In the style of the 16th Century Musical examples sung by vocal group Prepared by Vaclav Nelhybel Piano: Alexandre Barta Narrator: William Geib



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DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET MODAL COUNTERPOINT

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MODAL COUNTERPOINT

IN THE STYLE OF THE 16TH CENTURY

prepared by Vaclav Nelhybel

Musical Examples Sung By Vocal Group

Piano: ALEXANDRE BARTA Narrator: WILLIAM GEIB

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SIDE I

Band 1:

Counterpoint, as a technique of composition, represents a set of rules which co-ordinate the simultaneous progression of two or more melodic lines. In our discussion, we are going to outline the most important rules of so-called modal counterpoint, or counterpoint in the style of the sixteenth century. Modal counterpoint is also called vocal counterpoint, in contrast to instrumental counterpoint which is the second category, called counterpoint in the style of the eighteenth century.

1st Soprano: 2nd Soprano: Alto: 1st Tenor: 2nd Tenor: Baritone: Bass:

Charlotte Lyons Barbara Miller Gladys Helland Othello Pumphrey Alexandre Barta George Brooker Willie Thomas Jones

Modal counterpoint reached its perfection in the sixteenth century. The most important composer associated with this style is Giovanni Pierluigi Palestrina. It was Johann Sebastian Bach who. in the eighteenth century, developed instrumental counterpoint to perfection.

In counterpoint the chords obtained from the simultaneity of two or more melodic lines are the result of the correct treatment of the consonances and dissonances between the individual voices. The strictest application of contrapuntal technique is found in compositions by Palestrina. We shall use some excerpts from his compositions as demonstration examples on this recording. In addition, we will hear excerpts from compositions by Tomas Luis de Victoria, Marc Antonio Ingegneri and Michael Praetorius.

The contrapuntal music of the sixteenth century is mostly vocal music of religious character. For this reason most of our musical examples are vocal.

Throughout this discussion, the basic technical demonstrations use one theme, called Cantus Firmus (firm chant), of five notes. Music 1



We shall demonstrate counterpoint in two, three and four parts, and each of these examples will be shown in five different versions called species. This

could be demonstrated, of course, with excerpts from existing compositions, but we have decided to use only one theme in order to show how the various contrapuntal devices produce very different contrapuntal lines and very different relationships between them when centered around the same cantus firmus.

Our musical examples are not intended as demonstrations of how to sing contrapuntal music. A purely "demonstrative" interpretation is used which exaggerates the phrasing by very strong accents in order to underline the rhythmical interplay of the various lines.

Band 2:

Modes

Counterpoint uses twelve scales, called modes, which are divided in to two groups: six authentic and six plagal modes.

In every mode consisting of eight notes special emphasis is placed on two different notes: The strong emphasis, called final, corresponds to the tonic in the modern major-minor scales. The secondary emphasis corresponds to the dominant in the modern major-minor scales.

One plagal mode corresponds to every authentic mode, and this plagal mode starts one fourth below the final of the authentic mode. The names of the plagal modes are formed by adding the prefix "hypo" to the name of the authentic mode.

The final is identical for both the authentic and its corresponding plagal mode. The authentic and the plagal mode do not have in common the note of the secondary, dominant emphasis. The following examples indicate the full details.

lst mode: DORIAN
2nd mode: HYPO-DORIAN
3rd mode: PHRYGIAN
4th mode: HYPO-PHRYGIAN
5th mode: LYDIAN
6th mode: HYPO-LYDIAN
7th mode: MIXOLYDIAN
8th mode: HYPO-MIXOLYDIAN
9th mode: AEOLIAN

10th mode: HYPO-AEOLIAN 11th mode: IONIAN 12th mode: HYPO-IONIAN

The	final	D,	the	dominant	Α.	Music	2
The	final	D,	the	dominant	F.	Music	3
The	final	Ε,	the	dominant	C.	Music	4
The	final	E,	the	dominant	G.	Music	5
The	final	F,	the	dominant	C.	Music	6
The	final	F,	the	dominant	Α.	Music	7
The	final	G,	the	dominant	D.	Music	8
The	final	G,	the	dominant	C.	Music	9
The	final	Α,	the	dominant	E.	Music	10
The	final	Α,	the	dominant	C.	Music	11
The	final	C,	the	dominant	G.	Music	12
The	final	C,	the	dominant	E.	Music	13











Band 3:

Musica Ficta

The basic modes are diatonic. In certain melodic situations, however, some notes are altered. The altered parts are called musica ficta, or musica falsa, or musica colorata, which means "fictitious" or "false" music or music that is "colored."

