Bernardo Pasquini (1637–1710), besides being an important performer and composer, was a sought-after teacher who left behind an array of pedagogical materials. These include a list of rules (Regole) for cembalo players, a collection of models in counterpoint, and one of the earliest collections of partimenti.\(^1\) A partimento resembles a basso continuo, but whereas a basso continuo is an accompaniment to support other players, a partimento is an independent composition whose upper voice or voices must be improvised by the keyboard performer. The guided training in improvisation provided by partimenti helped young composers gain facility in the rapid production of multi-voice compositions and made a repertory of contrapuntal-harmonic schemata second nature to the student.\(^2\)

It was in eighteenth-century Naples that training in partimenti reached its highest level of development. As a relatively new technology of instruction, partimenti may have been instrumental in fostering the domination of eighteenth-century music by musicians trained in Naples, especially during the middle years of the century. Partimenti were not limited to Naples. They were, as mentioned, used by Pasquini in Rome, by Padre Martini in Bologna, and even in the school of J. S. Bach.\(^3\) Yet nowhere else but in Naples could partimenti be found by the many hundreds, written by almost every important maestro.

For Italian musicians of that era, training in partimenti was so common that no one seems to have bothered to write down the details of instruction. A typical manuscript collection of partimenti contains no instructions whatsoever, since the student would always have a maestro at hand to answer questions. For the French, by contrast, this tradition was foreign and required some explanation. The verbal introductions added to the earliest French printed editions of Neapolitan partimenti offer some clues as to details of the tradition.\(^4\) And because the history of partimento instruction was new to the French, they wrote down what little they knew of it.

Alexandre-Étienne Choron (1771–1834), an important figure in French music-pedagogical writing during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic periods, admired and befriended the composer Grétry, who had trained in Rome with G.-B. Casali. It may have been through these connections that Choron decided to publish collections of Neapolitan partimenti in the early 1800s. In 1810 he co-edited with François Fayolle a music dictionary that included an entry for the most important partimento author in the Neapolitan tradition, Francesco Durante (1684–1755).

Choron’s entry for Durante begins by stating, matter-of-factly, that Durante went to Rome to study with Pasquini and Pittoni:

DURANTE, (FRANCESCO), né à Naples en 1693, fut élevé au conservatoire de Santo-Onofrio, de cette ville, et reçut des leçons du célèbre Aless. Scarlatti. Il quitta de bonne heure ce conservatoire, et vint à Rome, attiré par la réputation de B. Pasquini et de Pittoni. Il travailla cinq uns sous ces deux maîtres, et apprit de l’un l’art du chant et de la mélodie; de l’autre, toutes les ressources du contrepoint. Il revint ensuite à Naples, et se livra à la composition; mais il travailla presqu’uniquement pour l’église, il ne fit jamais rien pour le théâtre; et dans le catalogue de ses ouvrages, on ne voit que très-peu de cantates et duos pour la chambre, et un très-petit nombre de pièces instrumentales.\(^5\)
Large portions of Choron’s dictionary were translated and copied by other publishers. The following entry from an English music dictionary edited by John Sainsbury in 1827 is clearly an adaptation of Choron (note the same, incorrect birthdate):

DURANTE, FRANCESCO, born at Grumo, a village near Naples, in 1693, was educated in the Conservatory of San Onofrio, and received lessons of the celebrated Alessandro Scarlatti. He quitted the Conservatory at an early age, and went to Rome, where he was attracted by the reputation of B. Pasquini and Pittoni. He studied five years under these masters, learning from one the art of singing and counterpoint, and from the other all the resources of counterpoint. He then returned to Naples, and devoted himself to composition; but he wrote principally for the church, to which his genius seems peculiarly to have directed him.  

Sainsbury’s dictionary was in turn pirated, with a version of the same entry appearing in Boston in 1854. Thus the story of Durante’s sojourn to Rome and his studies with Pasquini and Pittoni became common knowledge in the nineteenth century.

