

Chapter 1

Founding the Conservatoire: creating a French national school of music and pursuing the ideal model of the Neapolitan Conservatori

The history of the Paris Conservatoire was as tumultuous and variable as the history of France. In the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, the French people lived alternatively under Monarchies, Republics and Empires; each of these was marked by instability, not only on account of the political situation of the time, but also in the ways this affected the country's public institutions, including the Conservatoire.²⁶

After every regime change, the Conservatoire needed to be remodeled and altered in line with the requirements of the new government. Sometimes only minor changes were made, like the name of the institution, whereas other adaptations had an impact on a deeper organizational level. From evidence in archival documents, it appears that many of the requests from the directors and professors at the Conservatoire were accepted by the authorities in charge, allowing those working at the institution to have a certain degree of freedom.

There is a considerable body of literature recounting the history of the Conservatoire²⁷ and the Neapolitan Conservatori.²⁸ Drawing on this secondary literature and other archival documents, the first chapter focuses on the influence of the Neapolitan school during the creation of the French national school of music. It will expand on the events and people who influenced the growing myth of the *écoles d'Italie* in France before and after the revolution of 1789, demonstrating how the Conservatoire was founded as an imitation of the Neapolitan Conservatories and describing some differences between these institutions in their didactical approach and organizational structure.

1.1. The pre-revolutionary period

Prior to the revolution of 1789, the most important institutions dedicated to music education were *maîtrises* and the singing schools at the Opera. The *maîtrises* were schools for church musicians, where young students would take lessons of *solfège*,

26 For an overview of French history see Popkin (2020) and Crook (2002).

27 See e.g. Bongrain (ed.) and Poirier (ed.) (1999) and Hondré (ed.) (1995c).

28 See e.g. Cafiero (2005b) and (2009a), Sanguinetti (2012a), Gjerdingen (2009) and (2020).

music composition, organ and singing;²⁹ however, after the revolution, these *mâitris* were suppressed along with all religious institutions. These were then reestablished a few decades later in order to provide a musical education for children who could later enter the Conservatoire with a solid foundation.³⁰

In 1672 Jean-Baptiste Lully founded an *École de chant et de déclamation* at the Opera, thus starting a long tradition of secular singing schools. Although the founding principles of these schools were promising, the results eventually achieved were unsatisfactory.³¹ French singers had a reputation for being technically and vocally inferior to their Italian colleagues, who often described their neighbors' vocal performances as *urlo francese*. Castil-Blaze described an episode in which this term was used by the Neapolitan trained composer Tommaso Traetta (1727–1779):³²

Dans la *Sofonisba* de Traetta, cette reine se jette entre son époux et son amant qui veulent aller se battre. – Cruels, leur dit-elle, que faites-vous? Si vous voulez du sang, frappez, voilà mon sein; et comme ils s'obstinent à sortir, elle s'écrie: Où allez-vous? Ah! – Sur cet Ah! l'air est interrompu. Le compositeur voyant qu'il fallait s'éloigner ici de la règle générale, mit au-dessus de la note *sol*, entre deux parenthèses: (*Un urlo francese*). C'était en connaissance de cause, que Traetta nommait *hurlement français* le cri le plus aigu que pût former la voix humaine. Il jugeait d'un seul trait, avec une piquante justesse, la manière des chanteurs français de son époque.³³

A colorful description of this is given in Grimm's *Lettre sur Omphale*, published in 1752. The author describes his surprise when listening to a good singing performance in Paris, having had quite different expectations:

C'était Mademoiselle Fel, qui avec le plus heureux organe du monde, avec une voix toujours égale, toujours franche, brillante et légère, connaissait encore l'art que nous appelons en langage sacré *chanter*, terme honteusement profané en France, & appliqué à une façon de pousser avec effort des sons hors de son gosier, & de les fracasser sur les dents par un mouvement de menton convulsif; c'est ce qu'on appelle chez nous *crier*, & qu'on n'entend jamais sur nos Théâtres, à la vérité, mais tant qu'on veut dans les Marchés publics.³⁴

Italian music and musicians had been highly-regarded in France for over two centuries prior to the founding of the Conservatoire. By the end of the seventeenth century, Arcangelo Corelli's music was circulating in France, and French composers were composing *à l'italienne*. Arguments then developed during the first years of

29 For further information on the *mâitris*, see Dompnier (ed.) (2003), together with Dompnier (ed.) and Duron (ed.) (2020).

30 One famous example is the *Institution royale de musique classique et religieuse* founded by Alexandre Choron in 1817.

31 Lassabathie (1860), 1.

32 Traetta studied under Nicola Porpora and Francesco Durante.

33 Castil-Blaze (1856), 243.

34 Grimm (1752), 5–6.

the eighteenth-century between supporters of Italian music, represented by historian and musicologist abbot François Ragueneau (1660–1722), and advocates of the French style, led by magistrate and musicographer Jean Laurent Le Cerf (1674–1707).³⁵ The ongoing debate became so heated that composers like François Couperin used an Italian pseudonym for their compositions in the Italian style.³⁶

The point when Italian music ultimately triumphed is usually identified as the so-called *querelle des bouffons*, which started in 1752 following the staging of Giovanni Battista Pergolesi's "La Serva Padrona". At the time, the opera scene in Paris was dominated by the French *tragédie lyrique*, represented by the works of Lully (who, ironically, was a naturalized Italian living in France); whilst Italian operas were normally restricted to the performances at the *Comédie Italienne*. The introduction of the Italian *stile buffo*, with short comic interludes, within the temple of the French musical theater generated an animated debate between supporters of French and Italian music.³⁷ As a consequence of the preference for Italian music, Italian musicians moved to Paris in ever greater numbers and, as will be seen, these included exponents of the Neapolitan school.

1.2. From Naples to Paris: traces of the Neapolitan school and Neapolitan-trained musicians in Paris at the turn of the nineteenth century

The so-called *scuola napoletana* was well known in Paris by the end of the eighteenth century,³⁸ with a particular focus on singers on account of the perceived difference in quality between French and Italian performers. Italian instrumentalists were also in high demand, but in this area they distinguished themselves on the same level as their French or German colleagues. Evidence of this admiration for Italian singers can be seen in articles, revues, and references in manuals and books. Consequently, the *écoles d'italie* were held as a model to which French teaching methods should aspire. Many French commentators of the time wrote of their admiration for their Neapolitan colleagues, expressing a desire to reach a similar level of mastery and offering suggestions as to how this might best be achieved.

For instance, in his *Dictionnaire* Jean-Jacques Rousseau mentions Naples in several definitions, including under the description of the word *génie*:

35 See Fubini (1971), 38–51.

36 Rameau contributed to this dispute by criticizing Corelli's use of continuo figures. Rameau (1726), 94–106. See Gessele (1992), 193.

37 For further information on the *querelle* see Cook (2001).

38 On the definition of "scuola napoletana"- "Neapolitan school" see Sanguinetti (2012a), 29–40 and Cafiero (2007), 137.

Veux-tu donc savoir si quelque étincelle de feu dévorant t'anime? Cours, vole à Naples écouter les chef-d'œuvre de Leo, de Durante, de Jommelli, de Pergolèse.³⁹

Similarly, under *harmoniste* he uses Francesco Durante as *exemplum* for the entire world, and identifies Italy as the source of the best musicians:

Durante est le plus grand Harmoniste de l'Italie; c'est-à-dire, du Monde.⁴⁰

Under *composition*, he cites mainly Neapolitan-trained composers – including David Perez, Niccolò Jommelli, Durante and Leonardo Leo⁴¹ – as notable exponents of the art.

More than 40 years later, in the *Dictionnaire historique des musiciens*, Alexandre-Etienne Choron and François-Joseph-Marie Fayolle ascribe perfection in the rules of tonality (particularly their practical aspects) to the Neapolitan school, especially the one represented by Durante:

C'est dans l'école de Naples, et particulièrement dans celle de Durante, qu'elle [la tonalité] a été fixé sous tous les rapports, du moins en ce qui concerne la pratique: car, en ce qui concerne la théorie, elle est encore très imparfaite [...].⁴²

This reference to the advanced levels reached in the practical application of the rules of tonality (as opposed to a more limited display of the theoretical aspects) highlights a theme that recurs in other texts of the time. The tradition of French *traités* reached its peak during the era of the *Encyclopédistes*, around the midpoint of the eighteenth century and, as will be discussed later, Rameau's monumental *Traité d'harmonie* of 1722 cast a “long shadow” over French music teaching.⁴³

The repeated appearance of Durante's name in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century French texts serves not only as evidence of the admiration for Italian music and musicians; it also points to the interest that French musicians cultivated in the methods of the Neapolitan school.⁴⁴ In the Neapolitan school, *théorie* appears to be limited to elementary concepts and practical instructions, in marked contrast to the florid and prominent theoretical disquisitions circulating in France at the time. These different approaches – scientific and theoretical by the French, as opposed to the practical and product-oriented by the Neapolitan – served as a source of criticism on both sides.

