Introduction

When reading the works of partimento scholars, it is common to find mentions of its use in France.[1] The fact that partimento was known and used in France is easily demonstrated by the most famous partimento collections curated by Choron and Imbimbo, published in the first half of the nineteenth century. Choron's *Liste de souscripteurs* alone shows just how many musicians and intellectuals of the time were interested in learning more about this practice, or understood themselves to be part of this tradition; indeed, a look at the Paris Conservatoire's current curriculum reveals traces of partimento still alive today in the subject called *harmonisation au clavier.*[2] From this, it would therefore be legitimate to deduce that partimento was used in teaching at the Conservatoire, even in its early years. Nevertheless, at the time of writing, there is no evidence to suggest that either the ways in which partimento was introduced into the curriculum of the newly-founded Conservatoire, or its reception and transformation have been thoroughly investigated. The present study is an attempt to fill this gap in partimento research.

During the eighteenth century, Neapolitan-trained musicians were in demand for their skills throughout Europe and composers, in particular, occupied the most prestigious positions in the world of music.[3] One reason for this was their presence in one of the most vibrant intellectual capitals of the world, where they won fame and admiration in the best theaters in France. It was therefore logical that the Neapolitan Conservatori, the source of so many fine artists, should be taken as models when the first French national conservatory of music was being planned.

Together with the ideal model of the *écoles d'Italie,*[4] their teachers and methods needed to be imported to train French musicians in the same way. At this time, the French musical world was dominated by theoretical writings that adopted a scientific approach in its explorations of tonal harmony. The distinction between *musicien-algebriste*[5] and *musico prattico* is at the core of this encounter between the two *écoles;* nevertheless, in both countries there was a link between music theory and practice. The 17th and 18th century French tradition of *accompagnement* was florid

1 Among others: Cafiero (2020), Christensen (1992), Gjerdingen (2020), Holtmeier (2017), Sanguinetti (2012a).

2 Isabelle Duha, former teacher of this subject at the CNSMDP, collected her lessons in Duha (2000).

3 The names of Cimarosa, Paisiello, Piccini, Porpora, Sacchini and Spontini are only a few examples of Neapolitan-trained musicians who have been invited to work in European courts and/or theaters.

4 The name *écoles d'Italie* has been borrowed from the titles of Choron's works to describe the teaching tradition prevalent in Italy, especially in Naples in the 17th and 18th centuries.

5 Choron defined Rameau with these words. Meidhof (2016a), 217.

and popular, and authors like François Campion, Jean-François Dandrieu, Denis Delair, Saint-Lambert and Dubugrarre produced valuable treatises on *accompagnement* that deserve in-depth study.[6] At the same time, beyond the Alps, a growth in the production of theoretical works was emerging into the Italian musical world; notable examples of this being the works of Francesco Bianchi, Giuseppe Tartini and the so-called *scuola dei rivolti* of Francesco Antonio Calegari, Francesco Antonio Vallotti, Luigi Antonio Sabbatini and Giordano Riccati.[7] These topics certainly warrant further study but, for the purposes of this research, it is necessary to take some important facts into consideration. Firstly, the practice of *accompagnement* in France was starting to decline during the period chosen to focus upon and, in place of the traditional *basse continue,* written-out piano accompaniments started to appear in scores.[8] As will be discussed later, this change in the approach to *accompagnement* was also reflected at the Conservatoire. The second consideration was that partimento teaching in Naples was mainly devoted to children and, consequently, the theoretical content of lessons was simplified to the extreme – to the point of being almost nonexistent.[9]

As Rousseau had mentioned in his *Dictionnaire,* the role of *accompagnement* in French music teaching had lost its direct connection to the teaching of composition:

> Plusieurs conseillent d'apprendre la Composition avant de passer à l'*Accompagnement:* comme si l'*Accompagnement* n'étoit pas la Composition même, à l'invention près, qu'il faut de plus au Compositeur. C'est comme si l'on proposoit de commencer par se faire Orateur pour apprendre à lire. Combien de gens, au contraire, veulent qu'on commence par l'*Accompagnement* à apprendre la Composition? & cet ordre est assurément plus raisonnable & plus naturel.[10]

Paraphrasing Rameau, Rousseau defines accompaniment as composition, in much the same way that the Neapolitan masters considered partimento. At the time of the founding of the conservatory, the role of *accompagnement* was beginning to lose its central place in the teaching of composition.

