

RAMEAU AND PADRE MARTINI New Letters and Documents

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For the Bicentennial of Rameau's Death
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WHEN the Rameau literature has mentioned the personal relations that existed between Jean-Philippe Rameau and Padre Giambattista Martini, it has done so, until now, solely on the basis of the three letters published by Della Valle, Pougin, and Tiersot—those written by Rameau on July 6 and December 2, 1759, and by Martini on January 3, 1760.¹ La Mara and Vatielli published a number of other letters from the two men's correspondence; these publications, however, occurred outside the sphere of Rameau scholarship and so escaped its notice.² None of the above-mentioned editors had any real knowledge of the circumstances and documents behind the correspondence, and they all misinterpreted its substance, as is evident from their comments and explanations. Furthermore, of the thirty letters that make up this correspondence and are accessible today, nearly half have remained unpublished, while many of the more important ones appearing in the publications we have mentioned suffer from mistakes and omissions (the letter published by La Mara, moreover, appears only in a German translation).

This dialogue between two of the foremost representatives of 18th-

¹ G. Della Valle, *Memorie storiche del P. Giambattista Martini*, Naples, 1785; A. Pougin, *Deux lettres inconnues de Rameau*, in *Le Ménestrel*, Paris, 1908; J. Tiersot, *Lettres de musiciens . . .*, I, Turin, 1924; English transl. in S. Michaela M. Keane, *The Theoretical Writings of Jean-Philippe Rameau*, Washington, 1961. Cf. Nos. 2, 12, and 14 in the list on p. 463 below.

² La Mara [Marie Lipsius], *Musikerbriefe aus fünf Jahrhunderten*, I, Leipzig, 1886 (No. 6 in the list on p. 463); F. Vatielli, *Lettere di musicisti brevemente illustrate (Estratto de la "Cronaca Musicale," 1916-17)*, Pesaro, 1917, Chap. II: *Mangot, Rameau e Padre Martini* (Nos. 1, 5, 6 [It. transl.], 7, 8, 10, 19, 20, 21, and 23, and parts of Nos. 3, 18, and 29 in the list on p. 463).

century music theory is unique. Its background, and the results of our research, may conveniently be summarized at this point. At the beginning of 1759, Rameau submitted to the Accademia delle Scienze dell'Istituto di Bologna a manuscript entitled *Nouvelles réflexions sur le principe sonore*, which later was published under the same title, but in a radically altered version, as the appendix to his *Code de musique pratique* (1760).³ One of the Accademia's leading personalities, the naturalist and philosopher J. B. Beccari, officially delegated Padre Martini and another member (not known by name) to examine the treatise. Martini discharged his commission in an unusually thorough manner: not only the manuscript, but all of Rameau's published works on music theory were translated into Italian by Martini himself and by others under his direction. His investigation took a considerable amount of time, much to the annoyance of the impatient Rameau, and reached its conclusion when he presented the members of the Accademia with a detailed report, which also contained a description of all the rest of Rameau's theoretical writings. The extant documents do not give us the exact date of this occasion, but they do show that it had not taken place by April 1761.⁴

Nearly all of the cited documents and letters are at the Civico Museo Bibliografico Musicale, Bologna, which houses Padre Martini's library; a few isolated papers are at the National Libraries in Paris and Vienna.⁵ Within the limits imposed by the present context, we shall first deal with Rameau's *Nouvelles réflexions . . .*, then with the Italian translations of his works, with his correspondence, and finally with Padre Martini's report to the Accademia.⁶

We have no documents informing us of the personal reasons why Rameau, then in his 76th year, should have submitted a new theoretical work of considerable scope to a foreign society. In any case, it was an

³ Cf. the author's article "*Vérités intéressantes, le dernier manuscrit de Jean-Philippe Rameau*," in *Revue de musicologie*, July 1964. This treatise is not to be confused with the *Nouvelles réflexions de M. Rameau sur sa démonstration du principe de l'harmonie* of 1752.

⁴ The fact emerges from a letter of April 8, 1761 from Martini to Mangot (No. 23 in the list on p. 463).

⁵ The documents at the Austrian National Library were first brought to my attention by Mr. Martin Bircher during a term of study in Vienna. Professor Napoleone Fanti gave me his tireless assistance during my investigation of the material in Bologna. I extend my warmest thanks to both gentlemen for their invaluable help.

⁶ A complete transcription of all the original texts, together with a detailed commentary, will be edited by the author and published by the Centro Studi Musicali G. B. Martini in Bologna under the title *Padre Martini e J.-Ph. Rameau: Contributo alla storia della teoria musicale del sec. XVIII*.

unprecedented thing for him to do. Perhaps the disappointments he had suffered since the '50s at the hands of d'Alembert and other leading Encyclopedists in Paris provided a serious motive.⁷ On the other hand, we do know of previous occasions when he had shown a desire to be recognized by internationally prominent scholars abroad.⁸ The covering letter that accompanied Rameau's MS to Bologna has not survived; we have only his second letter, written in April 1759, at the beginning of which he shows his impatience at not having been notified of the manuscript's safe arrival (see p. 464 below).

Regarding Bologna and her Accademia, a few facts may be briefly noted. The city, known as "la dotta" ("the learned"), was famous for her scholars and for her University, which had been attended by such figures as Dante, Petrarch, and Tasso. The Accademia delle Scienze had been established in 1714 through a merger of the Accademia degli Inquieti, founded in 1690, and the Istituto delle Scienze, founded in 1711 by L. F. Marsili. The resulting Accademia delle Scienze dell'Istituto di Bologna is still in existence today. As early as 1739, Charles de Brosses (1709-77), Rameau's fellow-citizen of Dijon, wrote in his famous *Lettres familières* from Italy: "The principal thing in the city, and one of the most curious in Europe, I have kept for last. It is the institute or academy of science, an establishment recently formed by the famous count Ferdinand de Marsigli . . ."⁹ True, these *Lettres* were not published during Rameau's lifetime; but it is not impossible that he learned of the Accademia from conversations with de Brosses himself or from a perusal of the manuscript letters, since Rameau was one of the many eminent Parisians with whom de Brosses was in touch.¹⁰ In the years that followed, during the pontificate of Benedict XIV (1740-58), himself a native of Bologna, the fame and brilliance of the Accademia rose even higher. The sovereign pontiff of the Catholic Church, whom Montesquieu called "the pope of scholars," was one of the most forceful personalities in the Papal States and a patron of the arts and sciences (particularly of the natural sciences). The reputation of "Papa Lambertini" spread beyond Church circles: it was international. He endowed his native city—especially the Accademia, which stood under his patronage—with notable gifts of books and furnishings.¹¹ The French physicist and philosopher J.-J. Dortous de Mairan (1678-1771) became a

⁷ Cf. the author's article mentioned in note 3.

⁸ Cf. the letters of 1750 and 1752 from Rameau to Leonhardt Euler and to Johann Bernoulli II in the author's article *Nouvelles lettres inédites de Jean-Philippe Rameau*, in *Recherches sur la musique française classique* III, Paris, 1963.

⁹ *Lettre XX* (Sept. 15, 1739) on Bologna, to his friend M. de Neuilly.

¹⁰ According to R. Colomb, the editor of the first complete edition, *L'Italie il y a cent ans, ou Lettres écrites d'Italie à quelques amis en 1739 et 1740*, Paris, 1836; cf. his "Notice biographique sur Charles de Brosses," *ibid.*, p. xxviii.

¹¹ Concerning Benedict XIV and his connections with Bologna and the Accademia, cf. C. Forni, *Benedetto XIV (Prospero Lambertini)*, in *Atti dell'Accademia delle Scienze dell'Istituto di Bologna, Classe di scienze fisiche, Memorie, Serie I, No. 6*, Bologna, 1959. For the history of the Accademia, cf. *Annuario dell'Accademia . . . , Classe di scienze fisiche, 1961-62*, Bologna, 1962.

member of the Accademia in 1734, d'Alembert in 1755. Both were on close terms with Rameau; in 1749, representing the Académie des Sciences in Paris, they examined and accepted Rameau's *Mémoire où l'on expose les fondemens du système de musique théorique et pratique*, published the following year as *Démonstration du principe de l'harmonie*. (Beginning with Vol. VI of the *Encyclopédie*, the designation "de l'Institut de Bologne" appears next to d'Alembert's name.)

