Research and Performance Practice Forum

Improvised and Written Canons in Eighteenth-Century Neapolitan Conservatories

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Music played an important role in shaping Neapolitan identity since Charles III of Spain (Carlo di Borbone) conquered Naples and Sicily in 1734 and was crowned king one year later. A decisive role in this respect was played by the four conservatories; the students at these institutions sang and played in churches, convents, and theatres.[1] The *conservatoristi*, as these students were called, were trained through three basic activities: the singing of solfeggi, the playing of partimenti, and the writing of counterpoint and fugue. Solfeggi are singing exercises, commonly notated on two staves with the sung voice in the upper part and a bass line in the lower. They were used for practising solmization, tone production, intonation, and diminution. Partimenti are keyboard exercises, commonly written on a single staff in the F-clef, either figured or unfigured, and used to develop skills in the art of accompaniment, improvisation, diminution, and counterpoint. Maestri at the four Neapolitan conservatories would compose their own solfeggi and partimenti, along with large-scale sacred vocal works for chorus and instrumental ensemble to be performed in the conservatories' concert activities. Fortunately, many Italian archives, including the library of the conservatory in Naples itself, still hold a considerable amount of teaching materials and scores that were used in the Neapolitan conservatories.

In addition to practical training through solfeggi and partimenti, students took lessons in counterpoint and fugue and produced compositions that were often performed in concerts as part of their musical education. Student counterpoint notebooks from these conservatories commonly show extensive series of two-voice, three-voice, and four-voice fugues.[2]

Apart from written materials that have survived from lessons in counterpoint and composition at the Neapolitan conservatories, some manuscripts also suggest the use of improvisatory techniques. I will argue in this article that students also received training in *alla mente* canon. Documentation of techniques of singing and writing canons can be found in two different types of sources: counterpoint notebooks, where canons were analyzed technically; and solfeggio manuscripts, where they were used as part of a vocal training curriculum. In this essay I will investigate the use of solfeggio canons in the pedagogical output of Nicola Sala (1713-1801), the maestro in counterpoint

[1] The four conservatories were *Conservatorio dei Poveri di Jesu Christo*, the *Conservatorio della Pietà de' Turchini*, the *Conservatorio di Santa Maria di Loreto*, and the *Conservatorio di Santa Maria di Onofrio*. In 1743 the *Conservatorio dei Poveri* closed. Between 1797 and 1806 the three remaining conservatories successively merged into one institution, the *Real Collegio di Musica*.

[2] For an overview of the hitherto identified counterpoint notebooks that were used in the Neapolitan conservatories in the late eighteenth century, see Peter van Tour, *Counterpoint and Partimento: Methods of Teaching Composition in Late Eighteenth-Century Naples*, Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis 25 (Uppsala, 2015), 235-50.

DOI 10.1484/J.JAF.5.116042

at the *Conservatorio della Pietà de' Turchini* (hereafter called the *Pietà*) for some fifty years, between the 1740s and the 1790s.

The first part of this essay will show some examples of the tradition of the Neapolitan canon in seventeenth-century counterpoint treatises. In the second section I will compare the canons in Sala's counterpoint treatise, the *Regole del contrappunto pratico* (Naples, 1794) with Sala's solfeggio canons. I argue that the differences between Nicola Sala's canons in the different contexts of his printed treatise, on the one hand, and in his solfeggio collections, on the other, may be explained by their pedagogical function: the solfeggio canons were used as models from which students learned how to improvise canons, while the canons in the *Regole* served as models for written canon. In the final section I argue that improvisatory skills facilitated other aspects of these students' musical education as well, such as the realization of partimento fugues and the sketching and writing of fugues, particularly the canonic final stretto, termed the *stretto maestrale*.

Canon in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Naples

The Neapolitans had a long and proud tradition of writing canons. They appeared in counterpoint and composition treatises from the early seventeenth century onward and were practised in the Neapolitan conservatories until the early nineteenth century.[3] Among the most impressive early examples of this tradition are the enigmatic canons of Pietro Cerone's *El Melopeo y Maestro* (Naples, 1613).[4]

Italian counterpoint treatises from the seventeenth and eighteenth century commonly show a wide variety of canon techniques, with examples of imitation at different intervals, such as *canone all'unisono*, *canone alla seconda*, *canone alla terza*, etc. Such series of examples are commonly followed by similar series in contrary motion: *canone all'unisono per contrarii moti*, *canone alla seconda per contrarii moti*, etc. According to Angelo Berardi, canons at the second, third, sixth, seventh, and ninth came into use relatively late in the seventeenth century; canons at the unison, fourth, fifth, and octave had already been established considerably earlier.[5] Every type of canon had its own individual set of rules that students needed to learn how to put into practice. These different canon techniques were part of an approach to counterpoint teaching in which students were trained through specific so-called 'obligations' (*obligazione*). Such obligations could, for example, prohibit a certain interval, or involve the use of a certain rhythm, or the use of a fixed melodic element.[6]

3 Several interesting examples of this tradition, reflecting the tradition in the early decades of the nineteenth century, are provided in Jesse Rosenberg, 'The Experimental Music of Pietro Raimondi' (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1995).