Naples had suffered terribly during the Napoleonic wars. The four great conservatories of the eighteenth century all failed or were consolidated into the new Royal Conservatory. There was a sense that a golden age had passed, and friends of the old conservatories became perhaps overly protective of what they felt to be a uniquely Neapolitan tradition. In 1840 the Marquis of Villarosa published a tribute to the famous composers of Naples’s golden age. In it he dismisses the idea that the great Durante would have needed to seek instruction beyond Naples. Villarosa’s contention was taken up by Francesco Florimo (1800–1888), a friend of Bellini who became the librarian of the Naples Conservatory and wrote an extensive history of the old conservatories:

The travels of the famous young Mozart, for example, are easy to trace, even at the distance of centuries. People wrote about him in their diaries, there were announcements of his concerts in newspapers, and his visits to important aristocrats were recorded by their courts. Durante was not famous as a student. There are only scattered, indirect clues concerning his whereabouts before he became a maestro in Naples. The influential Belgian writer François-Joseph Fétis (1784–1871) concluded that, whether or not one could place Durante in Rome, he nonetheless absorbed the Roman style:

I signori Choron e Fayolle, nel loro Dizionario degli scrittori di musica, forse appoggiandosi a qualche tradizione, asseriscono che Durante nella sua giovinezza si sia recato in Roma, ove fermatosi cinque anni, si sia perfezionato sotto Pitoni nel canto, e nel contrappunto sotto Bernardo Pasquini. Vien ciò contraddetto dal Villarosa e dal Fétis; e mi par meglio fatto di seguire la loro opinione. Durante visse sempre in uno stato meschino, si da non potere aver mezzi per intraprendere tal viaggio e dimorare in Roma cinque anni. Pur nondimeno se non andò in Roma, pare indubitato che, avendo egli grande stima de’ maestri della Scuola Romana, avesse fatto seri studi sopra le composizioni di costoro, studi che ebbbero per oggetto principale d’introdurre nella Scuola Napolitana forme più severe, accoppiandole, come fece, al sentimento melodico e alla chiarezza delle armonie nel suo particolare modo d’insegnamento. E poi, aggiunge il Villarosa, qual bisogno poteva aver mai di tali maestri romani quando era stato ben istruito dallo Scarlatti e dal Greco? — Valevano forse il Pitoni ed il Pasquini più del Greco e dello Scarlatti?

The travels of the famous young Mozart, for example, are easy to trace, even at the distance of centuries. People wrote about him in their diaries, there were announcements of his concerts in newspapers, and his visits to important aristocrats were recorded by their courts. Durante was not famous as a student. There are only scattered, indirect clues concerning his whereabouts before he became a maestro in Naples. The influential Belgian writer François-Joseph Fétis (1784–1871) concluded that, whether or not one could place Durante in Rome, he nonetheless absorbed the Roman style:

The common opinion of historians today is that Durante did indeed study in Rome, and most likely with Pasquini and Pittoni. Yet if Durante studied with one of the pioneers of partimento instruction, and himself became a leader of partimento instruction in Naples, why were no partimenti by his teacher Pasquini preserved in Naples?

There is now known to be at least one Neapolitan manuscript that does contain Pasquini partimenti. This manuscript, preserved in the Naples Conservatory library (Conservatorio di Musica San Pietro a Majella), is listed as an autograph of the maestro Carlo Cotumacci (1709?–1785) and catalogued as MS 15.7.21/1. Titled Principji e Regole di Partimenti con tutte le lezioni, the manuscript was acquired by the conservatory library in 1881 according to a note on the cover page by Francesco Rondinella, Florimo’s assistant.