Jacopo (or Giacomo) Bartolomeo Beccari (1682-1766) was one of the most distinguished Italian scholars of his day—physicist, chemist, medical man, and philosopher. The fame of his lectures at the University of Bologna attracted a great number of students from many European countries. He was a member of the Accademia delle Scienze from its foundation in 1714 and four times its president between 1723 and 1750. A member of various foreign scientific societies, Beccari also was personally close to Benedict XIV, who gave him and the institutes over which he presided substantial support. His early education, like Rameau's, had taken place at a Jesuit college.¹²

In 1758, Padre Martini was admitted to the Accademia as its only musical member, doubtless on the strength of his thorough study and knowledge of the theoretical and historical branches of his science.¹³ Furthermore, the 53-year-old *maestro di cappella* of San Francesco was by then a universally accepted authority; therefore, it was quite natural that the Accademia should single him out for the task of examining Rameau's paper.¹⁴

¹² The following references contain specific information on this important correspondent of Rameau's. Contemporary reference works: Giamm. Mazzuchelli, *Gli Scrittori d'Italia*, Vol. II, Part II, Brescia, 1760; Giov. Fantuzzi, *Notizie degli scrittori bolognesi*, II, Bologna, 1782. Obituaries: Flam. Scarselli, *Nelle Solenni esequie del celebre filosofo e medico bolognese G. B. B.: Orazione*, Bologna, 1766; *Memorie per l'illustre filosofo bolognese J. B. B.*, in *Giornale d'Italia*, Tomo II, pp. 359-60. 19th century: *Nouvelle Biographie générale*, V, Paris, 1855. 20th century: Vatielli, *op. cit.*; *Enciclopedia italiana*; G. B. Bonino, *Commemorazione dell'Accademico Benedettino J. B. B.*, in *Atti . . . Memorie*, Serie I, No. 7, Bologna, 1959.

¹³ The Accademia delle Scienze should not be confused with the totally unrelated Accademia Filarmonica, which was founded in 1666 and, like the other, continues to exist under the same name—indeed, in the same building where Mozart took his famous examination for admission in 1770. Padre Martini was a member of both institutions, as may be seen from the designations that appear beneath his name on the title page of his *Storia della Musica* (Vol. I): "Accademico nell'Instituto delle Scienze, e Filarmonico."

¹⁴ Beccari and Martini had been brought together by a similar occasion before. In 1753-54, Don Anselmo Costadoni, *maestro di cappella* at San Michele di Murano (near Venice), had corresponded with both men concerning a medieval musical codex. Martini reported on it minutely in a letter to Beccari. Cf. F. Parisini (ed.), *Carteggio inedito del P. Giambattista Martini coi più celebri musicisti del suo tempo*, I, 1888.

Rameau's treatise in its original form is kept, together with an Italian translation and fourteen other handwritten documents of varied content, in a file labeled "*Martini, P. Giambattista. Miscellanea . . .*," No. I/45, at the Civico Museo.¹⁵ In Gaspari's catalogue, it is entered as follows: "Nouvelles réflexions sur le principe sonore. (Trattato senza nome d'autore colla relativa traduzione italiana.)" There is a similar entry in the file's list of contents. The name of the author is indeed absent from the manuscript, but the title and the content—at least the parts that correspond with the later printed version—leave no doubts concerning Rameau's authorship.

At the bottom of the title page there is the following comment in Gaspari's hand: "Da una nota apposta nel principio dell'*Introduzione* dove è citato il p. Amiot si ricava che questo scritto non è anteriore al 1780." ("From a footnote at the beginning of the *Introduction*, where there is a reference to Father Amiot, one infers that [the date of] this manuscript is not earlier than 1780.") Here, too, Gaspari was mistaken. The footnote to which he referred has its identical counterpart in the published version. It says that the Author (Rameau) has recently examined a treatise on ancient Chinese music, translated from the Chinese by Père Amiot of the Jesuit mission in Peking and addressed in 1754 to M. de Bougainville, of the Académie des Belles-Lettres. The allusion is to Jean Joseph Marie Amiot (1718-93), the famous Jesuit missionary, who lived in China from 1750 on. Amiot's *Mémoires sur la musique des Chinois tant anciens que modernes*, edited by Rameau's pupil Pierre-Joseph Roussier, was published in Paris in 1780, as Vol. VI of the *Mémoires concernant l'histoire, les sciences, les arts etc. des Chinois*. The volume is discussed at length, as its author's only work, in Pietro Lichtenthal's *Dizionario e bibliografia della musica*, Milan, 1836, III. Fétis, on the other hand, reports in his *Biographie universelle* that Amiot, in addition to writing the book in question, had begun, only a few years after his arrival in China, to send his translation of a Chinese treatise on ancient Chinese music to Paris in single instalments, addressed to de Bougainville, the Secretary of the Académie des Inscriptions, who then passed them on to the king's library. It is this translation to which Rameau refers in his footnote. It may be that Gaspari's knowledge about Amiot was entirely drawn from Lichtenthal's *Dizionario*.

The manuscript, penned in a very clear and careful copyist's hand, measures 16.5 x 21.5 cm. and comprises 43 written pages. Its preface, four and a half pages long, was dropped altogether in the printed version. Here Rameau gives an impressive account of his position as an interpreter of natural physical phenomena going counter to conventional geometry, whose exclusive concern is mathematical computation. The preface ends with the aged Master's tribute to the primacy of music over all the other branches of knowledge—a primacy founded on the *corps sonore* and its

¹⁵ Cf. G. Gaspari, *Catalogo della Biblioteca Musicale G. B. Martini di Bologna*, Vol. I: *Opere teoriche*, 2nd ed. rev., Bologna, 1961, p. 161.

proportions, which make themselves known to the ears and eyes of man.

The manuscript's contents are divided into several chapters, whose titles appear below opposite those of the printed edition, for purposes of comparison:

Manuscript	P.	Published version ¹⁶	P.
Préface	1	Introduction	189
Introduction	6	Développement des nouvelles réflexions	193
Nouvelles Réflexions sur le Principe Sonore	12	De la Proportion double	197
De la Proportion Double	16	De la Proportion triple	198
De la Proportion Triple	18	De la Proportion quintuple	204
De la Proportion Quintuple	20	Origine des Dissonances	206
De la Proportion des Dissonances	23	Du Principe	212
Du Principe	29	Conséquences des Réflexions précédentes pour l'origine des Sciences	215
Conclusion	34	Question décisive	228
	(to p. 43)		(to p. 237)

The number of pages covered by each version is approximately the same. The MS's final chapter ("Conclusion") was replaced by two entirely different chapters in the printed edition. The "Introduction" and the chapter entitled "Du Principe" contain important passages in the original version that were later omitted. Beyond this, the two versions differ from each other in numerous details. At three points in the MS—in the "Introduction" (p. 6) and in the first chapter proper (pp. 12 and 14)—Rameau addresses himself directly to the "Messieurs" of the Accademia.

In his letter of October 29, 1759 to Padre Martini, Rameau provides a number of comprehensive changes to be inserted in the text of his MS (cf. p. 467 below). In the printed edition, these are in turn replaced by new matter, so that we actually have three different versions of Rameau's last theoretical work, all written in close succession, a comparison of which affords an interesting glimpse of the Master's train of thought at the time. In his letter to Martini of December 2, 1759 (cf. p. 469 below) Rameau mentions his intention of sending him a new MS in which the whole preface and the sections devoted to Antiquity will be left out—the last, in view of Padre Martini's own treatment of the subject in his

¹⁶ Concerning the various writings by Rameau mentioned in the present article, the reader is referred to the forthcoming publication of his complete theoretical writings, edited by the author for the American Institute of Musicology.

history of music.¹⁷ It is quite possible, therefore, that Rameau may have meant to do Padre Martini a favor when he dropped important parts of the MS from the printed book. He was still anxiously awaiting the verdict of the Accademia.

