Partimenti in the Age of Romanticism

Raimondi, Platania, and Boucheron

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Abstract The teaching of music composition in Italy during the nineteenth century continued to make great use of *partimenti*. But during the course of the century, partimenti gradually lost their importance as guides to improvisation, transforming instead into blueprints for a written-out practice. Prominent musicians and teachers like Pietro Raimondi, Pietro Platania, and Raimondo Boucheron tried to merge the partimento tradition with the harmonic and formal innovations of their own era. Raimondi and Platania, significant exponents of the late Neapolitan school of composition, searched for innovation from within their own tradition. Boucheron, in Milan, deeply influenced by French and German theorists, used partimenti as a medium through which he could introduce elements of Romantic harmony. The partimento lessons of all three display not only a musical sophistication that merits our attention today, but also an insider's perspective on issues in nineteenth-century Italian composition.

DURING THE NINETEENTH CENTURY, Italian compositional theory began to be deeply influenced by transalpine theories, perceived as more "modern" and more in accord with the ideals of the age of Romanticism. In fact, many musicians—and particularly those who were exposed to French and (later) German influences—shared the idea that Italian traditional teaching methods had become obsolete (Sanguinetti 2005, 456). Nevertheless, partimenti continued to occupy a central position in the professional training of many Italian composers. Important musicians and theorists published new partimento-based works that tried to cope with the problems raised in teaching composition under this new aesthetic regime.

This altered situation was also reflected in the way that partimenti were used. In the eighteenth century, the realization of a partimento was generally improvised at the keyboard. The written part of compositional training was cultivated under other forms: strict and fugal counterpoint, and free composition expressed through *disposizioni* and *solfeggi*.[1] Fugue had a significant role as

1 *Disposizioni* were exercises set in open score for two or more voices, and involved imitation and other contrapuntal procedures. Often they were based on a *partimento*. *Solfeggi* was a short composition, usually for voice and unfigured bass, and was generally used in teaching as a first attempt at free composition. Disposizioni and solfeggi are discussed in Gjerdingen 2007 and Sanguinetti 2005.

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the capstone of both the unwritten (as *fuga-partimento*) and the written paths of advanced training.

During the nineteenth century, partimento teaching became more and more a written-out practice. At the same time, counterpoint lost its status in music pedagogy in favor of harmony, which took on the aura of a quasi-scientific discipline. Partimenti nevertheless remained a central tool in Italian musical pedagogy for most of the century, and for decades Fedele Fenaroli's *Partimenti* (1814) remained the preeminent textbook in the conservatories. New editions with added commentary were published in Italy until the first decades of the twentieth century, even though Fenaroli's partimenti were grounded in an eighteenth-century concept of tonality (Rosenberg 1995, 198–209; Sanguinetti, in press).

The immense fame of Fenaroli during the nineteenth century eventually eclipsed that of all other authors, including the great Francesco Durante and Leonardo Leo, whose partimenti had never been published. Even so, the old custom of eighteenth-century Neapolitan masters to compose new partimenti for their students did not entirely disappear. In the early nineteenth century, for example, Niccolò Zingarelli, teacher of Saverio Mercadante and Vincenzo Bellini, and a well-known opera composer in his own right, published two books of partimenti (Zingarelli 1830). His partimenti, written in a conservative style, show hardly any traces of the harmonic novelties being introduced by the rising generation of Italian composers like Gioachino Rossini, Gaetano Donizetti, Gaspare Spontini, and of course his own student Bellini. Zingarelli's conservative approach to partimenti was shared by many masters from his era. The result was a growing distance between music pedagogy and music practice. To remedy this situation, several musicians—from both inside and outside the Neapolitan tradition—searched for new ways of using partimenti. Among the first of these, Pietro Raimondi and Pietro Platania tried to adapt the old tradition to the new situation. Other musicians, like Raimondo Boucheron—who never studied in Naples—used the partimento as a tool for introducing to Italy the new methods of the Paris Conservatory.

Two Late Neapolitan Masters: Pietro Raimondi and Pietro Platania

Pietro Raimondi

Pietro Raimondi (1786–1853) was one of the most significant figures in the nineteenth-century Neapolitan school of composition. He published two important collections of partimenti: the *Bassi imitati e fugati divisi in tre libri* (*Imitative and Fugal Basses Divided into Three Books*, ca. 1830s) and his *Nuovo genere di scientifica composizione: Andamenti di Basso numerato con una due o tre armonie* (*A New Kind of Scientific Composition: Figured Basses with One, Two, or Three Harmonizations*, 1852). His best pupil, Pietro Platania (1828–1907), published his own collection of partimenti as the practical part of his *Trattato d'armonia, seguito da un corso di contrappunto* (*A Treatise on Harmony Followed by*

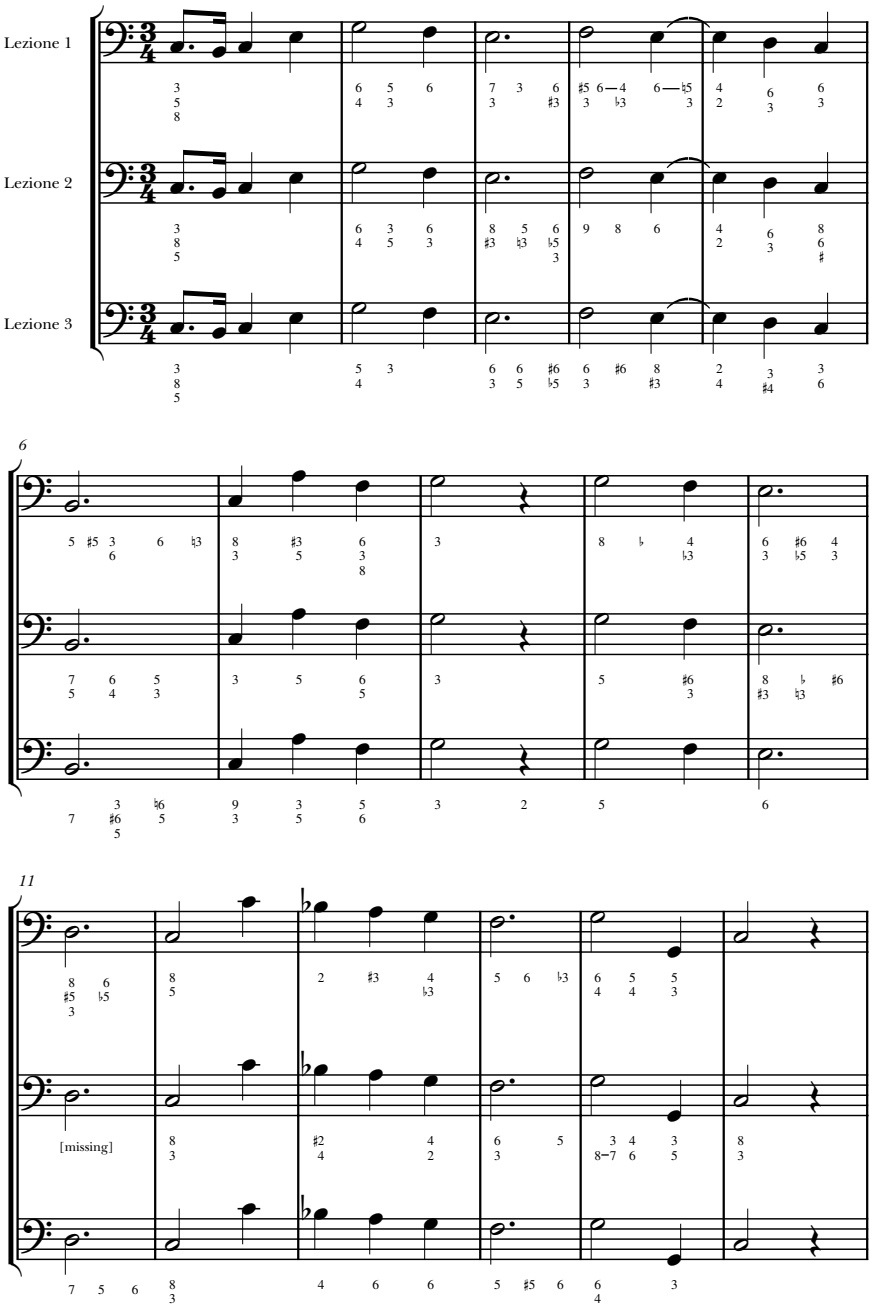
a Course in Counterpoint with Partimenti, 1883). Both men worked to preserve Neapolitan traditions, and both wrote partimenti. But they wrote them in a new way, differing in some respects from past tradition. Raimondi and Platania adopted an ambiguous position. On the one hand, they believed in "scientific" harmony. But on the other hand, they strove to preserve the leading role of counterpoint.

The most unusual aspect of Raimondi's *Nuovo genere di scientifica composizione* is that all the partimenti have multiple systems of figures. In fact, every bass line is provided with two, or sometimes three, harmonizations of increasing difficulty (Example 1). Other maestros like Gaetano Greco and Saverio Mattei had used multiple figures in the eighteenth century, but Raimondi's *Nuovo genere* is, to my knowledge, the only collection of partimenti that uses this procedure consistently.

