

# Another Look at Schenker's *Counterpoint*

Steve Larson

Heinrich Schenker's exemplary revision of the counterpoint method of Johann Joseph Fux combines insight into musical structure with thoughtful pedagogy and inspires two questions: (1) "How can we best incorporate Schenker's ideas into our teaching of counterpoint?"; and (2) "How do his revision of Fux's method (and or other writers' methods) suggest ways in which we might analogously revise Schenker's method?".<sup>1</sup> But before turning to these questions, it might be appropriate to ask why strict counterpoint seems to be such a hot topic these days.

Given the fact that most professional music-theory journals tend to focus on non-pedagogical topics, the focus of recent scholarships on strict counterpoint calls for an explanation.<sup>2</sup> Our explanation should

---

<sup>1</sup>Some of the ideas in this paper were developed while doing research supported by a Summer Research Fellowship from Temple University, "Analytic Models from Triple-Meter Species Counterpoint." An earlier version of this paper was presented to the 1993 national meeting of the College Music Society in Minneapolis.

<sup>2</sup>Some recent articles which discuss the teaching of strict counterpoint are John Hanson, "Cantus Firmi for Species Counterpoint: Catalog and Characteristics," *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy* 6 (1992): 43-81; David L. Mancini, "Using Species

probably put Schenker at center stage: Schenker's theories continue to be popular in the American academy—and he was a strong advocate of species counterpoint. Thus, the recent publication of Rothgeb and Thym's excellent English translation of Schenker's *Counterpoint* will likely add to both the popularity of Schenker's theories and the popularity of early instruction in strict counterpoint.<sup>3</sup> Along these lines, the recent reprinting of Felix Salzer and Carl Schachter's *Counterpoint in Composition* may be viewed as both a result of and a likely contributing factor to that popularity.<sup>4</sup>

If this popularity is based on more than Schenker's reputation, it may reflect important features of his discussion of species counterpoint. Of course, one consideration may be that American theorists, who tend to emphasize four-part exercises, see (in the idea of beginning with just two voices) an opportunity to approach a more-difficult task by working first on an easier one. But several virtues of Schenker's approach go far beyond this one consideration. Four of these concern pedagogy, psychology, differences with free composition, and similarities with underlying structure.

First, Schenker emphasized—as the essential pedagogical meaning of species counterpoint—a focus on “fundamental musical problems”:

The purpose of counterpoint, rather than to teach a specific style of composition, is to lead the ear of the serious student of music for the first time into the infinite world of fundamental musical problems.

Constantly, at every opportunity, the student's ear

---

Counterpoint in the Undergraduate Theory Curriculum,” *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy* 3/2 (1989): 205-21; and Fred Everett Maus, “Teaching with Westergaard's Counterpoint Rules,” *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy* 6 (1992): 83-95.

<sup>3</sup>Heinrich Schenker, *Counterpoint: A Translation of 'Kontrapunkt' by Heinrich Schenker*, ed. John Rothgeb, trans. John Rothgeb and Jürgen Thym (New York: Schirmer, 1987).

<sup>4</sup>Felix Salzer and Carl Schachter, *Counterpoint in Composition: The Study of Voice Leading* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989).

must be alerted to the psychological effects associated with  
....

It should be obvious that such a training of the ear for artistic purposes, whether creative-artistic or re-creative-artistic, is indispensable.<sup>5</sup>

One appeal here is that “the infinite world of fundamental musical problems” is relevant to pieces as varied as a Bach prelude, a Beethoven sonata, and a Brahms song (in fact, I would argue that this “world of fundamental musical problems” is also relevant to repertoire much broader than that which interested Schenker). Note also the emphasis on “the ear” – Schenker returns repeatedly to this point.

Second, as the quote above suggests, Schenker conceived of these problems as requiring psychological explanations. That is, he saw counterpoint as a way of understanding how the musical mind works. In fact, Schenker had originally planned to call this book not *Counterpoint*, but *Psychology of Counterpoint*.<sup>6</sup> However, I do not mean to suggest that his desire to explain music psychologically is something that Schenker associated only with counterpoint. On the contrary, it seems to be a general concern of his. One earlier example appears in *Harmony*, where Part II begins with a section entitled “On the Psychology of Contents and of Step Progression.”

