

# Counterpoint

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# Contrapuntal thinking: first phase (14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> cents.)

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Focus on two-voice simultaneities

Rules govern use of intervals

Fixed melodic kernel (*cantus firmus*) usually in tenor voice

Added voice could be higher or lower

Intervals allowed: 1, 4, 5; later 3, 6 (but not always 4)

Imitation between lines not common

# Contrapuntal thinking: second phase (15th-16<sup>th</sup>)

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More voices added

Some liberalization of intervallic rules

Some passing tones (2nds, 7ths) acceptable on unaccented beats

Flow of music was to be continuous (cadence avoidance);  
Palestrina

Fixed melody in tenor might be secular (rather than sacred)



Gioseffe Zarlino: Early, much imitated music theorist

# Palestrina: Mass for Pope Marcellus

The image displays a musical score for six vocal parts: Soprano, Alto, Tenor 1, Tenor 2, Bass 1, and Bass 2. The score is written in 4/2 time and features the text "Ky - ri - e e - - - le - i - son Ky - ri - e e - - -". The Soprano part begins with a rest, followed by a melodic line with a slur over the first phrase. The Alto part also begins with a rest, followed by a melodic line. The Tenor 1 part begins with a rest, followed by a melodic line with a slur over the first phrase. The Tenor 2 part begins with a rest, followed by a melodic line. The Bass 1 part begins with a rest, followed by a melodic line with a slur over the first phrase. The Bass 2 part begins with a rest, followed by a melodic line. The lyrics are: Soprano: Ky - ri - e e - - - le - i - son Ky - ri - e e - - -; Alto: Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son Ky - ri - e e -; Tenor 1: Ky - ri - e e - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -; Tenor 2: Ky - ri - e e - - - le - i -; Bass 1: Ky - ri - e e - - - le - i - son; Bass 2: Ky - ri - e e - - -.

# Diruta, *Il transilvano* II (1622)

*Contra-punctum.*

*Cantus firmus.*

Points of imitation

Mixed species in three voices

*Contra-punctum.*

*Cantus firmus.*

*In Secunda.*

*In Quarta.*

# Contrapuntal thinking: third phase (17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> cents.)

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Shift towards metricalization (from mensuration)

Shift towards tonal counterpoint (from modal counterpoint)

Free counterpoint (main melody, now called subject, devised by composer)

Formal rules for

- subjects
- types of imitation
- stretto (overlapping) realization

Counterpoint became more florid

# Retrospective formalization of rules (Fux)

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## Species counterpoint (18<sup>th</sup> century overview of 16<sup>th</sup> century usage)

- First species: whole note against whole note
- Second species: whole vs half
- Third species: whole against quarter
- Fourth species: suspensions (and resulting dissonances)
- Fifth species: mixed values



# Mattheson's rules for subjects

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Up or down: skips, then steps (pyramid rule)



Haydn, Quartet Op. 71, No. 1, III

Mozart, Divertimento K. 287, III

Best to change direction after leap, or to interrupt run in one direction



Brahms Concerto No. I, III



# More rules on subjects (Peter Schubert)

If repeated notes occur, place them on varying metric positions



Chopin, Prelude, Op. 28, No. 12

- Many subjects start begin with a rest or start in second half of measure



Beethoven 5<sup>th</sup> Symphony, I (stretto)

- This was already true in second-species counterpoint
















































# ...and finally, fugue



N.B. "Lucis Creator optime" subject

# Ockeghem masses ([jrp.Stanford.edu](http://jrp.Stanford.edu))

mass	Ockeghem	Kyrie-Gloria-Credo Sine nomine	5	 	
mass	Ockeghem	Missa Au travail suis	4	 	
mass	Ockeghem	Missa Caput	4	 	
mass	Ockeghem	Missa Cuiusvis toni (on D)	4	 	
mass	Ockeghem	Missa Cuiusvis toni (on E)	4	 	
mass	Ockeghem	Missa Cuiusvis toni (on F)	4	 	
mass	Ockeghem	Missa De plus en plus	4	 	
mass	Ockeghem	Missa Ecce ancilla domini	?	 	
mass	Ockeghem	Missa Fors seulement	5	 	
mass	Ockeghem	Missa L'homme armé	4	 	
mass	Ockeghem	Missa Ma maistresse	4	 	
mass	Ockeghem	Missa Mi mi	4	 	
mass	Ockeghem	Missa Prolationum	4	 	
mass	Ockeghem	Missa Quinti toni	3	 	
mass	Ockeghem	Requiem	3-4	 	
mass	Ockeghem	Credo [Village]	4	