he has been in the previous species.

In the fourth species, the cantus firmus moves in whole notes. The counterpoint also moves in whole notes, but in whole notes that have been delayed by the space of a half note. The rules are as follows: the counterpoint begins with a half rest, followed by a half note that forms a perfect consonance with the counterpoint (as in all other species). This half note is tied (suspended) to another half in the next bar. If the suspension is dissonant, it must resolve by step to an imperfect consonance. If the suspension is consonant, the choice of the next note is free, providing it is consonant with the cantus firmus, and providing it does not move to a perfect consonance in the same direction as the cantus had just moved. Then the new note is suspended to the next bar, etc.

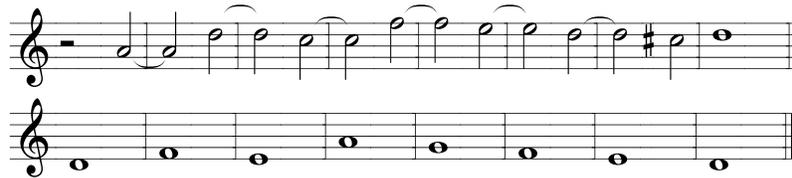
Dissonance treatment: all suspended dissonant tones must resolve by step to an imperfect consonance. Thus the resolutions of any dissonance are clear, as in the little chart here:

| <i>Dissonance</i> | | <i>Resolution</i> |
|-------------------|---|-------------------|
| 2 | → | 3 |
| 4 | → | 3 |
| °5 | → | 6 |
| 7 | → | 6 |
| 9 | → | 10 |

Please note that 2nds may not resolve to unisons, nor 7ths and 9ths to octaves. This happens in later music, which has not been composed yet. Also note that F above B, while being a fifth and looking like a consonance if you are not paying attention, is not one; if F is suspended above a B in the cantus firmus it must move to G; if B is suspended below F in the cantus firmus, the B must move to A.

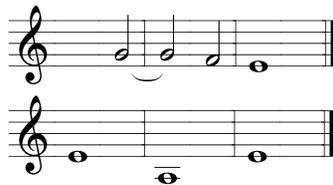
The whole thing comes down to these easy rules: every anacrusis must be consonant; a suspended downbeat may be consonant or dissonant — if it is dissonant, it must resolve on the anacrusis, by step, to an imperfect consonance and if it is consonant the next choice is free, given the usual rules. *Hint:* go for suspensions that are forced downward and use a consonant suspension as an opportunity to leap up. This is generally the best line.

You should strive to form a good line that forms as many dissonant suspensions as possible so you can get its sound in your ear and so you can witness the irresistible force of such dissonances. As such, your itinerant professor is less strict about overall linear plans than in the other species. The more-than-three consecutive thirds, sixths or tenths rule applies, however. Pay attention to your line and its relationship to the cantus firmus: it is quite easy simply to write a line in parallel sixths with the cantus, as follows:



Six consecutive anacrusis consonances are sixths, hence the whole counterpoint simply follows the cantus firmus in parallel sixths a half note later. *This is not an independent line!* Be aware also, far in advance, that long scalar passages in the cantus firmus are going to necessitate long sequences like the one at the end of the above example. For this very reason, you are given the "escape hatch" to break up such long sequences. Once per exercise, you may break the suspension sequence and insert a passage of second species counterpoint. The escape hatch looks like  rhythmically. The second, third and fourth notes of this example must all be consonant, and the third one (the downbeat half of the second measure) may not be an octave or a unison.

Ending. You probably won't be surprised to find that the preferred ending for the counterpoint in this species is the suspension cadence. The preferred ending is to suspend $\hat{8}$ into the first half of the penultimate measure, follow it with a half-note leading tone, followed by a whole note tonic. You must ALWAYS end on a whole note tonic. This ending is preferred for both above and below. Alternately, the penultimate measure may be a whole-note leading tone, putting the last two whole measures squarely into first species. For the last Phrygian cantus firmus, the preferred ending is



Alternately, you may end as you would in second species (suspended $\hat{6}-\hat{7}-\hat{8}$ above or suspended $\hat{5}-\hat{7}-\hat{8}$ below)

Finally, please be aware that all of the examples below are wrong because they contain direct motion to a perfect consonance.



