

## Checklist for Voice Leading

- [ ] Spacing.<sup>1</sup> Keep adjacent parts, excluding the bass, within an octave of each other.
- [ ] Objectionable Parallels.<sup>2</sup> Avoid two parts separated by a perfect fifth or octave from moving to new pitches separated by the same interval.
- [ ] Contrary Fifths and Octaves.<sup>3</sup> Do not correct objectionable parallels by changing octaves.
- [ ] Unequal Fifths.<sup>4</sup> Avoid transitioning between tritone (augmented 4<sup>th</sup>, diminished 5<sup>th</sup>) and perfect fifth intervals involving the bass. Acceptable if not involving the bass. Acceptable if transitioning between perfect fifth and tritone.
- [ ] Direct or Hidden Fifths and Octaves.<sup>5</sup> Avoid outer parts moving in the same direction into a perfect fifth or octave, with a leap in the soprano.
- [ ] Difficult Intervals.<sup>6</sup> Avoid augmented seconds, augmented fourths upward, diminished fifths downward, sevenths and intervals larger than an octave. Exception is when shifting notes between voices in the same chord and the new note was in another voice. To avoid augmented seconds, consider nontraditional doubling in preceding chord. When unavoidable, spell the interval progression enharmonically as a minor third.
- [ ] Melodic Voice Parts.<sup>7</sup> Diatonic steps and thirds are always good. For leaps greater than a third, change direction; continue in same direction within same chord; continue diatonic movement in same direction; or sustain the note after the leap long enough to imply a new melodic starting point.
- [ ] Diminished Triads.<sup>8</sup> Always invert diminished triads, usually using first inversion.
- [ ] Doubling Notes in Parts.<sup>9</sup> Best notes to double are tonic, dominant, and subdominant steps in the scale. The leading tone should not be doubled.
  - Double root of I, IV, V in root position. Double either root or fifth of inverted I, IV, V chords (avoid doubling the third, especially in first inversion).
  - Double third of II, III, and VI, but root may also be doubled.
  - For VII (dim), always invert (usually first inversion). Never double leading tone.
  - For Seventh Chords (such as V7) in root, include all four notes unless the melodic line necessitates doubling the root and omitting the fifth. For inverted Seventh Chords, include all four notes.
  - For Ninth Chords in root position, the fifth is omitted. For inverted Ninth Chords, the root is omitted. In major keys, (dominant) ninth must not appear in the bass.

<sup>1</sup> S. Kostka, et al., *Tonal Harmony with an Introduction to Twentieth-Century Music*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed., McGraw Hill, 2012, p. 72; Hawley Ades, *Choral Arranging*, expanded edition, Shawnee Press, 1966, p. 5

<sup>2</sup> Kostka p. 75; Ades p. 9

<sup>3</sup> Kostka p. 75

<sup>4</sup> Kostka p. 76

<sup>5</sup> Kostka p. 77

<sup>6</sup> Kostka p. 67; Ades p. 2,3

<sup>7</sup> Kostka p. 67; Ades p. 2

<sup>8</sup> Kostka p. 117; Ades p. 6

<sup>9</sup> Kostka p. 82, 120, 141; Ades p. 5-8