Third, this emphasis on principles instead of style leads to a recognition that the species exercise is *not* a piece of “real music,” but rather an artificial setting – like a musical laboratory – for experimenting with musical forces. In fact, Schenker spends a great deal of time showing how and why examples of free composition do not (at least at the surface) literally follow the rules of strict counterpoint. Always implicit in such explanations is the idea that we “explain” something

---

<sup>5</sup>Schenker, *Counterpoint*, 10.

<sup>6</sup>Heinrich Schenker, *Harmony*, ed. Oswald Jonas, trans. Elisabeth Mann Borgese (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954), xxvi.

by saying that it is *not*.<sup>7</sup> One way in which Schenker ties this to his music means evaluating every passage as if it were a solution to a problem—and that this evaluation consists in part of comparing the actual passage with other possible solutions. By suggesting which other possible solutions (and characterizing them as “simple” or “natural”)<sup>8</sup> are considered in such comparisons, Schenker’s ideas not only seem to place such comparisons on a more solid footing, but may also suggest to us ways in which the disciplines of composition and theory might be better pedagogical partners.

Fourth, a paradoxical result of emphasizing the differences between strict counterpoint and free composition is that this emphasis eventually leads to recognizing the similarities between strict counterpoint and the underlying levels of free composition (especially when viewed in the light of Schenker’s later theory of musical structure).

### Incorporating Schenker’s Ideas in the Teaching of Counterpoint

Unfortunately, as William Drabkin has observed, Schenker’s *Counterpoint* is not an appropriate textbook for first-year music majors—it is really more a book about how to *teach* counterpoint, and thus best regarded as if addressed to teachers more than to students.<sup>8</sup> There are at least three problems in using *Counterpoint* as a text for first-year music majors: the language and arguments are too complex; the many refutations of other counterpoint treatises are too subtle; and the format, with its irregular section-lengths, is impractical as support

---

<sup>7</sup>Of course, the idea of “analysis by recomposition” is not new; analysts have often illuminated one piece by showing it as an alternative to other possible pieces. On Schenker’s modes of explanation in *Counterpoint*, see Joseph Dubiel, “‘When You Are a Beethoven’: Kinds of Rules in Schenker’s *Counterpoint*,” *Journal of Music Theory* 34/2 (1990): 291-340.

<sup>8</sup>William Drabkin, review of *Counterpoint: A Translation of ‘Kontrapunkt’*, by Heinrich Schenker, trans. John Rothgeb and Jürgen Thym, in *Music Analysis* 8 (1989): 203.

for undergraduate classroom teaching.

However, we should note that Schenker would have been more likely to question apparent assumptions behind Drabkin's remarks than to disagree about the difficulty of *Counterpoint*. His description of its role in music education leaves open the question of whether *Counterpoint* is aimed more at the student or at the teacher. In an oft-quoted passage near the very beginning of *Free Composition*, Schenker outlines an "instructional plan [that] provides a truly practical understanding," which he says "is the only plan that corresponds exactly to the history and development of the masterworks, and so is the only feasible sequence."<sup>9</sup> This plan begins with "instruction in strict counterpoint (according to Fux-Schenker)."<sup>10</sup> But in a remark that appears to anticipate Drabkin's criticisms, Schenker seems to question the kind of classroom where counterpoint is usually taught:

Thus, my teaching, in contrast to more rapid methods, slows the tempo of the educational process. This not only leads the student to genuine knowledge, but also improves the morale of artistic activities in general. Surely it is time to put a stop to the teaching of music in condensed courses, as languages are taught for use in commerce.<sup>11</sup>

Nevertheless, it seems desirable to imagine how one might use the ideas in Schenker's *Counterpoint* to create a textbook and a classroom approach that would best serve early instruction in species counterpoint. If we view this task as, in part, one of rewriting Schenker's *Counterpoint*, then one source of ideas for such a rewriting would be *Counterpoint* itself.

For example, consider Schenker's discussion of third species. In both Book I and Book II, he discusses the "nota cambiata" or

---

<sup>9</sup>Heinrich Schenker, *Free Composition*, trans. and ed. Ernst Oster (New York: Longman, 1979), xxi-xxii.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., xxiii.