Counterpoint

Supplement 5

"...where other composers do what the notes wish, the notes do as [your name here] wishes" — *Martin Luther*
"I wanna have some fun." — *Samantha Fox, Recording Artist and Bimbo*

Fifth Species (2 parts)

Finally, you get to write a line that is somewhat more like music, and you're given a chance to use all your newly acquired contrapuntal biceps, triceps and quadriceps to create a beautiful line. The list of restrictions presented here should be considered great-grandfatherly advice, culled from centuries of probing into the music of Palestrina et al, that will give you a greater chance of writing a good line that a composer of the day would have been proud of. The advice and restrictions are much more stringent than what is found in Fux, so you may as well just put your copy in your bookcase and reminisce about it dreamily in years to come.

In fifth species, counterpoint is written in mixed note values against a cantus firmus that continues to move in whole notes. It is important to create variety in the melodies: four whole notes followed by eight quarter notes followed by two half notes, etc. is abrupt, lacking in continuity, and somewhat fishy besides. Rhythmic contrasts should be used smoothly and evenly. Just as skips require compensation in steps, so do rhythms require compensation. So after longer note values, a need is felt for shorter ones, and vice versa. Note the beginning of the *Sanctus* of Palestrina's Marcellus Mass:



San ----- *ctus, San* -----

The first note is syncopated, that is, tied over into the next bar. The downward movement of the two quarters which follow act as a sort of resolution of the syncopation, and also circle around the next strong note, the whole-note B, giving that note a natural feeling of completion for the time being. It still has the energy for the line to continue, and notice how the next strong note, D, is also circled, in a more complex way, giving it both a sense of completion and a greater energy for continuation. The largest skip for the passage is saved to introduce the high point, G, which also begins a text repetition. The accumulated energy from the skip is dissipated by smooth quarter-note stepwise motion down. Jeppesen compares this tune to a noble and gracefully splashing fountain. You will note that the line is not overtly dramatic, as this is not the point of a good line. The high point is entirely "natural" and while stressed rhythmically is not the longest note of the line.

In a general sense, you will want to strive for lines that grow higher slowly with evolving high points leading to a climax somewhere between halfway and three-fourths of the way through the exercise. Lines that involve gradually lower and lower register work less well. Rhythmically, you should strive for lines that begin in long notes, move gradually towards quicker notes towards the climax, and then relax rhythmically after the climax. But don't be mechanical! Don't try to get too fancy, either, because you will invariably end up writing an awkward line.

Dotted whole notes and dotted half notes are both allowed now, either attacking at the same time as the cantus firmus note, or attacking on the half of the CF note and suspending over the next CF note.

Changes of "species" in the counterpoint are generally most effective when off the beat of the cantus firmus — on the weak half, or 2nd, 3rd or 4th quarter of the cantus firmus note. It may be fine to change species to coincide with the attack of the new cantus firmus note, but you should listen to it with great care. Don't let the beat of the cantus firmus combine with "gear-shifting" in the counterpoint to

in a syncopated part of the measure for the word "descendens," which means "descended," (just like it looks) also forces the line down for another motetism. Do you notice the rhythmic crescendo in this example?

N.B. Note that the Palestrina example here has a key signature of one flat. If you prefer, you may transpose your cantus firmus up a fourth or down a fifth and add the key signature of one flat. If you do so, G# should be omitted from your chromatic vocabulary and Ab added. Aeolian will now be a 'D' mode and C will need to be sharpened at the cadence and B will need to be naturalized.

