CHAPTER 2

Melody and Counterpoint

Schenkerian analysis examines the interrelationships among melody, counterpoint, and harmony in the *structure* of tonal music. "Structure" in this sense may refer to the makeup and character of one aspect of a composition—such as melody—or to the complete fabric of the composition as established by melody, counterpoint, and harmony in combination.

In this chapter, we examine aspects of single-line melody in relation to major and minor keys, and summarize some basic principles associated with the combination of two or more melodic lines as illustrated in species counterpoint. In Chapter 3 we consider bass lines and harmonic structures, and harmonic prolongation. These chapters will put familiar material in a new perspective and will introduce a variety of Schenkerian analytical concepts.

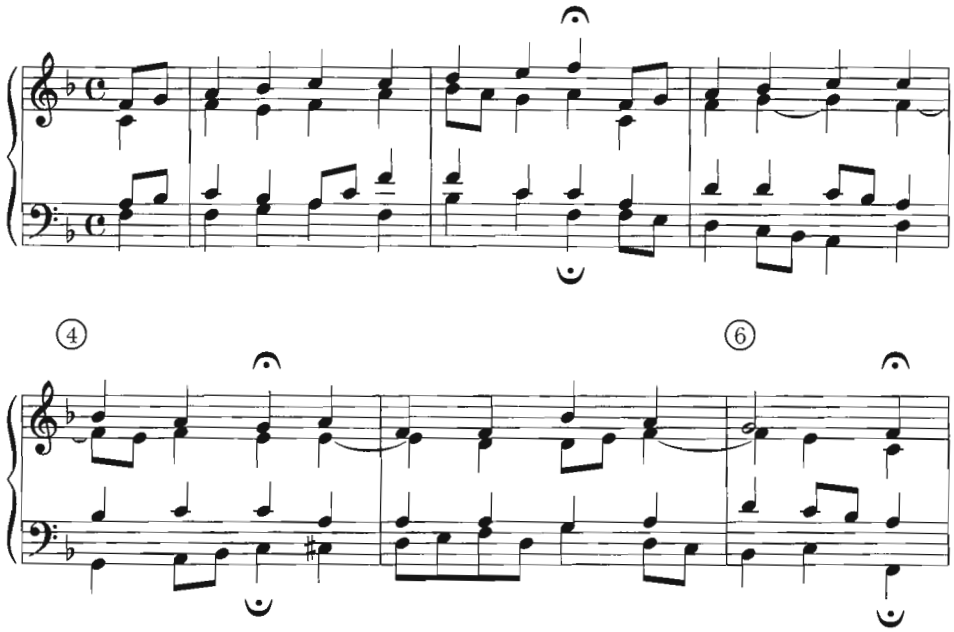
MELODY

The literature of tonal music contains an extraordinary variety and diversity of melodies. Yet each has been influenced and shaped in various ways by inherent characteristics of the tonal system. We begin by considering the ways in which essential features of the major and minor modes govern selected melodies from the literature.

Example 2.1 presents the first three phrases from a setting of the chorale melody "O Ewigkeit, du Donnerwort" by J. S. Bach. In the opening phrase, the melody outlines an F-major scale which is highlighted by the regular rhythm and chordal support.

EXAMPLE 2.1:

J. S. Bach, "O Ewigkeit, du Donnerwort," bars 1–6



Although the soprano melody in this phrase is entirely stepwise, the tones are related to one another in a dynamic manner. Between the tonic notes that begin and end the scale, the other tones of the tonic triad are emphasized by metrical position (A and C) and repetition (C). In the upbeat figure, scale degree $\hat{2}$ (G) connects $\hat{1}$ and $\hat{3}$ as a nonharmonic passing tone.[1] The relative instability of this tone enhances the forward movement to A. Scale degree $\hat{4}$ (B♭) likewise connects $\hat{3}$ and $\hat{5}$ and is harmonized by VII^6, which is less stable than the tonic chords it connects. In bar 2, the final three soprano notes of the first phrase are strongly directed to the tonic, with the half step between $\hat{7}$ and $\hat{8}$ creating a definitive arrival on the tonic note.

In purely melodic terms, the major scale is a configuration of tones where each note is in unique relation to the other notes in the scale because of the characteristic pattern of whole and half steps. The tones of the major scale thus exist in dynamic relation to one another. Scale degrees $\hat{1}$, $\hat{3}$, $\hat{5}$, and $\hat{8}$, tones belonging to the tonic triad, tend to sound relatively stable compared to the other notes of the scale. The half step between $\hat{7}$ and $\hat{8}$ gives the leading tone its strong tendency to move to the tonic. Scale degree $\hat{2}$, though a whole step above the tonic, may also be active in the direction of the tonic, and is sometimes called the *descending leading tone.* The tritone (the augmented fourth or the diminished fifth) formed by the combination of $\hat{4}$ and $\hat{7}$ is often called a "key-defining" interval, since any particular augmented fourth or diminished fifth occurs in only one major key, and its resolution by half steps to $\hat{1}$ and $\hat{3}$ clearly

identifies the tonic of that major key. Thus you can see how the major scale embodies a diverse network of potential relationships.[2]

The second phrase of the chorale melody begins like the first, though it is harmonized differently. After outlining the tonic triad and reaching scale degree $\hat{5}$ the melody changes direction and descends to $\hat{2}$. Approached from above and supported by V of a half cadence, the supertonic note is active in the direction of the tonic and does not sound conclusive. Consequently the listener is left with an expectation that the melody will later resolve to $\hat{1}$.

Notice that the melody in Example 2.1 comprises mostly stepwise motion. In both vocal and instrumental tonal music, stepwise motion provides the greatest possible continuity in a melody. Schenker used the term *melodic fluency* to describe the balance and poise that a stepwise line can provide. A melody consisting entirely of stepwise motion, however, could quickly become dull and monotonous. The judicious use of leaps therefore becomes necessary to provide variety.[3]

In contrast to the stepwise motion of the first two phrases, the third phrase contains two leaps before a stepwise descent to the tonic. The initial descending leap from A to F provides the expected tonic note. It is, however, supported by VI and consequently does not resolve the melodic (and harmonic) tension of the previous half cadence. The second leap ascends from F to B♭, creating the space of a fourth that is then filled in by descending motion. The descending and ascending leaps and subsequent stepwise motion create a balanced effect, combining melodic variety and continuity.

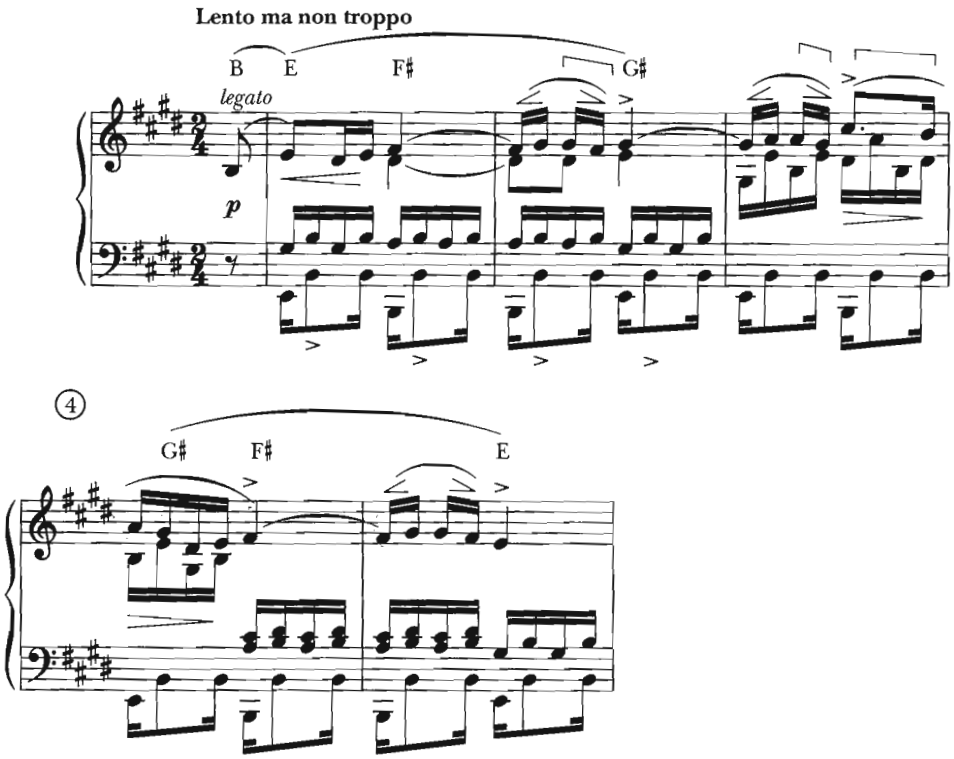
In tonal melodies, falling motion is typically associated with a release of tension and with closure, while rising motion conveys a sense of growing intensity, as if in opposition to gravity. Supported by both II^6_5 and V in the cadence, the descending leading tone is expanded to a half note—the only half note in the example. The greater length emphasizes the tone, and provides one final element of delay before the tonic note appears at the cadence.

The opening of Chopin's Etude, Op. 10, No. 3, is presented in Example 2.2. The shape of this beautiful melody outlines a symmetrical arch from the E at the beginning (with the preceding upbeat) to the E at the end. Certain tones stand out within this overall pattern because of length, rhythmic position, and other factors. In bars 1–2 the tones E, F♯, and G♯ are heard as primary, with neighbor figures decorating but not fundamentally altering this stepwise ascent. Notice that the extended tones F♯ and G♯ occur on the second beat and are tied over to the following downbeat, creating a syncopation reinforced by the notated accents. (These syncopations highlight the tones in conjunction with the supporting harmonies, which are also syncopated.)

