

Chapter 5

French realizations of Partimenti

This chapter is dedicated to the realization of partimenti in France. This starts with a short introduction on how to realize a partimento, followed by a section devoted to imitations and diminutions, and the *beste Lage*. Finally, some examples of French realizations will be presented.

Realizing a partimento, according to Neapolitan *Maestri*, starts with playing *con le semplici consonanze*, then adding the *dissonanze*, followed by imitations and diminutions.⁷⁴⁴ Texture is another element to be taken into consideration when realizing partimenti, and the number of voices may vary within the same piece. Melodic passages might be integrated with chords in cadences, or the number of voices may vary to create different textures.

In his preface to the French edition of Fenaroli's partimenti, Imbimbo provides his French audience with a few of his own technical instructions for the realization of partimenti:

1. The preparation of each dissonance should have a duration that is equal to – or longer than – the sounding dissonance.

I. Per esattezza di comporre si richiede che la legatura si debba far sempre, o tra due note di equal valore, o tra la nota grande e la picciola, e che giammai la nota picciola debba legar la grande per la ragione che il corpo minore non può attirare a se il maggiore, quantunque vi siano esempj di ottimi maestri in contrario, specialmente nel basso de' recitativi correnti.⁷⁴⁵

2. A piece must end on the downbeat.

II. Che un componimento qualunque debba terminare sempre al primo tempo della misura, e non mai al terzo tempo, e tanto meno al quarto, per evitare la disparità de' piedi musicali, che renderebbe il ritmo vizioso; sebbene si trovino ancora esempj in contrario.⁷⁴⁶

3. An adequate distance between voices needs to be maintained to achieve a good *cantabile* melody in each voice.

744 See Sanguineti (2007).

745 Fenaroli (1813/14), 45.

746 Fenaroli (1813/14), 45.

III. L’armonia successiva essendo determinata dal canto, ossia da più melodie combinate insieme; perchè l’effetto ne sia migliore, si dispongano le parti in maniera che conservino fra esse le giuste distanze secondo la natura delle voci.⁷⁴⁷

4. Unfigured partimenti are an exercise in learning how to find the appropriate chord for each bass movement.

IV. I *Partimenti* senza numeri sono stati così fatti dall’autore per esercitar lo scolare a ricercare da se gli accordi che il basso in tutti i suoi movimenti richiede.⁷⁴⁸

5. Sometimes there will be one accidental less in the key signature, as in the “ancient style.”

V. Alcuni bassi de’ *Partimenti* si trovano talvolta con un diesis, e talvolta con un bemolle di meno alla chiave, di quello che richiederebbe il modo, impiegandosi accidentalmente i mancanti. Ciò si è fatto per avvezzare lo scolare alla maniera antica.⁷⁴⁹

6. Some melodic notes may differ from the tones of the supporting harmony. These result from diminutions, and must be preceded, or followed, by consonances.

VI. S’incontrano ne’ movimenti delle parti alcune note di passaggio, o alla sfuggita che prendono il nome di note false o cattive, di note cambiate, e di acciacature, le quali appartengono tutte alla melodia, senza guasto dell’armonia. Tali note però debbono sempre essere precedute o seguite dalle note buone, ossiano consonanti.⁷⁵⁰

These would seem to be words of advice addressed to beginners, especially numbers 1–3 and 6, which carry standard instructions. It is interesting to note how Imbimbo needs to clarify why his edition contains unfigured partimenti, demonstrating – once again – that French accompanists were not used to this practice. To help his reader, he adds footnotes to unfigured partimenti, referring to the chapter where the rules relating to those passages are explained.

In the appendix to the *Principes d’accompagnement*, there is a section edited by Fiocchi entitled “des progressions de la basse et du chant”, which supplements the previous chapters on accompaniment rules. This chapter, presented as an introduction to counterpoint, contains several melodic patterns that are written in invertible counterpoint applied to bass motions. Figure 5.1. shows an example of the ascending scale accompanied by the 8–7–6 pattern.

747 Fenaroli (1813/14), 46.

748 Fenaroli (1813/14), 46.

749 Fenaroli (1813/14), 46.

750 Fenaroli (1813/14), 46.



Figure 5.1. Choron-Fiocchi [1804], 166. <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k1175562q/f204.item>

The two outer voices in figure 5.1. are invertible, and the middle staff contains a chordal accompaniment of the scale. The connection between partimento and counterpoint was an essential topic in Neapolitan Conservatori and was taught in both written and aural/practical form.⁷⁵¹

As we have seen, these subjects were kept separate at the Conservatoire: partimento was relegated to *accompagnement* classes, or sometimes used as *basses donnés* to be realized in a written *disposizione*. Counterpoint was taught along with fugue on a separate course that could only be accessed once the classes in *harmonie* had been successfully completed. It is therefore interesting to find these elements combined in a French source; however, Fiocchi – who wrote this section – was a student of Fenaroli and had very likely been trained to combine these exercises.⁷⁵²

5.1. Diminuzioni and imitazioni

Diminution and imitation were taught extensively in Italy until the 17th century. Many treatises were dedicated to this topic until it was gradually assimilated into counterpoint teaching.⁷⁵³ This explains why there are only a few elements of these techniques in partimento sources, often as examples for certain passages or *moti*. As seen in the previous chapters, students in Naples learned diminution through the application of counterpoint species to *moti del basso*. This is evident from manuscripts containing exercises, such as those by Lavigna and Muscogiuri which were previously discussed in Chapter 3.

An important source for the study of diminished partimenti is Durante's collection, entitled *Partimenti diminuiti*. Sanguinetti has examined these exercises and identified

751 See Van Tour (2015).

752 Another French source containing an application of counterpoint to harmony is Dourlen [1838], see Chapter 2.

753 See Sanguinetti (2012a), 183–190 and Sanguinetti (2013).

some aspects of diminution that apply to partimenti. These are a) greater rhythmic activity in the right hand when compared to the harmonic rhythm, b) the use of a polyphonic melody (a melody, typically containing two voices, written monodically), c) the use of the left hand to fill in the realization when the right hand is busy with more virtuoso passages, and d) the use of complementary rhythms, which maintain a rhythmic flow that is balanced throughout the piece by alternating, faster notes between both hands.⁷⁵⁴

Another example of partimento sources that contain diminutions is found in Sala. This consists of only four examples showing how to diminish the accompaniment in the right or left hand using eighth or sixteenth notes.⁷⁵⁵ These four examples were certainly not sufficient to teach students how to fully use passing or neighbor notes, *cambiata*, *sfuggita*, and other elements of diminution. These techniques were mainly taught through counterpoint in Naples, together with imitation techniques, such as exact imitation, rhythmic imitation, or inversions.

