

# Music Theory Pedagogy in the Nineteenth Century

## Comparing Traditions of Three European Conservatories

Bjørnar Utne-Reitan

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### Abstract

What characterized conservatory music theory pedagogy in nineteenth-century Europe? This article compares the nineteenth-century traditions of music theory pedagogy that are associated with the conservatories in Paris, Vienna, and Leipzig, specifically focusing on the middle of the century (ca. 1830–70). Through this comparison, it discusses the general characteristics of conservatory music theory pedagogy in nineteenth-century Europe. In the first section, the characteristics of the three individual traditions are discussed separately. In the second section, the traditions are compared from three perspectives: theoretical framework, pedagogical approach, and historical legacy. Although the traditions are very different on several central points (e.g., ties to Italian *partimento* pedagogy in Paris, to Ramellian fundamental bass in Vienna, to Weberian Roman numeral analysis in Leipzig), they also share some fundamental similarities. These drew the borders—the defining limits—of conservatory music theory. The article argues that in the nineteenth century, the idea of music theory as a primarily written discipline (centered on textbooks and written exercises and largely separated from musical performance) was made into one of the most central elements of these general characteristics of music theory pedagogy that were to be taken for granted and accepted as self-evident tenets across institutional traditions.

*Keywords* Paris Conservatory, Vienna Conservatory, Leipzig Conservatory, music theory education, history of music theory

# Music Theory Pedagogy in the Nineteenth Century

## Comparing Traditions of Three European Conservatories

Bjørnar Utne-Reitan

How did students at European conservatories in the nineteenth century learn music theory? This article examines this broad and fundamental question, focussing on the middle of the century (ca. 1830–1870) and comparing the pedagogical traditions of three central institutions: the Paris Conservatory, the Vienna Conservatory, and the Leipzig Conservatory. These institutions loom large in the history of higher music education as well as in the history of music theory pedagogy through their influential teachers and textbooks.<sup>1</sup> Comparing their pedagogical traditions gives scholars insights into the character of higher musical education in mid nineteenth-century Europe.

A central part of the present article is a discussion of the turn toward *writing* in music theory pedagogy, a historical development that had far-reaching consequences—both negative and positive. The claim that such a turn took place from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century is not novel. It figures in several recent studies of different traditions of music theory pedagogy. I will discuss these studies in due course. The original contribution of this article is a broader understanding of this turn—a bird’s eye view—through addressing how it manifested itself *across* different traditions of music theory pedagogy.

In addition to displaying the many important differences between the three traditions, I will thus also discuss the fundamental similarities between them. I argue that the idea of music theory as a primarily written discipline—centered around textbooks and written exercises and largely separated from musical performance—is one such similarity across the institutional traditions. Thus, it constitutes a central part of the *general characteristics* of

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<sup>1</sup> Holtmeier (2012: 5) claims that although there were things going on elsewhere in Europe—for instance, in Italy and England—the development of a “modern” theory pedagogy in nineteenth-century Europe mainly took place in Germany and France. This attitude is also reflected in Wagner’s (1974) study of harmony textbooks from the first half of the nineteenth century; he outlines three national circles (*Kreise*): a French, an Austrian, and a German. Although the inclusion of institutions in other capitals of culture in nineteenth-century Europe (London, Berlin, Prague, etc.) certainly would have enhanced the discussion, it was not feasible within the scope of this article.

conservatory music theory pedagogy in the nineteenth century. For many students and teachers in today's higher music education, this might seem like a rather self-evident claim regarding music theory pedagogy. However, these general characteristics of music theory pedagogy are historically contingent constructs, not *a priori* givens. That the conclusion may seem rather self-evident only attests to the lasting influence of nineteenth-century traditions.

Over the past thirty to forty years, scholarly interest in the history of music theory has been steadily growing. The history of music theory has come of age as a substantial field of research in English-language as well as German-language music scholarship. Although there have been written several studies of the individual conservatory traditions—which the current article will outline and take as its point of departure—not much has been written much about the bigger picture of conservatory music theory pedagogy in nineteenth-century Europe. The current article contributes to filling this gap by comparing music theory pedagogy at three nineteenth-century conservatories. The article is structured in two parts: (1) Discussions of three individual pedagogical traditions centered in Paris, Vienna, and Leipzig; (2) Comparisons of these traditions from the perspectives of theory, pedagogy, and historical legacy.

### **Defining Traditions**

Tradition “may be commonly understood as sets of beliefs and practices that are transmitted across generations to form a context that then becomes a framework for subsequent cultural activity ... and interpretation” (Beard and Gloag 2005: s.v. “Tradition”). In this sense, a tradition of music theory pedagogy is a set of music-theoretical beliefs and pedagogical practices that are transmitted from one generation to another. Robert Wason (2002: 59) claims that by the end of the eighteenth century, previously distinct national traditions of music theory had blended so much that it is difficult to distinguish among them, and while Carl Dahlhaus approaches this period in terms of national traditions, he makes it clear that the instruction in music theory had moved into an institutional from a national frame, mentioning the three conservatories studied in this article (Dahlhaus 1984: vii). In accordance with this, I will speak of traditions in institutional rather than national terms, bearing in mind that a tradition, of course, is conceptually different from an institution. However, a specific pedagogical tradition most often has one institution with which it is associated as well as specific teaching methods and/or textbooks that to a certain extent defines it.

As Ivor Goodson (1994: 118) has claimed—borrowing the term *invented tradition* from Eric Hobsbawm (1983)—“the written curriculum, whether as courses of study,

syllabuses, guidelines or textbooks, is a supreme example of the invention of tradition; but as with all tradition it is not a once-and-for-all given, it is a given which has to be defended, where the mystifications have to be constructed and reconstructed over time.” The main primary sources for our understanding of the traditions of music theory pedagogy are curricula in some sense, textbooks being of particular importance. Thus, teachers and textbook authors are inventors of traditions who construct the curricula of their various institutions. The continued use and adaptation of the curriculum over time establishes it as a distinct tradition.

### The Paris Conservatory

The first conservatory in the modern sense of the word was established in Paris. In 1795, the existing schools of singing (the *École Royale de Chant*) and playing (the *Institut National de Musique*) merged to become the Paris Conservatory (the *Conservatoire de Musique*), which offered its first classes in 1796–97 (Holoman 2015). There had, however, already existed conservatories in Italy for several centuries, the most famous in Naples. These were conservatories in the old sense of the word, meaning a kind of orphanage and boarding school to learn a craft (e.g., music). Whereas the old Italian conservatories had been European centers of institutionalized music education in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, they would soon be overshadowed by the modern conservatories that were established in the first half of the nineteenth century (Tregear 2020; Weber et al. 2001).<sup>2</sup> Although there are many differences that distinguish the modern institutions from the old ones, there are also several important links between the old Italian conservatories and Paris, the first modern conservatory.

Defining the tradition of music theory pedagogy is more complicated at Paris than the other two conservatories because many theory teachers at the Paris Conservatory wrote numerous textbooks. Judging by the number of published textbooks, harmony was the most important music-theoretical subject.<sup>3</sup> A strict division at Paris between harmony and

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<sup>2</sup> The decline of the old conservatories, and the rise of the modern ones, was closely connected with the Napoleonic Wars. As Cafiero (2005) noted, following the invasion of Naples in 1806, the remaining Neapolitan conservatories were merged into one new institution. Furthermore, Rubinoff (2017) argues that the pedagogical model developed at the Paris Conservatory was strongly influenced by military training. Peters (1990: 18–19) claims that the instruction at the Conservatory in the first decades centered on two arenas: military music and opera.