Questions and Answers

What's wrong with our lines when you mark "segmented" or "lonely" on them? A "lonely" note or set of notes is isolated in register from the rest of the line. A longer passage of registrally separated notes is one segment of a segmented line. The effect of such registral isolation is to split your line into a combination of more than one line. You have heard "multilinear" tunes all your life in music of Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, etc., and it often seems right based on those models to form segmented lines by leaping into foreign registers and abandoning them. In the tonal models, however, you understand both in hearing and in analyzing that the registral segmentation involves "motion into another voice." In other words, you hear tonal lines in terms of underlying multivoice counterpoint. In modal counterpoint, the surface counterpoint and the underlying counterpoint are one and the same. Therefore, there can be no "motion into another voice," since there is no "other voice;" so registrally segmented lines are not good lines.

What's wrong with ending on the high point? The cadence should be a point of relaxation, not of tension. Vocal tension is highest in higher registers, therefore cadences on high points are not points of relaxation.

Why aren't there any Lydian cantus firmi? Simply because there isn't much Lydian sixteenth century polyphonic vocal music. These composers preferred modes where the fourth and fifth degrees of the scale formed perfect consonances with the first degree.

You said don't change species at the same time a cantus firmus tone changes, but all the Palestrina examples do this. Not so. Quarters are always introduced in the middle of a whole note, or following a dotted half; halves are often introduced after a dotted whole. Besides, Palestrina's examples are lines used in free counterpoint that is not moving against unrelenting whole notes. As you'll find out in free writing, something usually happens to the rhythm in another voice to take away from the seeming accents and gear shifts on strong whole notes.

What's wrong with building a line from rhythmic motives? The lines have to have a unity in and of themselves, and building a line from rhythmic motives turns a line a collection of little pieces of lines that resemble each other, not a single organic line.

My counterpoint looks good and follows the rules, but I don't know what it sounds like. Either you should a) play it at the piano and find out or b) not play it on the piano and never find out.

Why do I have to use alto clef in every exercise? I'm your father and I say so. Besides, one day you will write for the viola and you don't want to admit any viola player is smarter than you, do you?

What does "Sorry, Tennessee" mean on the third page? I don't get it. It's a very obscure quote from a TV advertisement for Dreyfus Liquid Assets. I thought it would be funny. I may have miscalculated.

Really, what does good fifth species counterpoint look like? You could sit here staring at these nice fonts (Adobe Caslon, Lassus, Shpfltnat). Or you could turn the page.



Supplement 6

Free writing (2 parts)

In free writing, the cantus firmus principle is abandoned, and both parts contain a mixture of note values. For the most part, the same rules as for two-part writing in fifth species are valid in free writing; for the most part, the same rules about the overall shape of lines apply, as well. The main difference between free writing and fifth species writing is that free writing is *composition*.

In the exercises we do, the phrase structure will be much the same as that found in the Lassus *Cantiones* you have. A complete composition consists of several phrases, each of which sets a phrase of a text, each of which is musically unique, and each of which ends on a cadence. The cadences that do not end the composition are called *medial* cadences. The final cadence is called (all together, now) the *final* cadence. In each musical phrase, one voice enters alone and the other enters later, often (but not necessarily) imitating the first voice. If the second voice enters while the first note in the first voice is still sounding, it must enter on a perfect consonance; otherwise, the second voice may enter on an imperfect consonance. At the opening of the piece or at the beginning of a new section of text, the imitation may be as long as six halves later; at the opening of a less articulative phrase (one that begins only with long notes — wholes and brevises (brevæ? brevi?)) the second voice is more usually two, three or four halves later — which is also okay for a big new phrase. At the opening of the entire piece, the leading voice usually (but not always) enters on the tonic of the mode and the second voice usually enters on the tonic or the fifth of the mode. This pattern for the beginning of the piece is highly recommended, although not set in stone (e.g. see Lassus *Cantiones* #3, which is in Dorian mode and begins on E).

The final cadence of a composition should be in the same mode as its opening. Other medial cadences, including the cadence that closes the first phrase, may be in other modes than the mode of the opening. In other words, any phrase may modulate. Any medial cadence may be on F and any phrase except the opening phrase may begin on F. No phrase may cadence on B, but a phrase may begin on B if a mode is understood as other than on B (e.g. Phrygian beginning on the "dominant"). No phrase may begin or end on a "black note." There are no set rules for where medial cadences may occur, but the following guide given by David Lewin may be helpful:

| <i>A piece beginning in</i> | <i>often has medial cadences on</i> |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| C..... | G or A |
| D..... | F or A |
| E..... | C or A or G |
| G..... | D or C |
| A..... | C or D |

Feel free to ignore the above information if it is not helpful to you.