Partimenti can often present opportunities to introduce imitations. When these are not written out, they might be indicated by figures or the word *imitazione* (or *imit.*), or simply implied by a change of rhythm in the bass line.⁷⁵⁶

One example of the teaching of diminution and imitation in Fenaroli's school is shown in Lavigna's *Studi di contrappunto* manuscripts.⁷⁵⁷ The exercises in these manuscripts are often applications of diminution (in different levels, using different note values, from slower to faster) to *moti del basso*.⁷⁵⁸

Imbimbo also discusses diminution in his edition of Fenaroli's partimenti. As mentioned above, he explains how the diminution of the bass line creates a series of notes that are not included in the chord. These notes are called *false* or *cattive* (fake or bad notes), as opposed to consonant tones that are called *buone* (good).

Choron and Fiocchi dedicate a section to diminution in the *Principes d'accompagnement*. Interestingly, they refer to the works of Padre Martini and Zarlino for introducing passing tones.⁷⁵⁹

When discussing diminution, they quote Gasparini and offer examples of possible diminutions for cadences and other bass movements (fig. 5.2.).⁷⁶⁰ Together with examples of diminutions of the melody, there is an instruction given on how to play the partimento: when the right hand is playing an ornamented melody, the left hand should fill in the harmony.

754 Sanguinetti (2012a), 185–190.

755 See Sala (2017), 4.

756 See Sanguinetti (2012a), 191–205.

757 I-Mc Noseda Th.c.II7/a–g. See Chapter 3.

758 The manuscript has been examined in Sanguinetti (2013).

759 Choron-Fiocchi [1804], 98–99. Martini (1774), 25. Zarlino (1558), 195–199.

760 Choron-Fiocchi [1804], 99–101. Gasparini (1722), 69.



Figure 5.2. Choron-Fiocchi [1804], 99. <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k1175562q/f137.item>

Following this, there is a section dedicated to the diminution of the bass, with an indication to “fill in the harmony”, this time with the right hand, when the left hand is active with diminutions.⁷⁶¹ Figure 5.3. shows three different versions of the same bass line: the first with slow values and the other two with two different levels of diminutions.



Figure 5.3. Choron-Fiocchi [1804], 101. <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k1175562q/f139.item>

In treatises by teachers at the Conservatoire, it was common to find diminutions introduced together with imitations. Examples of selected bass movements are given with diminutions and imitations by Berton, Catel, and Dourlen. Figure 5.4. shows an example from Dourlen’s *Traité d’harmonie* showing imitations and diminutions of two progressions: descending second-rising fourth (mm. 1–7) and falling fifth-rising fourth (mm. 8–11).

⁷⁶¹ Choron-Fiocchi [1804], 100.



Figure 5.4. Dourlen [1838], 11. <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k96229899/f21.item.texteImage>

Diminutions are achieved through common contrapuntal tools such as passing tones, neighbor notes, *cambiata*, appoggiatura, anticipation, and so on. Compared to the written examples of Neapolitan teaching, French sources seem not to apply the same systematic approach to the study of diminution. For example, in Lavigna's manuscript each *moto* is diminished in different ways, with increasing speed in the surface rhythm. On the other hand, French *traités* do not usually show more than one or two chosen diminished examples for each *marche*.

Fétis explains the principles of a good realization through the concept of *élégance de disposition*:

Ce que j'appelle *Élégance de disposition* consiste à faire chanter, autant que possible, l'Accompagnement de la main droite, en imitant les traits de la Basse, lorsque l'occasion s'en présente, ou en adoptant quelque forme principale qu'on conserve jusqu'à la fin de l'exercice.⁷⁶²

According to Fétis, the imitation of elements found in the bass line is necessary in order to increase the melodic quality and the *cantabilità* of the voices played by the right hand.

In his *Traité d'accompagnement*, Dourlen suggests realizing a bass diminished by passing notes through parallel thirds, creating imitation (fig. 5.5.).

Quand la basse est figurée au moyen des notes de passage il est plus élégant de l'accompagner de la manière suivante.⁷⁶³

762 Fétis (1824), 44.

763 Dourlen [1840], 11.



Figure 5.5. Dourlen [1840], 11. <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k9627250k/f23.item.texteImage>

As discussed earlier, Dourlen's *Traité d'accompagnement* contains several Neapolitan partimenti. He uses some passages of a partimento by Sala to provide students with examples of realization with imitation.⁷⁶⁴

Figure 5.6. Dourlen [1840], 49. <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k9627250k/f61.item.texteImage>

The first line is the realization of mm. 8–11, in which the right hand imitates the motif of the bass in mm. 1–3. The second line shows mm. 57–64 with exact imitation in the right hand, creating a dialogue between the bass and the upper voice. In both examples, the left and the right hands fill in the chords when the other hand is playing the imitations.⁷⁶⁵

Il faut faire les accords de la main gauche quand on a une imitation à faire de la main droite; ce cas là arrive souvent en accompagnant la partition.⁷⁶⁶

⁷⁶⁴ It is the partimento in C major, number 26 in the 2017 edition edited by Peter van Tour. Sala (2017), 32–33.

⁷⁶⁵ These and other examples from Dourlen's *Traité* are also treated in Verwaerde (2015), 339–342.

⁷⁶⁶ Dourlen [1840], 49.

Colet introduces imitation together with the creation of a *sujet* on a given bass. He demonstrates how it is possible to compose a subject by combining invertible counterpoint – with imitations and diminutions – with a partimento;⁷⁶⁷ however, this chapter requires a good understanding of counterpoint in order to be effective. A student beginner would not be able to realize a partimento simply by reading Colet's observations and examples.

Colet calls the accompaniment distributed between left and right hand *accompagnement divisé*.⁷⁶⁸ Like other authors, he introduces diminutions and imitations together with the *moti del basso*. Figure 5.7. shows Colet's diminution options for the *Romanesca* using *accords brisés*, passing tones – and neighbor notes – sometimes chromatically altered.

Variations de l'exemple précédent.

Figure 5.7. Colet (1846), 205. <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k96391808/f215.item.texteImage>

After showing some options for diminution, Colet writes that these principles are “à peine connus en France”, yet they are necessary for good accompanist training.⁷⁶⁹

One of Colet's first suggestions for a realization is to be aware of the tonality of the bass in each section and apply the chords given by figures. A sound knowledge of how to use cadences, with and without *dissonanze*, is also required.

