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IMAGES OF GALANT MUSIC IN NEAPOLITAN PARTIMENTI AND SOLFEGGI

by ROBERT O. GJERDINGEN

In the eighteenth century, young boys with musical talent could dream of success as composers. The odds, however, were against them. The galant style of music in fashion at princely courts, opera theaters, and urban cathedrals demanded skills far beyond the reach of an amateur. It required not only excellence in counterpoint, figured-bass, orchestration, text-setting, and melodic design, but also such a high degree of compositional facility that one's creations gave the artistic impression of *sprezzatura* – refined nonchalance.¹ A lucky few like Mozart or the Bachs were born into professional musical families. For the rest it could be very difficult to find a teacher with the requisite sophistication and connections. An exception to this widespread predicament could be found in the southern Italian city of Naples. There the art of music flourished under the lavish patronage of the Spanish Bourbon dynasty. On his name day of November 4, 1737, Charles VII (later Charles III of Spain) gave Naples what was then the largest opera house in the world (3,300 seats), and the oldest one still functioning, the Teatro di San Carlo.² As the crown jewel among theaters, it presented only serious opera and attracted the greatest composers of the age. Other Neapolitan theaters presented comic opera and lighter musical entertainments. So many productions were staged, so many court concerts were scheduled, and so much elaborate sacred music was required at the dozens of magnificent churches that Naples might soon have run out of musicians had it not been for its four conservatories.

In the sixteenth century, the Catholic church had established various charitable organizations to conserve foundlings and orphans. Venice had its „Hospitals“ (*ospedali*) that trained girls in music so as to give them an „accomplishment“ that would enhance their marriageability. Today Antonio Vivaldi (1678–1741) is probably the best known of the many elite musicians who served as masters of the Hospitals.³ Naples, by contrast, had its „Conservatories“ (*conservatorii*) that accepted only boys seven years and older and trained them to be professional musicians. In both cities the more accomplished players were rented out to perform in theaters, concerts, and church services, and the resulting income helped support the institutions. Some older children taught the rudiments to younger children. The better pupils could become „little masters“ who taught more advanced students, and the very best students could study

¹ The concept of *sprezzatura* became well known through Baldassare Castiglione's *Il libro del Cortegiano* (Venice, 1528), which was a guidebook for the proper behavior of courtiers.

² „San Carlo“ refers to Saint Charles Borromeo, namesake of Charles VII, patron of learning and the arts, and an important figure in the counter-reformation.

³ Others in the eighteenth century include Baldassare Galuppi, Ferdinando Bertoni, Andrea Bernasconi, and Francesco Gasparini.

with famous adult masters to learn the art of composition. The composer of the inaugural opera at the Teatro San Carlo, for example, was Domenico Sarri (1679–1744), who had come to Naples at age six or seven and had been trained in one of the conservatories.⁴ Though almost no obviously pedagogical material is known to have survived from the *ospedali* of Venice, from Naples we have extensive preserved collections of music manuscripts that were used in the training of boys at the *conservatorii*.

In trying to understand how these largely nonverbal manuscripts of instructional music were used, and how they fostered great skill in improvisation, it may help to imagine ourselves in the position of a Neapolitan foundling. Behind him would lie poverty, possibly hunger, certainly very little security. Ahead of him might lie wealth and fame were he able to master the art of music. For such a boy, music is much more than black dots on a page of horizontal lines. It is more like a set of adult behaviors for which, if mastered, he will be richly rewarded. He *does* music, and in doing it well he receives praise and privileges. For him music is his *métier*, not a subject in school. As he gets older and is allowed to participate in ensembles, „music“ extends beyond the conservatory to include the physical movements observed of famous dancers, the voice heard of a renowned *castrato*, the tone and bowing admired of a violin virtuoso, the overpowering sound of the organ experienced in the cathedral, the stagecraft seen at the premiere of an opera, in short, everything associated with music in the lives of adults. Let us use the name *musica* for this wider concept of music, this ideal that the boy forms in his mind to serve as a touchstone for his own attempts to create improvisations, polished performances, and compositions.

Figure 1 shows our imaginary student below an ellipse that represents *musica*. The boy aspires to enter the realm of *musica*. Mere exposure to something as complex as polyphonic court music would not, however, have resulted in the boy making secure progress toward his goal. Instead, teachers at the Neapolitan conservatories wisely provided the boy with simplified images of *musica*. One image, *partimenti*, focused on basses. The other, *solfeggi*, focused on melodies. The arrows between these images and *musica* indicate not only the partial reflection of *musica* in *partimenti* and *solfeggi* but also the crucial roles that melody and bass play in the galant style. To master this style, one needed to control the elegant *pas de deux* of melody and bass.⁵

The double arrow between *partimenti* and *solfeggi* indicates the close relationship between these exercises. *Partimenti* were unfigured or lightly figured basses that the student realized at the keyboard by adding, at a minimum,

⁴ Sarri was enrolled in the Conservatorio di Sant'Onofrio a Porta Capuana.