39 Rousseau (1768), 230. Also mentioned in Van Tour (2015), 41; Diergarten (2021); and Cafiero (2005b), 15.

40 Rousseau (1768), 243. Also mentioned in Cafiero (2020), 83.

41 Rousseau (1768), 109. Also mentioned in Nicephor (2007), 37.

42 Choron-Fayolle (1810), XXXVIII. Also quoted in Cafiero (2020), 45. As Cafiero mentions, Fétis will later use this definition in his *Biographie universelle*.

43 See Holtmeier (2017a).

44 For an overview of Durante's reception in France see Cafiero (1999).

Although François Fétis admired the work of Fenaroli for its practical value as an example of the school of Durante, he also condemns its lack of theoretical contents:

On ne peut considérer les règles d'accompagnement pratique de Fenaroli (Naples, 1795) comme l'exposé d'une théorie d'harmonie; ce n'est qu'un aperçu pratique de la tradition de l'école de Durante; tradition pure, mais arriérée, et qui ne représentait pas l'état actuel de l'art.⁴⁵

On the other side, Emanuele Imbimbo (1756–1839) supported Neapolitan methods. Whilst his introduction to the French edition of Fenaroli's *partimenti* contains elements of French music theory, he criticizes this abstract approach to music-theory through praise to the ancient masters. These *anciens maîtres de l'art* are the Neapolitan *maestri*, who “senza essere matematici, ne hanno lasciato monumenti eterni di angelica melodia nelle loro armoniche composizioni.”⁴⁶

Despite this mutual criticism, both traditions attempted to emulate one another as a way to improve their standards of music education.⁴⁷ The French, and most other European countries, admired their Italian colleagues' style and ease of composition and sought out the best *Maestri* to learn their idealized musical secrets and skills. Similarly, some *trattati*, written with a more French theoretical approach, were published and circulated in Italy.⁴⁸

During the first years of the nineteenth century, many Neapolitan-trained musicians lived and worked in the *ville lumière*. Thanks to pioneering research by Rosa Cafiero, we can now follow the footsteps of some of these characters.⁴⁹ The first to be mentioned is Imbimbo who, according to Fétis⁵⁰, arrived in Paris in 1808 following his exile after the Neapolitan Revolution of 1799.⁵¹ Giuseppe Sigismondo, his teacher and mentor, describes a young and enthusiastic Imbimbo in his *Apoteosi*:⁵²

Ne' primi anni, che uscii, come suol dirsi dalla scuola grammaticale di quest'arte, e cominciai a scriver qualche oratorio sacro, come ho accennato dapprima, per la casa di Spadetta, ivi mi fu proposto per uno de' cantanti un tal D. Emanuele Imbimbo, che cantava di basso. Volli ascoltarlo, e trovai ch'era un baritono. Non avea gran voce, ma per camera era ottimo, e soprattutto trovai ch'era un giovane bastantemente culto nelle lettere, e versato nella Poesia. Egli dunque cantò bene la sua parte, e mi cominciò a far la sua corte, per non lasciarmi mai più. Indefesso per apprendere il canto, il partimento per accompagnare, il contrapunto per scrivere qualche arietta, e sempre nelle unioni accademiche volea a viva

45 Fétis (1840), 143. Also quoted in Cafiero (2020), 91.

46 Fenaroli (1814), V.

47 For the reception of French methods in Italy see Cafiero (2016), 342.

48 See among others the *Trattato di armonia* by Gaspare Selvaggi and Francesco Bianchi's *Trattato di armonia teorico pratico*. See Carlisi (2021) and Cafiero (2002) and (2003).

49 Cafiero (2016) and (2019).

50 Fétis (1837), 397.

51 Imbimbo appears to have been active in Montpellier after his exile. See Cafiero (2019), 63–64.

52 Sigismondo (2016).

forza cantar de' duetti buffi con me, cosa ch'io faceva malvolentieri, ma non c'era verso: bisognava secondarlo [...].⁵³

Saverio Mattei, a renowned student of Padre Martini, praises Imbimbo's singing skills in a letter written to Paisiello on the 17th of April 1785: "Jeri sera [...] in casa del Consigliere Boragine sentii cantare da Imbimbo l'aria è *un birbante*, e restai incantato."⁵⁴

In Paris, Imbimbo earned his living teaching music. From a collection of letters exchanged in 1820 between Imbimbo, Siméon (the *Ministre de l'Interieur*)⁵⁵ and Pradel (the *Ministre de la Maison du Roi*)⁵⁶ it is possible to reconstruct Imbimbo's application for the post of Professor "soit de chant, soit d'harmonie" at the *École Royale de Musique*.⁵⁷ Imbimbo mentions that his application should have been recommended by Gaspare Spontini (1774–1851), who had recently left Paris for Berlin. Spontini had been supported by Napoleon's first Empire but moved to Berlin after losing its protection following the Bourbon Restoration. However, it is not known whether Imbimbo's relationship with Spontini played a role in the rejection he received. Pradel received a presentation letter written by the *Ministre de l'Interieur* and a letter from Imbimbo himself. The *Ministre* wrote that Imbimbo "désire être admis parmi les professeurs de l'École Royale de Musique pour démontrer l'harmonie sous le rapport de la Basse fondamentale et continue." The mention of the *basse fondamentale*, extensively used by Rameau, was possibly an attempt to convince Pradel that Imbimbo could teach following French traditions. The same letter mentions that he had been living in France for twenty years and had become a French citizen. As we shall see, Imbimbo mentions Rameau's theories in his *preface* to Fenaroli's partimenti, but he does so critically and clearly still favors Neapolitan teaching methods. On receiving Imbimbo's letter, Pradel added a note: "Je crois qu'il suffit [...] de répondre qu'il n'y a pas de place vacante". The response that Imbimbo received on the 30th of May 1820 confirmed that, whilst there were no positions available at the time, they would consider him if any position opened up in the future.

Imbimbo published a collection of scale harmonizations dedicated to his student of *harmonie*, Marie Barbet, entitled *Gamme ou Echelle Musicale avec les Accords ordinaires et les Variantes dans la Marche de ses degrés*,⁵⁸ along with a pamphlet on mutual instruction, which will be discussed later in this chapter. He composed several pieces, including *La lontananza*, "canto alla luna", published by Raffaele Carli and dedicated to Luigi Cherubini.

53 Sigismondo (2016), 52–53. Also quoted in Cafiero (2001b), 193–194.

54 Villarosa (1840), 87. Also quoted in Cafiero (2001b), 193.

55 Joseph Jérôme, comte Siméon (1749–1842).

56 Jules Jean-Baptiste François de Chardebœuf, comte de Pradel (1779–1857).

57 Archives nationales O/3/1804.

58 Imbimbo [1830].

Cafiero⁵⁹ reconstructs Imbimbo's contacts with other Neapolitans in Paris and lists among these Nicola Basti (teacher of Italian language), Francesco Saverio Salfi (librettist and writer),⁶⁰ Gaspare Selvaggi⁶¹ (a music collector and author of a *Trattato di armonia*)⁶² and Raffaele Carli (owner of the *Typographie de la Sirène*, to whom we owe the publication of Fenaroli's books in France).⁶³ In 1807 Carli (1764–1827) began his work as a *marchand de musique, livres italiens et cordes de Naples*.⁶⁴ His printing house became a meeting place for Italian musicians in Paris.⁶⁵

Notable Neapolitan-trained musicians in Paris included the composers Giovanni Paisiello, Niccolò Zingarelli, Antonio Sacchini and the theoretician Francesco Bianchi, who was mentioned earlier. As one of Napoleon's favorite composers, Paisiello was invited to Paris by the French government to work as a composer. He collaborated with Le Sueur for two years before returning to Naples.⁶⁶ Zingarelli was forced to leave Rome for Paris in 1811 after he refused to conduct the *Te Deum* for Napoleon's new-born son, who had been nominated as King of Rome.⁶⁷ He remained in Paris, where he was ordered to compose a *messe solennelle*; he delivered this in 8–10 days, whereupon he received a request for five verses of the *Stabat Mater*. His works were greatly appreciated and in February 1812 he found himself free to return to Rome.⁶⁸ Antonio Sacchini studied composition under Durante at the *Conservatorio di S.M. di Loreto*. He moved to Paris in 1781, where he lived as opera composer and teacher. Having taught two future professors of the Conservatoire, Charles-Simon Catel and Henri-Montan Berton,⁶⁹ he played an important role in the dissemination of Neapolitan *partimento* in France.⁷⁰ Francesco Bianchi, a former student of Pasquale Cafaro, was author of an unpublished *Trattato di armonia teorico pratico*,⁷¹ which contains references to Rameau's theories. In 1775 he attempted to create a school in Paris emulating Neapolitan conservatories.⁷²

