
* O F

Counterpoint

THE parts of Musick are in all but Four, howsoever some skilful Musicians have Composed Songs of six, eight, and ten parts; for be the parts never so many, they are but one of these Four in nature. The names of those four are these, the *Bass*, which is the lowest part and foundation of the whole Song; the *Tenor*, placed next above the *Bass*; next above the *Tenor*, the *Mean* or *Counter-Tenor*; and in the highest place, the *Treble*. These four Parts, by the Learned, are said to resemble the four Elements, the *Bass* expresseth the true nature of the Earth, who being the gravest and lowest of all the Elements, is as a foundation to the rest. The *Tenor* is likened to the Water, the *Mean* to the Ayr, and the *Treble* to the Fire. Moreover by how much the Water is more light than the Earth, by so much the Ayr is lighter than the Water, and Fire than Ayr. They have also in their native property every one place above the other; the lighter uppermost, the weightiest in the bottom. Having now demonstrated that there are in all but four Parts, and that the *Bass* is the foundation of the other three, I assume that the

true sight and judgment of the upper three must proceed from the lowest, which is the *Bass*; and also I conclude, that every part in nature doth affect his proper and natural place, as the Elements do.

[* Counterpoint, in *Latin*, *Contra punctum*, was the old manner of Composing Parts together, by setting Points or Pricks one against another (as Minims and Semibreves are set in this following Treatise) the Measure of which Points or Pricks were sung according to the quantity of the Words or Syllables to which they were applied. (For these Figures □ □ ▽ were not as yet invented.) And, because in Plain Song Musick we set Note against Note, as they did Point against Point, thence it is that this kind of Musick doth still retain the name of Counterpoint.]

True it is, that the ancient Musicians, who intended their Musick only for the Church, took their sight from the *Tenor*, which was rather done out of necessity than any respect of the true nature of Musick, for it was usual with them to have a *Tenor* as a Theam, to which they were compelled to adapt their other Parts: But I will plainly convince by demonstration, that (contrary to some opinions) the *Bass* contains in it both the Ayre and true judgment of the Key, expressing how any man at the first sight may view in it all the other Parts in their original essence.

In respect of the variety in Musick, which is attained to by farther proceeding in the Art, as when Notes are shifted out of their native places, the *Bass* above the *Tenor*, or the *Tenor* above the *Mean*, and the *Mean* above the *Treble*; this kind of *Counterpoint*, which I promise, may appear simple and only fit for young Beginners (as indeed chiefly it is) yet the right speculation may give much satisfaction, even to the most

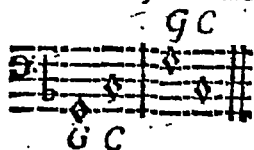
most skilful, laying open unto them, how manifest and certain are the first Grounds of Counterpoint.

First, it is in this case requisite that a former *Bass*, or at least part thereof be framed, the Notes rising and falling according to the nature of that part, nor so much by degrees, as by leaps of a third, fourth, or fifth, or eighth, a sixth being seldom, a seventh never used, and neither of both without the discretion of a skilful Composer. Next we must consider whether the *Bass* doth rise or fall, for in that consists the mysterie: That rising or falling doth never exceed a fourth, (a) for a fourth above, is the same that a fifth is underneath, and a fourth underneath is as a fifth above; for Example, if a *Bass* should rise thus:

(a) If the *Bass* do rise more than a fourth, it must be called falling: and likewise, if it fall any distance more than a fourth, that falling must be called rising:



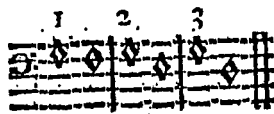
The first rising is said to be by degrees, because there is no Note between the two Notes, the second rising is by leaps, for *G* skips over *A* to *B*, and so leaps into a third, the third Example also leaps two Notes into a fourth. Now for this fourth, if the *Bass* had descended from *G* above to *C* underneath, that descending fifth in sight and use had been all one with the fourth, as here you may discern, for they both begin and end in the same Keys: thus,



This rule likewise holds, if the Notes descend a second, (b) third, or fourth; for the fifth ascending

is all one with the fourth descending. Example of the first Notes.

(b) If your Pass should fall a seventh, it is but the same as if it did rise a second, or a sixth falling is but the same of a third rising; and so on the contrary, if the Bass do rise a seventh or sixth, it is the same as though it did fall a second or third.



