

History and Theory of Music

Original article
UDC 78.072.2

<https://doi.org/10.56620/RM.2024.4.020-034>

EDN: SUZTQU



Nicola Sala's *Regole del contrappunto pratico* (1794): History, Theory, and Practice

Anastasia I. Maslova

Gnesin Russian Academy of Music, Moscow, Russian Federation,
nastena_maslova_23@gnesin-academy.ru, <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-5342-8245>

Abstract. The author of the article turns to the forgotten and little known treatise, *Regole del contrappunto pratico* (1794) by Neapolitan composer and teacher Nicola Sala (1713–1801) and examines it in the historical-cultural, theoretical and practical aspects. Emphasis is made of the important role played by the tutorial discipline of counterpoint, which presented the final stage of the course of composition instruction in Neapolitan conservatories. It is noted that Sala's treatise has become the sole published work of its kind reflecting the theory and practice of counterpoint in Naples during the second half of the 18th century. On the basis of the preserved memoirs of the archivist of the conservatory library, Giuseppe Sigismondo and British music historian Charles Burney, a critical evaluation of the prehistory and the stages of creation of the treatise is made, and the various vicissitudes that hampered its publication and dissemination are revealed. The tragic events in the history of Naples that took place in 1799 lead to virtually a complete destruction of the etchings and print copies of the *Regole*, which, in its turn, served as an impulse for its rejuvenation outside of Italy, in particular, in France. In lieu of this, the question is raised about the role of Sala and, to take it further, of the Neapolitan masters in the formation of the French professional musical education.

Keywords: counterpoint, Neapolitan conservatories, Nicola Sala, *Regole del contrappunto pratico*, Alexandre-Étienne Choron, instruction in composition in the 18th century

Acknowledgements: I would like to express my deep gratitude to the directors of the library of the Conservatory of San Pietro a Majella in Naples (Biblioteca del Conservatorio di Musica San Pietro a Majella), to Dr. Cesare Corsi and Dr. Tiziana Grande for their help in carrying out my research.

For citation: Maslova A. I. Nicola Sala's *Regole del contrappunto pratico* (1794): History, Theory, and Practice. *Russian Musicology*. 2024. No. 4, pp. 20–34. <https://doi.org/10.56620/RM.2024.4.020-034>

Translated by Dr. Anton Rovner.

© Anastasia I. Maslova, 2024

Introduction

In the 18th century Naples enjoyed by right the reputation of being not only the world capital of opera, but also of the leading center for cultivating musicians with the best professional performance. At a first glance, the explanation for this lies at the surface: as a result of a total inner reorganization in the 18th century, the four “conservatory” accommodations became the primary and, during the course of the entire century, the sole musical educational institutions endowed with a legal status in the world. [1; 2; 3] The other, much more profound reason was rooted in the process of education itself — a special system that was based on a unique program developed by the Neapolitan *maestri* and upheld by a lengthy pedagogical tradition. [4] Particularly the adherence to the precepts of the instructors and the methods, canons, techniques and principles present in their practices for a long time in combination with the observance of strict discipline and a strict competitive selection served as a true basis for the formation of the phenomenon of the Neapolitan school.

Receiving an education in Naples was something that musicians not only from various corners of Italy, but also those from all of Europe aspired to. The alumni of Neapolitan conservatories were distinguished for the highest level of their performance mastery, style and virtuosity, and in the field of improvisation, they had no equals. But the young men who mastered the art of composition under

the tutelage of the Neapolitan masters were especially honored. Charles Burney (1726–1814) in his travel notes about the state of music in France and Italy of his time recorded that the Neapolitans fairly “enjoyed the reputation of being the first <...> composers in Europe.”¹ This assertion is by no means groundless. The musical compositions by Johann Adolph Hasse, Niccolò Jommelli, Giovanni Paisiello, Tommaso Traetta, Niccolò Piccinni, Antonio Sacchini, Domenico Cimarosa and many others were performed throughout Europe and beyond it. So wherein lay the secret of the tutelage that made it possible to achieve such success?

The preparation of the future composers included, in addition to undergoing the course of *solfeggi*, mandatory for all the major fields of study, also the study of harmony, accompaniment and improvisational performance on the clavier, based on an assigned voice (most frequently, albeit, not always, the bass), — *partimento*, after which the student passed onto the classes of counterpoint and free composition and underwent the graduating examination. Undoubtedly, each of these disciplines merits attention on the part of contemporary research, on account of their incomparable effectivity and the uniqueness of the musical material preserved in large quantities in archives outside of Russia, as well as the specificity of the tutelage. In the first decades of the 21st century, an entire group of scholars from the whole world, including Russia, immersed themselves in mastering the practice of *partimento*²,

¹ Cit. ex: Burney Ch. *The Present State of Music in France and Italy*. 1st Ed. London: T. Becket and Co., 1771. P. 293.

² The practice of *partimento* has been the object of three monographs (Gjerdingen R. *Music in the Galant Style*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007. 528 p.; Sanguinetti G. *The Art of Partimento: History, Theory, and Practice*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. XIV, 385 p.; Tour P. van. *Counterpoint and Partimento. Methods of Teaching Composition in Late Eighteenth-Century Naples*. Ph.D. diss. Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 2015. 318 p.), a number of dissertations, including one in Russian (Mityukova Z. Z. *Partimento v ital'yanskoi muzyke XVIII veka: dis. ... kand. iskusstvovedeniya [Partimento in 18th Century Music. Dissertation for the Degree of Cand.Sci. (Arts)]*. Kazan, 2018. 241 p.), dozens of articles, several specialized internet portals, etc.

while in the early 2020s, works devoted to the art of *solfeggi* saw the light of day, as well. [5] At the same time, the achievements of the Neapolitan masters in the field of counterpoint have remained up till now unstudied and represented by a sparse amount of scholarly articles, never having received complex research. Nonetheless, the polyphonic genres and forms have been present in one form, or another on all the stages of composition instruction, while the great Giuseppe Verdi, who took lessons from Vincenzo Lavigna (1776–1836) — the orchestra leader at the *La Scala* and an instructor at the Milan Conservatory, who graduated from the *Santa Maria di Loreto* in Naples, remembered that in his classes he “did nothing other than canons and fugues, fugues and canons of all types.”³

Among all the conservatories in Naples, particularly *Santa Maria della Pietà dei Turchini* was especially proud of its traditions of teaching counterpoint. The lives of such outstanding composers and pedagogues as Giovanni Salvatore (1611–1688), Francesco Provenzale (1624–1704), Gennaro Ursino (1650–1715), Nicola Fago (1677–1745) and Lorenzo Fago (1704–1793), Leonardo Leo (1694–1744) and Giacomo Tritto (1733–1824) were connected with the instruction of this discipline. However, during the entire period of existence of the conservatory, the most respected and revered masters turned out to be one of Leo’s last students — Nicola Sala (1713–1801), who went down in history



Il. 1. Portrait of Nicola Sala (1713–1801).
Ciro Punzo (1850–1925). Napoli (Naples).
Conservatorio di Musica San Pietro a Majella

as “one of the most learned contrapuntists of the Neapolitan school”⁴ (Il. 1). He began his pedagogical activities, which still being a student of the advanced courses, as an assistant of the teacher — a *mastricello*, and retired at the venerable age of 86, at the position of *primo maestro* — the head of the conservatory.

