

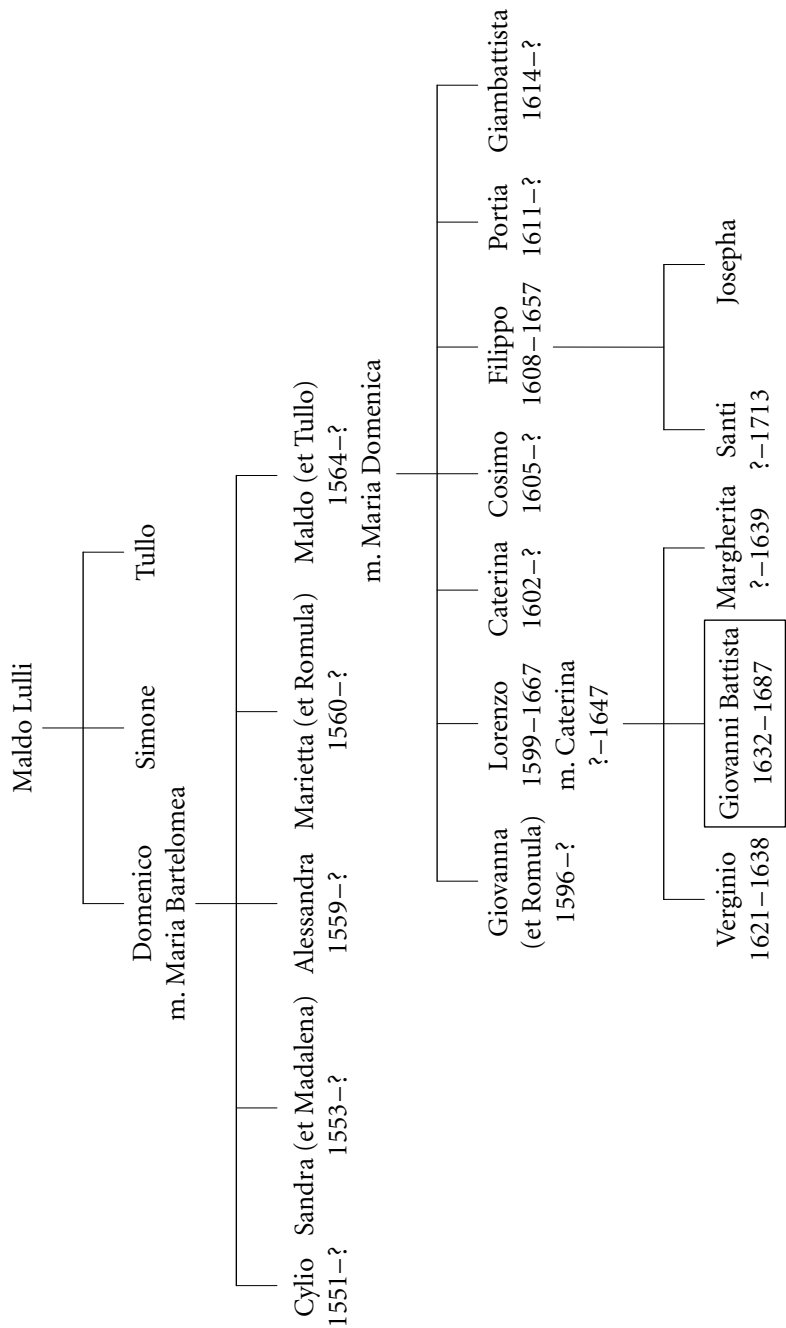
## 1 Lully's Tuscan family

JÉRÔME DE LA GORCE

When Henry Prunières undertook his new edition of Lully's work, he discussed the composer's origins in the "notice historique" of the first volume devoted to the ballets. He wrote: "What is known for certain about Lully's youth takes just a few lines."<sup>1</sup> Then, making reference to research that he had published in several articles between 1909 and 1912,<sup>2</sup> he listed the important milestones: the marriage of the musician's parents and his baptism. Since then musicologists and biographers have been content to recite these few facts – important to be sure, but quite insufficient for this great figure. In fact many documents conveying more extensive information are still in Florence today. They were unearthed in several archives during a series of research visits I made to this famous Tuscan city.<sup>3</sup>

The composer's father, Lorenzo di Maldo Lulli, accurately identified by Prunières, first attracted my attention. It was already known that after marrying a miller's daughter Lorenzo practiced that trade in Florence in the Ognissanti quarter, not far from the Arno, where several gristmills were then

