

Counterpoint in Music Bachelor Programs in the USA

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This study provides a comprehensive overview of how counterpoint is taught in undergraduate music programs across the United States, with particular focus on pedagogical approaches, curricular placement, and textbook usage. Despite counterpoint's inclusion in national accreditation guidelines by the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM), it is often minimally addressed within the core music theory curriculum, typically limited to brief introductions to species counterpoint and late-Baroque techniques. Elective upper-level courses offer more in-depth instruction, but reach only a small percentage of students. Through a review of over forty syllabi and a wide range of textbooks, this article evaluates the dominant pedagogical models – primarily textbook-centered, symbol-to-sound approaches – and recent trends, such as flipped classrooms, improvisation, and broader musical inclusivity. It also surveys widely used textbooks in modal, tonal, and atonal counterpoint, highlighting shifts toward more practical, stylistically diverse, and inclusive teaching practices. Ultimately, the article underscores the need for more integrated, historically-informed, and creative approaches to counterpoint pedagogy in American higher education.

Diese Studie bietet einen umfassenden Überblick darüber, wie Kontrapunkt in grundständigen Musikstudiengängen in den Vereinigten Staaten gelehrt wird, mit besonderem Fokus auf pädagogischen Ansätzen, curricularer Einordnung und der Verwendung von Lehrbüchern. Obwohl der Kontrapunkt in den nationalen Akkreditierungsrichtlinien der National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) enthalten ist, wird er im Kerncurriculum der Musiktheorie oft nur minimal behandelt – in der Regel beschränkt auf kurze Einführungen in den Species-Kontrapunkt und spätbarocke Techniken. Wahlpflichtkurse auf fortgeschrittenem Niveau bieten eine vertiefte Auseinandersetzung, erreichen jedoch nur einen kleinen Teil der Studierenden. Auf der Grundlage der Analyse von über vierzig Lehrplänen und einer breiten Palette an Lehrbüchern bewertet dieser Artikel die dominanten didaktischen Modelle – hauptsächlich lehrbuchzentrierte, Symbol-zu-Klang-orientierte Ansätze – sowie neuere Tendenzen wie Flipped-Classroom-Konzepte, Improvisation und eine größere musikalische Inklusivität. Es werden zudem weit verbreitete Lehrbücher zum modalen, tonalen und atonalen Kontrapunkt untersucht, wobei Verschiebungen hin zu praxisnäheren, stilistisch vielfältigeren und inklusiveren Unterrichtsformen hervorgehoben werden. Letztlich betont der Artikel die Notwendigkeit integrierter, historisch informierter und kreativer Ansätze für die Kontrapunkt-Pädagogik in der amerikanischen Hochschulbildung.

Introduction

This article provides a brief summary of the instructional approaches and textbooks used for teaching counterpoint as part of music Bachelor programs in the United States

in colleges, universities, and conservatories.¹ In the past thirty years, not much scholarly literature has been published on teaching counterpoint in Bachelor music programs in the US. Just recently, Sarah Marlowe² published an article, in which she applied Bloom's taxonomy to teaching music theory, and she demonstrated its effectiveness by describing teaching approaches to invertible counterpoint with excerpts from Johann Sebastian Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* and his *Two-Part Inventions*. Michael Callahan³ reported on teaching (primarily) two- and three-part counterpoint in a practical keyboard course, incorporating both improvisation and written work. David Lee Mancini⁴ wrote about using species counterpoint in the undergraduate, two-year core music theory curriculum and specifically juxtaposed teaching approaches by Kirnberger and Mozart to some modern (Schenkerian) approaches of teaching species counterpoint. Robert Gauldin⁵ tried to bridge teaching species counterpoint and late-Baroque counterpoint in undergraduate music theory and proposed modifications to traditional species counterpoint.

The two main books on teaching music theory contain, of course, comments on teaching counterpoint. The comments by Michael Rogers⁶, however, are reduced to just two pages of very general, almost useless suggestions for teaching counterpoint. The recent book edited by Rachel Lumsden and Jeffrey Swinkin⁷, on the other hand, contains an entire chapter on teaching historical counterpoint; in this chapter, Peter Schubert⁸ emphasizes singing, playing & singing, memorization, dictation, improvisation, analysis, and writing as pedagogical approaches to teaching counterpoint.