⁵ Recognizing the important contrapuntal interplay of melody and bass, in the eighteenth century, it was common to refer to composers as *contrapuntisti*. Mozart used this term when referring to Michael Haydn and Anton Adlgasser, and the eighteenth-century Roman musician Giuseppe Pitoni titled his book of composer biographies *Notitia de contrapuntisti e de compositori di musica* (Ms., c. 1725); ed. C. Ruini (Florence, 1988).

chords, or more desirably, a characteristic melody or counterpoint. *Solfeggi* were two-part compositions for partimento bass and melody. Given a partimento, the student tried to imagine and perform the appropriate harmony and melody. Given a solfeggio, the student tried to sing the often elaborate melody in the implied harmonic/contrapuntal context of the partimento bass. With a carefully controlled „pas de deux“ of melody and bass as the goal, these exercises focused not on each part alone, but on each part in the context of the other.

In Figure 1a the remaining ellipse represents the art of keyboard or *cembalo* playing. Partimenti were realized at the keyboard. That is, the student would demonstrate mastery of a partimento by performing both the written and imagined parts at the keyboard. The norms of keyboard performance, and the repertory of music intended for harpsichord and organ, constrained the types of realizations that a student might imagine. Just as the craft of woodblock prints employed conventional simplifications of the visual world, so keyboard works employed conventional simplifications of the aural world of real instruments and voices in complex counterpoint. Because only fragmentary realizations of partimenti have been preserved from authentic eighteenth-century sources (see below), there remain many unanswered questions about the exact nature of partimento realization, whether by master or student.⁶ For a master, partimento realizations may have approached the style of keyboard works written by composers at the conservatories in Naples.⁷ So in the keyboard repertory, and especially in those keyboard works written with pedagogical intent, the student had yet another partial image of the real complexity of *musica*.

Many questions also surround the performance practice of the Neapolitan solfeggio. In particular, it is presently unknown whether or not the bass of a solfeggio was realized as a partimento. That is, the nonverbal nature of the solfeggio treatises leaves us without any guidance as to who – teacher, student, or a third party – played the solfeggio's bass and whether that person played the bass as a single line or as a partimento to be enriched with other voices and chords. If the student played the bass, perhaps he played only what was written. This might have been a necessity for the youngest boys who would not yet have become proficient at the keyboard. If, on the other hand, the *maestro* played the bass, it is difficult to imagine an experienced keyboard improviser limiting himself to a single note in the left hand when the singing student would benefit from the richer context of a realized partimento.

In Figure 1b one can see the same configuration as in Figure 1a, except that the boy has been replaced with an ellipse displaying the word *schemata*. In the language of cognitive psychology, schemata (sing. *schema*) are „mental

⁶ Volume 51, no. 1 of the *Journal of Music Theory* is scheduled to include an extended discussion by Giorgio Sanguinetti on the subject of partimento realization.

⁷ Among the many Neapolitan writers of partimenti who also wrote keyboard works were Alessandro Scarlatti, Francesco Durante, Leonardo Leo, Nicola Sala, and Giovanni Paisiello. Naples-trained keyboard composers like Giovanni Rutini, Domenico Paradies, and Mattia Vento helped to disseminate the Neapolitan style abroad.

representations."⁸ They are models in the mind that mirror meaningful regularities in the world. If the boy in the conservatory is going to develop an improviser's and composer's mind through practice with solfeggi and partimenti, then he must begin to recognize and remember structural similarities among particular cadences, phrases, and sequences. Each generalization, once learned, forms a mental schema. As early as 1711, for example, the composer and theorist Johann David Heinichen used the term *schema* to describe an abstract harmonization of a scale in the bass.⁹ An apprentice composer, of course, would need to learn dozens if not hundreds of schemata. Such a student would begin to show real progress when he could match the simple schemata he learned in lessons with the more complex sounds of *musica*. It would be his learned schemata that enabled him tie together all the fragments of his training and to understand that solfeggi and partimenti were practical „steps to Parnassus," the Parnassus of *musica*.

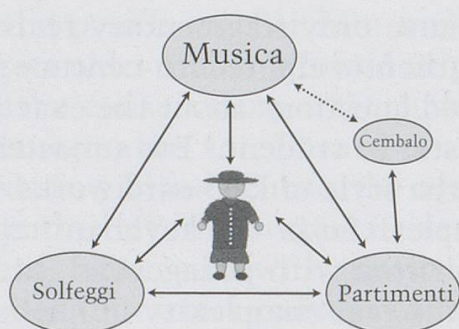


Fig. 1a

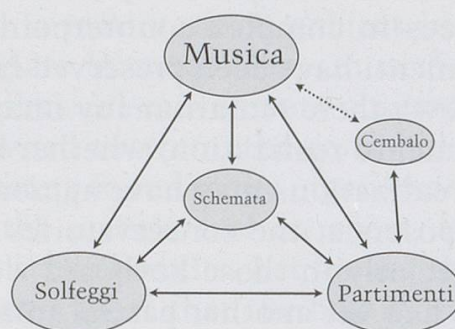


Fig. 1b

What were the „structural similarities“ in phrases of *musica*? If, following eighteenth-century aesthetics, we take serious opera (*opera seria*) as the highest expression of *musica*, and restrict ourselves to those works by composers trained in Naples which, in spite of the vagaries of changing times and tastes, exist in widely available modern editions and recordings, then three arias suggest themselves for comparison. The first is „Mi lusinga il cor d'affetto“ from Leonardo Leo's *Catone in Utica* (1729). The second is „Lieto così talvolta“ from Giovanni Battista Pergolesi's *Adriano in Siria* (1734). And the third is „Agitata per troppo contento“ from Antonio Sacchini's *L'eroe cinese* (1770).¹⁰

