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Exercises A: G-B-A B: C-D-E C: A- \sharp E-F

Hearing Two-Voice Counterpoint

You are now ready to listen to and notate two-voice counterpoint examples. As you learned when taking single-line dictation, it is important to postpone writing any pitches until you understand the musical context in which they occur. For example, if you listen to an eight-measure melody that you feel divides into two units, and you have memorized the first unit (by being able to sing it), then you are ready to write it down. Thus, always begin your listening with more general and global considerations, leaving the details until later hearings.

As always, begin by quietly singing $\hat{1}$, followed by the remaining scale members to situate yourself in the key; then listen to the first playing of the example. When listening to examples with multiple voices, focus on the following elements:

1. The opening and closing scale degrees in each of the two lines.
2. The motion of the individual lines and whether they are predominately by step or by leap.
3. The harmonic intervals formed by the two parts. Listen for consonance and dissonance and how dissonance is approached and left.

Another strategy you might wish to use (at least in the initial stages of notating two-voice counterpoint) is to concentrate on individual lines. Of course, this method somewhat defeats the goal of hearing multiple voices simultaneously. However, if you can sing an entire line and notate it and then turn to hearing how lines combine (begin with short units of one or two measures), you will soon be able to hear these two voices simultaneously.

Before you listen to two-voice lines, keep in mind the following tips and remember that notation is the last step, not the first.

1. *Be prepared.* Make sure you understand and anticipate clues, such as the key, the mode, and the number of measures in the example.
2. *Trust yourself.* It is a common mistake to write down an answer and then to assume it is wrong. More often than not, your initial impressions are correct.
3. *Play the odds.* A great deal of successful hearing is accomplished by means of informed guessing. For example, if you are trying to determine the final pitch of a melody but you know only that "it sounded convincing," you can rely on the odds that it is probably $\hat{1}$, since passages close there more often than on any other scale degree.
4. *Listen actively and with a goal.* Many times you might want music's dramatic power and beauty simply to wash over you. But taking dictation requires thoughtful, concentrated listening and parsing of the music