Teaching Counterpoint as a Music Program Accreditation Requirement

The vast majority of Bachelor music programs are accredited by the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM), and thus the NASM requirements guide the development of curricula and their contents. As a result, we find great similarities among most colleges, universities, and conservatories that offer Bachelor music programs. In the NASM guidelines, counterpoint is part of "musicianship studies," together with sight-singing, ear-training, harmony, keyboard harmony, orchestration, conducting, and music literature. NASM requires that

1 This article builds upon earlier pedagogical studies by this author, specifically Schüler 2005, 2009, and 2012.

2 Marlowe 2018.

3 Callahan 2012.

4 Mancini 1989.

5 Gauldin 1993.

6 Rogers 2004.

7 Lumsden/Swinkin 2018.

8 Schubert 2018.

undergraduate musicianship studies develop or provide: (1) conceptual understanding of musical components and processes; (2) continued practice in creating, interpreting, presenting, analyzing, and evaluating music; (3) increased understanding of musical achievements from various analytical, historical, and cultural perspectives; (4) musical perspectives informed by studies of various cultures and historical periods; (5) enhanced capacities to integrate musical knowledge and skills; and (6) a set of capabilities for independent work in the music professions.⁹

More specifically, the “common body of knowledge and skills” with regard to “Analysis” (which entails counterpoint) is defined as: “Analysis. Advanced skills in musical analysis based on competence in counterpoint, harmony, composition, orchestration, and the ability to integrate analytical knowledge and skills in the development of artistic interpretations and the preparation of scores for performance”.¹⁰ Although we see counterpoint listed first among the competencies here, the third and last mention of “counterpoint” in the 273-page NASM Handbook lists counterpoint after harmony (under the header “Degrees with a Designated Conducting Emphasis”): “Achievement of an advanced level of analytical skills including harmony, counterpoint, and orchestration. Studies in analysis are required throughout the degree program.”¹¹ In summary, counterpoint is required, but NASM does not specify the depth of studying counterpoint.

The Bachelor Music Degree Program and its Music Theory Courses in the US

Teaching counterpoint takes place in two types of courses: (a) in the music theory core curriculum, which all music majors are required to take, and (b) in specialized counterpoint courses that colleges and universities offer for upper-level students (juniors and seniors). The following tables show a sample Bachelor degree plan with semester credits, as it is most common in music programs in the United States; specifically, this is the Bachelor of Arts in Music program at Texas State University. GE stands for “general education.” Bold classes are part of so-called core curriculum (see below).

Freshman (1 st Year)			
1 st Semester		2 nd Semester	
Course	Credits	Course	Credits
Recital Attendance	0	Recital Attendance	0
<i>Aural Skills I</i>	1	<i>Aural Skills II</i>	1
<i>Music Theory I</i>	3	<i>Music Theory II</i>	3
Applied Lessons	2	Applied Lessons	2
Ensemble	1	Ensemble	1

⁹ NASM 2019, 86.

¹⁰ Ibid., 172.

¹¹ Ibid., 175.

Freshman (1 st Year)			
1 st Semester		2 nd Semester	
Course	Credits	Course	Credits
Class Piano I	1	Class Piano II	1
University Seminar [GE]	1	College Writing II [GE]	3
College Writing II [GE]	3	History of the US til 1877 [GE]	3
Mathematic [GE]	3		
Total:	15	Total:	14

Sophomore (2 nd Year)			
3 rd Semester		4 th Semester	
Course	Credits	Course	Credits
Recital Attendance	0	Recital Attendance	0
<i>Aural Skills III</i>	1	<i>Aural Skills IV</i>	1
<i>Music Theory III</i>	3	<i>Music Theory IV</i>	3
Applied Lessons	2	Applied Lessons	2
Ensemble	1	Ensemble	1
Intro to Fine Arts [GE]	3	Music History I	3
College Writing II [GE]	3	Princ. of Am. Government [GE]	3
Mathematic [GE]	3	Minor	3
Total:	16	Total:	16