The culmination of Sala’s longstanding work in the field of musical didactics became the publication of the treatise, *Regole del contrappunto pratico* (1794).⁵ This monumental

³ Cit. ex: Marvin R. M. Verdi Learns to Compose: The Writings of Bonifazio Asioli. *Studi musicali*. 2007. No. 36. P. 439.

⁴ Burney Ch. Sala, Nicola. *The Cyclopædia, or Universal Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and Literature*. Ed. by Abraham Rees, 39 Vols. plus 6 vols. plates. Vol. 31. London: Strahan, 1819. Without pagination.

⁵ Sala N. *Regole del Contrappunto pratico di Nicola Sala napoletano, Primo Maestro nel Reale Conservatorio della Pietà de’ Turchini Dedicata alla Maestà di Ferdinando IV Re delle Due Sicilie, 3 Vols.* Naples: Stamperia Reale, 1794. Vol. 1. 92 p.; Vol. 2. 143 p.; Vol. 3. 200 p.

three-volume work was enthusiastically accepted by the author's contemporaries and was broadly familiar in France, Germany and England. Its significance can hardly be overestimated in our time, as well: it is the only published work of its kind reflecting the theory and practice of counterpoint in Naples during the second half of the 18th century. Moreover, having been created in an inseparable connection with teaching, it is also a most important source on the path towards reconstruction and analysis of all the steps of the discipline concluding the course of instruction of composition in "the first musical seminary at Naples, the most celebrated school of counterpoint in Europe."⁶ All of this impels us to turn once again to the long forgotten, largely unknown treatise and examine it in the historical-cultural, theoretical and practical aspects.

From the Intention to the Realization

The idea of creating a comprehensive, accurately organized and thoroughly constructed system of teaching counterpoint was conceived by Sala at the very beginning of his pedagogical activities in the 1740s. This is directly or indirectly indicated by articles in various biographical dictionaries from the 18th and 19th centuries, as well as memoirs of the archivist of the conservatory library Giuseppe Sigismondo (1739–1826), and, according to them, Sala encountered a great amount of approval and support for his initiative on the part of his first teacher, Nicola Fago, who died in 1745. With Fago's death, the work was put on hold, however,

by July 1759, then the position of *secondo maestro* was taken up by Pasquale Cafaro (1715–1787), it had already been completed. Cafaro, who had also studied with Fago and Leo, had trust-based relations, so upon the end of his work, Sala turned to him, with the hope that he would provide aid with its publication. However, Cafaro, although he evaluated his colleague's work as "something useful for art," nonetheless, deemed publishing it to be unprofitable, due to the high costs and low demand: "O, my dear Don Nicola, who would wish to be bound to a work that is not on demand by anybody, except for composers, and for this reason would not bring any great profit in our days? <...> and, moreover, since this work is not for musical entertainment, but is merely theoretical, oh, how few people there are who would be inclined to buy it, since there are very few people who, indeed, aspire to delve into the luminous theories of this veritably divine art; so, dear Sala, think carefully, what you are planning to take a hand in, if instead of earning money from so many of your commendable works, you may lose, as they say, *operam et oleum*⁷." [6, p. 257]

The following stage of work on the treatise was eloquently compared by Sigismondo to the creative process of an artist: at times, Sala stopped his work, and at other times, resumed it, continuing to add the necessary corrections to it, finish writing the exercises and compose new musical examples. As a result, "as a true artist, who sets to work following his own intention and brings it to a state of perfection, <...> he, without wishing it, discovered a completed

⁶ Burney Ch. Op. cit.

⁷ "*Oleum et operam perdidit*" — Latin: "I lost the oil and the work," in other words, "I worked in vain"; here — to waste time in vain. A quotation from a comedy by Roman comedigrapher Titus Maccius Plautus *Poenulus* (332), where these words are pronounced by a hetaera, who was compelled to adorn herself in vain. It is found as a metaphor in other works by Plautus and Cicero.

work in his hands.” [Ibid., pp. 257–258] Sala’s friends and students gave him all sorts of support in his search for the opportunities of publishing the treatise, but all the attempts undertaken by them turned out to be in vain.

After Cafaro’s death in 1787, Sala acquired the position of *secondo maestro* and brought into his teaching first the materials of Leo’s lessons, and then those of his predecessor, having left his own practices only for use in class. Then, a certain Bianchi⁸ found out about them, a friend of Sigismondo, one of the conservatory’s students, who brought him to Sala, so that he could see his works. Sigismondo, being in possession of an immense collection, constantly enriched by him during the course of many years, came “into real ecstasy” from Sala’s work and promised to engage all of his connections for its publication. He introduced Sala to Marchese di Cesa — “a person distinguished by a great love and very multifaceted knowledge in the sphere of music, a composer equal to any scholar and a deeply versed master.” [Ibid., p. 258] The latter carefully studied the maestro’s treatise, adding from himself certain specifications required for greater clarity, and also deemed it very important to make this work accessible for other musicians. Marchese di Cesa secured the support of his longtime friend Giovanni Paisiello (1741–1816), who was the court chapel-master and enjoyed the benevolent treatment on the part of the king. Having convinced the latter that the profession of composers and musical masters would obtain a great advantage, if Sala’s

treatise would be published, he elucidated to him the need for His Majesty’s assistance. Paisiello, in his turn, told the king about this in detail, and the latter, having considered the arguments to be reasonable and advisable, agreed, at once, to finance the publication of Sala’s treatise and gave the corresponding instruction to the royal printing office.

There exists another version of the development of the events conducive to the publication of Sala’s treatise. It belongs to the aforementioned Burney and is explicated in Volume 31 of *The Cyclopædia, or Universal Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and Literature* published by the Reverend Abraham Rees (1743–1825), for whom he had written and edited all the articles in one way or other connected with music. In Burney’s version, the role of the intermediary who presented Sala’s work to the king is relayed to Sir William Hamilton (1730–1803) — the British ambassador in Naples and patron of the fine arts, known for his passion for antiques. His outstanding diplomatic qualities, farsightedness and broad outlook served as a guarantee for his success in parley on the most diverse themes.⁹ Thus, in the case of Sala, Hamilton not merely uttered his opinion about “how useful a work it would be in forming young composers,” but also did not fail to remind of “that reputation which Naples has long so justly enjoyed for producing the greatest number of eminent composers which Italy could boast.”¹⁰ All of this exerted an influence on the king’s decision in the most beneficent way.