The Italian translation of the original treatise, *Nuove riflessioni sul principio sonoro*, written in an extraordinarily fine copyist's hand, contains autograph comments by Padre Martini that reveal a thorough acquaintance with Rameau's earlier writings, as well as scrupulous care for the author's wishes concerning the revision (in accordance with the letter of October 29, 1759). In addition, Padre Martini's library has Italian translations of nearly all of Rameau's other theoretical works; in his first letter to Rameau (August 23, 1759), Martini writes that he had them sent from Paris when the Accademia first entrusted him with the task of examining the treatise, so that he might compare them with the later work. They are, in the order in which they were published: *Traité de l'harmonie* (1722), *Mécanique des doigts sur le clavecin* (1724),¹⁸ *Nouveau système de musique théorique* (1726), *Génération harmonique* (1737),¹⁹ *Démonstration du principe de l'harmonie* (1750) with *Nouvelles réflexions de M. Rameau sur sa Démonstration du principe de l'harmonie* (1752), and *Extrait d'une réponse de M. Rameau à M. Euler sur l'identité des octaves* (1752-53).²⁰ These translations were first mentioned in Gaspari's catalogue, then in Eitner's *Quellen-Lexikon*, finally in the present author's article on Rameau's writings in *MGG*; but they have never been cited, discussed, or singly investigated in the literature on Padre Martini.²¹ The manuscript division of the Austrian National Library in Vienna owns the following additional translations of writings by Rameau (doubtless also from Padre Martini's library), which have not been cited before: *Lettre de M. d'Alembert à M. Rameau* with the *Réponse de M. Rameau à la lettre de M. d'Alembert qu'on vient de lire*, his articles *Source où, vraisemblablement, on a dû puiser la première*

¹⁷ Vol. I of Martini's *Storia della Musica* did not appear in 1757 (the date printed on the title page) but only towards the end of 1760 or the beginning of 1761, as is apparent from his letters to Rameau (Jan. 3, 1760) and Mangot (Feb. 1761).

¹⁸ Published as the foreword to the *Pièces de clavecin*.

¹⁹ A translation of a review of this work (in *Observations sur les écrits modernes*, X) is also present, in the file containing the MS of the *Nouvelles réflexions sur le principe sonore*.

²⁰ Published in 1752 in the *Mercure de France*, in 1753 as a pamphlet.

²¹ There is also a translation of d'Alembert's article *Consonnance, en musique* from the *Encyclopédie* among the documents relating to Rameau, in the file labeled "Zibaldone Martiniano" (Gaspari, I, 100).

idée des proportions and *Origine des modes et du tempérament*, as well as his *Suite de la Réponse à la lettre . . .* (1761),²² and *Lettre aux Philosophes* (1762).²³

According to the Viennese card catalogue, this last group of translations, as well as the two letters of Rameau owned by the same library (the autograph of the letter of October 29, 1759 to Padre Martini and an Italian translation of the letter to Beccari of August 7, 1759), were formerly the property of the Austrian writer on music Franz Sales Kandler (1792-1831), who lived in Italy between 1815 and 1826. He stayed in Bologna several times during that period and probably obtained the documents there.

All the translations are complete; furthermore, they are carefully worked out and display a thorough knowledge of the subject. The translation of the *Traité de l'harmonie* has the list of errata ("Supplément") worked into the text. The first editions in French have all remained in Padre Martini's library to this day, and many of them bear the signature of Padre Stanislao Mattei, one of Martini's favorite pupils, who inherited his master's great library and who in turn, as the first director of the Liceo Musicale G. B. Martini, bequeathed it to that institution. Some of these works lack Italian translations, namely: *Observations sur notre instinct pour la musique* (1754), *Code de musique pratique* (1760), *Lettre à d'Alembert sur ses opinions en musique* (1760), and *Origine des sciences* (1762). Of these, the *Observations* deals mainly with esthetic, the *Code* with pedagogical and practical matters; the *Lettre à d'Alembert* is above all an episode in a personal polemic, while the *Origine des sciences*, which appeared anonymously, was probably not translated because Padre Martini doubted Rameau's authorship.²⁴ The various handwritings show that there were five translators besides Padre Martini; together, they translated some 1200 pages of printed text.

Padre Martini himself participated most of all in the translation of the *Traité de l'harmonie*, Rameau's first and fundamental work; large portions of the first book and the entire fourth book are in his hand. For the rest, his handwriting appears very often in all of the translations—on title pages, in footnotes, and explanatory comments. In the translation of the *Nouveau système*, at the end of the ninth chapter ("De la

²² Published in the *Mercure de France*, then as a pamphlet; cf. the author's article mentioned in note 3.

²³ Published in *Mémoires de Trévoux*.

²⁴ The author has been able to prove beyond any doubt that Rameau was indeed the author of *Origine des sciences, suivie d'une controverse sur le même sujet*. Cf. the article cited in note 3.

Mélodie naturelle. Réflexions sur les effets de la Musique ancienne & de la moderne.”), there is this interesting opinion in Martini’s handwriting: “Tutto ciò che qui espone Mons. Rameau è fondata nel supposto, *che i Greci cantassero in Consonanza* il che egl’è difficile di provare, come mi lusingo d’aver dimostrato nella seconda dissertazione. O sono veri, e come tali praticamente usati dai Greci; o sono puramente ideali, e non mai posti in pratica.” (“Everything that is here propounded by Mons. Rameau is based upon the supposition *that the Greeks sang in Consonance* which it is hard to prove, as I flatter myself I have shown in the second dissertation. Either they [presumably the “consonances,” or parts] are real, and as such were used in practice by the Greeks; or they are purely ideal, and have never been in practice.”)²⁵ These Italian translations all bear unique testimony to the thoroughness and conscientiousness with which an eminent scholar and artist came to grips with the works and concepts of a foreign colleague, whose orientation and points of view differed from his in essential, perhaps decisive, respects. This remains true even if Padre Martini ascribed his own extraordinary diligence to the fact that the world-renowned Académie Royale des Sciences had already examined and granted recognition to Rameau’s theoretical system.²⁶

True to the characteristics we have just mentioned, Padre Martini not only saved all the letters he received, but also drafted all his replies in full (often on the backs of the letters addressed to him), saving these rough copies as tidily as the letters. It is to this circumstance that we owe the preservation of much the greater part of the present correspondence. By contrast, the original of only one of Martini’s letters has come down to us;²⁷ a comparison between the clean and rough copies

²⁵ Martini is here referring to Vol. I of his *Storia della Musica*, whose “Dissertazione seconda” (pp. 165-234) bears the title, “Qual canto in consonanze usassero gli antichi.” Cf. also note 17. The comment is written on a little sheet bound with the MS and addressed to a certain Carlo Radisini, “Oratore” (unidentifiable today).

²⁶ The allusion is a reference to the famous judgment of December 1749 by the Parisian academy (47 pp.) on the *Mémoire* submitted by Rameau. They were published together in 1750 as the *Démonstration du principe de l’harmonie*. Padre Martini makes use of this argument in his first letter to Rameau, (mentioned above, Aug. 23, 1759), almost to excuse himself for being unable to set down his opinion of the MS as quickly as he was expected to do. Using the same rhetorical style, Martini also refers to the high spiritual level of the members of the Accademia and to his own spiritual poverty with regard to understanding Rameau’s system.