Junior (3 rd Year)			
5 th Semester		6 th Semester	
Course	Credits	Course	Credits
Recital Attendance	0	Recital Attendance	0
Music History II	3	Music History III	3
Modern Language I [GE]	3	<i>Advanced Music Elective</i>	3
Life and Physical Science [GE]	3	Modern Language II [GE]	3
Amer. Government [GE]	3	Life & Physical Science [GE]	3
Minor	3	Minor	3
Total:	15	Total:	15

Senior (4 th Year)			
7 th Semester		8 th Semester	
Course	Credits	Course	Credits
<i>Advanced Music Elective</i>	3	<i>Advanced Music Elective</i>	2
English Literature [GE]	3	Minor	6
Modern Language I [GE]	3	English Literature [GE]	3

Senior (4 th Year)			
7 th Semester		8 th Semester	
Course	Credits	Course	Credits
Elective	3	Communication Studies [GE]	3
Minor	3		
Total:	15	Total:	14

Table 1: Texas State University, Degree Plan for the Bachelor of Arts in Music

The structure of music theory and aural skills courses is usually as follows, with each course lasting one semester.

Music Fundamentals

Aural Skills I	Music Theory I
Aural Skills II	Music Theory II
Aural Skills III	Music Theory III
Aural Skills IV	Music Theory IV

Elective Upper-Level Music Theory Courses:

Musical Forms Counterpoint Orchestration Analysis of Modern Music Jazz Theory

Counterpoint instruction as part of the music theory core curriculum (Music Theory I–IV) for Bachelor students in most American colleges, universities, and conservatories is reduced to very basic principles of species counterpoint (sixteenth century) and late-Baroque counterpoint (eighteenth century). Students may receive a brief (one- or two-week!) introduction to two-part species counterpoint, often as part of Music Theory I. Such species counterpoint is generally taught without historically-informed stylistic issues of ‘real’ Renaissance music, but at least it often includes some minimal writing (composing) exercises, and is not merely analytical in orientation. That is, species counterpoint is primarily used ahistorically to prepare students for studying counterpoint as found in the outer voices in Bach chorales, which dominate textbooks, as well as to prepare students for understanding and using non-chord tones in tonal music in general. The music theory core curriculum at some colleges and universities covers some very basic, purely analytically-oriented terminology and principles of late-Baroque counterpoint – that is, without writing or composing any inventions or fugues – when discussing contrapuntal genres; however, the main emphasis of the Theory I–IV sequence is on harmony and four-voice part writing. Only a few institutions cover early twentieth-century music in Theory IV, and some institutions do not cover *any* counterpoint in their core curriculum.

A few textbooks shall be mentioned here to exemplify how little counterpoint is found in the core curriculum. L. Poundie Burstein’s *Concise Introduction to Tonal Har-*

mony¹² (New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 2016) contains one chapter of species counterpoint that very briefly covers first, second, and fourth Species (not third or fifth) – thus, only two to three weeks are dedicated to modal counterpoint, albeit in an ahistorical manner. The most commonly used textbook in the US – *Tonal Harmony* by Stefan Kostka, Dorothy Payne, and Byron Almén¹³ – previously delegated species counterpoint to its online resources only, but the 8th edition now includes two-part tonal counterpoint as a brief precursor for covering non-chord tones. The Schenkerian-based textbook *Harmony & Voice Leading* by Edward Aldwell, Carl Schachter, and Allen Cadwallader¹⁴ (5th ed. Mason, OH: Cengage, 2018) does not cover any counterpoint beyond briefly defining counterpoint as “simultaneous motion of several melodic lines” (p.60). *Theory for Today’s Musician* by Ralph Turek and Daniel McCarthy¹⁵ briefly covers two-part tonal counterpoint as well as fugue, but a chapter on Bach’s two-part inventions that was contained in its first edition is no longer included in this latest edition. Such an omission is all the more surprising, considering that *The Musician’s Guide to Theory and Analysis* by Jane Piper Clendinning and Elizabeth West Marvin¹⁶ (3rd ed. New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 2016) includes invention, fugue, and Baroque counterpoint in one of forty chapters. In short, undergraduate music theory core curriculum textbooks in the US focus on harmony and, although the inclusion of counterpoint has increased in the past decade, the introduction to either modal or tonal counterpoint is minimal and usually does not exceed three weeks of the sixty weeks of core curriculum (four semesters of each fifteen weeks or their equivalent in institutions using the quarter-term system). Whenever species counterpoint is covered in the core curriculum, exercises (usually in an accompanying workbook) include *writing* exercises, while non-species tonal counterpoint is usually covered *analytically* only.