Though an important maestro for decades at the conservatory of St. Onofrio, where he succeeded Durante, Cotumacci left behind few biographical facts of his life. Some of what little is known of him comes from the travel book of Charles Burney. Here is the entry describing Burney’s meeting with Cotumacci:

Sunday [November] 4 [1770]. I went this morning to San Gennaro, to hear the organ and to see the chapel, and the pictures in it, by Domenichini; after which I was conducted to the house of Don Carlo Cotumacci, master to the Conservatorio of St. Onofrio, whom I heard play on the harpsichord; and who gave me a great number of anecdotes concerning the music of old times. He was scholar to the Cavalier Alessandro Scarlatti, in the year 1719; and shewed me the lessons which he received from that great master, in his own hand writing. He also gave me a very particular account of Scarlatti and his family. Signor Cotumacci, was Durante’s successor. He plays, in the old organ stile, very full and learnedly, as to modulation; and has composed a great deal of church music, of which he was so obliging as to give me a copy of two or three curious pieces. He has had great experience in teaching; and shewed me two books of his own writing, in manuscript, one upon accompaniment, and one upon counterpoint. I take him to be more than seventy years of age.11

What Burney took to be a “book . . . upon accompaniment”—in other words a primer on thoroughbass—may well have been this partimento manuscript by Cotumacci. If Cotumacci did study with Scarlatti when he only ten or so years old, it would make sense that he would have come into contact with Roman styles and practices at an early age because Scarlatti himself had Roman training and many years of employment there. Thus it is reasonable that Cotumacci would retain partimenti by Scarlatti’s Roman colleague Pasquini as well as “lessons . . . from that great master” Scarlatti. This of course does not explain the larger question of why Durante, if truly a student of Pasquini, did not use Pasquini’s partimenti in his own teaching.

There are many questions that might be asked of this Cotumacci manuscript. First, of all, is it really by Cotumacci? According to the Naples Conservatory, yes. The manuscript is stamped “Autografo” and the dedication page is signed “Carlo Cotumaccio” (an alternate form of Cotumacci). The dedication to “Amico Lettore” (“Dear Reader”), followed by a preface with a description of the contents, raises a second question—Was this manuscript intended for publication? Compared to other Neapolitan collections of partimenti, it is quite rare to have a preface, much less one addressed to a “dear reader.” Partimento manuscripts are generally either small notebooks—zibaldone—used by individual students or large collections of all the lessons known by a particular maestro. Because such manuscripts were for internal use at the four conservatories, there was never an unknown “reader,” only students and maestros. Although this manuscript begins more like a printed book than a set of partimenti, it was not published. Indeed, no book of Neapolitan partimenti was published in Naples during the eighteenth century. The only Neapolitan collection of partimenti printed before 1800 was published by Paisiello in St. Petersburg (1782), as part of his service to the Russian court.12

A third question pertains to the integrity of the manuscript. The partimento expert Giorgio Sanguinetti has suggested that different copyists were involved and that the manuscript is a pastiche from different hands.13
There are, to be sure, considerable differences to the appearance of the music notation in the various sections of the manuscript. Yet if one compares the bass clefs across all the pages (partimento manuscripts use mostly bass clefs) one sees a remarkable consistency and a hand that compares well with the dedication page and its signature. It may be worth noting that the preface ends with an apology for any errors or omissions due to the “debolezza” (“feebleness”) of its author. If, as Burney says, Cotumacci appeared to be “more than seventy years of age” in 1770, though he was probably only sixty-one, he may well have been in poor health. And the ups and downs in his health might explain some of the variation in the appearance of various sections of the manuscript.

The manuscript opens with a few pages on the rudiments of music, including note names and intervals. Then it proceeds through a long series of Regole (“rules”) for realizing a partimento, each rule provided with one or more partimenti to exemplify the rule. The student’s task was first to recognize the special patterns described by the rule and then to perform them properly in combination with the cadences and other patterns previously learned. This is likely what was meant in the preface when Cotumacci said that the reader would find “molti modi di ricercare piú passi, che pongono accadere nel Partimento” (“many ways of treating several passages that occur in a partimento”). Following more than seventy pages of regole and sample partimenti, the actual partimenti begin, termed Lezioni (“Lessons,” pp. 76ff.).

