Cimarosa, wealthy chapel master to imperial courts, began his musical career as an indigent boy at the Conservatorio di Santa Maria di Loreto in Naples. There, as mentioned in chapter 2, he studied for a decade under several great maestros. An important component of his studies involved solving progressively more difficult problems in the realization of partimenti, as evidenced by his preserved *zibaldone* (“lessonbook”). A partimento, of course, was an instructional bass, meaning a bass written for a pedagogical purpose. Given a particular partimento to be played at the keyboard with the left hand, a student would work toward its solution and realization by testing various additions of chords or contrapuntal voices with the right hand. Mastery of the lesson was demonstrated when the student could ably perform, with both hands, a series of stylistically appropriate musical behaviors from the beginning to the end of the partimento.

How did young students like Cimarosa in the 1760s develop skills that can challenge even adult musicians today? Part of the answer seems to lie in the students’ memorization of a rich repertory of small musical patterns that could be drawn upon for possible matches to the local topography of a given passage in a partimento. In speaking of commedia dell’arte, Pietro Maria Cecchini (1563–ca. 1630) emphasized that “the actor must see to it that his mind controls his memory (which dispenses the treasure of memorized phrases over the vast field of opportunities constantly offered by comedy).” A young musician with a mind trained to control a “treasure of memorized phrases,” some of them learned through singing and playing *solfeggi*, could quickly apply them to the “opportunities” in a partimento. After all, the human mind excels at connecting memories with complex stimuli, for instance when we immediately recognize a known face or voice.

The smallest contexts to be learned were individual tones, intervals, and the combinations of intervals that make up chords. Included in this knowledge was an understanding of basic musical notation, of hexachord syllables labeling specific pitches and local intervallic contexts (*do, re, mi*, etc.), of scale degrees (*prima di tono, secondo di tono*, etc.), and of the shorthand for figured bass (*7 = 7/5/3, 6/5 = 6/5/3*, etc.). As suggested in chapter 2, these small domains of knowledge were interconnected more strongly then than now. Take for example the notation symbols for sharps and flats. Modern students learn them as instructions to alter a pitch, whereas in Cimarosa’s time they still functioned as signs for a change of hexachord syllable and local context. The flat sign occurring as an accidental meant “treat this note as *fa* so that there will be a whole step above it and a half step below
it,” and the sharp sign meant “treat this tone as mi so that there will be a half step above it and a whole step below it.” Local context was thus woven into even these rudiments of galant music.

Cadences often came next in the curriculum. Chapter 11 introduced dozens of the cadences known to adult musicians. For young students the world of cadences was reduced to three possibilities—simple (semplice), compound (composta), and double (doppia). The rhythm and contour of the bass determined which cadence to employ. Shown below are these three types of cadences in the particular guise of C major and 4/4 time (ex. B.1). The distinctive feature of how ⑤ moves to ① is marked with a bracket:

**ex. B.1**  The three partimento cadences for beginners

![Cadenza Semplice](image1)

![Cadenza Composta](image2)

![Cadenza Doppia](image3)

For the novice, it was efficient first to memorize the models and then to employ the one that best matched the target partimento. In example B.2 I have provided the last few measures of three partimenti by Fenaroli, one of Cimarosa’s teachers. Again, brackets highlight the final move from ⑤ to ①:

**ex. B.2**  The endings of three partimenti by Fenaroli (Naples, ca. 1800)

![Partimento A](image4)

**Bk. 4, no. 37**  G major

![Partimento B](image5)

**Bk. 4, no. 38**  E major

![Partimento C](image6)

**Bk. 4, no. 40**  C minor
The best match for ending A is the *cadenza composta*, with the partimento’s octave leap from upper to lower \( \Box \) aligning with the similar leap in the model. Note that even though the meter of A differs from the model, the upper parts of the model can easily be mapped onto the partimento. The best match for ending B is the *cadenza semplice*. And the best match for ending C is the *cadenza doppia*, with its four beats on \( \Box \) aligning with the model’s whole-note \( \Box \) and the four chords above it. Even for children, the matching would be “child’s play.” A more advanced student might recognize, for example, that ending B includes two instances of the *cadenza lunga* or “Long cadence” of Sala, with the first one likely to have some form of evasion in the melody. But a beginner, lacking perhaps that broader understanding, could still perform the passage correctly by mapping onto it two instances of the *cadenza semplice*.

