Species Counterpoint: Species III

Third species, as you might have guessed, involves four notes against one.

And, compared to the other species, it's easy peasy! In fact, the differences can be summed up into four rules.

First: Don't leap more than once in the same direction.

Second: All intervals larger than a third, including perfect fourths, must be counterbalanced by steps on both sides.

Third: As usual, the first note in each measure must be consonant. The third note in the measure is also usually consonant, but it can be dissonant... as long as it's the only dissonant note in the measure.

As for the second and fourth notes, they can be dissonant, as long as they are passing tones or neighbor tones.

A neighbor tone is a note approached by step, which resolves back to the note it came from.

Fourth: There are two special figures which act as exceptions to the rules above.

Hey, that makes five rules! No fair!

Well, they're kind of similar...

The double neighbor tone involves an upper neighbor and a lower neighbor played one after another, then returning to the note that approached it.

Can be dissonant!

This figure can be inverted, so the upper and lower neighbors switch places.

The nota cambiata (or changing tone) follows the pattern of a step down, a third down, then two steps up. The middle note of this five-note figure must be consonant.

Can be dissonant!

Must be consonant!