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THOSE BORING, ARCAINE PART-WRITING EXERCISES

L. POUNDIE BURSTEIN

KEYNOTE ADDRESS OF THE 2018 MTSMA ANNUAL MEETING
(WILLIAM PATTERSON UNIVERSITY, WAYNE, NJ)

Discussions of music theory pedagogy frequently begin by criticizing those boring, arcane part-writing exercises that harmony professors force upon their students. These sterile-sounding exercises are easy to disparage, since they often seem so far removed from the type of music that inspires us. As is regularly noted, students learn the most about music through creative engagement, not rule-laden exercises.

In this light, people often cite alternate paradigms for learning music theory. For instance, it is often mentioned how much better trained than current students were the orphans of eighteenth-century Naples, who played partimenti for hours each day and for years upon end. Granted, unlike today's students, those Neapolitan orphans were not a diverse bunch, and they all liked the same type of music, a style with which they were all intimately familiar. Besides, these orphans did not fill out teacher-evaluation forms at the end of every semester. Nonetheless, those of them who played partimenti day in and day out, year after year—and who did not actually commit suicide before finishing their training—were indeed much better trained in that specific style than the average student today, who studies harmony for a few hours a week over the course of three semesters.

This is much like what is found with exercises attached to any subject. You want to learn French? Live in France for ten years, speak French all day long, and you'll know more French than if you work on vocabulary and grammar exercises for a few semesters. Still, even if you are a native Francophone, you could nonetheless benefit from vocabulary and grammar exercises to help fine-tune your language skills. Or, if you want to learn some French in just a few semesters (but don't have the time or desire to speak French all day long), a few focused exercises can certainly help speed the learning process.

And something similar can be said of part-writing exercises. With part-writing exercises, teachers provide a set of Roman numerals or a figured bass that students are asked to realize in a largely homophonic, four-part setting. Although the solutions can be notated, part-"writing" exercises also can be completed directly at the keyboard or by having a group of students sing or improvise the four parts, without writing the notes beforehand.

Ideally, such exercises should not function as a substitute for or even necessarily as a prelude to more creative activities used in the instruction of tonal harmony. Rather, they should be employed as an adjunct to other types of engagements. Since instruction in part-writing exercises is already widespread, most published essays dealing with music theory pedagogy understandably focus instead on creative assignments, leaving the teaching of part writing and its rationale to fend for itself. Alternately, part-writing exercises are cited as pedagogical counterexamples, exemplifying the type of stuffy, pedantic pedagogy that is so fun to mock. There is particular glee that accompanies pointing out various instances in the repertoire that fail to literally match what is prescribed by standard part-writing rules (as though these exercises were intended to faithfully mirror what happens in real music). What gets lost in the shuffle, however, are the substantial benefits such exercises offer for establishing sensitivity to voice-

leading processes, in ways that can positively impact the hearing, performing, analyzing, and composing of tonal music of various styles. Unfortunately, the aims of and purposes for teaching part writing are often misconstrued, leading to frustration among teachers and students alike.

EXERCISES VS. REAL MUSIC

The utility of musical exercises as an aid in developing sensitivity to voice-leading procedures was well understood by previous generations of musicians. This is exemplified by the prevalent use of species counterpoint in music pedagogy starting from around the middle of the eighteenth century. Such exercises apparently did not serve as a prologue to training in composition, but as an adjunct to it, as a means of refining skills that students already had begun to acquire through practical training in composition and improvisation.¹

Consider, for instance, the early training of Ludwig van Beethoven. By the time he started studying species counterpoint in Vienna under the tutelage of Joseph Haydn and Johann Georg Albrechtsberger, Beethoven was an extremely accomplished composer. While still in Bonn, Beethoven had already penned some superb works that remain in the repertoire, such as his Wind Octet, Op. 103.² He no doubt acquired his early facility through extensive practice in improvisation, performance, and composition. Naturally, his youthful improvisations and compositions relied a great deal on ready-made schemas, patterns, formulas, and conventions that he culled from the musical style of the time, with which he was extremely familiar. Having learned how to handle these schemas in a visceral, haptic sense, Beethoven could then plug them into various settings. But skill with manipulating standard patterns might easily lead to

¹ See excellent discussion in Diergarten 2011 regarding the use and function of species counterpoint in the eighteenth century.

