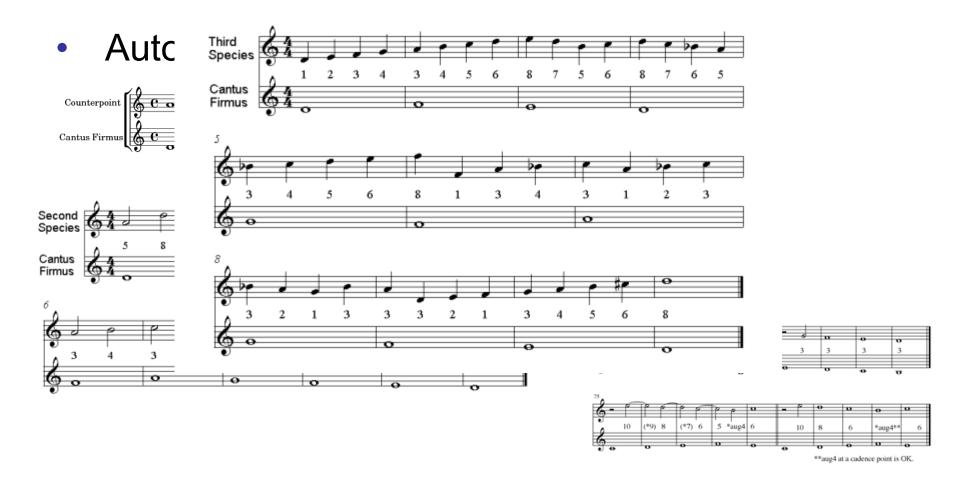# Improvisatory counterpoint

CS 275B/Mus 254
Stanford University

Counterpoint overview

- Various methods governing the combination of voices in a polyphonic work
- Main approaches
  - Note against note (*punctus contra punctum*), usually called "sixteenth-century" or "species" counterpoint
  - Palestrina counterpoint (also from the 16th century)
  - "Free" counterpoint (also "18th-century")
- Highly rule-driven
- Originally required a pre-existing melody
  - *Cantus firmus* (later "tenor")

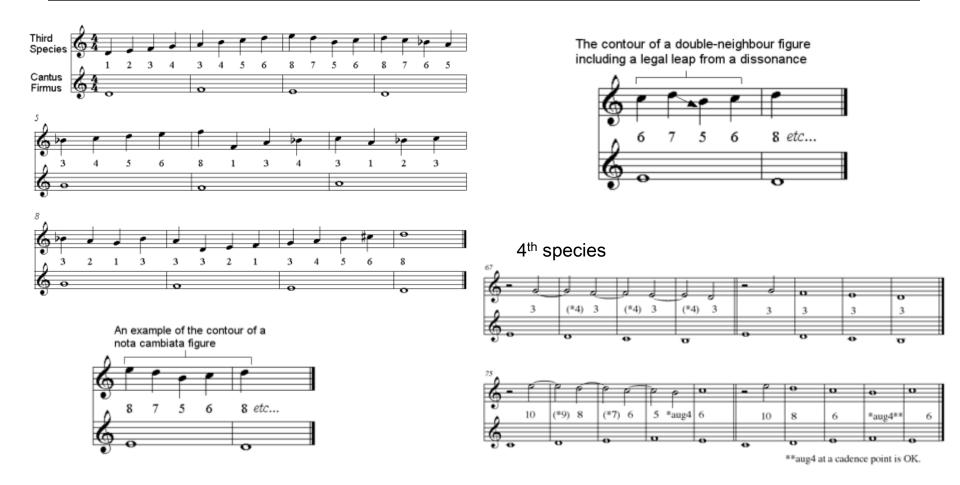# Work of Bill Schottstaedt (ccrma)

- Auto

**aug4 at a cadence point is OK.

Work of Thomas Noll (tnoll.org)

4th species

Work of Thomas Noll (tnoll.org)

The contour of a double-neighbour figure including a legal leap from a dissonance

An example of the contour of a nota cambiata figure

4th species

**aug4 at a cadence point is OK.
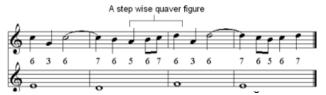
Fifth species

16th-century practice
as codified
In the 18th century

8th-note rules

- As a neighbour-note figure (a stepwise connection between two instances of the same (consonant) note may be used if and only if the middle note is also a consonance).