<sup>3</sup> Groth (1983: 22–25) provides an overview of the many harmony books published in nineteenth-century France.

counterpoint is challenging to maintain, however, since significant counterpoint training was integrated into the harmony course, especially through so-called *harmonie pratique* (Groth 1983: 77–79), while most training in the discipline *contrepoint* focused on strict *stile antico* vocal polyphony in the Fuxian tradition (80–82), in which there appears to have been considerably less interest (82, 85) and which was also subject to much public criticism for being outdated and irrelevant for contemporary composition (117–23). Sight-singing (*sofège*) was another part of the Paris curriculum, which also had been the case at the Italian conservatories (*solfeggio*; see Baragwanath 2020). It functioned as preliminary training in theory, laying an important foundation for the courses in harmony and counterpoint.<sup>4</sup>

Among the vast amounts of material on harmony some works have had a more lasting influence upon “inventing” this pedagogical tradition than others. Chief among them is the *Traité d’harmonie* (1802) of Charles-Simon Catel (1773–1830), which was chosen as the official harmony theory for the conservatory in 1801. Although it only remained the single official harmony textbook until 1815/1816, Catel’s work would continue to be a main point of reference for later textbooks used at the conservatory (Groth 1983: 7–14; Peters 1990). Catel creates a pragmatic divide between *harmonie simple ou naturelle* (chords one can derive from a ninth chord, natural or flat) and *harmonie composée ou artificielle* (other chords, mainly explained by way of suspensions). Although few adopted the derivation based on the ninth chord, “Catel’s distinction between ‘natural’ and ‘artificial’ chords became the model for most nineteenth-century French theorists.” (Peters 1990: 41; see also Groth 1983: 30–36)<sup>5</sup>

According to Penelope Peters (1990: 18), “Catel’s treatise was used at the Paris Conservatoire until 1816 when he was forced to resign because his sympathies lay with [former Conservatory Director Bernard] Sarrette and the Revolutionary and Napoleonic eras.” The Conservatory, closely associated with the revolution and the empire, was briefly closed

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<sup>4</sup> According to Rubinoff (2017: 486), who focus on the early years of the Paris Conservatory, the students “were educated according to a carefully graded methodology. Tuition proceeded in three stages: *sofège*, instruction in singing and instruments (especially winds), and instruction in music theory and history, accompaniment, and advanced instruction on the student’s chosen instrument.”

<sup>5</sup> Catel’s theory also incorporates an understanding of dissonance where deviation from an underlying simple harmonic structure is a defining feature. Thus, dissonant chords could “appear” to be consonant (*syncopé consonnante apparente*), for example, a 6–5 suspension turning an apparently consonant six-three chord into a properly consonant five-three chord or a 5–6 sequence turning apparently consonant five-three chords into properly consonant six-three chords. This has some affinity with the later Riemannian notion of *Scheinkonsonanzen*.

in late 1815 as a natural consequence of the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy (Holoman 2015). It reopened the following year. The reorganizations in this politically turbulent period—including the dismissal of Sarrette—thus explains how Catel’s book lost its official monopoly. By 1822, newly appointed Director of the Conservatory Luigi Cherubini (1760–1842), however, supported re-adopting Catel’s book—in spite of there now being other textbooks in use, most prominently the *Cours de Composition Musicale* (1818) by Antoine Reicha (1770–1836).<sup>6</sup> Cherubini requested François-Joseph Fétis (1784–1871) to write an official textbook dedicated to counterpoint and fugue that would complement Catel’s work on harmony (Groth 1983: 10–11).<sup>7</sup> The continued relevance of Catel’s work also at mid-century is underlined by the fact that Aimé Leborne (1797–1866), professor at the Paris Conservatory from 1836, published an extended edition of it (i.e., Catel and Leborne 1847). As a result of this move to conserve Catel’s ideas rather than to refine a theory of harmony itself, the many textbooks appearing from about 1830 on focused on improving its pedagogy. According to Groth (1983: 19), attempts at theoretical simplification, popularization, and methodological reworking largely replaced attempts at further theoretical experimentation. At the same time, it is also from the 1830s that explanations of increasingly more chromatic progressions are included in the textbooks, as Penelope Peters (1990) carefully documented.

Thus, at mid-century, there was an established theoretical tradition largely revolving around the theoretical framework put forward by Catel. On the practical side of the curriculum there is a clear link to the *partimento* pedagogy,<sup>8</sup> the hallmark of the old Italian

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<sup>6</sup> Reicha’s work, which Groth characterizes as by being close to actual compositional practice, is built on completely different principles than Catel’s (Groth 1983: 10, 41–45). According to Christensen (2021: 293–294), Reicha’s pedagogy was “one of relentless exemplification and iteration” where he would “show over and over how these chords and melodies might be used in practice.” This focus on learning through studying and imitating examples had precedents in eighteenth-century Italian, particularly Bolognese, pedagogy (e.g., Martini 1774–76; Paolucci 1765–72). Reicha’s work was “met with resistance” (Peters 1990: 20), for instance, from Fétis ([1840] 1994: 143–145; see also Christensen 2019b: 220–221). See Morabito and Bernard de Raymond 2021 for recent discussions of Reicha and his works.

<sup>7</sup> Fétis’ most important contribution to music-theoretical discourse in nineteenth-century France was probably, however, his theories of the historical development of tonality (Groth 1983: 58–68). See Christensen 2019b for a recent in-depth account of nineteenth-century concepts of tonality centered around the writings of Fétis.

<sup>8</sup> A *partimento* is “a sketch, written on a single staff, whose main purpose is to be a guide for improvisation of a composition at the keyboard” (Sanguinetti 2012: 14). For discussions of *partimento* pedagogy in eighteenth-century Italy (which also included other disciplines than *partimento*), see Sanguinetti 2012, van Tour 2015, and Gjerdingen 2007a, 2020. One could argue persuasively that there were several different traditions of figured-bass

music theory pedagogy, which emerges as a key for understanding and defining the Parisian tradition of music theory pedagogy. A central figure in this link is Alexandre-Étienne Choron (1771–1834), who praised Catel’s work for being closer to the Neapolitan *partimento* tradition than the fundamental bass theory associated with Rameau (Masci 2013: 12–14). Choron’s own contribution was his published editions of *partimenti* by Italian masters, hence securing their dissemination in early nineteenth-century France (Gjerdingen 2020: 42–45).<sup>9</sup>

The core of the Parisian tradition, based on Italian models, was learning a handful of harmonic voice-leading patterns associated with specific bass motions. These may be realized contrapuntally in a number of ways, thus integrating elementary counterpoint (*qua* voice leading) with studies of harmony. This was practical training that did not need theoretical justification for all progressions (as in, for example, fundamental bass theory). In Robert Gjerdingen’s (2019: 249) words, the Parisian pedagogical tradition taught students “a rich repertoire of harmonic contexts without claiming that there was one progression to rule them all.” In addition to cadences and the rule of the octave, standard bass motions (mainly sequences) were a central part of the training. These, closely related to what were known as *movimenti* (or *moti del basso*) in Italy, were called *marches d’harmonie* in France. They are found in a range of French textbooks spanning the whole nineteenth century (Gjerdingen 2020: 197–205).<sup>10</sup> Arguably the two most prominent were those of François Bazin (1816–1878, text 1857) and Henri Reber (1807–1880, text 1862), which contain a rich repertoire of *marches d’harmonie*.<sup>11</sup> These provided training in tonal idioms that the students had to

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pedagogy centered around *partimento*-like exercises, but for the sake of simplicity, I will refer to it as a single tradition.