² Beethoven composed the Octet by 1793; it was published posthumously, at which point it was arbitrarily assigned the high opus number of Op. 103; see Burstein 2006.

dependence on clichés. By facilitating his ability to uncover principles that lie at the heart of these patterns, working with relatively abstract species counterpoint exercises arguably better empowered Beethoven to cut to the heart of the music, thereby paving the way for him to polish and refine techniques that he initially developed through hands-on training.

The layout of species counterpoint exercises is clearly artificial, and its procedures far more constrained than those of the prevalent styles of the eighteenth century. Such artificial constraint is indeed a hallmark of nearly all types of exercises, from the practice of scales by instrumentalists and vocalists through the use of bicep curls in sports training. These constraints, in turn, help isolate the skill one seeks to cultivate. By the start of the eighteenth century, musicians had long recognized that the conservative contrapuntal procedures used in strict composition relate to those found in freer styles. Indeed, theorists noted that the contrapuntal procedures of freer “theatrical” styles could be understood as variants of those presented in a more straightforward manner within the strict style, otherwise known as the *stile antico*. As such, composing pieces in the strict style could be understood not only as an end unto itself, but also as a means of acquiring and internalizing an understanding of contrapuntal techniques that underlie compositions where counterpoint is treated in a much looser fashion.

Significantly, use of species counterpoint exercises as a pedagogical tool took off only after the *stile antico* waned in popularity.³ In earlier decades of the eighteenth century, in order to develop the contrapuntal skills inherent in the *stile antico*, one would simply compose a piece in that style. Inevitably, such a task would also require the need to attend not only to counterpoint, but to other things as well, such as text setting and texture. When composing in the *stile antico*

³ The strict style did continue to be employed in sacred choral music in the late eighteenth century, though to a lesser degree than previously; see Chen 2000.

largely ceased to become an end unto itself, but instead was employed primarily to help acquire skills that could then be applied to freer styles, musicians recognized the advantages of teaching strict contrapuntal techniques within the context of exercises. After all, although they were to be completed in a musical fashion, species counterpoint exercises were clearly not intended to serve as actual pieces of music. The very artificiality of these exercises helped remove many of the distractions that inevitably accompany work on actual pieces of music, thereby allowing students to focus almost exclusively on contrapuntal technique within a relatively isolated, laboratory-like setting.

Their status as exercises might not be as obvious with part-writing assignments as it is with species counterpoint. Since its layout is so overtly artificial, it is hard to imagine anybody mistaking a species counterpoint exercise for a real piece of music. Part-writing exercises, on the other hand, somewhat resemble four-part chorales of the type that are still sung in many church services.

If their primary function were to train students to compose hymns, however, the utility of part-writing exercises would be highly questionable. Although it is often suggested that four-part harmony exercises seek to emulate the practices witnessed in the chorales by J. S. Bach, part-writing exercises rarely come even close to exhibiting the sophistication and complexity of Bach chorales. If anything, the procedures of traditional part-writing exercises are more like those found in standard hymnal chorales. Hymnal chorales usually are extremely straightforward, conservative, and even bland—which makes their style particularly suitable for what is sought for abstract, generic exercises. Yet surely the main goal of these exercises should not be to compose the type of music that few would voluntarily listen to, unless they were actually in church.

Ultimately, the only unbreakable rule for composing real music is to create something that is beautiful, expressive, and stirring. With part-writing exercises, on the other hand, musical expressiveness is not that important, nor is it necessarily even desired. Expressiveness can be reserved for other types of pedagogical activities, such as “model composition” assignments, in which students are asked to compose a work that emulates a specific style (such as a minuet in the Classical style). Model composition assignments require that intense attention be given not only to voice leading, but also to many other musical features at the same time, such as rhythm, form, texture, orchestration, and the like. Part-writing exercises, on the other hand, concentrate on nurturing increased sensitivity to certain basic voice-leading processes that form a vital part of tonal music of various styles, and it is in the pursuit of this aim that part-writing exercises serve their greatest purpose.