The recognition of a best match depends on a holistic evaluation of all the musical features. For instance, in a fast tempo, the bass of example B.3 matches the *cadenza semplice* with the standard \( \Box-\Box-\Box-\Box \) bass. But in a slow tempo none of the three basic cadences would be a good fit. Instead, the passage would match the descending form of the “Rule of the Octave.”

**Ex. B.3**  
*Presto* \( \Diamond \) *cadenza semplice*; *Largo* \( \Diamond \) *Rule of the Octave*

The Rule of the Octave for a young musician, like the Rule of St. Benedict for a monastic novice, was really a collection of rules woven together into a code of conduct. The many component parts of the Rule of the Octave had diverse histories, and Heinichen (1711), as mentioned in chapter 1, treated what he called this “schema” for the major or minor modes as a combination of several two-note contexts. The Rule itself could vary when taught by different maestros in different cities and decades. So to avoid a level of detail better treated in specialist studies,\(^2\) I present below a synchronic, systematized, and slightly idealized exposition of the Rule, conforming in the main to what students in the Neapolitan conservatories would have absorbed from their teachers.

The diagram below (fig. B.1) shows an abstraction of how eighteenth-century musicians may have conceptualized the relative stability or instability of the different scale degrees across an octave in the bass. The dark boxes represent positions deemed stable points of arrival, and the light circles indicate positions felt to be unstable and more
mobile. As a first approximation of the Rule of the Octave, we can assign the stable scale degrees 5/3 chords (i.e., play simple triads on ① and ⑤) and the unstable degrees some form of a chord with a 6, perhaps 6/3. This simplified version highlights the great continuity in the traditions of Western European polyphonic music, inasmuch as the association of an “imperfect” sixth with instability and a “perfect” fifth with stability was a central feature of fifteenth-century traditions of improvised *fauxbourdon* singing in cathedrals, a tradition believed to have survived until at least the seventeenth century.

![Figure B.1 A first approximation of the Rule of the Octave](image)

Like the melodic minor scale, the Rule of the Octave is not quite the same ascending and descending. So for a closer approximation to real practice, let us examine movement up and down separately. Figure B.2 shows the ascending version. Dissonances (the starred clashes between an adjacent “6” and “5”) were added to the scale degrees that precede the stable positions. So as one ascends the scale in the bass, maximum instability comes just before a return to stability:

![Figure B.2 A second approximation—the Rule ascending](image)

The same general principle of maximum instability coming just before the return to stability applies when descending, though the dissonances are now between a “4” and a “3” (see fig. B.3). In the descent from ⑥ to ⑤, the tone corresponding to the “6” above ⑥ is raised a half step to create a leading tone (F♯ in a C-major context) to the stable octave above ⑤, thus giving scale degrees ② and ⑥ the same sonority.
There is still one more complication. The third scale degree was deemed partly stable, partly mobile. Following the principle of dissonance preceding stability, musicians often added a “4/5” dissonance to a rising ②, and almost always added a “4/2” dissonance to a ④ passing in descent between ⑤ and ③ (see fig. B.4). The Rule of the Octave is thus not a fixed set of chords, but rather a summary of central tendencies in the fluid and highly contingent practices of eighteenth-century musicians.

The Neapolitan maestro Giovanni Furno (1748–1837), in a discussion titled Regole delle cordi del tono [The Rules of Scale Steps], detailed further, more particular contingencies relating to departures from scalar movement. Example B.4 on the following page shows one of Furno’s partimenti for the rank beginner. As you can see, cadences and scalar passages account for all but the opening gesture. I have marked with asterisks three departures from the normal Rule of the Octave. For the first type (cf. m. 5), Furno recommended a 5/3 chord where ④ has not continued a descent from ③. This adjustment matches the Primer. For the second type (cf. m. 6), he recommended a 5/3 chord where ⑥ does not descend to ⑤. This matches the cadenza lunga (“Long cadence”). And for the third type (cf. m. 7), he recommended a 5/3 chord where ⑤ does not ascend to ⑦. This matches the cadenza finta (“deceptive cadence”). In his treatise Furno never mentions these larger contexts, though his partimenti suggest that knowledge of them was assumed. I present one of the many possible realizations of this small partimento in example B.5.
A beginner’s partimento by Furno. Cadences (dashed lines) and scalar passages (gray lines) comprise almost the whole exercise.