The *final* cadence of a composition should be a suspension cadence of the familiar sort, ending at the octave or unison. The final cadence may be a longa or brevis or a whole note on the third half of a $\frac{4}{2}$ measure tied to a brevis or longa. This writer prefers the cadence on a brevis which is attacked on the downbeat of the last measure and takes up the whole measure. In the latter

situation of a whole tied to a brevis or longa, note that this is the only situation in which a note of lesser value can be suspended to a note of greater value (remember how, for instance a dotted whole was supposed to begin on a "strong half" and how the rhythm ♩_♩ was prohibited in fifth species).

When you want to cadence using a suspension formula, you will have to decide which of the two voices will "play" fourth species counterpoint and which voice will "play" cantus firmus. It helps greatly when you plan ahead. Medial cadences may also be suspension cadences that end on the octave or unison. They may also be less conclusive: they may end on a fifth instead of an octave or unison; they may use non-suspension approaches; and as mentioned, they may end on a note that is not the tonic of the prevailing mode. Here is an example of a medial cadence on A:



It has some of the signs of the suspension cadence on A (the chromaticism and the ornament in the lower voice), but the cadential interval is a fifth instead of an octave or unison. A medial cadence should involve both voices; if one voice drops out where it seems a cadence has occurred, a cadence has not occurred. Use a leading tone in a medial cadence, if appropriate.

The medial cadence should occur on the first or third half of the $\frac{4}{2}$ measure. The cadence tone is usually prolonged only for the duration of a whole note or a dotted whole note, and that in only one of the voices; the other voice rests and breathes after its cadence attack and then leads off the next phrase without any discontinuity in sound — there should be no point in the middle of a composition where there is a composed silence in both parts. These are typical medial cadences with one voice holding the cadence tone and the other voice beginning the new phrase:



The main points are that a) one voice breathes after the cadence and b) the other voice sustains while the first one breathes so that there is no break between the cadence and the phrase that follows. See the Lassus *Cantiones* for all kinds of ideas for medial cadences.

In an academic course such as this, it's usually death to make the following statement: You may now cross the voices in free writing, just as Lassus does in his *Cantiones*. If you cross voices, then the rule that the voices may never be separated by more than a tenth will be strictly enforced! Do not cross the voices excessively, and by all means make connections so that the listener can tell what belongs to which line — e.g., don't use many leaps for Voice 1 to cross over Voice 2 and then back again. The upper and lower lines should retain that identity at least at the extremes of phrases. You will find that crossing voices will help you create beautiful, organic, wonderful contrapuntal compositions. Not.

Rhythmic Considerations

First, a set of redefinitions, for the sake of clarity. A *strong quarter* is the first, third, fifth or seventh quarter in a $\frac{4}{2}$ bar; a *weak quarter* is the second, fourth, sixth or eighth in the bar (terms come from third species). A *strong half* is the first or third half of the bar; a *weak half* is the second or fourth half of the bar (second species). Strong halves attack where whole notes à la cantus firmus, would attack; strong quarters attack where consecutive halves would attack.

The longa, if you use it at all, can only be used at the end of the composition. The brevis should be used only at the end or at the beginning. Sometimes (see Lassus) the brevis is also used at the first medial cadence. The first note of the composition does not need to be a brevis. The dotted whole or whole tied to a half ($\circ _ \text{d}$) should be used only at the beginning of a phrase or in a medial cadence. Whole notes, as long as they begin on strong quarters, may be used freely. The two voices should not simultaneously attack whole notes after the second voice has entered in any phrase (you can see why: rhythmic independence and especially rhythmic vitality is lost when this happens). Sorry, Tennessee.

Once you have progressed past the beginning of the phrase, at least one of the voices should attack on each half note. Otherwise, the overall rhythm is full of holes and dead spots.