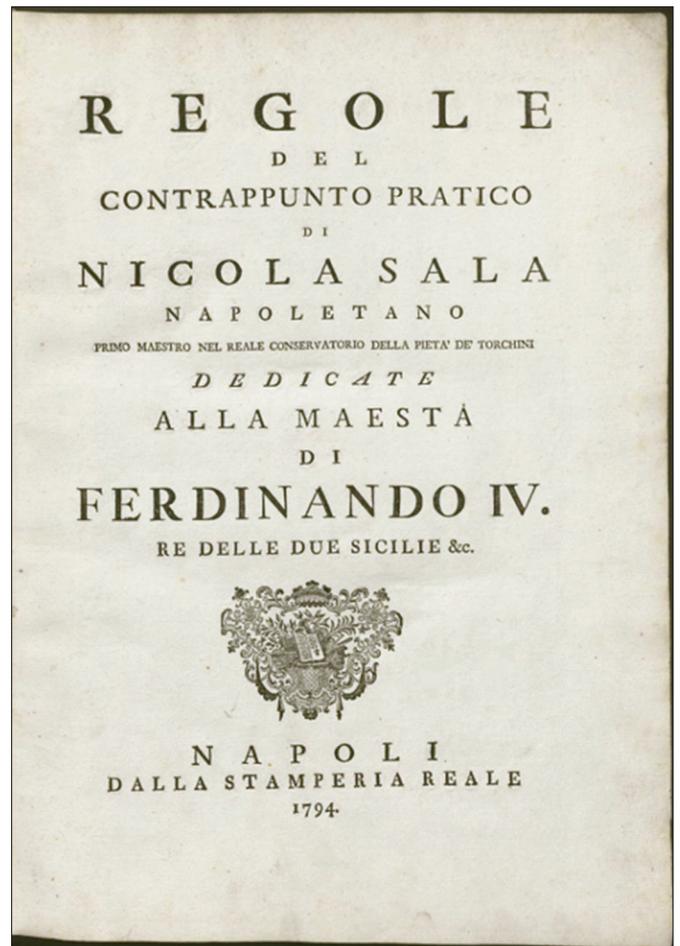
⁸ Most likely, what is meant here is Italian composer Francesco Bianchi (1752–1810), who studied in Naples with Niccolò Jommelli from 1770 to 1772, after which he visited the city numerous times in connection with the production of his operas.

⁹ One of William Hamilton’s most significant political merits is considered to be the establishment of close connections between the United Kingdom and the Neapolitan state by means of a treaty signed with his assistance on July 12, 1793.

¹⁰ Burney Ch. Op. cit.

In 1794, when Sala already turned 80, the long-cherished goal of his entire life was achieved — the treatise that summarized over a half-century experience of teaching counterpoint finally came out. It is noteworthy that the publication took place soon after Sala's appointment to the position of *primo maestro*, which found reflection in the title: "The Rules of Practical Counterpoint by Nicola Sala, the Neapolitan / Primo Maestro of the Royal Conservatory Della Pietà de' Torchini / Dedicated to His Majesty, Ferdinand IV / King of the Two Sicilies"¹¹ (*Regole del Contrappunto pratico* / di / Nicola Sala / napoletano / Primo Maestro nel Reale Conservatorio della Pietà de' Torchini / Dedicate / alla Maestà / di / Ferdinando IV / Re delle Due Sicilie &c. / Napoli / Dalla Stamperia Reale / 1794) (Il. 2). The publication was luxuriant: three volumes *in folio* were published "on the largest sheets of old Genovese paper in several hundreds of pages with large-scale and well-printed music, nobody has seen anything more magnificent than them." [6, p. 260] Burney, whose musical collection was also enriched by Sala's treatise due to the generosity of Lord and Lady Bruce, characterized it as the "most magnificent in size, and engraved on copper plates, in the largest, clearest, and most elegant character, of any musical publication which we have ever seen."¹²

The exposition of the theoretical and practical material in the treatise is preceded by a Dedication to the King and an Address



Il. 2. Title Page of the First Volume of Nicola Sala's *Treatise Regole del contrappunto pratico* (Naples, 1794)

to the readers, from which it is possible to highlight the following motives that impelled Sala to create this work, and also to mark a number of particular features reflecting the historical-cultural and didactic context. Thus, Sala mentions the uneasy moods

¹¹ An article by Rosa Cafiero, docent of the Department of History, Archeology and History of the Arts of the Milan University *Cattolica del Sacro Cuore* is dedicated to Sala's treatise, see: [7]. The text of the article is also available in an earlier version: Cafiero R. Un viaggio musicale nella scuola napoletana: note sulla fortuna delle 'Regole del contrappunto pratico' di Nicola Sala (Napoli, 1794). *Il presente si fa storia. Scritti di storia dell'arte in onore di Luciano Caramel*. A cura di Cecilia De Carli e Francesco Tedeschi. Milano: Vita & Pensiero, 2009, pp. 733–756.

¹² Burney Ch. Op. cit.

connected with the decline of the art of music,¹³ and sees as the most viable means along the path of rectifying this to be to turn to its foundational rule, the disdain of which “leaves minds with an unrestrained freedom that degrades into aberration.”¹⁴ Particularly these rules, studied by Sala during the course of many years, gathered and described by him in his treatise, form, according to the author’s conception, the teaching of counterpoint recommended to all “young men” who study at Neapolitan conservatories. Sala addresses his work to a broad circle of musicians, from beginning composers to experienced masters, under whose tutelage even the “novices” could acquire the principles expounded in it. But because the general rules of counterpoint essentially had never changed, and by the time of the emergence of Sala’s treatise, other “great people” had already dedicated numerous volumes to them, he aspires to disclose them anew, in such a way as to avoid the flaws possible in this connection — the repetition of the approach and the assumption that the path chosen by him is the best. “Such is my intention, such is my aim,”¹⁵ the Maestro concludes.

Alas, the tragic events in the history of Naples in 1799 inflicted damage on Sala’s creation. Having been captured by the French, the city plunged into chaos and was subjected to pillage. As the result, the etchings of the treatise, preserved in the Royal Printing Office, just as most of the printed copies, were lost, stolen, or destroyed, and the product of immense work, as was deemed, was gone forever.