Furno’s Metodo Facile breve e chiaro delle prime ed essenziali regole per accompagnare Partimenti senza numeri [An Easy, Brief, and Clear Method Concerning the Primary and Essential Rules for Accompanying Unfigured Partimenti] (Naples, 1817), from which example B.4 was taken, appeared during a period of reorganization and reevaluation at the conservatories, and his title betrays the growing influence of nineteenth-century “how-to” books. Traditional instruction in partimenti was anything but brief or easy, as Furno had learned from his own maestro Cotumacci. Cadences and the Rule of the Octave alone do not constitute a rich enough vocabulary for galant practice.

Instruction in partimenti also included figured basses, which developed students’ skills in sightreading thoroughbass accompaniments, helped beginners learn which harmonies to play, and could supply hints aimed at the realization of stock contrapuntal
combinations. A small figured bass (ex. B.6) by the Bolognese maestro Stanislao Mattei (1750–1825), pupil of and successor to Padre Martini (1706–1784), does not appear at first glance to have any clear organization:

**EX. B.6** Mattei, *Piccolo basso*, G major, no. 4, m. 1 (Bologna, ca. 1790s)

But in playing this exercise a good student might begin to hear patterns emerge whose implications, if recognized, could lead to a strongly contrapuntal, three-voice realization:

**EX. B.7** The author’s realization of ex. B.6
Mattei’s whole exercise demonstrates what Cimarosa’s lessonbook would have titled “Caminare di 2a e 3a”—“progressing by 2–3 suspensions.”

Many such common progressions had long ago crystallized into stock schemata. Furno, like the older maestro Fedele Fenaroli in his published set of Regole [Rules] (Naples, 1775), described a great number of such progressions as movimenti or “special moves.” If the Rule of the Octave described, by analogy to the game of chess, the simple, straightforward moves of pawns, movimenti described all the sequences of leaps and/or steps available to a Knight or Queen. Among the schemata presented in the previous chapters, the leaping-bass Romanesca, the Monte, the Monte Principale, the Monte Romanesca, and the large circle-of-fifths Prinner all appear in various regole as movimenti. For students, these learned sequences and other phrase-size schemata thus complemented the default reliance on the Rule of the Octave and helped to add a number of jewels to their “treasure of memorized phrases.”

Movimenti were described by their bass motion within each module of a sequence. Among the first to be taught was that of a bass that “falls a third and rises a second.” The rule was that the lower tone of the descending third should take a 6/3 or 6/5/3 chord, and that the following tone (a step higher) should take a 5/3 chord. “And thus,” as Fenaroli said, “one successively alternates the accompaniments [6/5 and 5/3] until the end of the motion.”

Durante wrote the modest partimento shown in example B.8 as an illustration “Of the Formation of the 5th and 6th,” meaning the proper disposition of 6/5/3 chords in the movimento that opens his exercise. The annotations—a “thick description”—of overlapping and nested schemata—are mine. A student like Cimarosa, of course, saw only the bass and the few figures provided. His task was first to recognize the match between the opening bass pattern and the “falls-a-third-and-rises-a-second” movimento, and then to set 6/5/3 chords on the lower tones of each descending third. I have labeled Durante’s particular instantiation of this movimento “Phrygian” to indicate that the bass tones receiving 5/3 chords descend through the Phrygian tetrachord from E₄ to B₃. Recognizing that this opening pattern is a movimento would greatly simplify the student’s task, since the Rule of the Octave offers no help at all and would, in fact, be misleading. Note that Durante does not provide an explicit solution to the problem posed by the opening movimento until measures 8–9, where he inserts the figures “6/5.”