B flat is used in the Dorian, Lydian and Ionian modes in descending melodic patterns in order to avoid the tritone between B and F. (The tritone will be explained later)

C sharp is always used when approaching the final in Dorian. In Aeolian, the C in the final chord is raised to C sharp which is the major third of the chord.

F sharp is used in Mixolydian when approaching the final and as the rasied third in the final chord in the Dorian mode.

G sharp is used in the Aeolian mode when approaching the final and as the raised third in the Phrygian mode (in the last chord).

The next five examples demonstrate the chromaticism or musica ficta used in the modes. Music 14-18







Tritone

The tritone or tritonus was called diabolus in musica (the devil in music), an expression which hints at how much this melodic pattern was abhorred. The tritone is the interval of an augmented fourth or diminished fifth between the first and last note of a short melodic phrase. <u>Music 19</u>



A diatonic note followed by its alteration, as for example C followed by C sharp, is unthinkable in a contrapuntal melody.

Band 4:

Cadences

Music examples 14 through 18 showed chromaticism as a standard part of the diatonic modes. These examples demonstrate also the cadence formulas in various modes. Example 14 is the cadence in the Dorian mode, example 15 is the cadence in the Phrygian mode, example 16 in the Mixolydian mode, example 17 in the Aeolian mode and example 18 in the Ionian mode.

As you may observe, there is no example for the cadence in the Lydian mode. The Lydian mode is identical with the Ionian mode except for the fourth step. In the Lydian mode the fourth is an augmented fourth, in the Ionian mode, however, a perfect fourth. To avoid the tritone, the augmented fourth is frequently altered to a perfect fourth, and the Lydian mode thus becomes identical with the Ionian mode. Since the finals of the authentic and plagal modes are identical, there is only one cadence pattern for the authentic and its corresponding plagal mode.

Band 5:

Rhythm

In counterpoint, the following rhythmical note values are used: the double whole note, the whole note, the half note, the quarter note and eighth notes which are used only in pairs of two.

The actual time unit is the half note. Every other half note is potentially accented.

There are strict rules for the division of accented half note beats into two quarter notes:

It is not permitted to divide an accented beat into two quarter notes if the following unaccented beat is an undivided half note. In other words, two quarter notes may be used on an accented beat if they are followed by another pair of two quarter notes on the succeeding unaccented beat. Music 20



Two quarter notes on an accented beat are also permitted if they are preceded by one or two quarter notes on an unaccented beat. Music 21



And finally, two quarter notes are permitted on an accented beat if the following unaccented beat is a half note tied over to the succeeding accented beat. Music 22



Band 6:

Melody

To create the free flow of the contrapuntal melodic line, numerous rules have to be observed.

A well-balanced melody should consist of more steps than skips. The skips are permitted only in certain intervals: in the minor and major third, in the perfect fourth, fifth and octave, and in the minor sixth, but in the latter upward only.

In melodies using of half notes not more than two skips in one direction are permitted. The larger skips have to be below the smaller ones. Music 23



In quarter notes only one skip is permitted. A downward skip in quarter notes is permitted on any beat. Music 24



An upward skip in quarter notes is permitted on accented beats only. Music 25

4	-	
:		
	- Contraction of the	

Skips larger than a third have to be followed by the movement of the melody in the opposite direction. Music 26



Periodical symetry and repetition of a series of melodic intervals or rhythmical patterns like this: Music 27 must be avoided.