Do not syncopate both voices at the same time. If one voice syncopates, the other voice must be in a more regular rhythm. Any whole note that begins on a weak half, in other words, must be supported by an attack in the other voice on a strong half. The rhythm $\text{d} \circ \text{d}$ should be supported in the other voice with something like $\circ \text{d} \text{d}$ or $\circ \circ$ or $_ \text{d} \text{d} \circ$ or $_ \text{d} \text{d} \text{d} \text{d}$ or a wide range of other options, providing the syncopation is accompanied by something that attacks the strong beat not attacked in the syncopation. This keeps the overall rhythm from sounding jerky. If you are using a suspension cadence, only one voice may use an ornamentation formula, while the other voice should use only whole notes or half notes.

The two parts must be kept rhythmically and melodically independent. As above, simultaneous whole notes, simultaneous dotted halves and simultaneous suspended halves should not be used. *Both voices should not have two consecutive half notes at the same time.* One voice may have two consecutive half notes and the other may have a dotted half followed by a quarter or a half-tied-to-a-quarter.

$\text{x} \text{d} \text{d}$ x is BAD
 $\text{x} \text{f} \text{f}$ x

$\text{x} \text{d} \text{d}$ x is OK
 $\text{x} \text{f} \text{f} \text{f} \text{f}$

$\text{x} \text{d} \text{d}$ x is OK
 $\text{x} \text{f} \text{f}$ x

Quarters move more quickly, so the two voices may move in simultaneous quarters a bit more. Four simultaneous quarters in a row are okay in the middle of the piece, but only if the melodic profiles are independent. No more than two or three may be exactly parallel (parallel thirds, sixths or tenths). Toward the end of the composition it is ok to excite the audience with a long burst of consecutive simultaneous quarters for special effect — but save such a passage for the ending. David Lewin calls such a passage "the musical equivalent of gold filigree on a printed text." Given the Lassus examples, you may compose a passage in the middle of the piece of up to eleven consecutive quarters in one voice if the other voice moves slowly, and if the quarters do not form elevators, and if the last quarter is a weak quarter.

Once a phrase is underway, it is idiomatic for the rhythm to ebb in one voice while flowing in another and vice versa. That is, one voice may be somewhat fancy and detailed while the other voice is plainer and in longer note values. Both voices should trade off being "fancy" and "plain." Ebbing and flowing rhythmically trades off between the voices so that one voice doesn't get all the good stuff while the other one has only gruel. The complementary relation of rhythm is analogous to contrary motion in melodies.

Dissonance Treatment

The correct treatment of many dissonances in free writing will clearly be covered by a pertinent species rule. There will be some new possibilities for dissonance treatment in free writing, as well. The list below is an incomplete list of ways of treating dissonances not clearly covered by a species rule (there are others evidenced in the music of the period; if you can codify a different way based on practice, show me and we'll add it to the arsenal). The trick here is to determine which voice contains the "dissonant" note and to treat it contrapuntally in the correct way.

When both lines move in quarters, first species rules apply if all the vertical intervals are consonant, except that two is a suggested number for consecutive thirds, sixths or tenths, and three is the absolute maximum. Third species rules cover dissonant weak quarters. There are ways that quarters may combine to form dissonances which will be covered later.

Consider a passing tone dissonance as in second species. This should be used only when the other voice has a whole note, dotted whole note, or whole tied to a half; otherwise the other voice may sound illegally dissonant. A common error is to try to use a dissonant "passing" half note against a preparation for a suspension in the other voice, as illustrated below:



The G in the lower voice is dissonant with the C in the upper voice. Since it's not possible to tell which voice is rhythmically subordinate to which, it's not possible to tell which voice is the dissonant one, or why. N.B. the rule to suspend the C in fourth species is that it must be consonant; yet the G with which it forms a dissonant is clearly passing and treated correctly in second species. So who's right? Nobody. Is this governed by the rules of fourth species or second species? Neither. Therefore, this is prohibited.

