Conclusions

The Paris Conservatoire was founded with the aim of educating French musicians who could compete with those from Italy. This declared aim presented a series of issues about musical training, which instigated debate and led to competing proposed solutions during the period examined (1795–1840). One of these debates was catalysed by a confrontion of quite different Italian and French traditions. From an early age, Neapolitan musicians were trained in a practical method; the combination of *solfeggio,* partimento and counterpoint resulted in the development of skills in singing, improvisation, and composition. In the best cases, this created complete musicians, highly sought after in the European job market at the time. However, the Conservatoire could not ignore its own rich, national tradition of music theory. Most French musicians of the time had received instruction based on this tradition and were rather resistant to change. Other musicians, such as Catel – who had been trained by Neapolitan *maestri* – or others that had come into contact with Neapolitan teaching methods, were supportive of the simple, yet effective approach of partimento teaching. Naples-trained musicians also had an impact on this trend, and some of them – like Piccini and Langlé – were employed in France's first national institution of higher musical instruction. An intense debate about which method to employ at the Conservatoire arose among its founders: this culminated in the choice of Catel's *Traité d'harmonie,* supposedly a compromise between the French Neo-Ramellian legacy and practical Neapolitan methods.

However, as Holtmeier describes, Rameau had already lost "die Deutungshoheit über die eigene Theorie" during his lifetime.[817] Through Rameau's public argument with the *philosophes* the "Verbindung zur praktischen Basse fondamentale" was literally cut.[818] At the same time, this rather abstract understanding of music theory was also associated with the spirit of modernity and academic honors. In contrast, the partimento collections of regole, with almost no text, must have seemed like an outdated and "pre-Enlightenment" invention from a bygone era.[819] For this reason, Imbimbo decided to make some additions to Fenaroli's original text, such as an introduction containing elements of scholarly theory, and the inclusion of references to the *basse fondamentale.* This gives us an idea of how partimenti were perceived in France. Theoretical explanations and definitions always preceded practical application. This is evident not only in Imbimbo's edition, but also in all *traités* examined. At the same

817 Holtmeier (2017a), 104.
818 ibid.
819 Holtmeier (2017a), 110.

time, Imbimbo positioned himself as a mediator between the two traditions during the of assimilation of Neapolitan partimento in France.

Manuscripts containing partimenti are usually dense with musical examples and lacking in text. By contrast, the teaching materials examined all contain a theoretical introduction on chord formation and often include detailed descriptions of *marches,* cadences, etc. Partimento practice introduced in the land of reason needed to be adapted in order to be accepted and understood.

Choron had warned that learning *accompagnement* through principles of harmony would not deliver good results, as the practical Neapolitan approach has been proven to be more effective. The method used to teach *accompagnement* is a key factor in the reception of partimenti in France. As seen, *accompagnement* was relegated to accompaniment and often taught starting with theoretical principles of harmony. The use of written-out realizations also had an impact on the efficacy of practical lessons, because partimento was – by contrast – almost entirely practice-based.

Berton was aware of the division between *théoriciens* and *practiciens*, and his own training under the *neo-ramiste* Rey and the Neapolitan Sacchini deeply influenced his vision. Through his works, Berton attempted to reach a middle ground combining the two approaches and simplifying the contents for his students. This scientific approach, together with the circulation of printed texts, became an essential part of the French method of teaching music theory. Lessons on theoretical subjects were slowly separated from practical instruction, a transformation that influences music teaching to this day.

Another reason for the difficulties encountered in Conservatoire training was the separation between *solfège* and singing lessons. Choron's testimony has given us an insight into the Conservatoire's situation and was therefore helpful in understanding this aspect.

Cherubini tried to improve the situation by increasing the practical aspect of harmony teaching. After his nomination as Director in 1822, he intensified lessons in *solfège* for singers, reopened the *pensionnat,* and reunited the classes of *harmonie* and *accompagnement pratique*.

An essential part of this research has been the teaching materials or books written by professors teaching *harmonie* or *accompagnement* used at the Conservatoire between 1795 and 1840. Its results are laid out in Chapter 2. Official guidelines for teaching harmony were given in Catel's *Traité,* the official *méthode* of the Conservatoire. It combines elements of French theories and practical examples, sometimes with short text explanations, leaving space for the teacher's clarifications. The French edition of Fenaroli's partimenti was most certainly used during *accompagnement* lessons.