- 1 "Ce qu'on sait de certain sur la jeunesse de Lully tient en peu de lignes." Jean-Baptiste Lully, *Les Ballets*, vol. I (Paris, Edition de la Revue Musicale, 1931), xiii.
- 2 Specifically PrunièresJ, 234–242, PrunièresF, 57–61, and Henry Prunières, "Recherches sur les années de jeunesse de J.-B. Lully," *Rivista Musicale Italiana* 17 (1910), 646–654. The circumstances under which Lully left Florence, mentioned in these studies, are reviewed in my book on the life and work of the composer (forthcoming, Paris, Fayard).
- 3 My research in Florence was assisted by several individuals to whom I wish to express appreciation: Dottoressa Cotta, Curator of the Archivio di Stato; Dottoressa de Gramatica of the Sovraintendenza ai Beni culturali di Florence; Luca Faldi of the Archivio della Curia arcivescovile di Florence; Professor Sara Mamone of the University of Florence; her students Silvia Castelli and Maria Alberti, who assisted with several archival sources; Dottoressa Ludovica Sebgond, specialist in the religious orders; and Gino Corti for his help at the Archivio di Stato. Special thanks are due my colleague and friend Marie-Thérèse Bouquet-Boyer, to whom I owe the transcription of several archival sources, including those found in the appendices published here for the first time.



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located on both banks of the river. Was he from one of the families of the Grand Duchy's capital who followed the same vocation? A fruitless search for reference to his parents and his birth in the registers of the Baptistry led to the certain conclusion that he must have been born outside the city. A notarial deed from 1640 listing the possessions he held in common with his two brothers, Cosimo and Filippo, and his cousin, Giovanni, guided this investigation.<sup>4</sup> Land that they must have inherited from their parents consisted of a forest of chestnut trees situated at Campestri near Vicchio.

Campestri, a charming hamlet, overlooks the valley of the Sieve from a height of 450 meters, in the Mugello region about thirty-five kilometers north of Florence. The area gave birth to artists as illustrious as Giotto and Fra Angelico. This part of Tuscany, not yet overrun with tourists, has scarcely changed for several centuries. Small farms are scattered throughout the landscape around the little church of San Romolo and the Villa Roti, the only patrician building. At the top of the hill above the village are numerous chestnut trees, providing one of the specialties of the Mugello. Some archival resources concerning the modest church have been preserved, including a regrettably incomplete account of marriages and funerals between 1567 and 1812.<sup>5</sup>

Among the references to the Lulli family appears an entry for December 3, 1581, recording the marriage of "Vettorino Lulli del popolo di S<sup>to</sup> Romulo" with a girl of the same parish named Francesca. A little later there is mention of the burial of Lucretia di Cresci Lulli on July 3, 1636, only a few years after the birth of the famous composer. Indeed, some members of the family must never have left Campestri.

The Lulli family was large. We know this through the records of a valuable baptismal register from San Cresci in Valcava,<sup>6</sup> where all the newborn infants of Campestri were brought several kilometers to receive their first sacrament in this venerable place. Thanks to this fairly complete document covering the period from 1549 to 1639, a genealogical tree of Lully's Tuscan family can now be traced. First, we find the record concerning his father,

4 Archivio di Stato, Notarile moderno protocolli 14146, December 2, 1640 (see Appendix 1, p. 11 below).

5 Florence, Archivio della Curia arcivescovile, S. Romolo a Campestri, matrimoni e morti, n° 296.

6 *Ibid.*, n° 2136.

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Lorenzo, son of Maldo Lulli and Maria Domenica. Lorenzo was born on December 15, 1599, at six o'clock in the evening and was baptized the next day. He was the eldest of at least four boys. His brothers Cosimo and Filippo were born after the turn of the century in 1605 and 1608, respectively. A third brother, named Giambattista (like the future composer), died before 1640. The other given names, like Lorenzo's, were not chosen at random: they are those of the illustrious Medicis, the sovereigns of Tuscany, also natives of the Mugello. Lorenzo's sister, three years older than he, was graced with the name Giovanna "et Romula," a probable reference to the family birthplace of Campestri.

The registry of San Cresci conveys other information of equal importance. In addition to the 1564 baptismal record of Lorenzo's father, "Maldo et Tullo," we find entries for his aunts and uncles. References to their relatives allow us to go back two more generations to a second Maldo Lulli, whose birth may have occurred in the *quattrocento*. Unfortunately, these fascinating details are not accompanied by any reference to the occupations of Lully's ancestors in the Mugello. Nevertheless, the existing village, the holdings of the Campestri family, and the association Lorenzo had with Florence until the end of his life indicate that in all likelihood they were peasants who lived off the land.

