

From Two-Part Framework to Movable Module: Changing Compositional Process in the Fifteenth Century

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Richard Crocker: “Discant, Counterpoint, and Harmony,” *JAMS* 15 (1962): 1-21.

- Discant: “a system of teaching **two-part composition**, in use *from the 13th to the 16th centuries*.” Characterized by contrary motion.
- Counterpoint: in the fourteenth century the word “discant” begins to be replaced with the word “counterpoint”; same basic meaning.
- Two-part framework: Crocker dubs this two-part structure the “two-part framework.”

Crocker: Change during the 15th century

- Third (and fourth) voices enrich the two-voice sonorities.
- The two-part framework is masked by other voices, above and below, leading to “the curious matter of the Renaissance bass,” below the tenor.
- Development of stereotyped formulas for masking the two-part framework, involving parallel motion and sequence. Described by Guilielmus Monachus (c. 1480).

What Crocker *didn't do*.

- Discuss **musical examples** in relation to his outline of continuity and change.
- Explain how to identify the two-part framework in particular compositions.

What I will do.

- Explore the use of the two-part framework in examples from across the fifteenth century.
- Focus on its musical characteristics.
- Show how to identify it.

1. Pieces where the two-part framework stays in the same voices throughout the piece.
2. Pieces where the two-part framework moves around the texture over the course of the piece. This will lead to the discussion of the two-part framework and imitative texture.

1. **Default:** Two-part framework is in the Superius and Tenor voices.

Two types of evidence:

External evidence: i.e. evidence that is external to the music of the two-part framework

Internal evidence: musical characteristics of the two-part framework

External evidence

- Alternate/replacement third (and fourth) voices (contratenors).

diss. susp.

[Superius]

T+S: 8 8 10 12 10 8 6 5 ④ 3 5 6 8 8 10 8 5 3

Tenor

Contratenor B

Contratenor A

Contratenor C *

7

S. cad.

5 5 10 10 8 6 3 5 6 5 8 3 3 3 3 5 1

T.

Ct B

Ct. A

Ct. C

Du Fay, *Se la face*, with 3 contratenors (external evidence)
 (A in 7 sources; B in Esc; C in 2 sources, superius varied)
 * Superius different (C) in sources with Contratenor C

Internal evidence:

- **Cadences** (6th to 8ve) between superius and tenor
- **Lack of fourths** between superius and tenor (two-part framework must be contrapuntally complete) (okay to include fourths treated as dissonance)

diss. susp.

[Superius]

T+S: 8 8 10 12 10 8 6 5 ④ 3 5 6 8 8 10 8 5 3

Tenor

Contratenor B

Contratenor A

Contratenor C

7

cad.

S.

5 5 10 10 8 6 3 5 6 5 8 3 3 3 3 5 1

T.

Ct B

Ct. A

Ct. C

Du Fay, *Se la face* (internal evidence)

Lack of fourths between S & T; 6th-8^{ve} cadence between S&T

Internal evidence

- **Imitation** between superius and tenor
(improvisable at short time intervals)

8

13

S.

T.

Ct. B

Ct. A

Ct. C

3 3 2 3 8 3 5 5 8 8 5 5 8 6 6 6 5 6 5 8

cad.

Corner brackets
show imitation

Du Fay, *Se la face* mm. 13-18
Imitation and Cadence (internal evidence)

Internal evidence:

- **Parallel imperfect intervals** between superius and tenor (improvisable patterns)

diss. susp.

[Superius]

T+S: 8 8 10 12 10 8 6 5 ④ 3 5 6 8 8 10 8 5 3

Tenor

Contratenor B

Contratenor A

Contratenor C

7

cad.

S.

5 5 10 10 8 6 3 5 6 5 8 3 3 3 3 5 1

T.

Ct B

Ct. A

Ct. C

Du Fay, Se la face; mostly contrary motion

cad.

[Superius]
S + T: 8 8 7 6 3 6 7 6 8 6 6 6 6 5 3 3 3

Tenor
C + T: 1 3 3 5 3 5 3 5 8 10 8

Contratenor

cad.

S
5 6 5 3 3 1 3 4 6 6 10 9 8 7 6 6 5 8

T
3 8 3 2 3 3 5 8 3 5 3 5 6 5 6

Ct

Hayne van Ghizighem, *De tous biens playne*

Lots of parallel motion (6ths & 3rds), shown by red lines

Contratenor uses primarily alternating 5ths and 3rds:

Peter Schubert's "Parallel-6th model"

(described by Guilielmus Monachus)

parallel 6ths /cadence

Imitation

Al 6 6 6 8 - 6 6 6 8 7 6

Al 1 5 8 5 10 5 10 12 8 5

Al

Isaac, *Alma redemptoris* (318), mm. 1-6
 4-v. passage with two-part framework
 in superius and tenor.