About one third of the accented beats should be tied over from their preceding unaccented beats. The remaining two thirds of the accented beats are articulated. In the following example there are seven articulated accented beats and the remaining three accented beats are tied to their preceding unaccented beats. Music 28



A melody starts on its final or on the fifth and ends, in most cases on the final with a half or whole note on an accented beat. The final must be approached by a step from either direction. The range of a melody is created by the ambitus of its mode extended by one or two notes on either end. In a phrase, the highest note should be reached only once (Observe the tone D in the sixth measure of example 28).

If two notes of a segment of a melody are an augmented fourth or diminished fifth apart (that is a tritone), the melody must never stop on the second tone of the tritone interval, but has to continue stepwise. Music 29



Band 7:

Counterpoint In Two Parts - General Rules

Now we shall proceed to the general rules of counterpoint in two parts.

The intervals between the cantus firmus and its counterpoint line have to be handled according to certain rules.

The intervals are divided into three groups:

Perfect consonances: the unison, the fifth and the octave.

Imperfect consonances: the third and the sixth.

Dissonances: all other intervals including the perfect fourth.

The beginning and the end of two part counterpoint must always be in a perfect consonance.

Consonances may be used on any beat; dissonances, however, are permitted on unaccented beats only, as passing half or quarter notes, Music 30



or they may be permitted as alternating one quarter note or two eighth notes downward only. Music 31



A dissonance is permitted on an accented beat only if it is prepared for by tying the dissonant note to its preceding consonant note. Such a dissonant note has to be resolved to its lower second on an imperfect consonance. Music 32



In relation to quarter notes every half note is accented. In relation to a whole note every other half note is accented. Every other quarter note is accented (in any relation).

Cambiata

There is a special feature called cambiata. It consists of four notes. The initial note starts on an accented beat with a consonance; the second note, one step down, may be a consonance or dissonance; the third note, which must be a consonance, is a skip down of a third; and finally the fourth note, one step up, may be consonant or dissonant. The cambiata is a melodic pattern always employed in quarter notes. The cambiata is frequently used and is the only case in which a melodic skip may start from a dissonance (the second and third quarter notes). Here is a series of five cambiatas. Music 33



Parallel motion

Parallel motion has to be used very carefully because it limits the freedom of the parts involved. The melodic lines may not be led in parallel thirds or sixths for more than three notes. The next musical example demonstrates retarded parallel motion which can be used in more than three consecutive notes. In the following example there are seven notes led in retarded parallel motion of sixths. Music 3⁴



Parallel motion in fifths or octaves between two melodic lines is never permitted. The next example is a fragment of three notes in three parts. First we shall play the soprano and alto:

Music 35



and now the alto and tenor: Music 36



There are no parallel fifths or octaves between the individual lines. When all three lines are played together we shall hear a succession of three triads which creates three parallel fifths. Since there is no parallel motion (in fifths) between the individual lines, this example does not transgress the rules about the parallel motion. It is a fragment of the Credo from Palestrina's Mass In Te Domine Speravi. Music 37



This example also demonstrates the crossing of voices, which is a frequent procedure in contrapuntal technique.

The <u>similar</u> motion in fifths and octaves, forbidden between the top and bottom line, actually occurs fairly often. Observe the soprano and bass in the first two notes of our musical example No. 18.

The interval between two parts should not exceed the tenth.

Cross relation

A diatonic tone in one part and its altered form in another part (cross relation) should be separated by at least two beats. (See example No. 33: B natural and B flat in the soprano)

After this enumeration of the strict rules we shall play a section of the <u>Kyrie</u> from the <u>Missa de Feria</u> by Palestrina in order to show that even though all the rules are observed, the composer achieves great expressiveness of the freely moving melodic lines. <u>Music 38</u>





Now we shall turn to counterpoint in two parts. One of the two parts is the given melody, the cantus firmus; the second part, which is added to the cantus firmus, is called counterpoint. In all our demonstrations we shall use a cantus firmus consis-

ting of five notes: Music 39

There are five different rhythmical patterns in which the counterpoint can join the cantus firmus; they are called species.

