

“... although the Masters sometimes take licences.”
 Observations on the *Guida Armonica* by Giuseppe Ottavio Pitoni

Giuseppe Ottavio Pitoni (1657-1743) was one of the most important composers of sacred music in Rome during the first half of the 18th century.¹ He worked in the city's main churches and left a vast quantity of musical compositions: over three thousand works (the masses alone amount to 247).² As *maestro di cappella* he served first at S. Marco (Palazzo Venezia) and S. Apollinare, as well as in Rieti, his home town. Then in 1694 he was appointed *maestro* to the Roman church of S. Lorenzo in Damaso. Between 1708 and 1719 he held the same position at S. Giovanni in Laterano, and from 1719 until his death he directed the Cappella Giulia in St Peter's.³

Over and above his importance as a composer of sacred music, Pitoni was also very influential as a teacher and expert theorist. His pupils included Girolamo Chiti (1679-1759), author of a biographical profile of his master,⁴ Francesco Antonio Bonporti, Francesco Durante, Leonardo Leo and Francesco Feo. As an authority and adviser on contrapuntal matters, Pitoni gained a wide reputation throughout Italy. Together with Padre Giambattista Martini and Girolamo Chiti, he is considered as one of the most important Italian music theorists of the 18th century.

In his descriptions, Chiti expresses a particular admiration for Pitoni's immense enthusiasm, which impelled him to compose without interruption

¹ The following abbreviations are used in the text:

BAV = Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana

C.G. = fondo Cappella Giulia

² Cfr. SIEGFRIED GMEINWIESER, *Giuseppe Ottavio Pitoni, Thematisches Werkverzeichnis*, Wilhelmshaven, Heinrichshofen, 1976.

³ See SIEGFRIED GMEINWIESER, “Giuseppe Ottavio Pitoni (1657-1743)”, *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft*, XXXII, 1975, pp. 298-309; ID., “Die Musikkapellen Roms und ihre Aufführungspraxis unter Giuseppe Ottavio Pitoni”, *Kirchenmusikalisches Jahrbuch*, LVII, 1973, pp. 69-78; ID. “Pitoni, Giuseppe Ottavio”, in *The New Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. by Stanley Sadie, 20 vols., London, Macmillan, 1980, vol. 14, pp. 790-791, and in *The New Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, second edition, ed. by Stanley Sadie, 29 vols., London, Macmillan, 2001, vol. 19, pp. 809-810.

⁴ GIROLAMO CHITI, *Ristretto della Vita, et opere del m.^{to} eccell.^{te} Sig.^r Giuseppe Ottavio Pitoni Romano Maestro di Cappella della Sacrosanta Basilica di S. Pietro in Vaticano e della Cappella Giulia*, MS dated “Roma li 23 Luglio 1744” (BAV, C.G. III/56).

and reflect tirelessly on contrapuntal problems.⁵ The result of this huge commitment was a monumental treatise that occupied much of his energies over several decades: the *Guida Armonica*, a work of theory in which he recorded all the possible contrapuntal relationships and combinations between two melodic lines. It consists of 22 manuscript volumes (incomplete in parts) as well as a further 19 volumes of sketches, models and revisions, all of which were bequeathed to the Cappella Giulia.⁶ Only the first volume was printed during the author's lifetime.⁷ From Chiti's correspondence, however, we learn that Pitoni bought up the entire edition and prevented its circulation (the reason, presumably, being the presence of certain blatant errors made by the printer).⁸ Fortunately, a single copy of the edition survived and it is preserved in Padre Martini's library in Bologna.⁹ The fact that it is a *unicum* is already a matter of some consequence, but this copy is in fact particularly distinctive because it also contains numerous critical comments in Martini's own hand. Though written decades after the publication of the treatise, these notes can be seen as a historical review of its content, offering valuable evidence for understanding the opinions of one of the most important music scholars of the age.¹⁰

⁵ CHITI, *Ristretto della Vita*, fol. [4]: "He was a man always devoted to study, and so as soon as he had finished his musical affairs and returned home he spent neither an hour nor even a moment during which he did not write, composing, notating, speculating, testing and retesting counterpoints in canonic inversion, modes, answers, subjects, and collected them in the large work of his Book of Movements [...]". Pitoni's habit of often annotating his compositions with the date and hour of completion gives us a good idea of both his working methods and his daily output.

⁶ BAV, C.G. I/4-44. The quantity of this output, referred to in the sources as "*Libro de Movimenti*", totals over 13,000 sheets.

