Readings Assignments on
Counterpoint in Composition by Felix Salzer and
Carl Schachter

Edition: August 28, 2006

Salzer and Schachter’s main thesis is that the basic forms of counterpoint encountered in species counterpoint are “expanded and modified by various techniques of prolongation” in classically tonal compositions. In chapters 6 and 7 they compare musical excerpts to species-like compositions. The authors refer to the latter as “analytic reductions,” but for ontological and methodological reasons I prefer to think of them as “voice-leading models.”

We will be concerned with the use, function, and principles for constructing such models. Many of the reading questions pertain to the relation between the model and the excerpt, about which the authors are sometimes vague. We will endeavor to differentiate and define the forms of “figuration” and “prolongation,” only some of which are named by the authors.

1 Progressions of First Species (117–23)

Examples 6-1 through 6-4 These examples are fragments of larger works, so the lines do not necessarily cooperate by reaching points of closure.

Analyze the structure of the outer voices, depicted in the simplified rhythm of first species. Use slurs to connect tonic-triad pitches. Where do you find structural anomalies? How does each anomaly affect the line’s projection of tonic?

Examine the inner voices. Do they also related to the bass voice in the manner of first species?

Example 6-5 The authors state that many of the notes in the top line are “melodic figurations that decorate” the melodic progression D–E–F♯. What types of figuration appear in this line? Or, to put it differently, how do we think of the excerpt in terms of the voice-leading model provided by the authors? How, for example, are the notes in the second and third beats of measure 1 a decoration of a repeated D?
Example 6-6  What species of figuration connect the upper line of the voice-leading model with the upper line of the excerpt? Concentrate on measure 2. — Does each of the inner voices work with the bass in the manner of first species?

Example 6-7  Why do you suppose the bass line of the authors’ model is notated an octave above the bass line of the excerpt?

2  Progressions of Second Species (122–27)

Many of the lines in the models alternate between first- and second-species behavior. Lines of mixed species are extremely common in voice-leading models.

Examples 6-8 through 6-10  Analyze the structure of the outer voices in each model. — Do the inner voices relate to the bass in the manner of first and second species?

Example 6-11  This is a much more complicated example. The patterns in the top line resemble patterns that occur in third rather than second species. The bottom line of the excerpt, moreover, is modeled as a compound line. What are the forms of elaboration used in the top line? What aspect of the elaborations do you suppose prompted the authors to model the outer voices in a mixture of first and second species? Look at the transitions from one bar to the next.

Example 6-12  The authors describe the behavior of the upper line as operations on the high F: “the initial F is transferred down an octave; the lower F moves up a seventh to E-flat.” Leaving aside the question of how a pitch can move from one place to another, is this description consistent with their voice-leading models? How else might you describe the behavior of the upper line?

Example 6-13  Where is the ninth to which the authors refer? How is the excerpt situated in the context of the recitative? Is the high F♯ part of a line? Is C♯ part of a line? The full recitative is given below. Compose a model consisting of the given bass line and two upper parts that realize the bass figures.

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1Imagine you were talking about a geographical position and were to say: “Chicago is transferred down to St. Louis; St. Louis moves west to Kansas City.” This form of speech probably abbreviates a longer form, such as: “The train starts in Chicago . . . “.
Example 6-14  In describing variation 2, the authors mention “the outlined interval of a seventh” as a prolongation of a descending step in the theme. How clearly is this seventh projected by the top line of variation 2? And how does this relate to the manner of second species?

3  Progressions of Third Species (127–31)

Example 6-11  Make a model of the outer voices using the patterns of third species.

Example 6-15  How is the model shown in part b of the example related to part a? That is, how is it elaborated? Notice the figured bass in the excerpt, which clearly indicates that Bach was thinking of this passage in terms of a model like that shown in part b.

Example 6-17  The model is quite peculiar in that the authors place the upper line’s F, which appears on the downbeat of bar 2 in the excerpt, on the weak fourth beat of the model’s first bar. What aspect of the excerpt encourages them to think that the initial harmony (i.e., the whole note line of the model) lasts for one and a half bars? How else could this passage be modeled in the manner of species counterpoint?

Example 6-18  The author’s description of their “reductions” is clear enough. But what is the motivation, do you suppose, for the process? What are they assuming about the psychology of the listener?

Example 6-19 and 6-20  These examples “reduce themselves”! In Example 6-19, how would you model the inner voices and the bass? How do the rhythms of these voices affect one’s interpretation of the upper line?
Example 6-21  Analyze the figuration in bar 1. What are the stages of elaboration that connect the sixteenth notes to the first chord of part a of the authors’ model? — How do parts b and c of the model contradict one another? Compare this to their analysis of Example 6-19.

4  Progressions of Fourth Species [part 1] (130, 132–37)

Example 6-22  How are the fifths on the downbeat of each bar in the model “implied by context” in the excerpt? What do the authors assume about listener psychology?

Example 6-23  The repeated register transfers in the top voice are such as to give the impression that the line is taking place in two registers. The term for this is “coupling.” Where else is this term used in musical contexts? — The authors’ models show the lower of the two coupled lines as changing pitch on the first and third beats of the bar. But this is markedly different from the excerpt, where the line changes pitch not on the third beat but rather on the fourth. The authors model this line in first species with the bass. Construct a model for this line using the manner of species other than first, taking the bass as the pacesetter.

Example 6-24  This is an extremely difficult example. The authors’ premise seems to emerge from an interpretation of the motivic content of the upper line.