First species:

The cantus firmus and the counterpoint use the same rhythmical values. Because every note of the cantus firmus starts on an accented beat, only consonances are permitted. In the next example the cantus firmus is placed once in the lower voice and once in the upper voice. <u>Music 40</u>



Second species:

For every whole note of the cantus firmus there are two half notes in the counterpoint. The first half note must be a consonance, the second half note can be either a consonance or a dissonance. Music 41



Third species:

For every whole note in the cantus firmus there are four quarter notes in the counterpoint. The first and the third quarter notes must be consonant; the second and fourth notes can be consonant or dissonant. <u>Music 42</u>



Fourth species:

Again there are two half notes in the counterpoint for every whole note in the cantus firmus. The second half note of the counterpoint, which is on an unaccented beat, is tied to the half note on the following accented beat. The half note on the unaccented beat must be a consonance, and the half note on the accented beat must be a dissonance.





Fifth species:

The counterpoint employs freely any rhythmical note values. It is called <u>florid counterpoint</u>. <u>Music 44</u>



Band 2:

Other Features (counterpoint in two parts)

In the next example both parts are free contrapuntal lines of equal importance. Music 45



The two-part counterpoint in which the second voice repeats exactly the melody of the first voice is called canon. The repetition may be identical or it can be transposed. In the next example we demonstrate a canon in which the basses begin with the melody on the tone D, and the tenors sing the exact melody, starting a whole note later, transposed one fifth higher. This is called canon in the fifth. Music 46



If the second voice does not exactly repeat the melody of the first voice but uses rhythmical changes, such as augmentation or diminution, this kind of two-part counterpoint is called imitation.

The Alleluia by Michael Praetorius is such an imitation in two parts. Music 47

Allelvia by Tractorius



Band 3:

Counterpoint In Three Parts

In three-part counterpoint the following consonant chords resulting from the three simultaneous voices involved are allowed: Major and minor triads in root position and their first inversions the diminished triad in its first inversion only.

The second inversion of a triad, the six-four chord, is a dissonant chord and therefore may be used only on an unaccented beat. Dissonant chords on an accented beat are permitted only in the fourth and fifth species where syncopation is involved.

Music 48



Similar motion in fifths and octaves may be used except in the outer parts. The third voice must be led in the opposite direction of the two parts which are led in similar motion. Music 49



The concluding chord must be always in root position. In the "minor" modes (Dorian, Phrygian, Aeolian) the third in the last chord is raised to a major third.

First species:

Here is an example of the first species in threepart counterpoint: Music 50



Now, the second species: Music 51



In the preceding two examples the cantus firmus was in the middle part. The next example, which demonstrates the third species, has the cantus firmus in the top part. <u>Music 52</u>



In the next example the cantus firmus is in the bass; the soprano and alto are written in the third species. Music 53



In the next example the syncopation, typical for the fourth species is in the soprano, the cantus firmus in the alto. Music 54













Now we shall demonstrate the free imitation technique in the three-part counterpoint on the Benedictus from the Missa Brevis by Palestrina. Following is the score and a brief analysis of the imitation technique here employed. Music 57

Benedictus from Missa brevis by Palestrina



-dic-

tus, gu

Be-













Band 4:

Counterpoint In Four Parts

In four-part counterpoint all rules mentioned in the preceding discussion are valid.

Here is an example of the first species: Music 58



In the demonstration of the second species the cantus firmus is in the tenor. Music 59



The next example, written in the fifth species, has the cantus firmus in the bass. The soprano part employs the syncopation typical for the <u>fourth</u> species. Music 60



The Amen in the next example abandons the cantus firmus in whole notes and uses four free contrapuntal lines. Music 61





We conclude the demonstration of four-part counterpoint with a short response, Una Hora by Ingegneri. In the opening of the composition the imitation technique in four parts is used. Music 62





Band 5:

Double Counterpoint in The Octave (two-part)

Now, we shall briefly explain the principle of double counterpoint. Let us take a two-part counterpoint with the cantus firmus in the lower part: Music 63



We transpose the counterpoint one octave lower, thus reversing the voices: the cantus firmus is now in the upper, and the counterpoint in the lower, voice. Music 64



Both versions are correct. A counterpoint written as just demonstrated is called <u>DOUBLE</u> <u>COUNTERPOINT IN THE OCTAVE</u>. In the text you will find a chart which shows how the intervals change when the counterpoint is transposed (one octave).