Adding to the influence of Neapolitan musicians, several treatises with references to the Neapolitan school were published and were circulating in Paris between the

59 See Cafiero (2001a), (2001b), (2002), (2007), (2016).

60 See Cafiero (2001b).

61 For further information on Gaspare Selvaggi see Carlisi (2021) and Cafiero (2002).

62 Selvaggi (1823).

63 Fenaroli [1814], Imbimbo [1814]. See Chapter 4.

64 Devriès-Lesure (1979), 45.

65 See Cafiero (2019), 45–46.

66 For further details on Paisiello's work in Paris, see Cafiero (2016), 353–358.

67 See Cafiero (2016), 363.

68 For the full account of Castil-Blaze on Zingarelli's stay in Paris and further details about these events see Cafiero (2016), 362–370.

69 See DiChiera-Johnson Robinson (2001).

70 See DiChiera-Johnson Robinson (2001).

71 GB-Lcm, MS 45.

72 See Cafiero (2003).

end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century.⁷³ Among these, Cafiero mentions the works of Francesco Azzopardi,⁷⁴ Gennaro Biferi,⁷⁵ Florido Tomeoni⁷⁶ and Honoré Langlé.⁷⁷ Apart from of Langlé, who was directly involved in the creation of the Parisian Conservatoire, there is no record of treatises by the others being used during lessons at the Conservatoire. In his 1808 *Éloge de Langlé*, Fayolle gives us this biographical detail about Langlé:

Honoré-François-Marie Langlé, né à Monaco en 1741, fut envoyé à Naples, à l'âge de seize ans, par le prince de Monaco, pour y apprendre la composition, et entra au conservatoire de la Pietà, et en devint premier maître de chapelle.⁷⁸

In his *Traité*,⁷⁹ Langlé describes himself as *Ancien premier Maître du Conservatoire de la Pietà à Naples*;⁸⁰ yet, as Cafiero points out, no evidence suggests that Langlé was actually the *primo maestro* at *La Pietà*. Most likely, he was a *mastricello*, as Fétis describes in his *Biographie*:⁸¹ “Il eut le titre de maître, c'est à dire, *répétiteur*.”⁸² In Paris, Langlé's *Traité d'Harmonie et de Modulation* was one of the manuals proposed as official *méthode* of the Conservatoire.⁸³ Together with Catel, he was *Professeur d'harmonie* for only two years following the Conservatoire's foundation (1795–97) and then served as Librarian until 1807. In the previous *École Royale de Chant* he had been appointed as a singing teacher in 1784.⁸⁴

Another further figure who contributed to the spread of Neapolitan teaching methods was Alexandre-Etienne Choron, who thus described his musical and mathematical training in the biography of his *Dictionnaire*:

CHORON (Alexandre-Etienne), né le 21 octobre 1772 à Caen, où son père était directeur des fermes, n'entreprit l'étude de la musique qu'au sortir de ses classes, qu'il termina avant l'âge de quinze ans, au collège de Juilly. Privé de toute espèce de secours, et contrarié dans ses goûts, il commença par apprendre lui-même, sans livres et sans les conseils d'aucun maître, à noter tous les chants qu'il pouvait retenir ou imaginer, et parvint à acquérir assez de facilité dans cet exercice, avant même d'être en état de lire une note de musique. Les ouvrages de Dalember, de Roussier, de Rousseau et autres écrivains de la secte de Rameau, lui servirent ensuite de guide dans l'étude de la composition, et le mirent en état de

73 Rosa Cafiero has extensively researched this matter. See Cafiero (2001b), (2007), (2009b), (2016a).

74 Az[z]opardi (1786).

75 Biferi [1770].

76 Tomeoni [1798] and [1800].

77 Langlé (1795).

78 Fayolle (1808), 152. Also in Cafiero (2020), 147.

79 Langlé (1795).

80 Langlé (1795).

81 Cafiero (2020), 147.

82 Fétis (1867), V, 192. Also quoted in Diergarten (2021).

83 See Chapter 2.

84 Pierre (1900a), 7, 14.

composer, tant bien que mal, en parties ou en accompagnements. Monsieur Grétry, à qui il montra quelques essais en ce genre, l'engagera à faire des études suivies, et lui indiqua M. l'abbé Rose, un des meilleurs maîtres français, avec qui il travailla quelques tems. Desirant ensuite connaître les autres écoles, il travailla assez longtems avec M. Bonesi de l'école de Leo,⁸⁵ et avec d'autres professeurs de celle d'Italie, et lut avec beaucoup de soin les meilleurs didactiques allemands, dont il apprit expès la langue.⁸⁶

This description illustrates that Choron began his musical studies autodidactically, and without any support until he started taking lessons from the “Abbé Rose” – almost certainly the famous librarian of the Conservatoire, Abbé Nicolas Roze (1745–1819) – and Barnaba Bonesi (1745–1824), a second-generation student of Leonardo Leo.

Choron's works stand as some of the most high-profile and remarkable examples of French response to the Neapolitan partimento tradition.⁸⁷ He demonstrates a thorough knowledge of Neapolitan pedagogical methods and repertoire and, in his *Principes de composition des écoles d'Italie*, he credits Nicola Sala's *Regole del Contrappunto pratico*⁸⁸ as one of his major sources. Indeed, Choron's *Principes* was advertised as a new edition of Sala's book, after the original printing plates for this had been destroyed. As examples of the “style d'Eglise concerté,” he exclusively refers to Neapolitan composers, including Niccolò Jommelli, Francesco Durante, Leonardo Leo, Giovanni Battista Pergolesi and Davide Perez. He published the *Principes d'accompagnement des écoles d'Italie*⁸⁹ in collaboration with Vincenzo Fiocchi, drawing upon Neapolitan masters once again and extensively quoting *partimenti* by Francesco Durante and Fedele Fenaroli.⁹⁰

In the preface, Choron tells us that he intends his publication to be a collection of practical rules and exercises of harmony, in contrast to the many theoretical works that had circulated previously. The book is divided into five chapters: the first being dedicated to the rules of *accompagnement*; the second to progressions; the third to the harmonization and accompaniment of a melody; the fourth to modulation; and the fifth to alterations, which contains partimenti realized by Fiocchi.⁹¹ Choron also quotes examples from Francesco Azzopardi's *Le musicien pratique*, which he had revised in a new French edition with additions approved by Azzopardi's student

85 Barnaba Bonesi studied composition under Giovanni Andrea Fioroni, a former student of Leonardo Leo.

86 Choron-Fayolle (1810), 137–138.

87 See Choron-Fiocchi [1804] and Choron (1808–1809). The contents of Choron's works are not explored here, as they are already discussed in Groth (1983) and Meidhof (2016). See also Simms (1971).

88 Sala (1794). See Cafiero (2016a), 326–328; Cafiero (2020), 57–80; Stella (2009) and Diergarten (2021).

89 Choron-Fiocchi, [1804].

90 A table containing Fenaroli's *regole* and partimenti, found in both Choron's *Principes*, is included in Cafiero (2020), 173–199.

91 See Chapter 5 for some examples.

Nicolò Isouard.⁹² Additionally, Choron incorporates Neapolitan partimenti, including those by Carlo Cotumacci, Nicola Sala, Durante and Fenaroli.⁹³

Choron also contributed to the reopening of the *maîtrises*. In 1812 he founded an *École Normale de Musique* where he taught using a method of collective teaching inspired by the *enseignement mutuel*, the first time that this had been used in France.⁹⁴ His *Méthode concertante* was based on a system of teaching different groups of different standards at the same time, with students divided into four classes, based on their starting level. The exercises used were polyphonic *solfeggi*, for which each class sang a melodic line of varying difficulty; first with separated voices, then together.⁹⁵ In 1820 his institution was renamed *École royale et spéciale du chant*; in 1825 it became an institution dedicated to church music, the *Institut royal de musique religieuse de France*.

