

Weak-Beat Consonance

You may move to a weak-beat consonance by step or by skip. There is only one way to create a consonant step motion: by moving from a fifth to a sixth or a sixth to a fifth, since only this intervallic combination contains two adjacent consonances. The generic term for such step motion is **5–6 technique** (see Example 4.12, mm. 1–2 and m. 5). The consonant second pitch may continue its motion in the same direction, in which case we call it a **consonant passing tone**, or it may return to the pitch heard on the downbeat, in which case we call it a **consonant neighbor tone**. Example 4.12 presents examples of each.

Consonant skips are motions by a third. **Consonant leaps** are motions by intervals larger than a third. To skip or leap, the weak-beat note must be consonant with both the preceding melody note and the CF. Examples of consonant skips and leaps are found in mm. 3–4 and 6–9. Consonant skips and leaps are also possible from the weak beat to the strong beat, but, again, they must be consonant with the preceding melody note and the CF; see Example 4.12, from mm. 1–2 and mm. 4–5. Notice that the majority of leaps take place *within*, rather than *between*, measures. This is because leaps draw attention to themselves; when they occur on an accented beat, they are particularly noticeable, thus detracting from the flow of the line.

EXAMPLE 4.12 Second-Species Counterpoint Using Intervallic Consonance on All Strong and Weak Beats

The musical notation for Example 4.12 shows a two-staff system. The top staff is the melody, and the bottom staff is the counterpoint (CF). The counterpoint consists of a series of whole notes. The melody consists of eighth and sixteenth notes. Various intervals and motions are labeled above the melody: CPT (Consonant Passing Tone) above measures 1-2 and 5; CL (Consonant Leap) above measures 3-4, 6-7, and 8-9; CN (Consonant Neighbor Tone) above measure 4; CS (Consonant Skip) above measures 2, 6, and 8. The intervals 5-6 and 6-5 are also labeled below the melody in measures 1 and 5 respectively.

Weak-Beat Dissonance

Dissonance is the most important new feature of second-species counterpoint. Indeed, dissonance is the source of much expression in tonal music and a powerful way to create a dynamic flow. But dissonance, like any great force, must be carefully controlled.

Second-species counterpoint uses a single type of dissonance: the **unaccented passing tone**. Passing tones (PTs) occur on a weak beat in 2:1 counterpoint, and they fill the space within the interval of a third, creating a smooth, stepwise motion. (We saw an example of the consonant passing tone using the 5–6 technique in Example 4.12.) The motion into and out of the dissonant passing tone must occur in a single direction, either ascending or descending. Since the PT may only occur on the weak beat, it will lie between two strong-beat consonances that are a third apart. Note in Example 4.13 that there are also consonant passing tones.