Perne is one of the most important examples of the French response to partimento. In his *Cours élémentaire* he included his own edition of Fenaroli's partimenti, adding to partimenti some *chants donnés* to help students practise accompanying a melody. Perne taught *harmonie* – where written realizations were the main tool used to prepare

for composition studies – and *accompagnement,* where impromptu realizations of a *basse continue* served as accompaniment.

Dourlen stated that he intended to base his *Traité d'harmonie* on the *écoles d'Italie*, though his book is structured in a similar way to other French works, and includes several passages with "French" theoretical instructions. Nevertheless, he still uses a different approach: harmony is introduced through counterpoint. On the other hand, his *Traité d'accompagnement* gives less space to theory and more to exercises. It has been demonstrated that his weak point was the use of given realizations, and inviting his students to practise these without finding solutions for themselves; consequently, they could not effectively learn how to accompany a *basse*.

Another author crucial to the reception of partimento at the Conservatoire is Colet. Although at the beginning of his career he did not fully embrace Neapolitan methods, in 1846 he published his own textbook *Partimenti, ou traité spécial de l'accompagnement pratique au piano.* He encouraged a double realization – written and played – to help students develop both accompaniment and compositional skills.

The last author examined is Bienaimé, author of a monumental *École de l'harmonie* that containied an extended list of topics. His book was published in 1863, the year of the premiere of Hector Berlioz's *Les Troyens* and almost two generations after Fenaroli's death; thus, emerging in the middle of the Romantic era, it contains elements of the new expanded Romantic harmonic language. He also published a collection of exercises for practising *accompagnement*, inspired by Fenaroli's *basses.*

In Chapter 3, the courses in *harmonie* and *accompagnement* at the Conservatoire were reconstructed. Contents of the *harmonie* curriculum followed Catel's *Traité* and, in addition to this, students had to realize basses (and later *chants)* in three- and/or four-voice settings. Different types of chords were introduced in their inversions quite early in the curriculum, as were elements of diminution and imitation. Suspensions follow, together with some examples of their inversions and the progressions in which they are typically used.

Accompagnement was mostly taught through figured basses. Unfigured partimenti were not typically used in France, perhaps not principally on account of their complexity (which may, of course, have also played a role!) but because this represented a totally different approach. During lessons in *accompagnement,* harmonic terminology was introduced, but in less detail. Chords were taught in their inversions and positions of the right hand, and progressions and the rule of the octave were also an important part of this training. Thanks to these reconstructions, it has been possible to compare teaching methods in Naples and Paris, with the main difference in approach arising from the traditions of both schools. Harmony was taught in Paris through chord formation and chord inversion theories while, in Naples, chords were strictly related to scale degrees in a system governed by the rule of the octave. However, despite its central position in Rameau's music theory, and the generally positive attitude of Choron and Fétis, the rule of the octave was never really accepted in France: this denied it the status of a system from which both the theory of harmonic progression

and chord morphology could take as their starting point. The rule of the octave remained a *gamme* after all, it did not become a *schemata*.

Perhaps it was the *moti del basso* that had the greatest impact on the French reception of partimento. By consistently using chords in inversion and subjecting them to the *ars combinatoria*, there was a sense in which the *marches d'harmonie* formed a tradition in their own right. Their origins could always be traced back to their Italian roots, though they became autonomous and thoroughly French. In Naples, the *moti* were linked to the application of *dissonanze,* which derived from counterpoint and therefore always remained tied to a traditional notion of dissonance. The French "vertical" approach to realization brought a new complexity and a new sonority to the "horizontal" Neapolitan method. This might have caused French students to learn more slowly, and could explain the different results in students' performance between the two schools in a certain historical period.

The teaching of accompaniment and improvisational skills was also very different in the two traditions. While Neapolitan musicians were able to improvise fugues and realize partimenti at a high level, French accompanists seem to have restricted themselves to a mainly chordal realisation. This limitation was due to the different goals of the two courses: partimento courses were part of composers' training, and were a practical application of counterpoint and harmony.

