

As you can see, the specific pitches, their combination into sonorities, their individual movement, and their interaction with other voices are not haphazard. Rather, they are part of a well-regulated and thoughtful procedure. The relationship between and movement of two or more voices is called **counterpoint** ("melody against melody") or **polyphony** ("multiple sounds"). Counterpoint has been the focus of Western music study since the tenth century and it continues to serve musicians to this day. Contrapuntal relationships depend on two elements: (1) the behavior of consonant and dissonant intervals, and (2) the harmonies implied by their interaction. In this brief introduction to two-part counterpoint, we focus exclusively on the first element: how consonance and dissonance create musical motion. Our study of harmony, the second element, begins in Chapter 5.

By the early eighteenth century, musicians had developed user-friendly ways to teach counterpoint. Johann Fux is credited today with a particularly succinct pedagogy. In fact, his book *Gradus ad Parnassum* was closely studied by composers of the late eighteenth century, including Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, as well as composers throughout the nineteenth century, including Brahms. The book and its concepts continue to this day to be a fundamental part of music theory instruction. Many composers, including Mozart, taught composition using a healthy dose of the ideas presented in *Gradus*. The compositional exercises of some of Mozart's students have been preserved, including several hundred pages from the pen of a wealthy Englishman named Thomas Attwood. Mozart considered Attwood as possessing some talent, remarking that he "is a young man for whom I have a sincere affection and esteem. . . . He partakes more of my style than any scholar I ever had." However, Mozart wasn't always complimentary, as we can see in Example 4.2, in which he has crossed out Attwood's entire exercise and, in English, expressed his frustration in no uncertain terms.

EXAMPLE 4.2

The image shows a musical score for two staves. The top staff is labeled with a circled 5 and the bottom staff with a circled 10. Both staves have the phrase "you are an ass." written below them. The notes are connected by lines, and the figures are written below the notes.

Staff	Figure	Interval
5	5	5
6	6	6
5	5	5
3	3	3
5	5	5
6	6	6
3	3	3
6	6	6
8	8	8
6	6	6
3	3	3
6	6	6
3	3	3
3	3	3
1	1	1

Fux begins with a study of melody (we have already dealt with this topic to some degree in Chapter 3). In subsequent chapters he uses these melodies, called **cantus firmi** ["fixed songs"; singular: **cantus firmus (CF)**], as the structural pillars against which he teaches how to add first one voice, later two, and, still later three, creating a total of four parts.

In order to make these studies as pedagogical as possible, Fux presents a series of five steps—or **species**—each of which isolates the way that an added voice would move against the CF. These five species begin, logically enough, with the addition of a single pitch above or below each pitch of the CF, resulting in **note-against-note-counterpoint**, or **first-species counterpoint** (also