Many programs offer an elective, one-semester upper-level course on counterpoint, however. Yet, as an elective, such a course is taken only by a small percentage of students and often only focuses only on eighteenth-century counterpoint. The remainder of this article will discuss such one-semester counterpoint courses, including common pedagogical approaches and textbooks. The observations are informed by a review of more than forty course syllabi that are freely available on the internet, by the review of many available textbooks, and by my own teaching experiences.

12 Burstein 2016.

13 Kostka/Payne/Almén 2017.

14 Aldwell/Schachter/Cadwallader 2018.

15 Turek/McCarthy 2018.

16 Clendinning/Marvin 2016.

Pedagogical Approaches

Most counterpoint courses in the US (just like music theory courses) are textbook-centered: usually one textbook is chosen, and students read each chapter alone with supporting lectures by the professor in class and with seminar-style work that focuses on analysis and model composition. Most commonly, a symbol-to-sound approach is used, meaning that concepts are explained (with music notation), and the music is heard. Seldom do professors teach music theory with a sound-to-symbol approach, in which music is first heard, with concepts derived aurally and then explained and studied conceptually.¹⁷ With the symbol-to-sound approach being most common, the dominating pedagogical approaches are:

- Lecturing
- Reading
- Studying Rules
- Analysis
- Listening
- Application of Rules to Model Composition

In recent years, one increasingly sees the following pedagogical approaches as well:

- “Flipped Classroom” (see below)
- Peer Teaching
- Composition Approach
- Inclusion of Modern Music, Popular Music, Jazz, or Non-Western Music
- Emphasis on Music-Making
- Improvisation

The “flipped classroom” approach usually entails students watching lecture-videos at home, which enables class time to be more of a workshop. In my own teaching, the “flipped classroom” is rather “peer teaching,” in which students study a textbook (and other materials, including videos) at home and explain concepts to each other in the classroom; I only intervene as necessary.

Regardless of pedagogical approaches, the vast majority of counterpoint classes are textbook-centered, and the course content is described in an obligatory course syllabus. As in other music theory courses, most counterpoint classes require students to write an analytical paper (or several analytical mini-papers), as well as several smaller and one larger model composition. Some courses require such compositions to be performed in class.

¹⁷ On his YouTube channel, Peter Schubert from McGill University in Montreal has several videos with contrapuntal improvisations. See <https://www.youtube.com/user/peterschubertmusic/> (July 6, 2022). The author of this article is not aware of similar approaches being used at American institutions. Schubert’s books (discussed further below), however, also based on a notation-centered approach, are published in the US and used at some US institutions.

North-American Modal and Tonal Counterpoint Texts

The following is an alphabetical list of English-language counterpoint textbooks.