Raimondi's multiple figures, however, are but a written-out manifestation of a much older pedagogic principle that lies at the very heart of all Neapolitan teaching practice: the search for multiple solutions to the same compositional problem. An excellent example of this practice can be found in the counterpoint exercises completed by Vincenzo Lavigna (the teacher of Giuseppe Verdi) under the direction of Fenaroli. In these exercises we find an almost obsessive search for the largest possible number of alternative settings for the same pattern, whether a cadence, a scale, or a *disposizione* (Sanguinetti in press). Interestingly, Raimondi—unlike most of his contemporaries—included a significant number of partimento fugues in his collection, following a formal scheme that stretches back to Nicola Sala and Giacomo Tritto (Stella 2006).[2]

This fugue tradition would be further developed by Platania in his *Corso completo di fughe e canoni di ogni genere* (*Complete Course of Fugue and Canons of All Types*, 1871). Platania, however, completely omits the partimento fugue and replaces it with a new format developed by his master Raimondi: *basso imitato e fugato* (imitative and fugal bass). The formal scheme used by Raimondi and Platania is outlined in Table 1. The main feature of this kind of fugue is that, following the exposition, one avoids the key of the dominant. From a formal point of view, the most significant harmonic degree becomes the subdominant. The formal scheme of this fugue includes two sections that do not appear in other traditions. They were called *imitazione* and *modulazione*. Both are sections that connect thematic statements (see Example 2). The *imitazione* consists of a nonmodulating sequence that makes use of imitative entries. The *modulazione*, on the contrary, is a connecting section that modulates without

2 This formal scheme, however, was not the only one used in the Naples conservatories. In fact, Sala and Tritto followed the school of Leonardo Leo (they were called "Leisti"), while another school followed Francesco Durante (the "Durantisti"). On the controversy between "Leisti" and "Durantisti," see Rosenberg 1999.

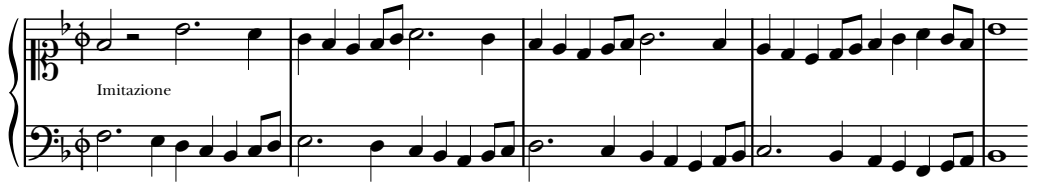


Example 1. Raimondi, *Nuovo genere di scientifica composizione* (1852), book 2, the beginning of lessons 1, 2, and 3; set in score format by this author

Table 1. The formal scheme of a typical fugue by Sala

Subject sections		*Free sections*
Exposition	→	Modulation and/or imitation or modulated imitation if the counterexposition begins from the answer or any way from the dominant
Counterexposition (not mandatory)	→	Imitation or modulation
Middle entry at the *IV del Tono*	→	Imitation (and/or modulation)
Augmented subject with the inversion at the distance of a 12th or, in a few cases, a 10th (again in the main key)	→	Imitation or modulation
Stretti (always in the main key)	→	Each stretto is followed by an imitation or modulation
	↓	
Canon, pedal point (not mandatory), final cadence		
	↓	
Coda (few bars; normally is not an independent section)		

(a)



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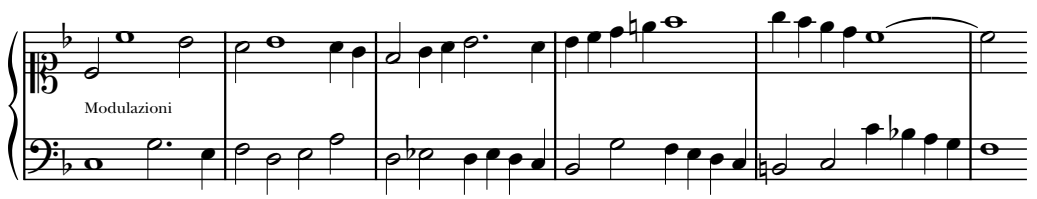
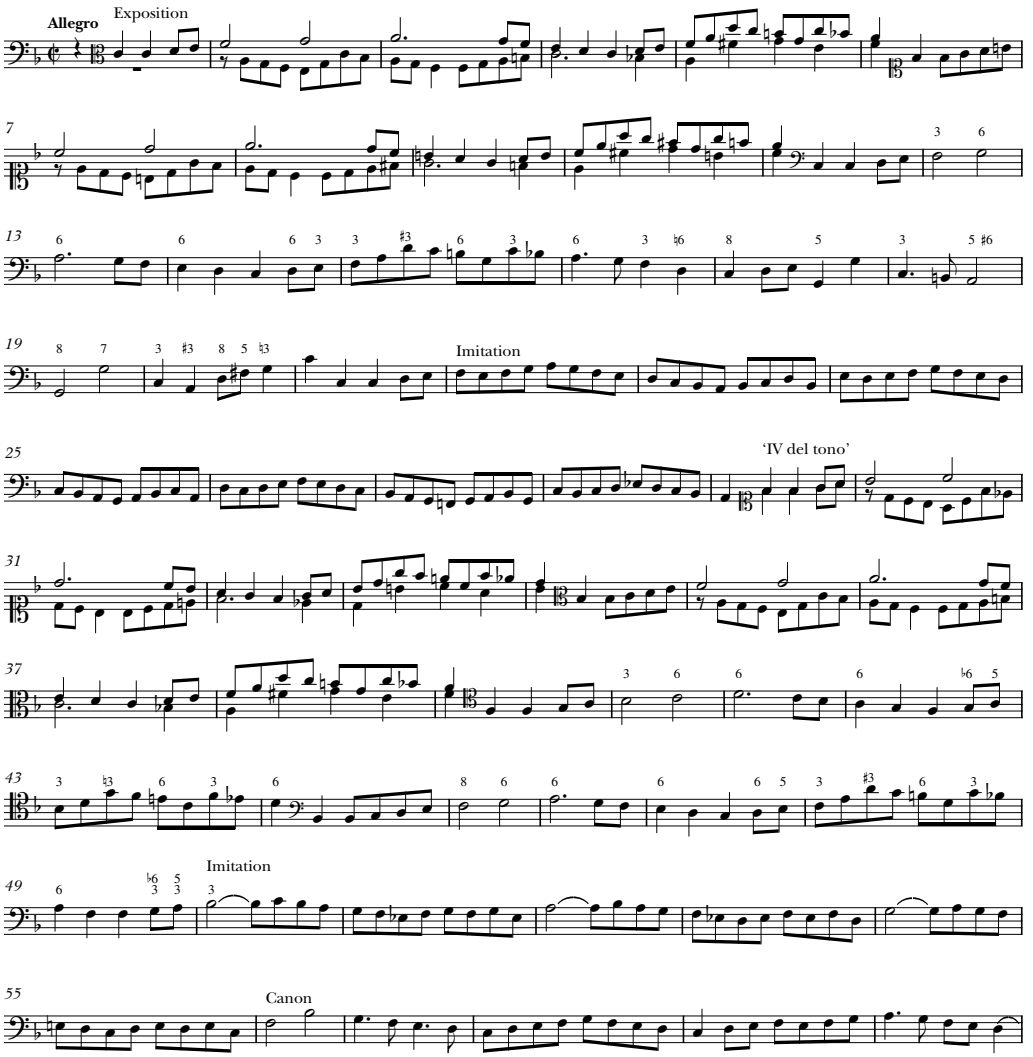


Example 2. Platania, *Corso completo di fughe e canoni di ogni genere* (1871), Fugue no. 5. (a) Imitation. (b) Modulation

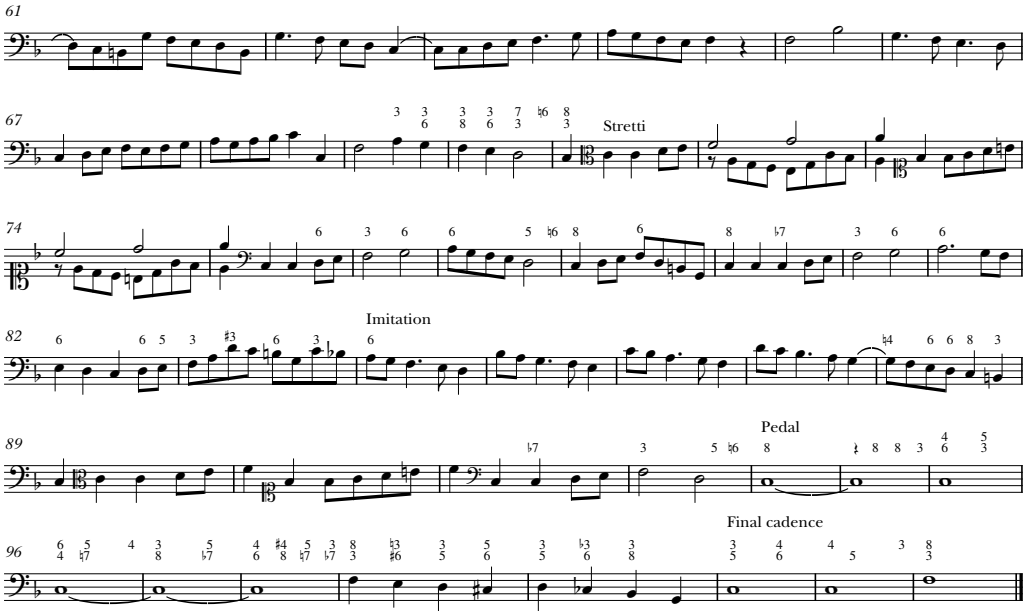
making use of imitations. Very rarely are imitation and modulation joined together. If they were, the passage would be called "modulating imitation" (*imitazione modulata*, Sala 1794).

Example 3 shows the application of this formal scheme to a partimento fugue by Raimondi. He follows its outline quite closely, except for the position of the canon that precedes, rather than follows, the stretto.

