Quartal Counterpoint Assignment

Write a polyphonic composition using P4th interval projections. Include short and long note values as well as syncopation in a 15-20 measure piece for 2 or 3 voices.

Steps to follow:

1. Familiarize yourself with the pitches generated by projecting a stack of P4th intervals upward. For example, E-A-D-G-C are found about the root note E. Inverting these pitches yields a quintal stack.

2. Note that these first five pitches can be arranged to create a pentatonic scale. The minor pentatonic is A-C-D-E-G, and the major form is C-D-E-G-A. Continuing the projection, the additional pitches are F-Bb-Eb-Ab-Db. These pitches create another pentatonic scale, and if you continue stacking P4ths the aggregate consists of all 12 pitches.

3. The first four or five pitches are most useful, and it is a common technique to slide up or down by a half-step at any point in the piece to introduce a new set of pitches.

4. Write rhythmically strong motives using the P4, M2, m7, and m3 intervals horizontally and vertically. A phrase may combine pitches from different quartal roots.

5. Write a second line to complement the first. The parts may share notes from the same quartal root, or they may be based on a different root for a polytonal effect.

6. Create clarity and rhythmic interest by combining shorter note values in one part with longer durations or rests in the other part.

7. As you write phrases, it is wise to leave gaps between notes, or lengthen the duration of notes to allow space for other parts to interact. This is a core concept for contrapuntal writing in any style.

8. Consider using an ostinato in one part, and combining pitches drawn from a different quartal set in another part. Do not dwell too long on a single quartal root in any part.

9. Inventions, canons, and other imitative forms are good models for quartal counterpoint.

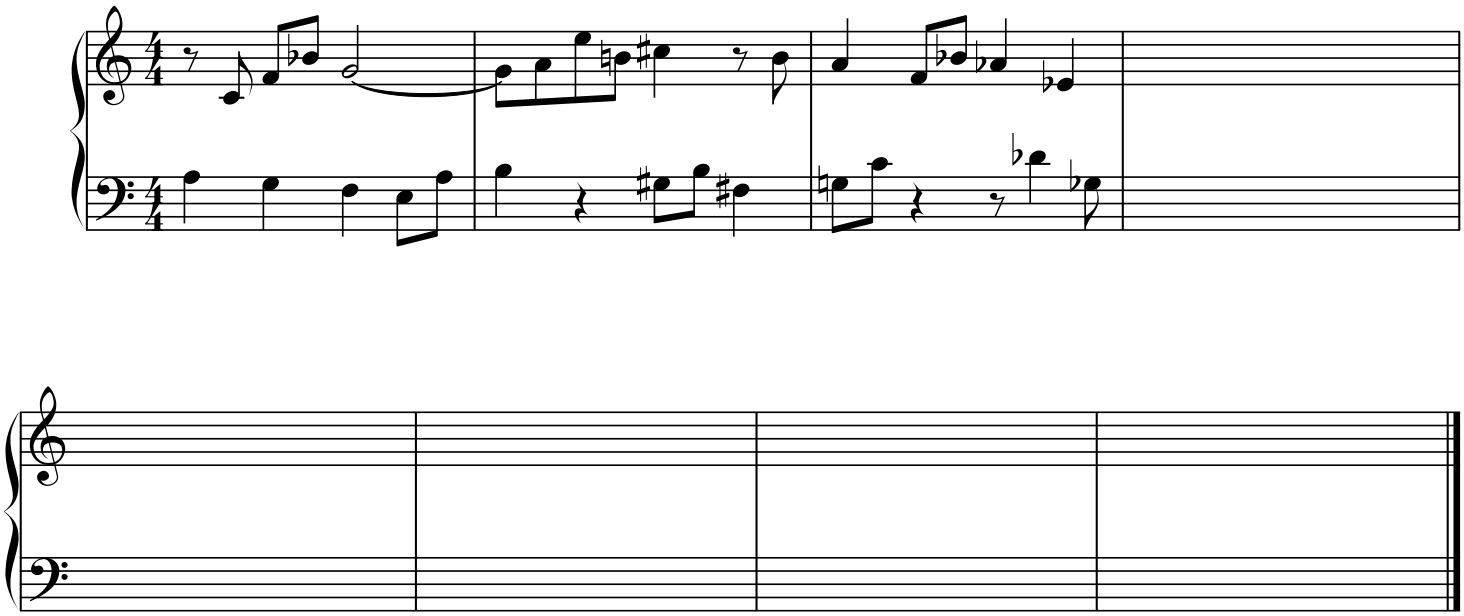
10. Employ motive variation techniques, including sequences, inversions, and fragments.

