

Introduction

The present edition of Carlo Cotumacci's (1709–1785) *Rules, Lessons, and Partimenti* introduces these exercises in print for the first time. Volume one of this edition encompasses the partimento rules, including an English translation by Massimo Redaelli, alongside 50 corresponding lessons. In these lessons, students are guided in mastering the treatment of various dissonances. The 50 lessons are structured into five sets of ten, each addressing specific musical elements. The initial ten lessons focus on the tied bass and the 4/2 chord, followed by lessons 11–20, which delve into 4-3 sequences featuring bass movements up a fifth and down a fourth. Subsequently, lessons 21–30 tackle 5-6 sequences over ascending scalar motion, while lessons 31–40 address 7-6 sequences over descending scalar motion. Finally, lessons 41–50 concentrate on strategies for handling the dissonance of the ninth.

The 50 lessons serve as a kind of 'basic course' within Cotumacci's partimento curriculum. Once students have mastered these lessons, they can progress to the more advanced set of 75 partimenti (Article number 202425). Interestingly, Cotumacci refers to this set as "lessons" in his autograph. The second volume of this edition contains these 75 partimenti. Presently, an increasing number of conservatories and music institutions offer courses in practical counterpoint and partimento. Often, lessons in partimento take place in smaller groups, combining practical one-on-one training with theoretical instruction. To enhance teaching and learning, this volume includes a "Workbook Section" presenting all 50 lessons once more, this time in blank piano scores. This format allows students to plan their realizations or jot down ideas acquired while practicing.

Underfigured Bass

One distinguishing characteristic of Cotumacci's partimenti is his unique utilization of what I term *underfigured bass*. Unlike many other instructors who initially focus on figured bass before introducing unfigured partimenti, Cotumacci introduces his students to underfigured partimenti early on, deliberately omitting certain figures. In this pedagogical approach, figures may appear without attached accidentals, serving a specific purpose: to guide students in understanding the modulatory processes or tonicizations within Cotumacci's partimenti. These intentionally

omitted accidentals are strategically employed to enhance the student's awareness and comprehension.

Cotumacci's partimenti hold a central position within the partimento repertoire, profoundly influencing a generation of Neapolitan composers due to his lineage as a student of Alessandro Scarlatti (1660–1725) and successor to Francesco Durante (1684–1755) at the *Conservatorio di Santa Maria di Onofrio*. This influence extended beyond his immediate circle; for instance, when the French theorist and historian Alexandre Étienne Choron (1771–1834) compiled a collection of partimenti in the initial segment of his monumental work, *Principes de Composition des Écoles d'Italie* (Paris, 1808-09), he featured partimenti by Fedele Fenaroli, Carlo Cotumacci, and Nicola Sala. Choron's selection encompassed the diverse styles of figuring prevalent in the Neapolitan partimento tradition: Sala's intricately *figured* basses, reminiscent of older contrapuntal styles ideal for preparing students for church music composition; Fenaroli's *unfigured* basses, characterized by a homophonic and operatic flair; and Cotumacci's *underfigured* basses, which occupied a middle ground between the two, offering a unique perspective within the tradition.

Cotumacci's approach to the underfigured bass seems designed to cultivate the student's awareness of the shifting tonalities and modulations inherent in these exercises. While figures in conventional partimenti typically indicate where to introduce accidentals to facilitate key changes, Cotumacci opts to leave such accidentals out of his figures. This deliberate omission challenges the student to consider the most appropriate placements for these notes, allowing for a more active engagement with tonicization and modulation. Additionally, Cotumacci includes sequences in certain partimenti where each element of the sequence is tonicized. In such instances, he may provide no figures at all, expecting the student to skillfully incorporate tonicizations independently.