The third two Notes which make the distance of a fourth, are all one with this fifth following.



But let us make our approach yet nearer; if the Bass shall descend either a second, third, or fourth, that part which stands in the third or tenth above the Bass, shall fall into an eighth; that which is a fifth shall pass into a third, and that which is an eighth shall remove into a fifth.

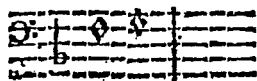
But that all this may appear more plain and easie, I have drawn it all into these six figures.

8	3	5
3	5	8

Though you find here only mentioned and figured a third, fifth, and eighth, yet not only these single ConCORDS are meant, but by them also their (c) COMPOUNDS, as a tenth, a twelfth, a fifteenth, and so upwards; and also the unison as well as the eighth.

(c) Both their COMPOUNDS is meant their OCTAVES; as a third and its eights, a fifth and its eights, &c.

This being granted, I will give you Example of those figures prefixed: When the Bass riseth, beginning from the lowest figure, and rising to the upper; as if the Bass should rise a second, in this manner.



Then

Then if you will begin with your third, you must set your Note in *Ala mire*, which is a third to *Fa ut*, and so look upward, and that Cord which you see next above it use, and that is an eight in *G sol re ut*.

After that, if you will take a fifth to the first Note, you must look upward and take the third you find there for the second Note. Lastly, if you take an eighth for the first Note, you must take for the second Note the Cord above it, which is the fifth.

Example of all the three Parts added to the Bass.

<p>Treble.</p>	<p>What parts arise out of the rising of the second; the same answer in the rising of the third and fourth, thus:</p>	
<p>Mean.</p>		
<p>Tenor.</p>		
<p>Bass.</p>		

This riseth a third. This riseth a fourth.

Albeit any man by the rising of parts, might of himself conceive the same reason in the falling of them, yet that nothing may be thought obscure, I will also illustrate the descending Notes by Example.

If the *Bass* descends or falls, a second, third, or fourth, or riseth a fifth (which is all one as if it had

H 3 fallen

fallen a fourth, as hath been shewed before) then look upon the six figures, where in the first place you shall find the eighth which descends into the third, in the second place the third descending into the fifth, and in the third and last place the fifth, which hath under it an eighth.

Treble. 8 3 8 3 8 3

Mean. 5 8 5 8 5 8

Tenor. 3 5 3 5 3 5

Bass.

Thus much for the rising and falling of the *Bass* in several: Now I will give you a brief Example of both of them mixed together in the plainest fashion, let this strain serve for the *Bass*.

Example.

The two Notes fall a second, the second and third Notes fall a fifth, which you must call rising a fourth, the third and fourth Notes rise a fifth, which you must name the fourth falling, the fourth and fifth Notes rise a second, the fifth and sixth Notes fall a third, the sixth and seventh Notes also fall a third, the seventh and

and eighth rise a second, the eighth and ninth Notes rise a fourth, the tenth and eleventh Notes fall a fifth, which you must reckon rising a fourth.

Being thus prepared, you may chuse whether you will begin with an eighth, or fifth, or a third; for as soon as you have taken any one of them, all the other Notes necessarily, without respect of the rest of the parts, and every one orderly, without mixing, keeps his proper place above the other, as you may easily discern in the following Example.

Example.

The musical score consists of four staves, each with a label on the left and a series of notes with stems. Above each staff is a line of figured bass notation. The notes are diamond-shaped with stems, and some have 'x' marks. The staves are labeled Treble, Mean, Tenor, and Bass from top to bottom.

Treble. 8 3 8 3 8 3 5 3 8 3 8

Mean. 5 8 5 8 5 8 3 8 3 8 5

Tenor. 3 5 3 5 3 5 8 5 3 5 3

Bass.

Let us examine only one of the parts, and let that be the *Tenor*, because it stands next to the *Bass*. The first Note in *B*, is a third to the *Bass*, which descends to the second Note of the *Bass*: Now look among the six figures, and when you have found the

third in the upper place, you shall find under it a fifth; then take that fifth which is *C*, next from *F* to *B* below, is a fifth descending, for which say ascending; and so you shall look for the fifth in the lowest row of the figures, above which stands a third, which is to be taken; that third stands in *D*; then from *B* to *F* the *Bass* rises a fifth, but you must say falling, because a fifth rising and a fourth falling is all one, as hath been often declared before; now a third when the *Bass* falls requires a fifth to follow it: (*d*) But what needs further demonstration, when as he that knows his Cords, cannot but conceive the necessity of consequence in all these, with help of those six figures.