The second partimento treatise written by Raimondi was entirely devoted to the already mentioned *basso imitato e fugato*, which gradually took the place



Example 3. Raimondi, *Nuovo genere di scientifica composizione* (1852), book 2, lesson 30



Example 3 (continued)

of partimento fugue in Italian pedagogy.[3] In the preface to his *Bassi imitati e fugati divisi in tre libri* (ca. 1830s), Raimondi writes:

> Despite the fact that the very well known Maestri dell'Armonia Choron, Marpurg, and others have only mentioned the school of the "Bassi d'imitazione" in passing, . . . until now no one has ever published a collection of basses for the instruction of young people who devote themselves to the musical art, in such a way as to facilitate the path to fugue. . . . With the greatest sorrow I heard from some ill-advised young people that in order to compose works in whatever genre it was enough to know the principles of voice-leading and to write some solfeggi, without wasting time in the study of fugue.

After having stressed the importance of counterpoint and fugue in the syllabus of the old Neapolitan school, he continues: "I wrote these Basses for those who are already skilled in counterpoint. But it is necessary to warn young scholars that they must first work hard on the partimenti by various authors, and only after that can they attempt to compose, otherwise their efforts will be fruitless." He concludes with the exhortation to "live happily."[4]

3 The *basso imitato e fugato* is still in use in the traditional Italian syllabus of the course in composition.

4 "Sebbene i chiarissimi Maestri dell'Armonia Choron, Marpurg, ed altri avessero accennata soltanto la scuola dei Bassi d'imitazione, pure quest'utile insegnamento è stato mai sempre trascurato, ne si è finora redatta una raccolta di Bassi, per istruire i giovani che si dedicano all'arte musicale, e così rendere loro agevole la strada per passare alle Fughe. . . . Con sommo rammarico intesi da taluni mal consigliati giovani, che per comporre delle opere in qualunque

Raimondi's preface is the only part of his book that contains written explanations. The rest of the book contains nothing but music, following the Neapolitan tradition of committing to paper solely the examples, and relying on oral transmission for the explanations.

Unlike Raimondi's partimento fugues, his *bassi imitati e fugati* are, from the perspective of form, more free. There is no standard formal scheme, so the different elements of the fugue (those outlined in Table 1) can be arranged in different tonal and formal designs. Still, the most important difference between the partimento fugue and the "imitative and fugal bass" lies not in the overall design but in the technique of realization: the former was improvised at the keyboard; the latter was written out. Compositional assignments on Raimondi's *bassi* completed by three of his students—Carmelo Fodale, Vincenzo Fiodo, and Pietro Platania—provide important evidence for the style of nineteenth-century written realizations (Fodale 1835; Fiodo 1835; Platania I-Nc Platania 58.3). As Raimondi wrote in the preface to his *Bassi imitati e fugati*, this work was designed "to facilitate the path to fugue" (Raimondi ca. 1830s), though it is unclear exactly which kind of fugue Raimondi had in mind. Nonetheless, it seems evident that the *basso imitato e fugato* was halfway between standard partimento practice and the written vocal fugue, thus representing at the same time a final stage of partimento training and a preparatory stage for the study of the vocal fugue.

According to Jesse Rosenberg (1995, 210), Raimondi's choice to publish a book entirely devoted to fugal procedures, together with the complete lack of any explanation, is a sign of a conservative position. This is true only in part. The late "Leista" tradition represented by Raimondi and his pupil Platania did try to preserve the old tradition in the new era, hoping to renew music teaching from within the Neapolitan school of composition. Yet Raimondi's belief in harmony as science, his research into new possibilities in counterpoint, his "contrapuntal gigantism" (Stella 2007), as well as the strong experimentalism that surfaced in his mature compositions, all testify, despite his strong connections with an academic classicism, to the Romantic nature of his theoretical works.

Pietro Platania

Pietro Platania, considered by Raimondi his best pupil, continued his master's involvement with partimenti. Around 1860, when he was the dean of the Regio collegio di musica del Buon Pastore (Good Shepherd Royal College of Music) in Palermo, Platania jotted down a sketch for the syllabus of the har-

genere, bastava semplicemente aver conoscenza della disposizione delle parti, e far dei solfeggi, né doveasi perder lungo tempo nello studio delle Fughe. . . . Questi bassi però sono stati da me scritti per coloro i quali sono già provetti nel Contrappunto, e fa mestieri di avvertire i giovani studiosi, che devono precedentemente occuparsi con impegno nei partimenti dei varii Autori, e poi cominciare a comporre, altrimenti infruttuose riusciranno le loro fatiche. . . . Vivi felice."

mony and counterpoint classes in his conservatory: "Harmony. In a rational and practical sense. Written realization. After 6 months practical performance on the piano and on the melodium [a reed organ] . . . Suggested authors: Fenaroli, Mattei and after, according to the professor's choice, a number of partimenti by Cotumacci, Sala, and Raimondi" (I-Nc Platania 58.3).[5] Sometime in this same period Platania wrote his *Trattato d'armonia* (published in 1883). Unlike his master Raimondi, Platania refused to add figures to his partimenti, thus following the age-old Neapolitan tradition. In the preface to his *Trattato d'armonia* he writes:

> The present treatise follows a practical system of teaching Harmony without indications of figures in the bass line, instead instilling in the pupil an awareness of the natural and inflexible canons of Harmony, i.e. the Rule of the Octave, the origin of the harmonized scale from the three fundamental and immutable triads embodying the tonality, the proper tendencies of tones in their various directions. . . . The use of figures makes pupils, notwithstanding their professors' theoretical explanations, one might say almost involuntarily harmonize without a clear determination, and without analysing their own work. I have therefore restricted the indication of figures to the end of the book, and only to show some special or rare ways of harmonizing, different from the common usage.[6]

This text, written by Platania around 1860, contains some references to an unpublished treatise on partimento titled *Sull'armonia*. In this work Platania states, "The method I hint at is based on a simple and very important rule: the pupil must study the basses without figures, learning to recognize the right figures after having understood the fundamental rules of harmony studied theoretically and practically" (Platania, *Sull'armonia*, I-Nc S.C. 12.8.2).[7]

Platania follows, in general, the traditional approach used by countless Neapolitan masters (including Fenaroli). He first begins with cadences and then introduces the Rule of the Octave, the different bass motions, and finally special, more complex patterns. Yet he imbues his partimenti with a Romantic aura that is completely absent from partimenti written by masters of the previous generation (e.g., Raimondi or Zingarelli). The most original aspects of his

5 "Armonia. In senso razionale e pratico- per iscritto- Dopo sei mesi esecuzione pratica sul piano e sul melodium . . . Autori da adottarsi: Fenaroli, Mattei e dopo, a scelta del professore, una quantità delle lezioni di partimenti di Cotumacci, Sala e Raimondi."

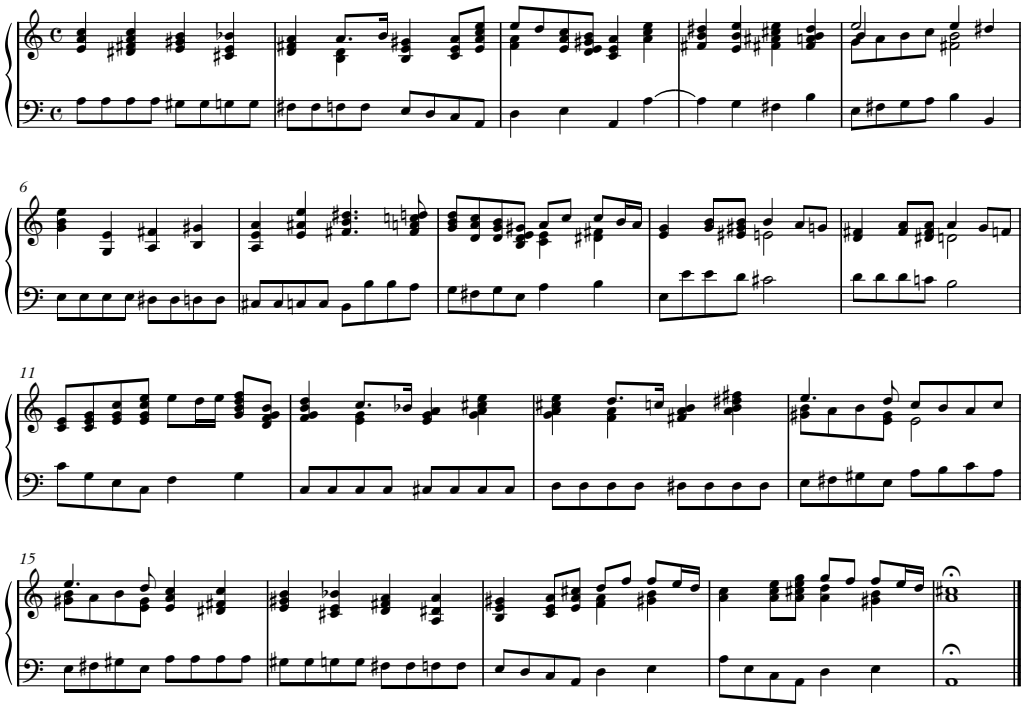
6 "Il presente trattato s'informa ad un sistema pratico d'insegnamento armonico senza indicazioni di numeri sul basso, istituendo invece l'allievo sulla cognizione dei canoni armonici naturali ed irremovibili, cioè: la conoscenza della regola dell'ottava, la derivazione della scala armonica dalle tre triadi fondamentali identiche che costituiscono la modalità, la rispettiva tendenza dei suoni componenti gli accordi nelle loro varie diramazioni. . . . L'uso dei numeri fa si che l'allievo malgrado le spiegazioni teoriche del maestro è trascinato, direi quasi involontariamente, ad armonizzare senza precisa persuasione e senza bene analizzare il proprio operato. . . . Mi sono riserbato io quindi l'indicazione dei numeri sul partimento verso la fine del Corso, e ciò solo per mostrare le ricercate o speciali maniere d'armonizzare, differenti dal consueto."