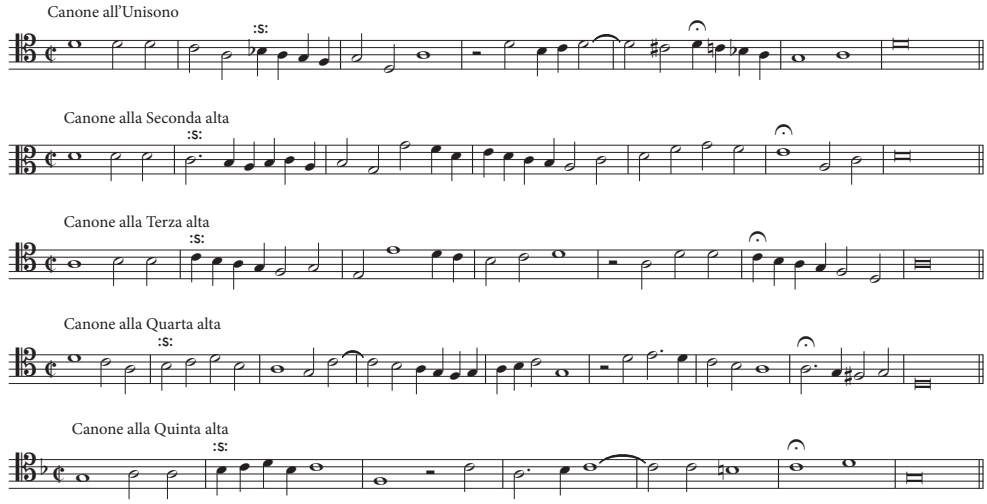
4 For a thorough discussion of the enigmatic canon in its cultural context, see Katelijne Schiltz, *Music and Riddle Culture* (Cambridge, 2015).

5 See Angelo Berardi, *Documenti Armonici* (Bologna, 1687), bk. 2, 86-87: 'Moltissimi sono i modi di comporre i Canoni come sarebbe a dire all'unisono, 4. 5. 8. quelli, che si compognono alla 2. 3. 6. 7. 9. sono più moderni.'

6 An early example of such obligation counterpoint that can be mentioned here is Pietro Pontio's *Dialogo di Musica*, 1595, pt. 3. Obligation counterpoint was widely used until the late eighteenth-century in Naples, particularly in the pedagogical tradition of the school of Francesco Durante. One of the most influential treatises that described this teaching method is the first book of Berardi's *Documenti Armonici*, 12-36.

Canonic example series commonly applied non-literal imitation within the diatonic system. For that reason, these canons are often referred to as 'diatonic' canons. They were usually notated on one stave, using a *signum congruentia* to indicate the moment at which the following voice should enter. Example 1 shows such a series of 'diatonic' canons from Scipione Cerreto's *Della Prattica Musica*.[7] Similar collections of canons are found in various other Neapolitan treatises, such as those by Pedro Cerone, Rocco Rodio, Silverio Picerli, and Domenico Scorpione.[8] As this article aims to show, the tradition of writing canons was continuously practised in Neapolitan conservatories during the long eighteenth century. As late as 1794, Nicola Sala's *Regole del contrappunto pratico* displays a series of canon examples that are quite similar to Cerreto's 'diatonic' canons of 1601. Sala's *Regole* canons are displayed in imitations up to the octave both in regular imitations and in contrary motion.

Example 1. 'Diatonic canons' from Scipione Cerreto, *Della Prattica Musica*, p. 220



It is not always possible to determine which canons were created through writing and which through improvisation. Specific guidelines for improvising canons are scarce in counterpoint treatises, although some of the descriptions that have survived show how systematic the training of improvised canons must have been. One of the most complete overviews of the various techniques of improvised canon is found in Ludovico Zacconi's *Prattica di Musica, seconda parte* (Venice, 1622). In the third part of this treatise, Zacconi explains the rules of a wide variety of two-voice improvised canons.[9] In those cases where literal descriptions of improvisatory practices are lacking, only the canons themselves may give us hints as to whether they were used as models for improvisation or for instruction in written canons.

7 Cerreto, *Della Prattica Musica* (Naples, 1601), 219-32.

8 Cerone, *El Melopeo y Maestro*, 1073-1143; Cerreto, *Della Prattica Musica*, 219-32; Rocco Rodio, *Regole di Musica* (Naples, 1609), 36; Silverio Picerli, *Specchio seconda* (Naples, 1631), 121-53; Domenico Scorpione, *Riflessioni armoniche* (Naples, 1701), 197-219; Sala, *Regole*, bk. 2, 159-200, 'Lo studio de canoni d'ogni genere', bk. 3, 1-2, 'Le disposizioni a due tutte in canoni', and bk. 3, 127-43, 'Lo studio de canoni.'

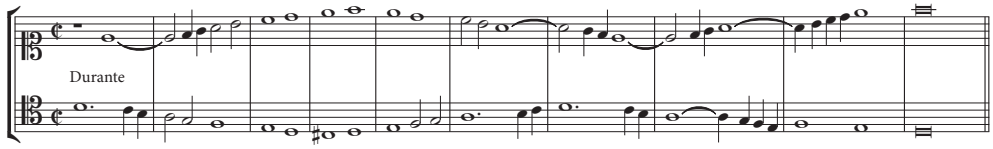
9 Zacconi, *Prattica di Musica, seconda parte*, lib. 3, cap. 3, 131. See also Ernst Ferand, *Die Improvisation in der Musik* (Zurich, 1938), 234 n. 1.

