

First Book  
of

# PARTIMENTI

*Preludes, Fugues, Rondeaux, and Puzzles*

*Twenty-four in total through all key signatures six flats to five sharps*

*composed by*

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*This book is dedicated to all who love early music, but especially to my very dear friend Nathan, who had very first sight of all of these partimenti, and spotted countless errata, contributed dozens of helpful comments and suggestions, and gave this music its first test drive.*

# P R E F A C E

To some it might seem extremely odd to publish a book of 18th-century-style partimenti in the 21st century, but, to me at least, there are a large number of reasons for doing so. Firstly, as an early musician, I take the composition of this kind of music very seriously, and these partimenti were undertaken primarily as a method of exploring a few things I was interested in as a historically-informed composer. Secondly, they were written to provide new exercises for myself in improvisation, and to evaluate my own conceptions and habits in this capacity. Thirdly, some of them were written as teaching materials for elementary fugue-writing and historical improvisation. I can only very humbly hope that they will be of some use to others as well.

I cannot say whether or not the music contained here will satisfy you more than other partimenti, but I can say that I have made an effort to make the pieces self-contained and well-wrought in their own right without disturbing what I believe to be the spirit of good partimento. I have therefore endeavored to make them short, inviting, robust yet flexible. Above all, they should please the ear and stimulate one's imagination, even if realized by a beginner: there is no reason that partimenti should not be exquisitely composed, no matter how miniature their character.

While keyboard instructors could easily coopt this book as a pedagogical tool, what this book is *not* is a textbook or partimento method by itself. The pieces are not expressly elementary, nor are they graded in difficulty in any way. Likewise, I have not included any realizations of my own, because, as I have said, I do not intend to present a method, nor do I wish to provide what may be misconstrued as “solutions” — something I think misses the point of this music. For these reasons this book will likely see more fruitful use by those musicians and scholars who have had some experience with partimento. That said, I have striven to make the book accessible to anyone well-steeped enough in basso continuo and counterpoint. In this way, there should be something for everyone in these pages.

It is my sincere hope that this book can bring just a fraction of the joy to my friends and colleagues that they consistently have given me with their inspiring musicianship and scholarship.

## ORGANIZATION AND PERFORMANCE

The organization of this book is by key. It progresses through twelve key signatures from six flats to five sharps, mostly one prelude and one fugue in each key. Rarely, a prelude is replaced by a rondeau, or a fugue is replaced by a musical riddle. The preludes and fugues grouped by key are not paired in any other way and the performer may play one prelude and transpose a different fugue afterward, for example, in performance. The fugues are written such that the subject is denoted by symbol after the bass enters. In the vast majority of cases, the entrance notes are not given and are left to the performer to intuit. As I have said, these pieces are meant to be as compact as possible: many of the fugues do not contain episodes<sup>1</sup> before the bass entrance, which of course may be added by the performer if they so desire. Many of the preludes can be played *all'inventio*, and in general one should look in all of the pieces for as much imitation as possible. Very often the performer need invent only as much as they wish, the clues to the rest being supplied elsewhere on the page.

At the back of the book there are a few auxiliary pages meant to be helpful to the performer. The first is a way to package sequences that are common in baroque- and classical-era music, and the second amounts to a mnemonic for transposing at sight via clef. While I have arrived at these myself, surely they cannot be entirely original, and I beg forgiveness for reinventing the wheel. It seemed appropriate to supply these in their current form, especially because this book is intended as a resource and not an attempt at a contribution to music theory or musicology whatsoever.

Regarding continuo figures, there are a few things to say. The first is that the very experienced reader may disregard them if they wish. I am not so arrogant to presume that the way I have figured this music is the best or the only way to do so, but I would still urge anyone reading through it to be diligent about working out my intentions in order to more completely understand the work before turning it on its head. The common sense and good taste of the performer is assumed throughout. A lack of figures usually, but not always, denotes a root position chord, and especially in these places the performer may take liberty with the harmony. Straight lines that follow figures to other figures designate resolutions of dissonance. Slightly diagonal lines mean that the figures they originate from represent right-hand harmonies that do not change over that period. This does not necessarily mean that one should not restrike said harmony or add passing harmonies, as it may mean in Couperin, for example. Lastly, a parenthetical figure is either cautionary or optional, and slashes across the figure 5 are sometimes cautionary. The *doppia cadenza* is abbreviated often as “*d.c.*”.