In bar 2, the G♯ neighbor note on the first beat anticipates the longer G♯ on the second beat. Accordingly, when the neighbor figure recurs a step higher on the first beat of bar 3, the neighbor tone A suggests that this tone will again follow on the second beat. Instead, the gradual, serene progression of the melody is altered: a leap to C♯ occurs in place of the expected A, shifting it (as an accented passing tone) to the downbeat of bar 4. In bar 4, A is followed by G♯. The stepwise motion of the large-scale melodic arch, however, is interrupted by a descending leap of a fourth to D♯, which balances the ascending fourth G♯–C♯ in

EXAMPLE 2.2:

Chopin, Etude, Op. 10, No. 3, bars 1–5 with analytical interpretation



bar 3. The tones F♯ and E in bars 4–5, emphasized through duration as in bars 1–2, conclude the essentially stepwise melodic arch.

This melody thus combines continuity and variety in an extraordinary way, by outlining the tonic triad. Beginning with the upbeat tone B, the melody moves through E to G♯, ultimately returning to E. The third motions E–G♯ and G♯–E are filled in with F♯ so that stepwise motion is introduced into the line. This continuity is interrupted by the leap to C♯: the resulting gap in the melody is filled in by the following sixteenth-note passage that cascades from the melody's high point. Both the melodic and harmonic motion are accelerated at this climactic moment, augmenting the rhythmic irregularity of this five-bar phrase.[4]

In contrast to the consonant support of F♯ in bar 1 and G♯ in bar 2, C♯ (bar 3) functions as an appoggiatura, resolving to B over the V^7 chord. Thus Chopin further intensifies the climactic tone by setting it as a dissonance. In a beautiful motivic relationship, this C♯ and the B that follows create a rhythmic augmentation of the preceding neighbor figures G♯–F♯ (bar 2) and A–G♯ (bar 3) as indicated by brackets. The C♯ is also associated with F♯ in bar 1 and G♯ in bar 2 by its position in the bar, and by its relatively long duration.

Beginning with the figure E–D♯–E in bar 1, we have seen that neighbor motions elaborate the principal tones of the melody. We may consequently

distinguish between two aspects: the accented and harmonically supported principal tones, and the embellishing figures. (For example, notice that the melody in bar 4, first beat, echoes the neighbor figures in bars 3 and 1.) This line therefore embodies both consistency and variety as it unfolds. The tones of the tonic triad serve as the melodic framework, with the arrival on the tonic in bar 5 creating a definitive goal of the melodic motion.

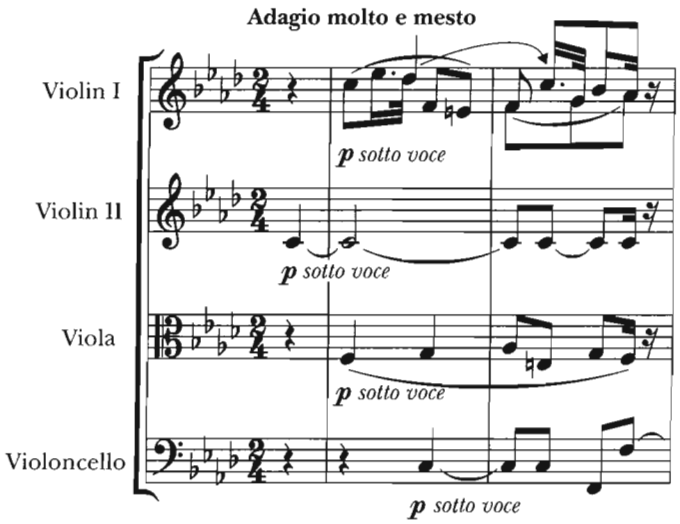
Chopin's melody will serve to illustrate the meaning of the term *structural level.* The melody as heard, note for note, represents what we may call the musical surface (or *surface level*). By distinguishing between those tones on the musical surface that are primary, and between those that are tones of figuration, we have established a new level of melodic coherence distinct from the surface. That is, we have observed connections among tones that are not immediately consecutive (such as the motion E–F♯–G♯ in bars 1–2). Two structural levels are thereby distinguished: the surface level that contains all tones, and a second, more *reduced* level that includes the principal tones only, without embellishing figuration. As we shall see, such connections can also occur over broader spans of music, on various *levels of structure.*[5]

The striking melody that begins the third movement of Beethoven's String Quartet, Op. 59, No. 1, illustrates some of the ways in which melodies in the minor mode may differ from those in major (Example 2.3). Following the initial C in the first violin, the leap to E♭ and descent to D♭ suggest that downward motion will follow—as it does with the descent to F and E♮.[6]

Beethoven's setting of this part of the melody creates a dramatic, almost eerie effect. Following the solo C in the second violin on the upbeat, the C in the first violin enters an octave higher, with the Cs forming an open fifth with the viola. Both the subsequent tones E♭ and D♭ are heard as dissonant with the open

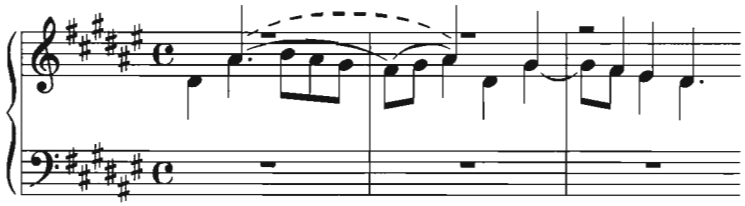
EXAMPLE 2.3:

Beethoven, String Quartet, Op. 59, No. 1, III, bars 1–2 with analytical interpretation



EXAMPLE 2.4:

J. S. Bach, Fugue in D♯ minor (*WTC* I), subject, bars 1–3 with analytical interpretation



fifth below; the melody then leaps to F, another dissonant tone, before moving to E♮ (the consonant third of the dominant chord).

This poignant melodic and harmonic tension is resolved in the second bar. The tones F and C resolve the preceding E♮ and D♭, respectively. In other words, the D♭, left "hanging" in bar 1, resolves to C in the original register only in bar 2. The tendency of flat $\hat{6}$ to resolve to $\hat{5}$ is strong; the listener will expect to hear a resolution even after several intervening notes. The leap from F to C, and the subsequent leaps that converge on A♭, balance the melodic disjunction of bar 1. During the course of the contracting leaps, two distinct melodic strands are formed in bar 2, both converging on A♭: C–B♭–A♭ and F–G–A♭ (the added beams in the example clarify these relationships).

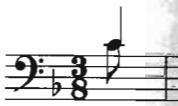
In our discussion of melodic fluency we noted that leaps are typically combined with stepwise motion for the sake of variety. This is particularly true of melodies conceived for instruments such as the violin, which can perform many leaps with little difficulty. Yet, as Beethoven's passage illustrates, a series of leaps may be related through underlying stepwise patterns.

The structural association of tones that are not immediately adjacent can also be seen in Example 2.4. In this fugue subject by Bach, an initial leap of a fifth from D♯ to A♯ creates melodic tension that is balanced by subsequent motion in the opposite direction. Before the descent takes place, however, A♯ is decorated by its upper neighbor B and by a descending and an ascending motion that returns to A♯. These intervening figures expand and embellish, but do not fundamentally interrupt, the overall shape of the melody indicated by the stems placed on the music. When a tone (like the A♯ in bars 1–2) remains active in its context, even though other tones may intervene, that tone is said to be *prolonged*. The broken slur in the example indicates this *melodic prolongation*. Chords can be expanded in similar ways: *chord prolongation* will be discussed in the next chapter.

Example 2.5 presents another fugue subject from Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*. The first part of the subject circles around C ($\hat{5}$), which is decorated by upper and lower neighbor figures. The subsequent leap to $\hat{7}$ creates a temporary gap in the line that is filled by the subsequent rising stepwise motion. This motion reaches $\hat{4}$ on the next downbeat, a tone which is highlighted both by its longer duration relative to the sixteenth notes before and after it, and by its accented metrical position. A final group of sixteenth notes begins on C (an upper neighbor to B♭) and leads to A at the conclusion of the subject. Once more a melodically fluent

EXAMPLE 2.

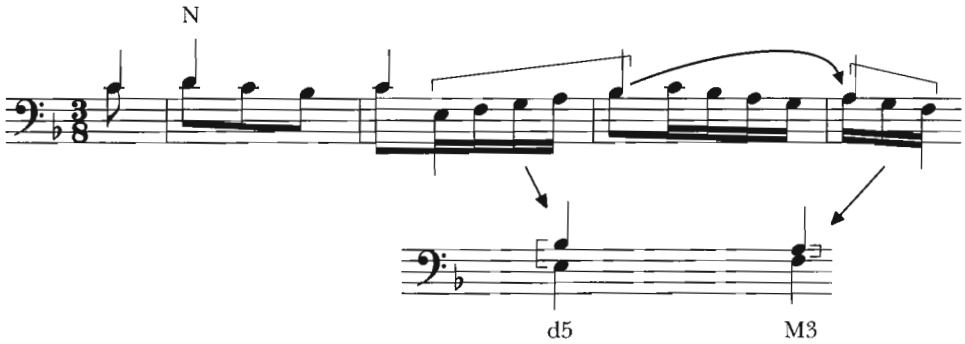
J. S. Bach, Fugue



line—C–B♭–A,
structural foun
The dynam
tle element: th
terval of the di
stand out more
is not released
to a major thir
subject proper
lows.) In a sens
As indicated in
fifth to a major
two or more d
melody. Frequen
compositional
The melod
notes of the to
neighbor) initi
and connecting
various ways, of
played as a bl
voices, of the c
person or playe
it suggests are i
Once again
rated into a si
(A–G–F–E), an
beams, provide
In bar 7 the
but by the lead
strong that Sch
stitute for scale

EXAMPLE 2.5:

J. S. Bach, Fugue in F major (*WTC* I), subject, bars 1–4 with analytical interpretation



line—C–B♭–A, expanded by the neighbor tone D—forms the "backbone" or structural foundation of the melody and provides overall coherence and direction.