“changing tone” figure (in Book I, its discussion takes up an entire section). In both books, he offers examples of counterpoint in third species that use the *nota cambiata* (in Book I, the figure can be found in a sample exercise composed by Schenker himself). Yet he concludes that the *nota cambiata* “fundamentally stands in contradiction to strict counterpoint itself” and “can hardly be counted as a phenomenon of strict counterpoint.”<sup>12</sup> This suggests that, if we rewrite Schenker’s *Counterpoint*, we should ban the *nota cambiata* entirely—not even mention it. The double-neighbor figure might suffer a similar fate.

Another example, subtle but pervasive, concerns the terms “consonance and dissonance.” *Counterpoint* may be read as an attempt to explain musical effects. One strategy for explaining these effects is to show how the inherent stability of an isolated tone combination creates and is altered by specific contexts. This strategy would seem to call for two different sets of terms: one for inherent stability and one for contextual stability. Notice the different needs for such sets of terms: terms for inherent stability are applied to isolated tone combinations (such as intervals) and imply membership in well-defined “equivalence classes” (assuming, for example, that all major sixths possess the same inherent stability); but terms for contextual stability are applied to individual notes (not intervals) in unique settings that allow comparison only along a “more or less stable” continuum (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Characteristics of consonance/dissonance categories

*Inherent Stability*

determined in isolation  
an attribute of an interval  
membership in classes

*Contextual Stability*

determined by context  
an attribute of a note  
on a continuum of relative values

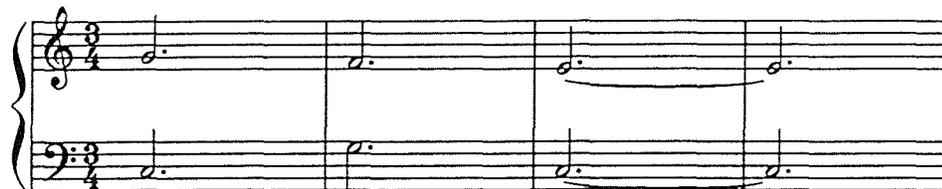
To underscore the importance of this distinction, see Example 1. In

---

<sup>12</sup>Schenker, *Counterpoint*, Book I, 239.

m. 6, F is embellished by a G that resolves back to the F. Thus, in the context of this example, the (inherently less stable) interval of a seventh is heard as contextually more stable than the (inherently more stable) interval of an octave. (Actually, Schenker might maintain that there is no interval of an octave in m. 6—that is, he might claim that the soprano G relates only to the F that it prolongs, not to the G in the bass<sup>13</sup>—but he is inconsistent about using this type of argument.) Unfortunately, Schenker's use of the terms “consonance and dissonance” for both inherent and contextual stability confuses these two ideas. Furthermore, it suggests, for example, that there is some meaningful criterion or set of meaningful criteria separating all intervals into two—and only two—mutually exclusive equivalence classes called “consonant and dissonant.” There isn't. Although Schenker states his rules of counterpoint as though they depend on a distinction between consonance and dissonance, the details of these rules show that they really concern many different categories of intervals—and that some of these categories incompletely overlap one another.

Example 1. A seventh embellishes an octave



---

<sup>13</sup>Sylvan Kalib, “Thirteen Essays from the Three Yearbooks *Das Meisterwerk in der Musik* by Heinrich Schenker: An Annotated Translation” (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1973), 187-212.

Another source of ideas for rewriting *Counterpoint* would be Schenker's later writings. The two books of *Counterpoint* were originally published in 1910 and 1922, but Schenker continued to theorize and write until his death in 1935. As an example of a passage from *Counterpoint* that might be altered in light of later writings, consider Schenker's discussion of "passing tones" that are left by leap. In Book I, he discusses three examples of harmonic fourths filled by only one passing tone (i.e., scale degree 5—scale degree 6—scale degree 8).<sup>14</sup> As Rothgeb's footnote suggests, "later, Schenker might well have renounced his explanation" of these examples (Examples 250-52).<sup>15</sup>

Perhaps the most important lesson, however, is that Schenker saw strict counterpoint as a form of ear training—whatever the content, our rewriting of it needs to be brought to the classroom in a way that makes it vivid for students' aural experience.<sup>16</sup>

But if we are to really follow Schenker's model, we must base our revisions on more than his ideas. After all, he certainly based his revisions of Fux on more than what we would describe as Fux's ideas.