Nevertheless, accompaniment was still an important subject at the Conservatoire, mostly for practical reasons, as accompanists were needed during classes in *solfège,* singing and other areas of performance training.[11] It was taught separately from *harmonie* until 1823, when Cherubini reunited the two courses.

Accompagnement therefore had a different role to partimento in musical teaching, although the terms were often treated as synonymous – as in the following passage by Fétis:

6 See Zappulla (2000) and Verwaerde (2015).
7 See Riccati-Vallotti (1991), Vidic (2016). On Bianchi see Cafiero (2003).
8 See Chapter 2 and Verwaerde (2015).
9 See Chapters 3 and 4 and Sanguinetti (2012).
10 Rousseau (1768), 8–9.
11 See Chapter 3.

> Au reste, en ne considerant l'harmonie que sous le rapport de l'Accompagnement, je ne fais que suivre la méthode des anciennes Ecoles d'Italie, qui n'y ont jamais vu autre chose, et qui ont formé les meilleurs Accompagnateurs.[12]

This matter will be considered at greater length later in the book.

This study investigates the integration of partimento at the Parisian Conservatoire, from its foundation in 1795 until 1840. After this date, a revival of partimento began in France and many authors included it in their works.[13]

Traces of the partimento tradition are mostly found in sources dealing with *harmonie* and *accompagnement,* specifically those written by Conservatoire professors: these will therefore be this essay's main focus. Clearly, there are other coeval French sources containing elements of partimento, written by authors who were not associated with the Conservatoire. Their works are certainly of great value but, since this field of research is restricted to the reception of partimento in harmony and accompaniment teaching at the Conservatoire, this area of research will be left for future investigation. For the purposes of this study, attention has been focused solely on those sources written by professors of *harmonie* and/or *accompagnement* at the Paris Conservatoire. When relevant, the work of other authors will be mentioned.

State of the Art

The main studies conducted on the teaching of composition and music theory at the Parisian Conservatoire at the beginning of the nineteenth century are by Groth (1983), Peters (1990), and Nicephor (2007). An older work by Wagner (1979) is also available, though its contents are now outdated. Wagner's study investigates music theory treatises from the first half of the nineteenth century in Austria, France, and Germany. In his section on France, he highlights the influence of Rameau on French theorists but does not restrict his focus to teachers at the Conservatoire, including the work of other contemporary authors in his research. The aim of his work is a comparison of *Harmonielehere* in the three countries, and consequently does not focus on French theories. Although Wagner's work is an early attempt to offer an overview of music theory treatises in Austria, Germany and France, it does not provide a complete and detailed insight into the ideas circulating at the time in those countries.

Groth explores the teaching of single subjects included in composition courses: harmony, counterpoint, fugue, melody and form, and orchestration. Her section on *Harmonielehre* mainly focuses on the works of Catel, Reicha, and Fétis, though she also considers the writings of other authors, exploring the subject and comparing their different ideas. In addition to this, she dedicates a short section to *praktische*

12 Fétis (1824), 2.

13 See Remeš (2021) for an overview.

Harmonielehere, linking it to *accompagnement.* Because partimento studies were not common at the time of her writing, she does not acknowledge the connection between these subjects and the Neapolitan methods. Above all, she exclusively takes printed works as her starting point, and the manuscript teaching materials used at the Conservatoire are not taken into consideration at all.