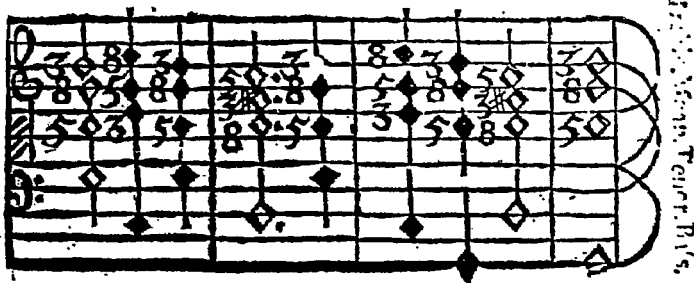
(*d*) When you have made a formal *Bass*, and would join other three parts to it, set the first Note of your *Tenor* either a third, fifth, or eighth above your *Bass* (which of them you please) which done, place your *Mean* in the next Cord you find above your *Tenor*, and the *Treble* in the next Cord above your *Mean*, then follow the rule of your figures, according to the rising or falling of your *Bass*, and the other Notes will follow in their due order.

But let them that have not proceeded so far, take this Note with them concerning the placing of the parts; if the upper part or *Treble* be an eighth, the *Mean* must take the next Cord under it, which is a fifth, and the *Tenor* the next Cord under that, which is a third. But if the *Treble* be a third, then the *Mean* must take the eighth, and the *Tenor* the fifth. Again, if the uppermost part stands in the fifth or twelfth, (for in respect of the Learners ear, in the simple Concord I conclude all his Compounds) then the *Mean* must be a tenth, and the *Tenor* a fifth. Moreover, all these Cords are to be seen in the *Bass*, and such Cords as stand above the Notes of the *Bass* are easily known, but such as in
sight

fight are found (*e*) under it, trouble the young Beginner; let them therefore know that a third under the *Bass*, is a sixth above it, and if it be a greater third it yields a lesser six above; if the lesser third the greater sixth. A fourth underneath the *Bass* is a fifth above, and a fifth under the *Bass* is a fourth above it. A sixth beneath the *Bass* is a third above, and if it be the lesser sixth, then is the third above the greater third, and if the greater sixth underneath, then is it the lesser third above; and thus far I have digressed for the Scholars sake.

(*e*) If this Discourse of Cords under the *Bass* do trouble the young Beginner, let him think no more upon them (for it is not intended that he should place any Notes below the *Bass*) but let him look for his Cords, reckoning always from his *Bass* upward; which that he may more easily perform, let him draw eleven lines (which is the whole compass of the *Scale*) and set the three used *Cliffs* in their proper places; this done, he may prick his *Bass* in the lowest five lines, and then set the other three parts in their orderly distances above the *Bass*, Note against Note, as you see in this Example.

Example.



The first example consists of three staves of music. The top staff is in bass clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). It contains four measures of music, each with a diamond-shaped note. Above the notes are the numbers 8, 5, 5, and 8. The middle staff is in bass clef with a key signature of one flat. It contains four measures of music, each with a diamond-shaped note. Above the notes are the numbers 5, 3, 3, and 5. The bottom staff is in bass clef with a key signature of one flat. It contains four measures of music, each with a diamond-shaped note. Above the notes are the numbers 3, 8, 8, and 3. The notes in the middle and bottom staves are black diamonds, while the notes in the top staff are white diamonds.

How both the ways may be mixed together, you may perceive by this EXAMPLE, wherein the black NOTES distinguish the second Way from the first.