²⁷ Written on January 3, 1760. The autograph, with remarks in Rameau’s hand, is in Paris (B. N. Mus., file “Lettres autographes de Rameau”); cf. facsimile and French translation in Tiersot, *op. cit.*

of this letter shows them to be identical in content, the only difference being in the draft's abbreviations and corrections. We may therefore assume that all the rough copies correspond entirely, as to contents, with the missing letters. For two letters of special importance to Padre Martini we even have several drafts: three for his first letter to Rameau (August 23, 1759) and two for a letter of recommendation, also to Rameau (May 1762), in which he introduces Carlo Goldoni and asks Rameau to be of assistance to the Venetian playwright, then settling in Paris.

But in addition to Beccari, Martini, and Rameau, there was still a fourth person who took a very active part in the correspondence: Jacques-Simon Mangot, Rameau's brother-in-law and, since 1756, *maestro di cappella* at the ducal court of the Bourbons in Parma. In a postscript to his letter of August 7, 1759 to Beccari, Rameau drew his brother-in-law into the correspondence as a go-between who would forward their letters to Paris and Bologna.²⁸ He did this because of a quarrel that had arisen between the Paris and Geneva postal authorities—a quarrel he had mentioned earlier, in an angry postscript in his letter of July 6, 1759 to Padre Martini, as the cause of unwarrantable delays in their correspondence (cf. p. 466 below). Since Mangot could avail himself of the ducal couriers bound for Paris, the exchange of ideas between Rameau and Martini could now proceed smoothly. And so, when Padre Martini wrote his first letter to Rameau (on August 23, 1759, as we have seen), he sent it to Parma with a covering letter addressed to Mangot: "So that the letter may safely and swiftly reach the hands of your famous brother-in-law Mons. Rameau, Mr. Beccari advises me to direct it to you with the request that you forward it at once with all speed." Rameau had obviously exerted considerable pressure on Mangot to get him to speed up the delivery of letters from Bologna. In his first letter to Padre Martini (November 3, 1759), Mangot writes: "My brother-in-law tells me he hopes to receive your reply to the present [letter] towards the end of November My address, in case you have forgotten or lost it, is, to M^r Mangot [*etc.*]"

²⁸ See Plate I for a facsimile and p. 466 for an English version of this letter. The Italian translation of the letter (mentioned above, p. 459) at the Austrian National Library in Vienna has, after the introductory "Monsieur," the following parenthetical note in Martini's hand: "(*Beccari dell'Instituto*)."
This is additional proof that Rameau's letters to "Monsieur" (also the letter of April 1759, cf. p. 464 below) are directed to Beccari. When addressing Martini, he invariably uses the form "Mon (très) Révérend Père" (cf. the letters of July 6, October 29, and December 2, 1759, p. 465 ff. below). In the Italian translation, incidentally, "beau-frère" (brother-in-law) is erroneously rendered as "cugino" (cousin).

Mangot, born in Lyons at the end of the 17th century, died in Parma in 1791 at a very advanced age. For more than thirty years he represented French music at the court of Parma—first under Don Philip, infante of Spain and Louis XV's son-in-law (ruled 1749-65), then under Ferdinand I. He brought a wealth of experience to his position: instrumentalist, actor, conductor, composer, theater and opera director, he had acquired his skills mainly in his native city, before he moved to Parma. At the court of the Bourbons (1731-1801) in those days, the office of "Ministre des Finances et Intendant Général de la Maison de S. A. R., l'Infant Duc à Parme" was held by G. Dutillet (or Du Tillot), himself a native of Lyons. In the period that followed the brilliant ascendancy of the Farnese family, he made it his concern to impress a particular character upon the cultural life of Parma and the nearby summer residence of Colorno (the duchy's Versailles). He employed the best French *and* Italian talent, but the dominant artistic trend was definitely French, represented by such figures as the architect Petitot, the painter Pécheux, and the sculptor Boudard.²⁹

Of the 30 letters that have come down to us from this correspondence, 9 are from Mangot to Padre Martini and 9 from Padre Martini to Mangot. Though at first Mangot had simply served as Rameau's go-between, his correspondence with Martini developed quite independently as time went by and lasted beyond the death of Rameau. For example, Mangot sent to Bologna a number of French compositions, which he had chosen at Padre Martini's request, and added some informative comments on the various categories to which they belonged. The fact that a good many of them were pieces from operas by Rameau is a sign of Mangot's concern in the propagation of his brother-in-law's music in Italy. Of special interest are Mangot's observations on the differences between the French and Italian music of his day. Five of the letters are from Rameau himself (2 to Beccari, 3 to Martini) and 6 are from Martini to Rameau. A letter of November 29, 1759 from Martini to Abbé François Arnaud forms part of the present correspondence; the Abbé, who is often mentioned in the letters of Rameau, Martini, and Mangot, had for years been on the closest terms with Rameau, as his

²⁹ For Mangot, cf. L. Vallas, *J.-S. Mangot, un beau-frère de Rameau symphoniste, compositeur et directeur d'Opéra*, in *Revue de musicologie*, Paris, 1924; *idem*, *Un siècle de musique et de théâtre à Lyon: 1688-1789*, Lyons, 1932; H. Bédarida, *J.-S. Mangot à Parme*, in *Revue de musicologie*, Paris, 1925; *idem*, *Parme et la France de 1748-1789*, Paris, 1927; N. Pelicelli, *Storia della musica in Parma dal 1400 al 1860 (Estratto della rivista "Note d'Archivio per la Storia Musicale"*, 1936), Rome, 1936. For the period presently under consideration, Bédarida's *Parme et la France* (above) is especially recommended. There are many documents by and about Mangot in the Archivio di Stato, Parma, e.g. in the files "Carteggio Bourbonico Francia, 1756-61" and "Real Casa: Ruolo di Parma, 1766 al 1805."

adviser, though he was 38 years younger than the composer.³⁰ The letters exchanged by Rameau and Mangot, and the letters written by Beccari have not come down to us. The purpose of the following list is merely to provide a chronological synopsis of all the existing letters, with the places where they are preserved (for the printed sources, cf. notes 1 and 2). Immediately after the list we present the unabridged texts of the five letters by Rameau, in English translation.

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Rameau to Beccari | Apr. 1759 (Bol., copy + It. transl.) |
| 2. Rameau to Martini | 6 Jul. 1759 (Bol., copy + It. transl.) |
| 3. Rameau to Beccari | 7 Aug. 1759 (Bol., aut.; Vienna, It. transl.) |
| 4. Martini to Mangot | 23 Aug. 1759 (Bol., draft) |
| 5. Martini to Rameau | 23 Aug. 1759 (Bol., 3 drafts) |
| 6. Rameau to Martini | 29 Oct. 1759 (Vienna, aut.; Bol., It., Lat. transl.) |
| 7. Mangot to Martini | 3 Nov. 1759 (Bol., aut.) |
| 8. Martini to Rameau | [Nov. 1759] (Bol., draft) |
| 9. Martini to Rameau | 15 Nov. 1759 (Bol., draft) |
| 10. Martini to Rameau | 15 Nov. 1759 (Bol., draft) |
| 11. Martini to Arnaud | 29 Nov. 1759 (Bol., draft) |
| 12. Rameau to Martini | 2 Dec. 1759 (Bol., aut. + It. transl.) |
| 13. Mangot to Martini | 20 Dec. 1759 (Bol., aut. + It. transl.) |
| 14. Martini to Rameau | 3 Jan. 1760 (Paris, aut.; Bol., draft) |
| 15. Martini to Mangot | 3 Jan. 1760 (Bol., draft) |
| 16. Mangot to Martini | 21 Jun. 1760 (Bol., aut.) |
| 17. Martini to Mangot | 21 Jul. 1760 (Bol., draft) |
| 18. Mangot to Martini | 10 Sep. 1760 (Bol., aut.) |
| 19. Martini to Mangot | 16 Sep. 1760 (Bol., draft) |
| 20. Mangot to Martini | 4 Feb. 1761 (Bol., aut.) |
| 21. Martini to Mangot | [Feb. 1761] (Bol., draft) |
| 22. Mangot to Martini | 25 Mar. 1761 (Bol., aut.) |
| 23. Martini to Mangot | 8 Apr. 1761 (Bol., draft) |
| 24. Mangot to Martini | 22 Aug. 1761 (Bol., aut.) |
| 25. Martini to Mangot | 3 Sep. 1761 (Bol., draft) |
| 26. Martini to Rameau | May 1762 (Bol., 2 drafts) |
| 27. Mangot to Martini | 8 Aug. 1762 (Bol., aut. + It. transl.) |
| 28. Martini to Mangot | 15 Aug. 1762 (Bol., draft) |
| 29. Martini to Rameau | 16 Aug. 1762 (Bol., draft) |
| 30. Mangot to Martini | 28 Dec. 1764 (Bol., aut.) |