Other considerations:

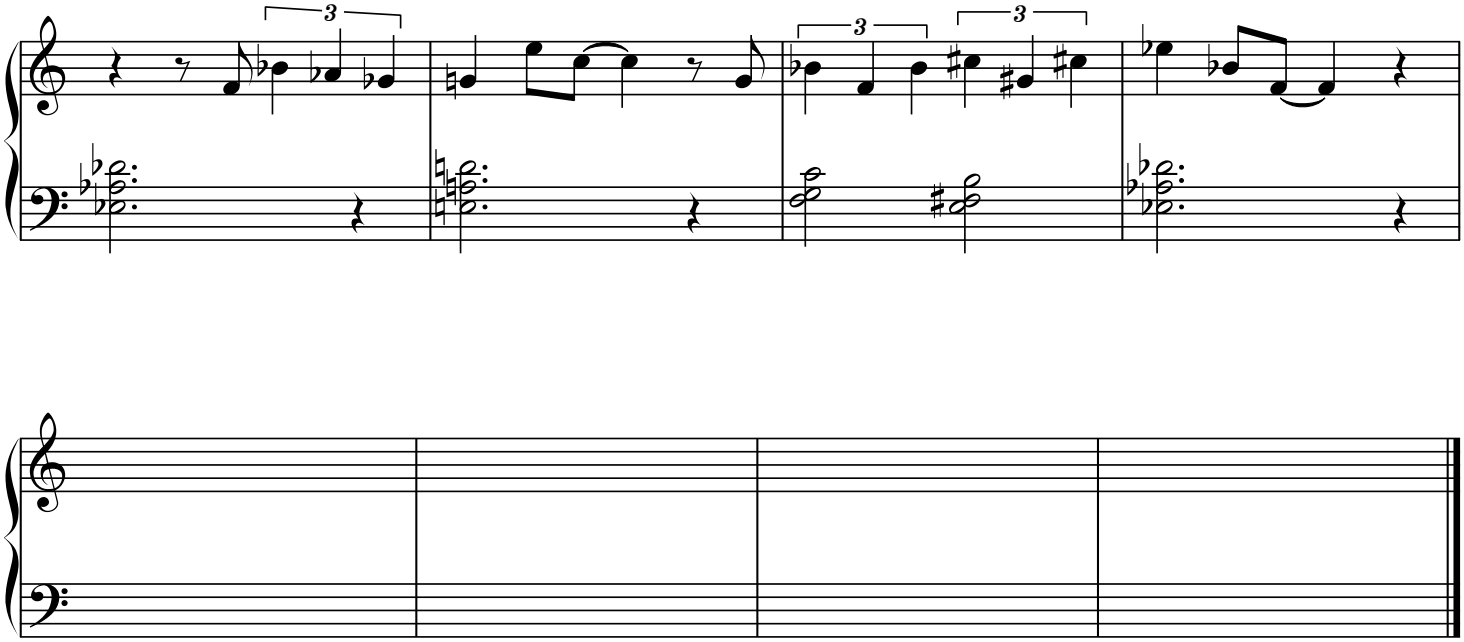
Study and emulate the masters of this 20th century style, particularly Paul Hindemith (*Ludus Tonalis)* and Bela Bartok *(Mikrokosmos).* Quartal and tertian harmony are most often combined in a piece of music, but sections may be primarily quartal while insinuating tonal centers. Mixed meters and polytonality are also common features in the style.

Quartal Keyboard Improvisation

Continue this passage to the double bar with stylistic and motivic unity.
Sketch your improvisation, and extend it with a contrasting section.



