

Counterpoint with Three Parts

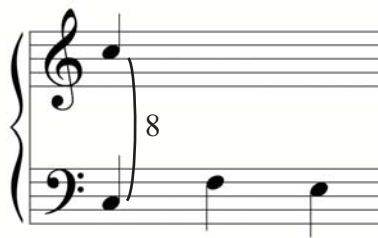
Working with Three Voices

In this format you'll have one CF and two new voices. I recommend that you start one of your voices, plot out a few notes, and then consider the other.

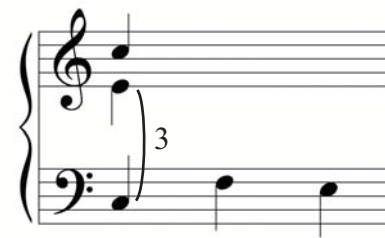
Intervals

In general, you should still think from the bottom up. You are still only allowed to make 8ves, 5ths, 3rds and 6ths against the bass.

1) Plot one voice against bass, following "old" rules.

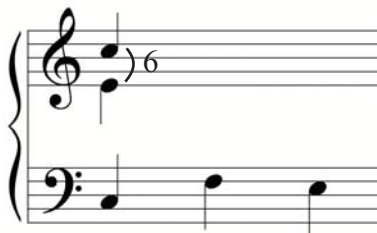


2) Plot the other voice against bass, following old rules.



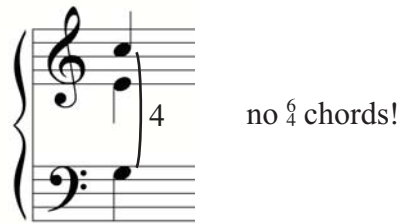
In addition, all upper voices must make "nice" intervals. Happily, we have a very liberal definition of nice, allowing everything but 2nds and 7ths. You can make 4ths and even the tritone in the upper parts. So...

3) Check and make sure upper parts make OK interval.

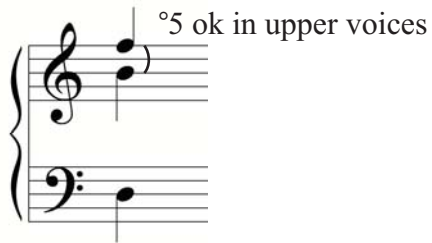


Triads and Partial Triads

These interval rules naturally produce root position and first-inversion triads. However, second inversion triads are banned, because they make a 4th against the bass.



As in our 4-part writing, the diminished triad is allowed in first inversion only.

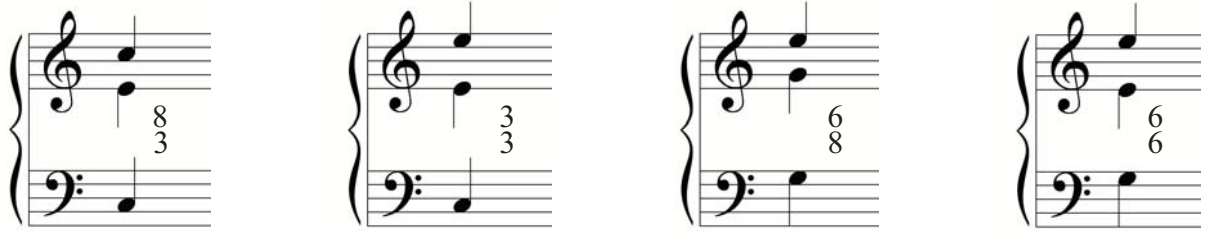


And one amazing thing is that first-inversion chords can run in parallel motion. In Renaissance music this technique is known as Fauxbourdon.

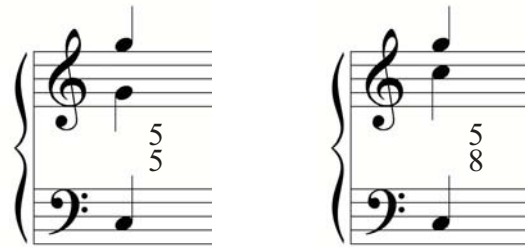
parallel 3rd, 6ths, and 4ths all OK



You do not, however, need to make a complete triad every time. Often you will have two tones, with one tone doubled.



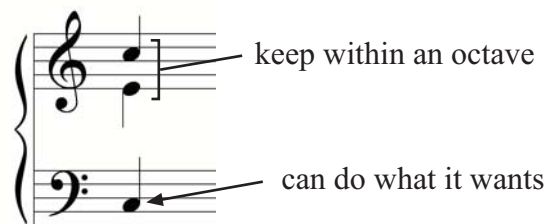
Remember that open fifths can often sound disappointing, especially in this harmonically rich context.



And save the triple octave for the end. Parts should never share a note (making a unison) except at the end.

Spacing

We'll use the same spacing rules as with 4-part writing. Upper parts should stay within an octave of each other, and the bass is free to wander away.



Parallels and Direct Intervals

Now you've got to look for fifths and octaves between your upper voices, as well as against the bass.

For direct 5ths and 8ves, we'll use the same rule as in our 4-part writing. Direct intervals only count between the top and bottom parts, and they are OK if the top part is moving by step.

OK, step "covers up" direct 5th

bad - direct 5th in outer parts

Ending

As usual, your penultimate chord (the one right before the end) will include $\hat{2}$, $\hat{7}$, and maybe $\hat{5}$. You can aim for a triple tonic at the end, or a doubled tonic with extra note.

to octaves

to octaves

to octave + third

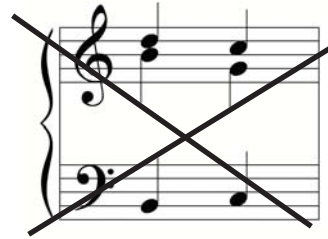
If you have two $\hat{2}$'s, you will need the extra note to avoid parallels.

You are never supposed to double $\hat{7}$.

avoiding parallel 8ves



don't double the leading-tone



Other Species

If you want to move one voice against the other stationary tones, remember that you have to check your rules against both parts.

For instance, let's say you want to make second species in your top part.

Check all parts from beat to beat... and from in-between beat to next beat.



If you want to move two parts against a stationary tone, make the moving parts in consonant intervals (basically, good first species counterpoint.)