Reception

The irretrievable lost suffered by the art of music was spoken of at that time by literally all the musicians experienced in this field. The notes about the “unfortunate incident,” which “took away this priceless work from the broad public” are found virtually in every dictionary and encyclopedia containing even a brief reference about Sala, who “died disconsolate from the great loss.”¹⁶ The latter also claim that “this new code of musical composition was hailed by all of Europe.” A confirmation of these rather loud words may be served by the entry in *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* (German for “Comprehensive German Newspaper”),

¹³ Overall, such judgments were characteristic for the introductions to treatises of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, which is marked, in particular, by Cafiero: “The regret about (the far and near) past and the sensation of approaching (regressive) changes lead to the setting-up of codices of rules, which form the expression of the golden past” (cit. ex: Cafiero R. *La trattatistica musicale. Storia della musica e dello spettacolo a Napoli. Il Settecento*. A cura di Francesco Cotticelli e Paologiovanni Maione. Napoli: Turchini Edizioni, 2009. P. 597. (The text is also available in German translation: Cafiero R. *Traktate über Musik. Musik und Theater in Neapel im 18. Jahrhundert*. Hrsg. F. Cotticelli und Paologiovanni Maione. Kassel und Basel: Bärenreiter Verlag, 2010. P. 646).

¹⁴ Sala N. *Sacra Real Maestà. Regole del Contrappunto pratico*. Vol. 1 (pp. n.n.).

¹⁵ Sala N. *A’Lettori l’Autore. Regole del Contrappunto pratico*. Vol. 1 (pp. n.n.).

¹⁶ Cit. ex: Choron A.-É. et Fayolle F. *Dictionnaire historique des musiciens, artistes et amateurs, morts ou vivans* <...>. 2 Vols. Vol. 2. Paris: Valade, 1811, pp. 259–260. See also: Bertini G. *Dizionario storico-critico degli scrittori di musica e de’ più celebri artisti di tutte le nazioni sì antiche che moderne*. 4 Vols. Vol. 4. Palermo: Dalla Tipografia Reale di Guerra, 1815, pp. 14–15; [Grossi G. B. G.]. *Biografia degli uomini illustri del Regno di Napoli, ornata dei loro rispettivi ritratti. Volume che contiene gli elogj dei maestri di Cappella, cantori, e cantanti più celebri*. Compilato da diversi letterati nazionali. Napoli: Presso Nicola Gervasi, Calcografo, 1819 (pp. n.n.); Orloff G. *Essai sur l’histoire de la musique en Italie, depuis les temps les plus anciens jusqu’à nos jours*. In 2 Vols. Vol. 1. Paris: P. Dufart et Chasseriau, 1822, pp. 291–292, etc.

published in Leipzig on May 29, 1805¹⁷: “Among the theoretical works, besides the aforementioned work by Fenaroli,¹⁸ only the famous large-scale work by Nicola Sala was published, which, undoubtedly, is something important and very noteworthy in its way...”¹⁹

The word of the destruction of Sala’s treatise, which had just come off the press reached as far as England. Burney, who had been happy enough to become the possessor of this work, having bypassed the tragic events of 1799, made his contribution, having made a detailed description of the structure, content and dispensation of the theoretical and practical material in *Regole*. Moreover, among the numerous manuscript volumes of *Dr. Burney’s Musical Extracts*, preserved in the British Library in London, an entire three of them contain a complete transcription of Sala’s treatise.²⁰

The other attempt to return the forfeited doctrine of counterpoint was undertaken in France. Here, the famous publicist, musical pedagogue and scholar, Alexandre-Étienne Choron (1771–1834), who was also in possession of Sala’s work and was of a very high opinion of it, considered in light of the evolved circumstances that he “could

not do anything more useful and honorable than turn all of his efforts on the resurrection of this great monument.”²¹ He recounted about his intentions in the introduction to the monumental three-volume publication *Principes de composition des écoles d’Italie*, published in Paris in 1809: “In light of certain particular circumstances, we were compelled to regret about the loss and wish for a new publication of one of them, the most significant, the most venerated of all of them, and, consequently, the most appropriate for the basis of work of this kind: I have in mind Sala’s masterpiece, titled *Regole del Contrapunto pratico etc.* None of his comments escaped my attention, and, carefully assessing them, I decided to embark on this new edition, adding to it, everything that, according to my plan, would be conducive to the formation of a complete composition course”²² (Il. 3).

Taking as a basis for his project the examples from Sala’s *Regole*, Choron added to them the exercises and compositions by Leo, Francesco Durante, Fedele Fenaroli, Cristofaro Caresana, Costanzo Porta, Giovanni Pierluigi Palestrina and other outstanding Italian masters and organized them according to

¹⁷ Gegenwärtiger Zustand der Musik in Neapel. *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*. Vol. 7. Jahrgang vom 3/10/1804 bis 25/09/1805. Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1805, pp. 557–570. The article is dated March 1 of the selfsame year.

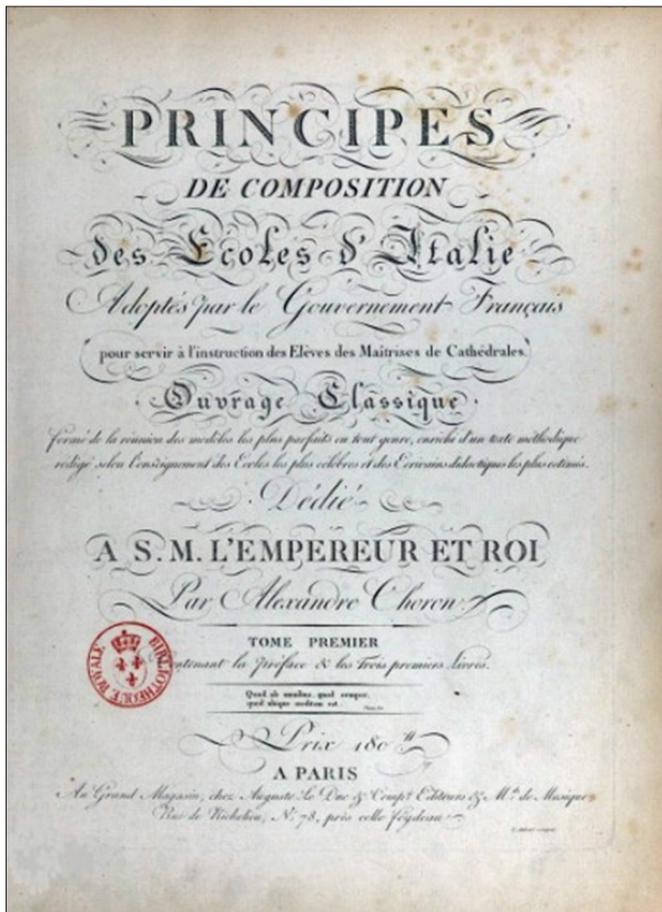
¹⁸ Ibid. P. 565: the correspondent refers to “Anweisung zum Generalbass,” in other words, to “Regole musicali per i principianti di cembalo” (Naples, 1775 [prima edizione] / 1795 [terza edizione]).