⁸ The nature of mental representations forms one of the major topics of philosophy and cognitive science. While there exist many historical and contemporary disputes about how we create, store, manipulate, and retrieve mental representations, the details of those disputes are not significant for the present discussion.

⁹ Heinichen describes this schema in his *Neu erfundene und gründliche Anweisung ... zu vollkommener Erlernung des General-Basses* (Hamburg, 1711), 201–4.

¹⁰ *Catone in Utica* (text by Metastasio), Venice, 1729; *Adriano in Siria* (text by Metastasio), Naples, 1734; *L'eroe cinese* (text by Metastasio), Munich, 1770. The arias mentioned in the main text can be heard sung by Monika Gonzalez, *Arie del '700 Italiano* (Hungaroton: HCD 32253).

Example 1

Example 1 shows a musical score with two systems. The first system consists of four measures. The second system also consists of four measures. Scale degrees are indicated by numbers in black circles above the melody and white circles below the bass. Triplet markings '3' are present in the melody of measures 1, 2, 3, and 5.

Example 1 presents an annotated excerpt from the opening ritornello of „Mi lusinga il cor d'affetto,” an aria performed by the great castrato Farinelli (1705–1782).¹¹ Though nominally by Leo, the possibility exists that it was written by another Neapolitan master, perhaps Vinci or Porpora.¹² The question of attribution aside, anything sung by Farinelli would have been memorable for a boy in one of the conservatories. The annotations show scale degrees in the melody (numbers in black circles) and scale degrees in the bass (numbers in white circles). Annotating a score is a modern device, but the Neapolitan collections of *regole* or „rules” for partimenti discuss scale degrees as one of the basic topics. The tonic or ① in the bass was called *prima di tono*, ② was called *seconda di tono*, and so forth.¹³ Focusing just on the salient melodic tones that fall on downbeats, we see first an alternation of ① with ② (mm. 1–3) followed by the stepwise descent ⑥–⑤–④–③. Focusing on the corresponding tones in the bass, we see an initial descent of scale degrees ①–⑦–⑥–③ followed by a second descent ④–③–②–①.

Example 2

Example 2 shows a musical score with two systems. The first system consists of four measures. The second system also consists of four measures. Scale degrees are indicated by numbers in black circles above the melody and white circles below the bass. Trill markings 'tr' are present in the melody of measures 1, 2, and 3.

¹¹ „Farinelli” was the stage name of Carlo Broschi, who trained in Naples under Nicola Porpora.

¹² *Catone in Utica* was arranged by Handel as *Catone* for performances in London (1732). Handel added or substituted arias by Hasse, Porpora, Vivaldi, and Vinci. This widespread practice has made it difficult, long after the fact, to determine with certainty who wrote what.

¹³ See, for instance, the writings of the Neapolitan maestro Fedele Fenaroli, *Regole musicali per i principianti di cembalo nel sonar coi numeri e per i principianti di contrappunto* (Naples, 1775).

Example 2 presents an annotated excerpt from the opening ritornello of Pergolesi's „Lieto così talvolta.“ The ornate melody for solo oboe will later join with soprano voice to form a duet, marked *amoroso*. In spite of the melodic fioritura, which looks so complex in notation, a comparison of the annotated scale degrees with those of Example 1 will reveal an almost note-for-note correspondence between these phrases of Pergolesi and Leo. The high G \sharp and F \sharp of Pergolesi's measure 2, for instance, reveal themselves as simple chromatic appoggiaturas to scale degrees ④ and ③.

Example 3

The musical score for Example 3 consists of four systems, each with a treble and bass staff. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is common time (C). The score is annotated with scale degrees in circles. System 1 (measures 1-3) has annotations ①, ⑤, and ①. System 2 (measures 4-6) has annotations ④, ⑥, and ③. System 3 (measures 7-9) has annotations ②, ①, and ⑥. System 4 (measures 10-12) has annotations ⑤, ④, and ③. The annotations indicate the scale degrees of the notes in the melody, showing a complex pattern of intervals and chromaticism.