7 "Il metodo dunque cui accenno si basa sopra una semplice ma importantissima regola, quella cioè, che lo allievo studiasse i bassi senza numeri, ma questi facendoli riconoscere dopo mercè i precetti fondamentali d'armonia ragionata teoricamente e praticamente."

output are thus to be found in the more advanced partimenti, rather than in the introductory exercises that closely follow the traditional path.

The partimento-related output of Platania may be summarized under two main categories: real partimenti and "imitative and fugal basses." Of the first category of partimenti, only a single realization from Platania of one of his own partimenti survives, together with a detailed example of a figured partimento. No realization of an imitative and fugal bass from Platania has come to light. Some manuscripts in the Naples conservatory library, however, include realizations by Platania (or by his students) of partimenti by Fenaroli, and of imitative and fugal basses by Raimondi. All these works bear witness to significant changes that occurred within the Neapolitan tradition in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Let us first examine a written realization of partimento no. 2 from Fenaroli's widely published book 4. It was penned by an anonymous student who studied under Platania around 1860 (I-Nc Platania 61). In many respects this realization (shown in Example 4) follows past tradition. It is written in a keyboard style, with frequent changes in the number of voices during the partimento—a characteristic feature of the eighteenth-century continuo practice. The realization employs, even if in a somewhat extended way, all of the

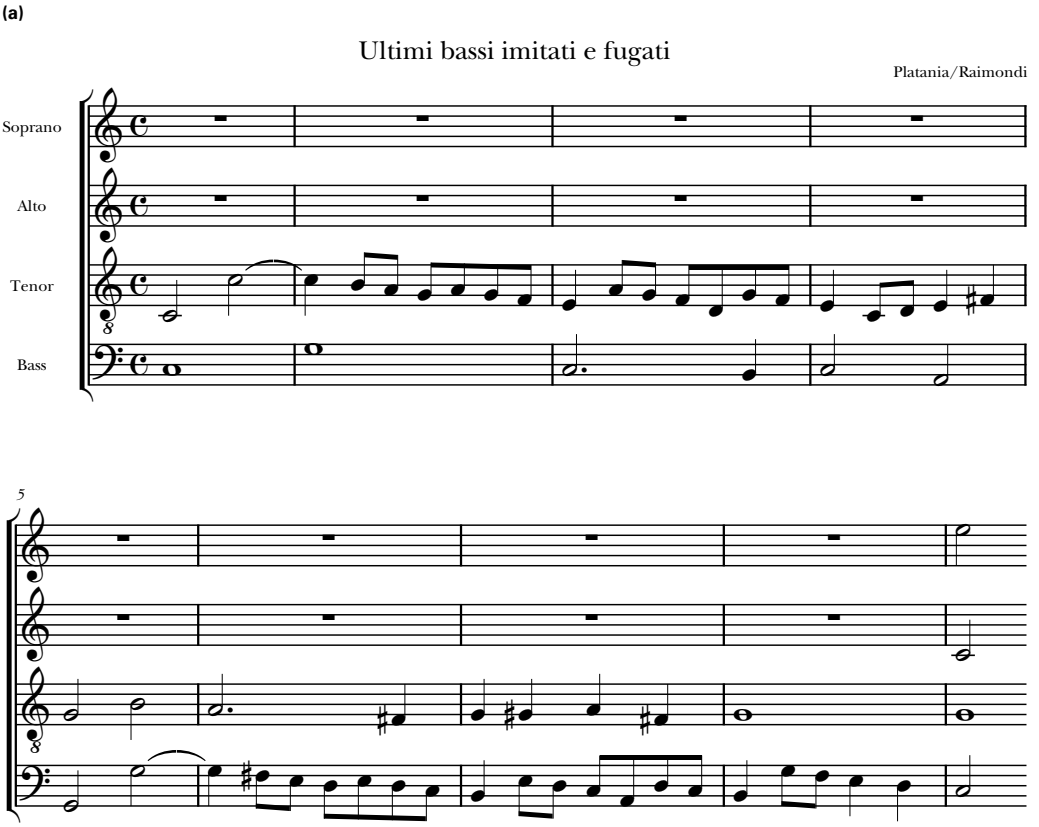


Example 4, Anonymous, *Partimento*. I-Nc Platania 61. The bass is taken from lesson 2, book 4, of Fenaroli's *Partimenti*.

five classes of partimento rules: (1) cadences and basic axioms, (2) the Rule of the Octave, (3) dissonances, (4) bass motions (here with remarkable chromatic variants), and (5) scale mutations (modulation). The texture, however, tends to be more chordal than in a typical eighteenth-century partimento realization (for a comparison with a more eighteenth-century style of realization, see the article by Sanguinetti, this issue).

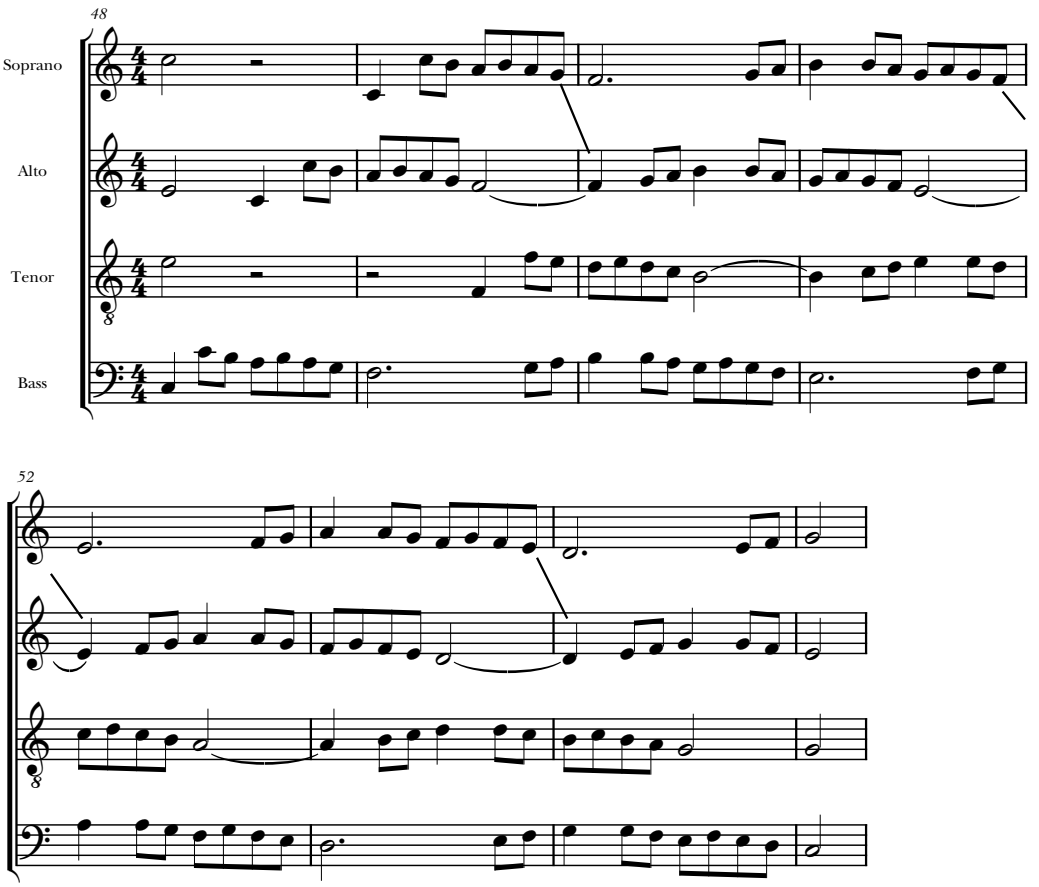
An example of the second kind of partimento is no. 51 from Raimondi's *Bassi imitati e fugati*, as realized by Platania (I-Nc Platania 58.13). This realization was probably completed during the 1850s and follows closely Raimondi's tradition. Two excerpts of it are shown in Example 5.