<sup>9</sup> Italian music theory pedagogy was, however, nothing new in Paris at the time. There had been a growing interest in *partimento* in Paris at least since the 1770s (Cafiero 2007: 139), culminating in the 1814 edition of *partimenti* by Fedele Fenaroli (1730–1818) published by Emanuele Imbimbo (1765–1839) in Paris.

<sup>10</sup> Groth (1983: 73) claims that these exercises are found in almost all nineteenth-century French harmony textbooks and are varyingly called *marches*, *tours*, or *progressions d’harmonie*. In 1847, Cherubini published a book wholly dedicated to *marches d’harmonie* (i.e., Cherubini 1847), testifying to its centrality in Parisian pedagogy at mid-century. Cherubini had been trained in Bologna, and in addition to the many Neapolitan influences on French theory pedagogy, there were also several ties to Bolognese pedagogy (Gjerdingen 2020: 264–65).

<sup>11</sup> Masci (2013) discusses Reber’s work while Gjerdingen (2020: 172, 186, 197–98, 296–98) discusses Bazin’s. Masci (2015) and Gjerdingen (2019) discuss these theory teacher’s influence on the next generation of theory teachers, testifying to how the established tradition was kept alive in the late nineteenth century.

recognize and creatively exploit when harmonizing a *basse donnée* (“given bass,” the French equivalent of *partimento*), for example, when participating in one of the conservatory’s official competitions in harmony.<sup>12</sup> A page with *marches d’harmonie* exercises by Reber is reproduced as Figure 1.

**<INSERT FIGURE 1 NEAR HERE>**

The tradition of music theory pedagogy associated with the Paris Conservatory has been referred to as a seamless continuation of the Neapolitan tradition (Holtmeier 2012: 6). Indeed, as Gjerdingen (2020: 272) claims, “the *marches harmoniques* taught at the Paris Conservatory were the direct descendants of the four-voice dispositions of *movimenti* taught in Naples.” Rosa Cafiero, however, reminds us that the Italian tradition was indeed transformed when adopted in Paris.<sup>13</sup> Her assessment of a *partimento* realization by Fétis, following a set of realization principles he has put forward, is that it “is severe in style and gives no opportunities for the ‘improvising’ instrumental voices that were supposed to be still in use in Naples. ... Fétis has cast a stereotyped model upon a living and continuously evolving tradition” (Cafiero 2007: 154).

Some professors stayed truer to the eighteenth-century Italian tradition than others. Gjerdingen (2020: 201, 266) points to treatises on practical harmony by conservatory professors such as Hippolyte Colet (1808–51, text 1846) and Auguste Panseron (1795–1859, text 1855) which demonstrate *partimento* realizations not only in a simple chordal style, but also in the more artful and contrapuntal style of the eighteenth century. Even so, the general tendency throughout the century was that a “largely improvisatory tradition ... had slowly transformed into something more strictly defined and notated” (Gjerdingen 2020: 298), and by the 1870s, the typical *partimento* realization by students at the Paris Conservatory was probably “characterized by block chords and simple resolutions of suspensions” (300).

The focus on textbooks and written exercises in Paris distinguishes it from the Italian *partimento* pedagogy, which focussed on practical training by the keyboard, including improvisation. This change in emphasis was not a drastic rupture: eighteenth-century Italian students had to do written exercises, and their nineteenth-century French counterparts did not

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<sup>12</sup> Bazin (1857) explicitly labels his *basse données* as *partimenti*. When the students were given a melody rather than a bass line, it was called a *chant donnée*. Gjerdingen (2020: 202–3) discusses the *basse donnée* for the 1854 competition, as well as the winning realization.

<sup>13</sup> Ijzerman (2021: 210–211) puts forward a similar argument.

abandon teaching harmony by the keyboard entirely.<sup>14</sup> Nonetheless, the production of textbooks in an Industrial-Age pedagogical setting of the classroom contrasts with the earlier more personal and practical emphasis. Although they build on the older Italian tradition, the works by Catel and his successors were modern textbooks that present “a harmonic and systematic approach foreign to any Neapolitan set of *regole*” (Ijzerman 2021: 210). It is thus important to avoid equating the Parisian tradition with the older Italian one while still acknowledging the very strong link between these two traditions of conservatory music theory pedagogy.

### The Vienna Conservatory

The great influence the French Enlightenment music theorist Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683–1784), especially his *Traité de l'harmonie* (1722), has had in the history of music theory is indisputable. Ironically, since the Parisian pedagogy mainly relied on practical methods associated with the old Italian conservatories, the more speculative theory of Rameau, especially the analytical tool of “fundamental bass” (*basse fondamentale*), did not have much impact there.<sup>15</sup> In Austria—or more specifically the Vienna Conservatory, which was established in 1817—the case was, however, quite different. There, the fundamental bass would become the foundation for its tradition of music theory pedagogy thanks to Simon Sechter (1788–1867), “perhaps the most influential teacher of music theory in Vienna during the nineteenth century” (Bernstein 2002: 788), and his *magnum opus*—the three-volume *Die Grundsätze der musikalischen Komposition* (1853–54). Robert Wason’s (1985) authoritative study of nineteenth-century Viennese harmonic theory analyzes Sechter’s main contribution as a mixture of established figured-bass thinking that had dominated earlier Viennese harmonic theory since Johann Georg Albrechtsberger (1736–1809) and Ramellian

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<sup>14</sup> According to Stella (2007) and Gjerdingen (2007b: 127), there was a similar turn away from improvisation toward a written pedagogy in nineteenth-century Italy as well.

<sup>15</sup> Although it was considered an alternative at first, Rameau’s fundamental bass—or at least most of it—was rejected when the treatise by Catel (1802) was chosen as the Paris Conservatory’s official harmony textbook in 1801 (Geselle 1989, 1992, 1994; see also Christensen 1993: 302). According to Fétis ([1840] 1994: 138), this “was the *coup de grâce* given to Rameau’s system, and the destruction of the latter was more complete and rapid because the remaining sectaries were excluded from public teaching at this time.”

fundamental bass.<sup>16</sup> A characteristic trait of this latter theory is that the fundamental bass may only move by intervals of a third or fifth.<sup>17</sup> Building on Rameau and Johann Philipp Kirnberger (1721–83), Sechter would analyze progressions by step using a tacit “intermediate fundamental”—thus reducing it to an allowed progression of thirds and fifths (Caplin 1980: 76; see also Grant 1977).

Anton Bruckner (1824–96)—Sechter’s student and later theory teacher at the conservatory—continued to teach Sechter’s doctrines after his teacher’s death in 1867. Bruckner never published a textbook, but his lectures given at the University of Vienna have been published posthumously based on student notes (i.e., Bruckner 1950). Although there probably were differences between Bruckner’s pedagogy at the university and at the conservatory, the lectures prove his loyalty to Sechter. Ernst Decsey (1907) additionally recalls that Bruckner treated Sechter’s *Grundsätze* like a religious text when teaching theory at the conservatory. Thus, the tradition was kept alive in the late nineteenth century.