- AtKisson, Harold F. (1956). *Basic Counterpoint*. New York (NY): McGraw-Hill.
- Ayres, Eugene E. (1887). *Counterpoint and Canon*. Philadelphia (PA): Presser.
- Bassett, Leslie (1967). *Manual of Sixteenth-Century Counterpoint*. New York (NY): Appleton-Century-Crofts.
- Benjamin, Thomas (2003). *The Craft of Tonal Counterpoint*. New York (NY): Routledge.
- Benjamin, Thomas (2005). *The Craft of Modal Counterpoint: A Practical Approach*. New York (NY): Routledge.
- Boyden, David D. (1953). *Manual of Counterpoint Based on Sixteenth-Century Practice*, 2nd edition. New York (NY): Carl Fischer.
- Clarke, Hugh A. (1901). *Counterpoint: Strict and Free*. Philadelphia (PE): Presser.
- Collins, John (2017). *Counterpoint: And How to Use It in Your Music*. New York (NY): Echo Pier Publishing.
- Davidian, Teresa M. (2015). *Tonal Counterpoint for the 21st-Century Musician: An Introduction*. Lanham (MD): Rowman & Littlefield.
- Denisch, Beth (2017). *Contemporary Counterpoint: Theory & Application*. Boston (MA): Berklee Press.
- Funicelli, Stanley A. (2009). *Basic Atonal Counterpoint*. SAF Publications.
- Fux, Johann Joseph (1971). *Study of Counterpoint: From Johann Joseph Fux's Gradus Ad Parnassum*. Translated by Alfred Mann. New York (NY): W. W. Norton & Company.
- Gauldin, Robert (2013a). *A Practical Approach to Sixteenth-Century Counterpoint*. Long Grove (IL): Waveland Press.
- Gauldin, Robert (2013b). *A Practical Approach to Eighteenth-Century Counterpoint*. Long Grove (IL): Waveland Press.
- Green, Douglass M., and Evan Jones (2011). *The Principles and Practice of Modal Counterpoint*. New York (NY): Routledge.
- Green, Douglass M., and Evan Jones (2016). *The Principles and Practice of Tonal Counterpoint*. New York (NY): Routledge.
- Horwood, Frederick J. (1958). *Basic Counterpoint*. Toronto: Thompson.
- Jadassohn, Salomon (1930). *Manual of Single, Double, Triple & Quadruple Counterpoint*, translated from the 3rd edition by Th. Baker. New York (NY): Schirmer.
- Jeppesen, Knud (2013). *Counterpoint: The Polyphonic Vocal Style of the Sixteenth Century*. Dover Publications.
- Kauder, Hugo (1979). *Counterpoint: An Introduction to Polyphonic Composition*. New York (NY): Da Capo Press.
- Kennan, Kent (1998). *Counterpoint: Based on Eighteenth-Century Practice*, 4th edition. Upper Saddle River (NJ): Prentice Hall [with a workbook].
- Krenek, Ernst (1940). *Studies in Counterpoint: Based on the Twelve-Tone Technique*. New York (NY): G. Schirmer.
- Krenek, Ernst (1958). *Tonal Counterpoint in the Style of the Eighteenth Century*. New York (NY): Boosey and Hawkes.
- Krenek, Ernst (1959). *Modal Counterpoint in the Style of the Sixteenth Century*. New York (NY): Boosey and Hawkes.