⁷ The title-page is lacking, but it is calculated that the book was printed between 1694 and 1708 (see fn. 10). Sergio Durante succeeds in narrowing the publication date to between 1701 and 1708 (see "La 'Guida Armonica' di Giuseppe Ottavio Pitoni. Un documento sugli stili musicali in uso a Roma al tempo di Corelli", in *Nuovissimi studi corelliani*, Atti del Terzo Congresso Internazionale, Fusignano 4-7 September 1980, ed. by Sergio Durante and Pierluigi Petrobelli, Firenze, Olschki, 1982, pp. 285-327, and in particular p. 295).

⁸ On pp. 7-10 of the volume, for example, the explanations on the sixth, seventh and octave appear twice, one after the other, though reproduced on different sheets and in different contexts. Clearly this was due to a mistake in the preparation of two different matrices. What remains uncertain, however, is whether or not this printing error was in turn due to a mistake in the respective pages of the original manuscript.

⁹ Today I-Bc, K. 47. The buying up of the volume and Chiti's attempted mediation in the affair are documented in Martini's correspondence with Pitoni's former pupil (see ANNE SCHNOEBELN, *Padre Martini's Collection of Letters in the Civico Museo Bibliografico Musicale in Bologna - an Annotated Index*, New York, Pendragon Press, 1979, nos. 1273, 1277, 1555, 1558, 1577).

¹⁰ GIUSEPPE OTTAVIO PITONI, *Guida Armonica. Facsimile dell'unicum appartenuto a Padre Martini*, facsimile reprint ed. by Francesco Luisi, Lucca, LIM, 1989. On the provenance of the *unicum*, as well as the correspondence between Martini and Chiti, see the preface, pp. VIIIff.

According to Chiti's description, Ottavio Pitoni

fu di statura giusta Capello nero complessione robusta, pendente in magro, d'occhio pronto ratiocino dotto, tratto familiare Costume onoratiss^{mo} rispettosiss.^{mo} nella estimatione d'ogni Professore di Musica d'viventì che morti servitievole Imprestando a chiunque chiedeva o per studio ò per musiche altrui le sue carte ò Partiti, Pu[n]tuale, e Prontissimo pagatore delle mercedi altrui, accur[atiss]imo difensore del Giusto e del Convenevole.

was of regular height, with black hair, robust build, tending to thinness, a keen eye, learned intellect, amiable disposition, most honourable customs, most respectful in his estimation of every musician, generous to the living and the dead, lending his papers or scores to anyone who asked, either for study or for the music of others, a conscientious and most prompt settler of payments and an assiduous defender of what is just and fitting.¹¹

According to Gmeinwieser's biographical note, these same physical features can be observed in an anonymous portrait of Pitoni, today in the Civico Museo Bibliografico Musicale in Bologna.

As I anticipated above, the *Guida Armonica* is a work of the utmost punctiliousness, for with remarkable breadth it covers all the different interval progressions that can appear between just two contrapuntal lines. The entire first volume is dedicated just to the unison: in other words, it covers the ways in which two voices can move from the unison to the second, third, fourth, etc. right up to the *vigesima seconda* (twenty-second), using one of the following manners (Ex. 1, here illustrated by the case of the sixth).

Each single movement is documented and illustrated with numerous examples from the literature.¹² As the author points out, these examples are drawn from various styles, genres and voice combinations. The individual progressions are exemplified both widely and exhaustively: passages from Josquin and Palestrina are followed by pieces by Porpora or Scarlatti; opera arias appear side by side with contrapuntal mass movements, recitatives and trio sonatas. Also included are examples from the theoretical works of

¹¹ G. CHITI, *Ristretto della Vita*, fol. [8v].

¹² C.G. I/41, fol. 293: “tutti l'essempij di moltissimi Prattici, cioè Antichissimi, Antichi, Moderni e Modernissimi, da 300 anni vi qua raccolti con grandissima fatica e diligenza”.

Kircher, Zarlino, Galilei and Gaffurio (just to mention a few).¹³

In each example, a single melodic passage is considered in isolation and marked out in the musical text by graphic signs. For Pitoni it seems to be of little importance whether the passage occurs between the soprano and tenor, alto and bass, or any other combination. Nor does he apparently see any significance in the note values with which the various intervals are left or reached. Indeed he even examines the embellishments in a solo part against the continuo part (Exx. 2-4). Following this procedure, Pitoni investigates, step by step, all the possible melodic movements between two parts, though without any regard for rhythm, key or relationship to the respective lowest part, and also ignoring other aspects, such as the range of the parts, phrasing, tone quality, rhythmic complementarity, etc. In this way the phenomenon of melodic part movement is observed from a “microscopic” perspective and determined solely by the interval itself, without considering it in either its harmonic or rhythmic context.¹⁴ In this respect, therefore, Pitoni’s conception corresponds neither to the treatises of composition of the preceding generations nor to the contemporary practice of developing entire harmonic relationships over a continuo line.