Pour bien réaliser un *Partimento*, il faut d'abord reconnaître le véritable ton dans lequel on est, et appliquer à chaque note l'accord indiqué dans les gammes sur lesquelles l'élève s'est déjà exercé. Il est aussi très important de connaître à fond les *Cadences* avec les consonances et les dissonances [...].⁷⁷⁰

767 Colet (1846), 77–83.

768 Colet (1846), 140.

769 Colet (1846), 145.

770 Colet (1846), 165.

On peut réaliser les Basses que nous venons de donner de plusieurs manières soit en *plaquant* les accords, soit en les brisant. L'Harmonie peut être tantôt à deux, à trois, à quatre et à plusieurs autres parties.⁷⁷¹

Colet also adds some realizations by Imbimbo – transcribed by the *Seguito de' partimenti* – as examples of realization with imitations:

L'élève peut plaquer simplement les accords, ou bien introduire des *imitations*, comme je viens de le faire dans les leçons précédentes écrites à quatre parties, mais il n'est pas toujours nécessaire de réaliser une harmonie à quatre parties pour le Piano; elle peut être plus ou moins nombreuse. Voici du reste comment E. Imbimbo réalise quelques *Partimenti* de Fénaroli.⁷⁷²

Among the sources examined for this study, the most complete treatment of imitations and diminutions can be found in Bienaimé's *École de l'harmonie moderne*, in which the author dedicates two separate chapters to diminution and imitation.⁷⁷³

Chapter thirteen of Bienaimé's *École* is dedicated exclusively to *notes de passage*. These include both passing tones and neighbor notes; in general, any nonchordal tone that moves by diatonic or chromatic step. Accented and non-accented variants are explained and examples with up to four consecutive passing tones are given. Figure 5.8. shows accented dissonant passing tones proceeding chromatically upwards and downwards.



Figure 5.8. Bienaimé (1863), 91. <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k9621825q/f95.item.texteImage>

These ornamental notes can also be accompanied by thirds or sixths, either in parallel or by contrary motion (fig. 5.9).

771 Colet (1846), 200.

772 Colet (1846), 244–245. The examples are from Imbimbo [1814], 27–28; 30.

773 Bienaimé (1863), 90.



Figure 5.9. Bienaimé (1863), 92. <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k9621825q/f96.item.texteImage>

Passing and neighbor notes can be further diminished by breaking the parallel thirds/sixths or chords into smaller rhythmic values and forming a polyphonic melody (fig. 5.10.).



Figure 5.10. Bienaimé (1863), 93. <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k9621825q/f97.item.texteImage>

Incomplete neighbor notes (in counterpoint commonly called *échappées*) are also discussed and called *note de passage par élision*:

La note réelle sur laquelle chaque note de passage devrait revenir est suprimée (il y a élision de cette note).⁷⁷⁴



Figure 5.11. <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k9621825q/f98.item.texteImage>

774 Bienaimé (1863), 94.

In the following example, Bienaimé shows the passing notes suppressed by elision in figure 5.11.:



Figure 5.12. Bienaimé (1863), 94. <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k9621825q/f98.item.texteImage>

Imitation is treated in Chapter 14 of Bienaimé's book.

L'imitation appartient plus particulièrement au contre-point et à la fugue qu'à l'harmonie, cependant nous croyons nécessaire d'en donner ici quelques notions, car dans l'harmonie écrite pour les voix, on anticipe souvent sur le domaine du contre-point: c'est-à-dire qu'on entre dans l'art de faire marcher, d'agencer les voix.⁷⁷⁵

A short introduction underlines the importance of introducing this feature during the study of harmony, and Bienaimé offers these basic instructions on the use of imitation:

1. An imitation can occur transposed on any interval above and below its model.
2. It should not occur too late in the composition, but at an adequate distance from the model: a maximum of four bars later.
3. Imitations work best in progressions.

Bienaimé provides examples of imitations on each interval. The following example shows an imitation on the fourth above, realized on a falling third-ascending second progression.



Figure 5.13. Bienaimé (1863), 97. <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k9621825q/f101.item>

775 Bienaimé (1863), 95.

Imitations can be *régulières* when they are an exact transposition of the model, and *irrégulières* when tonal mutations are applied. *Imitations régulières* are also called *imitations canoniques*.⁷⁷⁶ Another type of imitation is the *imitation libre, de rythme ou de quantité*. This imitation is achieved by repeating the same rhythmic pattern of the model without necessarily imitating the melodic contour. The same rhythmic values can, as a matter of fact, also be used with melodies in contrary motion.



Figure 5.14. Bienaimé (1863), 101. <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k9621825q/f105.item.texteImage>

As has been seen, the teaching of imitation and diminution in Paris was strictly related to the teaching of harmony, especially the *marches d'harmonie*. With the exception of Dourlen, who introduces species counterpoint at the very beginning of his *Traité d'harmonie*, other professors at the Conservatoire limit instruction on these topics to examples in their books, with little or no explanation. Only Bienaimé dedicates two detailed chapters to these subjects, combining elements of counterpoint with harmony. All of these approaches remain some way removed from the systematic Neapolitan teaching of counterpoint, as applied to partimento *regole*.⁷⁷⁷ Although some references to the Neapolitan school are present in the French sources examined – such as Sala's partimenti in Dourlen – the application of these techniques is generally limited to the *moti del basso*.

5.2. The *beste Lage*

The concept of *beste Lage* (best position or register in English) was introduced by Ludwig Holtmeier and derives its name from a term used by Förster in his examples for the *Anleitung des Generalbasses*.⁷⁷⁸ It is a procedure for creating an “ideal” set of outer voices, one that displays a fine balance between tension and release. Consequently, the two outer voices should work as an independent two-voice composition,

776 Bienaimé (1863), 100.

777 For further information on the teaching of counterpoint in Naples, see Van Tour (2015).

778 Förster (1818), vol. 1, 1.

while the internal voices fill in the harmony, functioning as accompaniment.⁷⁷⁹ Although there are few written instructions for this principle, Holtmeier identified the best position of the dominant seventh chord in all its inversions: these either place the seventh of the chord or the leading tone in the upper voice. These two notes are both *dissonances appellatives*, which create tension in both melodic and harmonic dimensions. Therefore, root position and the first inversion will have the seventh in the upper voice, while the remaining two inversions (4/3 and 4/2) will have the leading tone in the upper voice. Consequently, two of these positions present the tritone between the two outer voices (in the 6/5 and the 4/2 chords).