¹⁹ Ibid. P. 569.

²⁰ GB-Lbl Add. MSs 11589, 11590 and 11591. See: Oliphant T. *Catalogue of the Manuscript Music in the British Museum*. London: order of the Trustees, 1842, pp. 91–92; Hughes-Hughes A. *Catalogue of manuscript music in the British Museum*. 3 Vols. Vol. 3. London: order of the Trustees, 1909 (reprint in 1965). P. 327. Prior to 1839, Burney’s volumes belonged to the British musical activist William Chappell (1809–1888), the son of pianist Samuel Chappell — the founder of one of the most successful British musical publishing houses of the early 19th century, Chappell & Co.

²¹ Cit. ex: Choron A.-É. et Fayolle F. *Dictionnaire historique des musiciens*. Vol. 2. P. 259.

²² Choron A.-É. Préface. *Principes de composition des Écoles d’Italie pour servir à l’instruction des Elèves des Maîtrises de Cathédrales*. 3 Vols. Vol. 1. Paris: Auguste Le Duc, 1809, pp. 17–18.



Il. 3. Title Page of the First Volume of Alexandre-Etienne Choron's *Principes de composition des écoles d'Italie* (Paris, 1808)

a concisely elaborated plan.²³ Besides bringing in the examples from Sala's treatise on

counterpoint, he also included in his anthology a large number of his previously unpublished *partimenti*, preferring them, for the same reason, to the classical examples by Durante.²⁴

Moreover, shortly before the publication of *Principes de composition* in the Parisian publishing house *Auguste Le Duc*, Choron brought about a pilot edition of Sala's *Regole* (which Rosa Cafiero compared with "carrying out a dress rehearsal" [7, p. 60]), having published it in French translation as *Règles du contrepoint pratique*²⁵ at his personal address (see: [8; 9]). This volume was also supplied by him with his authorial commentaries, dated December 15, 1808 (six years following the introduction to *Principes*), and sold as the price of seventy-two francs.

Choron's noble action was perceived ambivalently by his contemporaries. For example, Grégoire Orloff expressed his sincerely regret that Sala did not live up to the moment when "his work, due to the Frenchman skillful in his craft, to whom, as it seemed, he bequeathed all of his patience, valor and talent,"²⁶ returned to life, once again. On the other hand, Sigismondo perceived in it merely a selfish intention for the sake of profit: "How good it is that you [Sala] saw at least before your death the grandiose culmination

²³ The material of the three volumes of Sala's *Regole* was rearranged in Choron's *Principes de composition* in the following manner: "Sala's models for the second book. Simple contrapuntal examples. Final cadences. Contrapuntal lines for an assigned theme"; "Sala's models for the third book. Double contrapuntal examples"; "Sala's models for the fourth book. Imitations and fugues"; "Sala's models for the fifth book. Canons."

²⁴ Choron A.-É. Préface. *Principes de composition des Écoles d'Italie...* Vol. 1. P. 23.

²⁵ Sala N. *Règles du contrepoint pratique, contenant une série de modèles sur toutes les parties de l'art du contrepoint; Par Nicolas Sala, Maître de Chapelle, Napolitain. Nouvelle édition, Mise en ordre et augmentée de la Collection Complète des Partimenti ou Leçons de Basse chiffrée du même Auteur, Par M. A. Choron.* Paris: Chez l'Editeur, rue du Regard, Faubourg St.-Germain, No. 6, [1808]. In this regard, see also the curious comment of Cafiero: Cafiero R. Il mito delle "écoles d'Italie" fra Napoli e Parigi nel decennio francese: il collegio di musica e il conservatoire. *Musica e spettacolo a Napoli durante il decennio francese (1806–1815)*. Atti del colloquio internazionale, Napoli, 4–6 ottobre 2012, a cura di Paologiovanni Maione. Napoli: Turchini Edizioni, 2016, pp. 326–328.

²⁶ Orloff G. *Essai sur l'histoire de la musique en Italie...* Vol. 1. P. 292.

of your endeavors; and did not suffer the bitterness of discouragement, having found out that at one instance your work had been taken advantage by a carpetbagger in order to obtain profit and fame. <...> Poor Sala: you were the only one among the masters of Naples, the remote part of Italy, who worked in order to leave behind him his immortal name, and you have been allotted, after your death, to remain in your grave dressed in a French manner!" [6, p. 261]

It must be acknowledged that upon the publication of his *Principes de composition*, Choron, indeed, pursued a double aim.²⁷ On the one hand, he created a complete course of instruction of composition for students of the recently opened Paris Conservatory, following a plan especially elaborated by him for this end, and, indeed, intended to illustrate it by compositions of Italian masters. And in this situation, Sala's treatise, which was considered virtually lost, and which contained an immense quantity of musical examples, turned out to be extremely useful. As a result, these two seeming self-sufficient intentions were fortunately combined together. Thereby, under the guise of the republication of Sala's work, Choron, in reality, fulfilled his own project, having appropriated from the Neapolitan master the musical examples appropriate for this, as a result of which the structure of the treatise, which at the present time causes disagreements among music scholars, changed in Choron's publication and cannot be revived in its original form.

The Structure of the Treatise

The particular feature of the original print edition of Sala's treatise consists in the fact that the three volumes of the *Regole* had not been published together, when they appeared at the printers. Since the etchings preserved at the royal printing office and could have elucidated the order of their succession disappeared without a trace during the events of 1799 and were considered for a long time to be lost, having been located only in the second half of the 19th century (and, even so, only in part: 169 out of 343²⁸), in European libraries that were in possession of this oeuvre the volumes were apportioned differently. The confusion that arose as a result of this led to the occurrence that among the researchers studying Sala's treatise, there arose two "traditions" of numeration of the volumes comprising.

Regarding the first volume of *Regole*, the music scholars are unanimous, since on its last page the publisher left the inscription "Fine del Primo Libro". As for Volumes II and III, both of them contain the identical phrases of "Laus Deo" (Latin for "Praise be to God", or "Glory be to God") at their ends and, for this reason, are frequently changed in their order. A group of Italian researchers (among them Rosa Cafiero, Gaetano Stella [10] and Paolo Sullo [11]) consider the second volume to be that which begins with the series of *disposizioni a due tutte in canoni* and consists of 143 pages. Pieter van den Toorn and Felix Diergarten²⁹

²⁷ This was written about by Silvanus Urban in one of his London journals. See: Urban S. *The gentleman's magazine*. Vol. 3. London: William Pickering, John Bowyer Nichols and Son, 1835. P. 216.