I argue that, if properly utilized, part-writing exercises should be geared toward reinforcing the concepts that (1) tonal music involves chords, and that (2) tonal music involves chord progressions. Stated simply: these exercises help to teach that tonal music could be understood as involving *chords* that *progress* from one harmony to the next. It is relatively easy to see chords and chord progressions within part-writing exercises. However, these things are not always so readily apparent within real music, not unless one has first trained by working on traditional harmony exercises.

SENSITIVITY TO (IMPLIED) CHORDS

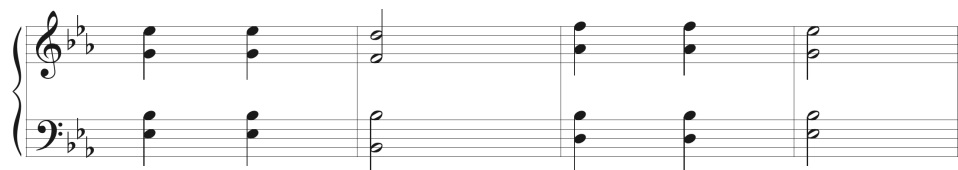
As an example of how part-writing exercises can promote sensitivity to the role of chords in tonal music, consider the passages shown in Ex. 1. Ex. 1a excerpts a piece by Carl Czerny; Ex. 1b presents an exercise-like fragment that shows Czerny's own analysis of this passage. That both passages of Ex. 1 involve an interchange between tonic and dominant chords may seem painfully obvious to those with training in harmony. On the other hand, the underlying harmonies of Ex. 1a may not be so obvious to beginners. In particular, notice that chords are for the most part not literally present in the excerpt of Ex. 1a, for at almost no point do more than two tones of a harmony appear simultaneously. The chords here are merely implied, they are a type of fiction that exists only in our imagination. In contrast, the exercise-like passage in Ex. 1b presents the imagined harmonies in an explicit manner.

EXAMPLE 1. Carl Czerny, *School of Practical Composition*, Op. 600 (1848).

(a) Excerpt from set of variations (1848, 22).



(b) Czerny's harmonic model of the excerpt from Ex. 1a (1848, 28), in the manner of a part-writing exercise.



Czerny describes this as displaying "the harmony upon which the forging theme is founded."

The notion that the passage of Ex. 1a could be understood in relation to the model of Ex. 1b is much easier to grasp for those who have had practice with four-part harmony exercises. Most beginning students likely would have trouble composing something as elaborate as Ex. 1a. However, relative beginners could readily compose something like Ex. 1b, and being able to do so helps them become more aware of the harmonic foundations of a piece such as Czerny's. And even for those students who have had such extensive training in and familiarity with this style that they could compose something that approximates the features of Czerny's composition, studying part writing nonetheless could help them hone an increased awareness of its chordal and voice-leading basis.

SENSITIVITY TO (IMPLICITLY) SMOOTH VOICE LEADING

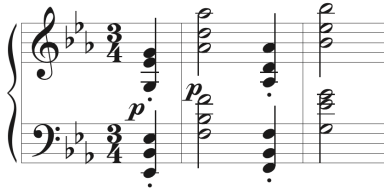
As noted above, in addition to demonstrating how music can be understood in relation to chords, part-writing exercises bolster awareness of harmonic *progression*, in which each note of every chord in tonal music can be understood implicitly to lead to a note of the following chord. In actuality, harmonies merely follow one another; the notion that one harmony leads to or resolves to the subsequent one is supplied by our imagination. Nonetheless, this implied notion is vital to understanding tonal music. Traditional harmony exercises are extremely useful in reinforcing this concept by having the upper voices largely move smoothly and independently from one chord to the next in a transparent manner.

This sense of implicitly smooth voice leading is not always obvious within real musical settings. In the passage of Ex. 2a, for instance, notice the large melodic intervals between the notes of each successive chord. The wild leaps here create a delightfully disjointed effect, one

that is nicely suited for an expressive, creative composition. However, these leaps make it difficult to see how the notes of each chord can be understood to lead from one harmony to the next.