The Complete Autograph Source

Until recently, the Neapolitan manuscript I-Nc Rari 1-9-14/1 was regarded as the sole autograph source for Carlo Cotumacci's partimenti. Acquired by the library of the *Conservatorio di San Pietro a Majella* in Naples in 1881, a note from

archivist Francesco Rondinella on its front page seems to confirm its authenticity and contents. However, beyond the initial 50 lessons, this manuscript contains only three of the 75 partimenti, alongside works by Leonardo Leo and Bernardo Pasquini. Moreover, the handwriting in I-Nc Rari 1-9-14/1 differs significantly from other known autographs by Cotumacci, suggesting that this source should be seen as an incomplete copy rather than an original manuscript.¹ In June 2019, Marco Pollaci kindly photographed another copy of Cotumacci's partimenti for me, labeled I-Nc 45-1-18/1. This manuscript, upon examination, revealed itself as a complete autograph of Cotumacci's rules, lessons, and partimenti. The handwriting in this manuscript aligns with that of several other known autographs by Cotumacci, including the setting of the psalm "Beatus vir" in the *British Library* in London² and the autograph solfeggio manuscript "Solfeggi a due" in the *Bibliothèque Nationale de France* in Paris.³

The 64 and the 75-set

The partimento database *UUPart* lists today sixteen sources for Cotumacci's *Rules, Lessons, and Partimenti*, although some of them appear in an incomplete state. Apart from the printed version in Alexandre Étienne Choron's *Principes de Composition des Écoles d'Italie* (Paris 1808–09), the RISM call numbers for these manuscripts are the following: D-MŪs SANT Hs. 1340, I-BGi Piatti Lochis 8590; I-MC 6-F-15/2 (section 2); I-MC 6-F-15/2 (section 6); I-Mc Nosedà Th. c. 106; I-Nc 34-2-1; I-Nc 34-2-2; I-Nc O(c)-3-40, olim 45-1-4/1; I-Nc 45-1-13/3; I-Nc 45-1-18/1; I-Nc 45-1-19/1; I-Nc 45-1-20/1, I-Nc Rari 1-9-14/1, I-Rsc A. Ms. 535, and P-Ln M.M. 107.

Two of the mentioned manuscripts, I-Rsc A. Ms. 535 and I-Nc 45-1-20/1, stand out due to differences in their content and structure. These manuscripts feature a series of 64 partimenti, deviating from the more common 75-part set. Notably, the composition of the 64-part set alternates between major and minor modes, whereas

the 75-part set begins with seven major mode pieces before transitioning to minor mode pieces. The structure of the 64-part set, likely the earlier of the two variants, mirrors the key arrangement found in the collection "Regole per ben sonare il cembalo" by Alessandro Scarlatti, dating back to 1754. This observation supports Charles Burney's assertion that Carlo Cotumacci was a student of Alessandro Scarlatti, as it suggests Cotumacci may have initiated his series of partimenti following Scarlatti's key order. Subsequently, it appears that the series of 64 partimenti was expanded with 13 new pieces (Nos. 63–75), while the final partimento in the 64-set (No. 64) was omitted. The appendix to the second volume of this edition will include this omitted piece (No. 64), which originally served as the concluding piece in I-Rsc A. Ms. 535.

Some General Remarks on Practicing Partimento

In the following section, I will give a few general hints on how to practice partimento. Thereafter I will highlight one example of Cotumacci's lessons, in which I will show some specific strategies on how to read underfigured bass, and how to practice it.

Some basic knowledge on clefs, notenames, intervals, accidentals, figures, and even handpositions and fingerings are explained in the first dozen of pages, leading up to the first exercises that are practiced on the keyboard. Before the student will start working on the realization of single lessons, Cotumacci advises the student to become familiar with harmonized scales. In 24 cadences, or *accadenze* as they are called in Cotumacci's words, the student will become familiar in harmonizing the scale in all keys. Every exercise ends with 6/4 and 5/3. It is clear, though, that 6/4 can be replaced by 5/4. The student is encouraged to vary the cadences.