The dissonant interval of a perfect fourth becomes a perfect fifth when transposed, and vice versa, the perfect consonance of the perfect fifth becomes a dissonant perfect fourth.

Therefore, in order to create a counterpoint that may be transposed one octave we must avoid the interval of the perfect fifth on an accented beat, because it becomes a dissonant fourth when transposed. The fifth and fourth are the only critical intervals in double counterpoint in the octave.

Band 6:

Double Counterpoint In The Tenth (Two-part)

A counterpoint which may be transposed one tenth higher or lower is called <u>DOUBLE COUNTERPOINT IN THE</u> <u>TENTH</u>. As you may see from the interval chart in the text, the critical intervals are the imperfect consonance of the third, which becomes a perfect consonance of the octave, and the imperfect consonance of the sixth which becomes a perfect consonance of the fifth (and vice versa).

When transposed (one tenth) parallel motion in thirds or sixths: <u>Music 65</u> becomes parallel motion in octaves and fifths: Music 66.





Band 7:

Double Counterpoint in the Twelfth (Two-part)

The third type of double counterpoint is in the interval of the twelfth. As can be seen from the interval chart in the text, the only critical interval is the consonant sixth which becomes the dissonant seventh and vice versa. Here is a short demonstration. Music 67



Double Counterpoint In Three Parts

In double counterpoint in three parts all three lines must be reversible.

First, let us take two parts written in double counterpoint in the octave. The cantus firmus remains in the alto; the counterpoint in the bass, when transposed, moves into the soprano line. <u>Music 68</u>



To these two parts we add a third part, also written in double counterpoint in the octave. Music 69



The cantus firmus which, in the preceding example, was in the alto is in the next example transposed one octave lower, thus becoming the bottom (bass) line. The bass counterpoint from the preceding example becomes, when transposed one octave higher, the top (soprano) line. The former soprano counterpoint, which is not transposed, becomes the middle (alto) part in the next example. Music 70



Band 8:

Homophony in Contrapuntal Composition

The basic principles of modal counterpoint as demonstrated in this discussion find many applications in the musical literature of the sixteenth century. We cannot discuss here the forms of contrapuntal compositions, but we wish to point out one very common pattern. A composition, such as a motet or a part of a mass, for example, is divided into several sections. Very often, each section has its own theme which is presented voice by voice in the imitation technique. Occasionally, the contrapuntal flow is interrupted by a few beats or even by a whole short section in purely homophonic style: Then all voices sing the same words in equal rhythm. We find the alternation of the contrapuntal and the homophonic treatment within one section in Ingegneri's Una Hora, our example 62.

The short Kyrie in the next example has three sections: the first and third sections use the contrapuntal imitation technique; the middle section is homophonic.

Homophony is a strong contrasting element in the contrapuntal composition technique. <u>Music 71</u>







Free Application of Contrapuntal Technique

The very last example is written in seven parts and is based on our familiar cantus firmus D-G-F-E-D. It demonstrates a more relaxed application of the technique of modal counterpoint in the style of the sixteenth century. Music 72



N.Br

















VACLAV NELHYBEL, Biography

Vaclav Nelhybel, composer-conductor-organist, was born in Polanka, Czechoslovakia. Besides obtaining a thorough musical education under the guidance of outstanding European musicians he also studied musicology, acoustics and philosophy at different Universities in Europe. He has conducted such well known orchestras as the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra of Prague, the Vienna Symphony Orchestra and the Munich Philharmonic. As lecturer, he has given extensive courses in musical forms, composition and orchestration. Prior to coming to the U.S. for permanent residence in 1957, he was Music Director of RADIO FREE EUROPE in Munich for seven years. His many compositions include operas, ballets, symphonic works, chamber music and countless scores for radio and films.

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