Ex. 2b provides a harmonic model of this passage in the form of a good part-writing exercise. Although it uses the same harmonies found in Ex. 2a, in the passage of Ex. 2b the underlying motion between the chords is made explicit, with each of the voices moving smoothly from one chord to the next. In Ex. 2c, on the other hand, there are huge leaps between the notes of each chord. The registers of the pitches in Ex. 2c do closely match those found in the Beethoven excerpt. Because of its many large leaps, however, Ex. 2c fails to clearly demonstrate the voice leading between harmonies. As a result, Ex. 2c is a poor part-writing exercise and a poor model for the passage of Ex. 2a.

EXAMPLE 2. Ludwig van Beethoven, Op. 31/3/iii, mm. 1–2, excerpt and two voice-leading models.

(a)	(b)	(c)
		
Great composition; not a four-part harmony exercise.	Not a composition, but fine part-writing exercise: demonstrates harmonic progression with smooth motion in the upper voices.	Poor part-writing exercise, and poor composition.

Some students might complain: “if Beethoven can use big leaps in his voice-leading, why can’t I?” The reason is *not* because he’s Beethoven and they aren’t. If Beethoven used such big leaps in a harmony exercise, he would be marked wrong, too. But Beethoven is writing a composition, not an exercise, and his composition does not (and naturally need not) display

voice-leading in the straightforward manner expected of an exercise. Put differently, Ex. 2a is a great compositional excerpt, because it sounds beautiful and inspiring—but it would be a lousy part-writing exercise. Ex. 2c, on the other hand, sounds dull, and thus it is both a lousy composition *and* a lousy exercise.

SENSITIVITY TO (IMPLICITLY) INDEPENDENT VOICE LEADING

In part-writing exercises, voices not only should mostly move smoothly, but also independently, rather than in one big clump. Accordingly, part-writing exercises should avoid parallel octaves and parallel fifths. Naturally, parallel octaves are extraordinarily common in music of the tonal repertoire, and in many styles of music parallel fifths are quite idiomatic. Nonetheless, to help develop their sensitivity to independent voice leading, students should be able to demonstrate—within the context of part-writing exercises—that they have the ability to avoid parallel octaves and parallel fifths when they opt to do so.

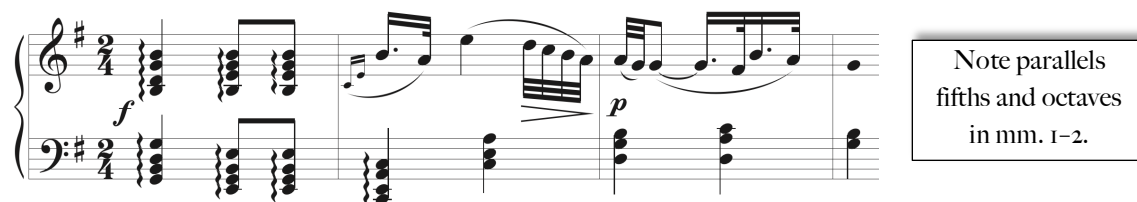
We often hear students complain that a harmonization that includes forbidden parallels or a similar violation does not necessary sound “bad.” But such common complaints miss the point of the exercises. As an analogy, imagine that you are instructed by a physical trainer to perform weightlifting exercises. It would do no good to point out that a barbell could be lifted more easily by using a forklift. The purpose of a weightlifting exercise is not to lift up a barbell, but to strengthen one’s muscles. Similarly, the purpose of a harmony exercise is not to compose a hymn that “doesn’t sound bad”; nor is it to mimic all the tonal possibilities witnessed in works of the Classical style. Rather, these exercises are designed to enhance sensitivity to basic voice-

leading principles—and to use parallel perfect intervals (after explicitly being told not to) displays an insensitivity to the vital concept of the independence of voices in tonal progressions.