Example 3 presents an annotated excerpt from the frenetic opening ritornello of Sacchini's *L'eroe cinese*. In the four decades that separate Sacchini's music from Leo's and Pergolesi's, many changes had occurred in opera seria. The opening measures of Example 3, for instance, do not easily map onto the opening measures of those earlier examples, though the initial emphasis on scale degrees u and y is one feature common to all three composers' efforts. In Sacchini's four-bar riposte to his opening statement (mm. 5–8, repeated

in mm. 9–12), however, one can still find the same general pattern seen in the cited ripostes of Leo and Pergolesi: a ⑥–⑤–④–① descent in the melody in parallel with a ④–③–②–① descent in a lower voice (here split between ④–③ in the second violin and ②–① in the bass).

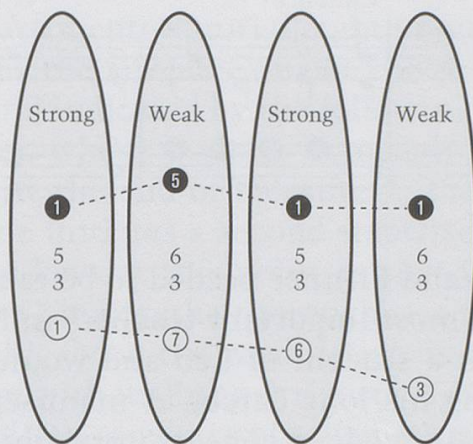


Fig. 2a

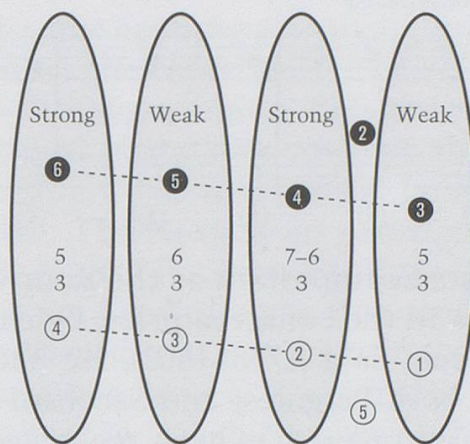


Fig. 2b

In the book *Music in the Galant Style*,¹⁴ I presented the results of comparisons of thousands of musical phrases from the eighteenth century. Figure 2a shows one of the schemata derived from those comparisons. Often known by the term „Romanesca“ in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, this schema closely matches the first part of the excerpts by Leo and Pergolesi. It features the ①–⑦–⑥–③ bass, along with a melody that focuses on scale degrees ① and ⑤. Figure 2b shows the galant schema most frequently used as a riposte to some opening gesture or phrase. Called a „Prinner“, after a seventeenth-century Austrian music theorist,¹⁵ this pattern matches the second part of the excerpts by all three Neapolitan composers. It features the ④–③–②–① descent in the bass and the corresponding parallel descent ④–③–②–① in the melody.

Though three excerpts hardly constitute a statistically valid sample of *musica*, they are in fact quite representative. During the career of Leo and Pergolesi, a Romanesca was often the opening gambit that led to a Prinner riposte. Literally hundreds of examples of this pairing of schemata can be found during the first half of the eighteenth century. By the time of Sacchini, the Romanesca had passed out of favor, though the Prinner riposte retained its utility. Had every use of the Prinner followed a Romanesca, one could imagine a boy learning their combination as a single schema. The empirical fact that the Prinner can follow other schemata, and that the Romanesca does not always

¹⁴ Robert O. Gjerdingen, *Music in the Galant Style: Being an Essay on Various Schemata Characteristic of Eighteenth-Century Music for Courtly Chambers, Chapels, and Theaters, Including Tasteful Passages of Music Drawn from Most Excellent Chapel Masters in the Employ of Noble and Noteworthy Personages, Said Music All Collected for the Reader's Delectation on the World Wide Web* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

¹⁵ Johann Jacob Prinner (1624–1694) was trained in Siena and later worked in Graz and Vienna. He wrote a treatise entitled *Musicalischer Schlissl* (Ms., 1677), which contains a discussion of how to accompany unfigured basses.

lead into a Prinner, would lead a student to conceptualize them as separate though closely associated patterns.

Example 4

The musical notation for Example 4 is presented in two staves. The first staff, labeled 'Romanesca', contains five measures of chords. The second staff, labeled 'Cadence', contains two measures of chords. Below the first staff, the figures 1, 5, 6, 3, 4, 1 are written, corresponding to the chords in the Romanesca. Below the second staff, the figures 1, 5, 6, 3, 4, 1 are written, corresponding to the chords in the Cadence.

Schemata as important as the Romanesca and Prinner needed to be taught to the boys in the conservatories. One of the most important teachers in Naples was Nicola Sala (1713–1801). He had been a student of Leo and would have known both Pergolesi and Sacchini during his long career. A manuscript of Sala's partimenti has been preserved in the modern conservatory library in Naples.¹⁶ If we open it to the small partimenti for beginners used to exemplify basic rules, we see right away the older, seventeenth-century form of the Romanesca (in the manuscript, fol. 3, staff 2; see Ex. 4). This partimento, only five measures in length, presents without labels or any instructions, the old form of the Romanesca followed by a cadence. I say „old form“ of the Romanesca because composers of Leo's generation had already changed the scale-degree pattern of Sala's partimento – ①–⑤–⑥–③ – to the more stepwise form of ①–⑦–⑥–③ (in figured-bass terminology, every other chord is now 6/3 instead of 5/3). Nevertheless, it was the old form that was taught first, perhaps because it was a pedagogical tradition and because it could be realized entirely with 5/3 chords. Because this small partimento would have been for a young boy very early in his studies, Sala gives it a literal type of figuring (not shown). That is, the highest-written figure corresponds to the highest voice, the next highest figure to the next highest voice, and so forth. The upper staff of Example 4 provides a simple realization constructed from Sala's thoroughbass figures (only the bass staff appears in Sala's partimento).

