# Tarantino's Rules for Partwriting

(adapted from Ebenezer Prout: Harmony, Its theory and practice (Boston, 1903))

## **Partwriting Rules**

Partwriting Rules are Counterpoint Rules:

- 1) Avoid **parallel unisons**, **fifths or octaves** this is to preserve the independence of the voices.
- 2) Avoid **Contrary Octaves or Fifths** this happens when we move from a fifth to a twelfth or an octave to a fifteenth.
  - a. Again it hurts the independence of the voices, sometimes this is unavoidable.
- 3) Avoid **parallel Unequal Fifths**, particularly between the Soprano and Bass. This is when we move from a P5 to a d5 (C-G; B-F)
  - a. Two exceptions: between upper voices moving by step
  - b. Between Soprano-Bass when moving in the same harmony
- 4) Avoid **hidden octaves** in outer voices.
  - a. Sometimes this is unavoidable at a cadence.
  - b. Three exceptions:
    - i. When Moving from  $I \rightarrow IV$  or  $I \rightarrow V$  or vice versa with bass moving by a fourth or fifth and soprano moving by a step.
    - ii. When the second chord is in second inversion (6/4) and its bass is scale degree 1 or 5.
    - iii. Moving from one inversion to another of the same chord.
  - c. In inner voices avoid moving from a 7th or 9th to an octave.
- 5) Avoid **Hidden Fifths** in outer voices
  - a. Exceptions:
    - i. In  $I \rightarrow IV$  or  $I \rightarrow V$  or vice versa with upper voices moving by step. Similar to 4-b-i.
    - ii. In ii $\rightarrow$ V, bass moving by a fifth, soprano falling by a third.
    - iii. Moving from one inversion to another of the same chord.
- 6) Avoid **Parallel Fourths** in outer voices
  - a. Except when a dissonance is resolving (e.g. from a chordal seventh to a chordal third)
  - b. In inner voices it is okay, but not advisable.
- 7) Avoid parallel seconds, sevenths and ninths.
- 8) Unisons
  - a. Don't approach or leave a unison in similar motion
  - b. Avoid moving from a second to a unison.

If you want to truly be safe, play by the strictest rules. These rules can all be boiled down to the fundamental rule: *Never move to a perfect consonance by parallel motion*.

#### **Spacing**

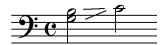
Don't have anything larger than an octave between adjacent upper voices, meaning soprano-alto and alto-tenor. It is OK between the bass and tenor.

### **Voice Crossing**

Don't cross voices within duos: bass-tenor and alto-soprano an only rarely between tenor and alto. This is again to preserve independence of voices.

#### Voice Overlap

Try not to have the bass, for instance, move above where the tenor was. Thus: bass-G, tenor-B, moving to a C chord. Don't have the bass move up to C. That would be voice overlap:



## **Doubling Rules**

For the most part doubling rules are soft rules, often voice-leading rules take precedence. Doubling is based on what position the chord is in.

- 1) In root position chords double the root. This provides strength.
- 2) In Second Inversion chords double the fifth the bass.
- 3) In First Inversion chords don't double the bass, unless it's a diminished chord if you have a choice double the soprano.

Prout does not provide these as guidelines. He suggests that you: "Double a primary, [scale degree 1, 4 or 5] rather than a secondary note." His only rule is:

- 1) Never double the leading tone
  - a. Except:
    - i. When moving form one inversion of V chord to another.
    - ii. When moving to a chord other than the tonic.

You may occasionally need to leave out the fifth of the chord for voice leading purposes.

This can be boiled down to one rule: DOUBLE THE BASS, unless you are in first inversion. Never, ever double the leading-tone.

### **Rules for Connecting Chords**

- 1) What's the bass?
- 2) Resolve any dissonances or tendency tones
  - a. Sevenths move down (e.g. in  $G7 \rightarrow C$ ; the F moves to E)
  - b. Flat sixes in minor tend to descend (e.g. "Ab"s in C minor tend to move to "G")
  - c. Raised sixes in minor tend to ascend (e.g. "A"s in C minor tend to move to "B")
  - d. Leading-tones in V rise when moving to I/i.
- 3) Are there any common tones?
  - a. Put in / tie any common tones
- 4) Fill in the rest
  - a. When bass moves by step, fifths and octaves move in contrary motion to that bass.
- 5) You may need to make lots of changes as you go along
- 6) Check all relationships for partwriting errors.