



gained through the practice of partimento, from automatism to fluency and astounding rapidity. And we are obviously free to revive this tradition, and also to transmit it, if we wish – as we are actually doing in academic courses, masterclasses and so on. But if we do so, this cannot serve as a revival of the art of Neapolitan partimento, but as the creation of our own. These remarks, of course, are not intended to dampen our enthusiasm for partimenti, but rather to enhance it, for it seems to me that the seductiveness of partimento as a practical, pedagogical device has been diverting our attention from other aspects that we should reconsider: as players and musicians, yes, but also as philologists, theorists and historians.

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PETER VAN TOUR

*COUNTERPOINT AND PARTIMENTO: METHODS OF TEACHING COMPOSITION IN LATE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY NAPLES*

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This is a publication of Peter van Tour's 2015 doctoral dissertation (in English) by the awarding institution, Uppsala Universitet. Because 'dissertation' and 'dull' are words often connected in the minds of readers, let me state at the outset that van Tour's book is far from dull. It makes fascinating reading for any devotee of eighteenth-century music, and for specialists it will significantly raise the level of partimento studies and force some revisions in the history of compositional training. In this review I will survey the book's main findings and highlight the author's achievements. In addition, I will insert a sample of the kind of follow-on study that all of this new material invites and enables.

In van Tour's words, "Partimento" is understood as a notational device, commonly written on a single staff in the F clef, either figured or unfigured, applied both in playing and in writing activities, and used for developing skills in the art of accompaniment, improvisation, diminution, and counterpoint' (35). The crucial phrase 'both in playing and in writing' distinguishes van Tour's perspective from previous studies, which emphasized keyboard improvisation. This reviewer, in a 2006 address given at the Orpheus Institute, Ghent (published as 'Partimenti Written to Impart a Knowledge of Counterpoint and Composition', in *Partimento and Continuo Playing in Theory and Practice* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2010), 43–70), did touch upon the subject, however tentatively. And Giorgio Sanguinetti's masterful *The Art of Partimento: History, Theory, and Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012) mentions a number of written-out partimento realizations, generally known in Italian conservatories as *disposizione à 3* or *disposizione à 4* (that is, three- or four-voice settings). But with van Tour's book a whole cohort of important and previously unknown manuscripts are introduced to show the step-by-step progress of specific students as they learned eighteenth-century counterpoint. Where previous scholars had to posit educated guesses about the details of such instruction, van Tour can report on exactly what was happening.

Partimenti belong to the musicological 'underground', where master artisans led the non-verbal training of young apprentices. Only in the last decade have scholarly treatments of partimenti emerged. As a new area of study, and with thousands of partimenti preserved in carelessly produced manuscripts, the situation has been reminiscent of what Jan LaRue encountered at New York University in the 1960s. His goal was to sort out the many problems of disputed attributions in the repertory of eighteenth-century symphonies (for example, the Pokorny controversy; see LaRue, 'Major and Minor Mysteries of Identification in the 18th-Century Symphony', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 13/1–3 (1960), 188–192). As mentor to a large cohort of eighteenth-century music specialists, he decided to establish a union catalogue of incipits



for all symphony movements from the period. The incipits in the current RISM catalogue stem from the same initiative. Analogous concerns prompted this reviewer to attempt a union catalogue of partimenti and solfeggi (shorter exercises in melodic diminution and embellishment) by assigning 'Gj' numbers to lessons in some important manuscripts. Van Tour has completely eclipsed that effort by creating a massive online database of more than ten thousand partimenti and solfeggi. These catalogues are searchable in several ways and can be found at the URLs <[www2.musik.uu.se/UUPart/UUPart.php](http://www2.musik.uu.se/UUPart/UUPart.php)> (partimenti) and <[www2.musik.uu.se/UUSolf/UUSolf.php](http://www2.musik.uu.se/UUSolf/UUSolf.php)> (solfeggi).

Work on LaRue's symphony catalogue involved numerous assistants supported by grants to make possible extended travels to European libraries. Van Tour's databases are impressive solo efforts aided by the new technologies of our time. The previously mentioned RISM incipits, for example, formed a crucial aid. So did copies of manuscripts shared by other partimento scholars or digitized by progressive libraries and made available on the internet. At times, a great deal of detective work was needed to ferret out important manuscripts that librarians over the centuries had catalogued as 'lessons', 'exercises', 'figured basses' or even 'miscellaneous'. At other times he had only to type 'partimenti' in a search field to find new treasures.