Peters focuses on aspects of harmony teaching in Fétis, Reber, Durand, and Gevaert. Although her work affords valuable insight into the evolution of harmonic theories at the Conservatoire, the authors she examined are excluded from this research: Fétis was professor of *contrepoint et fugue* and never taught harmony at the Conservatoire; Reber, Durand, and Gevaert were active in the second half of the nineteenth century and, therefore, beyond the period under consideration.

Nicephor follows the evolution of the Conservatoire to provide an overview of early nineteenth-century composition teaching. Whilst rich in material, her work lags behind Groth in clarity and structure: she places the subjects taught within the broader context of the institution's organization, drawing profiles of the main harmony, counterpoint, and composition teachers of the time and outlining the contents of their works. As will be described later, *accompagnement* focused mainly on piano accompaniment and was for many years taught separately from *harmonie*; in spite of this, Nicephor chose to follow the Conservatoire's curriculum at the time and does not include *accompagnement* in her research.[14]

By contrast, accompaniment is the topic of Verwaerde's 2015 study. Her groundbreaking work is centered on the practice of *accompagnement* in France during a slightly earlier period (1750–1800) and traces the development from *basse continue* to realized accompaniments in violin sonatas. The time frame examined in her work precedes the period that is being considered, so her research helps to define the state of accompaniment in France at the beginning of the period covered in this book. In her study, Verwaerde also includes sources that contain partimenti, acknowledging the influence of the Neapolitan school on French accompaniment. She cites Geminiani as one of the most influential sources of partimento in France, together with the works of Tomeoni, Choron and, of course, Fenaroli's French edition of partimenti. Verwaerde also includes examples of the French realization of partimenti and her study provides detailed insight into *accompagnement* in France, which is the starting point for this research. This study explores the period immediately following and focuses on the teaching of *accompagnement* at the Conservatoire and the role that partimento played.

Further research about the presence of partimento at the Conservatoire was recently published by Curtice (2021). His work focuses on the period of Cherubini's directorship of the Conservatoire (1822–1841) and how partimenti were used at the time. Cherubini came from the tradition of the *scuola bolognese* of Padre Martini, though he was also a supporter of Neapolitan partimenti. Nevertheless, in France all Italian traditions were frequently defined under the collective heading of *écoles d'Italie.*

14 See Chapter 3.

Curtice's work focuses on Cherubini's *basses chiffrées* and therefore does not explore in depth other French sources.

For some time, the prevailing belief amongst scholars was that French music theory during this period was dominated by the theories of Rameau (Christensen 1992). Since then, Holtmeier (2017a) and others have been able to show that Rameau's theories lived a rather isolated existence for a long time, and then only received a hesitant reception. When reviewing the sources consulted for this research, it became evident how Rameau's theories were being misinterpreted just 50 years after his death.[15] Although it would be interesting to research the reception of Ramellian theory at the Conservatoire in detail, this is beyond the scope of this study. When relevant, certain elements of Ramellian theory will be mentioned, though with reference to the work of scholars who covered similar topics.[16]

Partimento studies have awakened the interest of many esteemed researchers in the past two decades; amongst these, the main studies on this topic will be mentioned.

Research on the Neapolitan school has been championed by Cafiero in her many works, especially her recent volume, published in 2020. Sanguinetti (2012a) is the main reference for any research in this field, providing both historical and technical insights into partimento teaching. Gjerdingen (2007a) contributed to the field by applying schema theory to partimento and galant music. Van Tour (2015) investigated the relation between counterpoint and partimento teaching, providing an important contribution to our understanding of composition teaching at the Neapolitan Conservatori. Also, the works of Holtmeier (2007a and 2013), and Diergarten (2011a and 2011b) are an important contribution to the research in this field.