Music theory pedagogy at the Vienna Conservatory in the mid-nineteenth century—with Sechter as a dominating figure and his *Grundsätze* the most central resource—was characterized by a mixture of remnants of a primarily practical approach (figured bass) and those of a primarily speculative approach (fundamental bass). According to Wason (1985: 46), Sechter managed “to a surprising extent ... to make his system of fundamental bass compatible with figured bass practice.” Sechter himself claimed that it was consistent with figured-bass practice throughout his life, even when criticized for this exact point (Wason 1985: 32). Nevertheless, Sechter’s *magnum opus* represents a move in the direction of a

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<sup>16</sup> Dahlhaus ([1968] 1990: 33–38) also argues that Sechter’s *Grundsätze* represented a—theoretically not unproblematic—mixture of a theory of chordal scale degrees and a theory of fundamental progressions. The problematic part that Dahlhaus points to is that Sechter downplays a key principle in Rameau’s theory: that all chords are reducible to dissonant seventh chords striving towards consonant triads (see also Sprick 2016a: 266–67). This, a product of the mechanistic philosophy of the enlightenment (Christensen 1993: 103–32), was essential for Rameau’s fundamental bass. Although Sechter’s mixture was closer to practice than Rameau’s theory, it simultaneously reduced an important part of its theoretical rationale.

<sup>17</sup> Rameau’s theory also had its practical aims and goals and should not be reduced to pure speculative theory. It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss Rameau’s theory at the level of detail it deserves. See Christensen 1993 for one such discussion. Recent research has also shown the reception history of Rameau’s writings to be immensely complicated and multi-faceted (cf. Christensen 2019a; Holtmeier 2017; Petersen 2016). Suffice to say is that Sechter was not only influenced by Rameau, but also by the previous receptions of his theories (hence, “Ramellian”).

theory pedagogy built on a more speculative foundation than what had previously been the case in Vienna. Compared with the earlier Viennese figured bass textbooks (e.g., Albrechtsberger 1826; Preindl 1827), Sechter's work has more text and fewer music examples, and the direct link to contemporaneous compositional practice is missing (Holtmeier 2005: 225–27). According to Felix Diergarten and Ludwig Holtmeier (2016), Sechter's *Grundsätze* effectively marks the end of the purely practical figured-bass tradition, derived in turn from Italian *partimenti* models, that had dominated Viennese music theory pedagogy in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.<sup>18</sup> The earlier practice had been the basis of Sechter's purely practical figured-bass manual (i.e., Sechter n.d.)—published around 1830—which is similar to the *movimenti* pedagogy of the Italian tradition.

The distance to contemporaneous compositional practice is echoed in the infamous phrase that Bruckner allegedly said when teaching Sechter's theories: "Look, gentlemen, this is the rule. Of course, I don't compose that way."<sup>19</sup> Wason (1985: 61) additionally points to the fact that Sechter's *Grundsätze* does not contain a single example from the literature and, thus, "can only be called dogmatic."<sup>20</sup> Although one looks in vain for examples from the repertoire in his *magnum opus*, Sechter ends his three-volume work by claiming that the best way to understand his theories is by studying the works of renowned masters. However, he adds in the last sentence that "he who has studied the theory thoroughly *will understand better and more correctly* everything that is contained in a composition" (Sechter 1853–54, 3:356, my translation and italics). This suggests a deductive rather than inductive attitude, placing theory before empirical reality. Nicholas Cook (2007: 61) pointily sums up the problems with the anti-empirical foundation of the Viennese tradition by stating the following:

Time and time again, as Robert Wason shows (1985), Sechter and Bruckner forced themselves either into a position of denial when faced with music that did not conform to a largely anachronistic theoretical mold, or into sometimes ludicrously convoluted

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<sup>18</sup> Holtmeier makes the same argument elsewhere as well (see Holtmeier 2007: 6n4).

<sup>19</sup> The quote stems from Schenker ([1906] 1954: 177n2), who studied with Bruckner at the conservatory. Bruckner scholars have, however, recently argued that there are clear ties between Bruckner's practice as a composer and as a theory teacher (e.g., Chapman 2014; Stocken 2009). Schenker's Bruckner quote nevertheless clearly indicate that the connection between theory training and composition was questioned in late nineteenth-century Vienna.

<sup>20</sup> Wason compares Sechter's work to the other popular *Kompositionslehren* (such as Marx 1837–47 and Lobe 1850–67) claiming that—since these refer to examples from the musical literature—they may be called "critical" in contrast to Sechter's "dogmatic" approach.

explanations of apparently straightforward progression, usually involving substitutions of “intermediate fundamentals.”

A key premise in Sechter’s understanding of music is the primacy of diatonicism. In his theoretical system, a key is manifested through its diatonic circle-of-fifths motion in what has been labeled the “Sechterian Chain” (Bernstein 2002: 788–89). Chromaticism could be a result of the melodic elaboration of a diatonic fundamental bass or as chords based on tones from neighboring diatonic keys (790–91). Thus, chromatic music would be essentially diatonic in nature in Sechter’s system. An example from the first volume of *Grundsätze* where he demonstrates how a diatonic progression may be elaborated into a chromatic one is reproduced as Figure 2. This method of analytical reduction (or the reverse; compositional elaboration) would later be associated with Heinrich Schenker (1868–1935), and Wason (1985: 48–49) claims that what in Schenkerian terms is called “tonicization” (*Tonikaliserung*) was a key principle in Sechter’s theory, even though he did not introduce a new term or notation for it.

<INSERT FIGURE 2 NEAR HERE>

To summarize, the tradition of music theory pedagogy associated with the Vienna Conservatory was a mixture of a practical figured-bass approach and a more speculative fundamental bass approach that had its roots in the French Enlightenment in general and Rameau’s work in particular. Borrowing Gjerdingen’s Tolkien-allusion quoted above, in this tradition there indeed was “one progression to rule them all.” For the music to be “correct,” it had to be reducible to an acceptable fundamental bass built on progressions of thirds and fifths.

#### The Leipzig Conservatory

Ten years following the foundation of the Leipzig Conservatory in 1843, two of its theory teachers published their *magna opera*: *Die Natur der Harmonik und der Metrik*, by Moritz Hauptmann (1792–1868), and *Lehrbuch der Harmonie*, by Ernst Friedrich Richter (1808–79).<sup>21</sup> The authors had been colleagues at the conservatory since it opened, but their works are

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<sup>21</sup> In the same year, the Leipzig publisher that published Hauptmann’s and Richter’s books also published the first volume of the Sechter’s *Grundsätze*. Thus, 1853 stands out as an important year in German-speaking music theory both for the northern Leipzigian tradition and the southern Viennese tradition (Holtmeier 2005).

vastly different from each other. Using the distinction introduced by Hugo Riemann ([1882] (1900): s.v. “Theorie”) and adopted by Carl Dahlhaus (1984: 5–9) and Thomas Christensen (2002: 13–17), Hauptmann’s treatise is *speculative* music theory and Richter’s textbook is *practical* (also called *regulative*) music theory.<sup>22</sup> Whereas speculative music theory is defined as the “ontological contemplation of tone systems” (Dahlhaus cited in Christensen 2002: 13), practical music theory “seeks to draw from practice normative rules of syntax and models of structure, while at the same time disciplining that practice through pedagogical strictures” (Christensen 2002: 14). Dahlhaus (1984) also adds a third category to Riemann’s framework: *analytical* music theory. This is music theory centered around analyses of individual works—a paradigm that emerged in the transition to the nineteenth century in parallel with romantic aesthetics.<sup>23</sup> I will return to this third paradigm shortly.