Confronted with the muddle of frequently similar-sounding partimenti in hundreds of manuscripts, most scholars have chosen the expedient of treating partimento training as a unified Neapolitan tradition, a time-honoured approach seemingly sanctioned by the contemporary term 'the Neapolitan School'. The reality, of course, was that Naples had distinct *scuole* in competition with one another. Four conservatories flourished in Naples in the first half of the eighteenth century, and three remained in the second half. Those three – Sant'Onofrio, Santa Maria di Loreto and La Pietà – are richly described in van Tour's book. For the first time they emerge as having separate approaches to the teaching of counterpoint and composition.

In the 1960s, not very far from LaRue's New York University, the Juilliard school employed two great teachers of violin: Joseph Fuchs and Ivan Galamian. To violin insiders, the phrase 'a Fuchs student' or 'a Galamian student' meant certain details of training and technique. Students of these teachers occasionally adopted a partisan attitude, exaggerating the friendly rivalry of the two conservatory colleagues. Something similar seems to have developed in eighteenth-century Naples around two of the greatest masters: Francesco Durante and Leonardo Leo. Their students, and students of their students, began describing themselves proudly as *Durantisti* or *Leisti*. A number of documents attest to the currency of these terms well into the nineteenth century, although by then it seems that few writers were willing or able to commit to print what the essential differences had been.

Van Tour attacks this notoriously difficult historical riddle on a number of fronts. With the help of his extensive database he established a canon of the authentic partimenti of Durante and Leo, eliminating a host of incorrect attributions. With newly discovered manuscripts of student lessons in counterpoint he shows how Durante (and his followers) taught counterpoint above a partimento, with a free use of intervals of the dominant seventh chord and with a galant melodic style. The school of Leo, by contrast, was more conservative and taught the techniques of invertible or 'double' counterpoint from an early stage. Such counterpoint, of course, is a prerequisite for fugal writing, where a countersubject should be able to appear above or below the subject without violating contrapuntal norms. Having established the 'facts on the ground', and having identified Sant'Onofrio and Santa Maria Di Loreto as the Durantist conservatories, and La Pietà as the Leist one, van Tour then re-examined the documentary evidence about *Durantisti* and *Leisti*. In the process he both uncovered more and better sources from the early nineteenth century and found new instances of such descriptions in the eighteenth. Van Tour's achievement is remarkable both for the breadth of sources brought to bear on the problem and for the powers of synthesis needed to see how they all fit together. In the end it seems that quite technical differences in contrapuntal training were later interpreted, often by outsiders, as a quarrel between modernists (Durante) and traditionalists (Leo). This in spite of the fact that as a composer Durante confined himself to sacred music while Leo had a successful fling writing 'fashion-forward' operas.

The high standards of beautiful vocal lines that characterized the instructional materials of Leo and those of his most important successor, Nicola Sala, were the pride of La Pietà. Van Tour, an experienced counterpoint teacher himself, points out how the realization of Leist partimenti requires vigilance for the many places



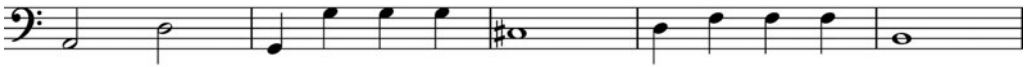
Example 1 Fenaroli's bass motion no. 6 from his *moti del basso*, as copied out by his student Biagio Muscogiuri in 1781 (I-Fc B.505). Taken from van Tour, Figure 37 (164)



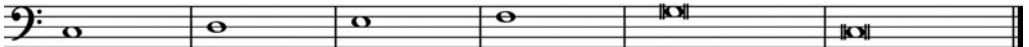
8



16



21



Example 2 Fenaroli's bass no. 1 from his twelve *bassi* or basses over which to write counterpoints ('Studio di Contropunto', I-Nc 22-2-6/2, page 2). Taken from van Tour's Figure 38 (165)

where new entries of a subject are implied and must be retrieved from the student's memory. In some of Sala's partimento manuscripts such spots are marked by little signs. As one might expect, partimento fugues have an important place in the Leist tradition.

