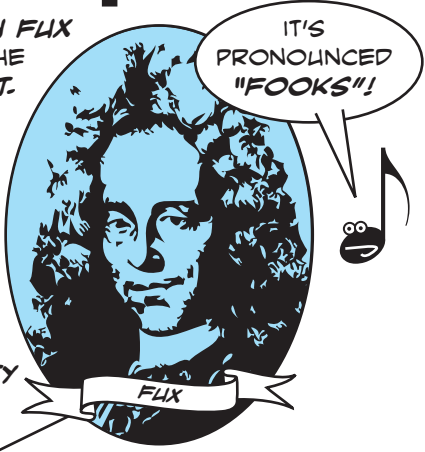


Introduction to Species Counterpoint

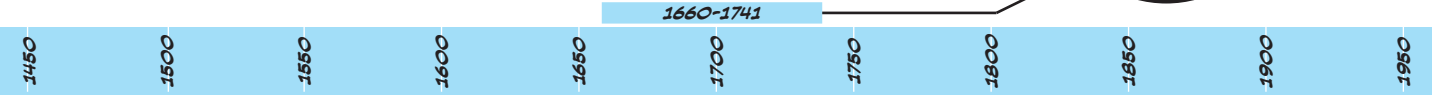
IN 1725, AN AUSTRIAN COMPOSER AND THEORIST NAMED JOHANN JOSEPH FLUX WROTE A THEORY TEXTBOOK CALLED *GRADUS AD PARNASSUM*, IN WHICH HE OUTLINED HIS METHOD OF TEACHING HOW TO WRITE *GOOD COUNTERPOINT*.

COUNTERPOINT IS THE COMBINATION OF TWO OR MORE MELODIES, EACH ONE AS IMPORTANT AND INTERESTING AS THE OTHER.

GRADUS AD PARNASSUM MEANS "STEPS TO PARNASSUS." PARNASSUS REFERRED TO THE HIGHEST PEAK IN GREECE, AND WAS USED AS A METAPHOR FOR PERFECTION.



GRADUS AD PARNASSUM WAS A **BIG HIT**, USED (OR AT LEAST PRAISED) BY COMPOSERS LIKE **MOZART**, **BEETHOVEN**, AND **HAYDN**. THE SYSTEM THAT FLUX USED IS REFERRED TO AS **SPECIES COUNTERPOINT**, BECAUSE IT INVOLVES GOING THROUGH INCREASING **LEVELS** OF RHYTHMIC COMPLEXITY WHICH ARE LABELED AS **SPECIES I**, **SPECIES II**, AND **SO FORTH**.



INTERESTINGLY ENOUGH, THE **LANGUAGE** FLUX WAS ADVOCATING WAS NOT THE COUNTERPOINT OF THE **COMMON PRACTICE PERIOD** TO WHICH HE BELONGED, BUT THE MORE **STRICT** RULES OF COUNTERPOINT USED BY COMPOSERS OF THE **RENAISSANCE** MORE THAN A **CENTURY EARLIER**.

SPECIFICALLY, FLUX WAS A **STARRY-EYED ADMIRER** OF THE ITALIAN RENAISSANCE COMPOSER **GIOVANNI PIERLUIGI DA PALESTRINA**, WHO HE CONSIDERED TO REPRESENT THE **PEAK OF COMPOSITIONAL ARTISTRY**... SOMETHING HE FELT WAS BEING **LOST** OR EVEN **SQUANDERED** BY HIS **BAROQUE** AND **CLASSICAL CONTEMPORARIES**.

OF COURSE, IT'S WORTH **POINTING OUT** THAT FLUX DIDN'T ACTUALLY **HAVE ACCESS** TO MUCH OF MY **MUSIC!**

RIGHT. SO THE **LANGUAGE** FLUX IS **TEACHING** IS REALLY AN **INTERESTING IDEAL**: BASED PARTLY ON HIS PERCEPTIONS OF **PALESTRINA'S MUSICAL LANGUAGE** AS DELIVERED TO HIM THROUGH **ITALIAN THEORISTS**, AND PARTLY ON HIS **OWN IDEAS** OF WHAT HE THOUGHT THE **LANGUAGE SHOULD BE**.

BUT LET'S CUT FLUX SOME **SLACK** HERE: AS THEORISTS, WE'RE **ALL GUILTY** OF THIS TO SOME DEGREE.

ANYWAY, **LET'S GET STARTED!** GOING THROUGH FLUX'S STEPS FOR LEARNING COUNTERPOINT GIVES US A **GLIMPSE** OF HOW THE **MASTERS** LEARNED THEIR CRAFT AND A FEEL FOR THE **ENVIRONMENT** IN WHICH THEY DEVELOPED THEIR **OWN** MUSICAL LANGUAGES.



HURRAY! LET'S GO, GIOVANNI, AND BRING THE **BEAUTIFUL LIGHT OF PERFECT COMPOSITION** TO THESE **EAGER STUDENTS!**

YEAH, JOE, **ABOUT** THAT... YOU **DO** REALIZE THAT YOUR IDEA OF **PERFECT COMPOSITION** IS JUST A

BLISSFULLY AWESOME THING?
YES, THAT'S JUST WHAT I WAS THINKING!

NO, I MEAN THAT IT'S **SUPER FUN? YAYYYY!!!!**