- Laitz, Steven G., and Christopher A. Bartlette (2010). *Graduate Review of Tonal Theory: A Recasting of Common-Practice Harmony, Form, and Counterpoint*. New York (NY): Oxford University Press.
- Lehmann, Friedrich J. (1907). *A Treatise on Simple Counterpoint in Forty Lessons*. New York (NY): Schirmer.
- Mann, Alfred (1958). *The Study of Fugue*. New Brunswick (NJ): Rutgers University Press.
- Martin, Henry (2005). *Counterpoint: A Species Approach Based on Schenker's Counterpoint*. Lanham (MD): Scarecrow Press.
- Mason, Neale B. (1968). *Essentials of Eighteenth-Century Counterpoint: A Practical Stylistic Approach*. Dubuque (IA): Wm. C. Brown.
- Merriman, Margarita (1982). *A New Look at 16th-Century Counterpoint*. Lanham (MD): University Press of America.
- Merritt, Arthur Tillman (1939). *Sixteenth-Century Polyphony: A Basis for the Study of Counterpoint*. Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press.
- Middleton, Robert E. (1967). *Harmony in Modern Counterpoint*. Boston (MA): Allyn and Bacon.
- Norden, Hugo (1969). *Fundamental Counterpoint*. Boston (MA): Crescendo.
- Norris, Homer A. (1899). *The Art of Counterpoint*. Boston (MA): Stevens.
- Owen, Harold (1992). *Modal and Tonal Counterpoint: From Josquin to Stravinsky*. Belmont (CA): Schirmer.
- Piston, Walter (1947). *Counterpoint*. New York (NY): W. W. Norton.
- Porter, Quincy (1940). *A Study of Sixteenth Century Counterpoint*. Boston (MA): New England Conservatory of Music.
- Procter, Leland H. (1952 and 1957). *Tonal Counterpoint*. Dubuque (IA): Brown.
- Prout, Ebenezer (1890). *Counterpoint: Strict and Free*, 2nd edition. London: Augener.
- Prout, Ebenezer (1891a). *Double Counterpoint and Canon*. New York (NY): Schirmer.
- Prout, Ebenezer (1891b). *Fugue*. London: Augener.
- Reed, H. Owen, Greg A. Steinke, and Paul O. Harder (2003). *Basic Contrapuntal Techniques: An Introduction to Linear Style Through Creative Writing*. Miami (FL): Belwin-Mills.
- Richardson, A. Madeley (1936). *Fundamental Counterpoint*. Boston (MA): American Book Company.
- Richter, Ernst Friedrich (1878). *Treatise on Counterpoint*, translated by Franklin Taylor. Boston (MA): Ditson.
- Roberts, Stella, and Irwin Fischer (1967). *A Handbook of Modal Counterpoint*. New York (NY): The Free Press.
- Salzer, Felix, and Carl Schachter (1989). *Counterpoint in Composition: The Study of Voice Leading*. New York (NY): Columbia University Press.
- Schubert, Peter (1999). *Modal Counterpoint, Renaissance Style*. New York (NY): Oxford University Press.
- Schubert, Peter, and Christoph Neidhöfer (2005). *Baroque Counterpoint*. Upper Saddle River (NJ): Prentice Hall.
- Smith, Charlotte (1989). *A Manual of Sixteenth-century Contrapuntal Style*. Newark (NJ): University of Delaware Press.
- Soderlund, Gustave Frederic (1932). *Examples Illustrating the Development of Melodic Line and Contrapuntal Style, from Greek Melody to Mozart*. Rochester (NY): The Eastman School of Music.
- Soderlund, Gustave Fredric (1947). *Direct Approach to Counterpoint in 16th Century Style*. New York (NY): Prentice-Hall.
- Spalding, Walter R. (1904). *Tonal Counterpoint*. Boston (MA): Schmidt.

- Stewart, Robert (1994). *An Introduction to Sixteenth-Century Counterpoint and Palestrina's Musical Style*. New York (NY): Ardsley House.
- Swindale, Owen (1962). *Polyphonic Composition: An Introduction to the Art of Composing Vocal Counterpoint in the Sixteenth-Century Style*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Tapper, Thomas, (1913). *First-Year Counterpoint (Two and Three Voices)*. Boston (MA): Schmidt.
- Thakar, Markand (1990). *Counterpoint: Fundamentals of Music Making*. New Haven (CT): Yale University Press.
- Tymoczko, Dmitri (2011). *A Geometry of Music: Harmony and Counterpoint in the Extended Common Practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- York, Francis L. (1907). *Counterpoint Simplified*. Boston (MA): Ditson.
- Zarlino, Gioseffo (1968). *The Art of Counterpoint: Part Three of Le istituzioni harmoniche, 1558*. Edited by Guy A. Marco, translated by Guy A. Marco and Claude V. Palisca. New Haven (CT): Yale University Press.

The majority focus either on modal / sixteenth-century counterpoint or tonal / eighteenth-century counterpoint. Some authors even wrote two textbooks – one with each emphasis. Few publications discuss counterpoint from other centuries.

Overview of Popular Modal Counterpoint Textbooks

The most popular modal / sixteenth-century counterpoint textbooks today are those by Peter Schubert (1999), Robert Gauldin (2013a), Thomas Benjamin (2005), and Douglass M. Green & Evan Jones (2011). Each will be briefly discussed.

The 324-page textbook by Peter Schubert (1999) is very detailed with lots of conceptual and analytical observations, as well as musical examples and exercises. After a general introduction to Renaissance style and notation, the author discusses modes, two-part species counterpoint (together accounting for about one quarter of the book), motivic repetition and variation, cadence formulas, imitative duos, invertible counterpoint, three-part counterpoint, and four-part writing. The book concludes with a chapter on composing a “whole piece.” In order to make the complex concepts easier to understand, the author distinguishes obligatory “hard rules” from rule-of-thumb “soft rules” that vary by composer.