In the Neapolitan school, this principle was strictly related only to the positions of the right hand. In some cases, the bass figures given with the partimento represented the voicing indicated by the composer. These types of figures might be recognizable when, for example, a smaller number is placed above a bigger. We can find some examples of this practice in Fenaroli or in Paisiello's *Regole*.⁷⁸⁰

Two French sources from the eighteenth century refer to a principle similar to the *beste Lage*:⁷⁸¹ Michel Corrette's *Le Maître de clavecin* and the *Traité théorique et pratique de l'accompagnement* by Claude de La Porte, which underlines the importance of the two outer voices in the *accompagnement*:⁷⁸²

Les parties les plus intéressantes dans l'accompagnement et qui s'entendent le mieux sont, la partie de la basse, et la partie la plus haute de l'accord; on les nomme Parties Supérieures.⁷⁸³

In the pages that follow, La Porte shows several examples of *marches* in different positions, the first of which often places the dissonance in the upper voice. Further examples include the *règle de l'octave* combined with other bass motions in all tonalities.⁷⁸⁴

Corrette indicates a best position for each key (among the most commonly used tonalities), both for playing the *règle de l'octave* and for his exercises.

The first position is indicated for C major, C-sharp major, D major, E-flat major (as second choice), B major, B-flat major, C minor, and B minor.

The second position is suggested for G major, A-flat major, A major, G minor, and A minor.

779 Holtmeier (2013) explains the principle on the basis of a *trio sonata*. For the definition, see Holtmeier (2013), 272 and Holtmeier (2017a), 138–141.

780 Paisiello (2008), 12–13.

781 These sources have already been studied by Verwaerde: therefore, mention is only made here of some central points in her research that are relevant to this work. For further details see Verwaerde (2015), 206–217.

782 Corrette (1753) and La Porte (1753).

783 La Porte (1753), 35.

784 Some tonalities, like D-flat major are omitted, yet represented by their enharmonic correspondent. La Porte (1753), 36–49.

The third position is recommended for E-flat major (first choice), E major, F major, F-sharp major, D minor, E minor, F minor, and F-sharp minor.⁷⁸⁵

These two sources are mentioned here on account of their importance in indicating a chosen position in music composition and/or *accompagnement*. This gives us an idea of what kind of instruction an accompanist might have received in 18th century France.⁷⁸⁶ Although it is rare to find such written instructions among the teaching material used at the Conservatoire, they nonetheless serve to illustrate the most relevant guidelines for the positioning of notes to be found in the sources examined.

An indication as to the best position to play certain chords can be seen in Choron and Fiocchi's *Principes d'accompagnement*:

Nous donnons chaque exemple sous toutes les positions; mais il faut remarquer que toutes ne sont pas également bonnes. La meilleure est, pour les accords consonants, celle où les parties supérieures sont en consonances imparfaite, et pour les accords dissonants, celle où ces mêmes parties sont formées par les dissonances.

According to this suggestion, consonant chords should hold an imperfect consonance between the outer voices, while in dissonant chords those voices should form the dissonance.

In Deldevez' collection of partimenti, an instruction appears indicating a *position chantante ou choisie*. This is one of the chosen positions for the realization of partimenti that gives priority to voice leading, rather than maintaining one of the three standard positions throughout the exercise. In his realizations of partimenti, he first shows three versions of the same partimento (one in each of the three positions), although he later provides only one example, either in one chosen position or in a mixed position.⁷⁸⁷

On the same matter, Perne gives instructions on how to interchange the three positions to create a *meilleur effet* with the accompaniment; a change of position, in order to return to the original range or to reach a better one, is called *reprise de position*.

Il est donc très important que l'accompagnateur sache choisir entre les trois positions, celle qui amène le plus de variété et le moins de monotonie. Il faut aussi qu'il considère que ce n'est pas la quantité de notes qu'on peut employer qui donne le plus d'harmonie, et que très souvent il vaut mieux retrancher une et même deux notes d'un accord, que d'employer toutes celles qu'il donne.⁷⁸⁸

785 Verwaerde (2015), 215.

786 Verwaerde mentions other sources containing a few indications on positions, like Biferi and Dubugrarre. See Verwaerde (2015), 206 et seq.

787 Deldevez [1868], 56 and following pages. See also chapter 4 and Cafiero (2019), 74.

788 Perne [1822], 432.

According to Perne, along with a position that brings variety to the accompaniment, another important element of good realization is the texture, or how many and which notes of the chord should be played. For example, he suggests that the fifth in a seventh chord can be omitted; he also advises that it is preferable to double the sixth in a sixth chord, but in a 6/4 chord it is not possible to omit any note, in order to “cover” the fourth.

As previously mentioned, Perne gives several examples of realized basses. Together with these examples, he writes annotations explaining why he chose to change the position in certain passages.⁷⁸⁹ These instructions listed here are Perne’s guidelines to partimento realization:

1. It is preferable to start the accompaniment in first position.
2. On a repeated note, the first and second position can be exchanged.
3. In a change of mode, the second position is preferred, since the third in the upper voice (the leading tone) enhances this change.
4. Cadences that confirm a modulation usually end in first position (with a *clausula tenorizans* in the upper voice).
5. A new tonic in a transitory modulation can be reached in second position (and later confirmed by a cadence in first position).
6. A good position in a sequence (harmonized with 5/3 chords) is with the second position (imperfect consonance) on the downbeat and the third or first position (perfect consonances) on the upbeat.
7. In a 6/4 chord, it is preferable to have the fourth or the sixth in the upper voice.

All these indications describe basic principles of composition and counterpoint:

- A piece should usually begin and end with the tonic between the outer voices (n. 1, 4, 5);
- Static and/or repeated notes should be avoided in the melody (n. 2, 7);
- During a modulation, imperfect cadences are often followed by perfect cadences that confirm and establish the new tonality (n. 5);
- Positioning the leading tone in the upper voice highlights a modulation (n. 3, *beste Lage*);
- In sequences, it is best to create a symmetric pattern in the upper voice to imitate, or mirror the bass line (n. 6).

Some insight into symmetry in the *marches* can be gained from Bienaimé’s chapter dedicated to progressions, which includes an interesting indication of how to realize these progressions.⁷⁹⁰ According to Bienaimé, the upper voice must imitate the movement of the bass in order to create a symmetry that will satisfy the ear.

⁷⁸⁹ Perne [1822], 407–408.

⁷⁹⁰ Bienaimé (1863), 60 et seq.