Canon Teaching at the *Pietà* in the Late 1750s

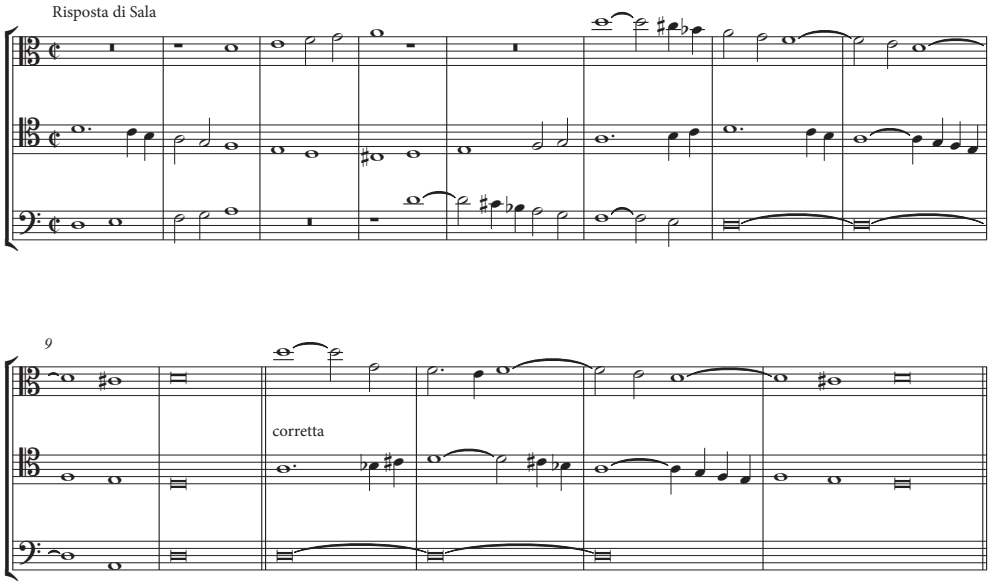
In recent years several manuscript sources have added to our knowledge about the use of canons in Neapolitan conservatories. The treatise on counterpoint and composition ascribed to Michele Gabellone and Leonardo Leo, preserved in more than a dozen manuscript copies, contains two chapters (chs. 9 and 10) on canon, providing a set of model canons.[10] In addition, the canons appear without any explanatory text in two manuscript sources.[11]

One of the most interesting canon collections is found in twenty-four folios in Sala's hand, preserved in the Biblioteca Civico Angelo Mai in Bergamo. These folios, with call number I-BGc Fald. 53, are part of the materials that Bergamese maestro Carlo

Example 2. Francesco Durante, canon in contrary motion (I-BGc Fald. 53, fol. 14r)



Example 3. 'Risposta di Sala' (I-BGc Fald. 53, fol. 13v)



[10] The Gabellone/Leo treatise is known today in fourteen manuscripts (locations indicated with RISM sigla): D-B Mus. Ms. 160; D-Dsl MB 4° 49; I-Bc F.69; I-Fc B. 2551; I-Mc Noseda Th.c. 91; I-Nc 20-2-31; I-Nc 22-2-6/3; I-Nc 27-6-40/1, olim 20-1-20; I-Nc 35-4-25, olim 4-3-27; I-Nc 4-3-28, olim C-I-21; I-OS Mss. Teoria B 24; I-OS Mss. Teoria B1; I-Vc Torr. Ms. A. 147; and finally, a manuscript in private ownership, but printed in facsimile and transcribed in Ottavio Beretta (ed.), *Una nuova fonte della trattatistica musicale settecentesca, le Regole per il Contraponto del Signor Fioroni Maestro di Capela* [sic] *di Milano* (Lucca, 2010).

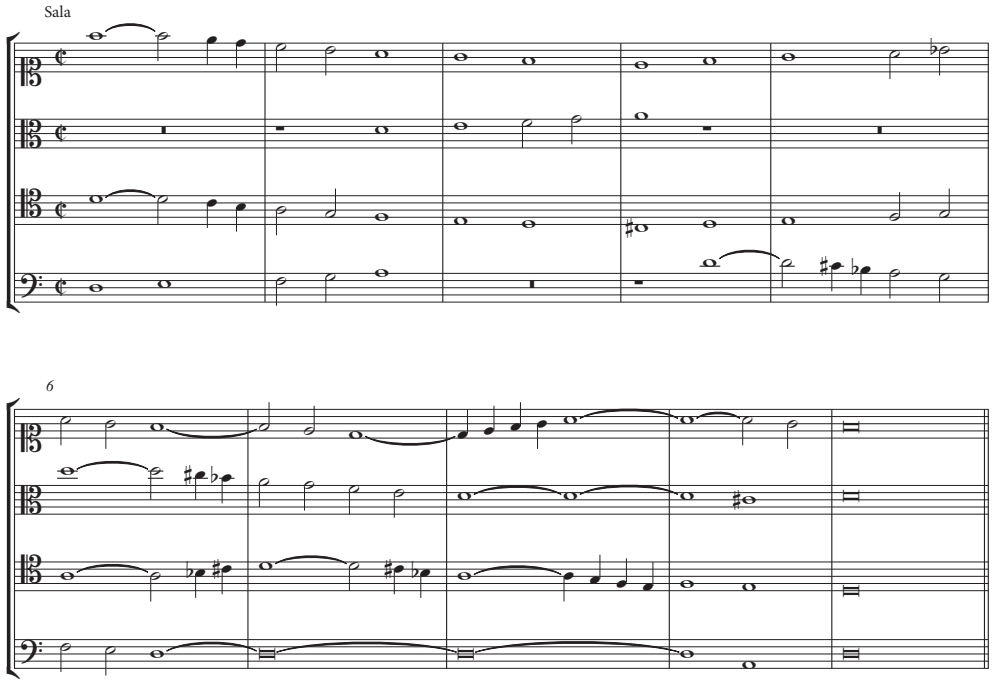
[11] F-Pn Ms. 1710 '[14 canons]'; and I-BGc Fald. 53, fols. 13-36 '[Canons by Leonardo Leo, Francesco Durante, Nicola Sala, (without title)]'. The title page of F-Pn Ms. 1710 attributes this manuscript to Carlo Cotumacci ('Originale di Carlo Cotumacci'), but this attribution does not seem to be correct, as the various canons in this collection are widely attributed to Leonardo Leo and Michele Gabellone.