The Durantist tradition, as mentioned, involved writing counterpoints above a partimento bass, and the partimenti that they used contain the matching phrases and sequential patterns of contemporary eighteenth-century concert music. The Durante student Fedele Fenaroli, for instance, was a close contemporary of Haydn, and the Fenaroli student Nicolò Zingarelli was born just four years before Mozart. To see what this meant for a student, let us examine an exercise (c1791–1792) in the training of Vincenzo Lavigna at the Durantist conservatory of Santa Maria di Loreto.

Lavigna, fifteen or sixteen years old at the time, came to have a special place in the history of Italian music because some forty years later he would teach the same tradition to none other than the young Giuseppe Verdi. Sanguinetti has previously written about Lavigna's exercises on simple cadences (*The Art of Partimento*, 45–46), but van Tour presents one of the more advanced partimento-based realizations. At fifteen, Lavigna would already have studied solfeggi and those partimenti in the first two collections by Fenaroli. (Fenaroli's partimenti were eventually published in six 'books' in Emmanuele Imbibo's bilingual (Italian/French) edition, *Partimenti Ossia Basso Numerato, Opera Completa Di Fedele Fenaroli* (Paris: Carli, 1812). This organization into books appears to have been in place already by the 1770s; see van Tour, 162–163.) In the third collection, which comprises the second part of Fenaroli's *Regole musicali*, originally published in 1775, he would be introduced to a number of *moti del basso* (bass moves or motions). One of the most recognizable today is the 'down a fourth, up a second' pattern used by Pachelbel in his famous Canon. [Example 1](#) presents Fenaroli's version.

For written counterpoint, as distinguished from the 'vernacular' counterpoint already required to realize simple partimenti at the keyboard, Fenaroli and his followers would often assign one of a dozen standard basses as a type of galant cantus firmus. The connection of the opening of [Example 2](#), one of these standard



The image displays four systems of musical notation, each consisting of a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The notation includes various note values (quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes), rests, and accidentals (sharps and naturals). The systems are labeled with bar numbers 8, 16, and 22, indicating the start of each system. The music shows a complex interplay between the two voices, characteristic of counterpoint exercises.

Example 3 Vincenzo Lavigna's counterpoint (a written 'realization' c.1791–1792, I-Mc Nosedà Th.c.117, f. 9v) to Fenaroli's bass no. 1 (compare Example 2). Taken from van Tour's Figure 8 (68)

basses, to the bass motion in Example 1 should be obvious, though the diminished fourth ( $c^1$  to  $g\sharp$ ; Example 2, bars 1–2) is a chromatic modernization of that centuries-old Romanesca pattern.

To a maestro or one of his better students, the formal design of this *basso* (Example 2) was patent. The 'down a fourth, up a second' theme of bar 1 cadences in bar 8. A quick modulation to the dominant (G major, bars 8–9) leads to a restatement of the eight-bar theme in the new key (bars 10–17). The second 'half' of the form begins with a two-bar pattern in D minor (bars 18–19) answered by a two-bar restatement in C major (bars 20–21). Bar 21 then initiates a four-bar scalar ascent to the final cadence (bars 25–26). Lavigna, probably one of the best students, scrupulously observed this overall design in the counterpoint that he wrote above Fenaroli's *basso* (Example 3).

The many student counterpoints reproduced in van Tour's book invite all manner of connections and comparisons with various harmonic theories, counterpoint treatises and speculations on the development of young composers. To this reviewer, for instance, Lavigna's written realization of Fenaroli's bass suggests how important the knowledge of collocation and schematic patterns was to the process of learning counterpoint in the eighteenth century. Beginners often think that counterpoint involves picking the right intervals. While this is literally true, an expert knows that good counterpoint involves picking the right collocations. That is, an expert thinks beyond single intervals to the motive or countermelody that best supports and enhances a given pattern in the reference voice. For the older forms of the 'down a fourth, up a second' or Romanesca schema, the default collocation was a stepwise descent beginning on the third degree of the scale. Example 4 shows Lavigna's exercise marked in the fashion of my *Music in the Galant Style* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). Lavigna had clearly learned the advanced skills of schema completion and stylistically valid collocation. Fenaroli's bass probed Lavigna's ability to recognize its many 'affordances' (its