Passing, neighboring and cambiata dissonance on a weak quarter (as in third species) may be used freely. This means that upper neighbor tones may be used (as Lassus uses them), but sparingly. If both voices are moving in quarters, a dissonance may be used on a weak quarter, but not on a strong quarter, providing each voice treats its weak quarter according to one of the legal formulas.

Appoggiatura dissonance in its limited form as manifested in fifth species should not be used if the other voice attacks the fourth quarter of the whole note beat. This makes the third quarter in the voice making the appoggiatura improperly dissonant. But the appoggiatura may be used in any other rhythmic context, providing that it begins on a first or third half of a measure. The appoggiatura *may* be used when the other voice prepares a suspension.



BAD



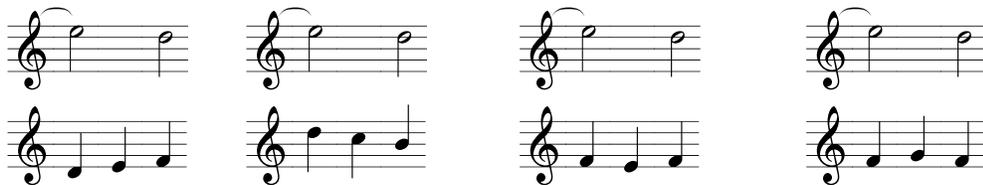
GOOD

In the second formula, the rhythmic subordination of the quarter notes to the suspension preparation, plus the consonance on the fourth quarter to which the appoggiatura resolves, makes it clear that the preparation for the suspension is essentially consonant. Compare that with the second/fourth species problem in the previous example.

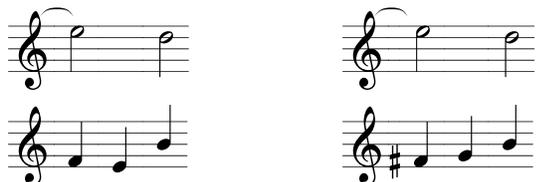
A suspension to a dissonance must begin on a strong quarter, as in fourth species (that is, it must begin on the second or fourth half of the measure). It must resolve stepwise *down* (not up anymore, no, no, nope!) on a strong quarter — that is, the preparation must be a half-note long, and so must the dissonance. (♩♩♩ or ♩♩♩♩ or the ornamented versions are the only possible rhythms when a suspension is dissonant). This being satisfied, the other voice may move on, from the moment of the suspension dissonance itself (on "quarter 1") to a different note under the tone of resolution (on "quarter 3"). This motion may be in halves, as below:



(Note here that the new rule that dissonances must resolve downward would have necessitated an incorrect resolution from 9 to 8 if the lower voice had not moved!) Or the line may move in quarters after the dissonance. In that case, the motion in quarters from the first to or through the third quarter must involve no leaps. The examples below are correct:



The examples below are incorrect:



In free writing, you are allowed "the dissonant dot." The dissonant dot is not a suspension in any sense, but is a special kind of syncopation. It syncopates the motion of two voices in parallel thirds, sixths or tenths through three consecutive halves. Such a motion is forbidden, as such (remember, three consecutive halves are prohibited!); but when it is syncopated by a dotted half-plus-quarter in one of the voices, it becomes "idiomatic." In this formula the dot may dissonate.

In case you're wondering what this is all about, see the examples below: **a** is prohibited because it contains three consecutive halves; it provides the skeleton of **b** and **c**, which use the dissonant dot in the upper voice and lower voice, respectively.

The first half of this pattern should be a strong half (first or third). The third note doesn't have to be a half note; both voices can go on freely once the third note has been attacked. This pattern is not used if the first half is a weak one (second or fourth half). I.e., the pattern analogous to the above is not valid as expressed below:

Never use the dissonant dot as a sped-up fourth species suspension. It may be used in conjunction with a cambiata-like figure, as the Palestrina example several pages ahead of this shows.