On the other hand, the purpose of *accompagnement* courses was to learn how to accompany a soloist; so the accompanist should not distract the listener with too many embellishments. Consequently, lessons in *accompagnement* were focused on teaching basic elements and did not generally provide students with enough information to develop improvisational skills. In addition, the use of ready-realized basses to teach accompaniment has been shown to be rather ineffective, and many students were not able to accompany *solfège* lessons. The use of *solfeggi* with realized accompaniments is one consequence of this practice.

The fourth chapter brought together the *regole* found in the French sources examined. Starting from the classification of intervals, consonances, and dissonances and going through the *moti del basso,* it was possible to highlight the differences in these areas that are found in French sources. The Ramellian – and, in particular, the Neo-Ramellian – influence is evident, especially in the both the terminology used and the approach to the *regole* through chord inversions. As stated, the rule of the octave, so central to Neapolitan teaching, is presented here as an option – albeit a central one – for scale accompaniment, and does not govern the entire harmonic system as it did in Neapolitan methods. Some French authors did give more space to the *règle de l'octave,* most likely by following the instructions given in Fenaroli's book, but it was rarely presented as an essential rule. The decline of French *basse continue* in favor of written accompaniment parts, and the scarcity of exercises with unfigured basses, might be related to the marginal role that was given to the rule of the octave in music education.

The teaching of harmony was impacted upon by the expansion of tonal harmony that began in the 19th century. In French sources it is common to find variations to the *moti* that introduce modulations into remote key areas. This feature was not included in partimento *regole*, since they followed the standard tonal paths of the 17th and 18th century.[820]

Finally, it was possible to reconstruct some instructions given in Paris for the realization of partimenti. Diminution and imitation were included in harmony lessons and applied to exercises, though instructions were often limited to the use of passing and neighbor notes and few other elements. An interesting point is the concept of the *beste Lage*. Although few sources offer guidelines on this principle, it might have been an instruction given during lessons, especially when the *marches* were taught in their best position. French realizations show the results of the different approaches of the two schools: chordal realizations were often used, and diminutions or interesting melodic lines were rarely applied. Some assignments realized by winners of the *concours* show a deeper understanding of counterpoint; nevertheless, these realizations are not partimenti but written harmony assignments, relegated to the role of *accompagnement*.

When the first national public institution of higher musical instruction in France was founded, the ideal of the Neapolitan *Maestri* influenced the choice of both teachers and didactical materials. Over the years, the librarians at the Conservatoire worked to build a collection that held an extensive selection of Italian and Neapolitan music.[821] The acquisition of the Selvaggi collection, and the trips taken by Kreutzer and Isouard to collect copies of Neapolitan scores and pedagogical material, are evidence of the efforts made to enrich the library of the Conservatoire with music and methods of the *école d'Italie*.

Partimenti and *solfeggi* were the foundation of French music education – even in those instances where they are not explicitly evident – and they became part of the training for all musicians. The process assimilating the pedagogy of the *écoles d'Italie* was inevitably influenced by French theories, which resulted in the application of calculations and inversions to the rules. In this process, the rules that made the Italian style recognizable and valued were modified, and this inevitably changed the musical results. Some changes occurred during this assimilation process, such as the use of French continuo figures or the separation between *solfège* and *harmonie pratique*: *Solfège* became a singing exercise and *accompagnement* a mere accompaniment for singers. The consequences of this separation were significant, since the Conservatoire would become a model for other European Conservatories.[822]

820 Partimenti evolved in the Romantic era in Italy and France, yet it appears that the Conservatoire did not own coeval sources of Neapolitan partimenti. For examples of this evolution, see Stella (2009) and Diergarten (2011b).

