

we shall try to justify them to the learned by reason, to those who follow only their ear by experience, and to those who show too much submission to the rules of their masters by pointing out the errors found there. Finally we shall try to prepare the reader to receive freely the rules set down here and deduced in order and at length in the following books.

The Third Book contains a specific method for learning composition rapidly. The method has already been tested, but since we are rarely persuaded except by our own experience, I shall remain silent about this. I shall content myself with asking those to whom this method is unfamiliar to see the fruits that can be derived from it before opposing it. Those who wish to learn are not concerned about the method used to instruct them, as long as the method succeeds.

No rules have yet been devised to teach composition in all its present perfection. Every skillful man in this field sincerely confesses that he owes all his knowledge to experience alone. When he wishes to share this knowledge with others, he is often forced to add to his lessons this proverb, so familiar to musicians: *Caetera docebit usus* [Experience will teach the rest]. To this end I shall give a reasoned, precise, and distinct explanation of all harmony through the simple exposition of three intervals, from which are formed two principal chords and the entire progression of the fundamental bass; the latter simultaneously determines the progression of the other parts. Everything else depends on this simple explanation, which as you will see can be understood at the very first reading.

The Fourth Book contains the rules of accompaniment, both for the harpsichord and for the organ. The position of the hand, the arrangement of the fingers, and everything else useful in acquiring practical facility as rapidly as possible is deduced there.

The basic rules for accompanying on the harpsichord can also be used for other similar accompanying instruments.

These last two books have a great deal in common, and will be useful to persons who wish to study either the practice of composition or that of accompaniment. One should also consult Book II, if one wishes to overlook nothing (assuming that I have forgotten nothing). I do not doubt that there are those who could do better than I, however, despite the pains I have taken to let nothing escape me, as my long discourses and repetitions must prove. These defects are due as much to my efforts to make matters clear and intelligible as to the feebleness of my intellect. As for Book I, it will not be of much use in practice. I have placed it at the beginning as proof of everything else contained in this treatise concerning harmony, and one should make whatever use of it one considers appropriate.

Jean-Philippe Rameau, *Treatise on Harmony*, trans. Philip Gossett (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1971), xxiii–xxvii. Reprinted by permission.

61

The Earliest Musical Conservatories

The first music schools in the modern sense (as distinct from the ancient choir schools attached to churches and cathedrals) sprang up in Italy, at Venice and Naples, in connection with charitable institutions that cared for orphans and foundlings. By the

eighteenth century, Venice was celebrated for its four "hospitals" for girls, Naples for its four "conservatories" (the two words meant the same thing) for boys. The concerts given by the girls at Venice, where musicians as eminent as Vivaldi oversaw the instruction, were particularly admired. Among the many travelers' reports on their prowess is this, by the historian Charles Burney (1726–1814), who visited Italy in 1770.

Sat. Aug. 4

[Venice] is famous for its *conservatorios* or music schools, of which it has four, the *Ospedale della Pietà*, the *Mendicanti*, the *Incurabili*, and the *Ospedaletto a St. Giovanni e Paolo*, at each of which there is a performance every Saturday and Sunday evening, as well as on great festivals. In the evening I went to that of the *Pietà*. The performers, both vocal and instrumental, are all girls; the organ, violins, flutes, violoncellos, and even french-horns, are supplied by these females. It is a kind of Foundling Hospital for natural children, under the protection of several nobles, citizens, and merchants, who, though the revenue is very great, yet, contribute annually to its support. These girls are maintained here till they are married, and all those who have talents for music are taught by the best masters of Italy.

Sun. Aug. 5

In the afternoon I went to the hospital *de' Mendicanti*, for orphan girls, who are taught to sing and play, and on Sundays and festivals they sing divine service in chorus. From hence I went to the *Ospedaletto*. The performers here too are all orphan girls; one of them, *la Ferrarese*, sung very well, and had a very extraordinary compass of voice, as she was able to reach the highest E of our harpsichords, upon which she could dwell a considerable time, in a fair, natural voice.

At the Hospitals and in Churches, where it is not allowed to applaud in the same manner as at the Opera, they cough, hem, and blow their noses, to express admiration.

Frid. Aug. 10

I had this morning a long visit from Signor [Gaetano] Latilla [1711–88, a well-known composer at the time]. He says the Conservatorios have been established at Venice about 200 years, as hospitals. That at first the girls were only taught canto firmo [Gregorian chant], and psalmody; but in process of time, they learned to sing in parts, and, at length joined instruments to the Voices. He says the expense on account of the music is very inconsiderable, there being but 5 or 6 Masters to each of these schools for singing and the several instruments, as the elder girls teach the younger; the Maestro di Cappella [director] only composes and directs; sometimes, indeed, he writes down closes [cadenzas] to suit particular airs, and attends all the rehearsals and public performances.

[Naples,] Wed. Oct. 31

This morning I went with young Oliver to his Conservatorio of St. Onofrio, and visited all the rooms where the boys practise, sleep, and eat. On the first flight of stairs was a trumpeter, screaming upon his instrument till he was ready to burst; on the second was a french-horn, bellowing in the same manner. In the common practising room there was a *Dutch concert*, consisting of seven or eight harpsichords, more than as many violins, and several voices, all performing different things, and in different keys: other boys were writing in the same room; but it being holiday time, many were absent who usually study and practise there together.

The jumbling them all together in this manner may be convenient for the house, and may teach the boys to attend to their own parts with firmness, whatever else may be going forward at the same time; it may likewise give them force, by obliging them to play loud in order to hear themselves; but in the midst of such jargon, and continued dissonance, it is wholly impossible to give any kind of polish or finishing to their performance; hence the slovenly coarseness so remarkable in their public exhibitions; and the total want of taste, neatness, and expression in all these young musicians, till they have acquired them elsewhere.

The beds, which are in the same room, serve as seats for the harpsichords and other instruments. Out of thirty or forty boys who were practising, I could discover but two that were playing the same piece: some of those who were practising on the violin seemed to have a great deal of hand. The violoncellos practise in another room: and the flutes, oboes, and other wind instruments, in a third, except the trumpets and horns, which are obliged to fag [labor] either on the stairs, or on the top of the house.

There are in this college sixteen young *castrati* [see next selection], and these live up stairs, by themselves, in warmer apartments than the other boys, for fear of colds, which might not only render their delicate voices unfit for exercise at present, but hazard the entire loss of them for ever.

The only vacation in these schools, in the whole year, is in autumn, and that for a few days only: during the winter, the boys rise two hours before it is light, from which time they continue their exercise, an hour and a half at dinner excepted, till eight o'clock at night; and this constant perseverance, for a number of years, with genius and good teaching, must produce great musicians.

Percy A. Scholes (ed.), *Dr. Burney's Musical Tours in Europe* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), I, 112, 113–15, 121, 269–70.

62

Castrato Singers

The leading male roles of Italian heroic opera in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were sung by men with powerful soprano and contralto voices. They had been operated on before puberty, so that they retained their childish voices as grown men. This inhuman custom did not shock most opera lovers, although there were

I
ca
at
E
m
ar

cc
as
N
an
pe
vo
ho
mu
acc
the
as

but
im
thr
per
refi
esta
upc

Percy
247-

Farin
Signo