At this point one might ask to what extent Pitoni’s particular theoretical perspective might stem from the traditional stylistic and functional distinction between sacred and secular music (which still co-existed as two clearly distinct systems in the 18th-century).

In Johann Joseph Fux’s famous treatise of counterpoint, the *Gradus ad Parnassum*, (1725), which Pitoni also knew, the church style is described as follows:

E perchè Iddio è somma perfezione, conviene che l’armonia consagrada in suo onore, sia fatta con tutto il rigore, e perfezion delle leggi, in quanto che porta l’umana imperfezione, e con tutti i mezzi atti ad eccitar la devozione. E se l’espressione del testo esige qualche allegrezza, si deve guardare,

¹³ Included within this abundance of examples (the first printed volume alone contains citations of some 125 composers and 21 theorists) are many unknown works. Hence the work is also a copious source for documenting the work of many composers. Two examples: in MS C.G. I/6 (fol. 329v) Pitoni presents an example of “Carlo Baliani à 5 Voci con l’acc.° nel Mott.° *Diliquam te dñe* fatto p. il Concerto del Duomo di Milano l’anno 1714”; and in MS C.G. I/20 (fol. 426) he cites a piece “a 2 Voci e Acc.° nella Cantata *Il Tantalò Sittibondo*” by Domenico Scarlatti. In this regard, see also the dictionary of composers Pitoni himself compiled: *Notitia de’ contrapuntisti e compositori di musica* (MSS in BAV, C.G. I/1, and I/2; critical ed. by Cesario Ruini, Firenze, Olschki, 1988).

¹⁴ Also mentioned, though documented less fully, are the passages from fifth to fifth and even octave to octave.

che l'armonia non si privi di gravità Ecclesiastica, di modestia, e di splendore, con cui gli Uditori si divagassero in tutt'altro, che in divozione [...]

And since God is supreme perfection, it is fitting that the harmony consecrated in his honour should be made with all the rigour and perfection of the laws, in so far as human imperfection permits, and with all the suitable means to arouse devotion. And if the text calls for some cheerfulness, one must ensure that the harmony is not deprived of ecclesiastical gravity, modesty and splendour, by which the listeners might be distracted into anything else but devotion [...]¹⁵

Significantly Fux's book is often cited by Pitoni. Both, after all, speak the same language with regard to sacred music, by referring to it as a stylistic context that is much less dependent on different moods and “affects” than that of secular music. The didactic principles of the two theorists, however, are very different.¹⁶

In the *Gradus*, Fux discusses music in the ancient sense, as part of the *quadrivium*; in other words, as a science in which one builds with the aid of the natural laws granted by God. To start with, therefore, he outlines the physical and mathematical principles behind sound and behind the rhythmic and interval proportions. Then he swiftly passes on to an explanation of counterpoint as the movement of two, three or more parts in the relationships of 1:1, 1:2, 1:4, etc., limiting himself to an exposition of the fundamental aspects of composition. In this master-and-pupil dialogue (a typical procedure in the treatise literature) the course pursued involves a gradual augmentation of the subject matter and concludes with mention of the various stylistic tendencies.

Pitoni, on the other hand, is more scholastic in his approach. According to the work's original plan, there was to be a separate volume for each of the 22 intervals examined. In the long preface to each volume, the reader is provided with general information on the nature of the interval in question, sometimes also including sundry curiosities (like the fact that between 1316 and 1334 the fourth was numbered among the consonances according to the papal decree of John XXII). This is followed by a series of chapters illustrating the various interval progressions, which are exemplified by an abundant variety of musical quotations, always following the general plan outlined above. The

¹⁵ JOHANN JOSEPH FUX, *Gradus ad Parnassum* (Wien, Van Ghelen, 1725); consulted edition: *Salita al Persaso, o sia Guida alla regolare Composizione della Musica*, translated by Alessandro Manfredi, Carpi, Carmignani, 1761, pp. 210 ff.