In the Neapolitan tradition, partimenti were often built from small elements, such as cadences, scalar motions, or sequential patterns, that were first practiced in short exercises and then put together into small pieces. Cotumacci's partimento are no exception to that rule. The figures in the lessons reveal the elements that are going to be practiced. "Lesson 1" repeats the scalar motions of the preceding cadences, and combines these with situations of the 4/2 chord and the tied bass. Most lessons repeat the material that is presented at the very beginning in new keys. Already the very first lessons show a clear construction, in which a thematic unit is confirmed in the main key and then modulates to either the dominant or the subdominant key. Most of the lessons contain one or a few sections of tonal instability, in which the

1 See: Giorgio Sanguinetti, *The Art of Partimento*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012, 348. See also: Rosa Cafiero, "La didattica del partimento a Napoli fra Settecento e Ottocento: note sulla fortuna delle 'Regole' di Carlo Cotumacci." In *Gli affetti convenienti all'idea*, edited by Maria Caraci Vela, Rosa Cafiero, and Angela Romagnoli. Naples: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1993: 559.

2 GB-Lbl Add Ms. 24296.

3 F-Pn 7338.

student is supposed to combine cadences or modulatory segments into a modulatory chain. It is of great value to start the process of learning to play these pieces by just reading the lesson with great care. Some questions that are of value to have noticed is where the important cadences take place, where modulatory segments are to be expected and what tonal areas that are used, and which tonal areas remain unused. The new keys that one may see appear could, for example, be marked into the score with a pencil as “IV” for the subdominant key in major, or the “vi” for the minor parallel key in major, etc.

Dividing the piece into smaller phrases or units may also help You to elaborate a single phrase not in one way but rather in a few different ways. Variation is the cornerstone of learning partimento, and it cannot be emphasized enough that one should always practice to achieve multiple solutions, and to become flexible in instantly selecting segments from the multiple versions that have been practiced.

An aspect that is somewhat characteristic for Cotumacci’s lessons, is his use of various forms of the 4/2-chord. It appears in alla breve meter at a slow pace, but also in quicker sequential motions that may surprize the player (see for example “Lesson 4”, mm.17–18).

It is good to remember that the materials that are provided in this first volume are arranged in a progressive order. This makes it advisable to approach the lessons more or less in the order they are presented. Before beginning to play, it is beneficial to consider the specific skills the composer aims for us to develop. Cotumacci provides some guidance through the titles of the rules preceding each set of 10 lessons. For instance, if we tackle “Lesson 14,” it serves as an application of the rules introduced between partimenti No. 10 and 11, focusing on concepts like “Explanation of the fourth, and of the third, namely when it has to be minor or major.” Lessons 11–20 then expand upon this pedagogical theme or rule.

When learning partimento with a teacher, I recommend learning short phrases by ear, simply by mimicking the teacher’s playing or recordings. In my own teaching approach, I often prefer to record phrases in a three-part contrapuntal style. The transparency inherent in three-part polyphonic style facilitates the imitation of three-part contrapuntal style. Four-part style becomes easily more chordal and becomes much more difficult to imitate by ear. The goal of partimento, it should be remembered, is to cultivate proficiency in practical counterpoint.

How to use the Workbook Section

Partimenti are best mastered through active engagement in playing rather than through writing. However, it is important to acknowledge that partimenti also functioned as a precursor to written counterpoint. Evidence of this can be found in the counterpoint notebooks of students from Neapolitan conservatories, where realizations of partimenti have been documented. In the realm of counterpoint, partimenti often served as foundational bass lines over which students would construct two- or three-part exercises in their notebooks. The objective of such exercises was to cultivate an understanding of various compositional elements including dissonance resolution, modulation, imitation, and motivic development.

Similar methods can certainly be applied today. Following the realization of partimenti on the keyboard, students may feel encouraged to document their most promising ideas in written notation in the workbook section (from page 61 and onward). It’s essential to underscore that the workbook should function as a tool for outlining the fundamental aspects of these compositions rather than transcribing them *verbatim*. This approach empowers students to construct their own customized learning framework, akin to scaffolding, prior to revisiting the pristine renditions provided at the beginning of the volume. This cyclical process is indispensable, as partimento training places a strong emphasis on attaining fluency in performance. Therefore, writing exercises should complement rather than obstruct the development of this fluency by fostering awareness and understanding of how practical skills can be refined.

How to Read Underfigured Bass

In the following pages, we will delve into the distinctive aspects of Cotumacci’s partimento pedagogy. As mentioned earlier, Cotumacci’s approach to using figures differs notably from that of other Neapolitan maestri in partimento collections.