### Ways in Which Schenker's Revisions of Fux's Method (and Those of Other Writers) Suggest an Analogous Revision of Schenker's Method

Schenker found that certain important ideas were only implicit in Fux's writing. In *Counterpoint*, Schenker sought to state these ideas explicitly and to follow them to their rational ends. In what follows, I will describe a theory of expressive meaning in music that I believe makes explicit some of the implicit principles underlying Schenkerian

---

<sup>14</sup>Schenker, *Counterpoint*, Book I, 185-86.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 354-55.

<sup>16</sup>I believe that the teaching of Schenkerian analysis is also best approached as a form of ear training. But this is a topic for another paper.

thought.<sup>17</sup> I will then suggest some ways in which these ideas might be followed to their rational ends in the teaching of strict counterpoint.

A central claim of the theory is that listeners give meaning to musical sounds by (often subconsciously) assigning those sounds to categories. I represent this idea with the phrase “hear ... as ....” For example, we may *hear* a pattern of pitches *as* an ascending gesture or we may *hear* a pattern of durations *as* a Siciliano rhythm.

To make students aware of the importance of this idea, I often begin my counterpoint courses by playing the following game. Look at the following string of numbers for only three seconds. Then, with the string covered up, write down what you remember.

**78    9101    1121    314**

Many students find it hard to recall the exact sequence. I then give them five seconds to memorize the following string of letters.

---

<sup>17</sup>This theory has been shaped by my work with Douglas Hofstadter on artificial intelligence and musical creativity. In my article “On Rudolf Arnheim’s Contributions to Music Theory” (*Journal of Aesthetic Education* 27/4 [1993]: 97-104), some of the ways in which the theory is inspired by Rudolf Arnheim’s applications of gestalt psychology to the perception of art are shown. Another essay, “Scale-Degree Function: A Theory of Expressive Meaning and Its Application to Aural-Skills Pedagogy” (*Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy* 7 [1993]: 69-84), offers a more detailed description of the theory, cites experiments in psychology and music cognition that support the theory, and offers a series of suggestions for developing aural skills based on the theory. In “Modeling Melodic Expectation: Using Three ‘Musical Forces’ to Predict Melodic Continuations” (*Proceedings of the Fifteenth Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society* [1993]: 629-34), I describe a computer model based on the theory and compare the behavior of that model to the behavior of subjects in a psychological study. Another paper deals with further aural-skills applications of an aspect of the theory concerning “step collections” (Robert I. Hurwitz and Steve Larson, “Step Collections in Aural Theory,” Paper presented to a session on *Applying a Theory of Expressive Meaning in the Written- and Aural-Theory Classrooms* at the national meeting of the College Music Society in Savannah, 1994). William Pelto’s “An Alternative to Rule Memorization in Written Theory” (Paper presented to a session on *Applying a Theory of Expressive Meaning in the Written- and Aural-Theory Classrooms* at the national meeting of the College Music Society in Savannah, 1994) shows how the theory explains aspects of harmony and voice leading, suggesting further pedagogical implications.

**Thissen    ten    ceise    asytome    mor    ize**

Finally, I point out that if the first string of characters is *seen* as “7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14” and the second is *seen* as “This sentence is easy to memorize,” then instead of memorizing the string, one simply understands it. The theory of expressive meaning that I will describe here helps to explain the cognitive bases of the rules of counterpoint in such a way that students may really understand, rather than just memorize, those rules.

In particular, the theory asserts that we *hear* music *as* purposeful activity within a dynamic field of musical forces. Those forces include “gravity” (the tendency of an unstable note to descend), “magnetism” (the tendency of an unstable note to move up or down to the *nearest* stable pitch, a tendency that grows stronger the closer we get to a goal), and “inertia” (the tendency of a pattern of musical motion to continue in the *same* direction, where what is meant by “same” depends on what that musical pattern is “heard as”). One might say that we experience melodic implications as if generated by these (and perhaps other) musical forces.