As with other aspects that are made explicit within the context of part-writing exercises, independence of voices is not always so readily apparent in real music. In Ex. 3a, for instance, it may seem as if the first three chords in the left hand move as a single block. Make no doubt about it: there literally are parallel octaves and fifths in Mozart's composition. Being able to explain away these parallels is much easier for those who have had practice in working on part-writing exercises. The facility acquired by such practice better allows one to see how the underlying voice leading here could be properly represented by the model of Ex. 3b, which is in the form of a good part-writing exercise. Although it uses the same chords as the opening of Ex. 3a, Ex. 3b presents these harmonies with explicitly independent voice leading. In contrast, Ex. 3c is a poor part-writing exercise and a poor model for the opening of Ex. 3a, for it does not adequately represent the independent strands of voice leading implied in this excerpt by Mozart.

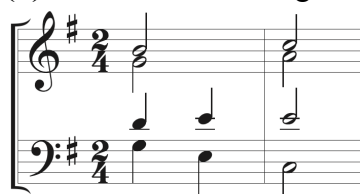
EXAMPLE 3. W. A. Mozart, Sonata for Keyboard and Violin, K. 379/ii.

(a) Quotation of mm. 1–4.



Note parallels fifths and octaves in mm. 1–2.

(b) Good Voice-leading model of mm. 1–2.



This model reflects the (implied) independent strands of voice leading.

(c) Poor Voice-leading model of mm. 1–2.



Use of parallel fifths fails to demonstrate sensitivity to independent stands of voice leading.

Incidentally, in the classes that I teach, toward the start of the music theory course sequence I have my students compose pieces in which I permit them to freely include parallel perfect intervals, without a grade penalty. Furthermore, when composing pieces in styles where it is appropriate, such parallel motion continues to be allowed in their subsequent assignments throughout their training. I repeatedly emphasize to my students that avoiding parallel perfect intervals in exercises is not a matter of “good” vs. “bad.” Rather, it is a matter of promoting sensitivity to voice independence by demonstrating the ability to avoid parallel perfect intervals when one chooses to do so—and one should always choose to do so within the abstract, purposely artificial environment of the traditional four-part harmony exercise.

SENSITIVITY TO TENDENCY TONES

To further promote the sense of the independence of voices, exercises also should display a sensitive treatment of tendency tones, such as leading tones and chordal dissonances. Accordingly, tendency tones should not be doubled within these exercises. Again, this is not because such doubling sounds “bad” (whatever that means). Rather, it is because doubling a tendency tone creates a redundancy and thus fails to properly demonstrate the independence of the voices.

Furthermore, sensitivity to the power of tendency tones within the context of exercises should be demonstrated by explicitly resolving these tones according to their tendency. Here, too, voice-leading treatment is understandably freer within real compositions. For instance, although the C-sharp in Ex. 4a is expected to resolve upward to the tonic, it instead is followed by a big leap downward, thereby producing a witty effect. In their own creative compositions, students also may treat leading tones in an unusual and expressive manner such as seen in Ex. 4a. When evaluating a student’s creative compositions, however, their teachers cannot always know if an oddly treated tendency tone results from the student’s deliberate choice, or from a lack of awareness of the effects of the leading tone.

For this reason, it is easier to develop sensitivity to the power of tendency tones within the context of part-writing exercises, where students are instructed to avoid witty, expressive effects. Accordingly, in students’ part-writing exercises (unlike in their creative compositions), a prominent leading tone must move upward in an explicit manner, as in Ex. 4b. Students who have worked on harmony exercises—and thus who have been trained to be aware of the effects

of leading tones—are better prepared to react to a passage like Ex. 4a in analysis and performance.

EXAMPLE 4. Joseph Haydn, Symphony No. 72 in D/iv, mm. 15–16.

(a) Quotation.

vlns. I + II

vla. + bassi

Leading tone (C-sharp) wittily
leaps down a seventh to D!

(b) Good voice-leading model in form of part-writing exercise.

In manner of proper exercise,
leading tone resolves up to tonic.

Or, consider the passage cited in Ex. 5a. In this excerpt, the voice-leading between chords is obscured by a sudden register shift (between mm. 44 and 46). Ex. 5b provides a model of this passage in which the octave shifts are removed, most of the embellishing tones are removed, and the rhythms are condensed; otherwise, the voice leading of Ex. 5b is much like what is found in Haydn's excerpt. Notice how within both Haydn's quartet and in Ex. 5b the dissonant chord tone, B-flat, does not resolve downward by step to A-natural. Since the dissonant chord tone does not resolve properly, Ex. 5b would be a poor part-writing exercise.

