

Introduction to Lesson 4 Assignment Palestrina Analysis: Sicut Cervus

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- **What is the translation of the work?**

Psalm 42:1 As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.

- **What examples of text painting are used? (Cite at least 3 examples)**

1) **desiderat**: desire (longing). The word, “desiderat”, is set with an upward, melodic movement, most often initiated by leap of a fourth, as seen in the cantus or tenor and in the soprano (an octave higher). Attention is also brought to the text by the rhythmic syncopation of the dotted quarter-eighth rhythm. The text painting has additional value to me, when I consider the various translations of the word, “desiderat” meaning: desire, longing for, *wanting to know, investigate, examine* and *discuss*. The melodic contour of “desiderat” (that lead us to a focal/climactic point “fontes”) with its initial leaps and subsequent, step-wise, ascensions could imply our initial leaps of faith and our journey toward God or the “Fount of Every Blessing’.

2) **aquarum**/water: The most fluid and step-wise movement is found in the melody of the word, *aquarum*.

3) **sicut**/just as: I find it interesting that *sicut*, albeit perhaps, the least important word of the text, translates to mean not only, just as, but also “*in the same way*”. The word is set to repeated pitches or a perfect unison each time the word appears.

4) **mea**/me (my own, mine, of or belonging to me): the descending major second each time suggests a humility or an act of bringing oneself down before God.

5) **Deus**/God: The fact that “Deus” is sung by the cantus, exactly three times cannot be a coincidence, but is representative of the Godhead, Trinity or Triune God.

- **Which voice begins the cantus firmus (melodic material) and is there a pattern to the interval or rhythmic sequence in which the subsequent voices enter?**

The cantus firmus is found in the tenor voice and is imitated by the other voices which also enter on the tonic. The cantus/tenor is most closely imitated by the soprano, an octave higher. The alto enters a fifth above the cantus, whereas the bass duplicates the cantus exactly on the first two words of text. Each voice enters with the same rhythm on the text, “*sicut cervus desiderat*,” with rhythmic differentiation of each voice on “fontes.”

There is a pattern to the intervallic sequence in which the voices enter. I began to order the entrances with a table. Here are the voice parts with their starting pitches.

1	Tenor	Alto	Soprano	Bass	2	Tenor	Alto	Bass	Soprano
	G	D	G	G		D	G	G	G
3	Bass	Tenor	Soprano	Alto	4	Tenor	Bass	Alto	Soprano
	G	D	G	C		A	G	G	A
5	Alto	Tenor	Bass		6	Soprano	Alto	Tenor	Bass
	D	G	C			C	G	C	G

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The pattern between the first and second entrance is opposite, in that the Tenor and Soprano first enter on the tonic while the Alto and Bass enter on the dominant, then in the second entrance, those roles are completely reversed. The altos introduce the subdominant in the third entrance and in the fourth entrance the cantus/tenor and soprano introduce the supertonic pitch. This was an interesting way to view the piece until its contrapuntal nature caused this way of thinking to become a bit cloudy in my mind.

- **Work to identify leaps in the melodic line (usually upward) the line resolves in the opposite direction - cite three examples.**

Leaps in the melodic line, where the line is resolved in the opposite direction, are most apparent in the “desiderat ad fontes” text, including:

- 1) the alto voice, mm. 5-6, ascends by a 4th (B-E) on “desi-” and resolves by a descending 4th (G-D) on “fontes.”
- 2) the tenor voice, mm. 3-6, ascends by a 4th (D-G) on the text, “desi-” and resolves by a descending 2nd (C-B) on the text, “fontes.” The full resolution of the melodic line occurs at measure 6, in the descending third (D-B) on the text, “qua-rum.”
- 3) the bass voice, mm. 15-17 ascends by a 5th (C-G) on text, “desi-” and resolves with a descending 5th (D-G) on the text, “fontes.”

- **Cite 5 specific examples of Palestrina’s Rules of Dissonance based on these 4 rules.**
 - **The dissonant note is never greater than a half note (in common time), or preceded by a note of smaller value than itself**

On beat four of measure 48 the cantus/tenor voice contains neighbor tones. There is a G in tied quarters that move down to F# on a quarter note and back to G on a half note.

Another instance is in the bass line of the final cadence. In measures 56-57 the bass is on the subdominant (C) for the duration of a dotted-half note, moves to the mediant (B) in the quarter-note (on a weak beat) and resolves the dissonance by returning to the subdominant (C) in a whole note.

- **Dissonant notes are found as passing tones**

The soprano voice in measure 9 contains a passing-tone in beat 3 (C) of (D-C-B) and the same melodic pattern in measure 11. Also, the dissonance in measure nine creates a diminished 5th with the alto voice.

- **Dissonant notes occur on weak beats**

In measure seven, during a tonic harmonization, the alto voice introduces the dissonant (E) on beat four (a weak beat).

- **Dissonant notes are identified as suspensions and are approached on a weak beat, occur on a strong beat, and resolve on a weak beat.**

There is a 4-3 suspension in measure 50. The alto voice approaches the tonic on beat two (in common time) during a dominant harmonization, the dissonance occurs on strong beat three and resolves on weak beat four.