Both books proved to be hugely influential but in different music-theoretical domains. This is also made clear by what seems to be their targeted audience: experts in the case of Hauptmann and students in the case of Richter. I will focus on Richter’s textbook because its impact was the greatest in the pedagogical domain, which is the focus of the present article. Hauptmann’s ideas were also posthumously published in the more accessible form of a harmony textbook (i.e., Hauptmann 1868), but this work did not have anywhere near the impact of Richter’s work.<sup>24</sup>

Richter’s *Lehrbuch der Harmonie* set the standard for modern harmony textbooks, popularizing Gottfried Weber’s (1779–1839) take on a Roman numeral analysis in the *Versuch einer geordneten Theorie der Tonsetzkunst* (1817–21). This Weberian Roman numeral approach is a descriptive type of music theory (Rummenhüller 1967: 11–17; Kopp 2002: 40–45) that threw emphasis onto “the individual character of a chord rather than the

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<sup>22</sup> Rummenhüller (1967: 27–28) and Rehding (2003: 65) discuss this Riemannian distinction.

<sup>23</sup> This tripartite systematization is central in the modern historiography of music theory. The categories are variously called “paradigms” (Dahlhaus 1984, 1985), “styles” (Christensen 2002), and “genres” (Christensen 2007). How the three categories should be understood and used is, however, much discussed (cf. Christensen 1988; Heidelberger 2017; Martin 2017; Sprick 2016b). Here, they are used purely as heuristic categories.

<sup>24</sup> In Munich, in contrast, Hauptmann’s speculative theory actually was the foundation for the theory courses from the founding of the conservatory in 1867 until they were replaced by Richter’s practical harmony textbook twenty years later (Petersen and Zirwes 2014; see also Petersen 2018). Generally, however, Hauptmann’s speculative ideas had little impact on practical music theory pedagogy prior to Riemann’s pedagogical works of the late nineteenth century (Holtmeier 2005: 229; 2011: 6). How Riemann’s work relates to Hauptmann’s is discussed elsewhere (e.g., Harrison 1994; Klumpenhouwer 2002; Rehding 2003).

place that it occupies in a progression” (Bent 1994, 1:131). Figure 3 reproduces a page where Richter summarizes the diatonic triads in major and minor with their respective Roman numerals.

Richter’s book went through many editions, was translated into several languages, and served as a model for many later harmony textbooks, thus having a long, lasting, and international impact on Western music theory pedagogy (Holtmeier 2005: 227–29; Wason 2002: 64).<sup>25</sup> The book would later become the first volume of Richter’s three-volume *Die praktischen Studien zur Theorie der Musik*. The second volume of this work, published last, covered simple and double counterpoint (Richter 1872), and the third covered canon and fugue (Richter 1859). Together, these three textbooks largely comprise the three-year curriculum in music theory at the Leipzig Conservatory during the middle of the nineteenth century, something to which Edvard Grieg’s exercise books from his time as a conservatory student from 1858 to 1862 testify (Utne-Reitan 2018).<sup>26</sup> Richter’s student and later successor at the conservatory, Salomon Jadassohn (1831–1902), would continue to disseminate his teacher’s ideas to students at the institution, keeping the tradition alive into the late nineteenth century.<sup>27</sup>

**<INSERT FIGURE 3 NEAR HERE>**

Although Richter is best known for his harmony textbook, the main part of the Leipzig curriculum was studies in counterpoint ending with fugal writing. The exercises in writing four-part harmony (e.g., chorale settings) served as preliminary studies prior to exercises in writing counterpoint (e.g., chorale preludes and fugues). The transition from harmony to counterpoint was seamless. Here, Richter followed the example of Kirnberger by starting with counterpoint in four parts and only later introducing two-part writing (Bent 2002: 582).<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> In addition to several English translations, it appeared in Russian, Danish, French, Spanish, Dutch, and Italian. The German original went through thirty-six editions by 1953 (Damschroder and Williams 1990: 266).

<sup>26</sup> The course design for male students, that is. According to the conservatory regulations (cited in Phillips 1979: 74–79), female students would follow “special classes in harmony designed to meet their needs” for two years.

<sup>27</sup> Wason (2002: 64) claims that Jadassohn’s (1883) harmony textbook is hardly distinguishable from Richter’s, with the only exception being Jadassohn’s more extensive treatment of chromatic chord progressions.

<sup>28</sup> This smooth transition is underlined by the fact that some of the exercises at the end of Richter’s harmony book are very similar to those at the beginning of his counterpoint book (see Utne-Reitan 2018: 67–73).

The theory education in Leipzig was centered around what Carl Dahlhaus (1989: 26) has coined “poetic” counterpoint—Bachian fugal writing combined with Schumannian-Mendelssohnian aesthetics. Dahlhaus argued that this approach shows how the idea of the “poetic” was understood linearly and attempted to be taught through training in counterpoint.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, the Leipzig tradition was heavily invested in the “conservative” side of the so-called “war of the romantics,” championing the genres of absolute music and “poetic” aesthetic of the early nineteenth century, so much so that *die Leipziger Schule* is established as a term that associates Leipzig with this aesthetic position (Forner 1997; Wasserloos 2004: 54–55). That the pedagogy championed conservative *romantic* aesthetics—and was not restricted to a more archaic ideal in the sense of strict Fuxian or quasi-Bachian counterpoint—is indicated by Richter’s textbooks and the exercises written by students at the conservatory.<sup>30</sup>

Joshua Navon has recently claimed that the music theory education at the Leipzig Conservatory helped produce an ideology of *Werktreue*.<sup>31</sup> He paraphrases Richter when claiming that “knowledge of music theory would ensure that a student’s interpretation of a work, rather than relying on pure instinct, was built upon recognizing (*erkennen*) the musical laws (*musikalische Gesetze*) employed by the work’s author” (Navon 2020: 75). This overarching claim of the production of *Werktreue* in nineteenth-century music education in general and in Leipzig in particular is almost certainly correct. However, he further claims that “theory pedagogy, which was relatively narrow and repertoire focused, functioned primarily as a means to cultivate knowledge deployable in *performing* works” and that it “helped instill analysis and understanding of musical works as prerequisites for performing them successfully” (Navon 2020: 81). I am not convinced that it is appropriate to define this

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<sup>29</sup> Elsewhere, Dahlhaus ([1978] 1989, [1980] 1989) has argued that the the idea of the musically “poetic”—which is notoriously hard to define as it “thrives on its own internal contradictions” (Dahlhaus [1980] 1989: 142)—was central to early nineteenth-century music aesthetics.

<sup>30</sup> Richter (1859: 1–4) presents the training in fugue both as the final stage of mechanical training in compositional technique and as a bridge between the theory classroom and poetical composition. Grieg’s expressive *Fugue in F Minor for String Quartet* (EG 114), written for Richter in 1861, is a good example of this ideal. For recent studies of student exercises by Grieg and Svendsen from their Leipzig years, see Christophersen 2016 and Utne-Reitan 2018.

<sup>31</sup> Goehr ([1992] 2007: 231)—whom Navon cites—defines *Werktreue* as the ideal that “performances and their performers have respectively been subservient to works and their composers” and that “to be true to a work is to be true to its score.”

tradition as one primarily focusing on repertoire and analysis, and a somewhat distorted picture of it emerges as a consequence of his presentation.<sup>32</sup>

Navon concludes his presentation of theory education by comparing the Leipzig tradition with the *partimento* tradition of eighteenth-century Italy,<sup>33</sup> drawing the following conclusion: “At Leipzig, where these exercises [*partimenti*] were replaced by extended regimes of written work, music theory became a tool primarily of analysis, not composition or improvisation” (Navon 2020: 87). It is not clear why Navon equates written exercises with analysis, and why this should additionally exclude composition.<sup>34</sup> Roman numeral notation was indeed an important part of Richter’s pedagogy, and there are a few examples from the repertoire in his textbooks (the great majority being his own constructed examples), but this alone does not mean that it was primarily focused on the analysis of repertoire. It certainly “helped instill” the practice in a very broad sense (so do the other traditions discussed in the present article), but this is not the same as being “a tool primarily of analysis.” The central aim of Richter’s pedagogy remains—as he himself proclaims (Richter 1853: v)—that the students learn *how* and not *why*.<sup>35</sup> Certainly, the Leipzig tradition was practical in another way compared with the *partimento* tradition, but it still remained in the general *practical* (i.e., *regulative*) paradigm of music theory, not the *analytical*. The students were expected to learn a craft (writing chorale preludes and fugues in a specific stylistic idiom) by following a set of given abstract rules. This was, of course, a way of learning the “musical laws” to understand the repertoire that the students performed, but it was nevertheless mainly done through the

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<sup>32</sup> This does not entail that Navon’s otherwise strong main argument regarding the production of *Werktrübe* is flawed.