Lenzi (1735-1805) collected during his studies with Nicola Sala at the *Pietà* in Naples between 1755 and 1759.[12] Here we find not only several of the model canons that are commonly found in the Leo/Gabellone treatise, but also a few canons that were obviously written and developed during Lenzi's lessons.

Fols. 13v and 14r of I-BGc Fald. 53 offer a unique insight into the place of canon instruction in counterpoint lessons at one of the Neapolitan conservatories. Here Sala apparently instructs Lenzi on how to develop a canon based on a model by an older master, in this case Francesco Durante (see Example 2). On folio 13v, the manuscript shows a three-voice canon, with the tenor voice taken from Durante's canon, marked 'Risposta di Sala' ('Sala's answer) in Lenzi's hand (Example 3). It would appear that this canon was made during Lenzi's lessons, since Sala gives different solutions for the end: after b. 10, Sala adds four measures, marked 'corretta' ('corrected').[13]

After this three-voice canon Sala adds another for four voices, apparently to show Lenzi how this canon could be elaborated even further. The previous canon is slightly altered in the four-voice version (see Example 4). It is unclear to what extent Lenzi was involved in the process of creating these canons. All twenty-four folios are clearly written in Sala's hand and contain canons by Leonardo Leo, Francesco Durante, and Sala himself. Nonetheless, there are good reasons to assume that these canons were analyzed, discussed, and elaborated during Lenzi's lessons. The sketchy nature of the canons, the

Example 4. 'A 4 Sala' (I-BGc Fald. 53, fol. 14r)



[12] Besides the twenty-four folios with canons by Leo, Durante, and Sala, I-BGc Fald. 53 also contains a collection of canons by Pietro Gnocchi (1689-1775).

[13] All of Example 3 is written in Sala's hand, suggesting that he made the corrections.

corrections in Sala's hand, the headings in Lenzi's hand, and the fact that these folios have been preserved among Lenzi's other materials deriving from his study time in Naples, all suggest that Lenzi's canon collection served as models for canon instruction as part of Lenzi's contrapuntal education.

Nicola Sala's *Regole* Canons

The study of fugue and canon was not only part of written counterpoint lessons at Neapolitan conservatories: fugues and canons were also commonly trained practically in daily singing lessons in the form of *solfeggi fugati* (solfeggio fugues) and *solfeggi canoni* (solfeggio canons). Numerous examples of two-voice solfeggio fugues are, for example, found among Leonardo Leo's solfeggi. Other authors who included solfeggio canons in their singing methods included Francesco Durante, Carlo Cotumacci (c. 1709-85), and Niccolò Zingarelli (1752-1837).[14]

In the case of Nicola Sala, canons from two different kinds of sources have survived: those in his printed theoretical treatise, the *Regole del contrappunto pratico* of 1794, two sections of which are entirely devoted to canons (bk. 2, 159-200 and bk. 3, 127-43); and handwritten canons in solfeggio manuscripts and manuscripts of solfeggio canons.[15] The obvious differences between these two types of canon urge us to investigate why the canons in theoretical sources show much more variety in technique than the solfeggio canons. I would argue that the solfeggio canons were primarily designed for practical use in singing lessons and aimed at developing improvisational fluency in canon technique, based on the following observations:

- Sala's solfeggio canons are dominated by one type of canon: the canon at the unison or octave at the temporal distance of two beats ('dopo due battute').
- Sala's solfeggio canons in *alla breve* time, in particular, show numerous standardized formulas for starting subjects, for cadences, and modulation.
- Many of the solfeggio canons apply *soggetti* that reappear in new keys ('Alla 5.ª del Tuono', 'Alla 4.ª del Tuono', 'Alla 6.ª del Tuono', etc.), facilitating the reuse of the previous subjects in new keys through memorization.