Durante’s partimento, though still more of an exercise than a fully fashioned work of art, is nevertheless considerably more artful than Furno’s (ex. B.4). Whereas Furno scarcely repeats any of the patterns in his exercise, Durante makes repetition, transposed repetition, and slightly altered repetition a central part of the student’s experience, helping thereby to foster an understanding of the underlying prototypes or schemata. The movimento appears four times in two keys, and the cadenza semplice (with the full ③–④–⑤–① bass) appears six times in five keys. In two places, a one-step-lower repetition of the Comma-semplice combination forms the larger pattern of a Fonte. And the still larger complex of “Phrygian-to-Do-Re-Mi-to-Fonte” occurs first in E minor and second in
ex. B.8  Illustration no. 34 from Durante’s Regole (Naples, ca. 1740)

B minor, giving the partimento a common type of exposition. Following the contrast of the fauxbourdon, Durante closes with restatements of the movimento and the Do-Re-Mi in the home key. The Fontes have no place in the final section because there is no longer a need to modulate. I provide one of several possible realizations of Durante’s partimento in example B.9. Because the above partimento already provides thorough schematic annotations, only the most important schemata are marked on this example. Note that, in the opening movimento, the sequence is compatible with caminare di 2a e 3a. That is, a student who can associate this movimento with a chain of 2–3 suspensions has essentially solved the musical problem posed by the partimento.
Furno’s small partimento (ex. B.4) was entirely pedagogical. Mattei’s march up and down the hexachord in 2–3 suspensions (ex. B.6) was too regular for most real performances in the galant style. Even Durante’s larger partimento (ex. B.8) was still constrained to reiterate its point about 6/5 chords. When a student advanced to tackle a full-size, free-standing partimento, he or she faced a significant increase in the music’s scope and complexity. Realizing a full-size partimento was—and still is—a significant challenge. A basic level of proficiency can be demonstrated by matching appropriate schemata to the various patterns in the bass. At this basic level the avoidance of error may be uppermost in the student’s mind. A second, intermediate level will involve introducing motivic connections between the different phrases and passages. One might describe the student as shifting, by analogy to sport, from defending to attacking, hoping to score artistic points. And an advanced level requires intuiting or deriving opportunities for brief canons and other
points of imitation. This is especially true for partimenti written in Durante’s era, when imitative counterpoint was pervasive. The student able to perform at this level is demonstrating considerable fluency in the style.

While early nineteenth-century copies of partimenti included overt clues such as “Imitazione” or “Imit.” written where an imitation was expected, the earlier partimenti did not. Presuming that the maestro did not immediately tell the student where to place imitations, the student needed to recognize what today we might call the contrapuntal affor-dances or what an eighteenth-century musician might think of as “opportunities.” That is, one needed to learn to recognize the cues and special configurations in the bass that would permit a known contrapuntal treatment. The following remarks relate to the opportunities for counterpoint in example B.10, my realization of one of Durante’s full-sized partimenti numerati, something of a misnomer since not a single figure (numero) appears. The bottom staff, of course, is Durante’s original partimento and the top staff is my realization of it. The astute reader may recognize in the opening of this partimento the prototype for Tritto’s later partimento shown in chapter 7 (ex. 7.20).

The stepwise bass descent of measures 1–6 affords a presentation of the stepwise Romanesca, which further affords a parallel stepwise descent in the melody. That stepwise descent affords the opportunity to highlight the Prinner by shifting that segment of the descent up one octave. The resulting parallel thirds further afford the opportunity for imitation on a chain of 2–3 suspensions, as demonstrated when the Romanesca returns (mm. 40–45), though choosing that option means abandoning the Prinner. The same types of affordance apply to the descending scales beginning in measure 8. One could set the melody in imitation at either the third or the sixth. Choosing imitation at the sixth realizes an inverted form of the Prinner, which will arrive “on schedule” back on the tonic triad in measure 15. An ascending scale (m. 28) and another descending scale (m. 35) allow for similar treatments. This is also true for the Falling Thirds patterns (mm. 47–50 and 56–59). Perhaps the most characteristic imitation occurs in the passages marked Monte Principale (mm. 50–53, 59–62, and 75–77). Though not immediately apparent, those passages are set in imitation at the fifth, with the accompaniment leading the bass by one quarter-note. The model for this treatment comes from a number of widely copied partimenti and, in particular, Durante’s own Studio no. 2 (see ex. 7.16).