The exposition begins with the subject sounding together with the bass line, as was customary in the partimento-fugue tradition (mm. 1–8, Example 5a). Unlike in a partimento fugue, in this format the given part is always the bass. This means that the first subject entry must be supplied by the student, who must scan the bass line in order to find the "hidden" subject (in this case,



Example 5. Pietro Raimondi, Ultimi bassi imitati e fugati, no. 51; realization by Pietro Platania, I-Nc Platania 58.13. (a) Exposition, mm. 1–8. (b) Canon, mm. 48–55

(b)

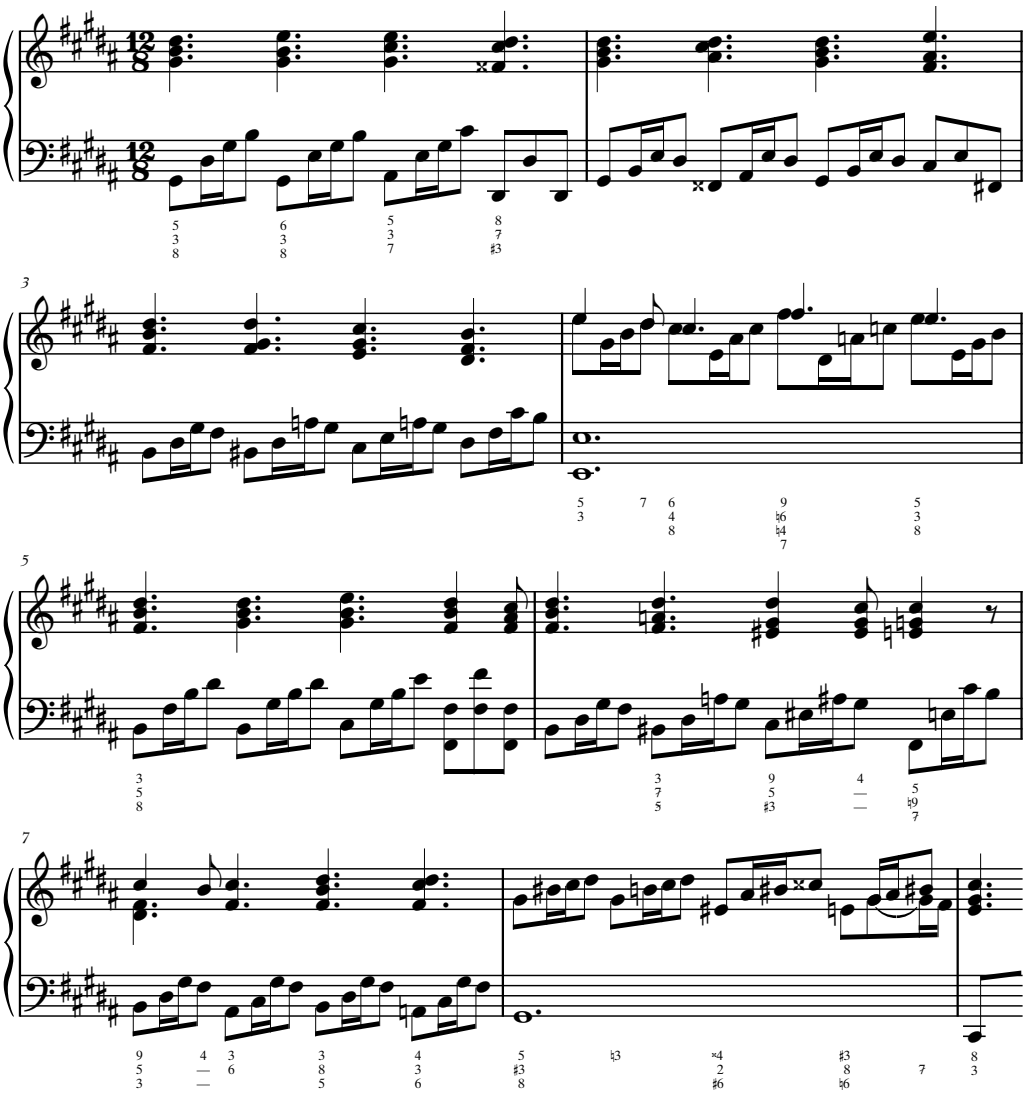


Example 5 (continued)

in bars 5–8). The identification of the subject (or subjects) is one of the chief difficulties in the realization of an imitative and fugal bass. The second excerpt shows a four-voice canon on a sequence (three voices at the unison, and the remaining voice at the fourth: mm. 48–55, Example 5b). The crossing of the voices (Example 4b, mm. 49ff.) and dissonant clash in approaching the unison (between soprano and alto, mm. 49–50, 51–52, and 53–54) are typical features of eighteenth-century counterpoint, ones that survived in the Neapolitan tradition well into the nineteenth century. The other basses of Raimondi, also realized in Platania's hand, are increasingly more elaborated, more and more similar to a fugue with middle entries (on the mediant, the submediant, or, closer to the fugue tradition of Nicola Sala, the fourth degree), imitations, canons, and stretti.

The partimenti were also used as a means of instilling the basic principles of musical form. Thus, Platania, in some of his *bassi imitati e fugati,* added

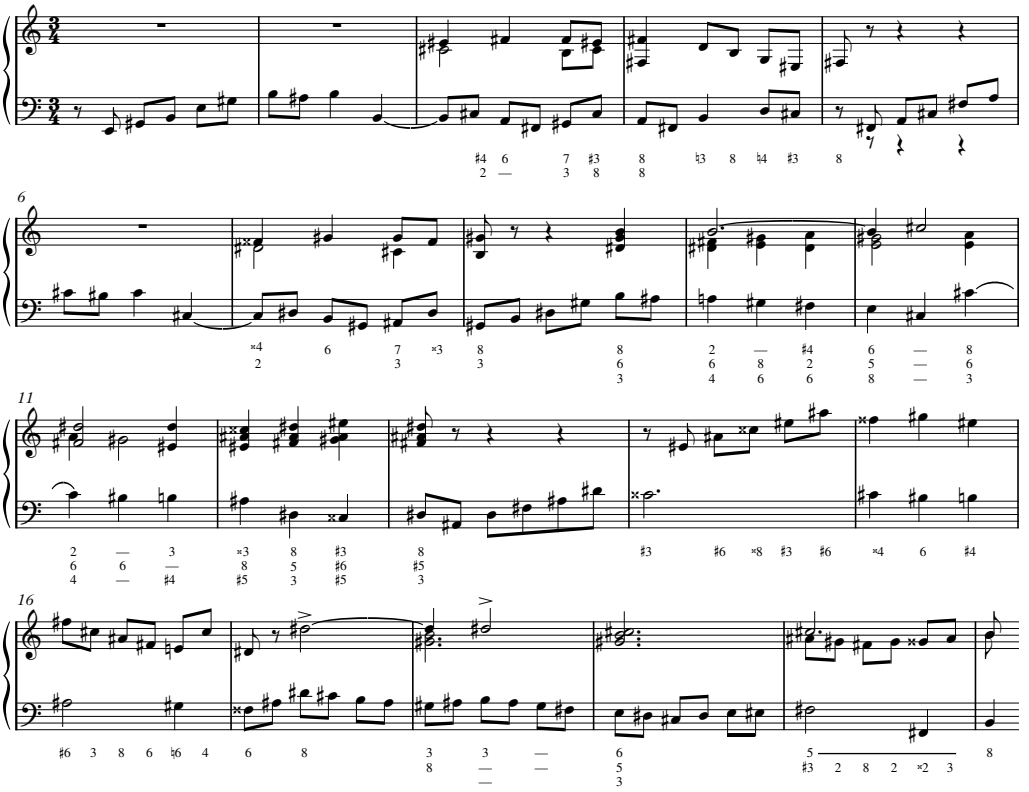
slow introductions, as he also did in his free fugal compositions. The same pedagogical function was accomplished by some partimenti that look (and sound) like a Romantic piano etude, or a *romanza*. In other words, the partimento, after having left behind the eighteenth-century genres and styles of the toccata, the concerto, or the galant sonata, made a last attempt to survive by adopting the new trappings of Romanticism. The bass and figures in Example 6 present a partimento etude by Platania in A–B–A form plus coda. No realization has survived for this partimento. The upper part was realized by this author.



Example 6. Pietro Platania, *Trattato d'armonia* (1883), partimento 29 from book 3; realization by this author

Compared to the Fenaroli tradition, this partimento appears far more harmonically advanced, with chromaticism, dissonant chords, and an idiomatic Romantic tension. Yet a closer look reveals that the fundamentals remain those taught by Fenaroli. In m. 1, the 5–6 exchange prevents parallel fifths in the motion from I to II; in mm. 2 and 3, the figures are omitted because the bass motion alone is sufficient to suggest the correct harmonies (which basically consist of a series of successive *mi-fa* motions causing an alternation between triads over the *fa* degrees and sixth chords over the *mi* degrees). The most interesting case in this example is perhaps m. 4, where the complex figures present nothing more than a Romantic elaboration of the *cadenza composta*. Thus, even if the left-hand texture closely resembles many nineteenth-century virtuoso piano pieces (e.g., prelude op. 28/24 by Chopin, etude op. 740/8 and op. 740/12 by Carl Czerny, or op. 20/24 by Joseph Kessler), the harmonic structure is basically the same as in Fenaroli.

The very last partimento in Platania's collection is titled "In forma di capriccio" (see Example 7). This partimento—which we might call a *partimento romanza*—likewise abounds in complex thoroughbass figures, along the



Example 7. Platania, "In forma di capriccio," no. 33, book 3: an excerpt from Platania's realization

lines of Raimondi's *Nuovo genere di scientifica composizione*, and it exhibits a strict relationship between the figures and the melodic contour. This work, following the first part reproduced in Example 7, continues with a *soggetto melodico* (melodic phrase), a period-like theme realized here by Platania with an asymmetrical period of eight plus seven bars added to the realized version only (see Platania 1883, *Partimenti* bk. 3, 43). The formal design is again an A–B–A form with a shortened *ripresa*, a very common feature of Italian nineteenth-century instrumental music (Rostagno 2003, 68–70).

The Neapolitan Partimento in Milan: Raimondo Boucheron

The largely self-taught Lombard composer Raimondo Boucheron (1800–1876) occupies a special position in the tradition of partimento.[8] He was born in Turin and took some music lessons in his childhood from obscure maestros like Vincenzo Goletti in Cuneo and Don Amedeo Savoia and Giovan Battista Colombo in Mondovì.[9] But he managed the most important parts of his training by himself. He became a well-known composer of sacred music (from 1847 to his death he was maestro di cappella at the Milan cathedral) and a teacher of composition. His best pupils were Edoardo Mascheroni, Edoardo Perelli, and Gustavo Adolfo Noseda.[10] Boucheron published an important book on musical aesthetics, *Filosofia della musica o estetica applicata a quest'arte* (*The Philosophy of Music, or Aesthetics Applied to This Art*, 1842) and an interesting harmony book titled *La scienza dell'armonia spiegata dai rapporti dell'arte coll'umana natura—Trattato teorico pratico* (*The Science of Harmony Explained by the Relation between Art and Human Nature—A Theoretical-Practical Treatise*, [1856]), in which he attempted the original approach of grounding harmonic procedures on principles of psychology and ethics.