The dynamic quality of this subject is enhanced by an additional, more subtle element: the rising motion from E to B♭ ($\hat{7}$ to $\hat{4}$) in bars 2–3 outlines the interval of the diminished fifth. (The notes that begin and end motions frequently stand out more than the tones in between.) The tension created by this interval is not released until bar 4, where the expected resolution of the diminished fifth to a major third is provided by the tones A and F at the end of the subject. (The subject proper ends on A, with F forming part of the countersubject that follows.) In a sense two "voices" are perceived in this apparent single-line subject. As indicated in the second part of Example 2.5, the progression of a diminished fifth to a major third is embedded in the melodic flow. A melody that articulates two or more distinct voices, such as this fugue subject, is called a *polyphonic melody*. Frequently the alternation of two or more voices becomes a primary compositional idea, as in the familiar tune "Greensleeves" (Example 2.6).

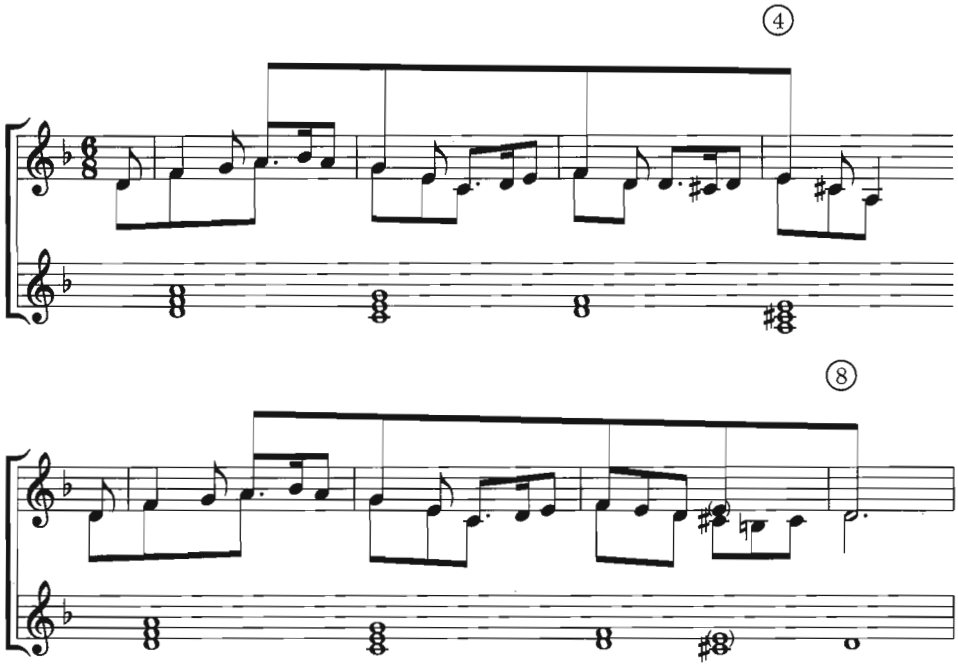
The melody begins with an arpeggiated ascent, partly filled in, through the notes of the tonic triad D–F–A. The climax tone A (embellished with an upper neighbor) initiates a stepwise top-voice descent, as indicated by the long stems and connecting beam. Each of these principal melodic notes is embellished in various ways, often through additional arpeggiations. If each arpeggiation were played as a block chord, the lower notes would be heard as inner tones, or voices, of the chord. Because the melody is written so that it can be sung by one person or played by a single-line melodic instrument, the chords or harmonies it suggests are incorporated into the melodic line itself.

Once again we see a polyphonic melody, where distinct voices are incorporated into a single melodic line. The partial structural descent in bars 1–4 (A–G–F–E), and the complete descent to the tonic in bars 5–8 indicated by the beams, provide large-scale continuity and direction, as in the fugue subjects.

In bar 7 the tone F is not followed by E (in the descent of the "framework"), but by the leading tone C♯ (on beat 2). The effect of melodic fluency is so strong that Schenker regarded the leading tone in contexts such as this a *substitute* for scale degree $\hat{2}$, which would, if actually present, produce a completely

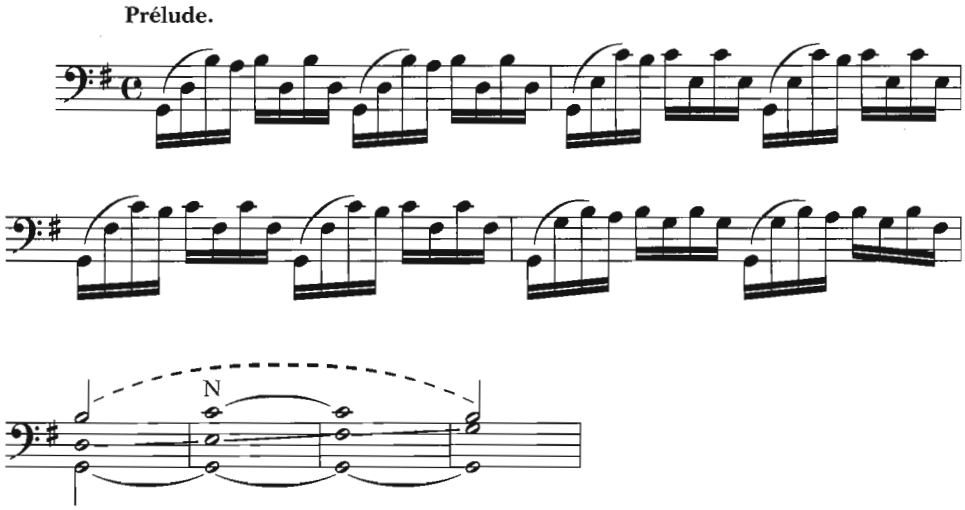
EXAMPLE 2.6:

"Greensleeves" with analytical interpretation



EXAMPLE 2.7:

J. S. Bach, Suite No. 1 for Unaccompanied Cello, Prelude, bars 1–4 with harmonic representation



stepwise descending line. In the first phrase of the melody, the motion A–G–F did in fact lead to E, supported by V. In this second phrase E is still suggested—in part *because of* the substitution of C♯—as the simplest and most usual connection between the F and the D, and by analogy with the preceding phrase. Parentheses, as in bar 7 of the example, are used by Schenkerian analysts to indicate suggested or "implied" notes.[7]

A single line can unite different voices that are widely separated, as in Example 2.7, the opening of the Prelude from J. S. Bach's Suite No. 1 for unaccompanied cello. In this work the degree of separation is extreme, as it is in much of Bach's music for unaccompanied instruments. However, melodic partitions of this type occur frequently—especially in music for solo instruments, where a single line may outline two, three, or more independent polyphonic lines. Having considered some basic characteristics of single melodic lines, we shall now explore further aspects of melody as revealed in the combination of two or more parts in species counterpoint.

COUNTERPOINT

In tonal music, counterpoint exists wherever there is the presence or the suggestion (as in Example 2.7) of two or more voices moving simultaneously. It is a fundamental musical element that is in no way restricted to inventions, canons, fugues, and similar genres.

For hundreds of years composers considered training in the discipline of counterpoint to be essential for the development of compositional technique. This concern with elaborating the ways in which lines are combined is easy to understand if we realize that in Western music contrapuntal principles were the earliest means by which polyphonic musical compositions were organized, and that the compositional use of harmonic principles developed gradually during later centuries.[8]

Schenker believed in the value of contrapuntal studies, and in fact was partly responsible for a renewed emphasis on counterpoint as a pedagogical discipline. He considered the study of counterpoint to be invaluable, not only as a necessary preparation for composition, but as a way to hear and to understand many fundamental principles of polyphonic tonal structures. He also believed that harmony and counterpoint are separate but closely related dimensions of tonal compositions, each with its own laws and characteristics and each working interactively with the other. Consequently, Schenker undertook the great task of explaining separately and abstractly the principles of harmony and counterpoint, which he believed would lead him to a profound understanding of the techniques of actual composition (which he referred to as "free composition").

In 1906, near the beginning of his career as a music theorist, Schenker published his study of harmony.[9] Four years later, in 1910, he published the first volume of a comprehensive treatise on species counterpoint; the second volume did not appear until 1922. This treatise reflects Schenker's growing awareness that the most ornate and complex melodies are shaped by simpler, underlying

guiding lines that tend to resemble the lines of strict (species) counterpoint, as he demonstrated with a series of examples from the literature of tonal music. In other words, Schenker discovered that the principles of melodic organization in tonal music are partly an outgrowth, or more elaborated version, of the linear techniques presented in the study of counterpoint.

We therefore continue our study of melody by turning to the five species of strict counterpoint, a framework ideally suited to the examination of voice-leading principles and dissonance treatment. Species counterpoint involves the addition of one or more lines to a *cantus firmus,* which is a simple melody, traditionally given in alto clef. A comprehensive discussion of the principles of species counterpoint is beyond the scope of this book, but we consider the essential characteristics of each species. In so doing we retrace some of the steps taken by Schenker in the development of his ideas. For through this approach we shall also begin to discover how the ornate melodies of musical compositions are related to the simple lines of strict counterpoint. Our minds and ears will thereby become more sensitive to the role played by the linear dimension of tonal music, which is largely responsible for creating the sense of flow and directed motion we associate with music as a dynamic art.

