

Terms for counterpoint

counterpoint: the art of combining melodic lines

imitation: the process of one line duplicating what another has just done; described by **harmonic interval** (distance between the first note of the leader and the first note of the follower) and **time interval** (number of measures, measure fractions, or beats), as in "imitation at the fifth after two beats"

inversion: treatment of a motive, theme, or subject wherein the interval pattern of the original is followed, but interval direction is reversed (inverted); i.e., M3 up becomes M3 down, etc.

retrograde: treatment of a motive, theme, or subject wherein the interval pattern of the original is followed, but in reverse order

retrograde inversion: treatment of a motive, theme, or subject wherein the interval pattern of the original is followed, but both interval order and direction are reversed

diminution: reduction of rhythmic note values by division; relative proportions remain undisturbed (modern practice includes the possibility of additive or subtractive diminution)

augmentation: expansion of rhythmic note values by multiplication; relative proportions remain undisturbed (modern practice includes the possibility of additive or subtractive augmentation)

canon: an imitative procedure of rigorous discipline; from Greek *kanon*, meaning rule, originally referred to a formula or rule for the realization of an imitative line which was not written out; usually consists of prolonged, strict imitation but follows no predictable tonal or sectional plan; typically for two voices (lines)

leader or **dux:** the initiating voice

follower or **comes:** the imitating voice

accompanied canon includes one or more voices not involved in the canon

double canon has at least four voices, and consists of two canons progressing simultaneously

triple canon has at least six voices, with three canons progressing simultaneously

canon in augmentation has the follower in augmentation relative to the leader

canon in diminution has the follower in diminution relative to the leader

retrograde canon (crab canon, canon cancrizans): follower is retrograde of the leader

mirror canon: follower in precise inversion of the leader (canon in contrary motion)

enigma canon (riddle/puzzle canon): imitation not given; clues to realization given by clef signs, entry signs, or literary inscriptions

free canon: either pitch or rhythm not imitated: **rhythmic canon** (intervallically free canon) imitates rhythm only; **rhythmically free canon** imitates intervals only

infinite canon (round): imitation goes on without interruption; if tonal level changes with each repetition, **spiral canon** results

fugue: an imitative compositional procedure or form in a specific number of parts (3-5), usually monothematic, and in "open" form (characterized by continuous growth and expansion rather than sectional return, as in ternary or sonata forms)

subject: the main "theme" of the fugue which enters unaccompanied in a single voice and forms the basis for the entire work; can be as short as a few notes to several bars; determines character of entire fugue, usually distinctive in melodic contour and rhythmic identity; tends to lack strong cadential ending, thus lending itself to continuity

to determine subject length, determine where response enters, look for a point of tentative settling, and compare all subject entries in the fugue

head motive: the most distinctive part of the subject, usually; the opening several intervals in a striking rhythm

response: traditionally, a second voice answers the first in imitation at the 5th above (or 4th below), which is to say at the dominant level; the two entries may be separated by a short **link**, which is described below
(subject continues to describe tonic entries, response describes dominant entries)

real imitation (or response) is an exact duplication of the original subject

tonal imitation carries slight alteration of interval for various reasons, usually to maintain the integrity of the tonic key where the response would too suddenly carry the music to the dominant; reasons for such alteration should be pondered; frequently the melodic interval altered is the P4 or P5

countersubject: the first voice to enter continues as the next voice carries the subject, and if this material is regularly (constantly) used against the subject, it is known as a countersubject; in the absence of a countersubject, assign no label other than "free counterpoint"

exposition is the opening section containing a statement of the subject in each voice in turn; the voice entries generally alternate between subject (tonic) and response (dominant) varieties, but other arrangements occur; no modulation outside the dominant occurs in the exposition; the exposition is considered complete when all voices have stated the subject, but occasionally a voice may carry two entries (not usually successive), producing for instance five entries in a four-voice fugue in the exposition; a fairly strong cadence might end the exposition, or may be avoided in the sake of continuity; occasionally a new set of entries will occur, still centered in the original key, producing a **counterexposition**

link (bridge): a brief connecting passage between voice entries, not developmental in character (see episode) (N.B.: some writers would call this device simply a transitional episode)

development: the music following the exposition, characterized by harmonic movement, modification of the subject, and episodes

episode: a passage during which no complete subject entry is in progress and which develops material previously heard (normally, at least), either forming a cadence (cadential episode) or providing tonal movement (modulation)

stretto: overlapping of subject entries; often the subject is shortened; a climactic device
total stretto involves all voices
partial stretto includes only some voices out of the total number

augmentation, diminution, retrograde, inversion may be used to alter the subject; change of mode or interval compression/expansion are also common

pedal point is an extended single tone, usually tonic or dominant of the original key, which provides an anchor and produces tension against the continuing harmonic motion; can occur anywhere after the exposition, but is primarily associated with the coda