In this Example the fifth and sixth Notes of the

The second example consists of four staves of music. The top staff is in bass clef with a key signature of one flat. It contains four measures of music, each with a diamond-shaped note. Above the notes are the numbers 3, 5, 8, and 8. The second staff is in bass clef with a key signature of one flat. It contains four measures of music, each with a diamond-shaped note. Above the notes are the numbers 5, 8, 3, and 3. The third staff is in bass clef with a key signature of one flat. It contains four measures of music, each with a diamond-shaped note. Above the notes are the numbers 5, 8, 3, and 3. The bottom staff is in bass clef with a key signature of one flat. It contains four measures of music, each with a diamond-shaped note. Above the notes are the numbers 5, 8, 3, and 3. The notes in the top and bottom staves are white diamonds, while the notes in the middle two staves are black diamonds.

three upper parts are after the second way, for from the fourth Note of the *Bass*, which is in from *G* and goeth to *B* is a third rising, so that according to the first Rule, the eighth shall pass into the fifth, the fifth into a third, the third into an eighth. But here contrariwise the eighth goes into a third, the

fifth into an eighth, and the third into a fifth; and by these Notes you may censure the rest of that kind. (f)

(f) When your *Bass* standeth still (that is to say, hath two or more Notes together in one and the same place) you may chuse whether you will make your parts do so too; or change them, as

you

which being prick'd in several parts, appeareth thus:

Treble.

Mean.

Tenor.

Bass.

I have propos'd the former Example of the eleven lines, to lead the young Beginner to a true knowledge of the Scale, without which nothing can be effected; but having once got that knowledge, let him then compose his Musick in several parts, as he seeth in his second Example.

Here I think it not amiss to advertise the young Beginner, that so often as the Bass doth fall a fifth, or rise a fourth (which is all one, as hath been said) that part which is a third to the Bass in the antecedent Note, that third I say must always be the sharp or greater third; as was apparent in the last Example of four parts, in the first Notes of the second Bar in the Mean Part, and likewise in the last Note but one of the same Part, in both which places there is a ♯ set to make it the greater third. The same is to be observed in what part so ever this third shall happen.

If I should discover no more than this already deciphered of *Counterpoint*, wherein the native order of four Parts with use of the *Concords*, is demonstratively expressed, might I be my own Judge, I had effected more in *Counterpoint*, than any man before me hath ever attempted, but I will yet proceed a little further. And that you may perceive how cunning and how certain nature is in all her operations, know that what *Cords* have held good in this ascending and descending of the *Bass*, answer in the contrary by the very same rule, though not so formally as the other, yet so that much use is, and may be made of this sort of *Counterpoint*. To keep the figures in your memory, I will here place them again, and after them plain Examples.

8	3	5
3	5	8

The image shows four staves of musical notation. Above the first staff are the figures: 8 5 8 5 8 5 5 8 5 8 5 8. Below the first staff are the figures: 5 3 5 3 5 3 3 5 3 5 3 5. Below the second staff are the figures: 3 8 3 8 3 8 8 3 8 3 8 3. The notes are diamond-shaped and arranged in a pattern that corresponds to the figures above and below them.

In these last Examples you may see what variety Nature offers of her self; for if in the first Rule the Notes follow not in expected formality, this second way being quite contrary to the other affords us sufficient supply: the

first and last two Notes arising and falling by degrees, are not so formal as the rest; yet thus they may be mollified; by breaking two of the first Notes.

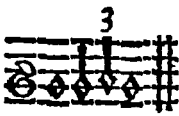


In the first *Bass* two sixes are to be taken, by reason of the imperfection

of the *Bass*s wanting due latitude, the one in *E*, the other in *F* sharp, but in the second *Bass*s the sixes are removed away, and the Musick is fuller.

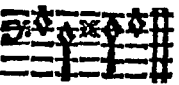
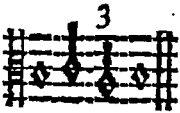
Nevertheless, if any be pleased to use the *Bass*s sharp, then instead of the eighth to the *Bass*s, he may take the third to the *Bass*s, in this manner.

Here the *Treble* in the third Note, when it should have past in the sharp eighth in *F*, takes for it a third to the *Bass*s in *A*, which causeth the *Bass*s and *Treble* to rise two thirds, whereof we will speak hereafter.



Note also that when the *Bass*s stands in *E* flat, and the part that is an eighth to it must pass into a sharp, or greater third, that this passage from the flat to the sharp would be unformal, and therefore it may be thus with small alteration avoided, by removing the latter part of the Note into the third above, which though it meets in unison with the upper part, yet it is right good, because it jumps not with the whole, but only with the last half of it.