For the Monte in measures 15–19 the accompaniment works equally well in a diatonic or chromatic guise. With unfigured partimenti, such choices lie with the performer, not the composer. Note also that although the chromatic Monte provides a series of leading tones to local foci on V, VI, and I, no leading tone is provided to VII (no F♯4 before G♯4 in m. 17). Whether through affinity to the Long Comma or merely to avoid a double sharp, that diatonic ending to an extended chromatic Monte was part of galant tradition. The final cadence, measures 80–81, with its doubled note values, invites the cadenza composta. Nevertheless I chose to use a slower version of the cadenza semplice to allow for one last appearance of the opening motive, the ornamental resolution of a 2–3 suspension.
ex. B.10  The author’s realization of Durante’s partimento numerato no. 14
ex. B.10 (continued)

FALLING 3RDS

MONTE PRINCIPALE

cadenza composita

PONTE

JOMMELLI

ROMANESCA

MONTE PRINCIPALE

cadenza finta
cadenza simplice
The passage from the second half of measure 19 to the first half of measure 27 is one of the most difficult to interpret from the bass alone. The eye may be drawn to the whole notes in the even-numbered measures as the likely core elements. But the best match to those four bass tones (E₃, D₃, C#₃, B₂) would be a large Prinner in B minor, which would not end properly with the bass’s final ascent to C♯ in measure 27. That stepwise ascent happens after each whole note, and if one pays special attention to the notes on the downbeats, the whole passage matches the down-a-third-up-a-second movimento described earlier. Applying that frame, one can then give the whole notes unstable 6/5/3 chords and the downbeat half notes stable 5/3 chords. The overall pattern, thus instantiated, matches the same Phrygian tetrachord found in the opening two measures of the Durante partimento shown earlier in example B.7. The ending chord, C♯ major in measure 27, works very nicely as a half cadence in F♯ minor, the relative minor of the preceding and following A-major contexts.

Readers interested in the still more advanced challenges of Durante’s partimenti diminuiti (“embellished partimenti”) and partimento fugues may wish to consult the author’s Internet site, Monuments of Partimenti.11 There one can also find the full texts of the treatises of Furno and Fenaroli in both English and Italian, Durante’s Regole, hundreds of partimenti, charts of the eighteenth-century maestros of the great conservatories, models for the emulation of galant musical style, and indices of partimento incipits.

The maestros in charge of young students in Naples needed practical, musically worthy teaching material that would slowly but surely transform boys into professional musicians. Lessons learned needed to be retained for life, and the combination of visual, aural, and tactile sensations in partimenti and solfeggi seems to have created especially vivid, well-remembered experiences. The boys gradually built up the rich nonverbal knowledge of how to integrate melody, harmony, counterpoint, characteristic gestures and textures, improvisation, large-scale form, and motivic coherence. And whether or not the correlation is causal, it is nevertheless a historical fact that the heyday of training in partimenti and two-part solfeggi coincided with the period of European dominance by musicians trained at Italian conservatories. The partimento may thus have been a preindustrial but cognitively advanced technology that was especially well adapted to the task of training young musicians for later service at galant courts, theaters, and chapels.

When galant society faltered at the end of the eighteenth century, the study of partimenti slowly transformed from a training of the musical imagination to a training in a canon of fixed exercises. The changes attendant with that transformation parallel the transition from an aural to a literate culture, and the overt marker of that change was the appearance, beginning in the 1820s, of published realizations of Fenaroli’s partimenti. That is, the basses designed to train the musical imagination became the left-hand parts of “piano pieces” to be read at the keyboard. Whereas the transition from improvised commedia dell’arte to the literary plays of Pierre de Marivaux (1688–1763), Goldoni, and Charles Simon Favart (1710–1792) changed one art form into another, the change of partimenti into stale exercises essentially extinguished their advantage over humbler exercises.
in harmony or simple counterpoint. Ossified partimenti continued to be taught as part of a revered tradition. Nadia Boulanger (1887–1979), for instance, was one of the last French teachers in an unbroken partimento tradition, including both her father and her grandfather, that extended back to the first years of the Paris Conservatory in the 1790s.\textsuperscript{12} Italian editions of partimenti continued to be published until the 1950s.\textsuperscript{13} Yet it was only with Karl Gustav Fellerer’s studies in the 1930s at the Santini collection in Münster that a modern appreciation of the original partimento tradition began to emerge. Fellerer’s small but insightful \textit{Der Partimentospieler}\textsuperscript{14} appeared in Germany shortly after the onset of World War II and was thus largely overlooked in the postwar era. The present volume represents a second stage of rediscovery, one in which many distinguished scholars are currently participating.