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\begin{align*}
&\text{In every bar but the last there is a passing motion starting on the second sixteenth, which is always consonant with the bass, unlike the first sixteenth, and concluding on the sixth sixteenth in the middle of beat 2; this sixteenth is likewise consonant with the bass. The pitches framing these step motions show up in the model as constituents of two different lines. As in an earlier example, the authors indicate that the context implies fifths on the downbeat of each bar. Are these implied in the same manner as before? How do the other sixteenths in the bar fit into this model?}
\end{align*}
\]

Example 6-25  This, too, is a difficult example. The interpretation of the bass line, in particular, is peculiar. The authors imply that the bass line during the first two beats of bar 1 is F rather than B♭. How does the actual bass line elaborate the rising third progression indicated in part c of the model? — Make a model using B♭ and C on the downbeats as constituents of the bass line. Include all lines implied by the excerpt in your model.
5 Progressions of Fourth Species [part 2] (135, 138–43)

Example 6-28  The authors’ model for the third and fourth bars suggests that “the ear” hears a direct connection between the low G and the high F♯. That seems peculiar. Showing all the stages of elaboration, make your own model of these bars that does not contain these two pitches in direct succession.

Example 6-29  Do as the authors say: “the student should try to explain the functions of all the embellishing tones of the top voice up to measure 26.”

Example 6-31  The authors imply that the bass line is structured on the model: F→B♭→C. What other pattern could be used to interpret the bass line? – How are the authors’ models inconsistent in their interpretation of parallel aspects of the excerpt? In particular, the rising thirds in the odd-numbered bars: what other species pattern could be used to model these bars? Try to make your models seem as regular in their pacing as the excerpt itself.

6 Chord Prolongation (144–47)

This reading presents a notion of “chord prolongation” that, despite its informality, consistent with Westergaard’s rules for monotriadic lines. The authors use “chord prolongation” where we have been speaking of “linear projection of a triad.” What does it mean to “prolong” a chord? What concept of “chord” is implied by this manner of speaking? — In a previous chapter the authors define “embellishing tone” as follows

We use the term *embellishing tone* to indicate the non-stepwise decoration of a single tone. This melodic function, therefore, represents a kind of disjunct analog to the stepwise neighboring tone. Because it is preceded or followed by a leap, the embellishing tone in species counterpoint must be consonant. Too large a leap will isolate the decorative tone from the main body of the line. The third is best in any case; the interval of the fourth should not be exceeded; in progressions d and e, Example 3-11, the embellishing tone is followed by stepwise motion to the main tone. (59)

Examine all the cases in which the authors use the expression “EM.” Do they all fit their definition? How else might these tones be described?

Example 6-39  The authors point to the step motion in the soprano as the prolonged element. What other aspects of the excerpt promote B♭ as the framing triad?
**Example 6-40** Evaluate the authors description of the bass line. A driving assumption of their description is that the soprano and bass complete triadic structures at the same time. Is that a necessary assumption? The entire phrase of the chorale is given below.

![Example 6-40 Image]

**7 Harmonic Progressions (148–52)**

The authors distinguish between the harmonic and contrapuntal progressions. In what sense are harmonic progressions *not* contrapuntal? Notice that they speak of “the presence or absence of harmonic function.” If harmonic function is absent, what is still present? Explain the distinction between harmonic and contrapuntal in your own words.

**8 Polyphonic Melody (153–60)**

**9 Manipulation of Register (160–69)**

Two concepts are presented: “transfer of register” and “superposition of inner-voice tones.” These are translations of Schenker’s German terms *Hohenlagen oder Tieferlagen* and *Übergreifung*.

The first concept refers to situations in which we think of a line as moving from one register to another, either up or down. Imagine a situation in which the sopranos begin singing a melody but in the middle the basses take over, continuing the melody an octave or two lower in their own register. In all cases, there needs to be some good reason to think about a note in one register as connected in a line with a subsequent note in a different register. What contextual clues, if any, are present in the excerpts discussed by the authors?

The second concept is more difficult to grasp. The original term, which means “reaching over,” is suggestive. Imagine a situation in which a line is forced to move downward, perhaps because its pitch has become a dissonant suspension. And imagine that the composer nevertheless wants the line to move upward. One way to make this happen, without contravening the law of descending resolution for dissonant suspensions, is to resolve the suspension and then leap up to a new pitch during the time of the resolution, thereby putting the line in a higher position than it would have been had it remained on the tone of resolution. For example:
The term “superposition of an inner voice” suggests that the D and F in the examples above do not belong to the upper line, but are somehow borrowed from an inner line. It is sometimes the case, as in the first example, that another line has a note of the same pitch class as the “superposed” note, but belonging to the same pitch class and belonging to the same line are radically different states of being. In general, I see no reason to multiply the number of lines to explain this kind of motion. Instead, I prefer to think of one line that flits from one trajectory to another, where those trajectories are just the sort defined by our rules of triadic elaboration. In the both examples above, I would say that the upper line sets out upon a lower neighbor trajectory, and abandons it in order to complete an upper neighbor trajectory.\(^2\)

The authors, however, are quite correct in using their expression to describe the behavior of the voices in Example 7-17; but here there are in fact two lines and neither disappears during the superposition. It would be equally correct to say that at each step one voice reaches over the other.

10 Voice Exchange (169–71)

\(^2\)Ontological point. According to the authors, “The melodic leaps stem from tones implied by context and latent in the sonorities” (165). In this scenario, any sonority is composed of a few actual tones and a bevy of latent tones. I prefer to think of sonorities as composed of tones, and other tones, should they occur can either be consistent with the sonority (either belonging to the same pitch class as one of the tones or being consonant with the tones) or not. A tone that is in this sense consistent with a sonority is neither latent nor necessarily a component in another line. Schenker, in his description of the phenomenon, lays great stress on the two-note configuration which typically has the form, or rather trajectory of an incomplete neighbor. My description simply avoids making a commitment to the linear function of the melodic leap; in some contexts it may belong to an inner voice, in others not. There is no way to tell apart from analysis of the context.