Species Counterpoint: Species II

**Second Species**

Counterpoint adds a touch more complexity: there are two notes against every one in the cantus firmus.

Fortunately, that doesn’t make it **twice as difficult:** in fact, most of the previous rules still apply without any changes.

**There are only a few exceptions:**

**Species I**

**Rule:**

**Species II**

**Rule:**

- Leaps are still fine, but don’t leap to a new high point on a downbeat.
- The A in the third measure is a new high point for the line, so leaping to it on the downbeat puts a lot of weight on that one note, making it stick out of the texture.

*Excepting, of course, ascending minor sixths and perfect octaves, but you already knew that.*

- No leaps larger than a perfect fifth*
- Leaps are still fine, but don’t leap to a new high point on a downbeat.

**Species I**

**Rule:**

- Still true... for downbeats. For the unaccented beats, dissonant intervals are fine, as long as they happen as passing notes: notes that fill in a third created by surrounding notes.

**Species II**

**Rule:**

- Unisons can only be used on the first and last notes.

**Species I**

**Rule:**

- Unisons can be used on unaccented notes... just be careful about crossing or overlapping voices!

**Species II**

**Rule:**

- This rule still applies: if you use a perfect interval on a downbeat, you need to use contrary motion from the immediately preceding notes, and at least one voice must move by step.

*However, you must also be careful not to have the same perfect interval on two successive downbeats. This is called parallel perfect intervals and it’s going to be a no-no for a good long time.*

(In fact, it’s also not okay to have parallel perfect intervals from the unaccented beat to the downbeat, but if you are approaching with contrary motion, that wouldn’t happen anyway.)

- Not too bad, is it? Yeah! Bring on third species!