²⁸ See: Florimo F. *La scuola musicale di Napoli e i suoi conservatorii*. 4 Vols. Vol. 2. Naples: tip. di Vinc. Morano, 1882. P. 67; Ibid. Vol. 3. P. 42.

²⁹ Diergarten F. Die italienischen und französischen Kontrapunktlehren des 18 und 19. Jahrhunderts. *Musiktheorie in Frankreich und Italien im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert* (= *Geschichte der Musiktheorie*, hrsg. im Auftrag des Staatlichen Instituts für Musikforschung). Eds. Inga Mai Groote and Stefan Keym. Vol. 12. Forthcoming.

consider the other volume as such, which also begins with the teaching of the two-voice *il modo di fare l'imitazioni*, but consisting of 200 pages, thereby, adhering to the order established in Choron's French edition. Burney goes as far as to refer only to two volumes in his description, as precisely does Francesco Florimo, who asserts as the complete edition of Sala's oeuvre the Neapolitan edition in two large folios.³⁰

Aspiring to reach a state of clarity in the present question, we shall examine the copies of Sala's treatise preserved in the library of the *Conservatorio di Musica San Pietro a Majella* in Naples. At the present time, the library is in possession of four sets of Sala's printed oeuvre. One of them was donated by King Ferdinand IV and contains on its title page the inscription: "ex dono S. R. M. Ferdinande IV Borbonij." It is noteworthy that this edition presents two volumes in one binding (92 and 143 pages, respectively, I-Nc S.C. 15.2.7) and one volume in a separate binding (200 pages, I-Nc S.C. 15.2.8). The last one, in its turn, arrived a little later — after the directors of the Conservatory of *Santa Maria della Pietà dei Turchini* in the letter from June 25, 1803 turned to the Royal Printing Office with the request to pass on to them the missing volume of *Regole* for the keeping in the music library (see: [7, p. 57; 12, p. 24]). Thereby, in all likelihood, it is this copy that Florimo refers particularly to. An analogous set in two folios without any gift inscription,

bearing the erroneous lettering of "SALA / PARTIMENTO" at the spine corresponds to I-Nc S.C. 15.6.1 and 15.6.2. The other two sets are distinguished by the fact that the three volumes in them exist separately — each one of them bound separately.³¹ Particularly this variant of the edition became the reason for the aforementioned confusion.

The author of the article, when characterizing the theoretical and practical material in Sala's treatise, adheres to the numeration customary in the Neapolitan conservatory and accepted among the Italian scholars. The justifiability of this choice is also validated by the correlation of the printed edition with the autograph manuscript of *Regole* preserved in the library of the Giuseppe Verdi Conservatory in Milan³² (Il. 4). This 104-page manuscript presents a music notebook in album format, which, although does not reflect the division into books, nonetheless, contains the full content of what in the printed version comprised Volumes I and II of the treatise. The use of the rather rare double or laminating system of pagination also ought to be relayed to the peculiarities of the printed edition. In the edition, the pages with the textual fragments of the work are assigned with a number doubling the continuous numeration of each volume.

Theory and/or Practice?

In all likelihood, the chief particularity of Sala's *Regole* consists in the means of presentation of the material and, consequently,

³⁰ Florimo F. *La scuola musicale di Napoli*. Vol. 2. P. 43.

³¹ One of them in the binding with the spine from a light-brown saffian leather corresponds to I-Nc S.C. 15.2.4 and 15.2.6 (the second volume, numbered as S.C. 15.2.5, is in manuscript form); the other one, with a leather spine of the color of ivory is preserved under the numbers of I-Nc S.C. 15.2.1, 15.2.2 and 15.2.3. See: Gasperini G., Gallo F. *Catalogo delle opere musicali del Conservatorio di musica San Pietro a Majella di Napoli*. Parma: Fresching, 1934. P. 29.

³² Sala N. *Regole del contrappunto pratico [Trattato di contrappunto e fuga]*. Autograph, [1787–1793]. I-Mc Ms. TM. 40. 104 p. URL: <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12459/1943> (accessed: 20.11.2024).

A' lettori l'Autore

Uomini sommi e nella Teoria e nella Pratica à riempiti volumi intorno alle regole del Contrappunto. Sembra un'aula di pretendere di far meglio, e una cosa inutile il replicare la stessa. Spero che leggendo l'opera che vi presento, sarete scusato dall'uno e dall'altro difetto. Non è pregio superbiamente di far meglio, non è sicuramente istruito per fare la stessa. Il cuore di dette opere non sono adattabili alla capacità de' giovani principianti, essendo di lunga per gli altri maestri alcune son troppo rifrette a soli principianti in modo, che niente si trova di apprendere il proprio. Mi sono ingegnato dunque di esporre tutto non solo i principii, ma di esporre in modo, che anche i principianti lo possono comprendere, colla guida de' Maestri, pe' quali ancorchè detti più di me, si è ancora qualche parola da trattenersi.

Ecco la mia intenzione, ecco il mio scopo. Spero, che se non potete lodar in tutta l'istruzione dell'istruzione, ne loderete almeno l'utilità del disegno.

Studio generale di Contrappunto pratico, e teorico

Principiando dalle Legnanze, e Dissonanze; quarti, e quali sono.

Le Legnanze sono quattro, e sono terza, quinta, settima, ed Ottava, delle quali due sono perfette, e due imperfette; le perfette sono Quinta, ed Ottava, si chiamano perfette, perchè non si possono fare maggiori, e minori; si eccettua la Quinta, che alle volte il Compositore la fa maggiore e minore per altre di loro, siccome gli fa di bisogno. La terza, e settima sono legnanze imperfette, perchè si possono fare maggiori, e minori, secondo al Compositore fa di bisogno. Le Dissonanze sono similmente quattro, e sono Seconda, Quarta, Settima, e Nona; dovendosi scrivere il Compositore della Seconda, e Quinta, il Basso deve stare legato, e dopo cadere di grado, e così farla a sua ribaltazione a Terza, ed a Quinta, o vera a Setta, non più virtuale della Settima, e Nona, che devono stare legati dalle Legnanze antecedenti; la Settima si prepara da tutte le Legnanze, e si risolve a Setta, quando il Basso sta fermo, ed a Terza, quando il Basso sale di quarta, o cala di quinta; e qualche volta si risolve alla Quinta, quando il Basso sale di grado, e la Settima cala di grado; non così si intende della Nona, la quale si prepara solo dalla Terza, e Quinta, e la sua ribaltazione si fa all'Ottava, alla Terza, ed alla Setta, purchè il Basso sale di quinta, e così farà la sua ribaltazione per tutte le Legnanze, secondo fa di bisogno al Compositore.