Furthermore, the hierarchical structure of music enables us to hear these musical forces acting between non-adjacent notes. Consider Example 2. The B on the third beat of the first measure is drawn by magnetism and inertia to the C on the following downbeat, even though it is first embellished before it resolves. One advantage of strict species counterpoint is that it creates an artificial environment in which the most vivid experiences of musical forces are uncomplicated by such embellishments.

Example 2. An unstable note is embellished before it resolves

The image shows a musical score for two staves, treble and bass clef, in 9/8 time. The treble staff contains a melodic line with a B note on the third beat of the first measure, which is embellished with a grace note and a sixteenth note before resolving to a C note on the downbeat of the second measure. The bass staff contains a simple accompaniment with a dotted half note on the first beat of each measure.

These forces help to explain the rules of species counterpoint. For example, musical gravity helps to explain the requirement that the suspensions of fourth species must resolve down, rather than up.<sup>18</sup> This explanation seems much less contrived than the one Schenker uses in *Counterpoint*, and seems as well to explain his requirement that, in the background, the fundamental line must always descend, never ascend.<sup>19</sup>

The theory further suggests that to hear a note as “unstable” means to *auralize* (to hear internally a sound that is not physically present) a more stable pitch to which it tends to move and a path (usually stepwise) that would take it there, displacing its *trace* (the internal representation of a pitch that is melodically active). For the reasons mentioned above, I avoid the terms “consonance and dissonance” entirely.

This definition of stability leads to a functional distinction between “steps and leaps.” In melodic *step* (that is, a half step or a whole step), the second note tends to *displace* the trace of the first. In a melodic *leap* (that is, any interval larger than a step), the second note tends *not* to displace the trace of the first. While this distinction is implicit in Schenker’s mature theory, he does not explicitly state it.

---

<sup>18</sup>Schenker’s explanation of the requirement for downward resolution of suspensions begins by deriving the suspension from the passing tone. My explanation resembles that of Hermann Roth (*Elemente der Stimmführung [Der strenge Satz]*, [Stuttgart: Carl Grüniger Verlag, 1926] and of Salzer and Schachter (*Counterpoint in Composition*). The former even uses the term “gravity.” One can also find references to gravity in the writings of other music theorists. Paul Hindemith writes: “In working with an element tied to the principle of gravity as closely as tone is, one cannot simply turn things upside down for the sake of a pretty idea” (Paul Hindemith, *The Craft of Musical Composition Book I [Theoretical Part]*, trans. Arthur Mendel [New York: Associate Music Publishers, 1945], 75). Edward Cone seems to demonstrate this point: he turns a passage upside down to show that something is missing in analytic methods that do not respect register and that consider inversionally-related group of notes to be equivalent. See Edward T. Cone, “Beyond Analysis,” *Perspectives of New Music* 6/1 (1967): 33ff.

<sup>19</sup>Oster’s explanation of the requirement for the descent of the fundamental line, which also seems unconvincing, refers to the overtone series. David Neumeyer suggests that this rule may admit exceptions. See Schenker, *Free Composition*, 13 (note 5); and David Neumeyer, “The Ascending Urlinie,” *Journal of Music Theory* 31/2 (1987): 275-303.

The step/leap distinction can have practical implications, and pointing these out to students may make the study of counterpoint seem more relevant to music majors' practical concerns. Consider Christopher Parkening's guitar performance of J. S. Bach's "Prelude no. 1 in C major" (from *Well-Tempered Clavier*, Book I).<sup>20</sup> A portion of the score is reproduced in Example 3. In m. 9, the same guitar string is used for both the A on the downbeat and the immediately following C. Because these two notes are not a step apart, the C does not displace the bass A (nor do any of the other notes in this measure). Thus, there is no problem in using the same string for both of these notes. However, this solution does not work in m. 8. There, the same string is used for both the B on the downbeat and the immediately following C. But because these two notes are a step apart, the C *does* tend to displace the bass B. In order to allow us to continue hearing the B after the C, Parkening slides the C back down to B on the following beat. The resultant lower voice, shown in Example 4, is a compromise, but an apparently necessary one—the point here is that understanding the step/leap distinction clarifies the need for the compromise.