Between 1817 and 1830 Choron was in charge of the *École primaire de chant*, a school connected to the Conservatoire (then *École Royale*) aimed at training and educating ten young singers aged between six and thirteen years old, who lived at the school for free.

Il était alloué à M. Choron 800 fr. par Élève:

1. Pour nourriture saine et suffisante, le logement, le feu, la lumière, le coucher et le blanchissage;
2. Pour enseigner les principes de la musique vocale et instrumentale en ce qui a trait à l'accompagnement sur le piano, et donner l'éducation religieuse, morale et grammaticale en usage dans les Établissement désignés sous la dénomination de Pensionnats [...].⁹⁶

Upon Choron's death his schools were closed, apart from the *Institut Royal de Musique Religieuse* which became the *École Niedermeyer*.⁹⁷

Another prominent figure in the Paris music scene who contributed to the spread of Neapolitan methods was François-Joseph Fétis (1784–1871).⁹⁸ Fétis was a Belgian composer, who had studied harmony at the Conservatoire under Jean-Baptiste Rey, whose own theory was deeply influenced by his teacher, Rameau.⁹⁹ Fétis did not limit his understanding of harmony to his teacher's system, but studied other methods – including partimento, the ideas of the so-called *scuola padovana* (represented by

92 Azopardi (1824).

93 See the *Uupart* database for correspondences. See also Cafiero (2020), 46.

94 For further information see later in this chapter.

95 Choron [1817].

96 Lassabathie (1860), 50.

97 For an overview of Choron's schools, see Ellis (2005).

98 See Ellis, Wangermée, Chouquet (2001), Peters (1990) and Toplis (2005).

99 Jean-Baptiste Rey (1734–1810) taught harmonie at the conservatoire for only three years and left because of his disagreements with Sarrette. His theories were also at odds with those of Catel, author of the official *méthode* of the Conservatoire. See Chapter 4.

Francesco Antonio Calegari, Francesco Antonio Vallotti and Luigi Antonio Sabbatini) and such exponents of German *Musiktheorie* as Georg Andreas Sorge and Georg Joseph Vogler. His extensive research resulted in Fétis’ 1844 *Traité complet de la théorie et de la pratique de l’harmonie*.¹⁰⁰ Prior to that, he was appointed Professor of Counterpoint and Fugue at the Paris Conservatoire in 1821 and worked as librarian at the same institution between 1826 and 1831.

However, Fétis’s works are not limited to theoretical treatises and compositions. He was active as what we would describe today as a music journalist, and he wrote countless articles on a variety of subjects. In 1827 he founded the *Revue Musicale*, a weekly publication which he almost always wrote single-handedly. Through his writings, Fétis became one of the most significant supporters of the *écoles d’Italie*. In his *Méthode*, he used partimenti primarily by Fenaroli, Durante and Sala as exercises in *accompagnement*.¹⁰¹ He also wrote many articles promoting the use of partimenti in France. In his *Esquisse*, Fétis mentions a different approach between Italy and other countries in the realization of these exercises:

Ces grands musiciens [Pasquini and Scarlatti] 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 d’une manière élégante toutes les parties de l’accompagnement. Sous ce rapport, les Italiens conservèrent longtemps une incontestable supériorité dans l’art d’accompagner.¹⁰²

Fétis mainly highlights the use of counterpoint in the Italian realization of a partimento. This resulted in all voices being individual melodies, in contrast to the German and French chordal realizations.¹⁰³ The ways in which some elements of counterpoint were integrated into these subjects will be demonstrated later in the book.¹⁰⁴

1.3. The creation of the Conservatoire in imitation of the *écoles d’italie*

Neapolitan influences on the history of French music pedagogy can be traced throughout the history of the Paris Conservatoire.

Around 1770 another *querelle* broke out in Paris between *Gluckistes* and *Piccinnistes*, both sides intending to rescue French opera from its decline. One proposed solution

100 Fétis (1844).

101 Fétis (1824).

102 Fétis (1840), 53. Also quoted in Cafiero (2007), 148–149.

103 For French *accompagnement* see Verwaerde (2015), that also contains a section dedicated to *Generalbass*, pp. 261–284. For Bach’s circle composition teaching methods based on *Generalbass* see Remeš (2020). See also Christensen (2008) and Brandes (2018).

104 For further information on Fétis’ theoretical works see Peters (1990).

was to create a vocal school in the style of Neapolitan conservatories,¹⁰⁵ about which Claude-Philibert Coquéau – a supporter of the operatic style of Niccolò Piccinni – wrote:

Je crois que vous oubliez une des principales causes des progrès de la musique en Italie, les conservatoires et l'excellente méthode qu'on y professe. A l'aide de cet établissement utile, les travaux des hommes de génie ne furent pas perdus avec eux. Ils purent transmettre à leurs élèves une étincelle du feu qui les embrasait et la carte qui les avait guidés leur route.¹⁰⁶

In 1784, an institution dedicated to developing a French singing school, the *École Royale de Chant et de Déclamation*, was founded “à l’instar des conservatoires d’Italie.”¹⁰⁷ In a letter, it was suggested that Piccinni would be head of the school, with the aim of training French musicians to work in the *Opéra* and theatres, rather than importing musicians from abroad:

Il faudrait attribuer à cette École le sr Piccinni, qui joint à son talent l’art de bien montrer et qui pourrait ainsi former d’excellents compositeurs pour l’avenir sans être obligé d’en faire venir d’étrangers.¹⁰⁸

Niccolò Piccinni (1728–1800) studied in Naples with Leonardo Leo and Francesco Durante. At the invitation of Queen Marie-Antoinette, he moved to Paris in 1766. Piccinni was then asked by Papillon De La Ferté¹⁰⁹ to lead this new singing school as *Premier Maître* (*primo maestro*), the same title used in the Neapolitan *Conservatori* for the Professor in charge of a specific class. Piccinni declined the position, making it clear that he could not leave his employment at the *Opéra* and the *Comédie Italienne* for a salary of 3000 Fr.¹¹⁰ After some negotiations, an agreement was reached, and the “Annonce de la création de l’école royale” from the *Correspondance littéraire de Grimm et Diderot*, named Piccinni as the main teacher of an institution created in imitation of the Neapolitan *Conservatori*.¹¹¹

François-Joseph Gossec, a composer and former protégé of Rameau, was selected as Director; with Piccinni designated *premier maître*; and Langlé and Guichard appointed as singing teachers. Girls were admitted to the school and all students learned dance, acting, and stage-fighting.¹¹²

105 See Gessele (1992), 195.

106 Coquéau (1779), 125. Also quoted in Gessele (1992), 195–196.

107 Pierre, (1900a), 1. For further information on the institutions that preceded the Conservatoire see, among others, Gessele (1992).

108 Pierre, (1900a), 2.

109 Papillon de La Ferté (1727–1794) was at the time the administrator of the *Menus-Plaisirs du Roi*.

110 See Pierre (1900a), 12–14.

111 Pierre (1900a), 14.

112 See Pierre (1900a), 16–17. In the Neapolitan *Real Collegio* girls were admitted starting in 1806 after the interdiction of training *castrati*. See Cafiero (1998).

In 1786 the potential of the school was acknowledged in a review of the students’ concert, which was written by Le Prévot d’Exmes and appeared in the *Mercure de France*:

La France recueillera abondamment les fruits de cette institution, lorsqu’on verra, dans quelques années, sortir de l’École royale de chant, de danse et de déclamation, des sujets instruits, tant en qualité d’artistes que de compositeurs, qui prouveront par leurs productions, que le goût de la bonne musique nous est aussi facile et aussi naturel qu’aux Italiens. On reconnaitra alors que les peuples d’Italie n’ont eu l’avantage sur nous, que parce qu’ils jouissent depuis longtemps d’un établissement de cette nature, sous le titre de Conservatoire.¹¹³

In this same review, the author offered some criticisms that would later be directed at the Conservatoire: a) the need for a *pensionnat* (eventually established in 1806) so that students could live on-site and focus on their studies, avoiding the need for them to travel back and forth to the *école*; b) problems arising from the individual teacher’s different teaching methods, which would later be addressed with the publication of the *méthodes*; c) the failure to apply the *enseignement mutuel* used in Neapolitan Conservatories, though this would later be partially achieved through the introduction of *répétiteurs*.¹¹⁴

In a review of the *École* six years after its formation, comparisons with the Neapolitan schools were still inevitable:

C’est d’après les conservatoires d’Italie qu’on a voulu avoir à Paris une école de chant. Mais quelle différence dans la formation de ces deux genres d’établissements, dans leurs effets, dans leur régime et dans leur utilité! Les conservatoires de Naples sont des espèces d’hôpitaux, des fondations pieuses qui se soutiennent par leurs propres revenus, en y joignant les bienfaits volontaires de quelques amateurs de musique, le service que font les élèves dans quelques églises et les pensions, quoique modiques, payées par des élèves étrangers. Ils sont ouverts à toutes les classes de citoyens, particulièrement aux plus pauvres et fournissent des musiciens de tout genre à l’Italie entière. L’École de Paris, qui ne forme guère des sujets que pour l’Opéra, qui ne peut être utile qu’à un petit nombre de personnes, est entretenue aux dépens du trésor public. Les conservatoires de Naples contiennent depuis 90 élèves jusqu’à 200. Il n’y a que deux maîtres résidents et quatre ou cinq externes. Ils forment d’excellents chanteurs, d’excellents compositeurs et des professeurs pour les instruments d’orchestre. Les jeunes gens y sont logés, nourris, entretenus et instruits gratuitement pendant huit ans. L’École de Paris n’a que 30 élèves et vingt maîtres auxquels il faut en joindre encore deux ou trois de supplément. On n’y forme que des chanteurs pour l’Opéra, ou tout au plus pour la Comédie italienne, quand on ne leur trouve pas assez de voix pour la grande scène. On y apprend le violon et la basse, mais on n’y enseigne pas le hautbois, la flûte, le basson et le cor, quoique ces instruments soient parmi nous d’une rareté extrême et que nous soyons obligés de les prendre presque tous parmi les Allemands. Ces élèves, quoiqu’en petit nombre, ne sont ni logés, ni nourris, mais on leur donne des appointements

113 Pierre (1900a), 19–21.

114 See later in this chapter.

proportionnés aux dispositions qu'ils montrent ou peut-être à la protection qui sollicite pour eux. Quelques-uns de ces sujets tirent aussi des appointements de l'Opéra.¹¹⁵

There is an interesting difference between these institutions in their sociological background. In Naples, the *Conservatori* were initially created as religious, charitable institutions,¹¹⁶ devoted to providing shelter and professional training for orphans;¹¹⁷ while, in Paris, they were primarily set-up to train professional musicians, in order to create a substantial body of French musicians to work at court or in orchestras, where there were currently large numbers of foreign musicians. In Naples, pupils had to sign a contract with the *Conservatorio*, agreeing that all their earnings from musical activities would go to the institution in exchange for board, lodging, and musical training.¹¹⁸ Paying students, often foreigners, were also admitted. In Paris, there was a similar system, whereby students had to sign an exclusivity contract with the Conservatoire to manage all their performances outside the Conservatoire (mainly in orchestras or choirs in theaters).

During the French Revolution, the *École* was suppressed and Piccinni moved back to Naples, where he was arrested on charges of Jacobinism in 1794. He returned to Paris in 1798.¹¹⁹ During the years of the revolution, military music was promoted through the *École de la Garde Nationale*, where students received two lessons of *solfège* and three instrumental lessons per week.¹²⁰ Among the students at the *École* were Catel, Lefèvre, Ozi, Duvernoy, all of who would go on to become teachers at the future Conservatoire.¹²¹ In 1793, the *École de la Garde Nationale* became the *Institut National de Musique*. Prior to this, music had been the domain of the church, court and military but the new *Institut National* sought to make all music accessible to a wider audience and, in addition to the subjects previously taught at the *École Royale* and the *École de la Garde Nationale*, there were lessons in composition (with Méhul and Le Sueur), violin, and cello. Also, a library was created at the *Institut*, containing all the scores,

115 *De l'organisation des spectacles de Paris ou essai sur leur forme actuelle...*, Paris, 1790 in Pierre, (1900a), 44.

116 Although these institutions were founded by the clergy, thanks to the many donations received, they were able to maintain a certain degree of independence from the Church. See Del Prete (1999).

117 The Neapolitan conservatories were created with a charitable purpose; however, since they specialized in music education, they were not only attended by orphans. In fact, by the end of the 17th century, orphans were a minority of the children admitted, as most of the students came from the families of professional musicians or were members of the clergy. See Olivieri (1999) and Aerts (2021).

118 See Cafiero (2005b), 20.

119 See Cafiero (2016), 328–329.

120 See Mongrédien (1986), 13–14 and Lassabathie (1860), 19.

121 Pierre (1900a), 85.

books and instruments confiscated during the revolution.¹²² This library later also housed the books and scores collected in Italy by Napoleon’s delegates, Rodolphe Kreutzer, violinist and professor at the Conservatoire, and the Neapolitan-trained, Maltese composer, Nicolò Isouard. These two musicians were sent to Italy twice (in both 1796–97 and 1798–99) to collect the best works of music and send them back to the Conservatoire’s library.¹²³

In 1795 Marie-Joseph Chénier, lyricist of revolutionary songs and a friend of Sarrette, presented a report on the reorganization of the *Institut National de Musique* at the July 28th convention. The main point of his argument was that musicians were needed for patriotic celebrations, and that these should be trained at the Conservatoire.¹²⁴ Most teachers of the former *École Royale* signed an agreement to join this new institution called *Conservatoire de Musique*, beginning in 1795.¹²⁵ The mission of the newly founded *Conservatoire* was to “Entretenir la musique dans la société, former des artistes pour les armées et pour les théâtres.”¹²⁶

Despite efforts to create a leading French singing school, the preeminence of Italian singers persisted. In 1801 Fétis wrote a *Projet d’un plan général de l’instruction musicale en France, particulièrement dirigé vers la vocale et la composition*.¹²⁷ In his proposal, Fétis aimed to show “les vices du Conservatoire actuel” and offered solutions, including the reestablishment of the *maîtrises* and the establishment of a school dedicated to composition and vocal music. Once again, the comparison with the *écoles d’Italie* and their “bonne instruction” guided the debate. According to Fétis, the first critical point to be addressed was the number and quality of teachers of composition and singing because, after a reduction in Government funding, three singing professors were replaced by two pianists “totalement étrangers à l’art du chant”.

In Paris, pupils were admitted from the age of seven. Like their Neapolitan colleagues, they started their training with *solfège*, after which they were allowed to learn instruments and take singing classes. In Naples there was a distinction between singers and instrumentalists, and Fétis argued that playing wind instruments affects young students’ voices and compromises the quality of their singing. This statement, published in 1801, seems to be at odds with the *Règlement* of 1800 (*Germinal an VIII*), in which the *ordre de l’étude* states:

122 For further information on the Library of the Conservatoire, see Massip (1996) and Giovanni (2021b).

123 See Cafiero (2016a), 349–352 and (2016b), XXXVI–XXXVIII. Details of these expeditions are in Giovanni (2021a).

124 See Mongrédien (1986), 16–17.

125 For an overview of the teachers at the Conservatoire, see Hondré (1995a).

126 Pierre (1900a), 160.

127 Fétis (1801).

IV. Les Élèves étudiant le chant ne peuvent recevoir l'enseignement d'aucune partie instrumentale.¹²⁸

It is not known whether Fétis wrote his pamphlet prior to the establishment of these rules at the Conservatoire or if the new *Règlement* had not yet been applied in 1801. In his 1802 *Observations sur l'Etat de la Musique*, Bernard Sarrette suggested the creation of a French school of music and singing that could rival those in Italy.¹²⁹ A few years later it was clear that, although instrumentalists trained at the Conservatoire were visibly successful and employed in orchestras, theaters and military bands, the quality of the trained singers was still considered by many critical observers to be substandard.¹³⁰ This is well-illustrated by an incident that Gabriel Vauthier relates about Choron who, upon hearing a student shouting at the top of his voice instead of singing, reprimanded him with the words: “tu chantes comme au Conservatoire.”¹³¹

A critique of the vocal teaching at the Conservatoire can be found in a review of a concert at the Conservatoire in the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* from 23 August 1809. The author of this excerpt paints a colorful picture of the above mentioned *urlo francese* which, apparently, still continued (and was taught) at the Conservatoire:

Zum Zurückbleiben des Gesanges trägt endlich auch bey, dass man in Frankreich keine eigentliche Gesang-Schule, keine sicher gestellte Methode des Unterrichts, angenommen hat: jeder Lehrer singt, oder schreyet, auf eigne Hand und nach eigner Weise; was nun noch an dem Einen gut ist, wird von Andern für schlecht erklärt, woraus folgt, dass der Schüler nicht weiss, wem er folgen soll, oder der Affe von dem wird, den er sich nun einmal zum Muster erwählt hat, wo denn nicht selten, wie bey blinden Nachahmungen fast allezeit, wahre Karikaturen zum Vorschein kommen. So wird der Hauptzweck des Conservatoire verfehlt; der nähmlich, den Theatern gute Sänger und Sängerinnen zu verschaffen.¹³²

On paper, the administration of the Conservatoire appeared to be working. In 1808 students were living in the *pensionnat* and being tutored there:

Les Élèves [...] recevaient la plus grande partie de leur éducation dans l'intérieur du Pensionnat; il y avaient Professeurs de solfège, de vocalisation et de chant, une classe de musique d'ensemble et de lecture de la partition, sans compter l'étude accessoire du clavier pour l'accompagnement; voilà pour la musique. Ils recevaient en outre, le soir, et trois fois par semaine, des leçons de langue française et italienne, de géographie et d'histoire, et, en dehors de celles de déclamations, il y avait des exercices de tenue et d'escrime.¹³³

128 Lassabathie (1860), 246. In the *Règlement* of 1808 it is specified that the piano is admitted together with *chant*.