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<sup>1</sup> This is not to say that they are *missing*!

# CONTENTS

I.	Prelude in C major . . . . .	I
II.	Fugue in C major . . . . .	3
III.	Prelude in D major . . . . .	4
IV.	Fugue in D major . . . . .	5
V.	Rondeau in e minor . . . . .	7
VI.	Fugue in e minor . . . . .	8
VII.	Prelude in E-flat major . . . . .	9
VIII.	Fugue in E-flat major . . . . .	10
IX.	Prelude in F major . . . . .	11
X.	Fugue in F major . . . . .	13
XI.	Prelude in g minor . . . . .	14
XII.	Fugue in g minor . . . . .	17
XIII.	Prelude in G-flat major . . . . .	18
XIV.	Fugue in G-flat major . . . . .	20
XV.	Prelude in A-flat major . . . . .	21
XVI.	Fugue in A-flat major . . . . .	22
XVII.	Prelude in b-flat minor . . . . .	24
XVIII.	Fugue in b-flat minor . . . . .	25
XIX.	Prelude in A major . . . . .	27
XX.	Puzzle in A major . . . . .	28
XXI.	Rondeau in B major . . . . .	29
XXII.	Puzzle in B major . . . . .	30
XXIII.	Rondeau in c-sharp minor . . . . .	31
XXIV.	Fugue in c-sharp minor . . . . .	32
	Sequences . . . . .	34
	Clefs . . . . .	35

# I.

## Prelude

This handwritten musical score for guitar is titled "Prelude" and is divided into eight staves. The music is written in treble clef with a common time signature (C). The notation includes a variety of chords and melodic lines, with many chords indicated by numbers (fingerings) and symbols (accents, slurs). The chords are often marked with a '6' (hexachord) and sometimes a '7' (heptachord). The melodic lines are written with eighth and sixteenth notes, often with slurs and accents. The score is a single melodic line, typical of a guitar prelude.

Staff 1: 6 6 6 6 4-3 6

Staff 2: 6 6 6 (7) 4-3 # # 7 4 6 5 6 6

Staff 3: 6 6 # 6 6 6 6 # 7 6 6

Staff 4: 4-# 6 6 6 6 6 (9) 6 6 6

Staff 5: 4-3 6 7 7 6 6 6 6 7-6 6 # 6 6

Staff 6: 6 6 6 7-6 6 7-6 # 7 6 6 6 4-# 6

Staff 7: 7 6 7 6 6 7-6 # 6 7 7 7 6 4-# 6 6 6

Staff 8: 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 9 7 5 6 9 7 6 6 6 6

6 6 4-3 7- 7- 7- 7- 7- 7<sub>4</sub> 7<sub>4</sub> 7<sub>4</sub> 7<sub>4</sub> 6 6 7-<sub>5</sub> (9)6

6 4-3 5 77 67 4-3

# II.

## Fugue.

*Soggetto*



# III.

## Prelude

The musical score is written on seven staves in a treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (D major). The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and dynamic markings. Above the notes, there are extensive handwritten annotations for guitar technique, including fret numbers and fingerings. The first staff shows a sequence of notes with fret numbers 6, 5, 4, 4, 4, 3, 2, 2, 2, 2 and fingerings 7, 4, 3, 2, 2, 2, 2. The second staff continues with similar patterns, including a triplet of eighth notes. The third staff features a sequence of notes with fret numbers 6, 5, 4, 4, 4, 3, 2, 2, 2, 2 and fingerings 7, 4, 3, 2, 2, 2, 2, 2. The fourth staff includes a sequence of notes with fret numbers 6, 5, 4, 4, 4, 3, 2, 2, 2, 2 and fingerings 7, 4, 3, 2, 2, 2, 2, 2. The fifth staff shows a sequence of notes with fret numbers 6, 5, 4, 4, 4, 3, 2, 2, 2, 2 and fingerings 7, 4, 3, 2, 2, 2, 2, 2. The sixth staff includes a sequence of notes with fret numbers 6, 5, 4, 4, 4, 3, 2, 2, 2, 2 and fingerings 7, 4, 3, 2, 2, 2, 2, 2. The seventh staff shows a sequence of notes with fret numbers 6, 5, 4, 4, 4, 3, 2, 2, 2, 2 and fingerings 7, 4, 3, 2, 2, 2, 2, 2.