Intervals shown in relation to the tenor.

2. Pieces where the two-part framework moves around the texture over the course of the piece.

How to tell when the two-part framework is in voice pairs **other than** the Superius and Tenor

Rests in one or more parts resulting in a **duo** where the voices are not the superius and tenor (*external evidence*)

Cadences: cadential formulas including pairs of voices that are not the superius and tenor.

Parallel imperfect intervals between pairs of voices other than the superius and tenor (improvisable).

Two-voice **imitation** or **canon** in pairs of voices other than the superius and tenor (sometimes improvisable).

Repeated contrapuntal combinations, or **modules**, in voices other than the superius and tenor.

[**Fourths:** negative evidence, not positive. Not considered here.]

Rests in one or more parts
resulting in a **duo**
where the voices are NOT
the superius and tenor.

External evidence

Superius

Tenor

Contratenor

S

T

Ct

S

T

Ct

S

T

Ct

S

T

Ct

T & Ct.

cad.

cad.

S & T.

S & Ct.

T & Ct.

S & T.

cad.

Power, *Quam pulchra es* (1440s), mm. 26-44

The two-voice framework moves around texture for duet sections

Cadences: 6th to 8^{ve} cadential formulas
between pairs of voices
that are NOT the Superius and Tenor.

Normal 6th-to-8^{ve} cadence in S&T in 4-voice music

The image displays two musical examples of a normal 6th-to-8^{ve} cadence in 4-voice music. The left side shows intervallic relationships for Soprano, Contratenor Altus, Cantus firmus (tenor), and Contratenor Bassus. The right side shows a specific musical example with a red box highlighting the cadence.

Intervallic Relationships (Left):

- Supranus: 6 6 8
- Contratenor Altus: 3 4 5 or 3 or 1
- Cantus firmus (tenor): 3 5 8 or 1
- Contratenor Bassus: (no intervals shown)

Musical Example (Right):

The musical example shows four staves: C. (Soprano), C.A. (Contratenor Altus), T. (Cantus firmus/tenor), and B. (Contratenor Bassus). The key signature has one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 2/4. A red box highlights the cadence in the final measure, where the Soprano voice has a 6th interval (F4) and the Contratenor Altus voice has an 8^{ve} interval (F4).

Intervals shown are in relation to the tenor voice

Guilielemus Monachus:
normal cadence as described

Gaffurius: normal cadence
as shown in example

Cantus firmus
(tenor)

fa mi fa

modus suprani

6 8

Bassus

modus tenoris

C.

C.A.

T.

B.

Guilielmus: Tenor & Bass
cadence as described

Gaffurius: Tenor & Bass
cadence shown in example

Superius

Altus

Tenor

Bassus

Compere, *Crux triumphans* (106), mm. 20-25

Gaffurius:
cadence in
Altus &

Bassus

Musical score for Gaffurius, showing a cadence in the Altus and Bassus parts. The score is written for four voices: Cantus, Contrat. acutus, Tenor, and Baritonans. The music is in 3/4 time and C major. A red box highlights the cadence in the Altus and Bassus parts, which occurs in the final measure of the excerpt. The word "cad." is written above the final note of the Altus part.

Compere:
cadence in
Altus &

Bassus

Musical score for Compere, showing a cadence in the Altus and Bassus parts. The score is written for four voices: Superius, Altus, Tenor, and Bassus. The music is in 3/4 time and C major. A red box highlights the cadence in the Altus and Bassus parts, which occurs in the final measure of the excerpt. The word "cad" is written above the final note of the Altus part.

Compere, *Propter Gravamen* (107), mm. 52-54.

Parallel imperfect intervals between pairs of voices other than the superius and tenor.