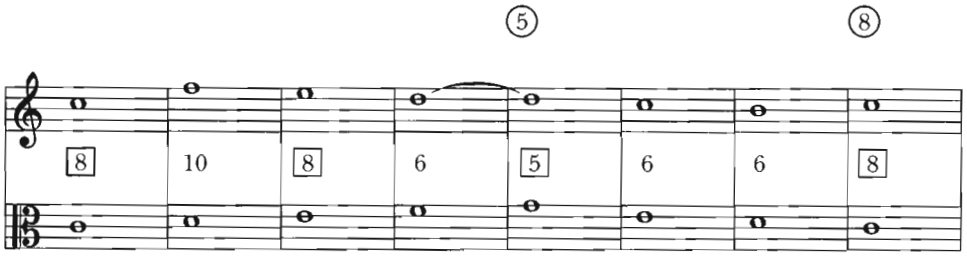
First Species

In first species, a counterpoint is added to a preexisting cantus firmus in the same note values (whole notes), thereby creating a note-against-note texture. Example 2.8 presents a first species exercise in which a counterpoint is added above a cantus firmus. Note that all of the intervals are either perfect or imperfect consonances, which are the only vertical intervals used in first species.[10] The ability to comprehend more complex textures in which dissonances embellish and connect consonances over broader spans of music depends upon the initial understanding of such simple but coherent musical structures based solely on consonances.

Notice that the exercise begins and ends with perfect intervals (indicated in boxes): these intervals embody maximum stability and repose. On the other hand, the more fluid imperfect consonances are most appropriate for the body

EXAMPLE 2.8:

First species counterpoint



of the exercise. In fact, the sense of motion or "flow" that most persons associate with tonal music is produced in part by imperfect consonances leading to and from stable points defined by the perfect consonances.

Observe also the differences among the four types of relative motion: *parallel* (same direction, same interval maintained between the parts), *similar* (same direction, different interval), *contrary* (opposite direction), and *oblique* (one part moves, the other remains stationary). Among the types of relative motion, contrary and oblique motion most directly promote independence between two lines: in this context, the stability of the perfect intervals in the middle of the exercise is considerably softened by contrary motion (bar 3) and oblique motion (bar 5), and by the predominance of imperfect consonances in the flow of the counterpoint from the second bar to the cadence.

The upper-voice counterpoint begins with an upward leap of a fourth, which produces some tension in the line (leaps generally are associated with tension), and it also opens up musical "space" between the voices. After the leap, however, the line changes direction and proceeds by step, a strategy that lends variety and shape to the line, and also begins to dissipate some of the tension created by the initial leap (stepwise motion in the opposite direction after a leap generally balances the effects of the leap). The counterpoint then continues down by step to the cadence.

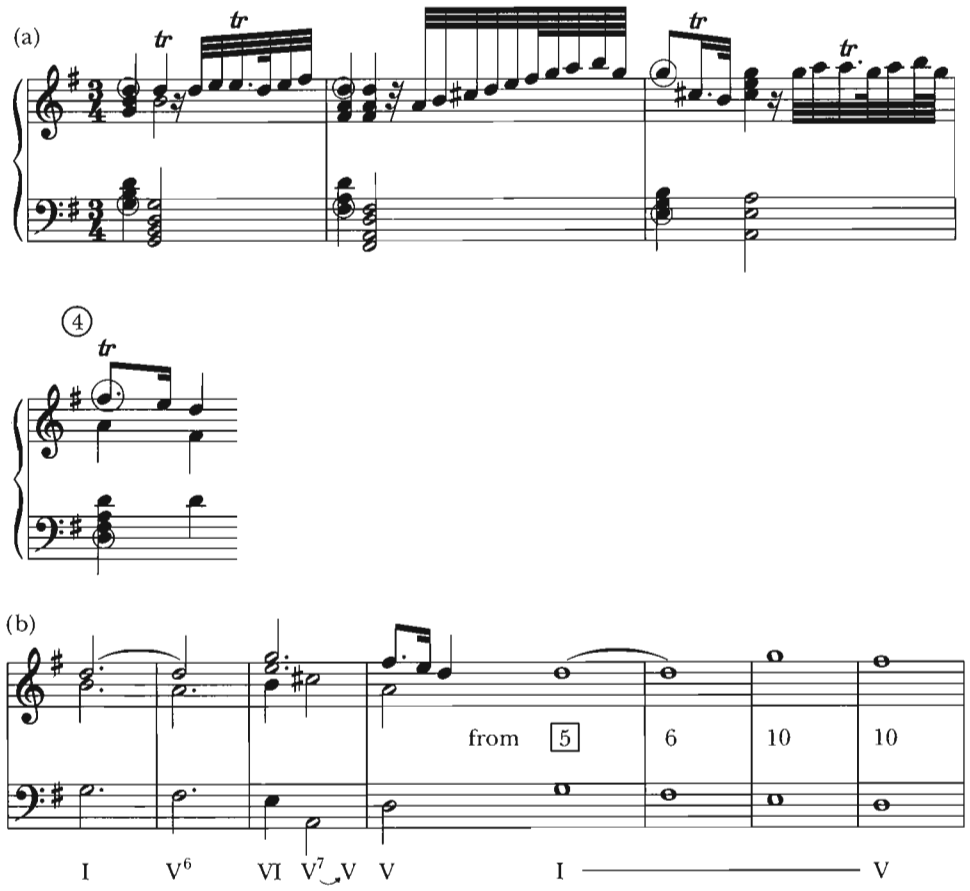
A question might now occur to the reader: Is the counterpoint monotonous and undifferentiated because of the predominance of stepwise motion? Although unrelieved melodic motion in the same direction can produce a line without shape and profile, it does not do so in this case for two reasons. First, the line begins with a leap, after which the E and D in bars 3–5 fill in the gap produced by the leap. Second, the tied D creates oblique motion; the pause in the line counterbalances the rising cantus firmus and also allows both voices simultaneously to begin a descending approach to the cadence. Descending motion is associated with release of tension; here, the relatively long descent of the counterpoint from its climax fully dissipates the tension of the initial leap.

Hence the counterpoint nicely contrasts, and therefore complements, the cantus firmus through the blend of parallel, similar, contrary, and oblique motion it fosters. Furthermore, considering that the exercise is only eight bars long, the counterpoint itself is a convincing and coherent line because it comprises a balance of disjunct and conjunct motion, with the latter predominating. Here, as in the examples discussed earlier, we see the characteristics of melodic fluency, a principle that will continue to be of concern to us throughout this book. Another aspect that contributes to the fluency of this line is the way it achieves a high point (a climax) and then descends purposefully toward the cadence. As mentioned above, descending motion relates to the release of tension; the descending stepwise motion to the cadence contributes to the sense of stability and finality (closure) we experience at the conclusion of the exercise.

We now consider an excerpt from a work by Handel, the theme of the Chaconne from *Trois Leçons,* bars 1–4 (Example 2.9a). A traditional harmonic analysis might represent the phrase as I–V^6–VI–$V^7$of V–V, as shown in the chordal reduction of Example 2.9b. A deeper understanding of this passage, however, arises from the realization that this succession of "chords" results as much from contrapuntal

EXAMPLE 2.9:

(a) Handel, *Trois Leçons,* Chaconne, bars 1–4; (b) harmonic and first species representations



factors as from harmonic ones. As illustrated by the reductions of Example 2.9b, the phrase is framed by the harmonic progression from I to V. An essential part of this motion is the contrapuntal relationship between the outer voices, which can be represented in first species terms (see the second part of Example 2.9b). The top and bottom voices form the intervallic pattern 5–6–10–10, a contrapuntal pattern that provides the framework for the motion from I to V. The intervals, however, are realized harmonically as triads, and the applied dominant chord in bar 3 conclusively establishes the dominant as the goal of the phrase.[11]

This passage illustrates the interactive roles of harmony and counterpoint in music, which is a temporal art. Musicians have long used physical metaphors such as "motion," "tension," and "flow" to describe how music is expressed in time. Since we often conceive of time metaphorically in horizontal terms, we might say that counterpoint, the linear dimension of music, provides the kinetic impulses by which harmony, the vertical dimension of music, is expressed in

time. The pa
the most fun
we shall see,
dependent u

Second Sp

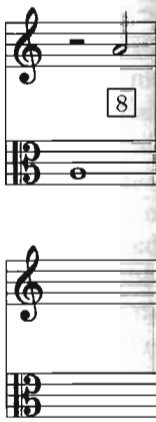
In second sp
the cantus fir
is enhanced
livened musi

Consider
organization
strong part
species. Ther
The upbeat,
mic momen
downbeats. F
uated in resp
to determine
texture still

Example
role of the s
occurs in ba
beats per bar

EXAMPLE

Second species



time. The passage is organized harmonically by the motion from I to V, one of the most fundamental means of harmonic organization in tonal music. But as we shall see, the ways in which harmony organizes different spans of music are dependent upon the prolonging effects of counterpoint.