# IV.

## Fugue.

Handwritten musical notation in treble clef, key signature of two sharps (F# and C#), and 3/4 time signature. The notes are irregularly spaced. A handwritten note "(notes irréguliers)" is written below the staff.

Handwritten musical notation in treble clef, key signature of two sharps, and 3/4 time signature. The notes are irregularly spaced.

Handwritten musical notation in bass clef, key signature of two sharps, and 3/4 time signature. The notes are irregularly spaced. Fingerings are indicated above the notes: 2, 6, 7-6, 4-3, 2-6, 2-6.

Handwritten musical notation in bass clef, key signature of two sharps, and 3/4 time signature. The notes are irregularly spaced. Fingerings and other markings are present: 2-6, 7-7, 6-6, 2, 4, 5, 6, 5, 4-#.

Handwritten musical notation in bass clef, key signature of two sharps, and 3/4 time signature. The notes are irregularly spaced. Fingerings and other markings are present: 6, 5, 4, 2, (7-6), #, 6, #.

Handwritten musical notation in bass clef, key signature of two sharps, and 3/4 time signature. The notes are irregularly spaced. Fingerings and other markings are present: 6, #, 6, #, 2-6, (7-6), 4, 6, 7-6, 4, 7-6.

Handwritten musical notation in bass clef, key signature of two sharps, and 3/4 time signature. The notes are irregularly spaced. Fingerings and other markings are present: 6, (7-4), #.

Handwritten musical notation in bass clef, key signature of two sharps, and 3/4 time signature. The notes are irregularly spaced. Fingerings and other markings are present: 6, 6, 6, 5.

Handwritten musical notation on a staff with treble clef and key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The notation includes notes, rests, and various chord symbols such as 6, 6#7, 7, 7-7, 6 6#, 6 7-8 4, and 9.

Handwritten musical notation on a staff with treble clef and key signature of two sharps. Chord symbols include 7-8, 9, 7 7 4#, 7-7, 6 7 7, 6 7-6, and 9.

Handwritten musical notation on a staff with treble clef and key signature of two sharps. Chord symbols include 7-6 #, 6, 9-8 7 7 6 6, 7-6 6 7, 6, and (7) 6.

Handwritten musical notation on a staff with treble clef and key signature of two sharps. Chord symbols include 6 4#, 2/3, 6 6 4#, and 6 4/2.

Handwritten musical notation on a staff with treble clef and key signature of two sharps. Chord symbols include 6, 7-6, 8 6, 6 6 6, 6, and 6 6 6 6 7.

Handwritten musical notation on a staff with treble clef and key signature of two sharps. Chord symbols include 6 4#, 2 6 - (9), 2 6 - (9), and 2 6 - 7 - 6.

Handwritten musical notation on a staff with treble clef and key signature of two sharps. Chord symbols include 6 8 7, 6, 6 4-#, and 7.

Handwritten musical notation on a staff with treble clef and key signature of two sharps. Chord symbols include 6, (7-6) (7-6) (7-6) (7-6) 6, 4-3/7, and 7.

# VI.

## Rondeau

Handwritten musical score for "Rondeau" in G major, 6/8 time. The score consists of seven staves of music with various guitar chord diagrams and fret numbers written above the notes. The piece is divided into three couplets.

- Staff 1: Title "Rondeau" and initial notation.
- Staff 2: First couplet, marked "- first couplet -".
- Staff 3: Second couplet, marked "- second couplet -".
- Staff 4: Continuation of the second couplet.
- Staff 5: Third couplet, marked "- third couplet -".
- Staff 6: Continuation of the third couplet.
- Staff 7: Final notation with a double bar line and repeat signs.

# VI.

## Fugue.

The musical score consists of ten staves of handwritten notation. The first staff is the title 'Fugue.' followed by a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 3/4 time signature. The subsequent staves contain dense musical notation with various clefs (treble and bass), accidentals, and complex rhythmic patterns. Numerous annotations are present, including fingerings (e.g., 3, 4, 5, 6, 7), slurs, and dynamic markings. Some staves include specific performance instructions such as 'alt: 7-6' and 'alt: 7-7'. The notation is highly detailed, with many notes beamed together and complex chordal structures.

this fugue may be played as a two-part invention, in which case the reader need supply very little material, but the passing dissonances are not always given.