129 “De créer (...) une école de chant qui pourrait par la suite rivaliser avec celles d'Italie”, Bernard Sarrette (1802), 37, also quoted in Hondré (1995b), 81.

130 Choron-Fayolle (1810), 154.

131 Vauthier (1908), 622. Also quoted in Devriès-Lesure (1996), 75.

132 *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*, n.47, 23/08/1809, Leipzig, Breitkopf und Härtel, 749.

133 Lassabathie (1860), 85–86.

An archival document written by Choron and dated 1820, entitled *Considérations sur la situation actuelle du chant en France et sur le moyen d'en opérer la restauration*, highlights the differences between the *école d'Italie* and France. It describes a significant pedagogical difference which may help explain the variance in quality between the two schools: the French separation of *sofège* and singing lessons. In Neapolitan conservatories the two disciplines did not exist independently.¹³⁴

En France, il n'en est point ainsi: on a fait de la lecture musicale un art séparé que l'on enseigne à part à ceux qui veulent devenir musiciens dans un genre quelconque, et l'on fait succéder à cette étude celle du chant ou des instruments. Il résulte de cette méthode un désordre effroyable et qui est une des principales causes de la situation fâcheuse et de l'infériorité ou le chant a été depuis si longtemps en France.¹³⁵

The document continues by criticising the teaching of *harmony*. Choron states that instruction in the theoretical principles of harmony at the *Conservatoire* should be taught alongside the more practical approach of *partimento*:¹³⁶

Le principal de ces vices (qui) consiste en substituer l'étude abstraite de l'harmonie à celle du partimento ou basse chiffrée, en usage dans toute l'Europe et qui a l'inconvénient d'éloigner les élèves du but vers lequel ils tendent, celui de devenir accompagnateurs (...) aussitôt que les élèves auront acquis quelque connaissance du clavier et quelque facilité à exécuter à vue sur le forte piano ils devront être appliqués à l'étude pratique du partimento. Le recueil de Fenaroli et celui de Durante, qui sont en usage à Naples et dans toute l'Italie, sont ceux que l'on peut employer de mieux pour cet usage. (...) Je dirais seulement que plus on pourra, pour l'enseignement du chant e de l'accompagnement, se rapprocher des usages suivis dans les anciennes écoles d'Italie, plus on fera sagement et plus on sera assuré d'obtenir des résultats avantageux.¹³⁷

The Conservatoire was closed after the Bourbon Restoration in 1816, and was reopened shortly thereafter under the name of *École Royale de Musique et de Déclamation*, with Louis Perne as Director and many of the professors who had served the previous institution.¹³⁸ When he was elected Director of the *École Royale* in 1822, Cherubini decided to develop a plan aimed at improving the quality of singing lessons.¹³⁹ La Rochefoucauld, Director of the *Beaux-Arts*, was concerned about the poor results of the school and, without consulting Cherubini, decided to replace the four singing teachers with three Italians recommended by Gioacchino Rossini:

134 See Baragwanath (2020).

135 Arch. nat. O/3/1804.

136 A similar transformation happened in Germany at the beginning of the 19th century. See Holtmeier (2012).

137 Arch. nat. O/3/1804. See Chapter 3 for the details of teaching of *accompagnement*.

138 Pierre (1900a), 186–187.

139 Luigi Cherubini (1760–1842) was the director of this institution from 1822 to 1842. For further information on Cherubini as the director of the Conservatoire, see Devriès-Lesure, (1996).

David Banderali (1789–1849) from Milan, Felice Pellegrini (1774–1832) from Turin and Gianmarco Bordogni (1789–1856) from Bergamo. In a letter addressed to Cherubini from 29th December 1827, he wrote:

Pour remédier à une décadence inévitable, il faut nécessairement chercher à naturaliser parmi nous les principes de l'école italienne si supérieure à toutes les autres.¹⁴⁰

Lessons in *sofège* became the first step in the training of singers, who were now required to attend a two-hour lesson, three times per week. Following the Neapolitan model, Cherubini reestablished the *pensionnat* (which had been closed since 1814) so that students could live in the school and concentrate all their efforts on music.¹⁴¹ Since the boarding was paid for by the *Conservatoire*, students had to repay the institution through their musical services. As in Naples, where pupils would sing in churches and for the *paranze*, students in Paris were employed as *choristes* at the *Opéra*. However, the best singers were exempt from choir duties to preserve their voices. These *élèves distingués* could also be offered piano lessons in order to learn how to accompany their singing.

Another measure introduced to improve the standard of French singers was to allow only those singers who had completed their training to take lessons in *déclamation lyrique*, thus avoiding any confusion arising from learning different vocal techniques at the same time.¹⁴² In 1823 the classes of *harmonie* and *accompagnement pratique* were reunited in order to achieve “des élèves qui soient à la fois bons harmonistes et accompagnateurs.”¹⁴³ Additionally, a *basse chiffrée* class – led by a *répétitrice* – was provided as an introductory course to *accompagnement* for girls. For the first time in France, Cherubini also introduced a “classe de composition pour femmes”; however, despite its promising title, this simply consisted of *accompagnement* for girls.¹⁴⁴

Cherubini also requested the immediate restoration of the name “Conservatoire”:

Ne serait-il pas convenable, de restituer à l'École royale de musique et de déclamation son ancien titre de *Conservatoire*, titre, que par habitude, on lui donne toujours dans la société, titre sous lequel il avait acquis sa grande réputation?¹⁴⁵

Despite this request, the institution would not regain its name until 1831.

140 Arch. nat. AJ37/83/1, letter of the 29th of December 1827 from La Rochefoucauld to Cherubini, quoted in Devriès-Lesure (1996), 78.

141 Devriès-Lesure, (1996), 76–85.

142 Devriès-Lesure, (1996), 80.

143 AJ37/83/8, in Pierre (1900a), 280. Also quoted in Devriès-Lesure, (1996), 88.

144 Nicephor (2007), 90.

145 Arch. nat. AJ37/1/5c *Rattachement de l'École royale à la division des Beaux-Arts du ministère de la Maison du roi. 12–17 avril 1821*. Also quoted in Devriès-Lesure (1996), 63.

1.4. Didactical organization at the Conservatoire

Research conducted by partimento scholars such as Nicholas Baragwanath, Rosa Cafiero, Robert Gjerdingen, Giorgio Sanguinetti and Peter Van Tour has reconstructed the pedagogical course taken by an apprentice musician in Naples. Young students could only start to learn partimento after training in *solfeggio* (which included the so-called “elements of music” and *solfeggio parlato*) for an average of three years, though this could last as long the *Maestro* deemed necessary.¹⁴⁶ Pupils were given singing or instrumental lessons according to their inclination, and the more advanced could progress to study counterpoint.

Similarly, the *Règlement* adopted when the Conservatoire was founded in 1795 divided teaching activities into three levels:¹⁴⁷

Premier degré. Les principes élémentaires du solfège forment la première partie de l'enseignement; les Élèves qui y sont classés ne peuvent suivre d'autre partie qu'ils n'aient été classés au second degré.

Second degré.

Les développements du solfège,
La vocalisation,
Le chant simple, le chant déclamé,
Les instruments en tous genres. [...]

Troisième degré.

Répétition de la scène chantée, avec accompagnement d'orchestre,
Accompagnement,
Composition théorique et pratique.