Some years later he wrote the *Esercizi d'armonia in 42 partimenti numerati* (*Harmony Exercises with Forty-two Figured Partimenti*, [1867]). With this work, Boucheron, like Platania, tried to meld the eighteenth-century partimento tradition with nineteenth-century harmonic innovations. But unlike Platania—whose work, as mentioned, grew out of the authentic Neapolitan tradition—Boucheron made use of only parts of the Neapolitan tradition, using them in a different context, one deeply influenced by German and French music theory.

8 The theoretical output of Boucheron is listed and briefly discussed in Sanguinetti 1997.

9 Vincenzo Goletti was organist at the cathedral of Cuneo; Giovan Battista Colombo was maestro di cappella in Mondovì. See the anonymous manuscripts I-BGc Serassi 368GoV and I-BGc Serassi 198CGB. I found no information about Don Amedeo Savoia.

10 Edoardo Mascheroni (1859–1941) was an Italian conductor and composer. He conducted the Italian premiere of Beethoven's *Fidelio* (1886), Catalani's *Wally*, and Verdi's *Falstaff*. He also composed some operas. Edoardo Perelli (1842–1885) was a composer and journalist. He wrote some interesting anti-Wagnerian articles for the *Gazzetta musicale di Milano* (see Carlo Matteo Mossa 1988, 41). Gustavo Adolfo Noseda (1837–1866) was a composer and collector. His important collection of rare editions and manuscripts is now in the library of the Milan conservatory.

Esercizi d'armonia is set in two volumes. The first is dedicated to a theoretical discussion and to the forty-two partimenti. The second is called *Chiave* (Key) and consists of full realizations of all the partimenti in book 1, thus offering students the opportunity to check their own work against the author's templates. Boucheron clearly assesses the intent of his book in the preface:

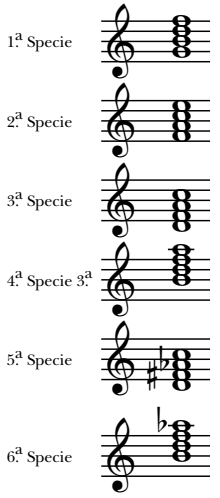
> Why a new Partimenti collection, after the well-known works by Sala, Fenaroli, Mattei, and others, and in a time in which many people regard this approach to harmony as almost useless? . . . I appreciate more than others the works of these revered maestri who preceded me . . . nor shall I ever cease to recommend their study. But, at the same time, I would argue that from the days in which Sala, Fenaroli, and Mattei composed their partimenti to the present, Harmony . . . has gained such a momentum . . . and has begun searching for such effects, which our well-deserving [authors] had never dared to think.[11]

The first volume begins with six chapters devoted to the rules of partimenti. In these chapters, Boucheron offers a remarkably French-flavored version of Neapolitan rules, as Emanuele Imbimbo did half a century earlier (Cafiero this issue). The first chapter is devoted to the basic rules of harmony: intervals, the concepts of fundamental bass, consonance/dissonance, inversion, and the different types of triads and seventh chords (Boucheron [1867], 5–9). The second chapter is titled "Dell'origine e ragione degli anzidetti accordi" ("On the Origin and Purpose of the Above-Mentioned Chords"). In this chapter Boucheron introduces the by then common notion of tonality being based on scale degrees I, IV, and V (Boucheron [1867], 10). But he adds a discussion that is doubly reminiscent of Rameau's concept of *double emploi*, and of François-Joseph Fétis's notion of appellative tendencies. If we consider IV as one of the pillars of tonality, the sixth that is often added above $\hat{4}$ in the bass would change this triad into a II. But Boucheron says that the added dissonance does not modify the nature of that chord, but only confers to it a more intense striving toward its goal (as does the seventh when added to the triad on V). In his ensuing discussion of the Rule of the Octave, in the standard Fenaroli version, he calls *cadenze* all the descending fifth-progressions along the scale. In doing so, he departs considerably from Neapolitan theory, which considers *cadenze* only those progressions involving root-position dominant and tonic chords (Boucheron [1867], 10). Later, at the end of his sixth chapter, Boucheron will provide students with a detailed table of cadences (Boucheron [1867], 37–42).

11 "A qual pro' una nuova opera di Partimenti, dopo le celebri di Sala, di Fenaroli, Mattei e più altri, ed in un tempo, in cui questo modo di studiare l'armonia è da molti stimato quasi inutile? . . . io apprezzo, quanto altri mai, le opere di quei venerandi maestri che mi precedettero; . . . ne cesserò mai di raccomandarne lo studio; ma osserverei in pari tempo, che dall'epoca, in cui Sala, Fenaroli, Mattei composero i loro partimenti, ai di nostri, l'Armonia, . . . ha preso uno slancio . . . e si è avviata in cerca di effetti, ai quali i benemeriti non avrebbero mai osato pensare."

The third chapter is titled "Del ritmo" ("On Rhythm"). Boucheron explains the difference between strong accent and weak accent, underlining the importance of rhythm in music. As an example, he shows the necessity for the strong accent on a tonic chord that ends an authentic cadence, or on a dominant chord that ends a half cadence—the rhythm and the harmony must coincide. He writes: "The cadence, therefore, essentially belongs to the domain of rhythm. This element exerts such an influence on it that, if the harmonic motion does not coincide with it, there is no closure"[12] (Boucheron [1867], 13).

The fourth chapter deals with voice leading and with the resolution of dissonant chords. He discusses here all possible bass motions, trying to simplify and rationalize the traditional series of motions offered by the Neapolitan maestros. Boucheron considers only six possibilities for the motion of the fundamental bass: a third, a fifth, or a seventh, either up or down. In this chapter, Boucheron lists all possible resolutions for the six types of seventh chords that he classifies in "species" (this classification was customary among Italian theorists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; see Example 8).



Example 8. Boucheron, *Esercizi d'armonia*, book 1, the six "species" of seventh chords

12 "La cadenza è dunque principalmente propria del ritmo e questo elemento vi esercita tale influenza che, se l'andamento armonico non vi coincide, la posa non ha luogo."

Unlike Neapolitan theory, which considered consonant all the chords contained in the Rule of the Octave (Sanguinetti in press), Boucheron considers the dominant seventh chord dissonant, as well as all the other types of seventh chords. Then he shows some possible resolutions of the diminished seventh chord, the diminished triad, and the augmented triad (Boucheron [1867], 14–22).

In the fifth chapter Boucheron further expands some aspects of the voice leading. He presents the motion of the parts (parallel, contrary, and oblique). The sixth and final chapter is titled "Degli accordi composti e del pedale" ("On Compound Chords and on the Pedal Point"; Boucheron [1867], 27–32). Boucheron calls those chords that result from a suspension "compound chords." He points out that the second chord of a suspension contains the note of resolution and then gives a series of examples listing the difference between 4–3, 7–6, and 9–8 suspensions. The chapter ends with a short presentation of anticipations, presented as the opposite of suspensions, and, in a short paragraph at the very end, of pedal points.

The theoretical part of the book is followed by the forty-two partimenti. While most nineteenth-century maestros encouraged, as we have seen, a written-out practice of realizing partimenti, Boucheron, throughout his treatise, refers several times to keyboard practice. He expresses his views on this regard in the following remark:

> It is better to warn that on the piano, as on the organ, it is not always possible to achieve a voice leading of the same perfection as in a four-voice vocal or instrumental composition, unless one divides the chords between the two hands according to the proper extension of vocal parts as soprano, alto, tenor and bass. This kind of realization, called by La Croix "by extension," although more correct, is less easy for the beginners than the common way, that is, playing the chords with the right hand and only the bass with the left. . . . Since in our realization we adhered to the second manner, it follows that in those partimenti where the harmony is joined with a melodic thought or figure, some unavoidable transpositions will occur that would not happen in the other way.[13] (Boucheron [1867], 26)

All the partimenti are written with complete figures and on two staves: the actual partimento is in the upper staff, and a fundamental bass is in the lower one.[14] The figures used by Boucheron prescribe exactly the position of the

13 "Conviene avvertire che sul piano forte come sull'organo non si può sempre ottenere un andamento di parti della medesima perfezione richiesta in una composizione di quattro parti vocali o strumentali distinte, se non dividendo gli accordi fra le due mani e dando loro a un di presso l'estensione, quale avrebbero quattro parti vocali, come soprano, contralto, tenore e basso. Questo modo però, che il La-Croix chiama per estensione, se riesce più corretto, riesce al principiante meno facile di quello più comunemente usato per eseguire gli accordi intieramente colla mano destra, incaricando la sinistra del solo basso. . . . A questo ci siamo per tanto attenuti nella Chiave, onde in quei partimenti che all'armonia accoppiano un pensiero o disegno melodico accadono spesso inevitabili trasposizioni che non occorrerebbero nell'altro sistema."

