BIZET'S CANONIC PASSAGE

Six hundred years later, the famous opera composer Georges Bizet wrote incidental music for Daudet's play *L'Arlésienne* (1872). Although a few musicians appreciated Bizet's music, the play was a big flop. So he extracted four sections of the incidental music and rewrote them for full orchestra. That version of the music was a big success and you may recognize this melody that Bizet treated canonically.

FIG. 4.11. L'Arlésienne Excerpt, Fourth Movement, A Section

L'Arlésienne is the lesser known of Bizet's last two great masterpieces, the other being *Carmen* (1875).

HOW TO WRITE A SIMPLE CANON AT THE OCTAVE

We looked at what defines a canon and two examples that are separated by six hundred years. Now, let's learn how to write one. Canonic technique includes applying our previous work with mixed ratios, non-chord tones, and motivic manipulation.

Step 1: Set It Up. Choose the key, meter, and length of measures. For this example, we will work in F major, 4/4, and eight measures.

Step 2: Outline the Form. The leader voice begins first, the follower voice enters two measures later, and both voices stop at the downbeat of measure 8 where the bass voice moves from scale degrees 5 to 1 and the treble voice steps to the tonic for that traditional perfect authentic cadence sound.
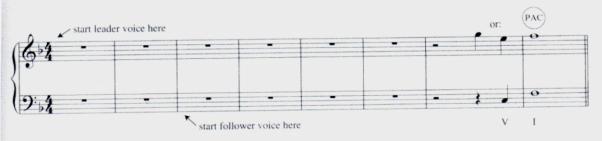

FIG. 4.12. Initial Setup and Outline of the Form

Step 3: Write the beginning of the leader voice. Write a simple diatonic melody for measures 1–2 ("a") that clearly outlines tonic-dominant-tonic harmony. This will let the listener "hear" the key; establishing the key is very important for all tonal music.

FIG. 4.13. Write the Beginning of the Leader's Voice

For this work, remember to label all non-chord tones and to include Roman numerals under the bass clef (even when only the leader voice is playing). It is important to be aware of the harmonies that you are implying with the melodies you create.

TIPS FOR WRITING CANONS

Tip 1.　An effective rhythmic practice to establish the key is to place the dominant harmony (the V chord) on a strong beat before the follower voice enters, and resolve it to the tonic harmony (the I chord) on the strong beat when the follower voice enters.

Tip 2.　An effective harmonic practice is to create the interval of a third or a sixth between leader and follower when the first note of the follower voice enters (measure 3, beat 1 in this example). You can do this by beginning the melody on the tonic (scale degree) and ending this first part with the mediant scale degree (or vice versa).

Tip. 3.　Moving by step is an effective melodic tool. Leaps are very effective for contrast but only if they do not occur too often.

TIPS FOR WRITING CLASSICAL MELODIES

If you would like that traditional melodic sound, in addition to being mindful of leaps, the following tips will help your melody sound classically historic, as in the late eighteenth and nineteenth century European styles (also called the "common practice period"):

1. Two leaps in a row must outline a triad.

2. If you leap a P5 or more, then immediately change direction.

3. Avoid augmented intervals.

Step 4: Start the Follower. For this exercise, we will keep all notes diatonic to the key. Copy measures 1–2 of the treble voice into measures 3–4 of the bass voice transposed down an octave ("a").

FIG. 4.14. Start the Follower

Step 5: Continue the Leader's Counterpoint Against the Follower. Write good counterpoint in the treble voice measures 3–4 ("b") using mixed ratios to complement the melody in the bass voice. Make sure this new part of the melody supports the implied chords, and label the non-chord tones.

FIG. 4.15. Continue the Leader's Counterpoint

Audio 22

WRITING GOOD COUNTERPOINT

1. If one voice is moving faster, the other voice may move slower and vice
    versa. This principle, that "each voice takes its turn," allows foreground
    shifting from one voice to another and helps maintain melodic independence.
    An exception to this guideline is when both voices are moving in parallel
    step-wise motion (this works for thirds and sixths in the traditional style).

2. Apply the motivic skills you learned in the previous chapter to your coun-
    terpoint. The new counterpoint that you write should often be motivically
    related to that which came before. Notice how this develops in our example.

Step 6: Continue the Follower Voice at the Octave. Copy measures 3–4 of the treble voice
into measures 5–6 of the bass voices, transposed down an octave ("b").

Audio 23

FIG. 4.16. Continue the Follower Voice at the Octave

Step 7: Continue the Leader Voice. Write good counterpoint in the treble voice in measures 5–6 ("c") using mixed ratios to complement the melody in the bass voice. Make sure that this new part of the melody supports the implied chords and label non-chord tones, as shown in figure 4.17.

Audio 24

FIG. 4.17. Continue the Leader Voice

Step 8: Continue the Follower Voice, but Prepare to Cadence. The next logical step would be to copy measures 5–6 of the treble voice into measures 7–8 of the bass voice transposed down an octave. We would do this if the canonic part of the composition were longer than eight measures. However, we need measure 8 to be the downbeat for the resolution of the perfect authentic cadence, so we must stop the canonic passage before that point. Start copying "c" into the follower voice. At some point, you will leave "c" and make the cadential formula to close the phrase. In this example, we will copy the leader voice's measure 5, beats 1–2 into the follower voice's measure 7, beats 1–2 (down an octave). So "c" begins in the follower voice, then departs from the canonic material and instead prepares for the cadential formula.

FIG. 4.18. Prepare to Cadence

Step 9: Cadence. Fill in the rest of measure 7 to make the perfect authentic cadence. The canonic passage ends with new counterpoint that realizes a perfect authentic cadence.

Audio 25

FIG. 4.19. Cadence

Step 10: Always double-check your work. Pretend that you are the teacher, and you will see your work in a new light and catch any "oops!" that you may not have seen before. You're done, congratulations!

Here is a map of how the eight measures should be constructed:

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Leader	a		b		c			
Follower	(rest)		a		b		c' (cadence)	I

FIG. 4.20. Map of Canon

SUMMARY

The canon is one of the most important elements in counterpoint—when the same thing happens at a different point in time in another voice. At any simultaneous point in time the canon, and imitative counterpoint in general, is defined by the contrasts between those voices—different rhythms, moving in different directions, different timbres (instrumental colors). So, there is a temporally, diagonally unifying factor perceived with simultaneous differences. We hear *the same* later on partly because each voice maintains its indepen-dence by *being different* at any single point in time. This simultaneous contrast and diag-onal sameness is crucial to understanding counterpoint's power and effectiveness. In this chapter we learned about the basic type, or baseline, of canons—the simple canon at the octave (or unison). There are many different types of canonic and imitative writing and we explore them in the chapters to come.