Conversely, although it less closely matches what occurs in Haydn's excerpt than does Ex. 5b, Ex. 5c far better fulfils the goals expected of a successful part-writing exercise. Ex. 5c thus provides a more effective model for the underlying voice leading of Haydn's passage by having the tendency tone B-flat explicitly follow its downward-resolving inclination. Those who have gained sensitivity to basic voice-leading concepts by working through an exercise in the manner of Ex. 5c are thereby better positioned to appreciate the excitement of the tension and

resolution associated with the note B-flat as it is exchanged between the violin and viola in Haydn's quartet.

EXAMPLE 5. Haydn, Quartet in E-flat, Op. 20, No. 1, iv, mm. 40–48.

(a) Quotation.

octave shift in all parts

B-flat: $V_5/V \longrightarrow V_4$ 4 7 5 3 I

(b) Voice-leading model in form of a poor harmony exercise.

Ex. 5b mimics the voice-leading of Ex. 5a; the chordal seventh (B-flat) does not resolve down.

(c) Voice-leading model in form of a good harmony exercise.

The chordal seventh resolves down in Ex. 5c, and thus Ex. 5c better reflects the underlying voice-leading of Ex. 5a.

HOW STRICT SHOULD EXERCISE GUIDELINES BE?

Owing to their artificial nature, there is a degree of latitude regarding the strictness or looseness of the guidelines for part-writing exercises. As a result, the precise rules given for these exercises might reasonably differ somewhat from one teacher to the next. However, the rationale that “such-and-such happens in real music, therefore it should be allowed in a part-writing exercise” alone won’t do. Again, the voice leading of part-writing exercises properly should be more constrained than what is found within actual pieces of tonal music, even within pieces from relatively conservative tonal styles, such as seen in examples cited above. In each case, teachers should consider whether the license allowed or restrictions required enhance sensitivities to underlying voice-leading procedures, or if they create needless complications.

For instance, consider the treatment of leading tones in inner voices. When V resolves to I, it is extremely common—even within conservative, four-part choral works—for a leading tone in an inner voice to move directly to scale-degree $\hat{5}$, rather than upward toward scale-degree $\hat{1}$. Again, the commonplace nature of this practice does not in itself suggest that this maneuver must be allowed in harmony exercises as well. Nevertheless there are other, solid reasons for allowing such license in part-writing exercises: (1) since the inner voices are somewhat masked, requiring the upward resolution of the leading tone only in the more prominent outer voices arguably is sufficient for an exercise to adequately reinforce sensitivity to the leading tone; (2) use of this freer voice leading in exercises can prepare altos and tenors for singing this common scale-degree motion when performing choral music; and (3) permitting this freer voice leading makes the exercises considerably easier to complete, which mitigates the burden of learning this voice-leading license.

A trickier matter involves deciding whether to allow freer treatment of dissonant tendency tones in inner voices. Consider Ex. 6, where the resolution of the chordal seventh is implicit, rather than literal. Though atypical of vocal works, voice leading of the type seen in Ex. 6 is extremely common in piano music. Should teachers therefore allow this implied resolution in part-writing exercises as well? Or would it be more effective to insist that the chordal seventh must literally resolve down by step within the context of exercises, saving use of the type of voice leading seen in Ex. 6 for model composition assignments?

EXAMPLE 6. Standard resolutions of V^7 .

upper voices

B C

F G

D E

Should this resolution of V^7 —which is common in the repertoire—be allowed in harmony exercises?

As another example, consider the excerpts shown in Ex. 7. Many teachers insist that the fourth above the bass in a cadential six-four must resolve down by step in four-part harmony exercises. But in real music it is not at all unusual for the fourth above the bass in a cadential six-four to move upward, as seen in Ex. 7a.⁴ Should we therefore allow passages in four-part harmony exercises such as that shown in Ex. 7b?