³⁰ For Arnaud (1721-84) and his relationship with Rameau, cf. P.-M. Masson, *Une lettre inédite de Rameau*, in *Mélanges de musicologie offerts à M. Lionel de La Laurencie*, Paris, 1933. The correspondence between Martini and this ardent champion of Gluck's reform of opera continued long after the death of Rameau. Arnaud's letters to Martini through the year 1778 are kept in the file "Zibaldone Martiniano" (No. H/78), together with the letters of Rameau and Mangot.

Letter No. 1

have the goodness to read all, or to have it
read so an account of it can be given to you

Sir

Will you excuse my uncertainty as to the reception of my manuscript, entitled *Nouvelles réflexions sur le principe sonore*, and dare I hope for a mere yes or no from your secretary. Can I flatter myself, besides, that in your INSTITUTE there is a Geometer kind enough to lend himself to my [mode of] reckoning, completely opposed to his: accustomed to using the biggest number to express the biggest size, he will find I have used unity for that same expression, the numbers simply marking its divisions, or aliquot parts: which presents to the mind an absolutely different order of the harmonical and Arithmetical ratios, although their means (given in Geometry for the discovery of their proportions) are simply inverted between us: the means indicate one thing to him, another thing in music, which removes the first difficulty I believe; the other lies in the inversions, and in our natural reduction of the interval given by the principle to their least terms or degrees: for example, the 12ths called Fifths, formed by this triple proportion, **ut. Sol. Re.**, are inverted into Fourths in this order, **Re. Sol. ut.**, which order is proposed towards the end of the article concerning Dissonance to make it known that the two extremes of that same proportion, viz. **Re. ut.**, join hands, so to say, in order to attract one another reciprocally into the harmony of their mean term **Sol.** $\frac{1}{48}$, wherein I find, however, that the greater Tone, given to us here for the first time, is rejected by the fourth Geometrical proportionals, added to both the harmonical and Arithmetical proportions, mutually inverted; from which I have only been able to accept the lesser Tone, and the greater half Tone, which with the greater Tone make up the smallest natural degrees taken by all the musical Systems as the basic principles of their very principle*.

What object within the province of any other sense but that of hearing can present us with a principle as evident as the Resonance of a *Corps sonore*, where one thinks that one is hearing but a single sound while [in fact] all the proportions are sounding at the same time (we mean the arithmetical inverted by the harmonical,) and where these proportions are limited, for our ears, to the $\frac{1}{5}$. of the *Corps sonore*? What are we to think of the perceptible Resonance of the $\frac{1}{3}$. and the $\frac{1}{5}$. of this *Corps sonore* generally recognized as the harmonical proportion, when the $\frac{1}{2}$. and $\frac{1}{4}$., which form a geometrical proportion with 1, and so have the more reason to ring out, are nevertheless quite indistinguishable? What are we to think of the means used by nature, to enable us to distinguish between these two proportions, and to prevent us from confusing them? How is it that no one has noticed them to this day? Nature herself is seen to decree them *Continuous*; then why does the Geometer in his Elements persist in presenting us with those [proportions] of four Terms as the principal ones? Why has he not thought of adding a fourth proportional to them? True, nature in this case grants equal ratios only to the progression of geometrical proportions, but cannot this fourth [proportional] be added geometrically? There, precisely, lies the origin of the harmonical

*This is shown to be true in the work. [Note by Rameau.]

Dissonances, whose inversion produces the smallest degrees that are natural to the voice, which until now had been derived exclusively from the differences between the consonances.

This principle, moreover, offers us some particulars that are worthy of admiration: by placing itself at the center of its Multiples and sub-Multiples, all of which it sets vibrating, it gives an idea of the infinite: by forcing the Multiples to divide themselves into its Unisons, they become one with it, proving thereby that it is the greatest, that it contains all and cannot be contained: furthermore, happy to have engendered all, it yields to its first products $1/2$, $1/3$, and $1/5$, the right to dispose of it, by making them the mean Terms of Geometrical Proportions on the pattern of the first one 1 , $1/2$, $1/4$,* while at the same time it communicates to these mean Terms the right of the infinite by progressions to the infinite, or to the indefinite, if one prefers, which they may attain this way or that: It makes these same proportions the arbiters of every harmonical succession and variety, each of the three Terms $1/2$, $1/3$, $1/5$, thereby receiving superior properties corresponding to the primacy of their origin, the harmonical proportion serving them only as an ornament everywhere, setting them up as a sub-proportion for which Arithmetic may substitute itself as its inversion.

The moment the *Corps sonore* rings out, everything is set in motion, Proportions, Progressions, Ratios whose differences lead to the infinitesimals, even the measure and the numbers that designate their Terms: here one sees the ear command the compass, while on the contrary the compass commands the eye, even requesting its help if need be, while at the same time giving it lessons on the greater or lesser perfection of the different ratios on the measure itself: the Arbitrary [numbers] are manifested here, and even the approximations, to which the ear yields in spite of ourselves, so that the other senses have the more reason to yield to them since.

SUPERBISSIMUM AURIS JUDICIUM [the ear's judgment is supreme (Cic. Or. 44, 150)].

As I have said in the work, Analysis has always been an obstacle to the lights which the Geometer might have derived from Music; if he makes use of Synthesis for proof alone: let him today employ it exclusively, and it shall lead him to his ends, without need of analysis for the proof.

Some other particulars in the work, finally, lead to the recognition that the *Phénomène sonore* is the only principle of science which it has pleased the Creator to submit to our reason. Can it be that at the very moment when truth is being disclosed in Music, the Philosopher should neglect that science; having made it his principal preoccupation for 3, or 4000, years on the basis of some feeble ideas that plunged him more and more into error.

I am with respect, Sir, your very humble and very obedient servant Rameau.
Paris, April , 1759.

Letter No. 2

My very Reverend Father,

In conveying my profound gratitude to Mr. Beccari for the favorable regard with which your illustrious society is good enough to honor me, I at the same

*Any other prime number may also be taken as a mean Term in other sciences.

time gave him to understand how delighted I was to learn that you had been entrusted with the care of examining my work. Enlightened critics need be feared by none, but by those who would impose on them: for my part, who seek only the truth, my Reverend Father, if I have cause to complain, it is only of the small number of judges offered us even by the most learned Academies, who can pass upon musical attainments. Treatises, systems on harmony have multiplied fruitlessly and unsuccessfully only because the phenomenon of the *corps sonore* had not yet been envisaged: it is from this very phenomenon that I saw the *Réflexions* arise, which I have the honor to submit to the judgment of the Institute: I await this judgment with the greatest impatience; whatever it may be, it shall be infinitely precious to me. If I do not deserve your approbation, you will at least render me the inestimable service of acquainting me with my errors.

I am with the profoundest esteem and the greatest respect.

My very Reverend Father

[Your very humble and very obedient servant
Rameau]

Paris, July 6, 1759
ruë des bons enfans

All the letters from Bologna to France are stopped at Geneva and the only one I received from Mr. Beccari was delivered to me as late as a month or so after its date. You may learn at the post office of a sure means by which your letters might reach us.