¹⁶ However, one cannot rule out the possibility that the *Guida Armonica*, in spite of its title, was conceived less with didactic aims than as a work for consultation. This is suggested not only by its “encyclopaedic” appearance, but also by the lack of progressive complexity in the material treated.

broadly systematic treatment, in which the author invariably repeats the same formula (title, introduction, explanation), is echoed in the individual musical examples, where we find a similar recurring formula (name of composer, title of work, species of movement). See Exx. 7-10.

In the manuscript sketches a large number of examples appear without the composer's name. In the final version, on the other hand, these same examples are attributed to the same mysterious work, the so-called *Fantasia ideale* of a certain "Gopintio Tiriedi" – who is obviously (if one unravels the anagram) none other than "G.O. Pitoni di Rieti".

The various styles that illustrate the changes in the use of both intervals and composition techniques over the centuries fall into six categories:

- style 1 the oldest style, called *a cappella*.
- style 2 *a cappella*, but for double choir.
- style 3 madrigal style, known as table music (*da tavolino*).
- style 4 *stile grosso*: works of sacred music from 8 to 32 voices, for two or more choirs, with continuo for the organ.
- styles 5 and 6 more modern manners of composition: freer conduct of the voices, use of dissonances; instrumental accompaniment, concertato texture; sacred and secular, oratorio and opera, arias, madrigals, instrumental music.

Pitoni's theoretical approach differs from traditional composition theory in certain fundamental aspects. In contrast with Fux's demonstrations on the counterpoint of 1:2, 1:4, etc., Pitoni's treatise defines, for example, the cambiata and passing-tone passages (both accented and otherwise) as pure interval relationships. Not even in the modern examples of his treatment are these phenomena explained in terms of part movement (as shown, for example, by Fux in relation to *contrapunctus floridus*). Moreover, as we also saw, a similar explanation is used in the cases of melodic diminution. Finally, Pitoni's traditional principles are evidently incapable of dealing with the linear motion of the contrapuntal parts, a phenomenon that had already been adopted by composers for several generations, even in the context of sacred music.¹⁷ This

¹⁷ By linear counterpoint what is meant are the diverse licences in melodic movement observed in vocal and instrumental music from the early 17th century onwards. In particular, it concerns melodic passages in individual and special parts of the composition that proceed at variance with the harmonic context and are justified solely by their line or movement. In the vocal music such procedures are often associated with a particular expressive intent in the setting of a text. The harmonic effects of such compositional liberties are uncommon yet pleasant, and like other musical phenomena of the *seconda pratica* they often defy definition by the usual rules.

helps to explain why his catalogue makes no mention of many compositional phenomena that instead deserve comment (false relations, the avoided resolutions of suspended chords, etc.): “... such things must be avoided as much as possible, although the Masters sometimes take licences”.¹⁸

Only in certain examples does Pitoni cite the freer progressions (Ex. 5).

Passages in a fugato texture or examples in linear contrary motion, however, are explained as interval progressions (Ex. 6).

In contrast with the traditional equality of the contrapuntal voices, Pitoni's theory uses a modern terminology. For example, in the madrigal compositions of the third style, he calls the lowest voice the “foundation part”, even though he then fails to consider it as the true basis for the upper parts (Ex. 7).

Likewise, in the examples in the modern sixth style, the customary hierarchy of the parts in relation to the bass is generally ignored. Hence we sometimes find that the subject of his comments is the relationship between the upper parts, as for example in trio sonatas. Again, the intervals are calculated independently of the bass part (see Ex. 9), even in cases of melodic movements within the same harmony (see Ex. 7).

As accompaniments to liturgical events and moments of pious devotion, Pitoni's sacred works tend towards the ideals of “ecclesiastical gravity”, “modesty” and “splendour” (as stipulated by Fux). According to Gmeinwieser, particularly the “four-part works display a stylistic development in the composer”.¹⁹ However, the modern compositional tendencies, deriving from the *seconda prattica*, remain as a matter of principle alien to his art.

During the final decades of the 17th century and the first of the 18th, we find a strong tendency towards chordal textures in musical composition, particularly in that of the Roman “stile osservato”, i.e. the contrapuntal idiom of the Palestrina tradition. A similar propensity is noted also in the

¹⁸ *Guida Armonica*, “Libro Primo” (printed), p. 3. In his *Notitia de' contrapuntisti e compositori di musica* (see fn. 13), while commenting on the lives of Monteverdi and Artusi, Pitoni also recalls their well-known controversy on the modern trends in composition. In the course of his account he betrays where his preferences lay. According to Pitoni, “Monteverdi wished, in order to escape the common rules, to include unconnected, bare dissonances in some of his madrigals, with the aim of achieving new modulations, new combinations and new affects [...], but this way of using dissonances and this new doctrine displeased Artusi, so he proceeded to contest it with many reasons (pp. 194ff)”. More particularly, “[Monteverdi's] modern theatre ariette [...] ousted the fine, grounded style of the madrigals that formerly had been the delight of music rooms” (pp. 284 ff; the page numbers refer to the modern edition).