Lorsqu'une basse est en progression, toutes les parties de l'harmonie sont soumises à une symétrie analogue à celle de la basse, et elles doivent dans leur ensemble, suivre le même mouvement que cette dernière: c'est-à-dire que, si la progression est ascendante, le mouvement général des parties doit être descendant; et descendant, si la basse est en progression descendante.⁷⁹¹

In the following example, we can see that the ascending fourth-descending third pattern is imitated through a canon at the octave in the upper voice. Bienaimé also appears to apply Perne's sixth principle regarding alternating imperfect and perfect consonances. Unlike Perne, however, in other examples he uses perfect consonances on the downbeat.⁷⁹²

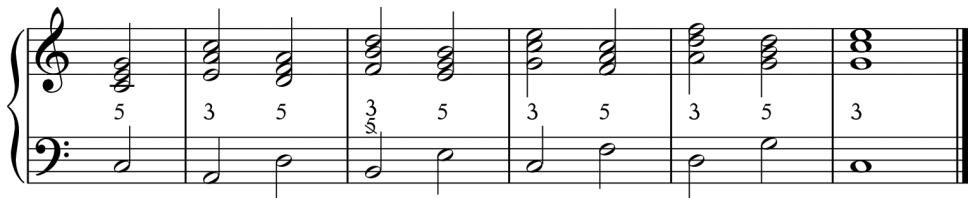


Figure 5.15. Bienaimé (1863), 62.

Symmetry can also be achieved by using other progressions in the upper voice, like an ascending scale (which here is applied to the same bass movement of the previous example).



Figure 5.16. Bienaimé (1863), 63.

Another source of interest for deducing principles of the *beste Lage* in *moti del basso* is Le Borne's manuscript, which contains harmony exercises he wrote under Dourlen's supervision, while attending Berton's course.⁷⁹³

Analysis of his realizations of exercises containing *moti del basso* show that some melodic patterns recur on certain bass motions. We can therefore assume that he was

791 Bienaimé (1863), 61.

792 See e.g. the falling fifths-rising fourths on page 62 of Bienaimé's *École*.

793 See Chapter 3.

instructed to position the upper voice according to certain principles. As previously mentioned, many examples in Le Borne's manuscript are copied from Catel's *Traité*; nevertheless, not every melodic pattern he uses is contained in Catel's book. However, a number of them are included in Dourlen's *Traité d'harmonie*, so he might have received these suggestions from his *répétiteur*. Berton's *Traité* also contains similar examples but, as mentioned, his approach is different from the one followed by Le Borne, which conforms to the Conservatoire's official *méthode*.⁷⁹⁴

We now move on to some examples from Le Borne's manuscript that contain these patterns. These are mainly focused on sequences accompanied by consonant chords, in order to highlight the melodic patterns. In fact, when dissonances are introduced, they are primarily positioned in the upper voice – as typically found in partimento sources. Patterns that are commonly found in other sources will be omitted: these include the *faux-bourdon*, which typically has parallel sixths between the outer voices; the ascending 5–6 scale, where the *rétard consonante* is usually in the upper voice; and the descending syncopated scale, where the fourth of the 4/2 chord is usually placed in the higher voice.⁷⁹⁵

The first exercise in Le Borne's manuscript begins with an ascending fifth-descending fourth progression (fig. 5.17. mm 1–4) and continues with a descending third-ascending fourth (mm. 5–10). The numbers above the staff represent the intervals between the bass and the upper voice.

Figure 5.17. Le Borne (1813), 2, mm.1–10.

The two upper voices could be exchanged, but Le Borne does not apply this variation to his realizations. As mentioned in Chapter 3, Le Borne omits the third in the second chord to preserve melodic motion and prepare the octave to avoid forbidden parallels. The melodic pattern for an ascending, fifth-descending fourth (accompanied *con le consonanze*) results in a 5–8 succession.

On the other hand, the descending third-ascending fourth sequence applies the so-called PIP principle (a sequence of perfect and imperfect consonances between the

794 See Chapter 2 and 3.

795 These typical positions are also mentioned in Chapters 3 and 4.

bass and the upper voice).⁷⁹⁶ The upper voice contains a canon at the octave that brings coherence and symmetry to the passage.

The second exercise (fig. 5.18) contains descending thirds in the bass line that are again accompanied by a canon at the octave in the upper voice. This results in parallel thirds between the outer voices.

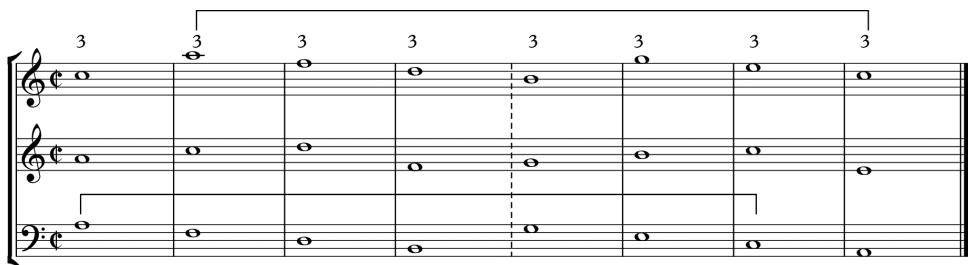


Figure 5.18. *Le Borne* (1813), 3, mm. 10–17.

The next example contains two *moti* that were often considered at the Conservatoire to be two versions of the same thing: the falling third-rising second and falling fifth-rising fourth. As can be seen, the first was considered to be the inversion of the second. In this exercise (fig. 5.19), one of the two patterns is used in the upper voice when the bass contains the other motion. The resulting consonances between bass and soprano are consecutive 5–3. On the *basso che sale di quarta e scende di quinta*, both upper voices show the same motion, but are so-placed in order to form contrary motion between them.

796 On the PIP principle see, among others, Jans (2007), 129 et seq.

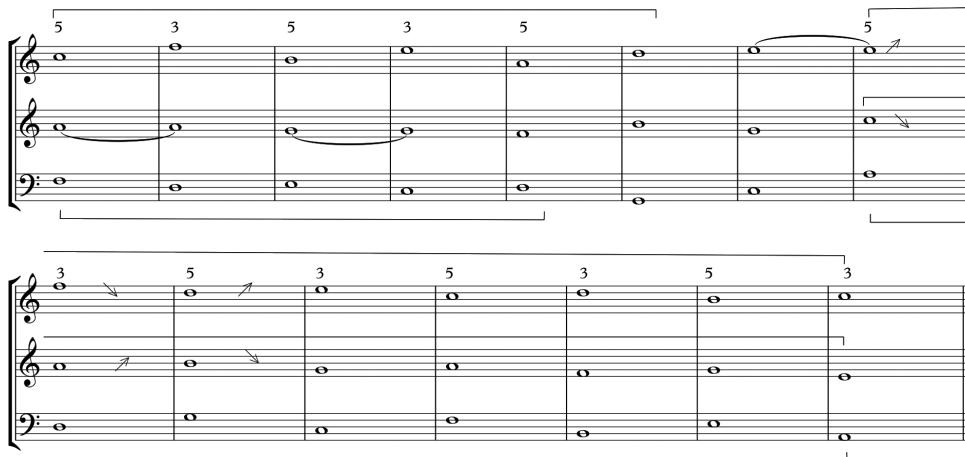


Figure 5.19. *Le Borne* (1813), 4 n.3, mm. 10–24.