Second Species

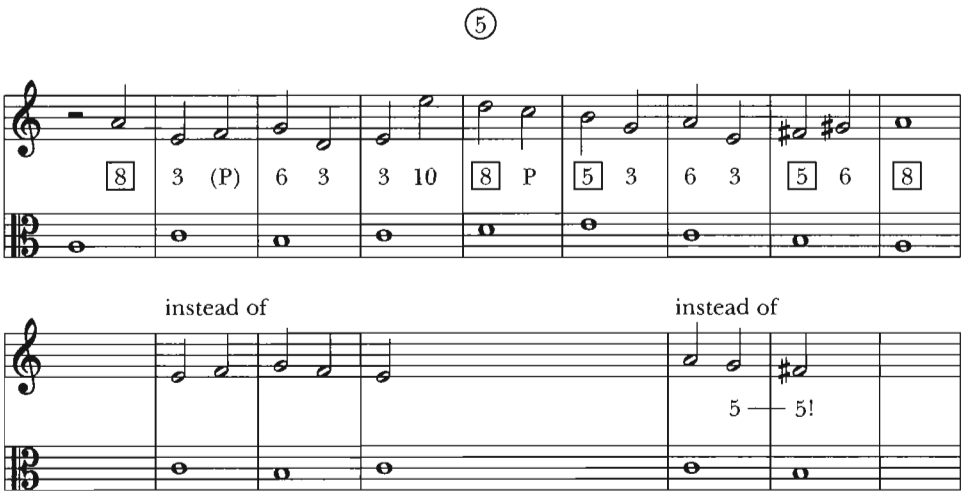
In second species, a counterpoint in half notes is set against the whole notes of the cantus firmus (two notes against one). The differentiation between the lines is enhanced by the quicker motion of the counterpoint, which leads to an enlivened musical texture more complex than that of first species.

Consider first that the two half notes of the counterpoint create metrical organization within the bar, a downbeat and an upbeat. The downbeat, the strong part of the bar, corresponds exactly to the beginning of a bar in first species. Therefore, consonances must occur on all downbeats in second species. The upbeat, or weak part of a bar, is different. Its purpose is to provide rhythmic momentum to the line and to connect the consonances on successive downbeats. Because of its subordinate rhythmic status, the second beat is evaluated in respect to the consonant downbeats it connects. Our purpose now is to determine the ways in which the second half note can function in a musical texture still regulated, as in first species, by the progression of consonances.

Example 2.10 shows a second species exercise in which we can explore the role of the second half note. The most important use of the second half note occurs in bar 2. The F on the second beat (species counterpoint assumes two beats per bar) connects the consonances on the downbeats of bars 2 and 3, and

EXAMPLE 2.10:

Second species counterpoint



represents straightforward *melodic progression.* This F, of course, is an instance of the very familar tone of figuration, the *passing tone.*

Moreover, because the F forms the interval of a fourth with the cantus firmus, an interval which is categorized as dissonant in two parts, it is a dissonant passing tone. This dissonant tone is correct in second species because it occurs on the second beat and is approached and left by step as described above. Notice that the note C in bar 5 is also a dissonant passing tone, and fulfills the same conditions. The passing tone is the first dissonance in species counterpoint and is the most fundamental type of dissonance in tonal music since it embodies directed motion to a goal. Stepwise motion to and from a dissonance has been regarded by composers throughout most of music history as one of the essential principles of voice leading.

While dissonant passing tones are the most characteristic feature of second species, consonant passing motion is also possible. The motions "5–6" or "6–5" above a cantus firmus will produce consonant passing tones; this is the only relationship where two consonances form a stepwise melodic line, whatever the melodic configuration may be.

In the limited context of second species counterpoint, the passing tone (on the second beat) connects two different consonances (on the preceding and following downbeats)—or, considered only horizontally, two different tones. When we begin to examine actual compositions, this observation will acquire additional significance. In those more elaborate contexts we will be able to amplify our statement to say that in connecting two different tones, passing tones will often connect two different registers or *voices* (such as a soprano and an alto voice). Although strict counterpoint per se is not concerned with such issues, we find in second species a foreshadowing of an important technique that figures prominently in the realm of prolonged harmony and counterpoint.

Another function of the second half note occurs in the third bar of our example. Here, the leap in the counterpoint, which is possible only because both intervals in bar 3 are consonant, creates the familiar technique of the *consonant skip.* A leap from consonance to consonance is often desirable, because a line consisting entirely of passing tones would be scalar and would lack sufficient variety and differentiation. In this case, the skip to D substitutes for F, which already occurred as a passing tone in the previous bar (compare the two parts of the example). Hence the leap helps to avoid monotony in the line and substitutes for direct melodic progression. We will discover that *melodic substitution* can serve various compositional functions (as in the substitution of C♯ for E in bar 7 of "Greensleeves," Example 2.6). Bear in mind, however, that this technique elaborates but does not alter the continuity of underlying, melodically fluent stepwise progression. In this case, the ear still follows the motion from the G on the downbeat of bar 3 to the E on the downbeat of the following bar.

Substitution is also evident in bar 7. On the second half of that bar, E is a virtual necessity. A leap to any other tone would lead either to a forbidden vertical interval (such as a fourth, F over C) or a *dissonant* melodic interval in approaching the F♯ in the next bar (a diminished or augmented interval such as C to F♯). On the other hand, a stepwise continuation from a G on beat 2 would create parallel fifths in approaching the following downbeat, as indicated in the example.

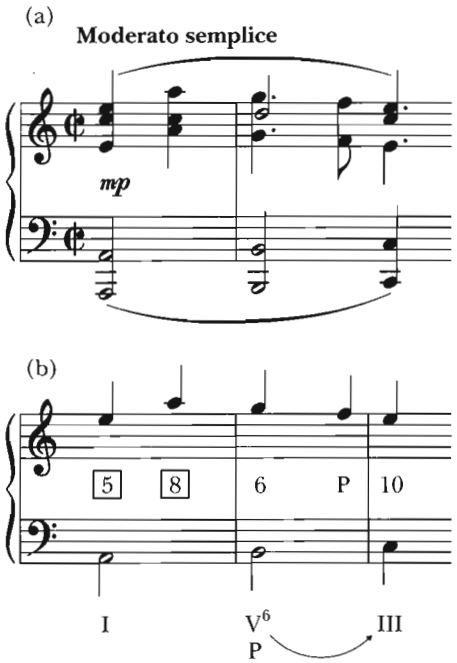
Substitution, therefore, can serve to improve voice leading through the avoidance of forbidden progressions or intervals.

Another use of a leap can be seen in bar 4, from E up to E, which does not so much substitute for another tone as it effects a *transfer of register.* At this point in the exercise, the counterpoint is (and has been) relatively close to the rising cantus firmus. The change of register opens up some additional space between the voices, establishes the climax of the phrase, and allows the upper voice to descend gradually, proceeding primarily in contrary and oblique motion to the cantus firmus before the cadence. Later in this book we will see how transfer of register can be a valuable compositional technique in free composition, where it makes possible richly polyphonic melodies and the integration of contrasting registers.

We now examine another passage, the opening two bars of Brahms's Intermezzo in A minor, Op. 76, No. 7 (Example 2.11a). As with the theme from Handel's Chaconne discussed above, this passage is best understood in terms of a combination of harmonic and contrapuntal principles. In the upper voice, the tone E is embellished first by a consonant skip to A, an embellishing tone (compare Example 2.11b). The line then proceeds by step back to E, through a G and a passing tone F. The E is consequently embellished and sustained—that is, *prolonged*—by a five-note figure. This figure develops within a harmonic motion from I to III. The chord supported by the second tone in the bass could be labeled a VII^6 (or V^6 of III), but may also be described as a "passing chord"

EXAMPLE 2.11:

(a) Brahms, Intermezzo, Op. 76, No. 7, bars 1–2; (b) second species representation



because the B, in the characteristic fashion of a passing tone, connects the A and C in the bass: correspondingly the $\frac{6}{3}$ chord itself passes between I and III.

This last observation illustrates that basic contrapuntal patterns must be further evaluated in contexts shaped also by harmonic principles. In our simplification, the B in the bass resembles a tone in a cantus firmus, the tones of which are neutral and are not generally associated with a specific contrapuntal function (such as is implied by the designation "passing tone"). In the music, however, the B supports a chord that connects tonic and mediant harmonies. Thus, influenced also by harmonic principles, the B is a passing tone (supporting a passing chord), but one of a higher structural order than the F in the upper voice, which serves a more local purpose. This distinction between two different types of passing tones is significant, and foreshadows the notion of structural levels, one of Schenker's most profound ideas that will be continually explored and refined throughout this book.

Our discussion of second species counterpoint covered straightforward melodic progression, which results from the passing tone that connects one tone with another. The significance of the passing tone in Schenker's ideas, however, far transcends the basic idioms of strict counterpoint. He was fond of metaphors and suggests that music in free composition traverses a "path." For Schenker, "the *goal* [of the path] and the course to the goal are primary. Content comes afterward: without a goal there can be no content."[12] Without the passing tone, there can be no connections, and without connections it is not possible to attain a goal and promote musical content in the horizontal dimension ("spatial depth"). As we will see in later chapters, the passing tone is the primary element of linear progressions and may further serve as the point of departure for other subsidiary motions.

