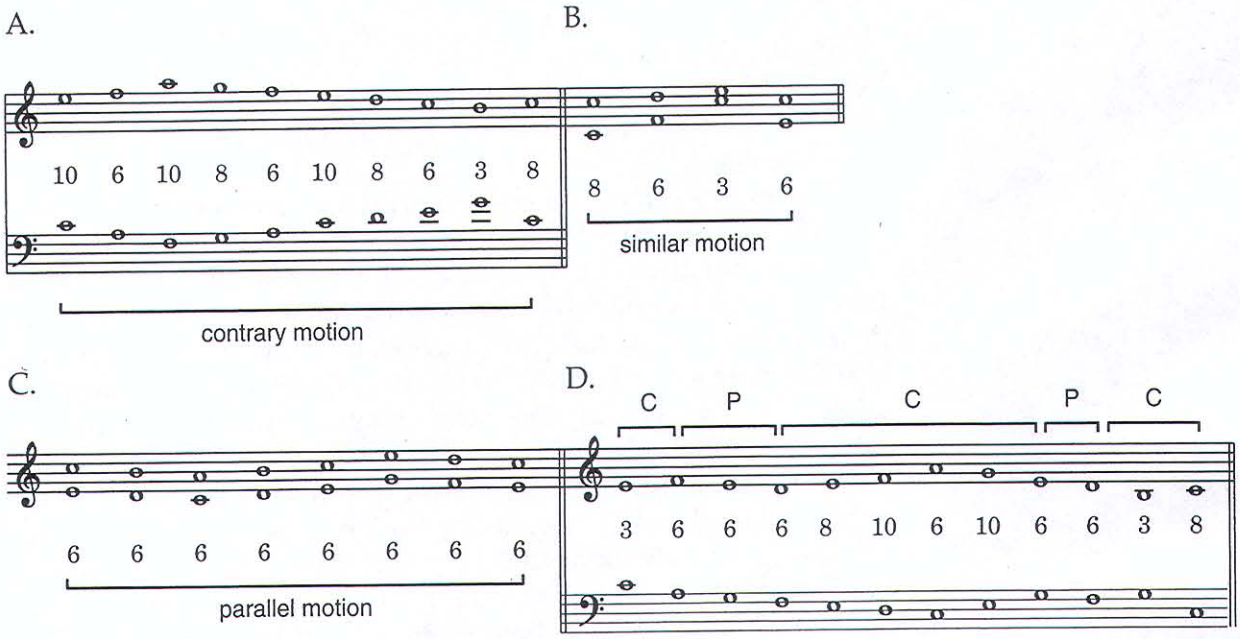
Contrapuntal Motions

Contrapuntal motion refers to the contours produced between two or more voices. Note-against-note counterpoint involves three types of contrapuntal motion.

Type 1. Voices that move in opposite directions from one another create **contrary motion**. For example, contrary motion is used in all but two cases in Example 4.5. Another example of contrary motion appears in Example 4.6A.

EXAMPLE 4.6



Type 2. Voices that move in the same general direction produce **similar motion**. Example 4.6B shows similar motion.

Type 3. Voices that move in the same direction and maintain the same generic interval create **parallel motion**. For example, parallel thirds and tenths characterize the motion between the second, third, and fourth intervals in Example 4.5. That these intervals are both major and minor does not affect the designation *parallel*; only the generic intervallic size needs to be repeated. Example 4.6C shows a string of parallel sixths.

Contrary motion creates the most independence between voices. You should therefore incorporate it as much as possible. Parallel motion can be very beautiful. But given that the voices are heard as shadowing one another, parallel motion substantially reduces voice independence and general motion. In order to maintain as much independence and momentum as possible in parallel motion, you may use only imperfect intervals (thirds and sixths). Further, parallel motion in thirds or sixths should be limited to a maximum of three consecutive uses (6–6–6, or 3–3–3) in order to avoid monotony. Music is made up of a mixture of these various motions to create a balanced and pleasing structure (Example 4.6D).

While parallel sixths and thirds are allowed, moving directly from one perfect interval between the CF and the counterpoint voice to another perfect interval of the same size is forbidden. Listen to Example 4.7, which contains several examples of such **parallel perfect intervals**, each of which is marked with parallel lines.