2.4 Fourth Species

Like second species, fourth species places two minims against each semibreve of the cantus firmus. The treatment of dissonances, however, is entirely different, because each minim 2 is tied to the following minim 1. There are thus no passing notes; instead:

Minim 2 **must** be consonant

Minim 1 **may** be dissonant—a suspension—if it is tied from the preceding minim 2 and falls a step to the following minim 2

Observance of these rules results in consonance-dissonance-consonance patterns such as 8 | 7 6 | 4 3 | 4 3 | 7 6 | above the cantus firmus or 1 | 2 3 | 4 5 | 4 5 | 2 3 | below it. The preceding consonance from which the dissonance must be tied is termed the **preparation**, the dissonance itself is termed the **suspension**, and the consonance that must follow it is termed the **resolution**.



Minim 1 does **not** have to be dissonant. If it is consonant, you may ascend or descend to the following minim 2 by any permitted step or leap.

If tying across the barline becomes awkward or impossible, you may omit a tie from your counterpoint and strike a new note on minim 1. (In such cases, the untied minim 2 may be a passing-note, as in second species.) You should resort to this expedient no more than twice in an exercise, however, and you must ensure that every untied minim 1 is consonant. If you can produce an exercise without omitting any ties, so much the better.

To form cadences:

Above the cantus firmus tie to $|_7 6 | 8 ||$ Below the cantus firmus tie to $|_2 3 | 1 ||$

Task 2.4.1 - Prepare staves for exercises on the Set One <u>cantus firmi</u>, and write the last two-and-a-half bars of each exercise. Indicate the intervals (1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8) between the staves.

If you like, you may begin fourth-species counterpoints with a minim rest. But your first interval must still be a Unison or an Octave—or, when the counterpoint is above the cantus firmus, a Fifth.

The rules for completing fourth-species exercises are:

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Do not write |_7 8 |—anywhere
Do not use the augmented Fourth or the diminished Fifth—anywhere
Avoid close Octaves | 8 x | 8 or 8 | x 8 | (where x = any interval) because they reduce the counterpoint to a mere clone of the cantus firmus
Avoid close Unisons, for the same reason
Seconds, perfect Fourths, Ninths, and perfect Elevenths are permitted above and below the cantus firmus
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Sevenths are permitted **above** the cantus firmus only

Close Fifths |5x|5 or 5|x5| are acceptable

You may use the progression [_2 1], but only in isolation from other Unisons, and only if the general direction of the parts warrants it

Task 2.4.2—Complete your Set One exercises. Indicate all intervals between the staves.

Mistakes made in fourth species are seldom straightforward to correct. Small slips can necessitate wholesale revisions unless you have a ready opportunity to omit a tie. You can counter the 'knock-on' effect of tied notes by writing entire exercises in reverse, working backwards from the cadence.

If your opening perfect consonance seems to be eluding you, remember that you can place it on either minim 1 or minim 2 of the first bar, because the minim rest is optional.

Task 2.4.3—Complete similar sets of exercises on further sets of cantus firmi.

Sample Workings

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