Third Species

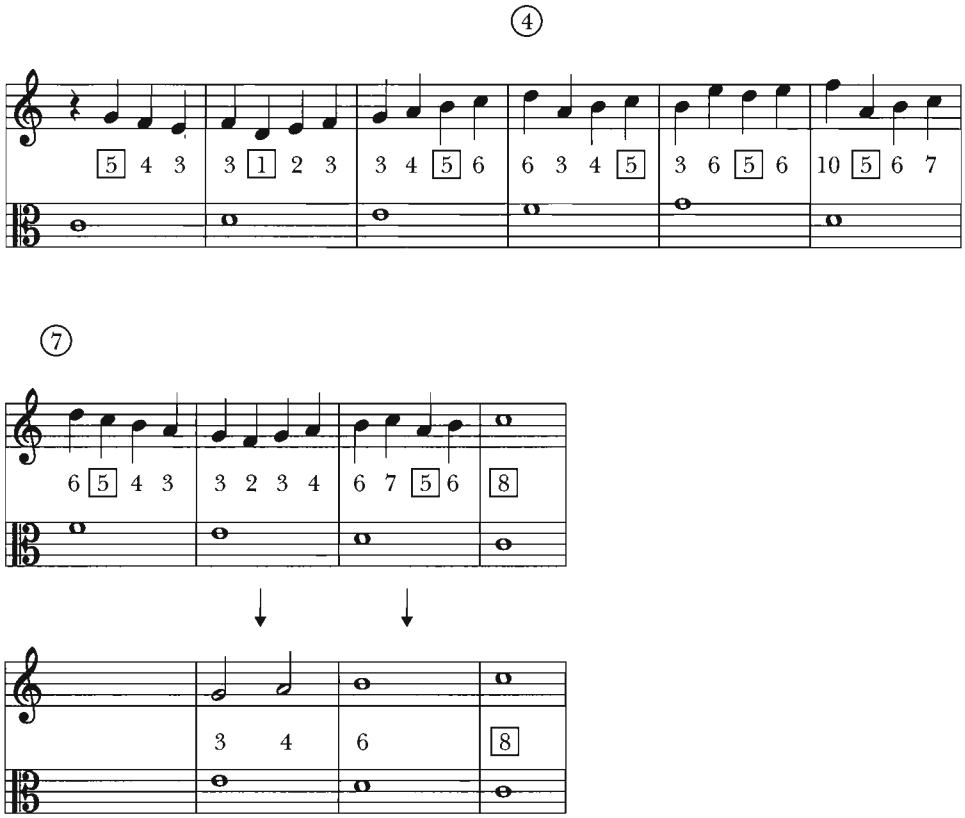
Third species counterpoint employs four quarters against the whole note in the cantus firmus (Example 2.12). This faster rhythm permits the use of rapid stepwise embellishment, which includes (in addition to the passing tone) consonant and dissonant neighbor notes that enliven the musical texture. Like the passing tone, the neighbor note moves by step; the distinction is that it *returns* to the point of origin, thus embellishing a single pitch instead of connecting two different tones.

Third species melodies combine scalar motion with passages in which embellishing tones prolong a note or otherwise retard the movement of a line. In bars 2–4 of the example, the octave ascent from d^1 to d^2 is filled in with stepwise motion, quickly reaching a new, higher register. In bars 4–5, the overall development of line seems slower by comparison, primarily because of the leaps and changes in direction. Following the climax tone f^2 on the downbeat of bar 6, the descending leap of a sixth to a^1 creates a "gap" in the line that is balanced by the concluding stepwise motion.

Third species melodies may sometimes be related to first and second species counterpoint, as shown below bars 8 and 9. Neighbor notes retard motion by

EXAMPLE 2.12:

Third species counterpoint



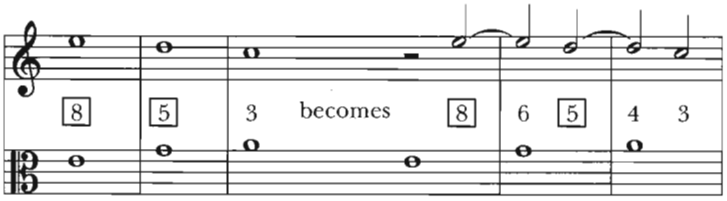
prolonging a tone: thus, the dissonant neighbor f^1 in bar 8 prolongs g^1, thereby creating an underlying motion in the bar (g^1–a^1) that is similar to a second species figure. In bar 9, the leading tone b^1 is prolonged throughout the measure by upper and lower neighbors; its motion to the cadence therefore simulates a first species progression. This prolonging figure, incidentally, commonly termed the *double neighbor,* has been used in composition since the Middle Ages. Though the neighbor notes appear to be incomplete, because of the leap from the dissonant C to A, both tones may be understood as complete neighbors of the first and last tones of the measure. This indirect relationship of notes illustrates that the ear can perceive relationships of tones over spans of varying lengths, even when other notes intervene.[13]

Fourth Species

The dissonant passing tone and neighbor note both arise through the addition of new notes to a melody, and thus may be described as *melodic* dissonances.

EXAMPLE 2.13:

Relationship between first and fourth species counterpoint

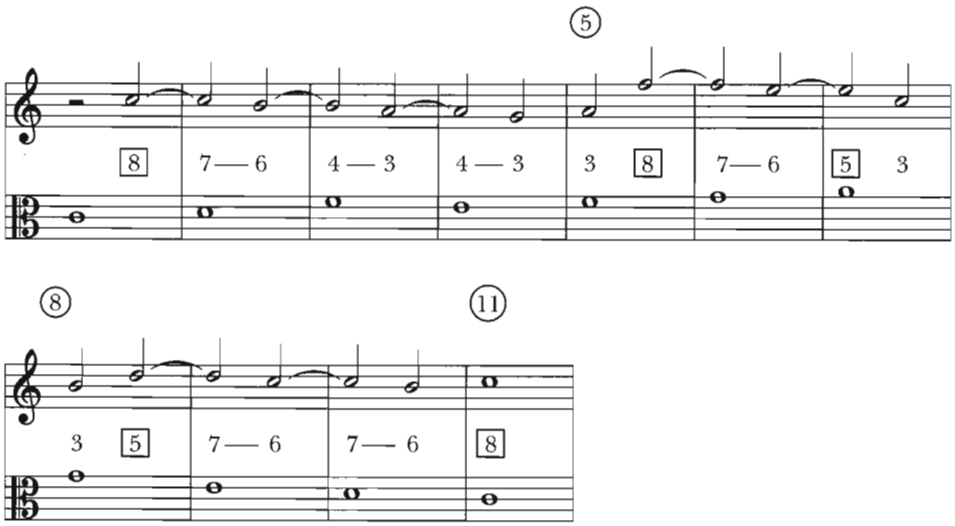


Fourth species introduces a second category, *rhythmic* dissonance, which is created through rhythmic displacement rather than through the addition of new melodic tones. In this species the counterpoint consists primarily of tied half notes, producing a rhythm closely related to the whole notes of first species. The tones, however, do not coincide with those of the cantus firmus, but are shifted to the second (weak) part of the bar. Example 2.13 shows the relationship between the whole notes of first species and the syncopation of fourth species.

This rhythmic displacement creates the characteristic type of dissonance in fourth species: the *suspension.* The initial note of the suspension, or *tone of preparation,* occurs on the second beat and must be consonant. The second part of the tied note, on the downbeat, is called the *suspension.* A dissonant suspended tone must resolve downward and by step on the following (second) beat, to the *tone of resolution.* If the tied note is consonant with the cantus firmus, resolution is not an issue (there is no requirement for descending motion by step). Example 2.14

EXAMPLE 2.14:

Fourth species counterpoint



presents a complete fourth species exercise. Notice that the rhythmically displaced counterpoint is otherwise similar to those of first and second species. Because the suspension occurs on the strong part of the bar, it has the strongest effect of the three fundamental dissonances.

The obligatory downward resolution of dissonant suspensions limits the possibilities for melodic development; in other words, a series of dissonant suspensions can lead only to a descending, stepwise line. There are, however, "expedients" that allow one to shape and balance the line more fully. In Example 2.14, for instance, the counterpoint reverts to the untied half notes of second species (bars 4–5 and 7–8). This technique, known as "breaking the species," provides opportunities for leaps and changes in direction, both of which help to create a balanced and varied line.

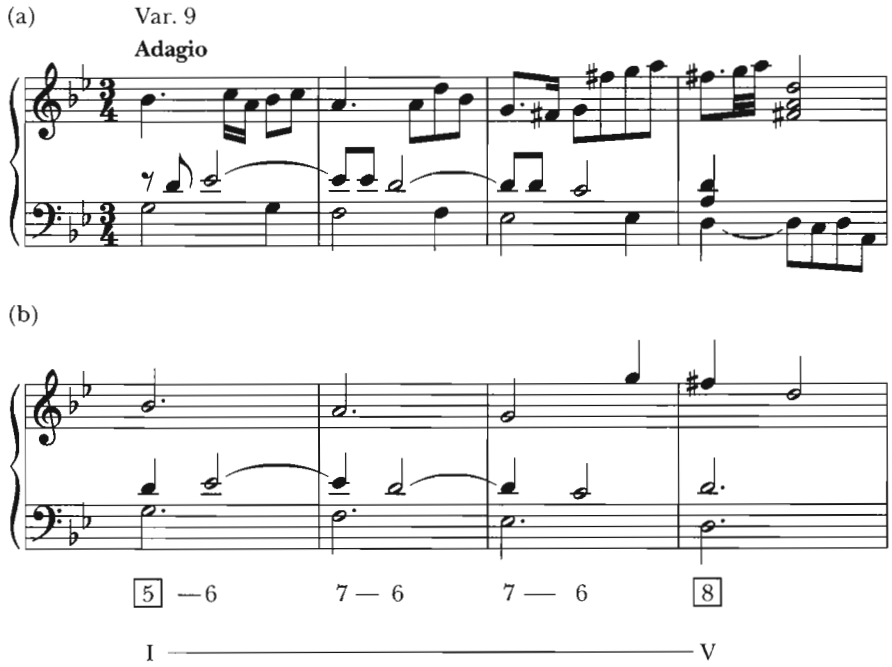
Notice that the tone that forms the consonance with the cantus firmus, what one might call the "main" tone, occurs on the second part of the bar in a metrically weak position. Thus fourth species provides us with a clear example of an important principle: the structural weight or significance of a tone does not necessarily coincide with its metrical position. In free composition, where more complex contrapuntal, harmonic, and rhythmic techniques come into play, this realization will figure significantly when we attempt to determine the function of a tone or harmony. The principles of rhythm (including meter) work in conjunction with, but somewhat independently of, the principles of harmony and counterpoint. Rhythmic factors can support or reinforce the structural function of a tone, but just as frequently they can conflict with harmonic and contrapuntal factors, thereby raising questions about structural function. In analyzing tonal music, one must always weigh carefully the interplay of harmonic, contrapuntal, and rhythmic factors that work interactively to achieve the development—the unfolding—of a musical composition.