Example 5

The musical notation for Example 5 is presented in two staves. The first staff, labeled 'Proposta', contains five measures of chords. The second staff, labeled 'Prinner', contains five measures of chords. Below the first staff, the figures 4, 3, 2, 1, 1 = 4, 3, 2, 1 are written, corresponding to the chords in the Proposta. Below the second staff, the figures 4, 3, 2, 1 are written, corresponding to the chords in the Prinner.

After the small section of rules or *regole*, Sala presents a series of lessons or *lezzone*, meaning relatively easy partimenti. The first of these lessons reviews

¹⁶ *Elementi per ben sonare il cembalo del Signore Don Nicola Sala* (I Nc, MS S.I.94).

two versions of the *regola dell'ottava* (Rule of the Octave),¹⁷ meaning standard harmonizations of the ascending and descending scale. Then Sala gives the student the first independent partimento, whose opening measures are shown in Example 5 (fol. 7v, staff 4). Again the treble staff does not appear in the original and is provided only as an illustration of a possible realization. The partimento's initial eighth notes cue some opening gesture (It. *proposta*), perhaps the simple C-major chord shown on the treble staff. The riposte (It. *risposta*) indicated by the following ④–③–②–① bass (mm. 1–2) is the expected Prinner, whose ⑥–⑤–④–③ melody is realized in the alto voice on the treble staff. At the end of measure 2, the bass note C3 is tied across the bar line. This tie initiates a second stepwise descent. The Neapolitan tradition was to change keys at this point so that C3–B2–A2–G2 becomes ④–③–②–① in the key of G major (the thoroughbass figures [not shown] make this modulation explicit). Once the modulation is accomplished, the pairing of the opening gesture with its Prinner riposte is played again, now in G major. This standard Neapolitan sequence of schemata finds echoes in Joseph Haydn's predilection for reusing an opening theme in the key of the dominant. The pedagogical link may be Haydn's studies with the Neapolitan maestro Niccolo Porpora. Haydn credited Porpora with teaching him „the true fundamentals of composition.“¹⁸ Porpora, Sala, and the other great teachers took pains to mirror in their lessons the important compositional schemata of the galant style. A student working through the lesson book of Sala would have been introduced, even in the book's first pages, to the Romanesca and Prinner, patterns so important to the arias of Leo and Pergolesi.

Example 6

Example 6 displays two systems of musical notation for the Romanesca and Prinner patterns. The first system shows the Romanesca (bass line) and Prinner (treble line) with fingerings. The second system shows the Prinner (treble line) and Romanesca (bass line) with fingerings.

System 1:

- Romanesca (Bass):** Measures 1-4. Measure 1: C4 (①). Measure 2: C4 (⑦). Measure 3: C4 (⑥), D4 (③). Measure 4: C4 (④), B3 (③), A3 (②).
- Prinner (Treble):** Measures 1-4. Measure 1: C4 (①). Measure 2: C4 (⑤). Measure 3: C4 (①), D4 (①). Measure 4: C4 (⑥), B3 (⑤), A3 (④).

System 2:

- Prinner (Treble):** Measures 5-8. Measure 5: C4 (③), D4 (③), E4 (③), F4 (③). Measure 6: C4 (⑥), D4 (④), E4 (④), F4 (④). Measure 7: C4 (⑤), D4 (③), E4 (③), F4 (③). Measure 8: C4 (④), D4 (④), E4 (④), F4 (④).
- Romanesca (Bass):** Measures 5-8. Measure 5: C4 (①). Measure 6: C4 (④), D4 (④), E4 (④), F4 (④). Measure 7: C4 (②), D4 (②), E4 (②), F4 (②). Measure 8: C4 (①), D4 (①), E4 (①), F4 (①).

¹⁷ See, for example, Thomas Christensen, „The ‚Règle de l’Octave‘ in Thorough-Bass Theory and Practice,” *Acta Musicologica* 64 (1992), 91–117.

¹⁸ From Haydn's autobiographical letter of 1776. See, for instance, Daniel Heartz, *Haydn, Mozart, and the Viennese School, 1740–1780* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1994), 237–38.

As with his partimenti, Sala's solfeggi present a reflected image of the schemata used by adult composers in Naples. Example 6 shows a lesson in F major (fol. 44v) that begins with a broad Romanesca. The important melodic scale degrees *u* and *y* could hardly be clearer, and the lower part drums away at the Romanesca's stock ①–⑦–⑥–③ bass. Measure 4 presents a short Prinner riposte, after which Sala presents an expanded, four-bar version of the same Prinner in the tonic key of C.