# VII.

## Prelude

The musical score consists of seven staves of handwritten notation in E-flat major (three flats). The first staff is the title 'Prelude' followed by a treble clef, a key signature of three flats, and a common time signature. The music is written in a complex, arpeggiated style with many beamed notes and slurs. Above the notes, there are numerous fingering numbers (1-4) and some slurs. The second staff continues the arpeggiated pattern with similar fingering. The third staff shows a transition to a more melodic line with some chords and a final measure with a fermata. The fourth staff continues with a similar melodic line and includes some fingering. The fifth staff is marked 'simile' and shows a melodic line with some slurs and fingering. The sixth staff continues the melodic line with some slurs and fingering. The seventh staff concludes the piece with a final cadence and a fermata.

for those who do not wish to retune their instruments to render e<sup>b</sup>- and a<sup>b</sup>-minor playable, this prelude may be used as a transcription exercise: see the appendix for a helpful method.

# VIII.

Fugue

# IX.

## Prelude

This page contains a handwritten musical score for guitar, titled "Prelude". The score is written on ten staves, each with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (Bb). The music is characterized by complex melodic lines and frequent use of barre techniques, indicated by numbers 1 through 8 above the notes. Chord diagrams are written above the staves, often with numbers 1-5 indicating fingerings. The notation includes various rhythmic values, such as eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. The piece concludes with a final chord and a double bar line.



7 — 7 — 7 — 7 — (6) (6) (4-3) (7) — 6 6  
5

(7) — 7 — 6 7 — 6 4-3

# X.

*Fugue*

6 7 7 6 (4-3) 6 5 6  
 2 6  
 7 7 6 (4-3) 6  
 7 7 9 8 4-3 7 (7)  
 7 #  
 6  
 6 7 7 7 #  
 6 3 4 #  
 2 6  
 2 6  
 4 6 7 (4) 7 #  
 2 6  
 6 7 6 # 6 5  
 4 #  
 6 5 4 #  
 6 7  
 7 6 5 4-3

This fugue is particularly useful for practicing stretches, and as a first foray into 5-voice realizations (it may equally well be played in 2, 3, or 4 voices). Resist, if you can, putting the subject in every single measure...!

# XI.

## Prelude

The musical score consists of eight staves of music, all in G minor (one flat) and 6/8 time. The notation is handwritten and includes various musical symbols such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings. The first staff is titled "Prelude" and begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a 6/8 time signature. The music is characterized by rapid sixteenth-note passages and complex rhythmic patterns. Fingering numbers (1-5) are written above many notes to indicate fingerings. Slurs are used to group notes together. The score ends with a double bar line and a fermata over the final note.

Handwritten musical notation on a staff. The notation includes notes, slurs, and fingerings. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 above the notes. There are also some symbols like '6' and '4' above the staff.

Handwritten musical notation on a staff. The notation includes notes, slurs, and fingerings. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 above the notes. There are also some symbols like '6' and '4' above the staff.

Handwritten musical notation on a staff. The notation includes notes, slurs, and fingerings. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 above the notes. There are also some symbols like '6' and '4' above the staff.

Handwritten musical notation on a staff. The notation includes notes, slurs, and fingerings. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 above the notes. There are also some symbols like '6' and '4' above the staff.

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Handwritten musical notation on a staff. The notation includes notes, slurs, and fingerings. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 above the notes. There are also some symbols like '6' and '4' above the staff.

Handwritten musical notation on a staff. The notation includes notes, slurs, and fingerings. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 above the notes. There are also some symbols like '6' and '4' above the staff.

*this prelude can be simplified easily by playing*

*otherwise, one may put the written material in the r.h. and play the harmonies with the left, or, as always, be free to invent one's own figurations.*

# XII.

Fugue.

# XIII.

*Prelude* {

7-6 7-6-6  $\frac{6}{4}$  6  $\frac{6}{5}$  (6)(6) (4-3) *triple.*

(6) (6) (6) (6)  $\frac{5}{3}$  5-6-6 4-3



# XIV.

*Fugue.*

6 6 7 7 (6) 6 7 6 8 4 - 3 8 4 - 3

6 6 7 4 3 6 6 7 6 6 — 6 6 4 6 6 7 - 6 6 6

(7) 6 6 4 - 7 5 6 — 6 5 6 — 6 — 6 — 6 6 6

6 2 6 (6) 6 7 4 6 7 8 4 6 6 4 - 3

\* what I perceive as an elegant rhythm and contour in this countersubject makes it worth the price tag of the passing 7 and open 5. For those who would take me to court over it, try this instead:

incorporating this yourself should be straight forward, but this is the price tag for Disliking my countersubject!!