On page 112 one finds the heading “Sigue Intavolatura” (“Here Follow the Intavolature”), which in Neapolitan practice means keyboard pieces with instructional aims. One purpose of intavolature was to be models for keyboard realizations of partimenti. This could mean learning particular phrase types (schemata) and particular types of diminutions. Example 1 (from the top of MS p. 112) shows what the German Kapellmeister Joseph Riepel called a Fonte, that is, a schema of one short passage in the minor mode (F minor) followed by a parallel passage in the major mode, one step lower (Eb major). The eighth notes present a simple diminution of the underlying voices and harmonies. Example 2, which is found nine measures after Example 1, adds further diminutions to the same schema and introduces a closing figure at the end of each two-measure module. This type of “model and copy” instruction was characteristic of apprenticeship in the craft tradition. The apprentice began making simple patterns and then, over time, learned various forms of decoration or embellishment. This was true for apprentice tailors, goldsmiths, carpenters, and, of course, musicians.

Ex. 1 The Fonte schema from an intavolatura by Cotumacci
There are many examples preserved of realized partimenti from students in nineteenth-century Naples. Some of these realizations resemble harmony exercises with full chords and little melodic interest. The very few examples of realized partimenti from the eighteenth century are quite different, and they more closely resemble the keyboard works of Domenico Scarlatti or the Two-Part Inventions of J. S. Bach. The same "linear" style is seen in the intavolature of eighteenth-century maestros. According to Fétis, the mastery of this melodic style of keyboard improvisation carried over to the world of thoroughbass accompaniment:

But the practice of accompaniment made considerable progress, particularly in the schools of Pasquini in Rome and of Alessandro Scarlatti in Naples. For their students, these great masters wrote numerous figured basses, to which the name Partimenti was given. Instead of striking chords, following the French and German usage, these masters demanded that the accompanist have all the accompaniment parts sing in an elegant manner. In this connection, the Italians maintained an incontestable superiority in the art of accompanying for a long time.

On page 161 of the manuscript the intavolature conclude. Then follows a set of ten "Partimenti del Sig. Don Bernardo Pasquini," as they are titled in the manuscript. The first of these is transcribed in Example 3.
At only eleven measure long, one might think that this would be an easy exercise. But there may have been good reason to place Pasquini’s partimenti at the end of Cotumacci’s book. The patterns learned in the preceding regole and intavolature tended to be presented individually and with some separation. Examples 1 and 2 are good instances of that clarity of presentation. In Pasquini’s first partimento, by contrast, multiple patterns are presented in overlapping or nested arrangements. Let us take just the first measure of this partimento as a case in point.

According to standard Neapolitan rules, a bass that “falls by third and rises by step” ("cala di terza e sale di grado") takes $5/3$ chords on the upper notes and $6/3$ chords on the lower notes. As Pasquini's figures make clear in measure 1 (see Ex. 3), that is not the case here. If the student, however, looks only at the “strong” eighth notes (the odd-numbered tones), then a match can be made to the pattern of four descending tones viewed either as the top four tones of the “rule of the octave” in descent, or to the modulating Prinner schema. And it is with those models that Pasquini’s figures coincide.

Example 4 shows a realization by this author (Gjerdingen) of Pasquini’s first partimento (Ex. 3). Instead of a series of plain chords, the realization takes up the remark of Fétis that the upper voice “sing in an elegant manner.” The two voices together provide more than enough clues for the listener to follow the “several passages that occur in a partimento” (Cotumacci, preface).
One of the hallmarks of Roman style was the matching of an active bass to two high voices that interact through frequent chains of suspensions. In the trio sonatas of Corelli this texture became a model for eighteenth-century music generally, at least until the 1760s, and the counterpoint models of Pasquini often feature the same texture. The seventh of Pasquini’s partimenti (see Example 5) begins with a bass recognizable to a Neapolitan student as the schema “cala di quarta e sale di grado” (“falls by fourth and rises by step”). This pattern was one of the common ground basses of the seventeenth century, appearing as the “B” or major-mode section in \textit{La Romanesca} (known to English speakers as the tune “Greensleaves”) and as the basso ostinato in Pachelbel’s \textit{Canon in D}.\cite{2}