Another version of the falling thirds-rising second progression uses the same sequence in the upper voice, in a sort of canon at the fourth that begins a half note later (fig. 5.20). The middle voice has the falling fifths-rising fourths sequence in contrary motion with the bass.

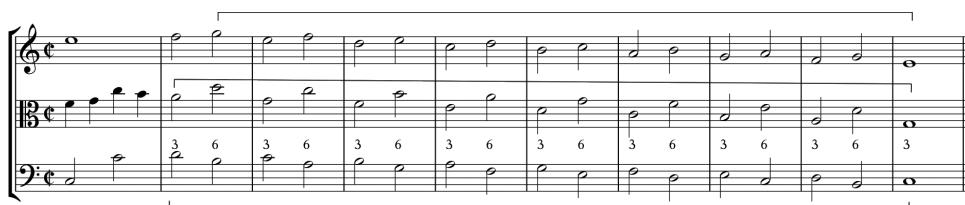


Figure 5.20. *Le Borne* (1813), 42, n.5.

From this overview, it is clear that the choice of certain melodic patterns was not entirely left up to the composer. Some general rules, most of them transmitted aurally, were applied to certain *moti del basso*. In Naples, these combinations were often assimilated by students during *solfeggio* lessons, where the combination of bass motions with melodic patterns created a sort of catalogue or musical vocabulary to be used during the *ars combinatoria* of composition.

Summarizing the information gathered from the sources examined above, the following principles of voice positioning stand out:

1. Dissonances are best positioned in the higher voice;
2. In the higher voice, *dissonances appellatives* are more effective;
3. Alternation of perfect and imperfect consonances creates a good effect;

4. Symmetry confers balance, and therefore elegance, to a piece. This can be achieved using sequential patterns in the upper voice and/or canons.

In the next section, it will be seen how these principles were employed in French realizations of Neapolitan partimenti.

5.3. French realizations

A realized partimento was not a succession of chords but a rich and perfectly shaped composition with its texture, themes, generic conventions, motivic play, and so on.⁷⁹⁷

In Neapolitan realizations, chords are mainly used in cadences, while the body of the partimento is usually accompanied by a single-voice melody (that could sometimes be polyphonic). As previously said, the tendency at the Conservatoire was to use partimenti as exercises in *accompagnement*, and realizations would therefore prioritize the use of chords, leaving the melodic function to a soloist. French musicians were aware of the difference in playing style, and sometimes criticized their neighbors' different approach:

Rien n'est si désagréable que ces traits de chant, ces roulades, ces broderies, que plusieurs accompagnateurs substituent à l'accompagnement. Ils couvrent la voix, gâtent l'harmonie, embrouillent le sujet; & souvent ce n'est que par ignorance qu'ils font les habiles mal à-propos, pour ne savoir pas trouver l'harmonie propre à un passage. Le véritable accompagnateur va toujours au bien de la chose, & accompagne simplement. Ce n'est pas que dans de certains vides [...] on ne puisse au défaut des instruments placer quelque joli trait de chant : mais il faut que ce soit bien-à-propos, & toujours dans le caractère du sujet.⁷⁹⁸

This difference in approach between the Italian and the French seems to be a misconception. Rousseau's criticism is based on the assumption that partimento and *accompagnement* are the same practice. Clearly, they do have a common basis, but they serve different purposes: partimenti were improvisational exercises that could become whole, autonomous pieces, while *accompagnement* was the art of accompanying a soloist. Naturally, by learning partimento, one could also learn accompaniment; how-

797 Sanguinetti (2012a), 206.

798 Rousseau (1751), 77 also quoted in Verwaerde (2015), 36–37.

ever, partimento takes *basso continuo* exercises to a higher level,⁷⁹⁹ where counterpoint is introduced, and compositional skills are refined.⁸⁰⁰

Choron distinguishes the figures of *accompagnateur* and *claveniste*. The *claveniste* is a performer, therefore creative through improvisation. He suggests that a good accompanist should also be a good performer, but his aim should be to highlight the singer by playing simple chords and reserve his creativity for the *intermezzi*.

Celui qui veut mériter le titre de bon accompagnateur doit pour ainsi dire oublier qu'il est claveciniste; il doit mettre toute son attention, non à briller lui-même, mais à seconder et faire valoir le chanteur. Il touchera donc avec simplicité la basse, telle qu'elle est écrite, sans se permettre d'y faire aucun ornement ni diminution et tant que le chant récitera, il se contentera de remplir l'harmonie, de la main droite, par des accords pleins, ainsi que nous l'avons enseigné dans le cours de cet ouvrage.⁸⁰¹

Despite this suggestion, there are many instances when realized partimenti of the *Principes d'accompagnement* contain elaborated melodies and are often written in a setting for two (or more) voices; some of these are realized as vocal pieces. Therefore, Fiocchi demonstrated how a realization might go beyond the mere accompaniment skills that were stated aims of the book.

Fétis also emphasised the difference between French *accompagnement* and partimento, highlighting the chordal approach of French (and German) musicians in contrast to the contrapuntal approach of the Italians.

Ces grands musiciens écrivirent pour leurs élèves beaucoup de basses chiffrées auxquelles on donna le nom de *partimenti*: au lieu d'y faire plaquer des accords suivant l'usage des Français et des Allemands, ces maîtres exigeaient que l'accompagnateur fit chanter de manière élégante toutes les parties de l'accompagnement. Sous ce rapport, les Italiens conservèrent longtemps une incontestable supériorité dans l'art d'accompagner.⁸⁰²

Three different versions of two Fenaroli partimenti will now be considered, with Demeyere's critical edition being used as reference for the original source of each.⁸⁰³

The first is the partimento in G major, the first of the *partimenti progressivi*.⁸⁰⁴ This partimento is based on the rule of the octave and composed to allow students to

⁷⁹⁹ Holtmeier has stated that Rameau took the *Accompagnement* "für den Gipfelpunkt der Kompositionslehre", in which all disciplines are brought together. (Holtmeier 2017a, 67 et seq.). The comments here, however, refer only to the teaching course *Accompagnement* taught at the Conservatoire.