Play these four measures, and add four more using the same texture and style.
Sketch your improvisation, and exchange upper and lower parts to extend it.



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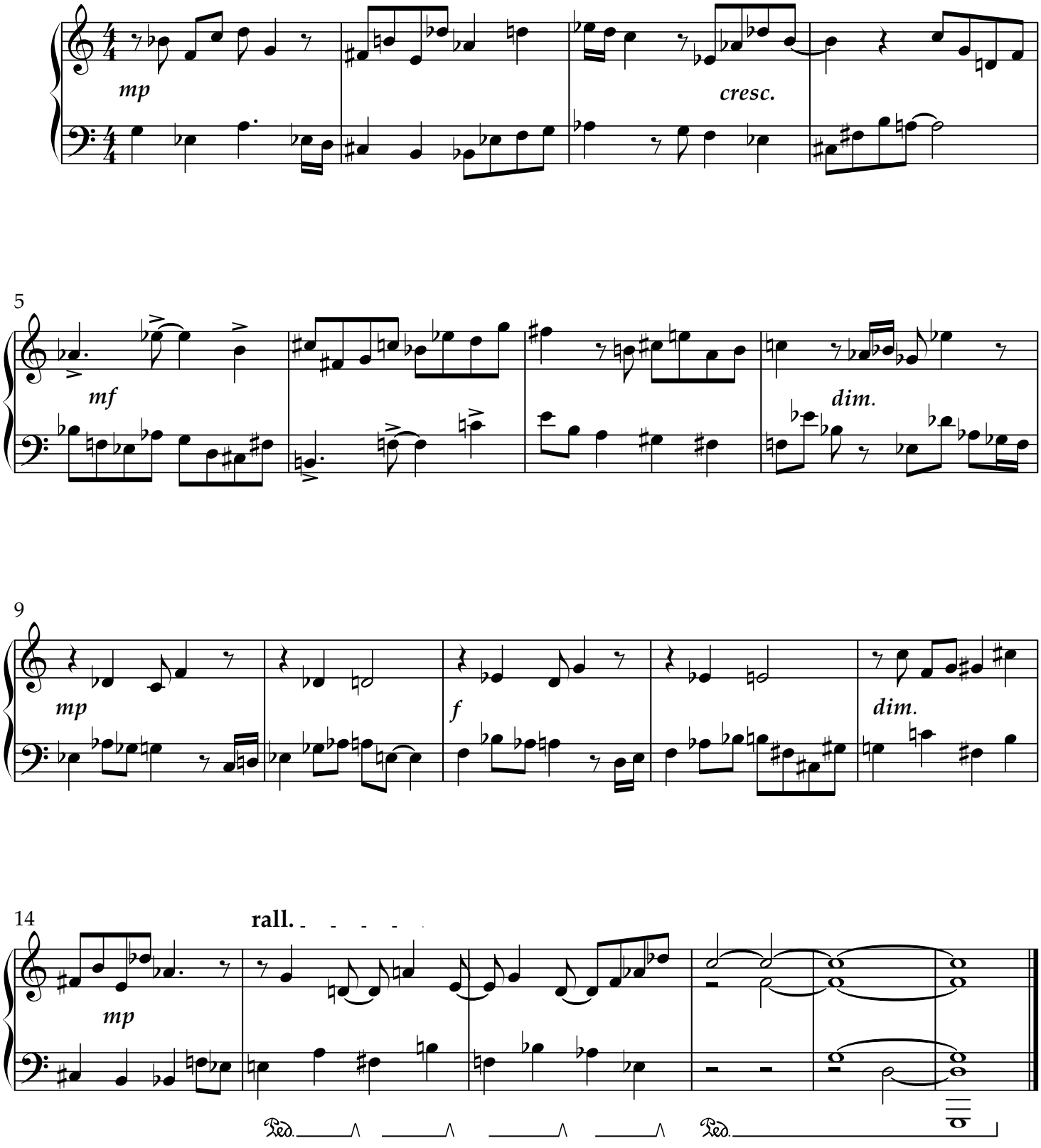
Quartal Example 1

B. Hansen

Moderato



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