In *underfigured* partimenti, students are provided with only rudimentary information in the figures. In numerous lessons, cadences featuring characteristic falling octaves are often denoted as 6/4 and 5/3 (refer to *Fig. 1* below). One might question why Cotumacci employs such markings for cadences. Aren’t they somewhat redundant? After all, wouldn’t these cadences be recognizable even without such figures? The rationale behind marking cadences in this manner likely lies in their ability to elucidate



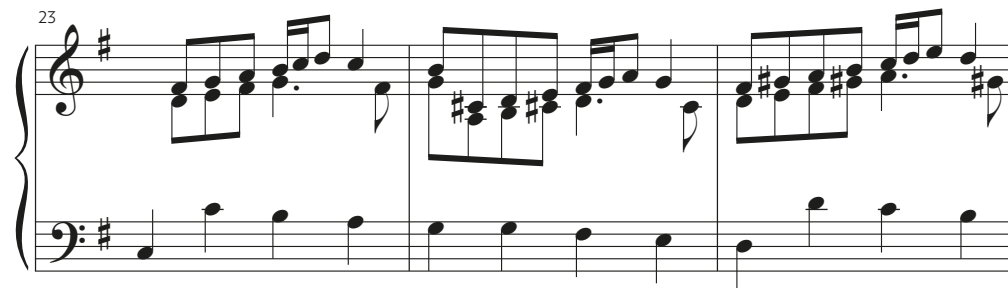
Fig. 1: Adding accidentals to figures in “Lesson no. 6” (mm. 1–3):



Fig. 2: Recognition of the cadence m. 4 and its implications:



Fig. 3: Tonicizations in the sequence of mm. 23–25:



the overall structure and construction of the piece, making modulatory processes more readily identifiable between these highlighted cadential points.

Taking a closer look at *Figure 1* alongside my proposed realization, it becomes evident that Cotumacci avoids using a sharp for the third in the cadence. There's a clear indication that the third over the last note in measure 2 should be a D sharp, rather than a D. As observed in many lessons, accidentals are sparingly used, and only when absolutely necessary. In practical terms, this means that most 6/4/2 chords can be interpreted in more than one way: if the 6/4/2 chord leads to a cadence in a dominant direction, a sharp on the 4 is required. However, if it remains in the same key, a sharp on the 4 is unnecessary.

In other instances, we may encounter unmarked cadences, such as in measure 4 of "Lesson 6" (see *Figure 2* above). Since "Lesson 6" begins in E minor and approaches a potential cadential progression, a modulation to the key of B minor is necessary. The appropriate point for this modulation seems to be the third beat of measure 3, where an A sharp is introduced in the alto voice. Similarly, using a C sharp over the note E (the subdominant in B minor) helps clarify its subdominant nature. The cadence, occurring in the middle of measure 4, restates the thematic material from the beginning, now in B minor.

Another aspect to note in Cotumacci's underfigured bass is the use of sequential patterns. The final section after the cadence in C major (measures 23–27) displays a sequence that remains unfigured but modulates back to the main key of E minor. Four successive falling tetrachords are employed in this bass line to link the cadence in C major with the imminent return to E minor. Readers may here be prompted to simply interpret and understand that tonicizations are intended to create a sequential transition linking the key of C major with the key of E minor.

As demonstrated in the examples from "Lesson 6" above (*Figures 1–3*), Cotumacci's teaching approach diverges from that of most other instructors in how figures are employed in instruction. Through these exercises, players will discover that Cotumacci adeptly imparts several invaluable skills: beyond proficiency in contrapuntal keyboard performance, these lessons will also refine players' abilities in analytical reading and compositional comprehension.

Peter van Tour

Editorial Principles

This diplomatic edition uses the following editorial principles:

- All clefs, time-signatures, and barlines are transcribed as in the principal source.
- All thoroughbass figures are transcribed faithfully as they appear in the principal source.
- All beamings are reproduced exactly as they appear in the principal source.
- The principal source reiterates key-signatures at every change of clef, even if no key change occurs. This edition modernizes this practice and shows only key signatures at key changes.
- Cautionary accidentals are reproduced as they appear in the principal source.
- Editorial cautionary accidentals, added for reasons of clarity, are always shown between round brackets.
- Repeated numbers in triplets and sextuplets are marked just one or two times, in order to avoid confusion with figures.