The recent critical edition of Fenaroli's partimenti by Demeyere (Fenaroli 2021), together with Sanguinetti's online appendix (2012a), are used in this study as reference for partimento *Regole*. Fenaroli's *Regole* has been used as the reference for partimento rules for various reasons: first, Fenaroli's books were well known in France at the time, thanks to Imbimbo's editions; moreover, they were purchased and used by the Conservatoire. Finally, Fenaroli's rules and partimenti are the ones most frequently found in the sources examined.[17]

Cafiero has also researched the various musical exchanges that took place between Naples and Paris (2001a; 2005b; 2007; 2016a) as well as producing studies on Imbimbo (2001b) and Carli (2019). The recent publication by Giovani (2021) brings to light the history of the Conservatoire library's Neapolitan acquisitions.

15 See Holtmeier (2017a).

16 Other works on French music theory and theorists include the studies of Méeus (1999) and Gessele (1994), those on Choron by Simms (1971) and Meidhof (2016a, 2016b, and 2021), and the contributions on Catel by George (1982), Geay (1999), and Meidhof (2017a and 2017b). At the time of writing this dissertation, Masci's article (2022) and book (2023) were not available for consultation.

17 See Chapters 2 and 4.

The history of the Conservatoire has been the object of many studies. Reference will frequently be made to the two volumes published for the 200th anniversary of its foundation and edited by Hondré in 1995, *Le Conservatoire de Paris, regards sur une institution et son histoire,* along with the 1999 publication edited by Anne Bongrain and Alain Poirier, *Le Conservatoire de Paris. Deux cent ans de pédagogie.* In addition, the online *Dictionnaire* by De La Grandville served as a vital reference, as did Gessele's 1992 work on the early years of the Conservatoire.

From this overview, it is possible to identify some gaps in the research that focuses on the French reception of partimento. It is not clear how partimento was taught at the Conservatoire, nor how it coexisted with French music theory. Likewise, doubts remain as to whether partimento played an active role in the teaching of *harmonie* and *accompagnement* and how it might have been used.

In her 2019 article, Cafiero questions how much Fenaroli's tradition could have circulated in the Conservatoire. An attempt will be made to answer this by using archival resources and reconstructing the courses in *harmonie* and *accompagnement* at the Paris Conservatory in its first years; and, from this, discover how – and if – Neapolitan *partimento* and Neapolitan teaching methods were integrated there.

The aim of this study is to answer the following questions as fully as possible:

How did the Conservatoire pursue its ambitious founding goal of establishing a school "qui peut rivaliser avec celles d'Italie?".[18] To what extent was this goal achieved?

What kind of Neapolitan teaching material was used at the Conservatoire and how was it used? Did the *professeurs* follow the "Neapolitan method"? What role did partimento have in French music teaching?

How did the theoretical tradition of French *traités,* with their lengthy arguments, coexist with the practical Italian approach?

What was taught during lessons in *harmonie* and *accompagnement* at the Conservatoire?

How were partimento *regole* taught in Paris? How were partimenti realized in France?

Methodological and terminological considerations

The present study is based on a combination of research in two fields: historical research and theoretical investigation.

Archival research is crucial in uncovering aspects of the organization of the Conservatoire and its curricula, and the works of Pierre (1900) and Sablonnière (1996)

18 Sarrette (1802), 37.

helped navigate archival resources. Moreover, the discovery of unpublished documents helped to fill in the gaps.

It was possible to reconstruct the teaching contents from manuscripts and printed sources: the manuscripts focused on were those of Le Borne, which contain his notes from *harmonie* lessons – mostly under Berton and Dourlen – and Perne's teaching notes.[19] Several printed sources were selected, these being written by professors at the Conservatoire who taught *harmonie* and/or *accompagnement* for a considerable amount of time between 1795 and 1840. These criteria exclude teachers who worked there for short periods and therefore could not have had a relevant influence on an establishment with a long-standing tradition. Sources were studied through the lens of historically informed music theory, meaning that their contents were examined from a partimento-oriented perspective. As mentioned, the main references were Fenaroli's *Regole,* one of the most widely circulated sources in France at the time and, when relevant, other Neapolitan collections of *regole*. Elements have been analyzed according to the Neapolitan system, based on the rule of the octave and scale degrees, as opposed to Rameau's *basse fondamentale* approach:[20] consequently, unless indicated otherwise, the term "degree" is used when referring to the scale degree (Arabic numerals), not the harmonic degree represented by Roman numerals. In the same way, the term *"dissonanza"* (dissonance) is used to indicate both suspensions – as the term is used in the Neapolitan school – and dissonant intervals, making the context clear whenever this term arises. In order to maintain coherence, elements of German *Generalbasslehre* will not be introduced unless strictly necessary. In general, the term partimento is only employed when referring to both the subject taught in Neapolitan conservatories and to describe a single (figured or unfigured) exercise.