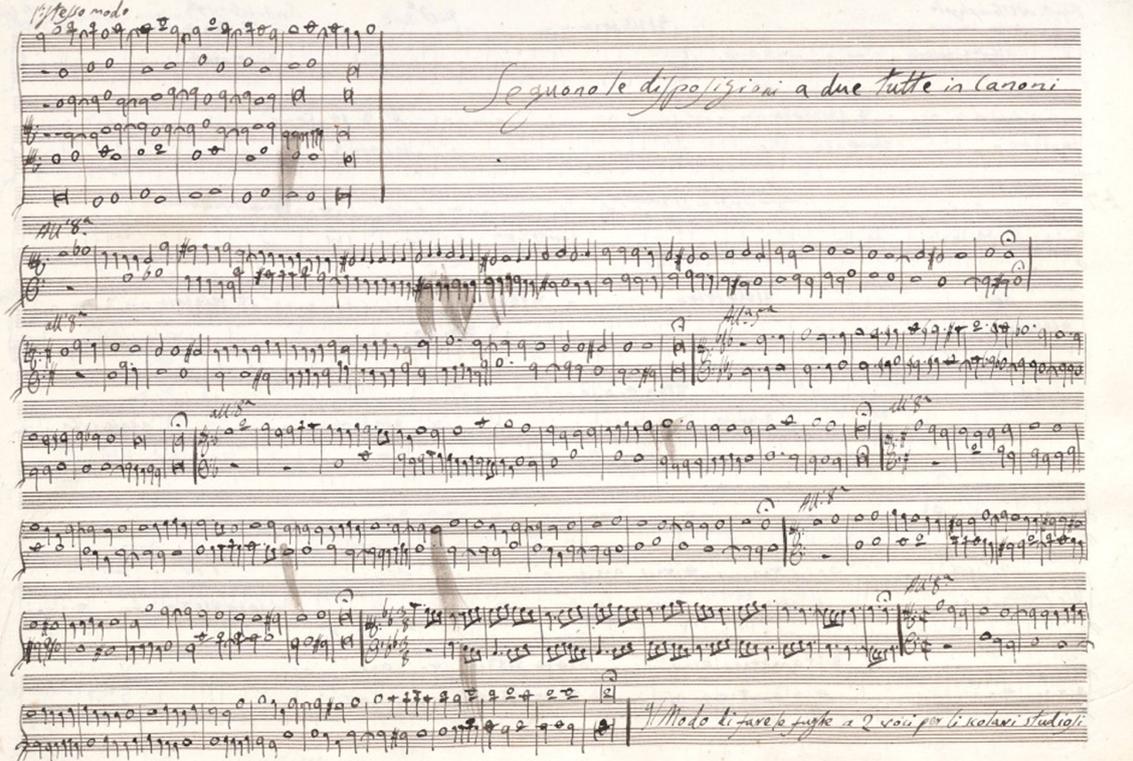
Segue la Pratica, principando dalle Cadenze a due, a tre, ed a quattro.

La Cadenza semplice a tre, si chiama con la terza composta a tre, e quinta equata, e dopo 3^a mezza; la Cadenza doppia a 2, di 3^a e 5^a e dopo 10 di 4^a e 6^a e dopo di 1^a e 5^a e dopo 3^a mezza.



38

Seguono le disposizioni a due tutte in Canoni



21

Il. 4. Introduction to the First Volume of *Regole* and the Beginning of the Teaching of the Two-Voiced *Disposizioni* and Fugues in the Autograph Score of Sala's Treatise (I-MC, Ms.TM.40)

the transmission of the accumulated knowledge, which contemporary scholars define as *iter per exempla*, which in translation from Italian literally means “following the example,” or “travelling along the specimens.”³³ It features bringing the theoretical examples to a minimum, limiting oneself only to the most indispensable ones, and an abundance of vivid examples, from which a competent student with the help of an instructor (or without one) must extract all the other knowledge by way of trial.³⁴ It must be observed that for 18th century Italy such a didactic approach presented not merely an effective means of “bringing up” young composers, but, broadly speaking, a means through which all the young artists could comprehend the secrets of their art (see: [13]). Thus, out of the more than four hundred pages of Sala’s treatise, the verbal exposition of the theoretical material in it takes up five pages, in its purest form. This peculiarity of Sala’s work was noted, in particular, by Burney (“This excellent author teaches more by example than precept”³⁵), Choron (“...the rules are expounded too briefly, in the form of preambles”³⁶) and the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* (“It is presumed that

it presents in itself a complete theory, and in the three volumes of the large folio <...> contains only very short rules and principles, but many excellent examples”³⁷). It must be added that all the musical examples cited in Sala’s treatise are his own compositions.

In Volume I of the treatise, the theory of intervals is expounded, which is followed by examples of the types of cadences in two-, three-, and four-voice counterpoint; then, following a short introduction, exercises are offered in the rhythms of the respective species with a *C major* scale playing the role of a *cantus firmus*, which is presented in all the voices in textures ranging from two to five parts, with the application of vertical rearrangement (*rivolto*); next, in a very expanded form, the theory of double counterpoint of the octave, tenth and twelfth is enunciated, which is followed by exercises in double counterpoint on an assigned *cantus firmus* in the six church modes (*modi*), which, likewise, pass through Johann Joseph Fux’s five species in two-, three-, four-, five- and six-voice counterpoint.³⁸ The main part of Volume II is allotted to collections of imitations (*disposizioni*) and fugues from two to eight voices in seven tones,³⁹

³³ This term is used, in particular by Gaetano Stella and Felix Diergarten.

³⁴ Most likely, particularly for this reason, Florimo considered *Regole* to be inappropriate for the “novices”: “the work... that is useful for observance and for study by the teachers and by those who are well acquainted with the art, but never serving as a guidebook or an example for the young people who are only beginning the study of counterpoint” (cit. ex: Florimo F. *La scuola musicale di Napoli*. Vol. 2. P. 34), which, incidentally, contradicts Sala’s intention.

³⁵ Burney Ch. Op. cit.

³⁶ Sala N. *Règles du contrepoint pratique. Avis de l’éditeur*. Cit. ex: [7, p. 61].

³⁷ *Gegenwärtiger Zustand der Musik in Neapel*. P. 569.