14 The fundamental bass in association with partimenti had already been discussed by Giacomo Tritto (1816).

parts in the realization. They are also very detailed, including decorative motions like passing and neighbor tones. Boucheron's use of complete figuring differs, however, from the contemporary practice of republishing old partimenti collections with newly added figures. In his case, we find musical situations that the old partimento theory would have been unable to classify and to realize. Boucheron writes:

> I publish this work only after having used it with the few students for whom I wrote it. [In this work], whenever possible, I have added to the bare harmony a genuine melody, in order to give satisfaction to the tastes and minds of the youth. In order to do this, I made use of unusual figures, not commonly used, but necessary to show—or to hint at—the [musical] idea. In doubtful or difficult cases, the student should seek advice in the part [of this book] titled *La chiave* (*The Key*), where the same ideas are written down in full notation.[15] (Boucheron [1867], preface)

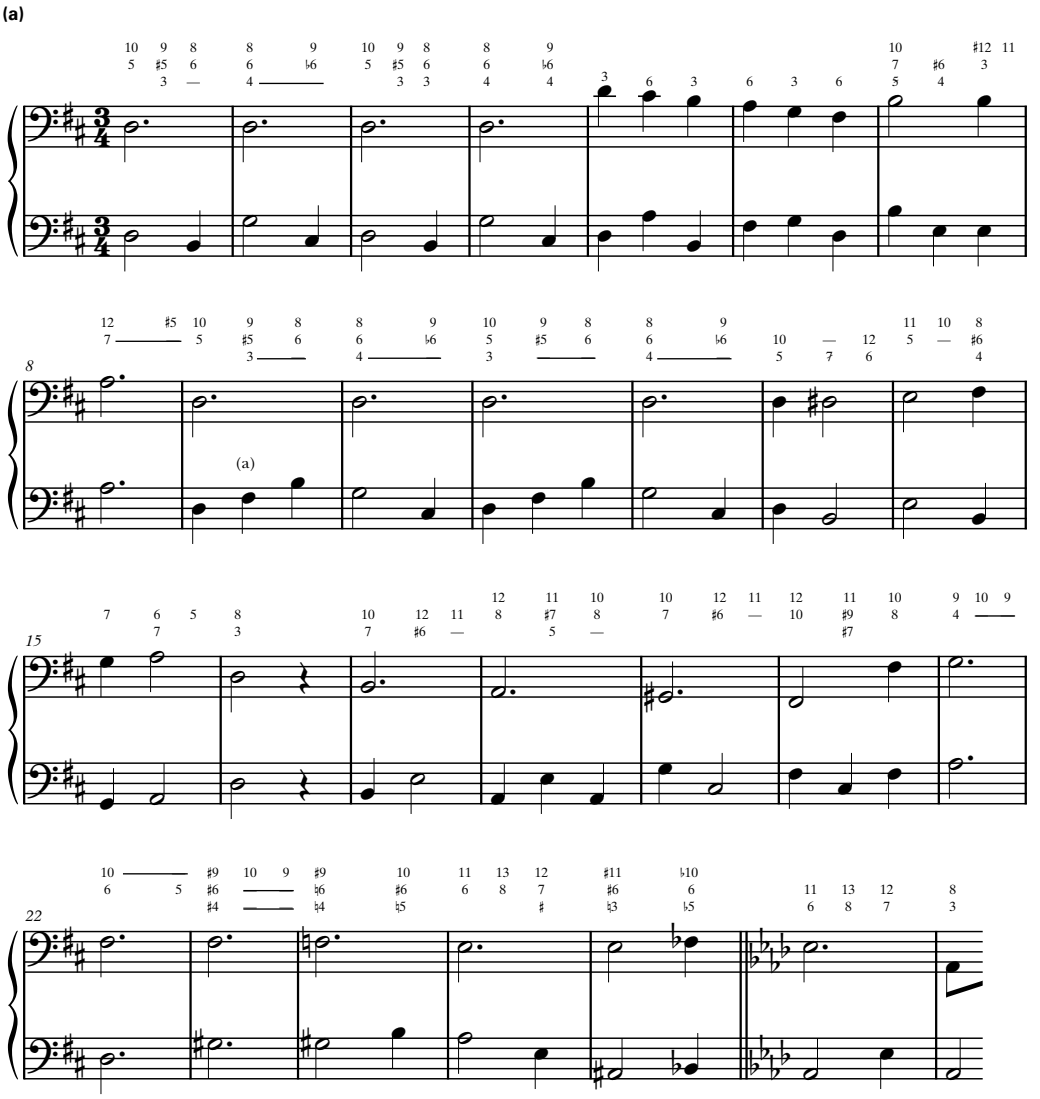
In doing so, Boucheron follows the opposite path of Platania. The latter rejects the use of figures and insists on the utility (for the students) of finding the correct solution for themselves, provided that they have the appropriate theoretical background. By contrast, Boucheron chooses to give all the figures as a practical demonstration of the new harmonic possibilities.

Boucheron—like a great many of his contemporaries—felt that partimenti pertained to the study of harmony, not counterpoint. Accordingly Boucheron's partimenti never show obvious traces of fugal or contrapuntal procedures. No longer connected with partimenti, counterpoint became a separate domain of knowledge pursued in separate studies.

In the work of Boucheron, partimenti have the added purpose of acquainting students with common formal schemes. Usually these partimenti have a period-shaped theme inside an A–B–A form with a shortened reprise of the A section (as was seen in the advanced partimenti of Platania). The B section is often in a relative key or in a third-relation key. This, too, was a typical feature of nineteenth-century Italian instrumental music (Rostagno 2003, 73).

In Example 9, from Boucheron's partimenti, it is possible to observe some of the stylistic and harmonic characteristics pointed out earlier (the examples show realizations by Boucheron himself). One can see very clearly that Boucheron obtains chromatic chords mainly by using chromaticized passing tones in an otherwise structurally diatonic frame. For example, in bar 1

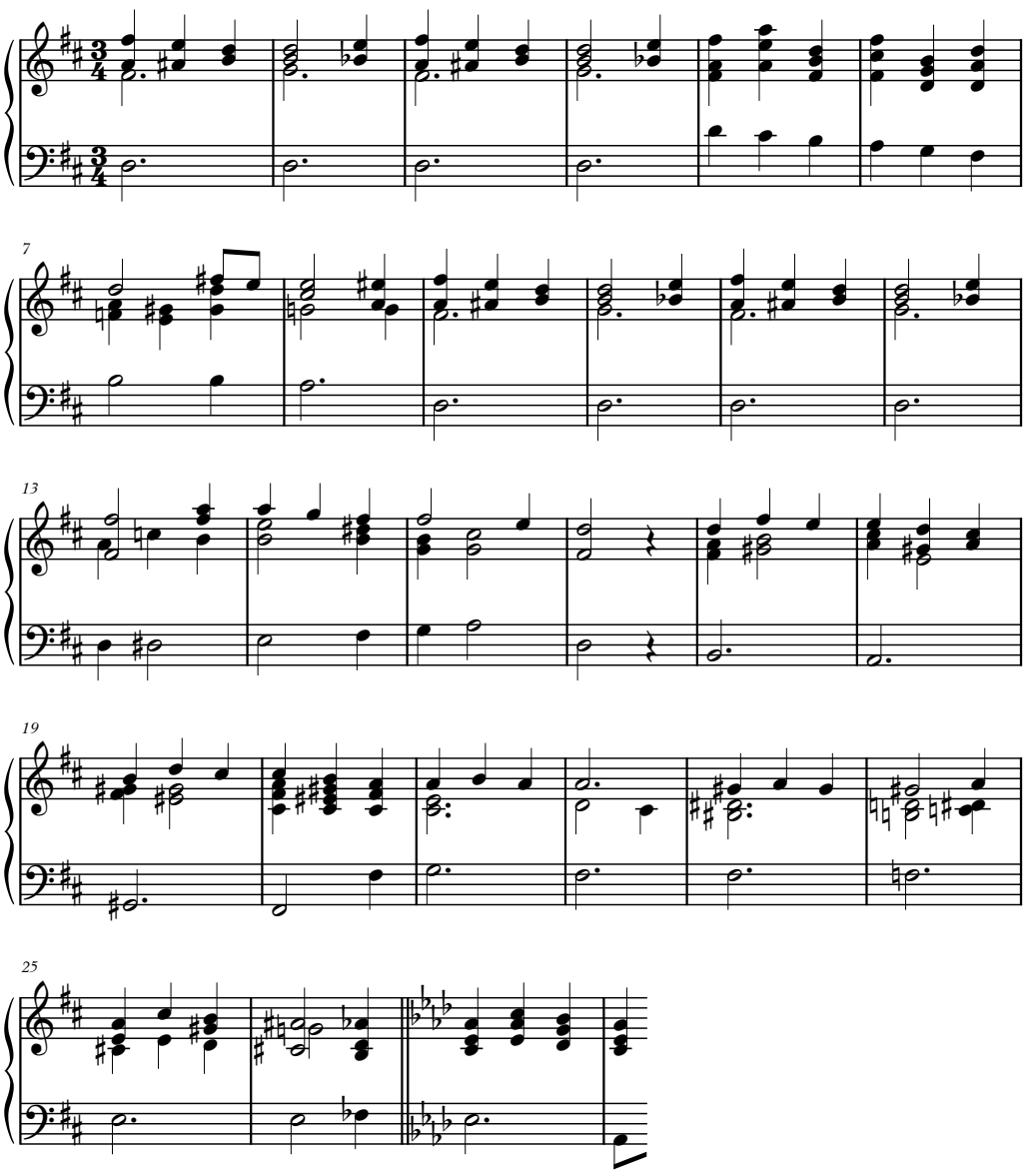
15 "Pubblico [quest'opera] solo dopo averla usata con I miei pochi allievi per cui la scrissi, mescendo per quanto era possibile alla nuda armonia una schietta melodia a maggior pascolo delle menti e del gusto giovanili, cosa che mi indusse a valermi di numeri non comunemente usati, ma necessari a indicare o far indovinare il pensiero, che più determinatamente espressi in note nella parte intitolata La Chiave, che l'allievo potrà consultare nei casi dubbi e per esso difficili."