Because of the systematic ways in which it explores each type of embellishment figure, species counterpoint seems to be the quintessential context for exploring the expressive meanings generated by the operation of musical forces within each type of embellishment figure. Consider the ways in which inertia, gravity, and magnetism operate on the unstable middle pitch in a three-note, neighbor-note figure. After we hear the first two notes, the force of inertia suggests that motion will continue in the same direction (which would create a passing-tone figure), thus all neighbor-tone patterns go against the inertia generated by their beginnings. The force of gravity makes upper-neighbors (which descend to give in to gravity) sound more "natural" than lower neighbors (whose ascent always defies both gravity

---

<sup>20</sup>Parkening performs the Prelude on two recordings: *The Christopher Parkening Album* (Angel S-36069) and *Pleasures of Their Company* (Angel DS-37351). The latter uses Bach's Prelude as accompaniment for Gounod's *Ave Maria*, with Kathleen Battle singing. Both performances transpose the Prelude, the first to D major and the second to F major.

Example 3. J. S. Bach, Prelude no. 1 in C major, *Well-Tempered Clavier*, Book I, mm. 1-9

The image displays a musical score for the first nine measures of J.S. Bach's Prelude no. 1 in C major from the Well-Tempered Clavier, Book I. The score is presented in a grand staff format, consisting of a treble clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is common time (C). The notation is organized into five systems, each beginning with a measure number (1, 2, 4, 6, 8) in the left margin. The right margin contains the measure numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9. The first system (measures 1-3) shows the initial melodic line in the treble clef and a bass line with a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The second system (measures 4-5) continues the melodic development. The third system (measures 6-7) shows the melodic line moving to a higher register. The fourth system (measures 8-9) concludes the excerpt with a final melodic flourish. The bass line throughout consists of a consistent eighth-note pattern, providing a harmonic and rhythmic foundation for the upper voice.

Example 4. Parkening's lowest string in mm. 8-9

and inertia) – we feel that “what goes up must come down.” This may explain why whole-step upper-neighbor figures seem more common than whole-step lower-neighbor figures. And the ability of magnetism to overcome both inertia and gravity explains why we often find combinations of diatonic (often whole-step) upper neighbors with half-step (often chromatic) lower neighbors. Consider Examples 5-7. Each of these examples uses upper and lower neighbors to embellish the tonic triad in F major. Example 5 is from a Mozart sonata, and Examples 6 and 7 are representative jazz clichés, the former associated with the style of Art Tatum, and the latter with the style of Charlie Parker. In these examples, the *upper* neighbors are *diatonic*, and, as such, may be either whole-step neighbors or half-step neighbors. Either way, gravity pulls these notes back down to the pitch they embellish. However, in these examples, the *lower* neighbors are all *half-step* neighbors – this allows magnetism to overcome gravity, pulling these notes back up to the pitch they embellish.

Example 5. Mozart, *Sonata* in F major, K. 547a, first movement, mm. 1-4

## Example 6. A lick in the style of Tatum



## Example 7. A lick in the style of Parker



Inertia also seems to help explain other details of these lines. In all these examples, the direction of the line seems determined by the direction of the last two notes of the embellishing figure. As C. P. E. Bach observed, the “turn figure” points upward. By circling around a note, it gathers energy—as if crouching for a leap. While the direction of the beginning of an embellishment figure determines the way in which inertia will act on an unstable middle member, the direction at the end of that figure engages expectations about what will follow the figure. Thus, in the Mozart example, the turn that ends with an ascent engages inertia to suggest that the next note will be higher: E-F points to A, B-C points to F, and G $\sharp$ -A points to C. (Note also that the last two notes of each measure seem to employ inertia in the service of locally reinforcing the global descent of the first four measures.) The Tatum example does a complete turn about every note of the tonic triad, and so “must” ascend. In the Parker example, just as in the other two examples, each upper neighbor is immediately followed by a lower pitch, and each lower neighbor is immediately followed by a higher pitch. And the lower and upper neighbors alternate. Splitting them as incomplete neighbors on different pitches “allows” the resulting compound melody to descend.