821 See Giovani (2021).

822 Sanguinetti (2012b), 504 and Daolmi (2005).

The second half of the 19th century saw the beginning of a new era for partimento in France. Many authors started promoting these exercises, deepening their knowledge of this tradition. Partimenti were still taught at the Conservatoire, but at a higher level and with a clearly French appearance, thanks to the works of Henri Reber, François Bazin, Paul Vidal, and others.[823] This new tradition continued and was exported outside France: the famous teachings of Nadia Boulanger are an example of this heritage.[824]

Partimento teaching is still current at the Paris Conservatoire and was assumed to have been an ongoing process since its foundation. This study attempts to reconstruct the first part of this assimilation process, demonstrating how the path to today's teaching of piano improvisation was not smooth, but rather a "long and winding road". Ideally, the founders of the Conservatoire wanted to recreate the Conservatori in Paris. They did not initially realize how partimento would inevitably conflict with their musical theoretical heritage and mindset. A new method started to develop from this clash and contributed to the creation of a unique French tradition of music teaching.

During the development of the French school, the Neapolitan school began to decline. The four Conservatori were progressively closed and were ultimately consolidated into a single institution. The French Conservatoire embarked on its success story, which continues to this day, and preserved the spirit of the Neapolitan school, assimilating it into a new identity.[825]

Here ends the journey of partimento from Naples to Paris. During this journey there have been some lost and rediscovered traditions. The almost-lost art of Neapolitan partimento was preserved by the myth surrounding its composers and the newly created French National Conservatoire. Visitors to the French capital can glimpse this merging of musical traditions by taking a walk to the Opéra Garnier.

On the façade of the Opéra there are thirty-five busts of composers (boxed names in fig. 6.1 and 6.2) by sculptors Charles Gumery and Louis-Félix Chabaud. Of these composers, eight are German, fourteen French, and fourteen Italian. If we take a closer look at those names, we can recognise nine descendants of the Bolognese school of Padre Martini (fig. 6.1.). Of the remaining composers, thirteen are representative of or connected with the Neapolitan school (fig. 6.2.). Nine were trained at a Neapolitan

823 Reber (1862), Bazin (1875). See Remeš (2021) for partimenti in France in the late Romantic era.
824 See Schubert (2017) for a testimony of her teaching.
825 See Sanguinetti (2005) and Cafiero (2016).

Conservatorio, and four studied with Neapolitan *maestri*: Haydn, who wrote that he learnt the "real art of composition" from Nicola Porpora; Verdi, who studied with Lavigna; Berton, a pupil of Sacchini; and Nicolò Isouard, who studied with Sala. Although a large statue of Rameau was placed in the main vestibule of the theatre, the legacy of the *écoles d'Italie* was still recognised in 1860 when the Opéra was planned, and carved in stone for posterity.

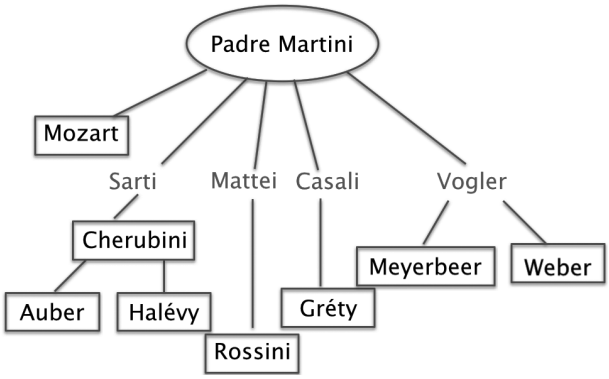

Figure 6.1.

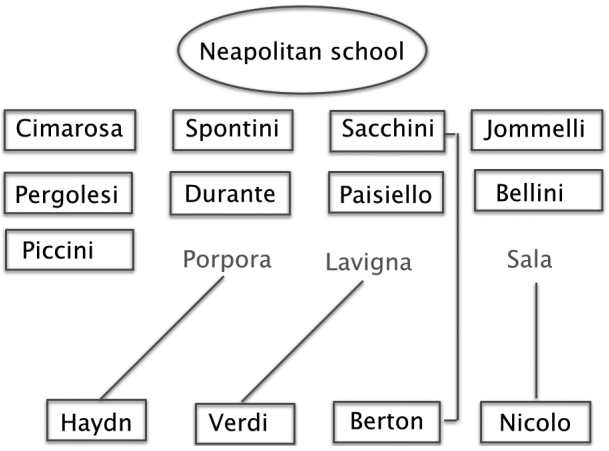

Figure 6.2.[826]

826 The statue representing Isouard is named "Nicolo".