We now return to Handel's Chaconne, to the ninth variation of the theme (Example 2.15a). In sets of variations the techniques of elaboration include increased rhythmic and melodic figuration, which transform and provide contrast to the theme. The ancient principle of variation is not restricted to pieces called "variations" (or "chaconnes" or "passacaglias"), but is a powerful means of organization in many different kinds of musical compositions. The principles and techniques presented in this book will enable you to better understand and recognize variation processes as they occur in tonal music.

A brief comparison of the first four bars of the theme (Example 2.9) with the corresponding part of the ninth variation reveals that the constant, the common denominator that unifies the varied presentations of the theme, is the descending "ground" bass from G to D. (Note that the use of the minor mode is another way of achieving varied repetition.) In the variation, however, the tenor voice is rhythmically displaced: a 5–6 shift above the bass prepares the first of a series of two 7–6 suspensions (Example 2.15b). The first phrase of the variation therefore retains the initial harmonic framework of the theme, but the suspensions provide a forward-moving impulse that intensifies the motion from I to V. The suspensions illustrated in fourth species counterpoint occur in compositions of many different styles, enlivening and transforming the note-against-note texture of underlying first species progressions.

EXAMPLE 2.15:

(a) Handel, Chaconne, Variation 9, bars 1–4; (b) fourth species representation



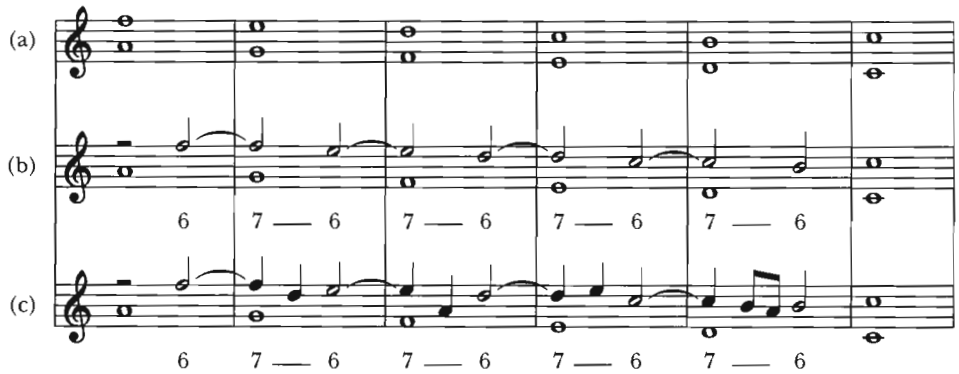
Fifth Species

We have seen how second, third, and fourth species introduce various types of melodic and rhythmic elaboration in the contrapuntal line. In fifth species, the procedures of the previous species are combined, with pairs of eighth notes added as an additional resource. The use of mixed note values naturally affords the line considerably more possibilities for variety and complexity. We now examine some of the idiomatic patterns of fifth species in relation to the suspensions of fourth species, enabling us to understand how smaller note values can decorate but not disrupt the continuity of underlying stepwise progressions, the essential characteristic of melodic fluency (Example 2.16).

Example 2.16a shows a first species motion to a cadence in parallel sixths; in 2.16b the upper voice has been rhythmically displaced, resulting in a series of 7–6 suspensions. Example 2.16c illustrates some ways in which this fourth species progression can be elaborated in fifth species with quarter- and eighth-note embellishments. The first suspension is decorated by a leap to consonance from the suspension, to the lower neighbor of the tone of resolution; the second suspension is decorated by a leap to and from a consonant embellishing tone; the third is embellished by the upper neighbor of the suspension; and the fourth is embellished by a pair of eighths that pass from the suspension to the lower neighbor of the tone of resolution. The point is that the stepwise progression of the fourth species line is still the guiding force of a line that now exhibits

EXAMPLE 2.16:

Embellishment of suspensions in fifth species counterpoint



leaps and detours; the resolution of the suspensions is so powerful that the ear retains the stepwise connections *through* the intervening notes.

This technique of embellishment (in free composition) has traditionally been referred to as *diminution,* because the embellishing tones are usually smaller note values. Another use of the term is to refer to the repetition of a line in smaller note values; this often happens in fugues, where, for example, a subject originally presented in half notes is then repeated in quarter notes. But just as frequently diminution is associated with the embellishment of an underlying guiding line that shapes the course of an upper voice.

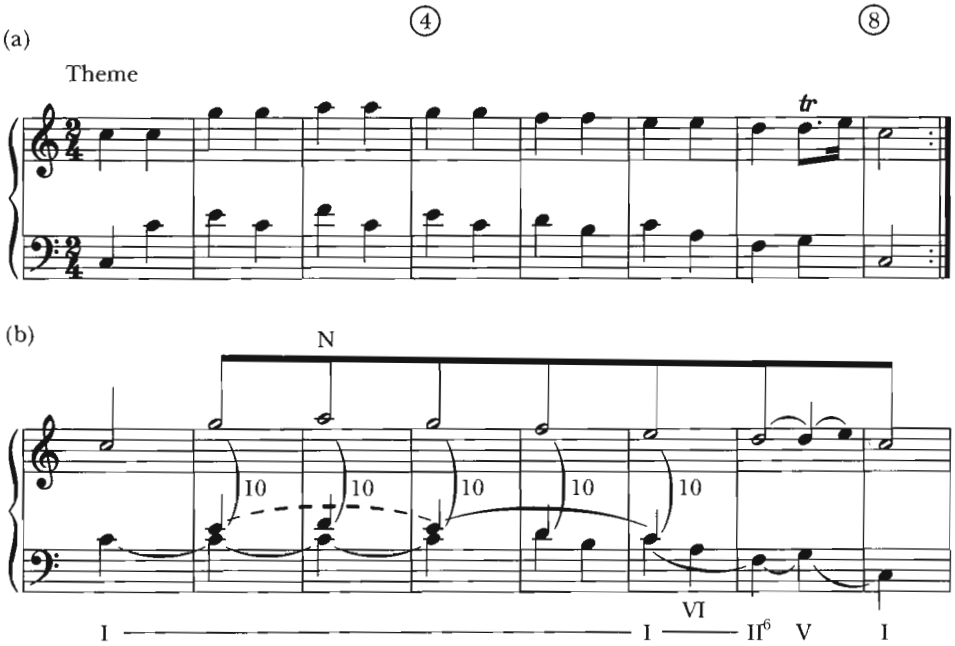
The line is often presented first in unadorned fashion, as in sets of variations on a chorale or folk tune; but a preexisting melody is not a necessary condition for diminution. We shall see that simple, melodically fluent lines lie beneath the surface of elaborate, freely composed melodies in virtually all styles of tonal compositions. And like the embellished progression in our fifth species example, the more direct stepwise progressions are perceived by the ear even as the texture is enlivened through the basic elements of diminution: passing tones, neighbor tones, consonant skips, and suspensions.

A SAMPLE ANALYSIS

We have seen several excerpts from the literature in which the fundamental voice-leading principles of species counterpoint function in the tonal fabric. Excerpts from Mozart's set of variations on the folk tune "Ah! Vous dirai-je, Maman" illustrate relationships of lines from strict counterpoint to melodies in a tonal composition. In our examination of part of the theme and one of the variations, it becomes apparent that melodically fluent lines similar to those encountered in strict counterpoint establish the framework and provide the coherence for the most disjunct and wide-ranging melodies in free composition.

EXAMPLE 2.17:

(a) Mozart, Variations on "Ah, vous dirai-je, Maman," K. 265, bars 1–8 (Theme);
(b) graphic representation



Example 2.17a presents the first phrase of the theme. Before examining the relationship between specific elements of diminution and the folk tune, we will begin with a general overview of the phrase. The harmonic and contrapuntal framework of the two-part setting is indicated in Example 2.17b: the tonic governs the first part of the phrase, after which an arpeggiation leads through VI to the II^6–V–I cadential pattern. (The N indicates a neighbor note, the dotted tie indicates a retained or prolonged note, and the solid slur or beam indicates tonal motion from one point to another.)

The characteristics of this tune are remarkably similar to the upper voice of our first species counterpoint exercise (Example 2.8). Both begin with a rather large leap (a fourth in the exercise, a fifth in the folk tune), followed by stepwise motion to the cadence. (In "Ah! Vous dirai-je, Maman," the incomplete neighbor e^2 in bar 7 decorates but does not interrupt the stepwise descent.) In other words, the initial leaps in both melodies create gaps in the lines and a degree of musical tension subsequently dissipated by the change in direction and the descending stepwise motion to the cadence.

In conjunction with the expansion of tonic harmony in the opening bars, the tones on the downbeats of bars 2–6 form a succession of parallel tenths between the two voices (Example 2.17b). In bars 2–4, these notes in the left-hand part can be described as a "tenor" voice (again illustrating the principle of polyphonic melody). In bar 3, the tenor F functions similarly to the A in the

soprano: it is a neighbor note that decorates and prolongs the tenor Es (of tonic harmony) on the downbeats of bars 2 and 4; in bar 5, the tenor D is a passing tone that leads from E to C.