Example 9. Boucheron, *Esercizi d'armonia*, partimento no. 40, mm. 1–28. (a) The figured bass with a fundamental bass below. (b) The realization by Boucheron

the motion 5–6 in the alto voice becomes 5–♯5–6, or, one bar later, the opposite motion 6–5 becomes 6–♭6–5. The characteristic symbol on the third quarter of bars 2 and 4 on the staff representing the fundamental bass indicates the presence of a dominant harmony; it means that even if the fundamental bass line indicates a C♯ as root of the diminished seventh chord, the real root (the A) is implied. A more structural use of chromaticism is the modulation to A♭ major, a tritone away from the home key. This key is reached through the

(b)



Example 9 (continued)

enharmonic reinterpretation of a dominant seventh V of V (reached in bar 25) as an augmented sixth chord on ♭VI of A♭ major.

Partimento: The Late Years

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, partimenti became less and less important in Italian musical pedagogy. The only exception was Fenaroli, whose *Partimenti* and *regole* were continuously in print until 1936 (Sanguinetti in press). In some restricted circles, particularly in Naples, vestiges of the original richness of this repertory still survived. This continuation (or perhaps rediscovery) was made possible by the emergence of musical historicism and a renewed appreciation of the art from earlier centuries—it was perhaps no accident that the greatest Italian exponent of historicism, Benedetto Croce, lived in Naples.

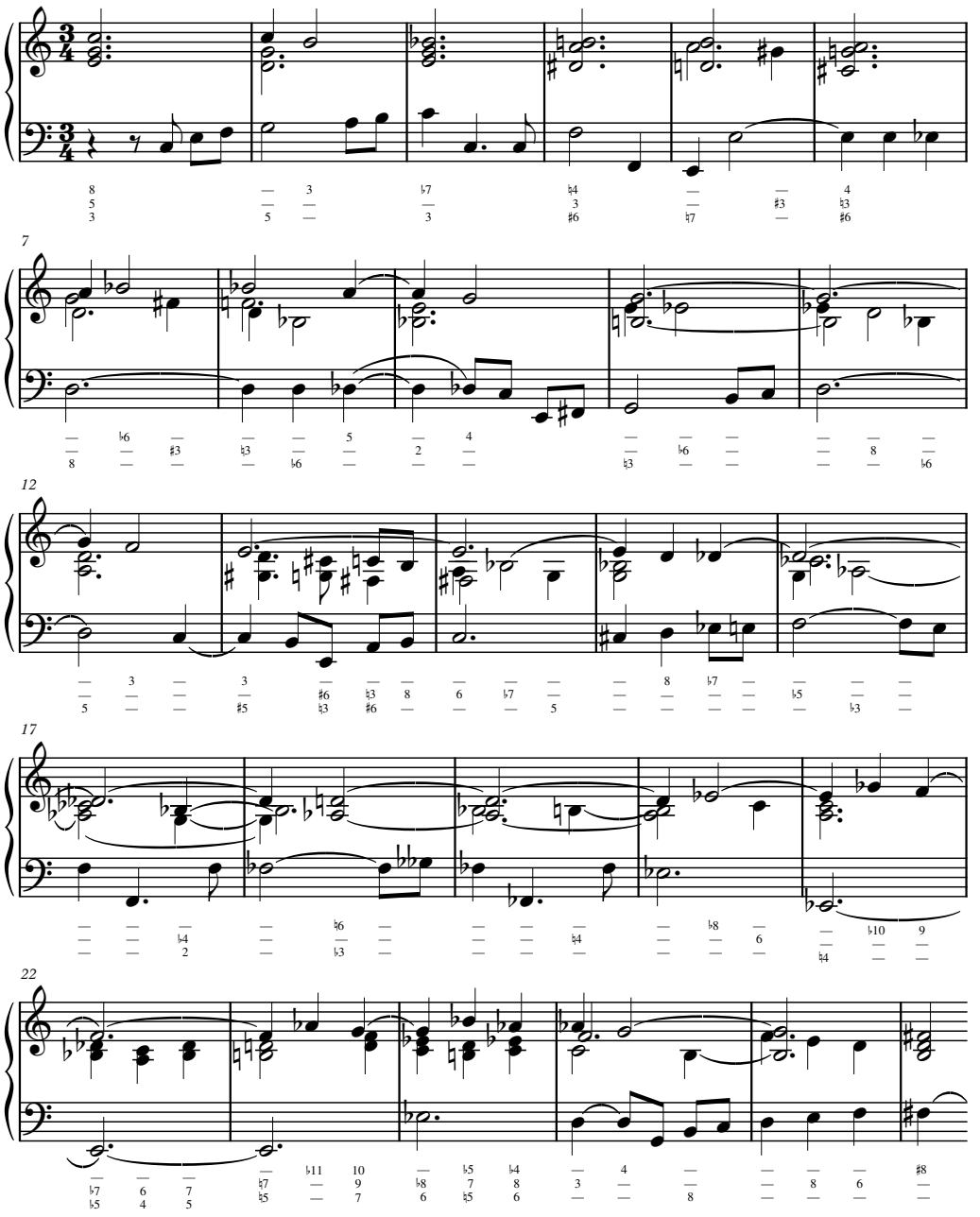
When the composer, pianist, and pedagogue Florestano Rossomandi (1857–1933) was a student in the Naples conservatory, he realized, under the guidance of his teacher Luigi Vespoli, various partimenti by Fenaroli in a style that recaptures some elements of harpsichord style (e.g., trillos and acciaccaturas; Rossomandi 1874, bk. 2, no. 29).

While there were, as mentioned, numerous editions of Fenaroli, other musicians preferred to publish anthologies of "ancient" authors. In 1896, Daniele Napoletano published a collection of partimenti by Nicola Sala (Napoletano 1896). In 1933, Camillo De Nardis, one of the last of the partimento maestros, published a collection by various authors, a sort of Neapolitan anthology of partimenti (De Nardis 1933). And what was probably the final collection of partimenti to come from within the direct tradition of Neapolitan maestros was edited by Jacopo Napoli and published in 1959.

In the late nineteenth century, the practice of partimento as improvisation at the keyboard on a given bass remained almost the exclusive preserve of organ pedagogy. At the Palermo conservatory, Carmelo Fodale, a pupil of Pietro Raimondi in the 1880s, taught partimento at the organ.[16] Guido Tacchinardi, Florentine composer and organist, composed his *Saggi di basso numerato e di contrappunto* (*Figured Bass and Counterpoint Exercises*) as "preparatory study for the interpretation of the music in the tied style . . . adopted by the organ school of the Royal College of Music in Florence" (Tacchinardi 1886).[17] The latter collection includes the totally figured, chromatic partimento reproduced in Example 10 (*Partimento cromatico*; Tacchinardi 1886, 44). As with Boucheron, the figures indicate the exact disposition of the voices in a way that makes realization an almost mechanical task. On the one hand, this represents an advantage: performers do not need any prior knowledge of

16 The name of Carmelo Fodale as teacher of *partimento al melodium* recurs in some uncatalogued documents that have been found recently in the library of the conservatory in Palermo (Anonymous, uncataloged).

17 "Studio preparatorio all'interpretazione della musica in stile legato. . . . Adottati dalla scuola d'organo del R. Istituto musicale di Firenze."



Example 10. Tacchinardi, chromatic partimento excerpts: mm. 1–27; realization by this author

harmony and counterpoint to complete a realization. But on the other hand, they cannot hope to gain any intimate acquaintance with the laws of composition that the old partimento practice assured. The harmonization of this partimento strays far from the Neapolitan rules. The chromatic motions of the bass, for example, are accompanied differently from what was possible in Fenaroli. Dissonant and chromatically altered chords resolve to other altered chords in an uninterrupted flux, and a strong cadence is found only at the very end of the composition (not shown in Example 10).

Conclusions

All the authors discussed exemplify different aspects of the nineteenth-century practice of partimenti. The collections in use remained the same for most of the century: Fenaroli's above all, but also some by Carlo Cotumacci and Mattei. The collections of earlier masters like Leo, Alessandro Scarlatti, and Durante were far less used, perhaps because of their lack of a clear pedagogical progression and perhaps because they were more wedded to an archaic style. The greatest change, however, concerned the use of partimenti. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the partimento was still a tool used for a global approach to composition teaching, just as it was in the previous century. Through the partimento, students learned not only how to place the proper harmonies above a bass, but also how to shape a complete piece of music in a given style. During the nineteenth century, the partimento gradually became something entirely different—an exercise in harmony. On the one hand, classic works by Fenaroli were being realized in a four-voice, steadily progressing, block-chordal style. On the other hand, newly composed exercises (like those discussed in this essay) became little more than basses for harmonization, even if retaining the traditional name of partimenti. A clear sign of this shift is the disappearance of one typical feature of the real partimento: the change of clefs. In fact, eighteenth-century partimenti usually moved freely from one voice of the texture to another and, except for the simplest partimenti, rarely confined themselves to the bass voice alone. Another significant change was the gradual disappearance of contrapuntal features like imitation, canons, and fugal procedures. An entire genre of partimento (perhaps the most important of all), the partimento fugue, disappeared entirely from pedagogical practice. Its place was taken by the new genre of exercise, the *basso imitato e fugato*.

But the decisive element, the one that caused the definitive twilight of the partimento tradition, was its divorce from improvisation. Only through practice in the improvised realization of partimenti could students fully develop their potential, fashioning in their minds a deeply rooted compositional instinct. The shift from improvisation to written practice marked the end of a centuries-long and glorious tradition.

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