Thomas Benjamin’s (2005) textbook is much shorter than Schubert’s: it is only 190 pages long, whereby the textbook portion comprises only half that; the other half is an anthology of complete works. The textbook offers much less detail than Schubert’s text, especially with regard to composer-specific characteristics. After an introductory chapter on general stylistic aspects, Benjamin offers chapters on two-voice counterpoint, three-voice counterpoint, and counterpoint in four voices. A brief (ten-page) chapter on the motet is followed by suggestions for further study. Throughout the book, the author offers precise explanations and many musical examples. Given its brevity, this textbook is not suitable for in-depth studies, but nevertheless gives a very good, concise introduction to modal counterpoint.

The textbook by Douglass M. Green and Evan Jones (2011)¹⁸ is extensive (316 pages), such that its depth is comparable to Schubert (1999). Each chapter has detailed yet precise explanations with numerous musical examples, followed by exercises and self-tests (for which the solutions are given in the back of the book). Topics include modes and monophony, the single line, counterpoint during the Middle Ages, first species in two and in three voices, counterpoint during the fourteenth century, second species in two and in three voices, counterpoint during the Renaissance, fourth species in two and in three voices, texture, melody, meter, further aspects of species counterpoint, and modal counterpoint in two, three, and four or more voices. The book closes with a chapter on the rise of tonality in the seventeenth century.

Finally, Robert Gauldin's (2013) 312-page textbook also offers clear explanations of concepts with many musical examples. Each chapter ends with an "assignment" section. It is the only textbook among the ones discussed here that discusses species counterpoint only briefly in an appendix, instead focusing on melodic writing in two- to eight-voice textures, dissonance treatment, imitation, canon, cantus firmus technique, parody technique, polychoral style, *musica ficta*, and chromaticism.

Overview of Popular Tonal Counterpoint Textbooks

The most commonly used textbooks on tonal / eighteenth-century counterpoint are those by Peter Schubert & Christoph Neidhöfer (2005), Thomas Benjamin (2003), Douglass M. Green & Evan Jones (2016), Robert Gauldin (2013b), and Kent Kennan (1998).

With an emphasis on learning by modeling, Schubert and Neidhöfer's text (2005) is divided into two parts: basic and advanced. The latter part is characterized by a more instrumental melodic style and freer use of dissonances. The 374-page book covers topics such as harmonizing a subject in simple counterpoint, melodic embellishment, variation techniques, imitation at the unison/octave and fifth, remodulation and third entry, fugue exposition, tonal answer, thematic presentations, sequences and episodes, laying out a whole piece, advanced embellishment, chromaticism and sequences, multiple counterpoint, writing an original subject, stretto, other techniques, and overall design and layout of a fugue.

The 404-page book by Thomas Benjamin (2003) is the most extensive counterpoint textbook of the four surveyed here, and it is entirely based on J. S. Bach's instrumental music, especially keyboard music. Besides detailed analytical discussions with plenty of musical examples, the textbook contains a plethora of student exercises. The book specifically discusses line and other elements of style, non-imitative two-voice writing,

18 A two-volume *The Principles and Practice of Counterpoint* was Douglass Green's almost-completed magnum opus when he passed away in 1999. Evan Jones was asked to be co-author to complete the book and to revise the language for a contemporary audience. The two volumes were eventually published as this modal counterpoint textbook as well as one on tonal counterpoint (discussed further below). See the foreword in both books.

chromaticism in two voices, composition of binary dance forms, imitation, canon, the two-voice invention, three-voice counterpoint (regarding texture, rhythm, harmony, chromaticism, triple counterpoint, and canon), fugue, four-voice counterpoint, variation forms, and the chorale prelude.

Similar to their modal counterpoint book, the 256-page tonal counterpoint book by Douglass M. Green and Evan Jones (2016) discusses musical examples extensively and has many self-tests and analytical assignments. Topics include species counterpoint in major and minor modes, eighteenth-century thoroughbass and chorale harmonization, the chorale prelude, continuo homophony, sequences and invertible counterpoint, the two-part inventions of J. S. Bach, three-voice counterpoint, rounds and canons, the fugue, counterpoint in the nineteenth century, and counterpoint in the twentieth century and beyond. It is one of the few books that venture beyond Baroque counterpoint.