![Ex. 5 Partimento No. 7, beginning with a stock bass](image)

The norm for this schema was to place a pair of voices descending in parallel thirds above the bass, sometimes as a chain of 2–3 suspensions. The sparse figures above the first phrase (measures 1–2) indicate how obvious this was in Cotumacci’s time. The second phrase contains more specific figures for similar suspensions. The relationship of the first two measures to the second two measures can be seen more clearly in this author’s realization, Example 6, in the style of a trio sonata.

![Ex. 6 Partimento No. 7, realized with two upper voices](image)

Whereas the first phrase of this partimento ends “open” with a half cadence (Ex. 6), the second phrase ends “closed” with a complete cadence in the main key of A major. A beginning student, one struggling to find the right chord for each note in the bass, might not recognize the phrasing of Pasquini’s partimenti, or notice that the second phrase is a free paraphrase of the first. Recognizing the scansion of a partimento was a key to a satisfactory realization. In the first partimento above (Ex. 4), for instance, the passage from the end of measure 3 to the
The beginning of measure 5 contains (1) a half cadence, (2) a deceptive cadence, and (3) finally a complete cadence. Missing those cues would make a realization far less stylistic.

The table below presents the incipits to the ten Pasquini partimenti in Cotumacci’s manuscript.

Table 1 The ten incipits of the Pasquini partimenti in Naples
While the sources of most of these partimenti are unknown, the last one, No. 10, seems to be an adaptation in partimento style (there are frequent changes of clef) of Pasquini’s “Partite diverse di Follia,” possibly written down from memory and with the form of the original’s second half changed substantially. Example 7 presents the first eight measures of Pasquini’s Partite with partimento no. 10 below it for comparison. The Partite is in the key of D minor, the partimento in C minor.

Ex. 7  Pasquini’s “Partite diverse de Follia” (upper staff) compared with his Partimento No. 7 (lower staff)

It is also possible that Pasquini’s Partite was just a point of departure for a new partimento. In any case, the similarity of the Partite and partimento in Example 7 may lend some support to the idea that these partimenti really stem from Pasquini. As mentioned earlier, these are the only partimenti by Pasquini known to exist in Neapolitan manuscripts. The mystery of why so few partimenti by Pasquini were copied in Naples remains.

As a final tribute to the musical qualities of the Pasquini partimenti in Cotumacci’s manuscript, I present realizations of partimento numbers 3 and 4 (Exx. 8 and 9). The first of these is a gavotte with clearly defined phrases and cadences. It exudes the sprightly yet dignified character that must have attracted Ottorino Respighi to orchestrate other keyboard works of Pasquini for preludes to his orchestral suites The Birds and Ancient Airs and Danses. The second one, the fourth in the set of ten, begins as a minuet whose paired measures of 3/4 meter scan very much like Pasquini’s Partite (long-long-long | short-short-short-short-long). After digressions to various keys, the Fonte schema in measures 29–31 (first B minor, then A major) signals the return to the home key and the opening rhythms. But near measure 34 the character changes to become more flowing and the bass begins to support a series of contrapuntal dissonances in the upper voices (indicated in the original partimento by more frequent and more complex figures), leading to an extended plagal cadence at the close.
Ex. 9 Partimento No. 4, which begins as a minuet
NOTES


13. Private correspondence with Prof. Sanguinetti.


17. See Gjerdingen, Music in the Galant Style, chap. 3, for the Prinner schema, and Appendix B for the Rule of the Octave.

18. See Gjerdingen, Music in the Galant Style, chap. 2, for the Romanesca schema.