- Parallels don't happen by accident
- Patterns described by Guilielmus as the basis of improvisation;
 - Parallel 6ths:
 - faulxbourdon
 - Parallel-6th model: bassus alternates 3rd and 5th
 - Parallel 3rds are the inversion of parallel 6ths
 - Parallel 10ths: more complex

(See Schubert, *Modal Counterpoint*, pp. 189-94, 24-46)

S&T (parallel 6ths) cad. A&B²³ T&B (parallel thirds, cadence)

S
ris, quo pro gre - - - de - ris

A
quo pro - gre - - - de - ris, pro - gre-de - ris

T
gre - - - de - ris, qua - si au - ro - -

B
pro - gre - - - de - ris, pro - gre - - - de - ris qua - si au - ro - -

Josquin Desprez, *Virgo prudentissima* (105)
mm. 21-29

Parallel 10ths

Gaffurius (*Practica musice*, Milan, 1496), bk. iii, ch. xii, tr. Young):

“There is also a certain very famous progression of notes in counterpoint (*celeberrimus ... processus notularum*) –

that of the baritone accompanying the notes of the cantus by moving with similar notes at an interval of a tenth, while the tenor harmonizes with each of the parts,

a procedure which Tinctoris, Gulielmus Guarnerius, Josquin des Prez, Gaspar [van Weerbeke], Alexander Agricola, Loyset [Compere], Brumel, Isaac, and other eminently delightful composers frequently observe in their compositions.”

(For a full explanation of the contrapuntal rules see Schubert, *Modal Counterpoint*, 193-4)

The image shows a musical score for four voices: Superius, Altus, Tenor, and Bassus. The Superius and Bassus parts move in parallel motion, maintaining a constant interval of a tenth. The Altus and Tenor parts move together, with the Tenor part ending on a cadence marked 'cad.' in red.

Compere, *Propter Gravamen* (107), mm. 52-54
 Parallel 10ths in outer voices

Where is the two-part framework?

- S&B (in parallel)? OR
- A&B, who make cadence, S doubles B up a 10th?

Two-voice imitation or canon in pairs of voices other than the superius and tenor.

- Canon does not happen by accident; has to come first.
- Canon at short time interval can be improvised (Milsom calls this “stretto fuga”).

Two-voice imitation in voices other than the superius and tenor

The image displays a musical score for three voices: Altus, Tenor, and Bassus. The Altus part is written in a soprano clef (C1), the Tenor in a soprano clef (C4), and the Bassus in a bass clef (C2). The music is in a key with one flat (B-flat) and a common time signature. The Tenor and Bassus parts exhibit a stretto fuga pattern, characterized by ascending intervals of a second and a fourth, followed by descending intervals of a third, and ending in unisons. Red brackets and lines highlight these specific intervals in the Tenor and Bassus staves. The Altus part provides a melodic line that interacts with the imitative texture.

Stretto fuga at the 5th below in Tenor and Bassus
(ascending 2nds and 4ths, descending thirds, unisons)

Josquin, *Liber generationis* (303), 2a pars, mm. 159-165

Repeated contrapuntal combinations, or **modules**, in voices other than the superius and tenor.

Makes possible imitative texture.

The image displays a musical score for three vocal parts: Superius, Tenor, and Contratenor. The score is divided into three systems, each with a measure number (5, 9, and 13) above the Soprano line.

- System 1 (Measures 5-8):** A red box highlights the Tenor and Contratenor parts, labeled "parallel sixths".
- System 2 (Measures 9-12):** A red box highlights the Soprano and Tenor parts, labeled "parallel thirds (ic 8)". A red "cad." annotation is placed below the Soprano line at measure 10.
- System 3 (Measures 13-16):** A green box highlights the Tenor and Contratenor parts, labeled "ic 8 (-5 +4) cad.". A red "cad." annotation is placed below the Tenor line at measure 14.

The score includes various musical notations such as clefs, time signatures, and accidentals (sharps and flats).

Power, *Quam pulchra es*, mm. 26-44
 Repeated **modules** in duet sections

Movable Modules and Imitation

The image displays a musical score for three voices: [Superius], Tenor, and Contratenor. The score is written in a system with three staves. The Superius part is in the upper staff, the Tenor in the middle, and the Contratenor in the lower. The music is in a key with one flat (B-flat) and a common time signature. A blue rectangular box highlights a specific musical phrase in the Tenor and Contratenor parts. Within this box, red numbers '1' and '2' are placed above the notes in the Tenor part, indicating specific points of interest or imitation. The Superius part has a rest in the first measure of the highlighted phrase, then enters in the second measure.