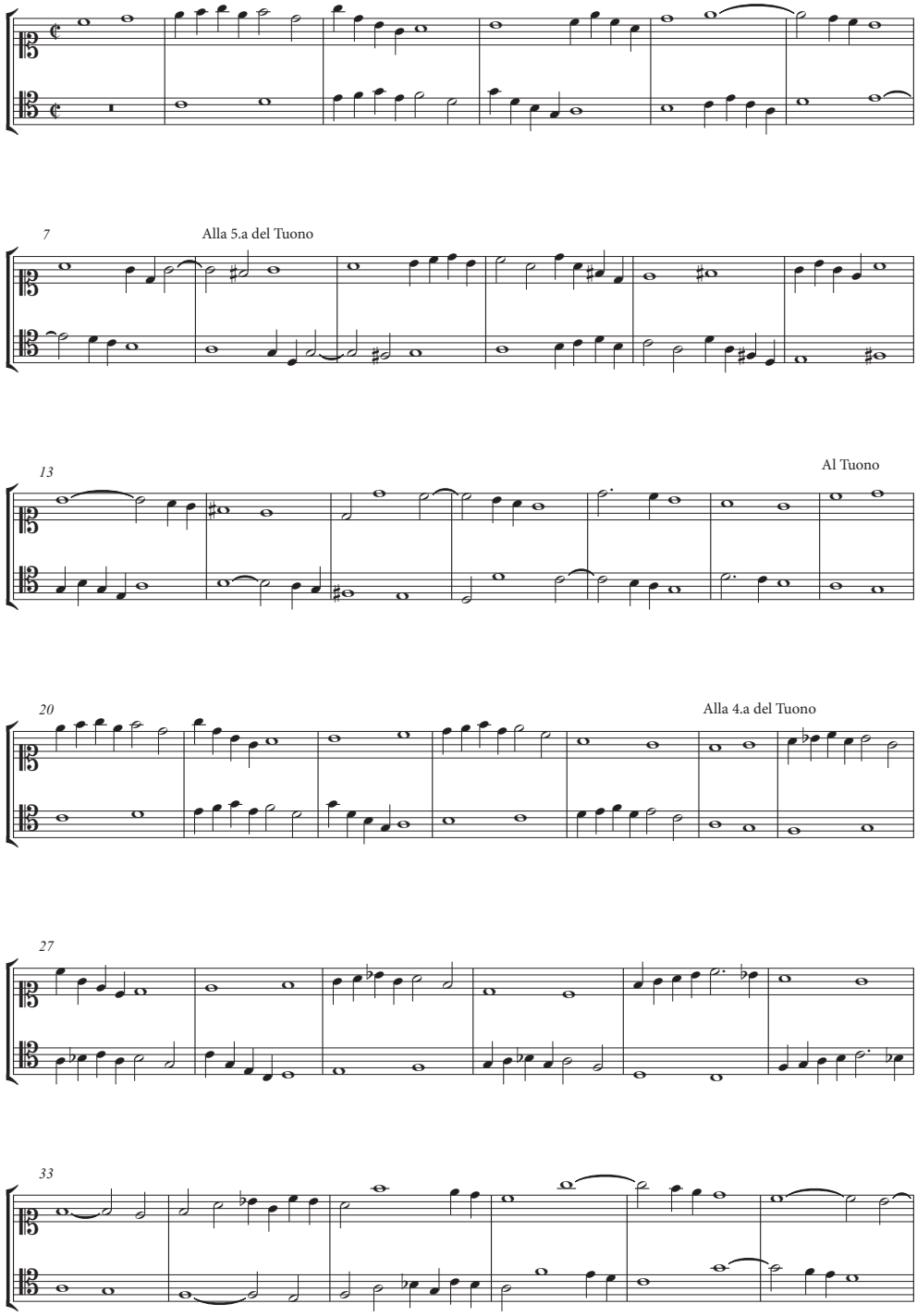
The following sections take a closer look at the standardized solutions in Sala's solfeggio canons that suggest an improvisatory practice of canon singing in Sala's singing lessons.

Nicola Sala's Solfeggio Canons

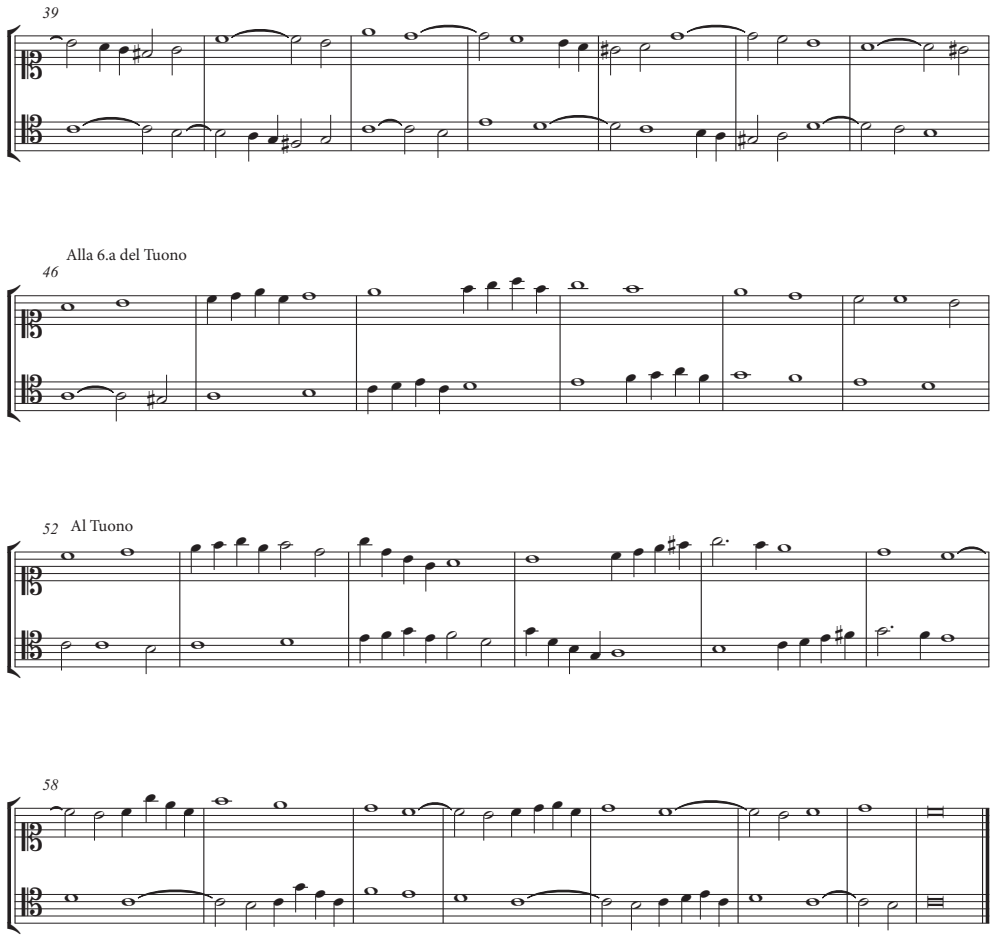
One of the most important features of the improvised canon is its regularity, its simplest principle being the ascending or descending scale. The *Solfeggio Canon No. 5* shows an example of designing a melodic line rising by steps for every whole note: *c′*, *d′*, *e′*, *f′*, *g′*, *a′*, *b′*, *c″*, *d″*, *e″*. The melody then modulates into the dominant key, from which the guide

[14] Some important sources for Neapolitan solfeggio canons are: F-Pn L 7338 (solfeggio canons by Cotumacci); F-Pn L 7409/2 (solfeggio canons by Durante); many autograph by Zingarelli in the conservatory libraries in Milan and Naples.
[15] Especially important is I-Nc 20-6-1/9.