coda occurs only after the original tonic is re-established, and to be perceived as such, must be fairly well set off by a significant pause and/or cadence; the coda will stay in the tonic (meant to include the common device of emphasizing the subdominant), and may include additional subject entries, stretto, or episodes of limited scope; occasionally a coda will introduce a homophonic texture to bring the fugue to a close; most writers steer away from identifying coda as a regular part of fugue, preferring instead to speak of a fugue's "final stage" bearing elements of return

double fugue is a fugue with two subjects, either 1) both are presented together in the exposition and then stay together during the remainder of the piece or 2) the first has an exposition and short development, followed by an exposition and short development of the second subject, which is followed by a development of both subjects together

fugato is a passage in a larger piece which follows the pattern of fugal exposition

fughetta is a miniature fugue

invertible counterpoint is produced by exchanging upper and lower positions of contrapuntal voices; resolutions of dissonances must therefore work in either position

double counterpoint is invertible counterpoint involving two voices

triple counterpoint is invertible counterpoint involving three voices (etc.)

one describes invertible counterpoint by figuring the intervallic distance moved by the (original) lower voice considering the (original) upper voice as stationary; invertible counterpoint at the octave (lower voice has been transposed up an octave) is the most common, though invertible counterpoint at the tenth, twelfth, and fifteenth are possible

invention is a procedure rather than a form, as it exhibits even fewer predictable sections and elements than fugue; some call it a study in counterpoint; the following characteristics define invention:

consistent and fairly continuous use of one motive or a small number of motives

motives have a generalized shape, meaning that the linear direction and rhythm remain constant while intervallic content may change

three or four sections are common, each closing on a well-defined cadence

contrasting material is not generally presented, except in the distinct (and common) pairing of motive with countermotive

invertible counterpoint is common

accompanied canon

Franck, Sonata in A for violin and piano, final movement.

Allegretto poco mosso

dolce cantabile

dolce cantabile

Follower at one 8ve, one measure

The image shows a musical score for Franck's Sonata in A. It features two staves: a violin staff on top and a piano staff on the bottom. The tempo is marked 'Allegretto poco mosso'. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#). The music is in 4/4 time. The violin part starts with a melodic line, and the piano part follows with a similar line an octave lower. The piano part is marked 'dolce cantabile'. A bracket indicates that the piano part is the 'Follower at one 8ve, one measure'.

double canon

Mozart, Double Canon, K. 228, for four voices.

The image shows a musical score for Mozart's Double Canon, K. 228. It consists of four staves, representing four different voices. The music is in 4/4 time and has a key signature of one flat (Bb). The score shows the first few measures of the piece, with each voice part following the same melodic line at different intervals.

retrograde canon

Canon at the octave below, in retrograde and augmentation.

The image shows a musical score for a retrograde canon. It consists of two staves. The top staff shows a melodic line, and the bottom staff shows the same line played in retrograde (backwards) and augmented (longer notes). The two staves are connected by a long horizontal line, indicating that the bottom staff is the retrograde and augmented version of the top staff.

mirror canon

Canon in inversion, at the fifth, after one measure.

The image shows a musical score for a mirror canon. It consists of two staves. The top staff shows a melodic line, and the bottom staff shows the same line played in inversion (upside down) and at the fifth interval. The two staves are connected by a long horizontal line, indicating that the bottom staff is the mirror image of the top staff.

enigma canon

Canon a2

Entry of follower (mirror of leader) on second beat

The image shows a musical score for an enigma canon. It consists of two staves. The top staff shows a melodic line, and the bottom staff shows the same line played in inversion and at the second interval. The two staves are connected by a long horizontal line, indicating that the bottom staff is the mirror image of the top staff. The text 'Entry of follower (mirror of leader) on second beat' is written below the bottom staff.

free canon

Langsam

Ob. 1

Solo Vln.

pp

etc.

Sehr rasch

Ob. 1,2,3,4

Bn. 1,2,3,4

f

to determine subject length

Bach, Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue.

response, tonal

Bach, Fugue in A minor for harpsichord, BWV 947.

countersubject

Bach, Fugue in G-sharp minor, WTC I, 18.

g#: I | d#: IV/v I

c#: I V I- | g#: IV/v-

Bach, Fugue in A-flat, WTC II, 17.

Answer

Countersubject 1

A 6th
B 7th

Countersubject 1

Transitional episode

Subject

Countersubject 2

Inversion at 15th

B 10th
A 8th

stretto

Four-voice stretto. BWTC, Vol. 1, *Fugue no. 1*, mm. 16-18.

invertible counterpoint

Inversion at the octave

Tenth

Twelfth

Fifteenth

Fifteenth

Twelfth

Tenth

Octave

a.

b.

c.

d.