For the second Example look hereafter in the rule of thirds, but for the first Example here: If in the *Mean* part the third Note that is divided, had stood still a *Minimi* (as by rule it should) and so had past in *F* sharp, as it must of force be made sharp at a close, it had been then passing unformal.



Of Counterpoint.

Example.

LXX

The musical score consists of four staves: Treble, Mean, Tenor, and Bass. The Treble staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). It contains two measures of music, with a '1' above the first measure and a '2' above the second. The Mean staff has a C-clef (soprano position) and a key signature of one flat. It contains two measures of music, with an '8' above the first measure and a '3' above the second. The Tenor staff has a C-clef (alto position) and a key signature of one flat. It contains two measures of music. The Bass staff has a bass clef and a key signature of one flat. It contains two measures of music. All staves use diamond-shaped notes and stems.

But if the same *Bass* had been set in the sharp Key, the rest of the part would have fallen out formal of themselves without any help, as thus :

This musical score shows the same four staves as Example 1, but with a different key signature for the Bass staff. The Treble, Mean, and Tenor staves are identical to the first example. The Bass staff now has a key signature of two sharps (D major), indicated by a sharp sign on the F line and a sharp sign on the C line. The notes and accidentals in the Bass staff are adjusted accordingly to fit the new key signature.

When the *Bass* shall stand still in one Key, as above it doth in the third Note, then the other parts may remove at their pleasure.

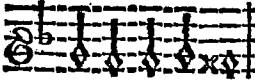
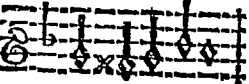
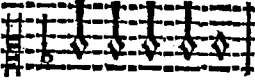
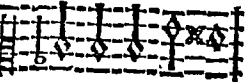
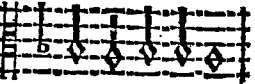
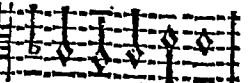
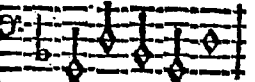
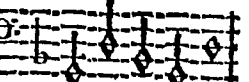
Moreover, it is to be observed, that in Composing of the *Bass* you may break it at your pleasure, without altering any of the other parts :

For

(b) But that scruple may be taken away by making the second Note of the Treble sharp, and instead of a fifth by removing the third Note into a sixth.

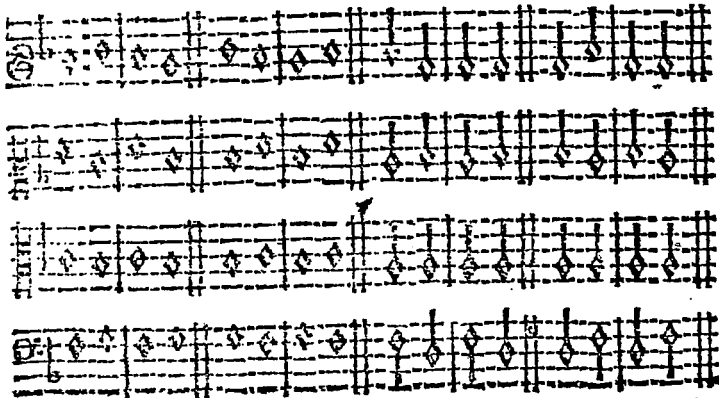
When any informality doth occur, the Scholar need not tye himself to the first Rules of the Bass rising or falling, but may take such Cords as his Genius prompts him to, (having a care that he take not two eights or fifts together) rising or falling betwixt any two parts whatsoever: 'Tis true, our Author did invent this Rule of the figures, as the easiest way to lead the young Beginneer to this kind of Composition, in which he hath done more than any that I have ever seen upon this Subject; but this he did to shew the smoothest way, and not to tye his Scholar to keep strictly that way when a block or stone shou'd happen to lye in it, but that he may in such a case step out of this way for a Note or two, and then return again into it.

Example.