A quaver neighbour note figure

6   3   6   7   6   5   6   5   1

- As passing notes that connect two consonant notes an interval of a fourth apart (rarely used).

A step wise quaver figure

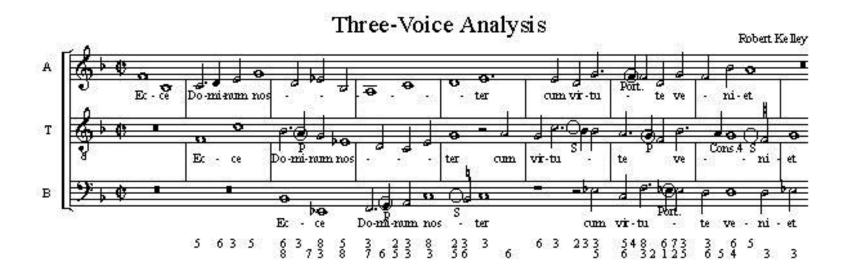6   3   6   7   6   5   6   7   6   3   6   7   6   5   6   7

Musical realities: 16th-18th centuries

- Consonance and dissonance

- Differentiation of vocal and instrumental rules

- Growing rhythmic independence between parts

- Increasing use of canons and fugues

- Substitution (Protestant cultures) of chorale melodies for *cantus firmi* (Catholic cultures)

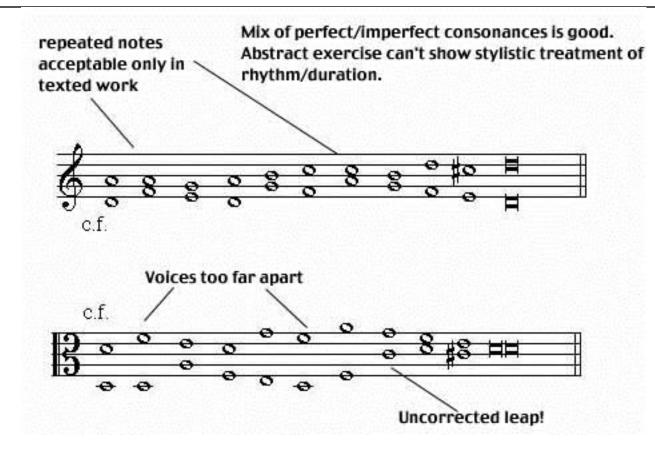- Elaboration of chorale melodies in chorale preludes
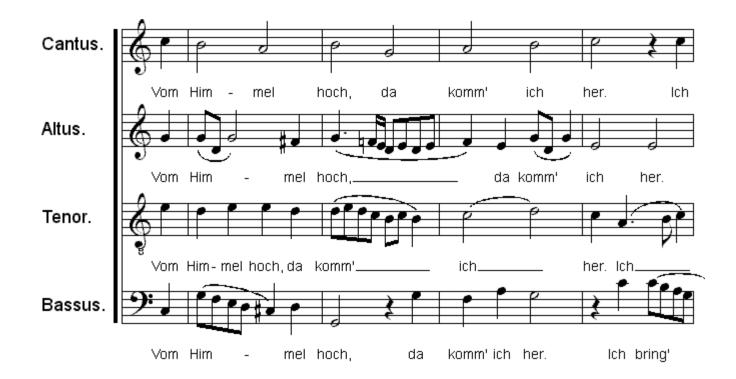
Consonance and dissonance

Two-Voice Analysis

Vincentino: *L'antica musica* Vol. 4

Three-Voice Analysis

Robert Kelley

Intervals weighted

repeated notes acceptable only in texted work

Mix of perfect/imperfect consonances is good. Abstract exercise can't show stylistic treatment of rhythm/duration.

c.f.

Voices too far apart

c.f.

Uncorrected leap!

Chorale settings

Canons and Fugues

Chorale cantata

Keyboard fugue

2013 Eleanor Selfridge-Field

Chorale variations (keyboard)

Dominik Hoernel

(U. Karlsruhe)

Hoernel, cont.