Le complément de l'enseignement, par une suite de cours dans lesquels la théorie générale et l'historique de l'art musical devaient être traités sous tous les rapports.¹⁴⁸

The pedagogy of the *premier degré* was later incorporated into the *méthodes* of the Conservatoire, specifically in the volume entitled *Principes élémentaires de musique [...] suivis de solfèges*.¹⁴⁹ This was divided into the basic elements of music (rhythm, intervals, scales, etc.) and the *solfèges*, which were similar to Neapolitan *solfeggi*, but accompanied by a figured bass. The exercises in *Principes élémentaires* were increasingly difficult, beginning with simple scales written in several rhythmic variations, before covering all intervals and tonalities. C-clefs are also introduced. The third book contains the second part of the *solfèges*, in which the level of difficulty progressed through the addition of time signatures that include compound meters, smaller note

146 Baragwanath (2020).

147 For an overview on teaching of theoretical subjects at the Conservatoire see Groth (1983), 14–17.

148 Lassabathie (1860), 229.

149 Agus, Catel et al. (1800). See also Chapter 2.

values, and embellishments. The final level includes *sofleggi fugati* in invertible counterpoint and canons.

The second level of teaching includes advanced *sofleggi*, presumably like those that were included a few years later in the *méthode: Solfèges pour servir à l'étude dans le conservatoire de musique*.¹⁵⁰ Here, the exercises, which were composed by professors at the Conservatoire, are similar to music pieces intended for public performance in both their form and melodic shape. The second portion of this volume contains polyphonic *sofleggi* scored for two, three and four voices. The content of singing and instrumental lessons can also be reconstructed from the official *méthodes* that were published and used as the main teaching material in the French institution.¹⁵¹ Archival sources also show that, together with the official *méthodes*, the *Solfèges d'Italie* was used at the Conservatoire.¹⁵² The celebrated collections of *sofleggi* edited by Jean-Louis Bêche and Pierre-Charles Levesque were published in at least five editions, starting in 1772,¹⁵³ and copies of them were regularly purchased by the Conservatoire.¹⁵⁴

During the third level of teaching, singers and instrumentalists could devote their time to preparing for public performances, while aspiring composers would start their journey with *accompagnement* and theoretical subjects.¹⁵⁵

The *Règlement* of 1800 describes the steps of this academic pathway. Students were examined every three months to determine whether they needed to continue in their class or if they could advance in their studies. Once their *sofège* training was completed, and they were sufficiently skilled in reading music and playing the piano, they could begin the *cours d'harmonie*. This class could last only one year, which meant that a student could not repeat it; those who did successfully complete the year of harmony were then permitted to take courses in composition. The first of these was *contrepoint et fugue* and, once this had been successfully completed, they could progress to *composition libre*. This indicates that not all students could attend classes in *harmonie* and *accompagnement*. Also, not all *Conservatoire* students would be eligible to perform in theaters. Those who did not achieve soloist standard were directed towards another career path: boys were destined to become orchestral musicians; girls, music engravers.¹⁵⁶ These selection criteria were similar to those used in Neapolitan conservatories, whereby the best students could aspire to a position of *Maestro di cappella* while the less gifted students could become instrumentalists; or, in the worst case, they could leave the Conservatorio to become priests.¹⁵⁷

150 Agus, Catel et al. (1801). See also Chapter 2.

151 The *méthodes* will be discussed in Chapter 2.

152 See Chapter 2. For further information see also Mamy (1998), Sullo (2012) and Baragwanath (2020).

153 Baragwanath dates the first edition in 1768 in Baragwanath (2020).

154 See Chapter 2 and Hondré (1995b), 101.

155 See Chapter 3.

156 Pierre (1900a), 17.

157 Cafiero (2005b), 21.

In 1822 the *Règlement* signed by Cherubini describes the three steps in training a composer in greater detail:

- 1) *Harmonie-Accompagnement*: in order to be admitted, students must have keyboard skills, be able to read music in all keys, and be confident in their sight-reading. Twelve students were admitted: six *en exercice*, effectively meaning that they studied directly with the professor; and six *auditeurs ou aspirants*, who took most of their lessons with the *répétiteur*, and occasionally with the professor.¹⁵⁸ The maximum age for admission was sixteen years old although, in some exceptional cases, students were taken up to the age of twenty.
- 2) *Contrepoint et Fugue*: Students must have completed their course in *harmonie* and be approved by the professor. Twelve students were admitted (six *en exercice* and six *auditeurs*), with the maximum age being eighteen or, in some exceptional cases, twenty-two years old.
- 3) *Composition*: Students who have successfully completed *harmonie* and *contrepoint* could then start composition courses. *Auditeurs* were not admitted. Students up to twenty-one years old, and in exceptional cases, up to twenty-five, were eligible to enter these classes. Only four students per professor were admitted; in 1822, the three professors of composition were Henri-Montan Berton, François-Adrien Boieldieu and Jean- François Lesueur. Cherubini left his position after he was nominated *Directeur*.¹⁵⁹ This study will focus on the first step in the training of a composer, the teaching of *harmonie* and *accompagnement*.¹⁶⁰

1.5. *Mastricelli* and *Répétiteurs*: the *Enseignement mutuel* between Naples and Paris

Enseignement mutuel is a teaching method used with large classes, where the presence of only one teacher could be insufficient for maintaining high quality instruction.¹⁶¹ The *Maestro* would teach the advanced students (called *mastricelli*) who would then teach the younger pupils. On account of this initiative, students learned more effectively and gained experience in teaching.

Imbimbo claimed that this method was invented in Naples. He wrote a pamphlet called *Observations sur l'enseignement mutuel appliqué à la musique*,¹⁶² in which he sought to describe the teaching methods of the Neapolitan conservatories to the French public.

158 Lassabathie (1860), 289.

159 Lassabathie (1860), 373.

160 See Chapter 3.

161 Several scholars have discussed the topic of mutual teaching. See e.g. Cafiero (2001b), 206–210.

162 Imbimbo (1821).

Il y avait des maîtres externes, payés par chaque conservatoire, qui ne communiquaient qu'avec les élèves supérieurs de chaque classe [...]. Parmi les élèves supérieurs, il y en avait un certain nombre qui étaient désignés sous le nom de *Mastricelli*, et qui instruisaient les élèves inférieurs des classe respectives. En général les élèves les plus forts remplissaient les fonctions de maîtres vis-à-vis des plus faibles, et par ce moyen, les leçons se transmettaient d'élève à élève.¹⁶³

The *Maestro* would arrive, announced by the ringing of the bell, and the advanced students would go to him for the correction of their exercises. This would happen in front of the entire class so that all students could listen to the corrections made:

Lorsque la cloche annonçait l'arrivée d'un maître, par exemple, du maître de contrepoint, les élèves supérieurs de la classe se rendaient, avec leur cartella, et les corrigeait toutes, l'une après l'autre, en présence de tous les élèves de la classe. Les autres maîtres suivaient la même marche dans leurs classes respectives, avec les élèves supérieurs.¹⁶⁴

The advantages of this method are easily explained:

Un jeune élève abandonné à lui-même, après avoir écouté la leçon de son maître, perde facilement de vue l'impression passagère qu'il a reçue. Mais lorsque cette impression se répète un grand nombre de fois; lorsque les élèves sont appelés à concourir mutuellement à leur enseignement; lorsque, enfin, on a l'adresse d'animer l'émulation par le puissant aiguillon de l'amour-propre, on ne peut pas manquer de hâter les progrès des élèves, de faciliter le mécanisme de l'instruction, et de soulager l'esprit dans une partie des difficultés qui résultent de la complication des signes et de l'aridité des principes.¹⁶⁵

There was debate as to the value of the *enseignement mutuel* at the time of Imbimbo's publication. Andrew Bell and Joseph Lancaster had already used this method in England and India,¹⁶⁶ while other publications by Louis-Benjamin Francoeur and Wilhem appeared in France.¹⁶⁷ Bell and Lancaster's methods were translated into Italian and printed in Naples in 1817.¹⁶⁸ Two years later, Federico Massimino published a pamphlet in France about the application of this method to music teaching, based on his experiences as *professeur* at the *Institution de la Légion d'honneur* of Saint-Denis.¹⁶⁹ An earlier statement about mutual teaching in Naples is found in Nicolas-Étienne Framery's *Encyclopédie méthodique*:

On demandera peut-être comment un seul maître pour la composition, comment un seul pour le chant, peuvent donner leçon à deux cents élèves. On pourra croire qu'un grand