Regole, e Principj di sonare
 lezioni di partimenti
 del Sig.^r Carlo Cotumacci

Rules and principles on how to play
 Lessons consisting of Partimenti
 by Carlo Cotumacci

[fol. 91v] Alfabeto de toni di tutte le chiavi, cioè

Illustration of the notes in all the clefs, namely

	G	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
<i>Chiave di Violino</i> Violin Clef								
<i>Soprano</i> Soprano Clef								
<i>Mezzo soprano</i> Mezzosoprano Clef								
<i>Contralto</i> Contralto Clef								
<i>Tenore</i> Tenor Clef								
<i>Basso</i> Bass Clef								
<i>Baritono</i> Baritone Clef								

L'alfabeto de toni sono sette, cioè

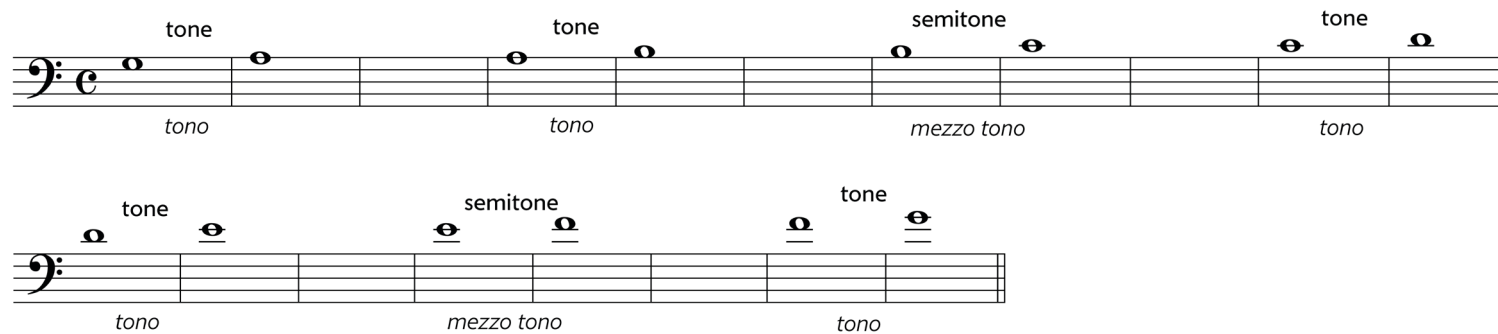
The notes of the scale, named after the notes of the alphabet, are seven. In the Bass clef, they are

Chiave di Basso
Bass Clef



[fol. 91r] Li toni sono sei, cioè cinque toni, e due mezzi toni

The scale consists of six tones, or, more precisely, five tones and two semitones, as in the following illustration:

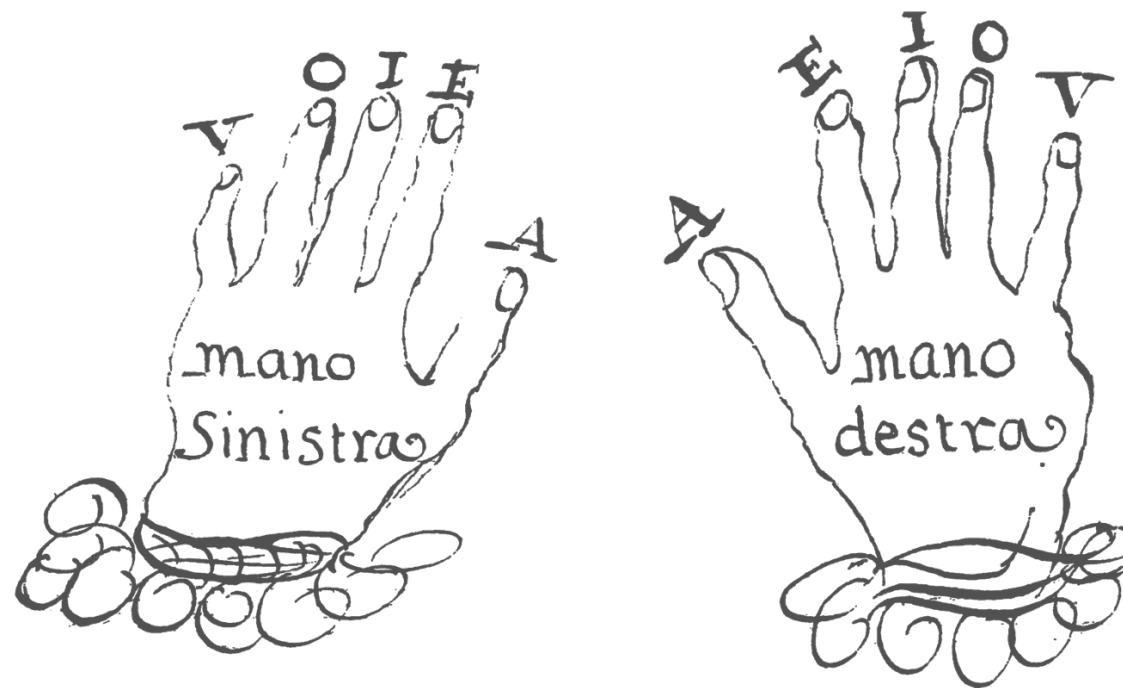


Quali in tutto sono cinque toni, e due mezzi toni.

In total, they add up to five tones and two semitones.

Per formare il tono secondo l'opinione de virtuosi vi vogliono otto come; dove si vede che il diesis <#> accresce quattro come, et il bemolle minuisce quattro altri come.

Musicians maintain that one tone consists of eight commas, and, in particular, the sharp sign <#> raises the note by four commas, while, equally, the flat sign lowers it by four commas.



[fol. 92v] Mano destra, acciò possi spasseggiare tutto il cembalo, cioè incominciando dal primo cesolfaut di sopra sino alla fine del cembalo, cioè l'ultimo cesolfaut di basso, incominciando dalla lettera u, o, i, e, i, e. siegui sempre i.e. alla fine poi deve restare il deto grosso, con fare i. e. a; colla stessa mano destra per calare da un ottava ad un'altra, si fa u. o. i. e. a. i. e. o., all'incontro poi per salire a. e. i. a. e. i. o. u. Mano sinistra, per calare assoluta un ottava, si fa a. e. i. a. e. i. o. u., all'incontro poi per salire u.o.i.e.a.i.e.a., questa e un ottava, ma per salire più d'un ottava si fa u. o. i. e. i. e. a. o. i. e. a. i. e. a. Supposto che sappi ciò, devi sapere quanta sono le situationi delle mani le quali sono trè, cioè in decima terza, in decima quinta, ed in quinta.

Right hand. In order to cover the entire span of the keyboard, start from the first Cesolfaut in the high register down to the lowest Csolfaut with the letters U, O, I, E, I, E. Repeat downwards to the lowest note, which has to be played with the thumb, concluding the sequence with I, E, A. When descending one octave with the same right hand, the sequence will be U, O, I, E, A, I, E, O. Conversely, the fingering to ascend with the right hand will be A, E, I, A, E, I, O, U. Left hand. The complete fingering to descend by an octave is A, E, I, A, E, I, O, U. Conversely, the fingering to ascend by an octave is U, O, I, E, A, I, E, A. However, to ascend further than an octave, the fingering is U, O, I, E, I, E, A, O, I, E, A, I, E, A. On this foundation, one has to learn the three positions of the hand, namely, 'in thirteenth,' 'in fifteenth' and 'in fifth.'

Carlo Cotumacci

The 50 Lessons

Regola di seconda, e quarta

La 2^a, e 4^a si pongono di botto, però quando le note del partimento sono ligate, sincopate ò nota col punto, cioè battuta, mezze battute, sospiri, e note radoppiate, le quali sono l'istesse come fussero ligate, sincopate, e puntate.