Letter No. 3

Sir

After the letter with which you honored me a good while since, I had hoped soon to learn what you thought, and what I should think, of the *Réflexions* I had the honor of submitting to your perusal. What, then, can be the cause of so considerable a delay? even if instead of the approbation which you encouraged me to expect, you were but to let me know the reasons that restrain you from granting it to me. Do I ask for praise? no, I seek only the truth; if I have not found it, acquaint me with my errors. I have had the honor of indicating my sentiments on the subject to the R[everend] P[adre] Martini, and I venture to assure you, Sir, and all your illustrious and learned society, that those sentiments are engraved in my heart. Once again, Sir, if I have not deserved your praise, send me your doubts, your criticism; my gratitude shall be none the less sincere and lively.

I am with the highest esteem and the greatest respect.

Sir

Your very humble and very
obedient servant Rameau

The present lawsuit between our Postmasters and those of Geneva, who are not sending us our letters, although I have asked two persons to see that mine are fetched, has made me avail myself of a brother-in-law whose name is Mangot, Master of the music to his R[oyal] H[ighness] M[y lord] the Duke of Parma, who will direct this to you, and to whom you may send your Answer under cover to



Monsieur

Sur la lettre que vous m'avez fait l'honneur de m'écrire il y a déjà longtemps, je m'attendois à savoir bientôt ce que vous pensiez, et ce que je devois penser moi-même, des réflexions que j'ai eu l'honneur de soumettre à votre examen. Quelle pourroit donc être la cause d'un retardement si considérable quand même au lieu de l'approbation que vous m'avez fait octroyer, vous devriez ne me faire savoir, les raisons qui vous empêchent de me l'accorder. Songez des éloges que je demande non, je ne cherche que la vérité et j'ai ne l'ai pas obtenue, faites moi connoître mes erreurs. J'ai eu l'honneur de marquer au R. P. Martini quels sont mes sentimens à ce sujet, et j'ose vous assurer, vous, Monsieur, et toute votre illustre et savante société, que ces sentimens sont au fond de mon cœur. Encore une fois, Monsieur, si je n'ai pas mérité vos éloges, envoyez moi vos doutes, votre avis que ma reconnaissance n'en sera ni moins sincère ni moins vive.

Je suis avec la plus haute estime et la considération la plus respectueuse,

Monsieur

Votre très humble et très
obéissant serviteur Rameau

La pièce qui se trouve entre nos directeurs de l'Académie et ceux de Genève, qui ne nous envoient point nos lettres, quoique j'aie prié deux personnes de faire retirer les miennes, m'a fait profiter d'un beau frère qui s'appelle Mangor-Matteo de Musique de son A. R. M. Le Duc de Parme, qui vous adresse celles-ci, et à qui vous pouvez envoyer votre Réponse sous enveloppe à son adresse si le R. P. Martini vous profite de la même occasion, je serai bien flatté de l'honneur et du plaisir que l'un ou l'autre m'a fera.

à Paris ce 7^e Août, 1759

Bologna, Civica Museo Bibliografico Musicale

Plate I

Autograph letter, dated August 7, 1759, from Rameau to J. B. Beccari of the Accademia dell Scienze dell'Istituto di Bologna (see p. 466)

his address, if the R. P. Martini wishes to avail himself of the same opportunity, I shall be flattered by the honor and the pleasure you both will grant me.

Paris, August 7, 1759.

My Reverend Father

Letter No. 6

In the ardent desire of gaining your suffrage I spend every moment in considering how this may successfully be accomplished, taking advantage, besides, of the certainty that I will receive your news by the intermediation of my Brother-in-law Mangot; and here, by the bye, are the changes I have made in the *Proportion des Dissonances*, after 12 or 13 lines ending with, *Which has led to the conjecture that it is but a product of Art.*

Continuation

new paragraph

The limits of our Voice are sufficiently known; anyone may experience that the 17th given out by the $\frac{1}{5}$ of the *Corps sonore* already exceeds its ordinary range; the more so the intervals rendered by lesser aliquot parts, such as its $\frac{1}{6}$ its $\frac{1}{9}$ &c in accordance with what is said on page . . . : some idea of the limits of the ear's perceptions has also been acquired, but perhaps with less certitude.

It is precisely in the identity of the Octaves that the ear exhausts its perceptions: no matter what Tone it hears, the Octave that brings it closest to the Tone which [the ear] likens to it will always be [the Octave] it chooses, to determine the interval it forms: experience confirms this beyond any doubt: and so, this identity guides the ear and at the same time reveals a most important secret to us, viz., that we are prone by nature to reduce the greater ratios to their least terms, because it is the only means by which we may conceive of them, or at least conceive of them with some ease; besides, [the identity] may well be regarded as the germ of the idea we have acquired, in Geometry, of the Inversions, of the different combinations and changes of order* and this identity has always prevailed upon the ear, despite the first laws of nature, which only reveals itself harmonically in Music: whence it comes that the intervals reduced to their least terms or degrees, having become the most familiar ones, have at the same time appeared to be the only natural ones. If experience has dictated the adoption of the Seventh as a harmonical Dissonance, whose inversion furnishes those tones and semitones which, as we have said, make up every System of Music, and which are dissonant one and all, it would seem [nevertheless] that nobody has presumed to mistake them for the Seventh, saying that Dissonance is but the product of Art:** the more so, as it was certainly believed that those Systems were founded on the most natural thing in the world.

And so, let us now be able to distinguish effects from their cause. For example, the geometrical proportion has not even been suspected [to exist] in Music: it is

*Including the change of order between the two Thirds that make up the Fifth, and consequently the inversion of the major into the minor Mode, produced by that of the harmonical into the arithmetical proportion. [Rameau]

**Such is still the Sentiment of the Encyclopedists, under the word *Dissonance*, p. 1049. and 1050: a Sentiment they have wrongly ascribed to me, as is proved by Chapter IX. of my *Génération harmonique*, where I make no pronouncement whatever upon that article, and where my little experience has helped me discover in practice what nature will give us. [Rameau]

nevertheless its Basis: Music has been made a part of the Mathematical Sciences, and deprived of the only thing that can characterize a Science: and what headway, what progress has been made? From the division of the Consonances, whose ratios made themselves felt and known, some tones and semitones, all dissonant, were derived, in order to arrive at the conclusion that Dissonance is but the product of Art, even though that operation is a sequel to the one we employ in gathering our first notions of the laws of nature. These are the limits of the Geometer's discoveries in Music, with the exception of some other intervals given by other differences, which have only served to lead him further astray.

Then let us not fail to recognize, in this, the difference between rules derived from mere effects, and those produced by their cause: the latter can only help to guide us with assurance, the former, on the contrary, may well lead us into error at times, even if the proof of this were to exist only in Music.

Whatever the reasons with which the Geometer may array himself to justify his discoveries, they will never appear as anything but the product of an instinct, whose germ is given us by nature in the *Corps sonore*: she could only explain herself to the ear so that in a single word, if I may be allowed the metaphor, she might communicate to the three principal Senses, Hearing, Sight, and Touch, all the means needed by that Geometer for his operations. Why does he everywhere give the primacy to the four-term proportions, when nature limits them to three in the *Corps sonore*? Why does he consider the latter, the continuous ones, to be progressive, rather than the former, when it is with the fourth term that their progression begins? Why does he give the arithmetical progression a right to progress that belongs only to the geometrical in Music? I will gladly let him profit, if need be, by the progression emitted by the vibrating of the Aliquot and Aliquant parts of the *Corps sonore*: but I find it hard to believe that from it he will derive any advantages coming close to those provided by the geometrical progression: hence, as he saw the harmonical progression denied to Music, no fourth proportional offered itself to his mind, because, not recognizing that this Science is susceptible of the geometrical proportion, he apparently could not bring himself to add that fourth [proportional] to it geometrically: nevertheless, it is from this [very proportional] that the harmonical Dissonance will arise, thus proving that we have it from nature, who inspired us with it in its inversions, for the reasons already mentioned, from the time when we acquired our earliest notion of Music.