<sup>33</sup> Figured-bass pedagogy related to the Italian *partimento* tradition had also been wide-spread in the German states and was in some contexts still practiced in the nineteenth century (cf. Diergarten 2011; Hust 2002; Menke 2018).

<sup>34</sup> Earlier in the article Navon (2020: 80) writes: “Because music theory was taught separately from performance [at the Leipzig Conservatory], it is fair to assume that its purpose was, as Alexander Rehding has recently put it, ‘to prepare students both for more complex composition tasks and for analysing pieces of music along the same lines.’” This phrasing—where Navon cites Rehding (2016: 251)—emphasizes training in (written) compositional technique as the primary focus and analytic skills as a bi-product seems much more reasonable. However, this has somehow changed when Navon reaches the above-cited conclusion regarding Leipzigian theory pedagogy.

<sup>35</sup> Richter did also write a short book on musical form and analysis (i.e., Richter 1852). This book was aimed at students in composition specifically and was not included in his *Die praktischen Studien zur Theorie der Musik*.

writing of compositional exercises. There are few indications that the analysis of works was a central part of the pedagogy.<sup>36</sup>

As Holtmeier (2011: 13) argues, a decisive turn toward the analysis of works in music theory pedagogy first came at the turn of the century together with a *fin-de-siècle* “New Empiricism.” Dahlhaus (1989: 100–101) points to how the textbook by Johannes Schreyer (1856–1929, text 1911) intentionally moved the focus from learning rules to the analysis of masterworks. Holtmeier (2011: 48n80) adds that the textbooks by Joseph Leibrock (1808–86, text 1875) and Bernhard Ziehn (1845–1912, text 1887) are early examples of this trend.<sup>37</sup> Dahlhaus and Holtmeier portray this as a break with the pedagogical traditions that relied on abstract rules and used few (if any) examples from the repertoire in their works. Holtmeier (2011: 13) explicitly mentions Hauptmann, Richter, Sechter, and Riemann as examples. In light of the above discussion, I find the labels “repertoire focused” and “a tool primarily of analysis” to be misleading. The practice of writing technical exercises in harmony and counterpoint based on abstract rules—a form of “compositional etudes” (Christophersen 2016: 225–31)—stands out as the most salient feature of music theory pedagogy associated with the Leipzig Conservatory in the nineteenth century.

### Comparing Traditions

Having characterized the three nineteenth-century traditions of conservatory music theory pedagogy, I now intend to compare them from three perspectives: (1) music-theoretical frameworks, (2) pedagogical approaches, and (3) historical legacies. The first being a large

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<sup>36</sup> I do not claim that analysis played no role at all in Leipzgian music theory pedagogy—it is certainly mentioned in the curriculum, though only as one of the parts of the composition course and not part of the more extensive three-year training in harmony and counterpoint (Phillips 1979: 94)—only that Navon overemphasizes its importance. While he cites Riemann’s critique of nineteenth-century conservatories, he does not mention that a part of this critique—which implicitly had the Leipzig Conservatory as its main target—actually alleged a lack of focus on music analysis in conservatory music theory pedagogy: “The ‘analysis of classical compositions’ looks very attractive in the advertisements of the institutes; in reality it has little meaning and is limited, where it is attempted at all, to common sayings” (Riemann [1895] 1994: 231–32).

<sup>37</sup> One could point to even earlier examples of analysis-oriented theory textbooks. The growing interest for music analysis in the nineteenth century—both inside and outside musical education—is well-known (see Bent 1987, 1994, 1996; Damschroder 2008). The point is not to locate the “origin” of this development but to emphasize that its major impact in conservatory pedagogy came late in the nineteenth century. Schreyer’s work stands out as a turning-point (or culmination) as analysis explicitly is made into the primary aim of the harmony training (Diergarten 2005).

topic also beyond the scope of interest on pedagogy, I will discuss it only briefly here and focus more on the other two perspectives.

### Theoretical Frameworks

A fundamental similarity between the actual theories of the three traditions is adherence to a relatively conservative stylistic idiom, incorporating more contemporary issues, such as chromaticism, later into the century. Even then, chromaticism was essentially viewed in light of an underlying diatonic framework, as is most explicit in Sechter's work. In the middle of the century, however, there was a surge in music theories that treated chromaticism in a manner more in touch with the "progressive" contemporaneous compositional practice. In German-speaking territories, this was probably best exemplified by the theory competition announced by *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* in 1859 (Rehding 2003: 39–46; Wason 1988). The important point for the present article is, however, that these "progressive" theory developments had little impact on teaching at the conservatories. In France, there was a similar divide between the conservatory tradition and the generally more "progressive" theories outside of this tradition (Groth 1983; Peters 1990: 3).

However, while retaining rather conservative theoretical frameworks, the three theoretical traditions propagate different kinds of conservatism, which may be seen in light of larger cultural factors. In Paris, there were ties to the galant style associated with the *partimento* tradition and interest in dramatic genres (e.g., opera), as reflected in the cantatas written for the *Prix de Rome*. In Leipzig, conservative romantic aesthetics combined with the Protestant musical genres often associated with Bach (e.g., four-part chorale settings, the chorale prelude, and the keyboard fugue) constituted the framework of reference. The Viennese tradition's very strict reliance on underlying diatonicism might also be tied to the Catholic music tradition and its high valuation of *der strenge* (or *reine*) *Satz*. Although both the latter two institutions were closely tied to the church music of the respective cities (most of the theory teachers were prominent organists as well), no categorical distinction based on this can be made. For example, the insistence on strict diatonicism as the natural foundation for music is not only found in Catholic Vienna but also in Protestant Leipzig, being a central tenet in the speculative work of Moritz Hauptmann. Thus, distinctions between Leipzig and Vienna on the foundational relationship of diatonic with respect to chromatic is about how this foundation should be interpreted. Whereas Hauptmann presented a full-blown speculative interpretation based on Hegelian dialectics, Sechter turned to Ramellian fundamental bass theory. The important difference is that whereas practical theory and speculative theory were

clearly separated in the Leipzigian tradition—the former represented by Richter’s pragmatic approach that composed the core of the conservatory’s music theory curriculum, the latter represented by Hauptmann’s extremely philosophical work—they were mixed in the Viennese (Dahlhaus 1989: 25). Returning to Paris, we note a general skepticism toward whether abstract tonal theories were of any use at all for learning practical harmony. This became clear in 1801 when Catel’s pragmatism was preferred over a Ramellian approach. By pointing to statements by Théodore Dubois (1837–1924), Michael Masci (2013: 14–15) demonstrates that this “ambivalence regarding the value of tonal theory for the study of practical harmony” remained a full century later.