The image displays four systems of musical notation for counterpoint exercises. Each system includes a treble and bass staff. Circled numbers (1-7) are placed above or below notes to indicate scale degrees in the local key. The exercises are labeled as follows:

- System 1: ROMANESCA (measures 1-7), CADENZA COMPOSTA (measures 8-15). Includes 'COMMA' brackets.
- System 2: PRINNER (measures 16-21), ROMANESCA (measures 22-29). Includes 'COMMA' brackets.
- System 3: CADENZA COMPOSTA (measures 30-35), minore (measures 36-41), FONTE (measures 42-47), maggiore (measures 48-53). Includes 'COMMA' brackets.
- System 4: SCALA (measures 54-61), CADENZA DOPPIA (measures 62-69).

Example 4 A schematic analysis of Vincenzo Lavigna's counterpoint (compare Example 3). The circled numbers indicate scale degrees in the local key. For each schema Lavigna provided the most probable upper voice

schematic connotations). Every bar or two suggested a stock expression, and Lavigna always hit the mark. Indeed, for the Fonte, Lavigna used the very same melodic pitches first recorded in Joseph Riepel's earlier description of that schema (*Anfangsgründe zur musicalischen Setzkunst*, volume 2 (Leipzig and Frankfurt, 1755), chapter 2, page 46).

Van Tour observes that such student exercises – contemporary counterpoints written above a partimento foundation – help to explain ‘the high level of compositional skill that these students acquired’ (18). The exercises narrow the gap between what we know of the study of solfeggi or improvised partimenti and the professional success that the best students could achieve shortly after graduation. Lavigna's exercise (Example 3), for instance, can be readily mapped onto a passage from one of Jommelli's masterworks, his third setting of Metastasio's *Demofonte* (Stuttgart, 1764). Example 5 shows a passage from the aria ‘La destra



27 ROMANESCA

30 COMMA CADENZA COMPOSTA

Example 5 Jommelli, *Demofonte*, ‘La destra ti chiedo’ (Act 2 Scene 10), bars 27–36; compare Fenaroli’s bass no. 1 (Example 2) and Lavigna’s realization (Example 3)

ti chiedo’ (Act 2 Scene 10), which has been transposed down a whole step for ease of comparison with Fenaroli’s bass (Example 2) and Lavigna’s realization (Example 3). This example shows clearly how such partimenti could approximate the syntax and form of professional composition, even though Jommelli uses more advanced versions of the Fenaroli/Lavigna schemata – a ‘Jommelli’ (that is, a leading-note seventh chord) substitutes for a plain ‘Comma’, and a ‘Cudworth’ cadence, with its scalar cascade, decorates the basic ‘Cadenza Composta’ (‘compound cadence’).

Stephen Shearon, in his 1992 dissertation, was the first to note that some partimenti of Nicola Fago (Fago and his son taught at La Pietà for more than eighty years) are derived from Fago’s mass movements (Shearon, ‘Latin Sacred Music and Nicola Fago: The Career and Sources of an Early Eighteenth-Century Neapolitan *Maestro di Cappella*’ (PhD dissertation, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1992), 619, 709–710, 895–897). Van Tour calls this type of ‘reverse engineered’ partimento a *basso seguente*, and he provides an appendix that lists twenty of them, together with identified full-score originals, all with connections to La Pietà. Two other appendices list (1) all known Neapolitan counterpoint notebooks, treatises and manuals; and (2) an extensive manuscript list of partimenti and solfeggi, intended as complementary aids to the online catalogues.

This is the part of a review where a polite writer notes a few infelicities. In a book this impressive it seems churlish to point out a misprint here or there. In fact the text and especially the musical examples have been very carefully prepared and edited. Perhaps the one item worth a brief mention is a possible misreading of Jesse Rosenberg’s 1995 dissertation on Pietro Raimondi (‘The Experimental Music of Pietro Raimondi’ (PhD dissertation, New York University, 1995)). Raimondi, a master of counterpoint, got into a feud with Vincenzo Bellini, the composer of *Norma*. Bellini’s champion in print, Francesco Florimo, characterized Raimondi as a turgid *Leist* in comparison to an elegant *Duranist* like Bellini. As van Tour notes (29), Rosenberg failed to find substantive distinctions between these camps in the 1840s, a time when Naples had only a single conservatory; by contrast, van Tour goes on to show that there *was* a real distinction in the previous century, and discovers that some of Rosenberg’s sources were quoting and redacting earlier sources. Yet the situation in the *primo ottocento* still seems rather confused and confusing.