May effectively be added &c. 2d paragraph in the Manuscript. For the last paragraph of this article I have substituted the following.

Let us mark well that nature, miserly and at the same time prodigal, yields these two Cadences only between the mean term and its Consequent, thereby leaving it to us to judge whether the same Cadences are possible in passages similar to those between these two fundamental Tones. There is one more correction to be made in the last paragraph but two, where, instead of, *nor to alter that harmony*, it should read, *nor to alter the harmony of its Consequent, &c.*

Moreover, I have just now discovered the origin of the minor Mode, which is nothing more than the inversion of the Major, and is derived quite naturally from the inversion of the harmonical into the arithmetical proportions: which affords me the opportunity of making the article on the triple Proportion considerably shorter. And you have seen that I recall that origin in the article on Dissonance.

reflections

The new remarks, which I have the honor to send you, will suffice, I believe, for your decision, without [my] being obliged to send you a new Manuscript where they will be inserted when it is printed [*sic*], of which I shall avail myself in order to abridge, above all, my Conclusions.

I beg your pardon, My Reverend Father, for causing you to waste so much time: glory is my only resource in this work, and I cannot count on it but by your suffrage, lacking which I should always fear to have led myself astray.

I have the honor to be with the greatest respect,

My Reverend Father,

Your very humble and very obedient
servant Rameau.

Oct. 29, 1759.

My Reverend Father,

Letter No. 12

I have this moment learned that you are engaged in writing a work whose 3rd part adheres closely to my *Nouvelles réflexions*, and I am all the more delighted since we may yet render back to Art all the luster it lost long ago: and, for the first part, I must send you the demonstration (founded as much on principle as upon our own experience) of a most essential fact which, it seems, has never been considered before, and which the musical treatises themselves have never even approached: perhaps you have forestalled me in your thoughts, my Reverend Father, perhaps again the thing may have escaped you, at the same time I shall have the honor of sending you a new Manuscript of my work, from which I shall eliminate nearly all the Preface, and the matter concerning antiquity, since this is to be the subject of your history of Music.

If you will honor me with an answer, by way of M. Mangot at Parma, then I venture to request that you send me something regarding the letter you must have received from Abbé Arnould. I am with the greatest respect,

My Reverend Father

Your very humble and very obedient servant
Rameau

Paris, Dec. 2, 1759.

Padre Martini had all of Rameau's letters translated as well, and the translations have occasional corrections in his hand. Italian versions of two of Mangot's letters have also survived (Nos. 13 and 27). There is even a Latin translation of Rameau's long letter containing the addenda to his MS (No. 6); perhaps its contents were of such moment to

Martini that he preferred not to rely on the Italian translation alone for his investigation.³¹

Padre Martini's report on Rameau's MS (cf. p. 453 above) is a document comprising 15½ pages. Occasionally, the left half of a page is reserved for comments and addenda (see Plate II for a facsimile of the first page). It is evident from various turns of phrase that the text is in fact an address, which Martini meant to deliver before a plenary session of the Accademia.³² It is divided into 48 theses. Written for an audience of musical laymen, and therefore all-inclusive, the verdict clearly falls into three sections: a) definitions (theses 1-6), b) presentation of Rameau's theories (theses 7-33), and c) the verdict proper (theses 34-48).

After acknowledging and giving an account of the task entrusted to him, Martini begins by defining the craft of musical composition as an ordering of intervals, of "Gradi Armonici." The measurability, the quantitative properties of intervals are dealt with and demonstrated by "Musica Armonica" in the field of mathematics, just as the measurable celestial bodies form the subject of astronomy, another of the mathematical sciences. But from another point of view, music is a branch of physics, since it is a product of the natural or artificial *corps sonore* to the extent that a tone, with all its properties and effects, originates in it. This aspect alone (Martini continues) forms the basis of Rameau's observations, although he hardly touches upon physics proper. Next come definitions of the several consonances, dissonances, and forbidden intervals, and of the octave system. It is quite apparent from this very introduction that the two men's points of departure are fundamentally

³¹ Rameau's first letter (April 1759), written in a clear, typical copyist's hand, bears his autograph signature and date. His second letter (July 6, 1759), on the other hand, appears to have been copied in Bologna and has no signature. But its authenticity is beyond question, not only because of its contents, but because Della Valle published it as early as 1785 (cf. note 1), together with the letter of December 2, 1759 (No. 12 in the list), although without the postscript concerning the troubles with Geneva. Della Valle (who, like Martini, was a Franciscan friar) published a selection of more than 100 letters directed to Martini, in order to show how many famous contemporaries had corresponded with the composer, who had died the year before (1784).

³² This document, too, is at the Civico Museo, in the file "Zibaldone Martiniano," No. H/78 (Gaspari, I, 100). Among the papers of the Accademia no document has so far been found regarding the acceptance or rejection of Rameau's MS. While such a document may yet come to light, it is quite possible that the Accademia, having listened to Martini's report, simply proceeded with the order of the day, without taking official notice of the occasion in its records (*De Bononiensi Scientiarum et Artium Instituto atque Academia Commentarii*). In any case, Rameau's name is nowhere in evidence among the members of the Accademia.

different, even though Martini makes a serious effort, especially in the section that follows, to judge Rameau objectively and fairly.

Martini devotes about seven pages to a presentation of Rameau's music theory, basing himself not only on the MS under consideration, but extensively (and quite rightly) on the *Démonstration* (1750), the ripest, clearest, most significant treatise Rameau had written up to then. Martini's description of Rameau's method is both intelligible and impressive; he begins by pointing out its difference from earlier attempts at explaining the ratios present in nature ("i rapporti della Natura"), then goes on to speak of Rameau's development of the *principe sonore*, of the geometric, arithmetical, and harmonic proportions he derived from the *corps sonore* which at the same time contains them, and of the identity of the octaves. Though Martini thoroughly grasped Rameau's theories, he was unable to accept them and remained bound to a tradition that had its roots in antiquity. This is seen, for example, in the long and important 20th thesis, where he eloquently expresses his astonishment that in Rameau's system D and B, the tones "next" to C ("le voci collaterali e prossime del Generatore"), should have to be fetched from so far away—the whole tone C-D from beyond the third octave (8:9), the semitone B-C from before the fourth octave (15:16).

The last six pages contain the gist of the whole discussion, namely, Padre Martini's pronouncement on the doctrines of the great Frenchman. It is not only interesting but astonishing. Written in a style strongly reminiscent of Latin sentence structure and rhetoric, it breathes a thoroughly conservative spirit.³³ With a modesty that is typical of his manner, Martini begins by saying that he only wishes to communicate a few "observations" and "rational difficulties," so that the membership may either refute them as null and void or lay them directly before Rameau. In his "observations" (theses 34-39), Martini ingeniously enlists the many-sided concepts of "nature" and "natural," then so much in vogue, to support his refutation, and he pits the natural laws of hearing against those of the *corps sonore*. The third and fifth overtones (perfect fifth above the first octave, major third above the next) are the mainstays of Rameau's theory; remarking on their distance from the fundamental and on the resulting inconvenience to the ear if it is

³³ In this connection, one may mention Martini's Latin monograph, *De usu progressionis geometricae in Musica*, which appeared in 1767 in Vol. V, Part II of *De Bononiensi . . . Commentarii* (cf. note 32), under the heading "Academicorum quorundam Opuscula Varia," pp. 372-94. Here Martini bases himself extensively on the Greek treatises on music theory, so familiar to him, and derives all his results from mathematical methods, without even mentioning physical phenomena such as that of the *corps sonore*.

to judge them promptly (“incomodi all’Udito per formare un pronto giudizio”), Padre Martini sets about finding other tones in the *corps sonore*—simple (not compound) tones, closer to the fundamental and therefore suited to the laws of hearing, since the ear likes simple tones, indeed prefers them to compound tones. To this end, he places overtones 3 and 5 side by side with overtones 2 and 4 (the first two octaves) and puts the (rhetorical) question, whether one may not allege that the *corps sonore* also produces the simpler tones $2/3$ and $4/5$, which are contained in the first half-octave above the fundamental; and whether, according to the laws of nature, it is not more orderly to proceed from the whole to its parts step by step, rather than by leaps and bounds . . .