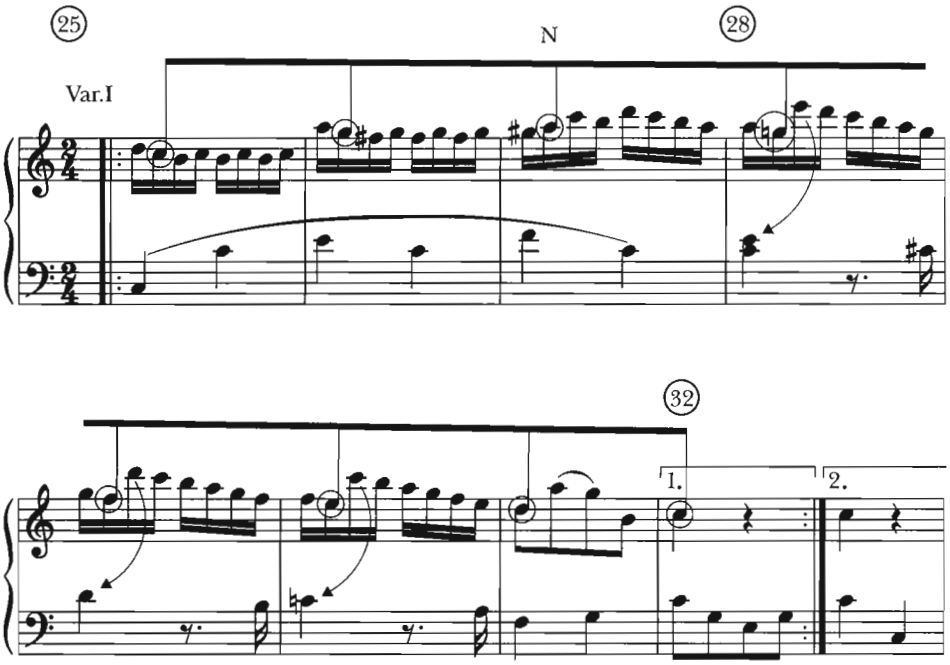
Just as tonic harmony governs much of the bass, so many of the notes of the upper voice express the tones of the tonic triad, C–E–G. The line begins with a leap from the root to the fifth of tonic harmony, scale degree $\hat{5}$, which is decorated and prolonged by an upper neighbor A. The line then passes through F to E, the third of tonic harmony. It concludes with D and C ($\hat{2}$ moving to $\hat{1}$), tones supported by the II^6–V–I cadential pattern. Hence this well-known melody, in its characteristics of voice leading and melodic fluency, resembles in striking fashion a line of first species counterpoint.

We now turn to the opening phrases of the first variation (Example 2.18) and third variation (Example 2.19). For clarity we have circled and beamed together the tones in each measure that correspond to the tones of the folk tune (compare with Example 2.17). What becomes immediately apparent is that Mozart has presented the tune within various kinds of figurations (or embellishments) that allow performers to display not only their technical skills, but also the capabilities and idiomatic aspects of the piano. (Sets of variations were often composed as vehicles for virtuosic display on a particular instrument.)

In the first variation, upper and lower neighbor motion embellishes C and G in bars 1 and 2 respectively: because the neighbor motion is dissonant with

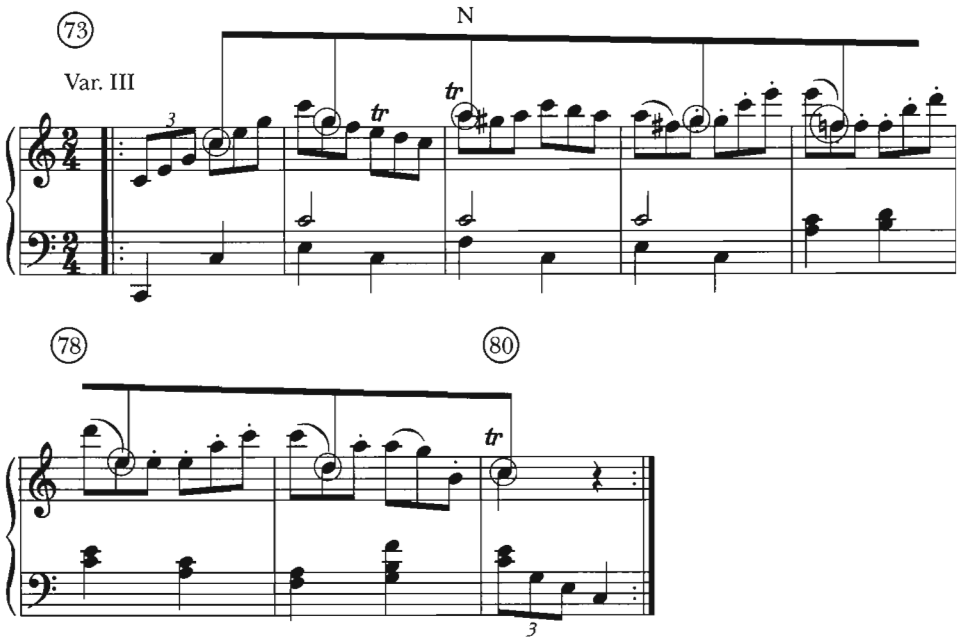
EXAMPLE 2.18:

Mozart, Variations on "Ah, vous dirai-je, Maman," K. 265, bars 25–32 (Variation 1) with analytical interpretation



EXAMPLE 2.19:

Mozart, Variations on "Ah, vous dirai-je, Maman," K. 265, bars 73–80 (Variation 3) with analytical interpretation



the bass and the underlying chord, its role as figuration is clear. In bars 27–30 scalar motion occurs, also clearly an embellishment of the underlying line. The high notes initiating the scales in bars 28–30 (E–D–C) are chord tones that add an additional strand of voice leading to the right-hand part, making it polyphonic. Notice, however, that these tones do not form an *independent* line, but double notes in the left-hand part. Note also that each of the first six bars of the variation begins with an accented tone of figuration, so the chord tone is delayed. As we said earlier, it is important to bear in mind that metrical position and structural value do not always coincide, as this variation illustrates.

Chordal skips and arpeggiation predominate in the third variation (Example 2.19). In the first bar, the tone C of the melody is embedded within a rapid, wide-ranging arpeggiation that employs the skill of the performer's right hand. The arpeggiation, moreover, confirms our *reading*—that is, our interpretation—of the theme, that a C major triad, tonic harmony, is expressed in bar 1. In bar 74, the second tone of the melody, G, appears on the second eighth (after a chordal skip from C) and initiates a stepwise line that descends through the passing tones F and D to the tonic note C. The passing tones fill in the intervals between the fifth, third, and root of tonic harmony outlined in the arpeggiation of the first bar.

In bar 75, the A is decorated first with a chromatic lower neighbor and then by a consonant skip to C, followed by a passing tone back to A. The way in which the melody tone G appears in bar 76 is especially interesting: the A on the downbeat is a suspension of the melody note from the previous bar (suspensions are

not always tie
is further dec
tone of resolu
(Example 2.1
its resolution
beat. This va
correspond t
structurally p

On the s
giation, creat
ister. The ma
large leap of
28–30 of Exa
been shifted
fourth specie
always accom
can perform
voice: such h
tal music.

Through
formed the si
and complex
passing tones
as it were, in
an underlying
significant wa
those encour
complex and

1. Workboo
   a. Assig
      King,
   b. Assig
   c. Assig
      bars
   d. Assig

2. Additiona
   a. Moza
      Varia
   b. Beeth
      Varia
   c. Schul
      bande

not always tied in free composition). The resolution of the suspension, however, is further decorated by F♯, an incomplete chromatic lower neighbor to G, the tone of resolution. We observed similar decorated suspensions in the fifth species (Example 2.16): in the present example the suspension and the decoration of its resolution shift the main tone to the third eighth, the weakest part of the first beat. This variation again illustrates that metric position does not necessarily correspond to structural "importance": sometimes, as here, harmonically and structurally prominent tones may occur in metrically weak positions.

On the second beat of bar 4 Mozart shifts the line upward through arpeggiation, creating a climax in the phrase through the establishment of a new register. The main melody notes of bars 5–7 are each preceded with the rather large leap of a descending seventh. The notes in the higher register (as in bars 28–30 of Example 2.18) are notes from an inner voice of the texture that have been shifted above the main melody tones. (Note that the high notes appear as fourth species suspensions.) Clearly the decoration of an underlying line is not always accomplished by means of stepwise motion or small leaps. Instruments can perform large leaps and change registers much more easily than the human voice: such highly disjunct embellishments frequently characterize instrumental music.

Through our discussion of this example we have seen how Mozart has transformed the simple, melodically fluent folk tune into a line of remarkable variety and complexity. Despite the detours produced by the leaps, arpeggiations, and passing tones, the stepwise character of the theme is present, behind the scenes as it were, in the upper voice of the variation; the theme, in effect, has become an underlying guiding line for the variation. We can now better understand how significant was Schenker's discovery: that melodically fluent lines, similar to those encountered in the five species of counterpoint, lie beneath the most complex and ornate melodies of actual compositions.

Exercises

1. Workbook Exercises.
   a. Assignment No. 1: Beethoven, Seven Variations on "God Save the King," WoO 78, Theme and Variation 5
   b. Assignment No. 2: Folk Tune ("Ashgrove")
   c. Assignment No. 3: Chopin, Nocturne in F minor, Op. 55, No. 1, bars 1–8
   d. Assignment No. 4: Bellini, "Casta Diva" (from *Norma*), bars 16–23

2. Additional Pieces for Analysis.
   a. Mozart, Nine Variations on a Minuet by Duport, K. 573 (Theme; Variations 1, 6, and 8).
   b. Beethoven, Six Easy Variations (G major), WoO 77 (Theme and Variation 1)
   c. Schubert, *Die schöne Müllerin*, No. 13, "Mit dem grünen Lautenbande" (complete vocal melody)