Example 7

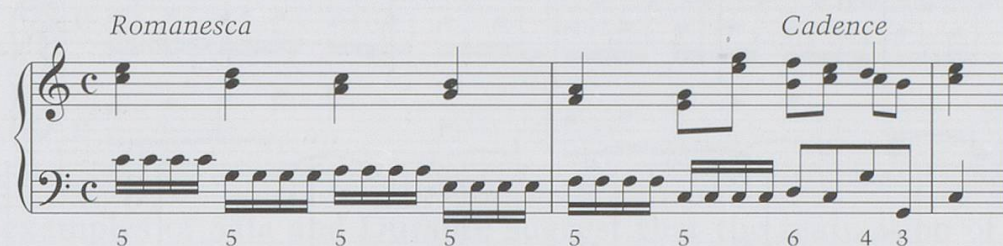
Example 7, from just a few pages further into the same manuscript (fol. 49v), shows the first four measures of a lesson in Eb major. In measure 1 we can see the outlines of a Romanesca. Though much more brief than the excerpt of Example 6, this Eb passage still contains all the features of the prototype shown earlier in Figure 3: its melody gives special emphasis to scale degrees *u* and *y*, and its bass manages to present both the newer ①–⑦–⑥–③ and the older ①–⑤–⑥–③ patterns. As expected, Sala's Romanesca leads into a clear Prinner riposte in measure 2, complete with a ④–③–②–① descent in the bass and a ⑥–⑤–④–③ descent in the melody. As seen in Sala's second small partimento (cf. Ex. 5), the first Prinner then leads into a second, modulating Prinner (now in F major). Comparing the solfeggi from Examples 6 and 7, we see instances of how boys learned not only the proper sequence of schemata, but also the different options available. Example 7, for instance, uses a second Prinner to modulate quickly to the dominant key of Bb, something appropriate for a lesson of only one and a half pages in length. Example 6, by contrast, runs to four pages and thus shows the student how to expand the opening section by keeping the second Prinner in the home key of C major.

Although the general course of instruction at the conservatories can be inferred from the surviving manuscripts of partimenti and solfeggi, many of the details remain unknown. We do not, for example, know the years of composition for most of these exercises because the partimenti and solfeggi preserved from the eighteenth century are generally copies of copies. In only one instance (1782, with Paisiello at the Russian court of Catherine the Great) were Neapolitan partimenti published during the eighteenth century.¹⁹ In all other cases students worked with manuscript copies made by themselves, by professional copyists, or by other students. Over the course of their studies,

¹⁹ Giovanni Paisiello, *Regole per bene accompagnare il partimento* (St. Petersburg, 1782).

students could assemble a notebook (It. *zibaldone*) of such exercises.²⁰ Only a few of these private notebooks survive. The Estense library in Modena has such a notebook by the Naples-trained composer Domenico Cimarosa. At some early stage the library catalogued this item as containing compositions by Cimarosa. But the notebook, dated 1762 and signed by the twelve- or thirteen-year-old Cimarosa, actually contains partimenti by the great Neapolitan composer and maestro Francesco Durante (1685–1755).²¹ The partimenti in Cimarosa's notebook thus allow us to make inferences about the training of Cimarosa and possibly about the training of his classmates.

Example 8



Cimarosa was born in December of 1749. Following the death of his father, he entered one of the Neapolitan conservatories in 1761 when he was eleven or twelve, one of his teachers being Sacchini.²² Only a year later (1762, the date of his notebook) he was already studying partimenti of some complexity. Example 8 presents a passage from his notebook that contains a version of a known Durante exercise on the Romanesca.²³ As you can see in the partimento (and in the treble staff added to give it the context of a simple realization), Cimarosa was already expected to be able to realize a Romanesca and to know his cadences. After the passage shown, the partimento modulates to the dominant key of G major and then begins several modulating sequences. This is impressive material for a young student to master. Cimarosa would spend an additional ten years in training at the conservatory after which he went on to an illustrious career as an opera composer. In the period 1782–87 he was appointed maestro of one of the Venetian *ospedali*. Then he was recruited to the Russian court. He may be the only eighteenth-century composer to have

²⁰ A *zibaldone* or commonplace book was also assembled and studied by the actor-improvisors of the *Commedia dell'arte*.

²¹ Today, Cimarosa's *zibaldone* looks like a selection of excerpts from the much larger manuscripts of Durante partimenti. Those large manuscripts may, however, have been archival in nature, collecting in a single location all the known partimenti by Durante. An individual student like Cimarosa may have had a much smaller collection. See Nicoleta Paraschivescu, *Die Partimenti von Francesco Durante unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Hs. 283 des Istituto Archeologico in Rom* (Basel, 2007), thesis, Schola Cantorum Basiliensis.

²² Antonio Sacchini was secondo maestro of the Conservatorio di Santa Maria di Loreto from 1761 to 1762. Cimarosa's other teachers were *primo maestro* Gennaro Manno, the partimento master Fedele Fenaroli, and the violin master Carcais.