	There may yet be more variety afforded the Bass,	
	by ordering the fourth	
	Notes of the upper parts according to the second	
	Rule, thus:	

But that I may (as near as I can) leave nothing untouched concerning this kind of Counterpoint, let us now consider how two Thirds being taken together between
 1 the

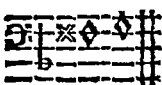
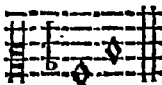
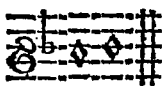
the *Treble* and the *Bass*, may stand with our Rule. For sixes are not in this case to be mentioned, being distances so large that they can produce no formality: Besides, the sixth is of it self very imperfect, being compounded of a third, which is an imperfect Concord; and of a fourth, which is a Discord: and this the cause is, that the sixes produce so many fourths in the inner parts. As for the third, it being the least distance of any Concord, is therefore easily to be reduced into good order. For if the *Bass* and *Treble* do rise together in thirds, then the first Note of the *Treble* is regular with the other part, but the second of it is irregular; for by rule instead of the rising third, it should fall into the eighth. In like sort, if the *Bass* and *Treble* do fall two thirds, the first Note of the *Treble* is irregular, and is to be brought into rule by being put into the eighth, but the second Note is of it self regular. Yet whether those thirds be reduced into eights or no, you shall by supposition thereof find out the other parts, which never vary from the rule but in the *fluy bass*. But let me explain my self by Example.



The

The first two Notes of the *Treble* are both thirds to the *Bass*, but in the second stroke, the first Note of the *Treble* is a third, and the second which was before a third, is made an eight, onely to shew how you may find out the right parts which are to be used when you take two thirds between the *Treble* and the *Bass*: For according to the former rule, if the *Bass* descends, the third then in the *Treble* is to pass into the eight, and the *Mean* must first take an eight, then a fifth; and the *Tenor* a fifth, then a third; and these are also the right and proper parts, if you return the eight of the *Treble* into a third again, as may appear in the first example of the *Bass* falling, and consequently in all the rest.

But let us proceed yet further, and suppose that the *Bass* shall use a sharp, what is then to be done? as if thus:

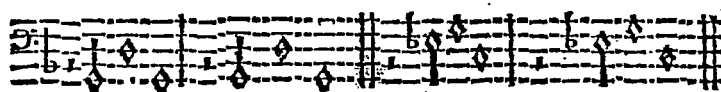
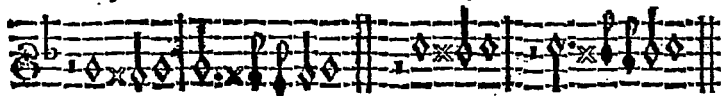


If you call to mind the rule delivered concerning the sharp *Bass*, you shall here by help thereof see the right parts, though you cannot bring them under the Rule: for if the first Note of the *Bass* had been flat, the *Mean* part should have taken that, and so have descended to the fifth; but being sharp, you take for it (according to the former observation) the third to the *Bass*, and so rise up into the fifth. The *Tenor* that should take a fifth, and so fall by degrees into a third, is here forced by reason of the sharp *Bass*, for a fifth to take a sixth, and so leap downwards into the thirds. And so much for the thirds

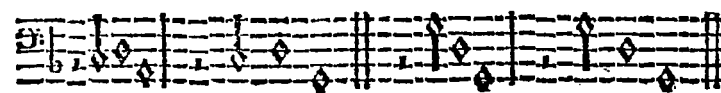
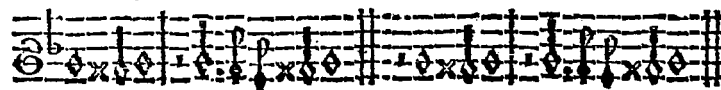
Lastly, in favour of young Beginners let me also

add this, that the *Bass* intends a Close as often as it riseth a fifth, third, or second, and then immediately either falls a fifth, or riseth a fourth. In like manner, if the *Bass* falls a fourth or a second; and after falls a fifth, the *Bass* insinuates a Close, and in all these cases the part must hold, that in holding can use the fourth or eleventh, and so pass either in the third or tenth.

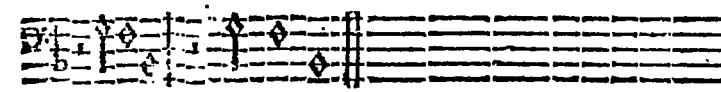
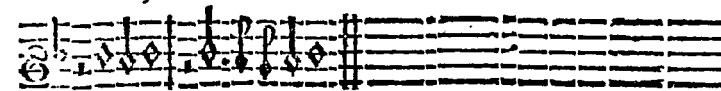
Thus, or thus. Thus, or thus.