# XV.

Prelude

5 3 5 3 etc.

(5) #

(6) 6 7 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6

6 7 5 3 (7 6 6) 7 (4) (2)

6 7 7 7

6 4-3

# XVI.

Fugue.

6 (9)-6 77-6 6 4-3 (3) 2 (3)

7 - 6 4-3 (6)

7-6-6 (b)4-p 5 5 b4-p 6 6 9-8 6 7 9-8 7 6 (7)

In this fugue I have given the notes for the entrances above the soggetto symbol ( $\text{S}$ ), due to the many diatonic possibilities of this scalar fugue subject. The clefs may be your guide to which voice to place the entrances in, but they may often be adjusted as you see fit. Lastly, there are many more possibilities for stretto (with rectus, inversus, or both) not written explicitly here. It is worthwhile to explore these yourself.

# XVIII.

## Prelude

The image displays a handwritten musical score for a prelude, consisting of eight staves of music. The notation is written in a cursive style and includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and accidentals. The score is annotated with numerous numbers and symbols, likely representing fingerings or specific musical techniques. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The music is written in a 3/4 time signature. The score is divided into measures by vertical bar lines. The annotations include numbers like 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and symbols like #, b, and ~. The final staff ends with a double bar line and a fermata over the final note.

# XVIII.

Fugue.

Handwritten musical notation on a single staff. The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and a common time signature (C). The melody consists of several measures of music, primarily using eighth and sixteenth notes. Above the staff, there are handwritten chord symbols: a 5/5 chord, followed by three 6 chords, and a final chord that appears to be a 6/5 chord. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

# XIV.

*Prelude*

Handwritten musical score for a prelude, featuring six staves of music. The score includes various guitar chord diagrams (e.g., 666, 777, 66, 77, 6-6, 7, 6 4/2, 6 4/2, 7 6 (4) (4) D.c., 6 6 4-#, 6 6 (4) 2, 6 6 4/2, 6-7 2 6 (D.c.)) and dynamic markings (d.c., simile). The piece concludes with a double bar line and a final chord diagram (6-6 66 D.c.).

this prelude might be best realized at a moderate tempo and with more or less constant sixteenth motion.



# XX.

## Puzzle.

Handwritten musical score for 'Puzzle'. The score is written on four staves, all in the key of D major (two sharps) and 3/4 time. The first staff is in soprano clef (C1), the second in alto clef (C3), the third in bass clef (C4), and the fourth in bass clef (C4). The music features various rhythmic values including quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes, as well as rests and trills. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

Hint: what are you thinking if not about thinking and thinking?

# XVI.

Rondeau

the reader is encouraged to add a couplet of their own to the two given here.

# XVII.

Puzzle

Handwritten musical notation for a puzzle. It shows two staves. The top staff has a treble clef, a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#), and a double bar line. The bottom staff has a bass clef, the same key signature, and a sequence of seven quarter notes: G2, F2, E2, D2, C2, B1, A1. The piece ends with a double bar line.

Harmonize the bass part using only the material written.

I put my thing down, flip it and reverse it.

Is it worth it? Let me work it.

Gift: Force from Mary Elect:

# XXIII

## Rondeau

6 9(7)6 5 4 3 9(7)6 (5) 4-3(1)3 8 6 8x  
#-6 8 6 9(7)6 5 4 3 (6) 5# 9-3 d.c. 6 6 7 6# 6  
# 7 5 4# 6 6(7) 6 7 6-4-3 6 7 7 5 3  
6 7-3# 7-6 7-4 6 7-6 8 4-x#  
6 7- 6 6-6 (7) # (8) 7-6 6 6  
7-6 7-(3) #-6-7 6-6 8 6 6 (d.c.)