¹⁹ SIEGFRIED GMEINWIESER, “Stil und Kompositionspraxis in der Kirchenmusik Roms im 18. Jahrhundert, dargestellt am Werk des Giuseppe Ottavio Pitoni”, in *Festschrift Erich Valentin zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. by Günther Weiß, Regensburg, Bosse, 1976, pp. 31-40.

works of Pitoni.²⁰ Gradually composition has become less and less a matter of combining polyphonic lines of equal weight, and increasingly a process based on entire harmonic progressions, which are then filled in with the individual parts. Although the link with the modal system is retained, at least nominally, the major-minor duality is on the increase, even in sacred music. The character of the melodic movement within the contrapuntal texture is particularly influenced by recourse to more complex harmonic relationships borrowed from modern secular composition. At the same time, however, the ecclesiastical style retains its traditional compositional structure, so that it “should not be of inconvenience to the Singer, but easy to the articulation”,²¹ especially as regards the length of the phrases, and the musical period.

Thanks to Chiti’s biographical portrait, we have information on Pitoni’s composition practice:

[le sue compositioni] molte volte per la sua grandiss^{ma} pratica distendeva correnti calamo ò molte altre volte distendendo il solo Basso continuo di dove ancora con l’obbligo ò di soggetto ò di risposta ne ricavava senza farne partitura originale, le quattro parti reali legate, e sciolte, e sempre con vera ecclesiastica Armonia consonanza sua propria.

many times, owing to his very great experience, he wrote down [his compositions] with flowing pen or many other times wrote down just the continuo part, from which – despite the requirements of subject and answer – he derived the four separate parts, without making an original score, and this always with true ecclesiastical harmony and fitting consonance.²²

Hence even for Pitoni, the use of thoroughbass with simplified contrapuntal textures, as practised in 18th-century Italian teaching, was in no way a contradiction of polyphonic composition. And yet, from his theoretical point of view, the relationship of each individual voice to the foundation part is not even taken into consideration.

In view of these contradictory aspects of the *Guida Armonica*, it is surely useful to consider the question of how his contemporaries received the work. The only surviving evidence, however, is the series of comments added by Martini to the Bolognese *unicum* of the first and only printed volume. Clearly we must consider that these notes were written years after the author’s

²⁰ See “Pitoni”, *The New Grove* (2001).

²¹ FUX, *Gradus ad Parnassum*, p. 211.

²² CHITI, *Ristretto della Vita*, fol. [4v].

death,²³ and that Martini's didactic approach is that of a later generation. Nonetheless, his critical attention focuses on points that most probably had already dissatisfied Pitoni's contemporaries. The comments, which are scathing in places, essentially concern not only the intervallic aspect and the failure to acknowledge the bass as the principal point of reference, but also the author's meticulously systematic approach, which sometimes leads him to wrong conclusions. For example, Ex. 8 illustrates the interval of the ninth, which Pitoni examines not only independently of the bass part but also considers as functionally equivalent to the second.

Martini also expresses a lively disagreement with Pitoni's way of treating individual melodic lines without regard for the lowest part and considering them as abstracted from the harmonic context (Ex. 9).²⁴

In spite of the individual sarcastic comments, in certain cases Martini agrees with Pitoni's reflections. But he expresses doubts on the theorist's rigid categorization of styles (Ex. 10).

In 1774, Martini himself published a didactic book for the study of counterpoint, divided into two volumes.²⁵ In the *Breve Compendium* at the start of the first volume, he formulates ten concise rules, which are then applied to the eight modes, using as examples complete compositions drawn from the traditional contrapuntal literature. As in Fux's treatise, the second volume is entirely devoted to the study of the different types of fugal writing. Both Fux and Martini insist on the fact that all the intervals are derived from the respective lowest part of the composition.²⁶

The above considerations induce us to draw the following conclusions. Unlike a composition treatise with well-defined didactic aims, Pitoni's *Guida*

²³ The first letters preserved in the Chiti-Martini correspondence, which document Martini's interest in Pitoni's treatise, are dated 1746. However, it seems that Martini came into possession of the book only around 1753 (see the preface to the facsimile reprint of the *Guida Armonica*, cited in fn. 10).

