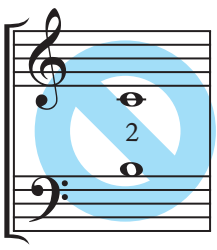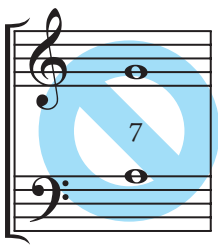# Species Counterpoint: Species I

"FIRST SPECIES" COUNTERPOINT IS THE MOST RHYTHMICALLY SIMPLE TYPE OF COUNTERPOINT: BOTH VOICES HAVE THE EXACT SAME RHYTHM. AS A RESULT, IT'S ALL ABOUT THE INTERVALS!

AND THAT TAKES US TO THE FIRST RULE: ONLY USE CONSONANT INTERVALS.

NO SECONDS!

NO SEVENTHS!

AND IT'S IMPORTANT TO KNOW THAT TO THE SIXTEENTH-CENTURY EAR, THE PERFECT FOURTH WAS ALSO DISSONANT!
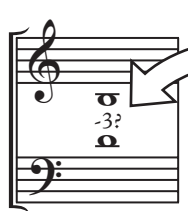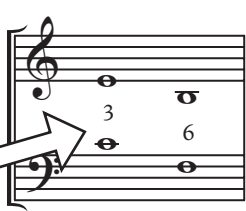
NO FOURTHS!

SEE HOW THE NUMBER OF THE INTERVAL IS WRITTEN IN BETWEEN THE TWO VOICES? YOU SHOULD DO THAT TOO.

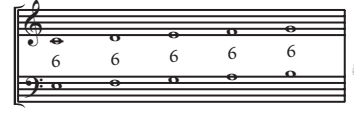IT'S HOW ROCK STARS DO IT!

NEXT RULE: VOICES CAN'T CROSS OR OVERLAP.

VOICE CROSSING: TOP NOTE IS LOWER THAN BOTTOM NOTE

VOICE OVERLAP: TOP NOTE IS LOWER THAN THE PREVIOUS BOTTOM NOTE

AND THEN: THIRDS AND SIXTHS ARE FINE, BUT NO MORE THAN THREE IN A ROW.
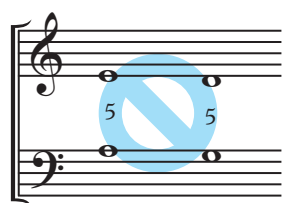
TO MUCH CONSONANCE, AND THE NATIVES GET RESTLESS.

WOOOOOO

THE NEXT RULES HAVE TO DO WITH PERFECT INTERVALS (P1, P5, AND P8... REMEMBER, P4 IS DISSONANT!), WHICH PLAY IMPORTANT ROLES AND REQUIRE SOME SPECIAL TREATMENT.

BECAUSE THEY ARE SUCH A STRONG SONORITY WHICH CAN STOP THE COUNTERPOINT IN ITS TRACKS, UNISONS CAN ONLY BE USED ON THE FIRST OR LAST NOTES OF AN EXERCISE.

ALL PERFECT INTERVALS MUST BE APPROACHED WITH CARE IN ORDER TO PRESERVE VOICE INDEPENDENCE. FIRST OF ALL, NEVER REPEAT A PERFECT INTERVAL!
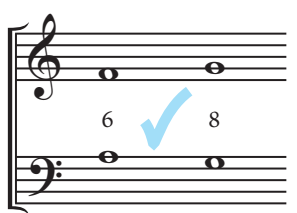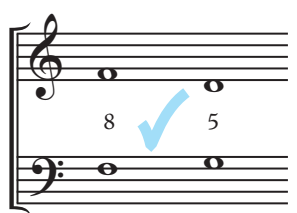
THESE ARE CALLED PARALLEL FIFTHS... AND THEY'RE JUST AWFUL!

IN FACT, APPROACHING PERFECT INTERVALS WITH BOTH VOICES MOVING IN THE SAME DIRECTION IS BAD, EVEN IF IT'S FROM AN IMPERFECT INTERVAL.

PLUS, IT'S ALSO NOT OKAY TO APPROACH A PERFECT INTERVAL WITH LEAPS IN BOTH VOICES!

SO IT'S EASIEST TO REMEMBER WHAT YOU CAN DO: APPROACH PERFECT INTERVALS USING CONTRARY MOTION, WITH AT LEAST ONE VOICE MOVING BY STEP.

FIRST NOTE: NO PROBLEM

IN THE MIDDLE: NO WAY

IN FACT, EACH EXERCISE MUST BEGIN AND END WITH A PERFECT INTERVAL WITH THE TONIC IN THE LOWER VOICE.

WAIT... WHY IS THAT LAST BIT IMPORTANT?

FOR THESE EXERCISES, YOU'LL BE WRITING A MELODY ABOVE OR BELOW AN ALREADY-WRITTEN MELODY, CALLED A CANTUS FIRMUS.

THE CANTUS FIRMUS WILL ALWAYS START AND END ON THE TONIC NOTE... SO IF YOU ARE WRITING COUNTERPOINT BELOW THE CANTUS FIRMUS, YOU CAN'T START WITH A PERFECT FIFTH, BECAUSE YOU'RE LOWER VOICE WON'T BE THE TONIC. YOU'LL HAVE TO START WITH A UNISON OR OCTAVE INSTEAD!