Robert Gauldin's eighteenth-century, 335-page counterpoint book (2013) includes extensive conceptual and analytical discussions, as well as plenty of assignments, such as error detection, analytical problems, completion, and original writing projects. Most *cantus firmi* come from Lutheran chorales. Chapter topics include melody, general characteristics of counterpoint, two-part counterpoint, diminution, free counterpoint, real imitation and double counterpoint, two-part canon and invention, three-part counterpoint, chorale preludes, chromaticism, tonal imitation, invertible counterpoint, additional contrapuntal devices, fugue, variations assignments, choral writing, and counterpoint in the Classical period.

Counterpoint by Kent Kennan (1998) is an enduring "classic," despite the fact that the author passed away in 2003. Textbook and workbook are separate, the textbook being a treasure for busy teachers who prefer ready-to-use exercises. Topics covered are the melodic line, two-voice counterpoint, chromaticism, writing of short two-voice pieces, canon, invertible counterpoint, the two-part invention, motivic development, three-voice counterpoint, writing short pieces in three voices, imitation, three-part invention, trio sonata, fugue, forms based on the chorale, and contrapuntal variation forms.

Textbooks for Both Modal and Tonal Counterpoint

Several publications provide an introduction to both modal and tonal counterpoint as a one-semester textbook. For example, in her 237-page book, Teresa M. Davidian (2015) introduces students to melody, first, second, and third species counterpoint, analyzing and composing a simple piece in two parts, double counterpoint, two-part canon, J. S. Bach's two-part inventions, counterpoint in three and four parts, and fugue. Davidian's book stands out in its greater diversity of musical examples, including music by woman composers, popular music, and vernacular music. The book also encourages students to write background music, music for dinner parties, or video game music, in addition to writing in traditional genres.

Within 178 pages, Beth Denisch (2017) covers the basics of writing counterpoint (treatment of consonances and dissonances / non-chord tones, species counterpoint, melodic gestures, call-and-response, and cadences), motivic manipulation, canon, imitative counterpoint, ostinatos and accompanied canon, other canonic techniques, and advanced contrapuntal techniques and applications, such as canons of rhythm and creative processes. The textbook by Denisch includes musical examples from world musics, popular music, and jazz.

In 1992 Harold Owen wrote a 389-page book on modal and tonal counterpoint from Josquin to Stravinsky, covering introductory concepts (such as a comparison of examples from the fourteenth through the twentieth centuries), counterpoint in the late Renaissance (from two to more than four parts, including instrumental duos, canzonet, motet, fantasia, dance variations, motet, and madrigal), counterpoint in the early Baroque (including chaconne and passacaglia, trios, canzona, ricercar, fantasia, and choral fugato), counterpoint in the late Baroque (chorale prelude, inventions, sinfonias, canons, fugue, and other genres using fugal techniques), polyphony in the Classical and Romantic eras, and polyphony in the first half of the twentieth century (including serial and atonal counterpoint as well as counterpoint in the music of Hindemith, Bartók, and Stravinsky).

Textbooks for Atonal Counterpoint

Atonal counterpoint is specifically discussed in two textbooks: those by Stanley A. Funicelli (2009) and by Ernst Krenek (1940). While the former offers a set-theoretical *composition* approach, the latter offers studies on counterpoint based on the twelve-tone technique.

Final Remarks

The approaches to teaching counterpoint in US undergraduate music programs are manifold and reflected in the many, rich, and diverse textbooks. Traditionally, either in-depth analytical courses on modal or on tonal counterpoint have been offered; more recently, some colleges and universities have created courses that cover several centuries of contrapuntal traditions. But unlike many German or other European curricula, American curricula do not emphasize a historically-informed understanding of diverse musical styles. In the past decade, the College Music Society (CMS 2014 and CMS 2016) initiated discussions on pedagogical changes to increase intra-disciplinary connections, especially music making in the music theory classroom. The work of Peter Schubert (Schubert 1999, 2018; Schubert & Neidhöfer 2005) shows this tendency toward practical music-making and improvisation. Other textbooks, specifically those by Davidian (2015) and Denisch (2017), show a greater diversity in the music repertoire

being discussed. Only few courses and publications include counterpoint in modern or contemporary music.

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