

Canon Composition: Lesson Nr. 2

Imitation at Other Pitch Intervals

by Michael L. Carroll

In this lesson we will explore a canon with the imitation taking place at an interval of a 2nd plus an octave (i.e., a ninth). We will also include a cadence at the end that is not part of the canon. And we will work with two woodwind instruments and triple meter. Otherwise, the procedure will be exactly as it was in Lesson 1.

1. Cadence. Not part of the canon.

C F6 G C

Flute

Bassoon

3. Harmony to bass part.

Not part of canon.

Em7 Am C F6 G7 C

Fl.

Bsn.

2. Canon begins (actually ends) here.

4. Copy and paste from lower voice in measures 3 and 4 and transpose up a second and an octave.

F Bdim Em7 Am C F6 G7 C

Fl.

Bsn.

5. Write harmony to the upper part in the bass.

6. Copy and paste from
2 measures 3 and 5 and
transpose up a 9th.

19 G C F Bdim Em7 Am C F6 G7 C

7. Write harmony to upper voice
in the bass.

8. Copy and paste from
measures 3 and 5 and
transpose up a 9th.

29 C Dm G C F Bdim Em7 Am C F6 G7 C

9. Do not write harmony in the
bass because we've arrive at the
beginning.

Some textbooks (Grabner) will tell you not to allow both voices to jump simultaneously in the same direction. I tend to relax that somewhat by only disallowing that when the meter is moving from a weak beat to a strong one. Here we have structured the canon so that the two measure movement is always from weak to strong. Therefore, the jumps in going from measure 4 to 5 are allowable because we moving from a strong beat (measure 4) to a weak one.

It is also important to have only one melodic high point.

10. Work forward now by subdividing the dotted half notes melodically.

First Variation

41 C Dm G C F Bdim

47 Em7 Am C F6 G7 C

Fl.

Bsn.

2nd Variation

The musical score for the 2nd Variation consists of two systems, each with a Flute (Fl.) and Bassoon (Bsn.) part. The first system starts at measure 53. The Flute part has a melodic line with notes G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The Bassoon part has a lower melodic line with notes G3, F3, E3, D3, C3, B2, A2, G2, F2, E2, D2, C2. Chords are indicated above the Flute staff: C (measures 53-54), Dm (measures 54-55), G (measures 55-56), C (measures 56-57), F (measures 57-58), and Bdim (measures 58-59). The second system starts at measure 59. The Flute part has notes G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The Bassoon part has notes G3, F3, E3, D3, C3, B2, A2, G2, F2, E2, D2, C2. Chords are indicated above the Flute staff: Em7 (measures 59-60), Am (measures 60-61), C (measures 61-62), F6 (measures 62-63), G7 (measures 63-64), and C (measures 64-65). Both systems end with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Summary

1. We proceeded just as in Lesson 1 but this time we used an interval of a 9th for the imitation with eight measures of canon and four measures of a cadence at the end. The cadence made us of motives exhibited in the canon.
2. Note the effective use of staccato to draw attention here and there.
3. Without modulation 12 measures may seem boring to some. In the next lesson, I will throw in some modulation and secondary dominants to spice it up a bit.