### Pedagogical Approach

“Stick a farm boy with straight fingers and healthy ears in one end, and after a year the finished composer or virtuoso comes out at the other” (Riemann [1895] 1994: 235). This is how Riemann ends an 1895 critique of contemporaneous professional music education. In many ways, he was right. As Yvonne Wasserloos (2004) has argued, the Leipzig Conservatory was often criticized for taking in too many students and for leaving an impression of a machine where a young person would follow a set of courses (all of which, performance and theory, were taught in groups for maximum efficiency) before taking exams and, upon successful completion of them, would have been transformed into a composer or virtuoso. Citing Hauptmann (1892, 2:5, 2:20) and Wasielewski (1897: 38), Joshua Navon portrays the Leipzig pedagogy along these lines:

The general setup of music theory lessons seems to have followed the format Hauptmann pursued during the institution’s first few semesters, even though he himself admitted, just weeks before the conservatory’s opening, that not a single instructor had any idea of how to go about teaching classes. According to Wasielewski, Hauptmann would set a “harmonic exercise” for the six to eight students in his class to solve on the blackboard, during which time he would simultaneously correct the work students had completed outside of the class and lecture them on the mistakes they were making on the board. Writing again to Hauser, Hauptmann noted that his harmony and counterpoint students “learn their drill like a company of soldiers; it is only the awkward squad that gets noticed” (Navon 2020: 83).

The tradition had its flaws and problems, but it would nonetheless be considered to be among the most prestigious musical educations in the late nineteenth century. The Leipzig model was imitated many places across the globe when—to borrow Riemann’s ([1895] 1994: 226) metaphor—conservatories would shoot out of the earth like mushrooms.

The pedagogical approaches changed in several ways when music theory was “schoolified.” Change was not only reflected in the teaching of larger groups, but also in the general turn toward the classroom and typical artifacts associated with it. Most important here is that practical music theory became a written discipline. As Navon claims:

Conservatory training instituted pens, pencils, and notebooks (and sometimes chalk and blackboards) as the dominant media of assessment in music theory. In an ironic turn of events, a system so focused on the “practical” aspects of music education actually encouraged students to consider musical *writing* rather than their musical instrument(s) as the medium through which they should develop their music-theoretical knowledge and demonstrate it most directly to their teachers. (Navon 2020: 86–87)

This fundamental turn is also quite visible in Paris, which specifically builds on a pedagogical tradition of a largely oral nature. At the old Italian conservatories, music theory was primarily taught through practice (especially improvisation) by the keyboard. In Paris, however, the textbook takes center stage and, with it, the written exercise. The importance of writing is further proven by the harmony and fugue contests at the Paris Conservatory, where the students would not have access to a piano (Gjerdingen 2020: 192). The approach propagated at the conservatories in Leipzig and Vienna also challenged and gradually overshadowed the *partimento*-like figured-bass traditions that had been common in German-speaking territory.

The centrality of writing intensified during the course of the century and was part of the more general separation of theory from performance (and improvisation) in music education, a division that is still operative today. This division proves to be a result of the modern conservatories’ “schoolification” of music education, which included the introduction of the modern theory textbook. As Navon (2020: 66) argues, the separation of what in Italy had been one unit (composition, improvisation, performance) into several disciplines (effectively separating theory and performance) was a fundamental precondition of *Werktreue*. It may be understood as part of the fundamental changes around 1800 when, as Lydia Goehr ([1992] 2007) observed, the work-concept became regulative. The composer became an artist (and a genius) more than a craftsman, and each musical work produced had to be marked by individuality and originality. Thus, it was natural that the re-creative performance of music be separated from the creative production of music.

This fundamental turn toward *Genieästhetik* also led to suspicion regarding the “learnability” of composition. Learning free composition did not, however, have to be the primary aim of the theory training, despite what, for instance, was maintained by Richter

(1872: 12–13, 89–92). Theory teachers could rather point to the learning of compositional craft as perfected in older styles, or more vaguely “to the strengthening of the discipline of musical thinking” (Dahlhaus 1984: 117, my translation), making it easier to justify the education as being somewhat conservative when compared with contemporary compositional practice.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, harmony was a mandatory subject for all students, and most textbooks were aimed as much toward performers as composers (Groth 1983: 68; Holtmeier 2005: 228). This meant that all the traditions held contemporaneous compositional practice—especially the progressive strands—more or less at arm’s length. This is further underlined by the prevalence of theoretically constructed (and rather “dry”) examples and exercises, and a lack of examples from the literature in several of the textbooks. Schenker, among others, saw this as a major flaw in music theory pedagogy, claiming that his own theoretical work was an attempt to bring harmony and counterpoint closer to free composition, the “actual life of music” (Cook 2007: 60–63). Earlier, in Paris, Reicha had attempted to build a theory pedagogy closer to compositional practice, but his work is “an anomaly among the nineteenth-century Conservatoire treatises” (Peters 1990: 19).<sup>39</sup>

In all three conservatories, composition was taught as a separate subject, apart from harmony.<sup>40</sup> In Vienna, this separation seems to have been institutionalized rather late, as *praktische Komposition* was offered as a class separate from music theory first in 1860 (Tittel 1967: 35). Bridging theory and composition was, however, considered as a problem, as the

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<sup>38</sup> Dahlhaus (1984: 116–22) discusses this under the fitting heading “Das Dilemma der musikalischen Handwerkslehre.” Diergarten and Holtmeier (2016) also point to the suspicion towards the “learnability” of composition that accompanied the *Genieästhetik* as an important factor in the decline of *partimento* pedagogy.

<sup>39</sup> Aimé Leborne—Reicha’s successors at the Paris Conservatory—would, however, add an appendix with examples from several opera composers (Auber, Donizetti, Gluck, Halévy, Méhel, Meyerbeer, Rossini, Verdi, and Weber) to Catel’s much-used textbook (Catel and Leborne 1847: 114–129). He thus tried to bridge the gap by showing how principles presented in Catel’s dry constructed examples were put to use in actual compositions. This is something of a compromise compared to Reicha’s more radical attempt at reframing the theory pedagogy.

<sup>40</sup> In Leipzig, composition was, however, a smaller discipline than harmony and counterpoint. Grieg’s studies are symptomatic (Utne-Reitan 2018). Whereas he studied composition only in the last year of his studies (with Reinecke), he studied harmony and counterpoint all of the years and always in the class of two different theory teachers parallelly (first with Richter/Papperitz, then Richter/Hauptmann). This practice of “team-teaching” (Phillips 1979: 179)—practiced in theory classes and in performance classes—was a hallmark of the Leipzig Conservatory. It seems like while the theory teaching exclusively focused on harmony and (especially) counterpoint, the composition teaching focused on free writing in larger formats (Christophersen 2016: 220; Utne-Reitan 2020: 50–51).

infamous Bruckner remark mentioned above emphasizes. Another example is a 1853 letter from Hauptmann, where he complained that there was a complete separation between counterpoint and composition at the Leipzig Conservatory:

The composition class takes no notice of counterpoint, the pupils are not taught to let the one affect the other—everything that pleases is permissible, they are told—and they consider themselves let out of jail, so to speak, into beautiful Nature. To be sure, this beautiful Nature is often ugly enough, for such vulgar, harsh, unmusical stuff as our youngsters treat us to now and then, was never before heard of. It is nothing but vexation at their own inability, set to music. (Hauptmann 1892, 2:254)

A key similarity between the three traditions is the centrality of harmony in the pedagogical approach. Written harmony exercises comprised the core of all three curricula, most often realizations of given figured basses. The big difference between them is how students were taught to understand harmonic relations to solve these practical tasks. Crudely put, *partimento*-inspired schematic patterns reigned in Paris, Ramellian fundamental bass theory in Vienna, and Weberian Roman numeral analysis in Leipzig.

