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# DOUBLE COUNTERPOINT AND CANON.

BY

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## P R E F A C E .



VARIOUS causes have conduced to the somewhat long delay in the appearance of the present work. Since the second volume of this series (*Counterpoint, Strict and Free*) was issued, the author, at the request of the publishers, has compiled four small books supplementary to *Harmony* and *Counterpoint*. This for some time prevented his commencing the present volume. But the chief cause of the delay has been the difficulty of the task itself. A book which, like the present, deals with many of the most abstruse problems of musical theory, required a great deal of preliminary work, not only in examining and comparing existing treatises, but in writing a very large number of examples to illustrate the various points touched upon. Such a book, if produced in a hurry, would be of little or no value. The author is by no means unaware of its shortcomings; but he can at least honestly claim for it that he has spared neither time nor trouble in its preparation, and that he has done his best to make it practical and useful, especially for those who are studying without the aid of a master.

As mentioned in the preface to *Counterpoint*, it was originally intended to include the subject of Fugue in this volume. To have done so, however, would have necessitated the omission of so much which it is desirable that the student should know, and would have compelled the author to treat of Fugue itself in such a cursory, not to say perfunctory manner, that he soon decided to confine the present volume to Double Counterpoint and Canon, and to deal with Fugue in a separate work, which shall follow this as soon as he can find time to write it.

In treating of double counterpoint, it has been thought advisable to begin with it, as with simple counterpoint, in the strict style. It must, of course, be borne in mind that this is merely preliminary technical work to such double counterpoint

as is used in actual composition. It has been necessary in some respects to relax the strictness of the rules when applying them to double counterpoint—especially in the tenth, the most difficult interval to work. The fundamental principles of strict counterpoint are, nevertheless, observed; and the author believes that writing under restrictions will be of great value to the student, as giving him freedom in the later stages of his work. The whole of the examples to the strict double counterpoint have been written expressly for this work.

In treating of free double counterpoint, the plan pursued in the preceding volumes of this series, of taking the examples, as far as possible, from the works of the great masters, has been adhered to. It will be seen that the quotations are both more numerous and longer than in *Counterpoint*. This is because the student now approaches more nearly to actual composition, which can be better learned from the study of good models than in any other way. It is impossible to teach the invention of melody, though the general principles of its forms may be made intelligible enough; but the exercise of the imagination may be stimulated by the study and analysis of existing masterpieces; and though it is not to be expected that the student will ever acquire the skill of a Bach, yet, from the examination of that composer's works, he can at least discover many general principles to guide him in his own efforts. The chapters on double counterpoint on a florid subject, and with free parts, largely consist of analyzed extracts from the works of the great composers.

The subject of double counterpoint in the rarer intervals is passed over in silence by most theorists. Though far inferior in importance to those more frequently employed, these double counterpoints are not without interest; and, as they are more often used than is generally supposed, a chapter is given to this subject, in which some curious examples will be seen. In the last chapter of the first part of the book, an attempt has been made to simplify the difficult study of triple and quadruple counterpoint.

The second half of this volume, which deals with Canon, presented more difficulties to the author than the first, chiefly because of the impossibility of giving on many points any beyond the most general directions. In one respect, it is believed, the present book differs from most of its predecessors. A great part of the instructions on canon to be found in many treatises has

reference to matters which are not of the slightest practical use to the student. It is doubtful whether it is worth while for anybody at the present day to trouble himself about writing an infinite canon by augmentation, a *canon cancrizans*, or a riddle-canon. Yet the old text-books give elaborate instructions for the composition of these musical puzzles, for they are nothing better. As the object of these volumes is to teach what the student may really need, these subjects are not dealt with at all, though, for the sake of completeness, specimens of all the varieties are given. Only such canons are treated of in detail as possess true musical value, and the learner who masters these will find that he knows all that is really necessary for him. The study of double counterpoint, and of the various forms of imitation is an invaluable and indispensable introduction to the higher branches of composition, and amply rewards the musician for the somewhat severe labour necessary for its acquirement.

The author has to acknowledge his obligations for assistance from several quarters. He is indebted to a series of articles by Mr. J. S. Shedlock, in the *Magazine of Music*, for calling his attention to some of the examples of counterpoint in the rarer intervals in Bach's "Wohltemperirtes Clavier." He has to thank Mr. F. Corder for the canon in § 453, and Herr E. W. Fritsch, of Leipzig, for permission to reprint the canons in §§ 452, 468 from the *Musikalisches Wochenblatt*. His warm thanks are again due to Dr. C. W. Pearce, not only for valuable suggestions, but for his kindness in revising the proof-sheets of the volume—a more than usually troublesome work, owing to the large amount of music type.

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