One goal of this research was to identify the elements of partimento used in teaching at the early Conservatoire by reconstructing the *harmonie* and *accompagnement* curricula and examining the professors' writings. Additionally, the intention has been to understand if – and how – partimenti were used during their lessons and what changes, if any, were applied to them. The chord theory contained in the examined sources has not been discussed, as this has already been addressed by other scholars and, in any case, is not a typical element of partimento teaching. Reference will be made to the work of these researchers when mentioning chord formation theories and the aspects of French theory that are relevant. French theories are undoubtedly of great value and deserve further study; however, there is insufficient space here to discuss this topic in depth.

The Conservatoire went through several changes during the years under investigation, often due to the tumultuous political upheavals in nineteenth century France. For clarity and consistency, all these institutions will be referred to as "Conservatoire",

19 Respectively F-Pn Ms 8303 and F-Pn Ms 7641 (1–4).
20 Holtmeier (2011a).

although they might have been called something different at the time in question. An overview of the institution's history will be provided in Chapter 1.

Reference will be made to the *scuola napoletana,* or Neapolitan school, following the definition given by Sanguinetti:

> A continuous pedagogical tradition, developed in a specific locale, that made use of particular methods and developed its own corpus of theoretical and practical works.[21]

More specifically, this focuses on musicians trained at Neapolitan Conservatories and their teaching methods developed between the late seventeenth and early nineteenth centuries.[22]

It has been decided not to translate citations from Italian, French, or German and the author trusts that music theorists active in this field of research are familiar with these languages, since the majority of texts draw freely on them. The quotations were also copied from the original without modification, thus leaving any differences from current language usage intact, without marking them with [sic].

Outline of the book

This present study follows the pathway of partimento during the development of a French national institution for higher musical education. The journey from Naples to Paris starts with the founding of the Conservatoire, moving through the teaching material used in Paris, the courses of *harmonie* and *accompagnement*, and their contents, before ending with realizations of partimenti in France.

In Chapter 1, the history of the Conservatoire is explored, along with the ways in which its transformations have influenced music teaching throughout France. We also follow the road from Naples by presenting Neapolitan-trained musicians living and working in Paris and their role in the radically changing musical life in France at the turn of the eighteenth century.

Chapter 2 is dedicated to the analysis of teaching material used at the Conservatoire, including works written by professors working at the establishment before 1840 but which were published later. This material might contain teaching resources used by the professors during their lessons, even if these remained unpublished until several years later.[23]

21 Sanguinetti (2012), 30. See also Cafiero (2007), 137.

22 For a detailed description of the four Neapolitan Conservatori, see Cafiero (2015). See also Sanguinetti (2012), 29–40.

23 This was common at the time. Another example of this practice are the books of Förster (1818 and 1823).

The third chapter attempts to reconstruct the *harmonie* and *accompagnement* courses at the Conservatoire by drawing on manuscript and printed sources; this will include a description of the syllabus that students on those courses followed and give an idea of what they learned.

In Chapter 4, the partimento *regole* that are contained in the French sources studied are brought together and examined in order to provide an overview on how these instructions were taught in Paris.

In the final chapter of this study, French realizations of Neapolitan partimenti will be introduced, together with instructions found in French sources on imitation, diminution, and the so-called *beste Lage*.[24] Some examples of French realizations are also presented.

24 See Chapter 5.