

Species Counterpoint: Species IV

WITH THE **FOURTH SPECIES**, WE STOP USING SMALLER NOTE VALUES AND **BACK UP A BIT TO SPECIES I**. BUT INSTEAD OF HAVING THE NOTES MOVE AT THE **SAME TIME**, SPECIES IV INVOLVES THE VOICES BEING **OFFSET FROM ONE ANOTHER**.

Musical notation for Species IV counterpoint. The top staff is a treble clef with a common time signature. The bottom staff is a bass clef. The notes are: Treble: quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter. Bass: half, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter. Figured bass numbers are: 5 3 6 (7) 6 (7) 6 3 6 (7) 6 (4) 3. The circled numbers 7, 7, 7, and 4 indicate dissonances.

THE BIGGEST DIFFERENCE WITH **SPECIES IV** IS THE FACT THAT **DISSONANCES** ARE PERMITTED ON THE **DOWNBEAT**. BUT AS YOU MIGHT EXPECT, THEY HAVE TO FOLLOW CERTAIN **SPECIFIC RULES**.

DISSONANCES IN **SPECIES IV** MUST BE IN THE FORM OF **SUSPENSIONS**. A **SUSPENSION** IS A DISSONANT NOTE THAT IS **APPROACHED** BY BEING HELD OVER - **SUSPENDED** - FROM THE **PREVIOUS NOTE**.

OH YOU DON'T SAY.

ANOTHER **IMPORTANT DEFINING CHARACTERISTIC** IS THAT THE **SUSPENSION RESOLVES DOWN** BY **STEP**. IF IT DOESN'T RESOLVE DOWN BY STEP, IT'S **NOT A SUSPENSION!**

Musical notation showing a 7-6 suspension. Treble clef: quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter. Bass clef: half, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter. Figured bass numbers: 6 8 (7) 6. A starburst highlights the F5 note in the treble staff.

IN **THIS CASE**, THE **SUSPENSION** IS THE **F** ON THE **DOWNBEAT** OF THE **SECOND MEASURE**. IT'S **PREPARED** BY THE **F** IN THE **PREVIOUS MEASURE**, AND **RESOLVES DOWN** TO THE **E**.

7-6

WE LABEL SUSPENSIONS BY THE **INTERVALS** OF THE **SUSPENSION** AND **RESOLUTION**, SO THIS ONE WOULD BE CALLED A **7-6 SUSPENSION**.

SUSPENSIONS ARE **GREAT**, BY THE WAY, BUT DON'T USE THE **SAME ONE** MORE THAN **THREE TIMES** IN A ROW, OR **FLUX** WILL **RELEASE THE HOUNDS**.

SIMILARLY, IN **THIS EXAMPLE**, THE **SUSPENDED NOTE** IS THE **D**, WHICH FORMS A **FOURTH** WITH THE **A**. IT MOVES TO A **C**, A **THIRD** ABOVE THE **BASS**, MAKING IT A **4-3 SUSPENSION**.

Musical notation showing a 4-3 suspension. Treble clef: quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter. Bass clef: half, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter. Figured bass numbers: 8 6 (4) 3. A starburst highlights the D5 note in the treble staff.

THE ONLY SUSPENSION FLUX ALLOWS WHEN WRITING COUNTERPOINT **BELOW** THE CANTUS FIRMUS IS THE **2-3 SUSPENSION**, IN WHICH THE SUSPENDED NOTE FORMS A **SECOND** WITH THE CANTUS FIRMUS, THEN **RESOLVES DOWN** TO A **THIRD**. (WHEN THIS SUSPENSION IS WRITTEN AN OCTAVE LOWER, IT IS SOMETIMES CALLED A **9-10 SUSPENSION**.)

4-3

THE **7-6** AND **4-3** SUSPENSIONS ARE THE ONLY ONES FLUX ALLOWS WHEN WRITING COUNTERPOINT **ABOVE** THE CANTUS FIRMUS.

SEE HOW WE **RESOLVE** TO A **LARGER INTERVAL**, UNLIKE THE **7-6** OR **4-3?** WE'RE **BELOW** THE CANTUS FIRMUS, SO WE **MOVE AWAY** FROM IT. BECAUSE **SUSPENSIONS ALWAYS RESOLVE DOWN!**

Musical notation showing a 2-3 suspension. Treble clef: quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter. Bass clef: half, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter. Figured bass numbers: 5 3 (2) 3. A starburst highlights the D5 note in the treble staff.

IN **SPECIES IV**, YOU'RE DEALING WITH A LOT OF **LIMITATIONS** WITH **MELODY** AND **COUNTERPOINT**, SO YOU WILL SOMETIMES GET **TRAPPED** IN A SITUATION WHERE **NOTHING WILL WORK**. WHEN THIS HAPPENS, YOU ARE ALLOWED TO **"BREAK SPECIES"**: FORGET THE **TIE** AND SLIP INTO **SPECIES II** FOR A COUPLE OF NOTES.

FOR EXAMPLE, HERE WE **BREAK SPECIES** SO WE CAN AVOID WRITING A **FLUX-ENRAGING FOUR 4-3 SUSPENSIONS** IN A ROW!

Musical notation showing a sequence of four 4-3 suspensions followed by a 'Species Breaker' section. Treble clef: quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter. Bass clef: half, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter. Figured bass numbers: 8 (4) 3 (4) 3 (4) 3 6 5 6 8 6. A starburst highlights the fourth 4-3 suspension.

DON'T GO **CRAZY** WITH THIS, THOUGH... **SPECIES IV** COUNTERPOINT SHOULD **EMBRACE** SUSPENSIONS, NOT **AVOID** THEM. IT'S BEST TO **BREAK SPECIES** ONLY **RARELY**. UNFORTUNATELY, SOMETIMES THAT MEANS **BACKING WAY UP** AND **CHOOSING A DIFFERENT STARTING PITCH** FOR YOUR COUNTERPOINT!