Esempio per conoscere tutte queste note antecedentemente dette.

The image contains two staves of musical notation in bass clef with a common time signature (C). The first staff illustrates three types of notes: 'sincopata' (syncopated), 'ligata' (ligated), and 'col punto' (with a dot). The second staff illustrates 'raddoppiate' (doubled) and 'sincopate' (syncopated) notes.

A queste note già dette ci ponerai 2^a, e quarta, e la quarta la scioglie la 6^a alla nota che cala del partimento, e la 2^a resta per 3^a alla medema nota della resolutione, se quel tono che hà seconda, e quarta quando doppo la resolutione della sesta ritorna allo stesso tono, allora la quarta deve essere minore, e quando poi non ritorna allo stesso tono vuole essere maggiore, e quando poi calassero più note di seconda, e quarta, devono essere quarte minore, e l'ultima maggiore, purchè non ritorna allo stesso tono

The rule of the second and of the fourth

The second and the fourth are used without preparation only when the note of the partimento is tied, part of a syncopation or a dotted note, namely, when they last a whole bar, half a bar, a quarter of a bar or they are repeated quaver notes, which is the same as if they were tied, part of a syncopation or dotted.

Example to understand the aforementioned passages.

The second and fourth must be added to the ones mentioned above. The fourth is resolved by the sixth of the following descending note of the partimento, while the second is held and becomes the third of the same resolution. If the key of the partimento occurring after the resolution of the fourth and sixth is the same, the fourth must be perfect. If, however, the key of the partimento succeeding the resolution is not the same, the fourth needs to be augmented.

che vuole essere minore com'avemo detto di sopra, e quando poi fusse stata quarta maggiore, ti porta à prima di tono, cioè entra per prima di tono quella nota che saglie doppo la quarta maggiore.

V.S., volti per ponere in prattica tutto quello che se proposto di sopra.

Moreover, in a descending sequence of seconds and fourths, the fourths must be perfect, but the last one must be augmented, because the partimento does not return to the same key, as we mentioned above. Had it been an augmented fourth, it would lead to tonic, as the note occurring after the occurrence of the augmented fourth is the tonic.

Your Lordship turn the page, to view practical examples of what was explained above.

Here follow the lessons 1–10

1.

14

26

38

I-Nc 45-1-18/1, fol. 96v

2.

8

16

24

I-Nc 45-1-18/1, fol. 96v

Workbook Section

Imitation – Memorization – Variation – Realization – Notation

I.

4/2 6 4/2 6/4 2 6/4 5/3 4/2

14

4/2 4/2 4/2 4/2 4/2 4/2

26

4/2 4/2 4/2 4/2 4/2 4/2 4/2 6/4 2/6 4/2 6 4/2 6 4/2 6 6/4 2

38

4/2 6 6/4 5/3

2.

Musical notation for measures 2-7. The system consists of a grand staff with a treble clef and a bass clef. The bass clef contains the notes and fingering. The notes are: G2, A2, B2, C3, D3, E3, F3, G3, A3, B3, C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5. The fingering numbers are: 4/2, 4/2, 6/4/2, 6/4/5/3, 4/2/6.

8

Musical notation for measures 8-15. The system consists of a grand staff with a treble clef and a bass clef. The bass clef contains the notes and fingering. The notes are: G2, A2, B2, C3, D3, E3, F3, G3, A3, B3, C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5. The fingering numbers are: 4/2, 6, 4/2, 6.

16

Musical notation for measures 16-23. The system consists of a grand staff with a treble clef and a bass clef. The bass clef contains the notes and fingering. The notes are: G2, A2, B2, C3, D3, E3, F3, G3, A3, B3, C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5. The fingering numbers are: 4/2, 6, 6/4/2, 6, 6/4/5/3, 4/2, 6, 6/4/2, 6/4/5/3.

24

Musical notation for measures 24-31. The system consists of a grand staff with a treble clef and a bass clef. The bass clef contains the notes and fingering. The notes are: G2, A2, B2, C3, D3, E3, F3, G3, A3, B3, C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5. The fingering numbers are: 4/2, 6/4/2.

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