The "dissonant third quarter" in third species is allowed by Fux, but not here. It is now allowed only in the context shown below:

Here, the following are true: one voice prepares for a fourth species suspension: in the string of quarters in the other voice the first, second and fourth quarters are consonant; the third quarter, which sounds at the same time as the first voice, is dissonant with the suspension preparation. In this case, the line in quarters must RETURN to the dissonant interval on the strong quarter which follows. It may then continue on with a quarter, half, dotted half or whole — the most common note value is a whole note, making a suspension cadence. If this is too complex, it's best to forget about it for now until you have more experience in writing with the other rules.

Watch out for direct fifths, octaves and unisons, either simultaneously, from a quarter back, a half back (sounds like football) or even a whole back, when the line is approaching simultaneous attacks anywhere, on weak halves as well as strong. Never let both lines leap to a simultaneous attack in the same direction. After the entrance of the second voice in a phrase, it's rare to find both voices attacking a unison or octave simultaneously on a strong (first or third) half. The examples below are bad. Figure out why.



The fourth species ornaments may now be used to elaborate any line moving down by step in half notes, i.e.



to use more than two in a row, nor too many at all, since it makes the line too lacy, complicated and jejeune.

Text Setting

Each counterpoint line will be a setting of a text. At the end of this supplement are some short Latin texts suitable for setting in this style. You may choose your own text, providing it is not in English, providing it is sacred, and providing you clear it with me. Each phrase of a composition will set one particular phrase of text; within each phrase the text may be repeated freely. As seen in Supplement Five, skips to high points work best as beginnings of text repetitions. In each new musical phrase, a new text phrase is often chosen (but may be the same as the previous phrase) with distinct new musical ideas. I.e., every new musical/text phrase carries with it new musical invention. Sometimes you may want to end a composition with a long "Amen," providing the sentiment expressed in the text is something to be happy about. Alternately, you may want to do a long composition in several phrases that simply sets the word Amen over and over again in different ways.

Every note value longer than a quarter may carry a syllable of text. No eighth note can carry a syllable. A single quarter can bear a syllable, but usually only when the preceding dotted half or half-tied-to-quarter also carries a syllable, and the quarter is followed by a longer note value that also carries a syllable. Any syllable carried by a quarter note must be unstressed in relation to the syllables that surround it. For instance, you may set the word "Kyrie" in the rhythm ♩·♩♩ or the word "Gloria" as ♩♩♩ — Since the word "Maria" has a stress on "ri," you will not want to set that syllable on a quarter note.

A syllable may change on the first of a string of quarters, but not in the middle of a string of quarters; nor may it change on the FIRST longer note after the string of quarters.

The last syllable in a phrase of text should be taken by the cadence tone; this rule overrides the one stated directly above.

You may use repeated notes **IN MODERATION** when you use note values of halves or greater if and only if a new syllable is sung when the note repeats. Don't overuse this. When repeated tones occur, they are usually in material that opens a phrase before the second voice enters, and in subsequent imitations or quotations of the same thematic material.

Consider the accents of the syllable changes and the stress patterns of the text as resources for rhythmic variety and flexibility — that is, as another dimension for "counterpoint." It is not necessary to put text accents always on strong halves, despite what your mother told you. It is idiomatic, especially in Lassus, to create cross-metric patterns with them. See especially *Cantiones* #1.

Imitation

You took Music HUM, didn't you? So you know what imitation is. Not only that, it's the sincerest form of flattery (and the flattest form of sincerity). Actually, your instructor probably used "imitative" more than he or she used words like "music." Writing imitative counterpoint is not as scary as one thinks it is, peering in from the outside. Imitative parts merely imitate, they don't have to share lodging and make breakfast for each other.

You are not going to write strict canons in this class. Imitation is much less strict than canonical writing. What will be most important in your imitative writing will be the openings of new phrases, which are normally imitated literally, but can be imitated at inversions, in retrogrades, in augmentation and in diminution. If you feel lucky, you can try one of the more complex ones. Otherwise, stick with imitating at the octave or unison, or at any other diatonic interval, providing that you do not end on B. Imitation at the unison and at the fifth are most common.