Busnoys, Magnificat [sexti toni],
3. Quia respexit, mm. 1-3

Modules in a point of imitation: Periodic Entries (PEn)

S & T

The image displays a musical score for three voices: Superius, Tenor, and Contratenor. The score is divided into two systems. The first system shows the initial entries of the Superius and Tenor parts, with the Contratenor part starting later. The second system shows the continuation of the Superius and Tenor parts, with the Contratenor part remaining silent. Red numbers 1 and 2 indicate the first and second entries of the Superius and Tenor parts. Blue boxes highlight the first and second entries of the Tenor part. The text 'T & Ct' is written in red above the Tenor part in the first system. The text 'S & T' is written in red above the Superius and Tenor parts in the first system. The text 'S', 'T', and 'Ct' are written in black above the Superius, Tenor, and Contratenor parts in the second system. The music is written in G major and 4/4 time.

[Superius]

Tenor

Contratenor

1

2

1

2

T & Ct

1

2

S

T

Ct

Busnoys, *Pour entretenir mes amours*

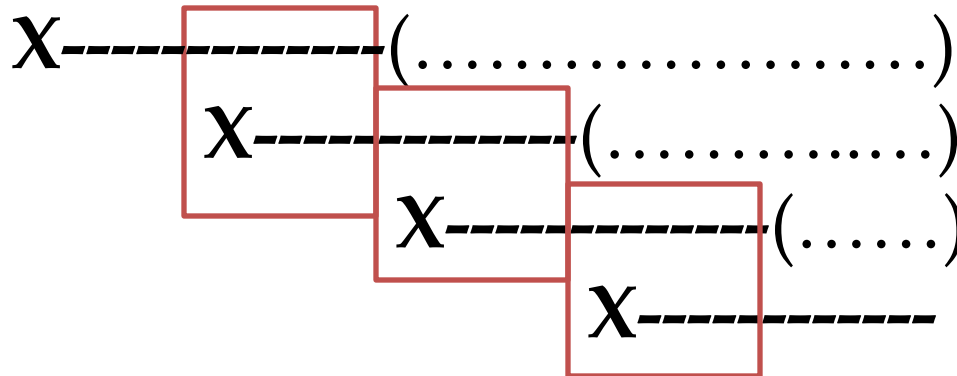
Modules in a point of imitation:
Periodic Entries (PEn) – with a divided
contratenor for the sake of another module

The image displays a musical score for three parts: Superius, Tenor, and Contratenor. The score is divided into three measures. The first measure is labeled 'Ct. & Ct. ic 8' in red. The second measure is labeled 'T & Ct.' in red. The third measure is labeled 'S & T' in red. Blue boxes highlight specific musical phrases in each part across the measures. The Superius part has a blue box around the first measure and another around the third measure. The Tenor part has a blue box around the first measure and another around the third measure. The Contratenor part has a blue box around the first measure and another around the third measure. The bottom part of the score shows a different set of parts: S, T, and Ct. The S part has a blue box around the first measure. The T part has a blue box around the first measure. The Ct part has a blue box around the first measure. The bottom part of the score is labeled 'S & Ct. ic 15' in red.

Busnoys, *Pour entretenir mes amours*

Periodic Entries (PEn)

- Voices enter after the same time interval (TI) of imitation.
- Overlap creates a repeated contrapuntal combination or *module* (shown in box)



Josquin Desprez

S&T (module, canon, duo)

A&B (module, canon, duo)

Four-part vocal setting (Superius, Altus, Tenor, Bassus) in G minor, 4/4 time. The S&T section (measures 1-10) features the Tenor and Superius parts in canon. The A&B section (measures 11-14) features the Altus and Bassus parts in canon. Red vertical lines mark the beginning of each section.

Superius: Vir - go pru - den - tis - si - ma,
Altus: Vir - go pru - den - tis -
Tenor: Vir - go pru - den - tis - si - ma,
Bassus: Vir - go pru - den -

S&T (canon, cadence)

cad.

Four-part vocal setting (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) in G minor, 4/4 time. The S&T section (measures 15-20) features the Soprano and Tenor parts in canon. A red vertical line at measure 15 marks the start of the canon. A red vertical line at measure 20 marks the end of the canon. The cadence (measures 21-24) features all four parts.

S: quo pro - gre - de - ris, quo pro gre - de -
A: si - ma, quo pro - gre - de - ris, quo pro - gre - de - ris,
T: quo pro - gre - de - ris, quo pro -
B: tis - si ma, quo pro - gre - de - ris, quo

parallel 6ths

cad. A&B

T&B (parallel thirds, cadence)

Four-part vocal setting (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) in G minor, 4/4 time. The parallel 6ths section (measures 25-28) features the Soprano and Alto parts in parallel 6ths. The cad. A&B section (measures 29-32) features the Alto and Bass parts in canon. The T&B section (measures 33-36) features the Tenor and Bass parts in parallel thirds. Red vertical lines mark the beginning of each section.