Van Tour’s close inspections of many manuscripts by student contrapuntists whet our appetites to study these manuscripts ourselves. Think of the broad interest in Handel’s partimenti written for Princess Anne, where only Handel’s basses are preserved. Or consider the many studies of Mozart’s lessons for Thomas Attwood, where the order of the preserved manuscript pages can only be conjectured. These new Neapolitan



sources, by contrast, show the order of lessons, in some cases the exact dates of each lesson, the students' work in completing the exercises and how counterpoint lessons fitted into the larger training of young musicians. Instead of being one-off special cases, as with the just-mentioned Handel and Mozart lessons, these Naples manuscripts were part of an almost industrial scheme for training generations of performers and composers, many of whom were very famous in their day. An interesting feature that recurs in several of these preserved collections is the repeated but varied realization of an exercise. That is, the student received a partimento from the master and then realized its entire bass in two, three or up to seven different versions. The skills of counterpoint and variation were closely connected in the pedagogy, as one might expect in an *ars combinatoria*.

The sources of formal instruction in free composition are few, perhaps because the products of that instruction are often indistinguishable from actual compositions. Nevertheless, van Tour has been able (201–203) to piece together the timeline of the young Carlo Lenzi as he moved from exercises in basic counterpoint (1755) to completed three- and four-voice fugues (1756), textless motets (1757) and mass movements (1758–1759). In Naples, students in the programme for chapel masters needed to have sacred compositions performed publicly in order to complete their programme of study, so it makes sense that large sacred compositions indicated the end of formal study. The conservatories in Naples were, after all, institutions of the church.

In what might be termed the 'first globalization' (informally so-called by my colleague at Northwestern University, Drew Davies), the Neapolitan conservatories refined and expanded the methods of apprenticeship to a point where their graduates dominated European music for several generations. Their musical practices were spread to far-flung colonies and commercial outposts. Charles Burney, hoping to implement a plan for a conservatory in London, went to Naples to see how it was done. The young Mozart went there to size up his future competition and meet the titans of opera. The most assiduous in adopting Neapolitan methods were the French. The aristocrat Alexandre Choron promoted the Leist tradition as a model for contrapuntal instruction at the nascent Paris Conservatory, featuring Sala partimenti and a Leo fugue in his publications (*Principes d'accompagnement des écoles d'Italie* (Paris: Imbault, 1804); *Principes de composition des écoles d'Italie* (Paris: Le Duc, 1808)). The competing tradition also made sustained inroads in Paris through important Durantists like Piccinni (protégé of Marie Antoinette) and Paisiello (Napoleon's chapel master). In translation, partimenti became *basses données* ('given basses'), the *moti del basso* became *marches harmoniques* ('harmonic progressions'), *disposizione à 4* became the standard four-voices-in-four-clefs *réalisations*, and the basses meant to test a student's knowledge of contrapuntal affordance and collocation became the *concours d'harmonie* (the unfigured partimenti used in the harmony examinations). As a result, strong echoes of the training methods of eighteenth-century Naples found their way into the lives of young composers as diverse as Halévy, Delibes and Ravel, and of important pedagogues like André Gedalge and Nadia Boulanger. Even a modernist icon like Luciano Berio is quite literally a *Durantista*. When he was just six years old, his grandfather presented him with a copy of Fenaroli's partimenti. So we owe van Tour our sincere thanks for putting this amazing tradition onto a more secure musicological foundation. He has elucidated its origins, cross-currents, styles of instruction and plans of study. As his title suggests, in both the Durantist and Leist traditions we can now see that counterpoint and partimento were intimately linked, much as counterpoint and advanced *Generalbass* were in German-speaking lands. In van Tour's databases he has created public resources that will aid all future studies of these important and immense repertoires.

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