163 Imbimbo (1821), 4–5.

164 Imbimbo (1821), 3. Also quoted in Cafiero (2001b), 207.

165 Imbimbo (1821), 16.

166 Lancaster (1803). Bell-Lancaster (1817). Bell (1823).

167 Massimino [1819]. Francoeur [1818], Bocquillon, Guillaume-Louis, dit Wilhem (1821).

168 Bell (1823) and Lancaster (1803). Bell-Lancaster (1817).

169 Massimino (1819). See Cafiero (2020), 160–172 and Cafiero (2019), 58–59.

nombre passe souvent plus de huit jours sans en recevoir; on se tromperait. Chaque écolier reçoit chaque jour une leçon au moins d'une heure, dans chaque genre, & voici comment on s'y prend:

Le maître choisit quatre ou cinq des plus forts élèves; il les exerçait tour-à-tour en présence l'un de l'autre avec le plus grand soin. Quand cette leçon est donnée, chacun des élèves qui l'a reçue la rend à son tour à quatre ou cinq autres d'une classe inférieure, & sous l'inspection du maître. Ces seconds écoliers en font autant, & la leçon se propage ainsi jusqu'aux derniers rangs. Parmi tous les avantages sensibles de cette méthode, il faut distinguer ceux-ci, [1.] qu'en même temps que les élèves s'instruisent dans l'art musical, ils apprennent à enseigner les autres, [2.] qu'ils ne peuvent écouter légèrement les préceptes qu'on leur donne sans que le maître s'aperçoive à l'instant même de leur négligence ou de leur distraction, & [3.] que les principes de l'art ainsi reçus et rendus au même moment se gravent dans leur esprit de manière à ne jamais s'en effacer.¹⁷⁰

Imbimbo strongly criticizes Massimino's suggestion that *enseignement mutuel* could be applied to singing lessons,¹⁷¹ stressing that each voice depends on the singer's unique anatomy and therefore requires individual training. Entrusting the teaching of singing to *mastricelli* would not allow each student to fully develop his or her vocal abilities. In addition, limiting the teaching of singing to group lessons would result in improper development of vocal technique.

Consequently, while Imbimbo recommends the use of this method for harmony lessons, he warns of its limits when learning musical expression and interpretation skills:

Nous croyons pouvoir ajouter qu'on peut aussi appliquer utilement la même méthode à l'enseignement de l'harmonie, en divisant cette partie de l'instruction en deux sections, celle des *Partimenti* et celle du *Contrepoint*. On démontrera, sur le tableau, la division de la corde sonore, la théorie de tous les intervalles, la combinaison et la marche de tous les accords sur les différents mouvements de la basse, et l'on dictera les règles de la composition. En suivant cette méthode, et en lui donnant tout le développement dont elle est susceptible, on parviendra, sans doute, à faire des musiciens très-instruits; mais parviendra-t-on à faire exécuter la musique avec goût, avec sentiment, avec expression?¹⁷²

Another publication on this topic appeared in 1823 by Tommaso Consalvo, organist of the Real Cappella Palatina and teacher at the *Real Casa de' Miracoli*, a school for girls at which music was taught.¹⁷³ He published a pamphlet on the application of the Lancastrian method to "Teoria, Canto, Suono, Setticlavio, Partimento."¹⁷⁴ Consalvo describes how the students of the "first class" receive lessons from the *maestro*; these students then teach the same lesson to the students of the "second class", who then repeat the process with the next group. In his method, Consalvo suggests the use of

170 Framery-Ginguene (1791–1818), 304–305.

171 Imbimbo (1821), 20 et seq.

172 Imbimbo (1821), 17–18. Also quoted in Cafiero (2001b), 208.

173 Cafiero (1999), 762.

174 Consalvo (1823). The text is entirely reproduced in Cafiero (2001b), 219–220.

the *Méthode de Piano* by Adam, the official method for piano teaching used at the Conservatoire, together with Clementi's books, Fenaroli's partimenti, and the *solfeggi* for two voices by David Perez.

In 1816 Choron presented a plan for the reopening of the Conservatoire based on the teaching methods of Neapolitan conservatories. Although this plan was not adopted, it contained a description of how the *enseignement mutuel* was supposed to be applied:

Deux professeurs titulaires, l'un de composition, l'autre de chant, ce dernier donnant leçon chaque jour à tous les Élèves. Les plus avancés, recevant directement la leçon du Maître qui exposait les règles, donnait les exemples, les faisait exécuter par les *Élèves-maitres*, indiquait les défauts et les moyens de les corriger; après la leçon principale, les Élèves se formaient en subdivisions, dans lesquelles les *Élèves-maitres* faisaient répéter la leçon qu'ils venaient de recevoir, sous la surveillance du professeur titulaire. L'Élève recevait ainsi deux heures de leçons par jour.¹⁷⁵

A similar role to a *Mastricello*, called *Répétiteur*, was first introduced at the Conservatoire to assist singers and instrumentalists during rehearsals before performances.¹⁷⁶ In the *Règlement of Germinal an VIII*¹⁷⁷ the *Répétitions* were extended to all classes and *répétiteurs* supervised three lessons out of the eight that students received every 10 days (*décade*):

Art. 13. Les Élèves reçoivent huit leçons par décade, pour chaque partie de l'enseignement auquel ils sont admis; cinq de ces leçons leur sont données par leurs Professeurs; les trois autres par un Répétiteur choisi parmi les Élèves les plus avancés de la classe. Ce Répétiteur, désigné par le Professeur, est nommé par le Directeur sur la proposition motivée des Inspecteurs de l'Enseignement.¹⁷⁸

Experience gained as a *Répétiteur* was taken into account when new professors were selected:

Les Élèves du Conservatoire, pour être admis aux Concours des places de Professeurs, doivent avoir rempli les fonctions de Répétiteurs dans la partie qu'ils veulent professer, pendant une année au moins; à talent égal, l'Élève aura la préférence sur l'étranger.¹⁷⁹

As with the Neapolitan *Mastricelli*, the role of *Répétiteur* was considered as preparation for a future professorship, as stated in a *Règlement* of 1808:

175 Lassabathie (1860), 47.

176 Pierre (1900a), 227.

177 March 1800.

178 Pierre (1900a), 232.

179 Lassabathie (1860), 243.

Pour compléter les moyens d'étude des Élèves, en les disposant à transmettre l'enseignement, les plus avancés d'entre eux sont appelés, sous la surveillance immédiate des Professeurs, à remplir les fonctions de Répétiteurs. Les Répétiteurs qui se distinguent par leur manière d'enseigner et leur bonne conduite peuvent être appelés aux fonctions d'adjoints aux Professeurs.¹⁸⁰

In the *Règlement* of 1822, *Répétiteurs* were chosen from among graduated students and were obliged to work for the *Conservatoire* for at least one year.¹⁸¹ Later on, it was noted in the 1841 *Règlement* that they were again selected from among the students in a class, and their services were required to cover for the professor's absence:

Il est nommé par le Directeur, dans chaque classe, un Répétiteur pris parmi les Élèves de la classe. Les Répétiteurs sont tenus de remplacer les Professeurs dans le cas de maladie, de congé ou d'absence prévu par l'article précédent.¹⁸²

The *enseignement mutuel* was possibly introduced in the early Neapolitan Conservatories in order to be the most economic way of teaching a large number of students. On the one hand, students were able to memorize the content of the lessons by repeating them to younger students and gain teaching experience; on the other, this method carried with it the risk of passing on incomplete or incorrect ideas, since the majority of students had only limited contact with the *Maestro*.

The history of the *Conservatoire* and its evolution illustrates how the institution pursued its two main goals. The first was the foundation of a school like the Neapolitan *Conservatori* that would bring forth generations of highly competent French musicians, particularly singers. The second, inspired by the spirit of the French Revolution, was the establishment of an *école nationale française*, with a distinct character and identity. The two goals might have contradicted one another: the role model for the *Conservatoire* was a highly-admired foreign institution but, at the same time, there was a desire for a musical conservatory that reflected the national identity and presented itself as distinct from other nations. Following the French Revolution, the need to fashion a new national identity permeated every area of life, and music was not exempt from this change. By contrast, Naples had always been a Monarchy, both before and after the failed revolution of 1799. Nevertheless, the coexistence of these two goals generated a new model of institution, and one that was imitated by other institutions throughout the world.

The reputation of the Neapolitan school and its effective teaching methods was undoubtedly an inspiration for the foundation of the first public music schools in France. The *Conservatoire* attempted to follow the model of the Neapolitan *Conservatori*, not only in the contents of their lessons but also in their teaching methods.

180 Pierre (1900a), 238.

181 Pierre (1900a), 247.

182 Pierre (1900a), 250–251.

The adoption of a system similar to the *enseignement mutuel* – as practised at the Neapolitan conservatories, the establishment of the *répétiteurs* and the creation of a *pensionnat* are key examples of this influence.