first triplet  
second triplet  
third triplet

# XXIV.

Fugue.  $\text{1/8}$

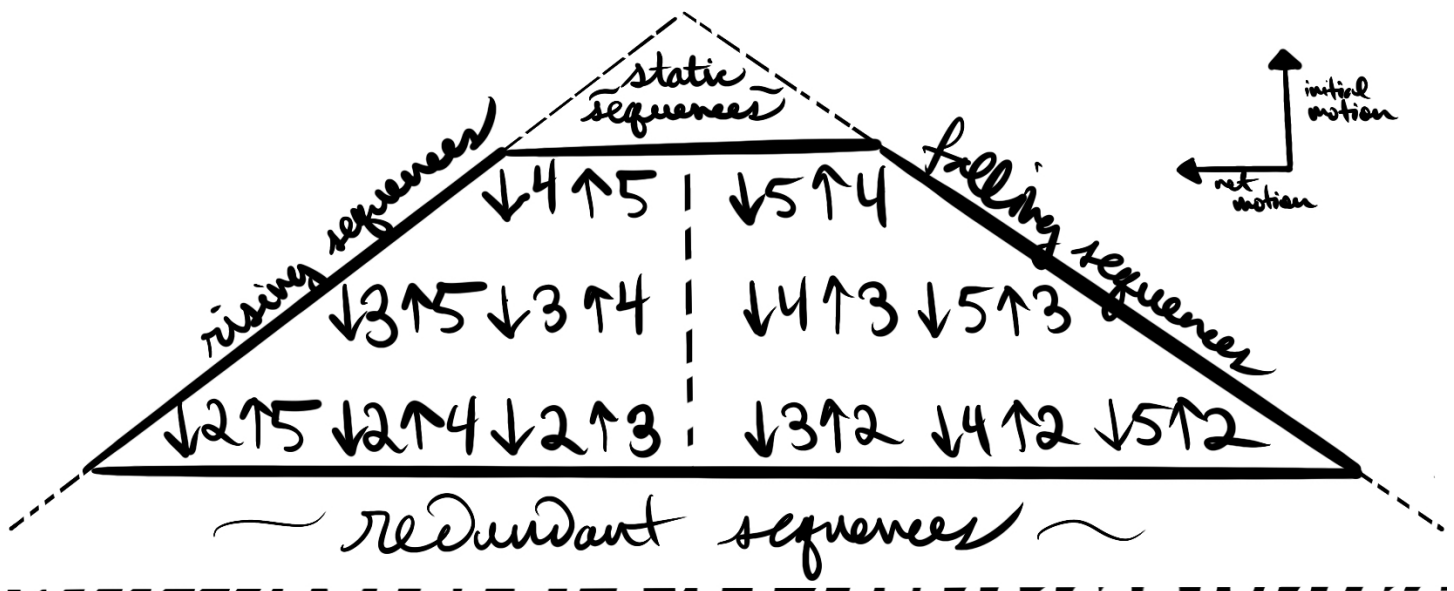
6 7 7  $\frac{4}{2}$  (6) 8 6 4-#

D.S. al fine

\* the alto clef passage immediately following the asterisk may be played as a bass-, alto- or soprano line.

# Twelve Fundamental Sequences

A sequence is here defined as any periodic interval motion of the bass, but it suffices to limit ourselves to sequences with only two distinct intervals of opposite direction. Only two because more complex sequences are almost always reducible to a bipartite sequence like those enumerated below. No similarly directed intervals (e.g.  $\downarrow 2 \downarrow 3$ ) need be counted in the present classification system because any such bass motion is either transpositionally equivalent to one of the form  $\downarrow x \uparrow y$  or it appears in the other part that harmonize the sequence, and permuting the component notes will not change the fundamental harmonic, which can still be indexed by the bass motion. Not counting static ( $\uparrow x \downarrow x$ ) sequences or transpositionally equivalent sequences, there are fundamentally twelve, and they are shown below:

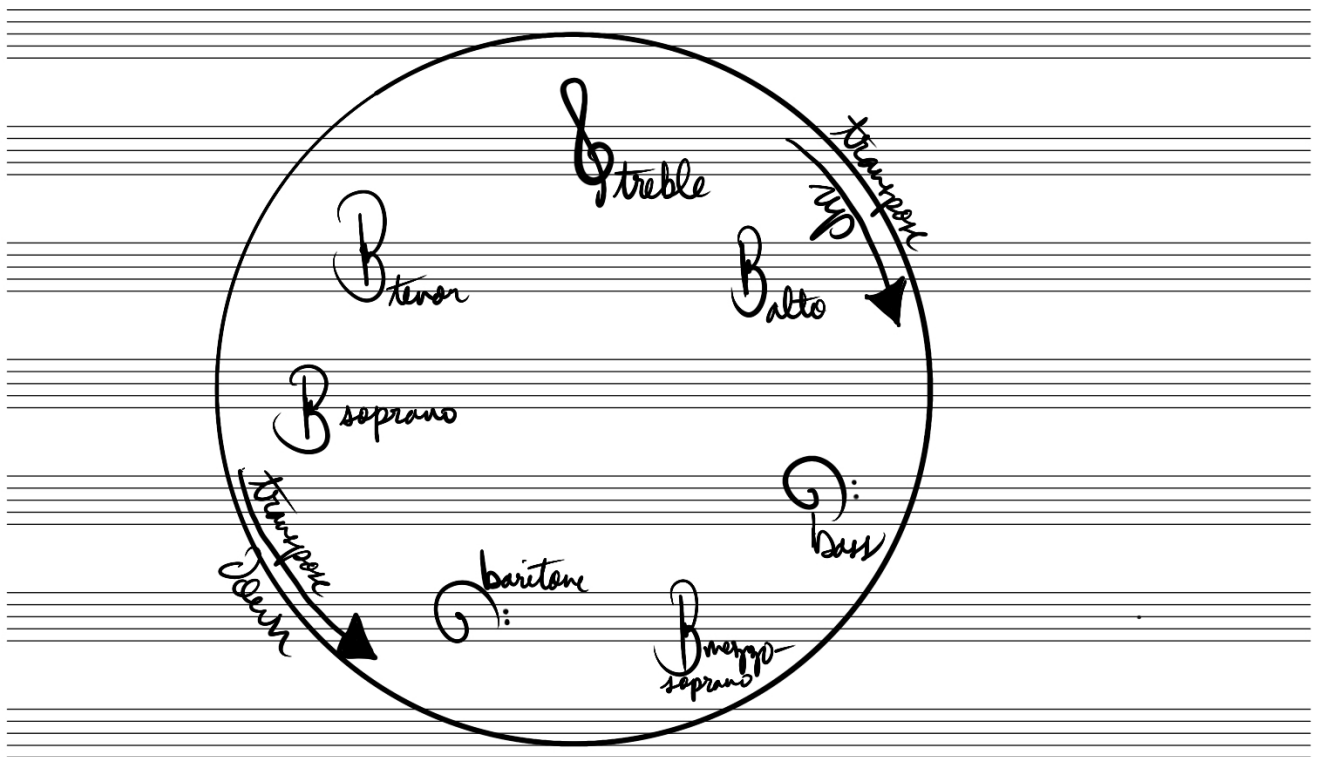


Of course, these bass-line patterns may be harmonized a number of ways, but are usually found, at least in the context of early European music, under a diatonic realization. This is especially true of the patterns in the middle columns which represent sequences whose net motion (interval difference between each iteration/period of the sequence) is stepwise; we can understand, then, the relative ubiquity of such diatonic harmonizations as a consequence of the "rule of the octave" upon which so much of baroque music is based. Many will recognize some of these harmonizations by other names, e.g.  $\downarrow 5 \uparrow 4$  = "circle of fifths", or  $\downarrow 4 \uparrow 2$  = "Pachelbel" and even  $\downarrow 3 \uparrow 4$  = "rising 5-6".

I have found it profitable to explore the relationships between these sequences by replacing them with others when I encounter them. In so doing, one can expand the practical and theoretical depth of their improvisatory toolkit. One finds, for example, that sequences with the same net motion (same column) are particularly straightforward to replace with one another. Sequences that share a component interval motion (same row), on the other hand, are usually more easily placed next to one another to judge the net motion one way or another. What I have written here is barely the tip of the iceberg; entire books have been devoted to the topic of sequences.

# Seven Fundamental Clefs

These seven clefs, four of which are a very much-endangered species, are all one needs to be able to transpose at sight. No matter the interval of transposition, one need simply find the clef they are currently reading in on the circle below, and move about the circle according to the number of steps away the new key is. I imagine the new key signature (you may have to make a few ♯'s into ♮'s, etc.), and read in the clef you arrive at.



For example: to transpose up one step from bass clef, use the mezzo-soprano clef.

F A C → G B D

Musical notation showing the transposition of notes F, A, and C from a bass clef to a mezzo-soprano clef, resulting in G, B, and D.