⁸⁰⁰ Examples of 18th century Neapolitan realizations can be found in, among others, Sanguinetti (2012a), 226–231 and Paraschivescu (2009). See also Van Tour (2017).

⁸⁰¹ Choron-Fiocchi [1804],102–103.

⁸⁰² Fétis, (1840), 53.

⁸⁰³ Fenaroli (2021b). Other French sources not examined for this research contain realizations. Among these are Fétis (1824) and Lemoine (1835). Further examples are in Verwaerde (2015).

⁸⁰⁴ Gj1301.

practise this rule in the first key of the *durus* hexachord. All three cadences (*semplice*, *composta*, and *doppia*) are also included in the bass. In fact, the bass line contains parts of the ascending and descending *regola dell'ottava*, interrupted by cadences. A modulation to the secondary key (D major) starts in bar 5 and is confirmed by a *cadenza composta* (with a cadential 6/4 chord) in bars 9–10. The piece then retransitions to G major, where the complete scale appears (mm. 12–13). The partimento ends with a *cadenza doppia*. Every time there is a second degree in the partimento, it is figured as 6. This does not necessarily indicate a 6/3 chord, since the fourth of the 6/4/3 chord was considered an embellishment and could have easily been added by the player.⁸⁰⁵

This partimento is realized in three different French sources: Deldevez' edition of Fenaroli's book, Perne's *Cours élémentaire* and Choron-Fiocchi's *Principes d'accompagnement*.

Deldevez uses chordal realizations in his book and in this partimento. The figures correspond to Fenaroli's, except for the fourth degree in bar 1, which here does not use the 6/5 chord (the *grande sixte*). Every time a second degree occurs in the scale, Deldevez applies the *beste Lage*, positioning the leading tone in the upper voice (see brackets in fig. 5.21). The same happens on the descending fourth degree and during modulations (as seen in the *beste Lage* principles identified in French sources). In the *cadenza composta* in bar 9, he also positions the *rétard* of the fourth in the upper voice, treating it as a prepared dissonance. The upper voice of the *cadenza doppia* has the *clausola tenorizans* preceded by a third degree, a typical pattern of this type of cadence.⁸⁰⁶

Deldevez usually chooses one position for his realizations, based on the presence of dissonances or leading tones.⁸⁰⁷ In this partimento he frequently changes position to allow parallel imperfect consonances between the outer voices (boxes in fig. 5.21). Therefore, when parallel sixth chords occur, Deldevez follows the typical position of the *faux-bourdon*, with parallel sixths between the outer voices in a three-voice texture. When a 6/5 chord follows a sixth chord, he also positions the sixth in the upper voice. As mentioned, the fifth in a dominant-seventh chord might not be prepared, but the fifth of the 6/5 on the fourth degree should be. In m. 13, the lack of preparation can be tolerated on account of the G from the previous bar, where one voice is missing. One could assume that the first G is doubled and preparing the dissonance. Although Deldevez rigidly applies this position instruction, he does not, unfortunately, adjust the rest of the melody accordingly, creating several leaps that disrupt the overall balance.

805 See Chapter 4.

806 Holtmeier (2017a), 118–119.

807 See e.g. Deldevez [1868], 62 and following pages.

Figure 5.21. Deldevez (1868), 62.

The next example is Perne's realization of Fenaroli's partimento. As said, Perne does not give entire realizations in his *Cours*, but he composes a *chant* for each partimento, instructing students to realize it and then compare their results with the bass line.⁸⁰⁸ In figure 5.22. the *chant* and the partimento have been combined to obtain a two-voice realization.

808 See Chapter 2.



Figure 5.22. Perne [1822], 274–275.

Perne changes some figures, like the sixth chord on the fifth degree in bar 4 or, more interestingly, the passage in bar 13. He adds a transitory modulation in C major, where Fenaroli clearly intended to write the entire rule of the octave in G major. As said, this partimento is specifically composed to practise this rule, and this passage (mm. 12–13) is the only appearance of the full octave. Perne interrupts the flow of the *regola*, transforming the fifth degree into a second of C major. The reason for this choice is not clear, since Perne did teach the *règle de l'octave*, and his book contains an entire edition of Fenaroli's partimenti. It might have been an attempt at variety through a key change, which is something that Perne did earlier in other sections of his book.⁸⁰⁹

Just as Deldevez did, Perne prioritizes imperfect consonances in the upper voice in certain passages (see boxes in figure 5.22), particularly parallel sixths in *faux-bourdon* passages. Elements of the *beste Lage* (in brackets) appear on the second degree and, in bar 6, the outer voices contain the *dissonances appellatives*. The fourth in bar 9 is here treated as a consonance, which is briefly exchanged for the F-sharp (the missing note of the chord) and resolves to the leading tone. Perne also uses some diminutions: he uses the sixth and the fifth as passing tones – especially when 6/5 chords appear – so that both main notes of the chord sound (bars 8, 11, 13). This tendency to use polyphonic melodies in certain passages reaches a high point in the *cadenza doppia*, where the diminution contains the most relevant notes of the harmony.

A notable example of Neapolitan realization is Fiocchi's version, contained in the *Principes d'accompagnement*. Fiocchi is known to have studied with Fenaroli and

809 See Chapter 4.

supposedly learned how to realize partimenti from him. The character of his piece is very different from the previous examples in that it is written in a pure keyboard style, with many embellishments. Some of these are written out, where typically a cembalist would play them without the need of an explicit guide in the score. It is obvious that Fiocchi is keen to show his French audience that a partimento is meant to be transformed into an independent piece, unlike an *accompagnement*.

Figure 5.23. Choron-Fiocchi [1804], 104.

In comparing the structure of Fiocchi's melody with those examined earlier, it is interesting to note that Fiocchi uses parallel sixths only on the ascending second degree and the third (bars 2 and 12 in figure 5.23). While the other authors use parallel sixths on other degrees, Fiocchi chooses to adopt parallel thirds on the ascending and descending scales (bars 3, 4, and 13). Through a skillful use of diminutions, these passages become more interesting. He also introduces some elements that are imitated throughout the piece, creating coherence and balance. The opening gesture of this realization should also be highlighted for, while Deldevez and Perne both started with a 1-7-1 movement, Fiocchi introduces the entire descending scale (the "theme" of this

exercise), which contrasts with the ascending motion of the bass in the first bar. The rhythmic variety in the scale also confers melodic dynamism that contrasts with the regular rhythm of the bass line. Some elements of the *beste Lage* are also present, indicated in brackets in figure 5.23. The diminution of the *cadenza doppia* includes the typical descent from the fourth degree to the first. This time the G is not the tonic but the fourth, which then resolves to the leading tone.