His “rational difficulties” (theses 40-48), Padre Martini goes on to say, have led him to seek the reasons why the principle of the *corps sonore* was unknown, ignored, or perhaps even abandoned by the ancients, and by the Greeks in particular. He can see why this was the case with the Pythagoreans, since for their musical investigations they set reason above the senses. But the followers of Aristoxenos, who valued the senses more than reason, were a different story; and even more so, perhaps, were the followers of Ptolemy, who combined the senses with reason—yet they left not even a hint that they had ever discovered the *principe sonore*. In this section of his investigation Martini devotes himself mainly to the methods of division and progression used by the Greeks (Pythagoras) and by the medieval theorists to obtain the tonal equipment needed by the musician. What matters to him here is to determine how far Rameau may be indebted to Pythagoras. While Martini finds that the triple proportion (the source of fifths and fourths) was already used by Pythagoras as his only basis, he can find no trace in antiquity of a quintuple proportion (the source of thirds and sixths) . . .

The Accademia’s commission was by no means the first opportunity Martini had of occupying himself with Rameau. The name turns up in his correspondence as early as 1743, in an exchange of opinions with Francesco Antonio Vallotti (1698-1780) in Venice. The latter emphatically praised Rameau at the expense of Leonhardt Euler, whom he called a musical ignoramus. In his reply, Padre Martini confesses he has not yet made a thorough study of either man but had always assumed that Rameau based himself, in practice, on Euler’s theories; now, however, wishing to learn more about both, he asks Vallotti for further information.³⁴ In a later letter (without date or name of addressee), Martini very favorably compares Rameau’s theory of the “inversion

³⁴ Cf. Parisini, *op. cit.*, pp. 109-12.

or change of harmony” (“Rovescio o cambiamento d’Armonia”) with Zarlino’s statements on the invertible nature of intervals (*Dimostrazioni harmoniche*, Rag. 2, Def. X); in doing so, he refers especially to certain chapters in the *Traité de l’harmonie* and the *Génération harmonique*.³⁵ A correspondence with the composer and *maestro di cappella* Andrea Basili (c. 1703-77) in Loreto shows that by then (1750) Martini was quite immersed in Rameau’s writings.³⁶ They were discussing the works of Rameau and Charles-Henri Blainville (1710-c. 1777) and the Italian translations of those works. This is Martini’s estimate of Rameau: his system is thoroughly modern, and a far cry from the excellent old Italian school; it would be a gross injustice towards that school if today’s Italians were to follow Rameau, for Italy has given its laws to all the nations across the Alps but has never itself adopted the laws of any other school. Martini feels that Rameau’s system can be of value in the secular and theatrical styles but not in the polyphonic and church styles, where he even considers it to be harmful.

Of some interest, finally, is a long, undated letter to Tartini, in which Padre Martini compares that composer’s principles of music theory with those of Rameau.³⁷ The letter is the continuation of a discussion on the immutable laws of nature as revealed in reliable, flawless experiments. Martini compares Tartini’s first experiment of the *terzo suono*, in which two tones sounding simultaneously produce a third tone beneath, with Rameau’s experiment of the *corps sonore*, in which *one* tone produces *two higher* tones sounding simultaneously. He speaks of the recognition accorded to Rameau’s experiment by the Académie Royale des Sciences and repeatedly mentions the “French experiment,” the “Frenchmen’s experiment,” the “experiment of the French Academy.” He cannot bring himself to understand why the two experiments should produce different results, since both are based on the natural properties of vibrating strings. He is assailed by doubts as to the reliability of the methods applied by Rameau and Tartini: or is nature herself to be considered unstable?

Padre Martini’s preoccupation with Rameau’s works and theories, dating back to the ’40s, emerged one more time, apparently, before he received the Accademia’s commission—this time in a footnote on

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2. Internal evidence makes it possible to place this letter after 1743 without question, and possibly before 1750, since Rameau’s *Démonstration du principe de l’harmonie*, published in that year, is not mentioned in the letter.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 330-32.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 341-44. The letter was in any case written after 1750, since Martini refers to Rameau’s *Démonstration du principe de l’harmonie*.

Rameau's harmonic inversion in the first volume of the *Storia della Musica*.³⁸ The text of the footnote includes quotations in French. This is the only reference to Rameau in all three volumes of Martini's history, except for a musical example on pp. 283-84 of the same volume, where thirteen measures from the opera ballet *Les Fêtes d'Hébé ou les Talents lyriques* are quoted to illustrate the dissonance of the fourth. In the index to that volume, Rameau is referred to as a "celebre Scrittore di Musica Teorica, e Pratica de' nostri giorni" ("celebrated contemporary Writer of Theoretical, and Practical Music").

An informative letter from Vallotti to Martini, written in October 1779 (fifteen years after Rameau's death) soon after the appearance of Vallotti's well-known *Della scienza teorica e pratica della moderna musica* (Padua, 1779), has the following passage with reference to that book: "Vorrei arrestare in Italia i progressi del sistema di M^r Rameau; come altresì far conoscere, che la Musica è una scienza matematica al pari dell'astronomia . . ." ("I should like to arrest the progress of M^r Rameau's system in Italy; and to make it known, that Music is as mathematical a science as astronomy . . .").³⁹ This criticism of Rameau's system is odd and hard to understand, coming after Vallotti's praise of the French master 36 years earlier (cf. p. 472 above); but it agrees with several passages in the book where he criticizes Rameau and moves away from his former position. His attitude becomes more intelligible when we consider that his teacher of theory and composition, Francesco Antonio Calegari, a Venetian, had "discovered" and applied the principle of chord inversion even before Rameau, although he had never published his discovery.⁴⁰ Calegari left only one MS, *Ampla dimostrazione degli Armoniali Musicali Tuoni*, dated 1732, which was known to Vallotti and his pupil Luigi Antonio Sabbatini (1739-1809).⁴¹ Padre Martini had also corresponded with Calegari, so that the members of this North Italian school of theory and Padre Martini may well have

³⁸ "Dissertazione seconda," pp. 279-80, note 226. Cf. also notes 17 and 25 in the present article.

³⁹ Civico Museo, Bologna, Scansia "UU," Scatola "A," busta 13; German translation in La Mara, *op. cit.* See the introduction to Martini's report on Rameau's MS, concerning music, mathematics, and astronomy (p. 470 above).

⁴⁰ Cf. L. Busi, *Il Padre G. B. Martini*, Bologna, 1891, pp. 297-311. The fact that Calegari discovered and applied chord inversions before 1722 (the year Rameau's *Traité de l'harmonie* was published)—or at least before Rameau's theories became known in Italy—is mainly expounded by Vallotti, in the unpublished MS of Parts II and III of his vast project (*Della scienza teorica . . .* was intended as Part I of the work).

⁴¹ Cf. L. A. Sabbatini, *La vera idea delle musicali numeriche segnature*, Venice, 1799, p. clx. Sabbatini had also been a pupil of Martini.

influenced each other's opinions on Rameau. Besides being active as a composer and teacher, Rameau had succeeded in publishing a remarkably comprehensive body of theoretical works, which his pupils and partisans propagated far beyond the borders of France, in the form of translations and adaptations. Vallotti, on the other hand, wrote only one theoretical work and lived to see just the first volume published, shortly before he died at the age of 81. This, in conjunction with a wish to rehabilitate his forgotten teacher, and a national pride that was common to all concerned, may well account for his reference to Rameau in the lines he wrote to Padre Martini in 1779.

(Translated by Piero Weiss)