This emphasis on expressive meaning has implications even for the content and ordering of the species. In the traditional species, the meter is always duple (or quadruple). While Schenker mentions the possibility of exercises in triple meter, he does not systematically

explore such settings.<sup>21</sup> To systematically explore the motion qualities of different musical contexts, species counterpoint might include separate species devoted to triple meter. I have explored two ways of doing this in my teaching. The first scheme, shown in Figure 2, has two advantages: first, each new specific dissonance treatment is emphasized by its introduction in its own species; second, each new species retains either the rhythmic texture or the general dissonance treatment of the preceding species.

Figure 2. First scheme for teaching species counterpoint

<i>Traditional species number</i>	<i>Rhythmic texture</i>	<i>General new dissonance treatment</i>	<i>Specific new dissonance treatment</i>
1	1:1		
2	2:1	passing tones	filling a third
2	3:1		filling a fourth
3	3:1	neighbor notes	
3	4:1		accented (third-beat)
4	duple syncopes	suspensions	
4	triple syncopes		decorated suspensions
5	triple combinations	combinations	
5	duple combinations		

Unfortunately, this scheme has few practical problems. First, the triple-meter, second-species exercise seems redundant, and its avoidance of neighbor tones seems unjustified and unmusical. Second, while the triple syncopes allow the advantageous separate introduction of decorated suspensions, triple mixture adds little more than the possibility of breaking the ties of triple syncopes or the opportunity to subdivide the triple-meter half-note into quarters. The result is an unnecessarily large number of species and possibly a class of tired

---

<sup>21</sup>See Schenker, *Counterpoint*, Book I, 195 and 222, which contains an example (Example 11) by Albrechtsberger.

students. Figure 3 shows a second scheme, which seems to preserve the advantages while eliminating the disadvantages of the above scheme.

Figure 3. Second scheme for teaching species counterpoint

<i>Traditional species number</i>	<i>Rhythmic texture</i>	<i>New dissonance treatment</i>
1	1:1	
2	2:1	passing tones
3	3:1	neighbor tones
3	4:1	accented (third-beat) embellishments
4	duple syncopes	suspensions
4	triple syncopes	decorated suspensions
5	duple combinations	combinations

Perhaps additional species should follow. They could incorporate advanced triple-meter textures (hemiola, two-against-three) and/or chromaticism.

Furthermore, emphasis on expressive meaning suggests that students' assignments might have a different focus. While writing and performing whole exercises remain central, the following types of exercises focus on individual sub-skills and emphasize the cultivation of a musical ear:

- (a) Label the following intervals and identify their type (consonance, dissonance, allowed, prohibited, passing, neighbor, etc.).
- (b) To create a climax at the point marked, write a leap to that note and a stepwise descent following it.
- (c) The following exercise can be completed in only one way. Fill in the blanks.
- (d) Find the rule-violations in the following exercise. For each rule-violation, indicate which rules are violated and indicate how other features of the exercise affect the effects of the rule-violations.

- (e) Perform your exercise by simultaneously playing the cantus firmus on the piano and singing your counterpoint.
- (f) Convert this exercise into an exercise in a different species.

Finally, a word about underlying counterpoint in free composition. One virtue of the study of strict counterpoint is that it makes ideal preparation for doing Schenkerian analyses. Thus, counterpoint teachers may be eager to show students reductions of free compositions—both to share with students some of the ways in which strict counterpoint governs the underlying structural levels of free composition and to hold their interest by suggesting one way in which strict counterpoint may seem relevant to their practical concerns as performers, composers, and teachers of music. However—especially if counterpoint precedes traditional instruction in harmony (as many have advocated)—I would like to advocate a slightly different approach: while I would not rule out doing reductions, I would urge teachers of strict counterpoint to find other ways of showing how examples of free composition (whether or not they obey the explicit rules of strict counterpoint) embody the musical forces of gravity, magnetism, and inertia that underlie those rules and how they exemplify ideas about expressive meaning that are implicit in Schenker's *Counterpoint*.