Example 5. Nicola Sala, *Solfeggio Canon No. 5* (I-Nc 20-6-1/9, pp. 10-11)



Example 5. (continued)

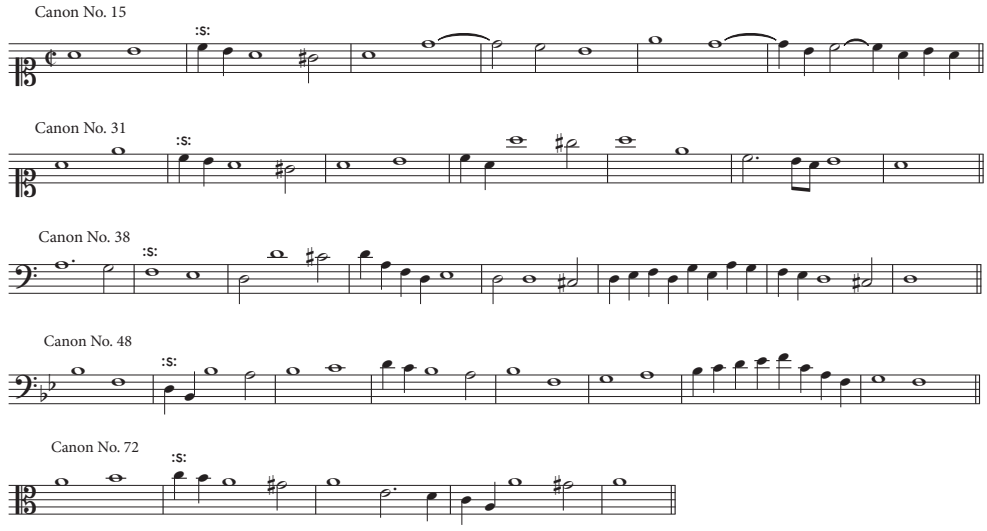


restarts (see Example 5). The procedure is extremely simple: the guide in the cantus (the starting voice) is imitated by the consequent in the tenor (the following voice) at the octave, at the time interval of two beats. Sala applies this same procedure in the vast majority of the solfeggio canons. This makes the rules as predictable as possible.[16] Diminution patterns disguise the regularity of the canons and add to the individuality of the two voices.

This is the basic procedure in Sala's solfeggio canons. In contrast to the canons from the *Regole*, Sala hardly uses any variety regarding the pitch intervals that separate the voices: either they imitate each other in unison, or they imitate each other in the octave. The two-voice canons in the *Regole* move at the time interval of one, two, or three

[16] Of the seventy-five canons by Sala in I-Nc 20-6-1/9, the second voice starts two beats later in no less than sixty-seven (89% of the total). The eight exceptions are: No. 4 ('dopo tre battute'), No. 9 ('dopo quattro battute'), No. 16bis ('per moto contrario'), No. 17 ('alla settima grave'), No. 25 ('per moto contrario'), No. 51 ('dopo tre battute'), No. 59 ('canone in 2.ª dopo una battuta'), and No. 68 ('solfeggio fugato [aggravato dopo tre battute]').

Example 6. Nicola Sala, Solfeggio Canons Nos. 15, 31, 38, 48, and 72 (I-Nc 20-6-1/9)



beats, while the great majority of the solfeggio canons move at the time interval of two beats.

Interestingly, a great number of Nicola Sala's solfeggio canons start with similar scalar patterns. Example 6 shows several solfeggio canon openings, from which it becomes clear that the same type of canon is applied (that is: in unison and at the distance of two whole notes), but also that several similar formulas are used. One of these commonly applied starting formulas has been called the 'Do-Re-Mi schema' in our own time (see Example 6, Canons 15 and 72, b. 1, and Canons 31 and 48, b. 3).[17] It seems that, over time, such formulas became standardized melodic elements in *alla mente* canons.

It is easy to imagine that the regular training of improvised canons must have been great fun. With just a limited set of one-measure musical formulas young students were able to start an improvised canon such as the ones shown in Example 5. It must have been pedagogically quite fruitful that senior students could teach junior students with such un-notated solfeggi, in which both the guide and the consequent challenged their limits.[18]

In the next section, an attempt will be made to show some of the possible advantages of training canon solfeggi for other parts of the musical curriculum in the Neapolitan conservatories.

[17] As Robert Gjerdingen has clarified for me in a private correspondence, his use of the term 'Do-Re-Mi schema' does not intend to exclude similar patterns in minor keys. See Robert Gjerdingen, *Music in the Galant Style* (Oxford, 2007), 77-88.

[18] See Emmanuele Imbimbo, *Observations sur l'enseignement mutuel appliqué à la musique, et sur quelques abus introduits dans cet art; précédées d'une notice sur les conservatoires de Naples, par Emmanuel* [sic] *Imbimbo* (Paris, 1821).

Modulatory Planning in Improvised Canons

The lack of technical variety in the solfeggio canons signals that these pieces had a function different from the significantly more varied 'diatonic' canons in Sala's printed treatise. Besides the above-mentioned assumption that they were used as models for improvisation, solfeggio canons may have served also as practical models for planning a composition's modulations: although many of the solfeggio canons are built from similar one-measure formulas (as shown in Example 6), they show variety regarding the aspect of modulatory planning.