Thus, or thus. Thus, or thus.



Thus, or thus.



In the Examples before set down I left out the Close, of purpose that the Cords might the better appear in their proper places; but this short admonition will direct

rect any young Beginner to help that want at his pleasure. And thus I end my Treatise of (i) *Counterpoint*: both brief and certain, such as will open an easie way to them, that without help of a skilful Teacher endeavour to acquire the first grounds of this Art.

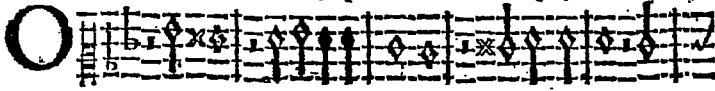
(i) *Counterpoint* is the first part and ground of Composition. The second part of it is *Figurative Musick* or *Descant*, which mixeth fast and slow Notes together, bindeth Discords with Conords, and maketh one Part to answer another in Point of Fuge, with many other excellent varieties: To the attaining of which, I cannot commend you to a better Author, than our most excellent Countrey-man, Mr. Morley, in the second and third Part of his *Introduction to Musick*. If you desire to see what foreign Authors do write on this Subject, you may (if you understand Latin) peruse the Works of *Athanasius Kirkerus* and *Marsennus*, two excellent late Authors.

But first peruse the two little Treatises following in this present Book, the one of the Tones of Musick, the other of Passages of Conords; in both which, our Author (according to his accustomed Method) doth more briefly and more perspicuously treat, than any other Author you shall meet with on the same Subject.

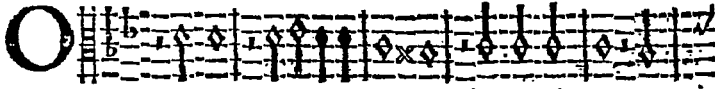
A short Hymn, Composed after this form of Counterpoint, to shew how well it will become any Divine or grave Subject.



Lord have mercy upon me, O hear my prayers both



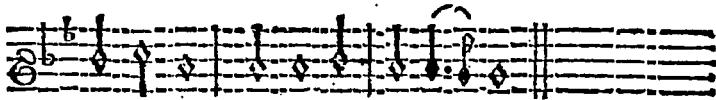
Lord have mercy upon me, O hear my prayers both



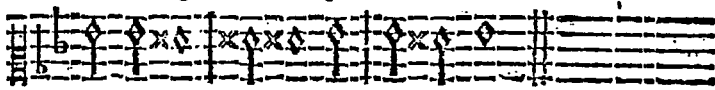
Lord have mercy upon me, O hear my prayers both



Lord have mercy upon me, O hear my prayers both



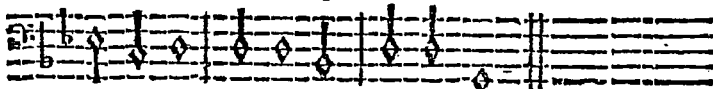
day and night, with tears pour'd forth to thee.



day and night, with tears pour'd forth to thee.



day and night, with tears pour'd forth to thee.



day and night, with tears pour'd forth to thee.

In this Ayre the last Note only is, for sweetness sake,
altered

altered from the Rule, in the last Note of the *Treble*, where the eight being a perfect Concord, and better befitting an outward part at the Close, is taken for a third; and in the *Tenor* instead of the fifth, that third is taken descending; for in a middle part, imperfection is not so manifest as in the *Treble* at a Close, which is the perfection of a Song.



The previous text was excerpted from:

A BRIEF
INTRODUCTION
TO THE SKILL OF
MUSICK:

IN THREE BOOKS.

THE FIRST:

The Grounds and Rules of MUSICK,
according to the *Gam-ut* and other
Principles thereof.

THE SECOND:

Instructions for the Bass-Viol, and also
for the *Treble-Violin*:

WITH

LESSONS for BEGINNERS.

By JOHN PLATFORD, Philo-Musicæ.

THE THIRD:

The Art of Descant, or Composing Musick
in Parts: By Dr. *Tho. Campion*.

With Annotations thereon, by Mr. Chr. Simpson.

London, Printed by *William Godbid* for *John Playford*,
and are to be Sold at his Shop in the *Temple*. 1670.