

Fourth Species

Overview – Basic principles

Main idea: motion in suspensions, with notes starting on the weak, second half-note beats and then tied into the strong, first half-note beats.

Suspensions

Dissonant suspension

Suspension begins with *preparation*, a consonance on the second half-note beat.

This note is tied over into the first beat, producing dissonance. (In fourth species, dissonance occurs only on the strong beat, not on the weak beat.) This is the *suspension* proper.

It then moves on to the *resolution* in the second half of the measure – downward by step to a consonance. (Always downward, whether writing lower or upper CTP)

The image shows a musical score for a dissonant suspension in the upper counterpoint. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff (upper counterpoint) and a bass clef staff (lower counterpoint). The upper staff is divided into two measures. The first measure has a half note on G (labeled '5') and a half note on A (labeled '6'). The second measure has a half note on B (labeled '7') and a half note on A (labeled '6'). The lower staff has a half note on C (labeled '8') and a half note on D (labeled '10'). The upper staff is labeled 'prep.' above the first measure, 'susp.' above the second measure, and 'res.' above the second measure. The lower staff is labeled 'prep.' below the first measure, 'susp.' below the second measure, and 'res.' below the second measure. The notes in the upper staff are tied across the measure boundary.

Dissonant suspensions in the upper counterpoint

Three allowed suspensions: 7-6, 4-3, 9-8.

First two are best; use 9-8 sparingly, never chained (creates parallel octaves).

Dissonant suspensions in the lower counterpoint

Three allowed suspensions: 2-3, 9-10, (4-5)

First two are best; use 4-5 very sparingly, never chained (creates parallel fifths).

Consonant Tie

Consonant ties occur when both of the tied half notes are consonant. Because the half note on the downbeat is consonant (where the suspension normally would be), **any continuation is possible** – upward or downward, step or leap.

Sometimes consonant ties mimic dissonant suspensions by continuing downward by step. This happens most frequently with 5-6 suspensions (in either voice).

Consonant suspensions should not predominate – fourth species exercises should consist mainly of dissonant suspensions.

Suspensions in series

Maximum of three in a row for chained suspensions of the same type (7-6, 2-3, etc.).

Breaking Species

Sometimes instead of tying over the consonant second beat, you move to a new (consonant) note on the first beat. **This is called breaking the species; you break out into second species (briefly!), and the rules for second species apply. Do this as little as possible.**

Reasons to do this: break out of suspension chain after three; melodic variety; avoiding errors.

Voice-Leading Rules – Dealing with perfect consonance

Fifths and octaves

In fourth species the ear often connects consecutive *weak* beats.

No fifths, octaves, or unisons on consecutive weak beats if a dissonance occurs on the strong beat.

OK if a consonance is in between.

When fourth species breaks into second, rules apply as in second species.

The Unison (not actually about voice-leading, just about the interval's use)

Can't be the resolution of a dissonant suspension, but otherwise may occur freely on either beat.

Beginning and Ending

Always start with half rest, always tie the first note across the barline (never start by breaking species).

In the next to last measure, use scale degree one on a strong beat as a dissonant suspension (prepared in the previous measure), resolving to the leading tone. Note that this ending is the most prescribed of any species, as two and a half measures are entirely given. The only choice to be made is whether to end with a unison or an octave when writing lower counterpoint.

Melodic Construction

Because dissonant suspensions predominate, and because they all resolve down by step, fourth species lines will mainly go down. Within that constraint, do as much as possible to create variety and a large shape. Especially use consonant strong beats strategically, because they allow free continuation (often an upward leap, or a note that sets up an upward leap to the preparation of a dissonant suspension on the next weak beat).

Tied, repeated notes across the barline are a main feature of fourth species; repeated notes within a measure are never used.

As in other species, avoid writing a climax in the CTP in the same measure as the climax in the c.f. The climax should be a tied note; breaking species should be unobtrusive, so don't write a climax in second species. For avoiding simultaneous climaxes, count the start of this tied note, not the end.

Range and Spacing

The range of the melody and the spacing between the voices should be at most an octave and a sixth.