S: ris, quo pro gre - de - ris
A: quo pro - gre - de - ris, pro - gre - de - ris cad.
T: gre - de - ris, qua - si au - ro -
B: pro - gre - de - ris, pro - gre - de - ris qua - si au - ro -

30 **S&A canon** **A&B mod.10's** 35 **S&B mod. 10's, T&B cadence**

qua - si au - ro - ra, qua - si au - ro - ra, val - de ru - ti - lans, val - de ru - ti - lans,

cad. cad. cad.

a & b modules: 40 **a** **b** **a'** **b** 45 **cad. S&B**

- ra val - de ru - ti - lans? fi - li - a Si - on, fi - li - a Si -

val - de ru - ti - lans? fi - li - a Si - on,

val - de ru - ti - lans? fi - li - a Si - on

lans, val - de ru - ti - lans? fi - li - a Si - on, fi - li - a

im. modules **S&A triadic canon over long note** 50

on, to - ta for - mo - sa et su - a - b - b - vis

to - ta for - mo - sa et su - a - b - b - vis

to - ta for - mo - sa et su - a - b - b - vis

Si - on,

T & B (cad.) (start w/ A&B par 3rds?)

4-voice canon (stretto fuga)

es, es, pul-chra ut lu - na,
 es, to - ta for - mo - sa et su - a - vis es, pul - chra ut lu -
 - a - - - - - vis es, pul - chra ut lu - na, e -
 to - ta for - mo - sa et su - a - vis es, pul - chra ut lu - na,

S&T 70 (canon, cadence) cad.

e - lec - ta ut sol, e - lec - ta ut sol.
 - na e - lec - ta ut sol.
 - lec - ta ut sol. e - lec - ta ut sol.
 e - lec - ta ut sol, ut sol, ut sol, ut sol.

Josquin, *Virgo prudentissima* (105)

Conclusions

- Over the course of the fifteenth century there was **shift from a stable two-part framework** in superius and tenor, to a situation where the **framework is constantly moving** from one pair of voices to another. This corresponds to Jessie Ann Owens's study of compositional sketches in *Composers at Work*:

Sometimes they worked first with two "essential" voices and added a third, while at other times the grid of essential versus added shifted from phrase to phrase. (196)

- The new emphasis on repetition and the interest in varied textures toward the end of the century leads to more canon, parallelism, imitation, and repeated modules.

- Repeated two-voice modules become the basis of sixteenth-century imitative textures, as Peter Schubert has shown.

Corollary

Successive vs. Simultaneous composition
is a false dichotomy

- All composition is successive – you have to do one thing after another.
- All composition is simultaneous – you can compose one thing while thinking of what you will compose against it.
- An imitative texture, as in a motet around 1500, is just as “successive” as a non-imitative texture, it’s just that the two-part framework can move around the texture, and the compositional units are shorter.

Relevant publications by Peter Schubert

“Counterpoint Pedagogy in the Renaissance.” In *The Cambridge History of Western Music Theory*, ed. Thomas Christensen, 503-533. Cambridge University Press, 2002.

“Hidden Forms in Palestrina’s *First Book of Four-Voice Motets*,” *JAMS* 60 (2007): 483–556.

Modal Counterpoint, Renaissance Style, 2nd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

“Musical Commonplaces in the Renaissance.” In *Music Education in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. Russell E. Murray, Jr., Susan Forscher Weiss, and Cynthia J. Cyrus, 161-192. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010.

Relevant publication by Jessie Ann Owens

Composers at Work: The Craft of Musical Composition, 1450-1600. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Relevant publications by Julie E. Cumming.

“Composing Imitative Counterpoint around a *cantus firmus*: Two Motets by Heinrich Isaac.” *Journal of Musicology*, 28: (2011): 231–288.

“Text Setting and Imitative Technique in Petrucci’s First Five Motet Prints,” in *The Motet around 1500: On the Relationship of Imitation and Text Treatment*, ed. Thomas Schmidt-Beste. Epitome musical. Turnhout: Brepols, 2011; in press.

“From Variety to Repetition: The Birth of Imitative Polyphony.” In *Yearbook of the Alamire Foundation 6*, edited by Bruno Bouckaert, Eugeen Schreurs, and Ivan Asselman. Peer, Belgium: Alamire, 2008, 21-44.

http://alamirefoundation.org/sites/alamirefoundation.org/files/AF_Yearbook_6_2.pdf