²³ This partimento is the only one of Durante's partimenti numerati to have a title, which was *La perfidia*.

served as *maestro di capella* for the sovereigns of two empires (Russia, 1787; Austria, 1791).²⁴

As mentioned earlier, there are hints scattered among the Neapolitan manuscripts regarding how to realize a partimento. In Sala's partimenti one finds a page on which, following a demonstration of the realization of a rising and falling scale, there are three versions of a realized Romanesca (see Ex. 9, where both the treble and bass staves are authentic).²⁵

Example 9

The musical notation for Example 9 is organized into five systems, each consisting of a treble and bass staff. The first system is labeled 'Scala' and shows a rising and falling scale. The second system is labeled 'Romanesca' and 'Cadence' and shows a Romanesca and a Cadence. The third system is also labeled 'Romanesca' and 'Cadence' and shows a Romanesca and a Cadence. The fourth system is labeled 'Romanesca' and shows a Romanesca. The fifth system is labeled 'Cadence' and shows a Cadence.

²⁴ Cimarosa served Catherine the Great of Russia as *maestro di capella* from 1787 to 1791, and Leopold II of Austria as *maestro di capella* from 1791 until returning to Naples in 1793.

²⁵ As mentioned, it was quite rare for realizations to be notated in the eighteenth century.

The first version is the easiest, the second is more difficult, and the third, with its sixteenth notes and implied 7–6 suspensions in the right hand, is by far the most difficult. The iterated bass tones of the third version are strongly reminiscent of Durante's own partimento exercise on the Romanesca (cf. Ex. 8). And the realization in sixteenth notes closely follows Durante's own suggestion for how to decorate the Romanesca pattern as illustrated in his „embellished partimenti“ (It., *partimenti diminuiti*; see Ex. 10, where both the treble and bass parts are by Durante).²⁶

Example 10



These examples of Sala and Durante suggest that the realization of a partimento could involve rapid figurations characteristic of composed works for the harpsichord. Moreover, the examples suggest that there were traditions for standard realizations of particular schemata.

Example 11

Romanesca *Cadence* *Prinner*

Proposta *Prinner* *Cadence*

Romanesca *Cadence* *Prinner*

²⁶ In Durante's *partimenti diminuiti*, he precedes each partimenti with from one to five brief suggestions for the realization of the particular schema featured in that partimento.

17 *Modulation* *Romanesca* *Cadence*

22 *Weak Cadence*

26 *Cadence* *Rising Sequence*

29 *Cadence*

The notation consists of four staves. The first staff (measures 17-21) is in bass clef with a key signature of one flat. It includes labels 'Modulation', 'Romanesca', and 'Cadence'. The second staff (measures 22-25) is in bass clef and labeled 'Weak Cadence'. The third staff (measures 26-28) is in treble clef and labeled 'Cadence' and 'Rising Sequence'. The fourth staff (measures 29-31) is in bass clef and labeled 'Cadence'. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 below the notes.

Example 12

Romanesca *Cadence*

The notation shows a two-voice setting in 4/4 time. The first staff is in treble clef and the second in bass clef. The first four measures are labeled 'Romanesca' and the last two are labeled 'Cadence'. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 below the notes.

On the page facing his models for the *Romanesca*, Sala's manuscript contains the complete partimento shown in Example 11. Though not perhaps immediately obvious, given the octave displacement of the bass's A3 in measure 2, this partimento begins with a traditional *Romanesca*. The 2–3 suspensions in the imaginary upper voices (indicated by the figures) match the prescriptions of several other masters. They can be seen, for example, in Example 12, from a partimento by Stanislao Mattei of Bologna, pupil of Padre Martini and teacher of Rossini and Donizetti.²⁷ Following Sala's *Romanesca*, the figures indicate first a *cadenza doppia* (It., „double cadence,” one of three standard cadences taught in Neapolitan *regole*) and then a Prinner riposte.

In the sixth measure the clef and texture change. There are now two voices, fully written out. What is being taught here is the form and texture of the concerto. The opening measures in the bass clef represent an orchestral tutti; the subsequent measures in the treble clef represent a two-voice solo. Measures 6 and 7 give the *proposta*, which Sala writes as a two-voice imitation. The *dux* or lead voice plays a descending triad (C5–A4–F4), which the *comes* or follow-

²⁷ *Piccolo basso: In tutti li toni per introduzione alli bassi numerati ó siano partimenti* (MS, Naples).

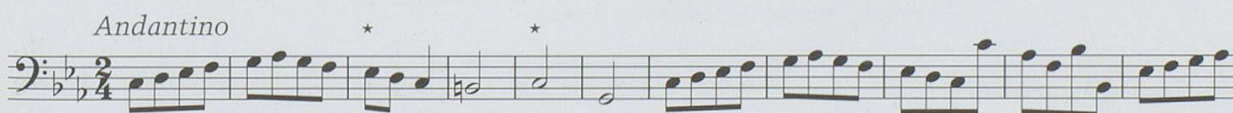
ing voice answers in the so-called „tonal“ fashion as (F4–E4–C4). Measure 8 begins the *risposta* of a Prinner, and measure 9 begins the modulating Prinner (F major changes to C major). The modulating Prinner ends in measure 11, and a weak cadence in the same measure ends the solo.