As soon as the student had acquired the skills of taking the role as the guide, improvising a section in the main key, he would soon experience the difficulties of taking the next step. Either he would need to finish the canon, or he would need to take the canon to a new key by restarting the guide in this key. In most cases the first goal in such a succession of keys would be the dominant ('Alla 5.ª del Tuono'), or the subdominant key ('Alla 4.ª del Tuono').

In order to give the reader an opportunity to try some of the steps that were taken in learning this kind of improvised canon, I have provided some simple exercises in the Appendix. In these exercises, I have used several of the strategies in Sala's solfeggio canons and put them in a progressive order, successively leading to the kind of solfeggio canons that appear in the manuscript I-Nc 20-6-1/9.

Example 5 shows one of Nicola Sala's solfeggio canons in full (*Solfeggio Canon No. 5*), with headings marking the modulations as they are given in the manuscript. The first section of the canon (bb. 1-8) moves from the main key of C major to the dominant G major. In the second section (bb. 8-19) the canon moves back from the dominant to the main key. The third section (bb. 19-25) restarts the theme of the canon but turns this time to the subdominant F major. The fourth section (bb. 25-46) is somewhat longer than the previous sections, moving to A minor. In the fifth section in A minor (bb. 46-51) the guide is somewhat shorter than the start and leads the canon back to the main key of C major. The sixth and final section (bb. 52-65) recapitulates the canon soggetto and completes the canon.

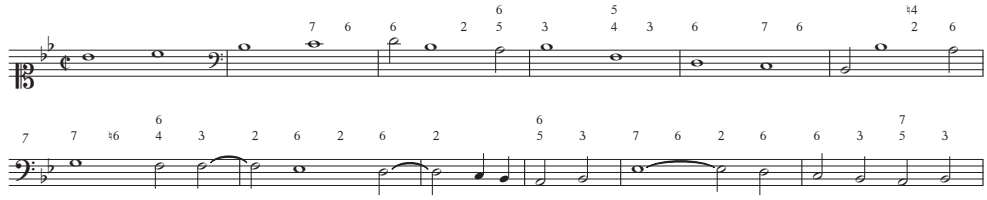
The Use of Canon Technique in Sala's Partimenti

As the counterpoint notebooks kept by students of Nicola Sala show, canon was a common element in Neapolitan contrapuntal training. Canon was considered to be an important element in church music. In addition to this, it may be assumed that training in improvised solfeggio canons was important also for the realization of partimento fugues. Sala often based the theme of a partimento on melodic formulas that were quite similar to those found in the solfeggio canons. An example of this is Sala's *Partimento No. 104* from one of the Neapolitan autographs of Sala's partimenti (I-Nc 46-1-34), where it is entitled 'Ricercata'. The 'Do-Re-Mi' pattern that is found in so many of the solfeggio canons is here put into action in a *ricercare* partimento (see Example 7).

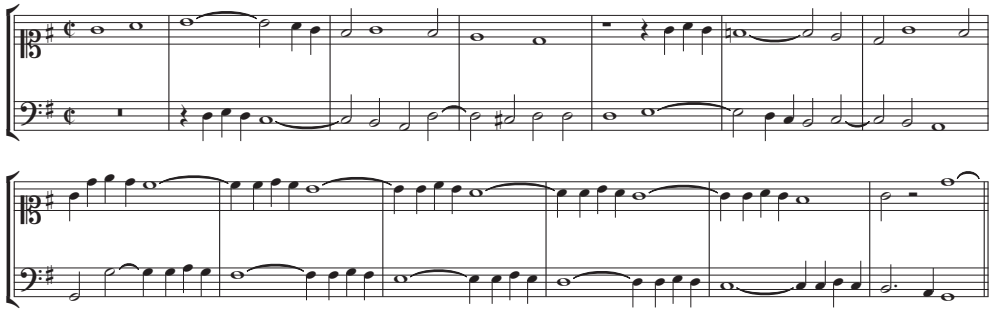
The techniques that were trained practically through solfeggi and through partimenti eventually influenced the study of written counterpoint. Notebooks by Sala's students show numerous examples of how these kinds of techniques were used in written

counterpoint exercises, particularly in the final stretto of written fugues. Example 8 shows the first thirteen measures of a two-voice fugue by one of Nicola Sala's French students, written at the *Pietà* in 1789.

Example 7. Nicola Sala, 'Ricercata', [*Partimento No. 104*], bb. 1-12 (I-Nc 46-1-34, fol. 81v)

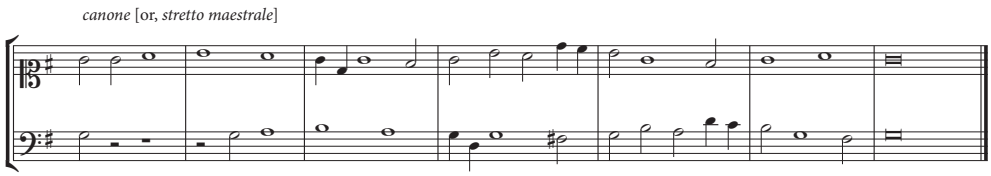


Example 8. Louis Julien Castels de Labarre (?), *Fuga No. 14*, bb. 1-13 (F-Pn Ms. 8223, fol. 18r)



It seems likely that the master in most cases dictated the subject and the countersubject to the student beforehand.[19] These had to be worked out before the next lesson. Besides the common procedures of making a proper exposition this also involved the construction of several stretti, the last of which was to be in canon. A fugal theme such as in Example 8 (bb. 1-2) presumably allowed the student to apply the formulas he had practised extensively in solfeggio canons (see Example 9).