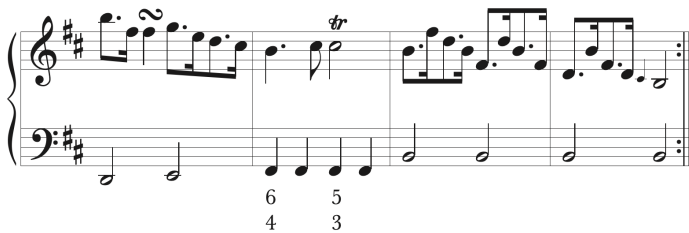
In considering this possibility, notice that the four-part model of Ex. 7b differs in some subtle yet significant ways from Ex. 7a. In real music, when a fourth above the bass in a cadential six-four resolves upward, it is almost invariably accompanied by a trill, appoggiatura, or a textural complication. In assignments that involve composing works that emulate the

⁴ See Lodewyckx 2015 and Ninov 2016.

Classical style, there is no question that students should be allowed resolutions such as seen in Ex. 7a. But a harmony exercise like Ex. 7b arguably simplifies out the context-specific justification for the upward resolution of the fourth above the bass, stripping away the rhythmic anticipation and trill that are so essential to what happens in Ex. 7a. As a result, it may be argued that sensitivity to the cadential six-four can best be developed within the context of part-writing exercises by insisting students resolve the fourth above the bass down by step, saving freer resolutions for when students work on model composition assignments.

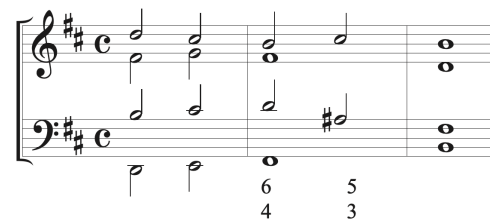
EXAMPLE 7. Anna Bon, Sonata for Keyboard in D, Op. 2/5/I, mm. 64–67.

(a) Quotation.



In this standard ending, the fourth above bass of (implied) cadential six-four moves upward (see also Ex. 3a).

(b) Possible voice-leading model.



Accordingly, should something like this be allowed in part-writing exercises?

Adding extra rules and guidelines for part-writing exercises is rarely benign. There is always a risk that burdening students with too many guidelines, such as picayune rules regarding doubling, might distract them from the primary aims of these exercises.⁵ Among the guidelines that I feel are needlessly fussy is the common requirement for students to compose an interesting soprano line within a part-writing exercise. It seems so unfair to ask students to compose a four-part, homophonic passage using specific harmonies, without text, set with a dull rhythm—and

⁵ Regarding doubling rules, see Aarden and von Hippel 2004; and Huron 2016, 149–156.

yet also make the melody line interesting. Placing such an unnecessary encumbrance on exercises forces students to spend more time on them, while diverting attention from the main goal of the exercises in promoting sensitivity to chords and chord progressions. It also takes time away from their work on other activities that can far more effectively develop a sensitivity to melodic processes. Whenever instructing their students to follow a specific rule within an exercise, teachers should consider whether the time and effort required for the students to grasp the rule is worth the conceptual payoff that results.

The quicker students can learn basic voice-leading concepts through the proper use of part-writing exercises, the quicker they can focus on more creative exercises, such as model compositions. Among their many other advantages, model compositions allow students to focus on important musical features, such as rhythm and texture, that are inadequately covered by traditional harmony exercises. Furthermore, there are some vital facets of harmony that can be understood only in a holistic setting, such as is more readily afforded by model compositions and other such creative assignments.

Working on generic part-writing exercises will never by itself lead students to compose truly inspired pieces, any more than practicing the technical etudes composed by Charles-Louis Hanon by itself can lead pianists to the broad musical or technical skills required to play real music. In all, exercises do not replace creative musical work. But the reverse is true as well, for the skills acquired by exercises can help facilitate the creative process. True, to claim that a composition sounds like a harmony exercise is never a compliment, any more than it would be praise to claim that a pianist's performance of a Chopin etude sounds like a rendition of a Hanon etude. Yet one need not be apologetic about teaching such exercises, provided that they are treated in a proper manner and with their appropriate benefits and limitations kept fully in sight.

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