The tutti returns in measure 12 with the same sequence of schemata as in the opening measures: Romanesca, cadence, Prinner. In measure 17 the tutti begins to modulate back to F major. That done, the Romanesca ritornello reappears, followed by an extended cadence that ends „open,“ that is, unresolved. The solo enters (m. 20) for two iterations of weak type of cadence, followed as was the norm by a strong cadence in measure 27. The tutti then returns to perform a rising sequence (what Joseph Riepel called the Monte or „mountain“)²⁸ that leads to the last and strongest cadence. Just before the very end, Sala has his bass part allude to the motive of a descending triad introduced earlier by the solo (cf. m. 30 with m. 6).

To realize Sala's partimento at the keyboard, more is required than merely to decipher the figures in the manner of a *basso continuo* accompaniment (many Neapolitan partimenti have no figures at all). The student who wanted to advance to improvisation and composition needed to supply something of *musica*, something of the real art of melody, rhythm, and counterpoint. To this end, partimenti often contained internal clues that, when understood, could lead the student to an „Aha!“ moment. That is, the student could come to realize that two musical motives could fit together hand in glove. One way to teach this was to encourage students to begin a partimento with voices in imitation, as with the first solo in Sala's partimento. Let us look at how a simple partimento by Niccolò Zingarelli (1752–1837) fits this description (see Ex. 13).

Zingarelli's father died when he was seven. He was then accepted at the Conservatorio di Santa Maria di Loreto in Naples, enrolling just three years before Cimarosa, with whom he would share several teachers. He went on to become the head musician at the Milan cathedral, at St. Peter's in Rome, and eventually the director (1813) of the reorganized conservatory of Naples (after the Napoleonic wars and dislocations, the separate conservatories were merged).²⁹ He was the teacher of Bellini.

Example 13



²⁸ The name *monte* was given to types of ascending sequences by Joseph Riepel (1709–1782) in his *Anfangsgründe zur musicalischen Setzkunst, ii: Grundregeln zur Tonordnung insgesamt* (Frankfurt and Leipzig, 1755).

²⁹ The successor institution to the four eighteenth-century conservatories in Naples is the Conservatorio Musica di San Pietro a Majella.

Example 13 looks quite simple. In its C-minor context, the bass appears to do little more than ascend and descend the scale. The secret of this partimento, which would become more apparent if one studied the entire exercise, is that measures 1–2 in the bass can be shifted an octave higher to constitute the melody of measures 3–4 (at the asterisk). In other words, this is a bass that, like the tune of „Frère Jacques,“ can initiate a musical canon. An advanced student might also notice that a third voice could enter with the same subject at the second asterisk.

Sala's partimento does not afford any contrapuntal combinations as conceptually simple as a canon. But almost every melodic motive in the solo can be used to create the full texture of the tutti. This partimento would strongly suggest as much to the attentive student, who ought to notice that the solo of measure 8 reuses the bass motive of measure 4. Some combinations suggest themselves directly, as for instance using the opening of the solo as a model for the opening of the tutti. This would be in line with the student's own experience of concertos, where the opening motives of tutti and solo usually match. Other combinations can be worked out by practice and study. There are no eighteenth-century realizations of Sala's partimento against which, in our own day, we might compare and judge our modern efforts. In his day, realizations were improvisations (only in the nineteenth century did written-out realizations become common). Example 14 presents this author's realization of Sala's partimento.

Example 14

The musical score for Example 14 is presented in three systems, each with a treble and bass staff. The key signature is C minor (two flats) and the time signature is 3/4. The first system (measures 1-3) shows a treble staff with a melodic line and a bass staff with a simple accompaniment. The second system (measures 4-6) continues the melody and accompaniment. The third system (measures 7-9) shows the melody and accompaniment concluding. The score is written in C minor, indicated by two flats in the key signature.

The image displays a musical score for a piece in B-flat major, 3/4 time, consisting of six systems of music. Each system is numbered at the beginning of the first staff: 13, 16, 19, 22, 25, and 28. The notation is written for piano, with a treble and bass staff joined by a brace. The music is characterized by rapid, continuous sixteenth-note passages in the right hand, often with trills (tr) and grace notes. The left hand provides a steady accompaniment of eighth and sixteenth notes, sometimes with longer rests. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The score concludes with a double bar line at the end of the sixth system.

In developing the art of improvisation through partimenti and solfeggi, the Neapolitan conservatories enabled the best of their students to compose with great fluency and rapidity. The careful and laborious development of internalized schemata during their years of training made it possible for these composers to imagine and perform multipart music with what looked to the general public like very little effort. For these highly trained musicians, the act of composing was a mental process, with the musical score reflecting a final, external transcription of an internal improvisation.