Example 9. Louis Julien Castels de Labarre (?), *Fuga No. 14*, bb. 60-66 (F-Pn Ms. 8223, fols. 18v)



[19] This assumption is supported by the counterpoint notebook 'Studj dj contrappunto fattj da me Filippo M.ª Gherardeschi. Dj Pistoia' (I-PS B.171.4), written in Bologna in 1756 under the direction of Giovanni Battista Martini. On two occasions in this notebook (pp. 71 and 75), Filippo Maria Gherardeschi jotted down a theme and countersubject, then made a fugue out of them shortly thereafter.

Conclusion

Sala's canons fall into two categories. The counterpoint treatise *Regole del contrappunto pratico*, printed in 1794, gives examples of what are commonly termed 'diatonic' canons. Such canons commonly belong to the category of the canon with obligations and display a wide range of canonic techniques. The counterpoint notebooks of Carlo Lenzi, written while he was a student of Sala, show that such canons were studied technically and that they were used as models that were further elaborated or altered into reworked (written) canons.

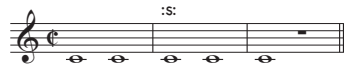
The other category is the solfeggio canons. Such canons appear in collections of solfeggi. They show considerably less variety from a technical perspective. The solfeggio canons were not only used to practise solmisation; the majority were also used as models for improvisation and, possibly, for modulatory planning.

The differences that are found between Sala's 'diatonic' canons and the considerably more schematic solfeggio canons suggest that improvised canons were used as part of singing lessons at least until the late eighteenth century, considerably later than has been previously assumed. This notion contributes to a deeper understanding of how eighteenth-century composers carried on the centuries-old tradition of canon technique in Naples.

Appendix. Practical Hints for Canon Improvisation

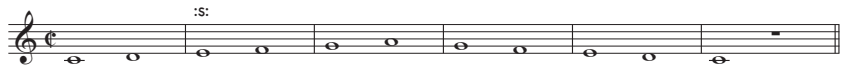
I offer here some practical hints on how to get started with improvising the kind of canon most commonly applied by Nicola Sala: the two-part canon 'all'unisono dopo due battute'. The following exercises are intended to give provide basic skills that may be further explored. The exercises provide the necessary tools for making small canons of ten to fifteen bars in a single key. Once the singers have mastered these basics, they can move on to the next step, which is to modulate and to reintroduce the *soggetto* in new keys.

1. *A safe start.* Singers often react with some anxiety when they are invited to participate in improvisation exercises. It is therefore best to start with a very simple exercise of just singing a few notes in unison, inviting the singers to follow the leading singer after two beats:

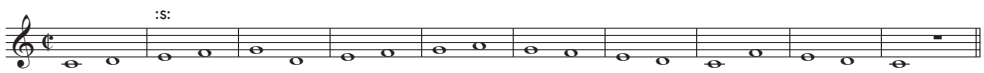


   Although this doesn't get us anywhere yet in terms of canon singing, as a first exercise it creates a safe 'set-up' for the next exercise.

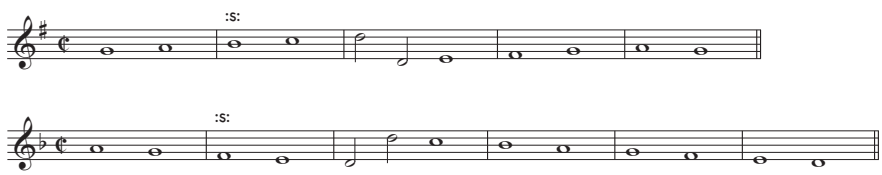
2. *The* scala semplice. The teacher sings an ascending and a descending six-tone scale and asks the singers to imitate the melody at two beats' distance:



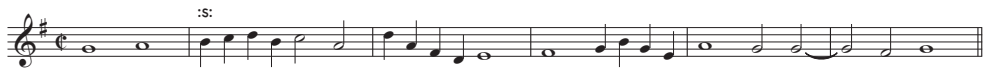
3. *Fourths in the opposite direction*. The *scala semplice* may function as a basis to which we can always return. However, some variation is also needed. This can be achieved by inserting fourths into the scale in the opposite direction from which the scale is moving:



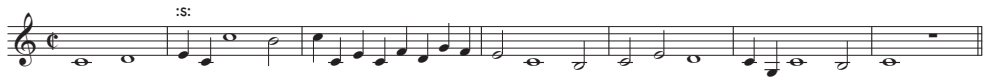
4. *Varying scales with other intervals*. The most commonly used intervals for varying the direction in scales are the fourth (see Exercise 3), the sixth, and the octave. Singers are now invited to create their own exercises using these intervals. If a melody needs to be kept within the singers' range, this can be done by breaking a note into two half notes and singing the second half note an octave either higher or lower:



5. *Creating rhythmic variation*. The scale can then be diminished into smaller note values, providing the canon with rhythmic variation.



6. *Using cadential formulas*. The previous exercise included a cadential formula. Such formulas can also be used at the beginning of a canon. In the following exercise, I have chained a few of these formulas together:



7. *Varying scales through syncopations*. In addition to those techniques that have been shown in Exercises 3, 4, and 5, the canon can also be varied through the use of syncopation. The following example shows, a fragment from Nicola Sala's *Solfeggio Canon No. 37*, illustrates the application of this procedure:

Abstract

According to the current understanding of the curriculum at the Neapolitan conservatories, students were taught composition primarily through partimento-playing and through written studies in counterpoint. However, singing instruction was equally fundamental as keyboard playing. In this essay I highlight the importance of sung *canoni* (or *canon solfeggi*) in the lessons of Nicola Sala (1713-1801), at the *Conservatorio della Pietà de Turchini*. With such improvised canons, students were systematically prepared for composing written counterpoint, including the final stretto of the fugue, in which canon technique was applied.