³⁸ The dissemination of Johann Joseph Fux’s oeuvre *Gradus ad Parnassum* (Vienna, 1725) in Naples is written about, in particular, by Cafiero. See: [14, pp. 200–202]. See also: Tour P. van. *Counterpoint and Partimento*, pp. 193–200. The interpretation of Fux’ teaching in the Russian polyphonic school is the object of an article by associate professor of the Russian Music Department at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, Kirill Vladimirovich Diskin. [15]

³⁹ The question of the change from the system of church modes to the classical major-minor tonal system is examined in a special research work by adjunct professor of music history of the University of South Carolina, Michael Dodds. See: [16].

and in its conclusion contains several antiphons and a section devoted to the study of various types of canons. Volume III also includes yet another collection of various imitations and fugues from two to eight voices in six modes, antiphons, concert compositions on a *cantus firmus* (among them, the motet *Protexisti me, Deus*, which Sala composed for participation in a competition for the position of the director of the Royal Cappella of Naples on April 21, 1745) and more complex types of canon.

Conclusion

Summarizing all the aforementioned, it is possible to come up with the conclusion that Sala's treatise *Regole del contrappunto pratico* (1794) is not merely an oeuvre with a rich history, reflecting the theory and practice of counterpoint in Naples during the second

half of the 18th century; it presents a unique specimen of the didactic tradition formed in the south of Italy and demonstrating an astounding effectiveness. Under Sala's tutelage, Gaspare Spontini, Valentino Fioravanti, Giacomo Tritto, Adalbert Gyrowetz, Ercole Paganini, Giuseppe Farinelli, Stefano Pavesi, Ferdinando Orlandi, Luigi Caruso, Louis Julien Castels de Labarre and many other musicians who subsequently became famous composers and pedagogues⁴⁰ received their training in this system. Moreover, Sala's treatise, which was included in Choron's ambitious project, has virtually laid down the foundations for compositional education in France. At the same time, Choron's oeuvre, in its turn, is still in need of thorough study, which shall also assist in determining the true role of the Neapolitan masters in the formation of French musical education.

References

1. Sanguinetti G. The Realization of Partimenti: An Introduction. *Journal of Music Theory*. 2007. Vol. 51. Partimenti, No. 1, pp. 51–83. <https://doi.org/10.1215/00222909-2008-023>
2. Mityukova Z. Z. The Neapolitan “Conservatories”-Shelters of the 18th Century as a Pedagogical Phenomenon. *Scholarly papers of Gnesin Russian Academy of Music*. 2017. No. 4 (23), pp. 70–84. (In Russ.)
3. Yuneeva E. A. Emergence and Development of Four Ancient Napolitan Conservatories. *Bulletin of the Saratov Conservatory. Questions of Art History*. 2021. No. 1, pp. 81–88. (In Russ.)
4. Maslova A. I. Counterpoint Battles in the 18th Century Naples: an Attempt of Historical Reconstruction. *Contemporary Musicology*. 2021. No. 2, pp. 3–38. (In Russ.) <https://doi.org/10.56620/2587-9731-2021-2-003-038>
5. Baragwanath N. *The Solfeggio Tradition: A Forgotten Art of Melody in the Long Eighteenth Century*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2020. XIX, 410 p. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197514085.001.0001>
6. Sigismondo G. *Apoteosi della Musica del Regno di Napoli in tre ultimi transundati Secoli*. 4 Vols. D-B Mus. ms. autogr. theor. Sigismondo, G.I., 1820. A cura di C. Bacciagaluppi, G. Giovani, R. Mellace; introduttivo di R. Cafiero. Roma: Società Editrice di Musicologia, 2016. LXXIV, 334 p.

⁴⁰ The following are, as a rule, also labeled as Sala's students: Angelo Tarchi, Carlo Lenzi, Étienne-Joseph Floquet, Giuseppe Gherardeschi, Pietro Ray, Benedetto Neri, Francesco Paolo Maurizio Parenti and Giovanni Niccolini.

7. Cafiero R. Un viaggio musicale nella scuola napoletana: le ‘Regole del contrappunto pratico’ di Nicola Sala (Napoli, 1794). *La didattica del partimento. Studi di storia delle teorie musicali. Collana di teoria musicale e trattatistica: Teorie musicali. No. 6.* Lucca: LIM Editrice, 2020, pp. 57–80.
8. Skamletz M. Eine frühe französische Abschrift von Nicola Salas Regole del contrappunto pratico. *Studi Pergolesiani / Pergolesi Studies.* Vol. 11. Bern: Peter Lang, 2021, pp. 319–348.
9. Meidhof N. Alexandre Étienne Choron’s Adaption of Nicola Sala’s Regole del contrappunto pratico as Contribution to the Cultural Transfer between Naples and Paris. *Studi Pergolesiani / Pergolesi Studies.* Vol. 11. Bern: Peter Lang, 2021, pp. 349–362.
10. Stella G. Le ‘Regole del contrappunto pratico’ di Nicola Sala: una testimonianza sulla didattica della fuga nel Settecento napoletano. *Rivista di Analisi e Teoria Musicale.* 2009. Vol. 15, No. 1, pp. 121–143.
11. Sullo P. L’impostazione didattica di Nicola Sala, maestro di Gaspare Spontini. *Musica e spettacolo a Napoli durante il decennio francese (1806–1815).* A cura di Paologiovanni Maione. Napoli: Turchini Edizioni, 2016, pp. 417–454.
12. Giovanni G. *Tra Napoli e Parigi. Storie di una migrazione libraria. Collana: Studi e Saggi. No. 43.* Lucca: LIM Editrice, 2021. X, 379 p. <https://doi.org/10.24451/arbor.15566>
13. Gjerdingen R. The perfection of craft training in the Neapolitan Conservatories. *Rivista di Analisi e Teoria Musicale XV.* Lucca: LIM Editrice, 2009. No. 1, pp. 29–52.
14. Cafiero R. ‘Prattica della musica’: un bilancio sull’insegnamento della composizione nel XVIII secolo. *La didattica del partimento. Studi di storia delle teorie musicali. Collana di teoria musicale e trattatistica: Teorie musicali. No. 6.* Lucca: LIM Editrice, 2020, pp. 189–238.
15. Diskin K. V. Maxim Berezovsky’s Concerto Do Not Reject Me In My Old Age: A Perspective From Johann Joseph Fux’ School of Fugue. *Contemporary Musicology.* 2022. No. 1, pp. 105–135. (In Russ.) <https://doi.org/10.56620/2587-9731-2022-1-105-135>
16. Dodds M. R. *From Modes to Keys in Early Modern Music Theory.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2023. 512 p. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780199338153.001.0001>

Information about the author:

Anastasia I. Maslova — Lecturer, Post-Graduate Student at the Department of Analytical Musicology, Gnesin Russian Academy of Music, Moscow, Russian Federation.

Received: 18.11.2024

Revised: 09.12.2024

Accepted: 11.12.2024