Imitation may be strict or it may be free. The distinction is self-evident. "Real" answers are preferred to "tonal" answers (if you don't know what this means, purge this from memory and read on). After the opening musical phrase is stated and imitated, the way you imitate is mostly free. Obviously, it pays to plan ahead. Generally, you should plan on imitating the opening up to the first text repetition, and the beginnings of subsequent repetitions of the text.

Stretto imitation is quite common in music of the late sixteenth century (even more so in the early sixteenth century) — that is, imitation in which a new voice is added before the previous voice finishes the theme. See the Lassus *Cantiones* and the beginnings later given in this Supplement. Don't make all your lines move stepwise at all times — these lines lack profile. When moving in long note values, larger skips are helpful and give a thematic profile to a line.

Remember *Valde Honorandus Est* from Supplement 5? (Pregnant pause, shuffling of papers) Here's how Palestrina began that piece (the lower voice sounds an octave lower than notated):

Val - de ho - - - - - no - ran - dus est, - - - - -

Val - de ho - - - no - ran - dus est, - - - - - val - - - - -

Find the "dissonant dot" that Palestrina turns into a cambiata. This is not explicitly allowed in our list of rules, but you may use it, since Palestrina did.

And here's a little imitative development of *the bread that descended from heaven*:

Hic est panis de caelo descendens

Hic est panis de caelo descendens

Openings of pieces

Here are some openings to try for starters in imitation:

"Ave Maria" (repeat as often as needed)

Ave Maria,

A--

"Gloria" (repeat as often as needed)

Glo----

Glo----ri-a, Glo----

"Amen" (repeat as often as needed)

A--

A--men, A-----

"Patrem omnipotentem" (repeat as often as needed)



Pa -- trem om - ni - po

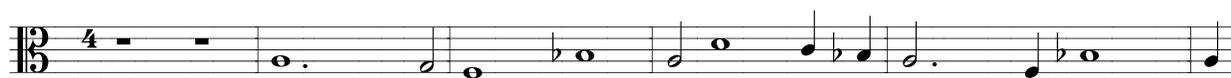


Pa -

"Kyrie eleison" (repeat as often as needed)



Ky- --- ri - e E --- lei- --- son



Ky- --- ri - e E --- lei- --- son

"Cum Sancto Spiritu" (repeat as often as needed) *Non-strict imitation*



Cum Sanc-to Spir- --- i- --- tu



Cum Sanc-to Spir- ---

"Requiem" (repeat as often as needed)



Req- --- ui - em, Req- --- ui -



Req- --- ui - em,

Exercise: Find a correct interval of imitation and delay of imitation for the Palestrina *Sanctus* melody given at the beginning of Supplement 5:



San- --- ctus, San- ---

Sample Latin texts

Ave Maria,
Gratia Plena.
Dominus tecum,
Virgo serena.

*Hail Mary,
Full of grace.
God is with you,
Serene virgin.*

Agnus Dei
Qui tollis peccata mundi
Miserere nobis.

*Lamb of God,
Who takes away the sins of the world
Have mercy on us.*

Kyrie Eleison
Christe Eleison
Kyrie Eleison

*Lord have mercy
Christ have mercy
Lord have mercy*

Benedictus
Qui venit
In nomine Deus

*Blessed
Is he who comes
In the name of the Lord.*

Gloria
In excelsis Deo
Et in terra pax
Hominibus bonae voluntatis

*Glory
To God in the highest
And on earth
Peace, good will towards men.*

Credo in unum Deum
Patrem omnipotentem
Factorem coeli et terrae
Visibilium omnium et invisibilium

*I believe in one God
the Father almighty
Maker of heaven and earth
and of all things visible and invisible.*

Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus
Dominus Deus Sabaoth
Pleni sunt coeli et terra
Gloria eius.

*Holy, holy, holy
Lord God of Sabaoth
heaven and earth are full
of your glory.*

Requiem æternam
Dona eis Domine.

*Eternal rest
Give them, Lord.*

Cum Sancto Spiritu
In gloria Dei Patris
Amen. *Amen.*

*With the Holy Spirit
in the glory of God the Father,*