²⁴ In spite of the title *Guida Armonica*, the modern concept of *armonia* as a musical structure consisting of three principal parts (Gaffurio, Zarlino) is not the central aspect of the treatise (see PAUL VON NAREDI-RAINER [HELMUT HÜSCHEN], "Harmonie" in *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, zweite vollständig neu bearbeitete Ausgabe, hrsg. von Ludwig Finscher, Kassel, Bärenreiter-Metzler, Sachteil, vol. 4, coll. 116-132; CARL DAHLHAUS, "Harmony" in *The New Grove*, vol. 8, pp. 175-188, and in *The New Grove*, second edition, vol. 10, pp. 858-877 with revisions and additions).

²⁵ See GIAMBATTISTA MARTINI, *Esemplare o sia saggio fondamentale pratico di contrappunto sopra il Canto Fermo*, 2 vols., Bologna, Volpe, 1774/1775 (ed. facsimile: New Jersey, The Gregg Press, 1965).

²⁶ FUX, *Gradus ad Parnassum, Della nota contro nota, nella composizione a tre*, pp. 79. MARTINI, *Esemplare o sia saggio fondamentale*, preface, p. XIV, note 1: "All the intervals described always refer to a given sound, which is the lowest and which serves as principal element to which all the other intervals are compared."

Armonica is a sort of ‘encyclopaedia’ of interval movements: a collection of examples that aspires to a total comprehension of musical composition from its smallest unit of construction. To illustrate the melodic progressions within a polyphonic work, the author’s chosen point of departure is not the individual melody, to which a second and third line are added in accordance with the various rhythmic proportions (1:2, 1:4 etc.). Instead he focuses on the interval relationship of just two parts: a relationship that unfolds independently of all the other relationships within the compositional structure. The result is a very limited perspective of composition and one of doubtful utility to the unskilled composer.

Also questionable is the (highly dubious) way in which the author makes up for the lack of examples from the literature with others that he himself has freely dreamed up. Here the supposed claim of offering the reader confirmation of his theories through the works of other composers is particularly artificial.

Although Pitoni must have recognized the weak points of his system, over the decades in which he worked in the project he failed to find an alternative and more complete theoretical method (besides, a fresh approach would have forced him to a total revision of the volumes already completed). This awareness transpires, for example, in his respectful criticism of Monteverdi (see fn. 18) and in his facile tolerance of certain compositional licences, which he imputes to the composer’s mastery without subjecting them to careful analysis.²⁷ His criticism of Monteverdi, as the representative of a freer compositional style, betrays a particularly dogmatic attitude to traditional composition. And his willingness to interpret such compositional liberties as a sign of artistic mastery betrays the difficulties of discussing the modern stylistic trends in any genuinely dialectic way. Indeed, precisely to avoid any such discussion, over such unresolved phenomena he glibly and somewhat implausibly extends a blanket of admiration.

Pitoni’s role as a renowned teacher appears in strong contrast to his peculiar theoretical stance, which contemplates the composition practices of the various stylistic environments only when they match the traditional rules. A careful examination of the *Guida Armonica* brings to light a number of methodological issues that the author tacitly avoids tackling. Moreover, the evident errors (e.g. the observations on the interval of the ninth), as well as the use of music examples made up by himself are compounded by a series of contradictions that ultimately make his analytical method extremely unconvincing.

Finally, it is worth briefly mentioning a later treatise that resembles the *Guida Armonica* in certain respects: the *Dictionnaire des accords*, written by

²⁷ Significantly in the first printed volume of the *Guida Armonica* Pitoni cites just one music example from Monteverdi.

the French composer and essayist Henri Berton in the early 19th century.²⁸ The author of this work again adopts a close-up perspective, though in this case he systematically records the multiplicity of chordal progressions. Unlike Pitoni’s work, however, Berton’s exhaustive treatment of the material had its uses and indeed made a valuable contribution to the incipient teaching of harmony (“*Harmonielehre*”). Its utility for the budding composer lies in its methodical illustration of the contemporary harmonic vocabulary. Another conspicuous contrast with Pitoni’s system is the fact that by that time – a century after Pitoni – all consideration of the harmonic progressions is unquestionably rooted in the hierarchical relationship between the parts, as established by the homophonic texture.

²⁸ HENRI-MONTAND BERTON, *Traité d’harmonie suivi d’un dictionnaire des accords*, Paris, Durand, 1815.