Training in counterpoint continued after studies in harmony, though in Paris, it was integrated into the harmony training in addition to existing as a separate subject. The school fugue—or, as Robert Wason (1986: 300) called it, “that Frankenstein monster of nineteenth-century theory pedagogy”—was the common culmination of conservatory music theory training in the nineteenth century. In Leipzig, fugal writing was the final part of the theory course, and in Paris, there was a separate competition in fugue.

### Historical Legacy

All three traditions would influence later music theory pedagogy both inside and outside conservatories. About the latter, ties between the Parisian tradition and Nadia Boulanger (Gjerdingen 2019) and the Vienesse and Heinrich Schenker (Wason 1985) are noteworthy. The Leipzigian tradition, in contrast, strongly influenced developments in conservatory music theory pedagogy. This is because both the “Leipzig model” was widely imitated at many conservatories founded in the late nineteenth century (Wasserloos 2004) and Richter’s textbooks—both the original German editions and the translations and adaptations—were broadly disseminated and remained in print long into the twentieth century.

Dahlhaus ([1977] 1983: 67) claims that “so long as a tradition is still in full flower it is taken for granted and needs no further justification.” Part-writing in the manner of four-part

chorales accompanied by Weberian Roman numeral analysis has been one such Leipzigian practice so taken for granted in the context of music theory pedagogy that, until recently, it has scarcely needed any further justification.<sup>41</sup> This does not mean that no developments have taken place since Richter, but rather that his fundamental framework for modern music theory pedagogy is more or less intact. It is useful to be reminded that in the eighteenth century, it was common to take three-part textures as a point of departure, such as Corelli's trio sonatas, instead of the four-part structures exemplified in Bach's chorales (Holtmeier 2007: 9).<sup>42</sup>

Several critiques by prominent music theorists in the early twentieth century, often aimed directly at Leipzig and Richter, suggest that a nearly hegemonic paradigm of music theory pedagogy had been established there. In a chapter polemically titled "Critique of current methods of teaching," Heinrich Schenker ([1906] 1954: 175–181) argued that such methods (represented by Richter) taught the students neither harmony nor counterpoint. Rudolf Louis (1906)—co-author of one of the most influential harmony textbooks of the early twentieth century (i.e., Louis and Thuille 1907)—also attacked Richter's book (which he portrayed as having some kind of monopoly), calling it completely outdated that had moreover been bad from the start. Arnold Schoenberg ([1911] 1978: 15, 165) criticized Richter, specifically his treatment of modulation, in his influential *Harmonielehre*. The above-mentioned turn toward the analysis of works, mostly associated with Schreyer (1911), was an additional break with the established "dogmatic" traditions. Although these attacks certainly led to several radical changes (for example, causing a decline in the use of Richter's textbooks), the basic tenets of nineteenth-century music theory pedagogy in general—and the Leipzigian tradition in particular—largely remained intact throughout the twentieth century. These tenets were taken for granted at such a deep level as to be equable to music theory pedagogy itself. Hence, music theory pedagogy remained textbook-oriented and revolved

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<sup>41</sup> In some areas (e.g., parts of Germany and Scandinavia), Roman numerals were replaced by (post-)Riemannian function symbols—a later tradition stemming from Leipzig. Nevertheless, the main point—what Brian Hyer (2011: 111) calls "the mania for naming and labeling chords"—remains more or less the same.

<sup>42</sup> This is also part of larger structural changes. Byros (2009) and Gjerdingen (2010) have shown how modes of listening and musical understanding changed from the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries. Changes in music theory pedagogy certainly played a part in these developments, but they are also intertwined with more fundamental aesthetic and epistemological changes, such as the work-concept becoming regulative (Goehr [1992] 2007) and the transition from a "classical" to a "modern" *épistémè* (Foucault [1966] 2002).

around written exercises and often took four-part chorale settings and Weberian Roman numeral analysis as its point of departure.

These practices are, however, historically contingent constructs, as has been highlighted by recent critiques. Robert Gjerdingen (e.g., 2019, 2020), for example, has criticized modern music theory pedagogy for teaching students “about” harmony rather than teaching them to “do” or “make” harmony.<sup>43</sup> As he puts it, modern music theory pedagogy does not teach the students harmony, which in the form of figured bass was taught practically at the keyboard, but rather “fairy tales about harmonic forces, functions, wills, or essences” (2019: 252). He presents this turn as a massive failure and indicates that to teach students actually to master harmony, a return to the tenets of the *partimento* pedagogy is necessary.

Gjerdingen aims his critique towards the pedagogy that characterized the turn of the twentieth century, with Riemann’s function theory as his main target. However, the general move away from “doing” and “making” harmony toward learning “about” it is a legacy, and logical continuation, of the earlier nineteenth-century trends discussed in this article. To put it in less categorical terms, this move was from one kind of “doing” (realizing exercises by the keyboard through guided improvisation) to another (writing exercises following theoretical principles codified in textbooks). It is hard to disagree that this had negative consequences. Nevertheless, it is unhelpful to discredit modern music theory pedagogy entirely. Arguably, it has been successful in teaching harmony to large groups of students simultaneously and in getting students to a decent level in a limited amount of time. The different “fairy tales” play a key part in this success by providing students with different verbal scaffolds (some certainly more speculative than others) for understanding and conceptualizing tonal music. These scaffolds also enable discourse, spoken and written, about music and its structures.

That said, there is certainly room to incorporate insights from other pedagogical traditions, such as *partimento*. The emphasis on tonal idioms (schemata) rather than chord-to-chord progressions, and the integration of performance (improvisation) in theory instruction are but two promising developments. That a modern textbook in harmony and counterpoint drawing on the *partimento* tradition was published recently (i.e., Ijzerman 2018) provides an example of one such mediation between old and new approaches.

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<sup>43</sup> For other examples of critiques of modern theory pedagogy, see Masci 2013 and Holtmeier 2004, 2007, 2012.

## Conclusion

By the middle of the nineteenth century, several traditions of music theory pedagogy competed in professional music education throughout Europe, coalescing around and associated with the conservatories in Paris, Vienna, and Leipzig. Harmony was a central subject in all the traditions, but the concepts taught for solving the exercises in harmony (and understanding tonality) were quite distinct. Very broadly speaking, the individual traditions were characterized by a *partimento*-inspired pattern-based approach in Paris, Ramellian fundamental bass in Vienna, and Weberian Roman numerals in Leipzig. In the late nineteenth century and continuing into the twentieth, the Leipzigian approach was imitated worldwide as the standardized way of teaching harmony: part-writing chorales and analyzing them chord by chord according to some system. The strong position of the Leipzig model is indicated by the amount of criticism it received in the early twentieth century, which negatively affirmed its position as the “industry standard.” Ultimately, the nineteenth-century German *Harmonielehre* tradition, in which Richter’s work was central, proved to be “a global export success” (Holtmeier 2007: 13; see also Holtmeier 2010).

The most important legacy of nineteenth-century conservatory music theory pedagogy is not, however, any characteristic of one particular institutional tradition but rather the shared characteristics among them. Most important were the ideas that music theory was largely separated from musical performance and improvisation, and that it was primarily a written discipline centered on textbooks and written exercises. Although such exercises certainly were part of earlier traditions of music theory pedagogy, it is safe to say that they dominated the pedagogy of the nineteenth-century conservatory and continue to play an important role to this day. How much longer they will continue to do so is now a question.

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