The next partimento to be analysed is from Fenaroli's second book, in A minor.⁸¹⁰ This partimento contains several *terminazioni di tono*. After the first two bars in A minor, it modulates to C major. In bar 6, a chromatic alteration introduces D minor. These tonalities are confirmed by a *cadenza composta*. The retransition happens through a *basso che scende di terza e sale di seconda* that ends by tonicizing A minor with a repetition of the first motive.⁸¹¹ The partimento ends with a *cadenza doppia*.

Figure 5.24 shows Colet's *example réalisé*. The partimento is realized in *accompagnement* style, through a succession of chords that maintain a fluid rhythm. When the rhythm in the bass is slower (bar 6), the right hand compensates to preserve the flow. Colet chooses the third position, which he maintains until bar 17, where he switches to first position for the final *cadenza doppia*. In his realizations he tries different positions, including the *position libre*. He adds no explanation as to why he chooses this position, where a first position or a mixed position would have allowed for a more interesting upper voice. Apart from the *doppia* at the end, the only elements of the *beste Lage* are in the position of the diminished fifths between the outer voices (indicated by brackets in the example).

810 This partimento has no Gj number. In Demeyere's edition it is listed as "D" in the second book in Fenaroli (2021b).

811 In Demeyere's edition, the second half of bar 11 is harmonized with the dominant seventh chord of b-minor (therefore the notes are A#-G#-A#-F#). Demeyere has used I-Bsf-M.F._I-8 as his main source. In other sources, these notes are not altered, and the progression continues diatonically. The second version is preferred for two reasons: 1. This progression is usually found in partimento sources in its diatonic form. Alterations would be used in a *Fonte*, but here the A# interrupts the symmetry of the transposition of the model (typically one whole tone lower); 2. All the French sources examined contain the diatonic version.

Colet (1858), 97 and 148. This realization of Fenaroli's partimento has been examined in Verwaerde (2015), 335–338.



Figure 5.24. Colet (1858), 64.

Although his book contains contrapuntal instructions on diminutions and imitations, Colet hardly ever uses them in his realizations. Rare examples are found in a chordal realization of Fenaroli's first G major partimento in the second book, which includes diminutions and a realization of Durante's *partimento diminuito* in D major, using the *modo* given (fig. 5.25).⁸¹²

The next realization is by Perne. As said, the example in figure 5.26 is a combination of Fenaroli's partimento and the melody Perne composed as *chant donné* to be realized at the piano. It is therefore important to keep in mind that an accompaniment to both voices was implied (and indicated by the figures).

Perne uses a short thematic element in the melody every time the repetition of the motive in the bass occurs (indicated by dashed slurs in the example). In bars 8–9 he uses the inversion of this element, creating a *Do-Re-Mi* schema.⁸¹³ When the progression occurs, he uses a motive that is imitated and transposed in the next occurrence (mm. 11–12). He often inserts *dissonances appellatives* (shown by brackets in the example) into the melody, and positions the leading tone in the melody in modulations. At the end of the partimento, Perne realizes the *cadenza doppia* with the descending *clausola tenorizans*, preceded by the third degree of the scale.

812 Colet (1858), 97 and 148. This realization of Fenaroli's partimento has been examined by Verwaerde in Verwaerde (2015), 335–338.

813 Gjerdingen (2007a), 77–88.



Figure 5.25. Colet (1858), 148. <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k96904998/f156.item?r=colet%20partimenti>



Figure 5.26. Perne [1822], 292–293.

Both Perne and Colet respect Fenaroli's bass line and figures.

In the next example, the original partimento has been expanded into a larger composition.

Figure 5.27 shows Fiocchi's realization (and expansion) of the same partimento. In the *Principes de accompagnement* it is attributed to Leo, but this partimento is included in several sources as part of Fenaroli's second book of partimenti.⁸¹⁴ It is interesting to note that in Choron's *Principes de composition*, the same partimento appears in its original, shorter version and is attributed to Fenaroli.⁸¹⁵ Fiocchi's realization is in a contrapuntal *trio* setting, for two violins and continuo like Corelli's *Sonate da Chiesa*; in fact, Corelli might have been Fiocchi's model when realizing this partimento. Although the second voice uses a soprano clef, the two upper voices proceed in a violinistic style, creating a dynamic flow of tensions and releases, imitative dialogues and overlaps, which are common elements in Corelli's compositions. One of these is evident in Fiocchi's chosen position. When he introduces the suspensions of the ninth, he places the two upper voices at the interval of a second, creating the dissonance typically found in this type of writing. One difference in style is the use of the Italian sixth chord in bar 14, which is not typical of Corelli's *trio sonate*, while the French sixth chord is commonly used in the minor *regola dell'ottava*.⁸¹⁶

The modifications made by Fiocchi also include changes in figures, especially introducing the suspension of the ninth on each cadence and in the *basso che scende di terza e sale di seconda* progressions. There is a bar missing between mm. 9 and 10

⁸¹⁴ See the UUPart website for a complete list of these sources.

⁸¹⁵ Choron (1808–9), 6. In bar 11 the last note is an F#.

⁸¹⁶ See Chapter 4 for Fenaroli's description of this chord.

and, as mentioned, Fiocchi inserts an entire middle section of nineteen bars (it is the same length of the entire original partimento, mm. 12–30). This section is composed using the same material as Fenaroli's partimento, but in new tonalities: E minor and G major. Another falling thirds-rising seconds progression leads to the end of this section with a half cadence in bar 30. The two voices continue in imitative style, with a subject that varies when repeated in the answer (see brackets in fig. 5.27), and elements of this theme are used throughout the composition. The two progressions employ two quite static melodic lines, with a leap in one of the voices that confers movement to the part.

This chapter has explored the development of realizations in France, highlighting elements of counterpoint such as imitation and diminution found in the sources used by famous teachers at the Conservatoire; this gives us an idea of the amount of information a student would receive. Although some common tendencies can be applied to the realizations shown, the main differences seem to be between the two schools' approach to partimento and *accompagnement*. As we have seen in the previous chapters, each school had its own history, traditions, and peculiarities that led to different use and interpretation of *basso continuo*.

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Figure 5.27. Choron-Fiocchi [1804], 116.