It is probably thanks to the produce from the forest at Campestri that Lorenzo Lulli first met then married Caterina del Sera, a miller's daughter. Among the witnesses at their wedding we first find a baker, Jacopo Papini,<sup>7</sup> to whom millers supplied wheat and chestnut flour, even flour ground from the highest quality chestnuts, the *marroni*. Through this business Lorenzo would have had the opportunity to meet Caterina. In the month of October 1619, at scarcely twenty years of age, he was engaged to marry her. He was then already living in Florence in the quarter of "San Pancratio."<sup>8</sup>

Following the wedding Lorenzo set up household near the church of San Salvatore di Ognissanti, probably with his father-in-law, Gabriello del Sera. The baptismal record of his oldest son, Verginio, dated Thursday, April 1, 1621,<sup>9</sup> attests to this change of domicile while indicating that the

7 Marriage act of February 17, 1620, cited by PrunièresF, 59.

8 The church of San Pancrazio is situated in the present via della Spada.

9 Florence, Archivio dell'Opera di S. Maria del Fiore (Opera del Duomo), battesimi, maschi, 1620/21.

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boy's godmother, Maria, was the daughter of a gardener. The personal relationships remained within a humble social class. Their modest status did not prevent millers from contributing financially to the religious confraternities of Florence. Indeed, in 1624 Gabriello appears in the accounts of the "Compagnia del terzo Ordine," "gathered" at the church of San Salvatore.<sup>10</sup> Four years later, on May 7, 1628, it is Lorenzo Lully's turn to be mentioned when he is recorded as a "mugnaio" (miller).<sup>11</sup>

When Giovanni Battista was born on November 29, 1632, his father was already practicing the miller's trade. According to a notarial deed of 1640, he was already living at this date in the "via di Borgo Ognissanti," a major artery running parallel to the Arno.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, the document specified that he had been living there with his brother Filippo since the first of May 1632. Giovanni Battista would have been born not in a mill, as people have too often reported, but in a house in the via Borgo Ognissanti, probably the one where his grandfather Gabriello died in 1636. Two extant death certificates permit us to situate it even more precisely in this part of the city. In one case the deceased was a "mugnaio in Ogni Santi,"<sup>13</sup> and in the other a "mugnaio del popolo di S. Lucia."<sup>14</sup> The indication of the two churches should not be interpreted as an error. Both are linked by the via Borgo Ognissanti. Gabriello's home, like that of his son-in-law and grandson, would thus be situated between the two churches in the most populated section of the street, next to the old city gate.

One finds the same uncertainty in other documents relating to dates in Lully's youth. His baptismal record<sup>15</sup> indicates the parish of Santa Lucia, but it is at the church of San Salvatore di Ognissanti that several of the closest family members were buried several years later: his brother, Verginio, on June 13, 1638, and his sister, Margherita, in October 1639.<sup>16</sup> At

10 Archivio di Stato, Compagnie religiose soppresse da Pietro Leopoldo 2071.

11 *Ibid.*

12 See Appendix 1, p. 11 below.

13 Archivio di Stato, Arte di Medici e Speciali 258, August 26, 1636.

14 Florence, Archivio della Curia arcivescovile, S. Salvatore in Ognissanti, morti, August 26, 1636.

15 Florence, Archivio dell'Opera di S. Maria del Fiore (Opera del Duomo), battesimi, maschi, 1632/33. Cited in PrunièresJ, 235.

16 Florence, Archivio della Curia arcivescovile, S. Salvatore in Ognissanti, morti, June 13, 1638 and October 1639.

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the early age of seven, Giovanni Battista became the only one of his parents' children to remain in the father's household.

This state of affairs allowed for greater care over his education. By that time, Lorenzo Lulli had already achieved a fairly comfortable life; in addition to the revenue he realized from the forest at Campestri, he managed other business ventures. He operated at least one gristmill, probably that of his recently deceased father-in-law. Lorenzo's brother, Filippo, was asked to pay him twelve *lire* a month for his board and lodging. In one of his ledgers Lorenzo mentioned what his brother owed him, crediting him in 1640 with 126 *scudi* – that is, six years' room and board.<sup>17</sup> This was a large sum of money to advance at that time, even to a close member of the family. In this context, the education offered to Giovanni Battista would not have been neglected. Certainly he was taught to write at an early age; his earliest autograph signatures<sup>18</sup> show perfect mastery of a calligraphic style more common in Italy than in France.

We know neither where he was educated nor who taught him. According to Lecerf de la Viéville de Fresneuse "it is certain" that he had a "Cordelier"<sup>19</sup> as his first music teacher. The Cordeliers (Franciscans) were common in Florence, established for several centuries at Santa Croce to the east of the city, but also to the west as well, at the Ognissanti in fact, where they were called the "Zoccolanti." The populace around the church of San Salvatore supported several confraternities including that of the "Terzo Ordine," in which Lorenzo Lulli played an active role. In 1643, when the eleven-year-old Giovanni Battista was receiving his early musical education, Lorenzo was not content just to pay a tithe to this congregation, which perpetuated the memory of its namesake, Saint Louis of France. He took it upon himself to organize a special collection.<sup>20</sup> His religious devotion and financial acumen must have allowed him to hold an increasingly important position in this religious community.

17 See Appendix 1.

18 The first known signature of the composer appears at the end of his marriage contract (Paris, Archives nationales, Minutier central, XLVI-85). It is reproduced in the catalogue of the exhibition, *Lully, Musicien Soleil* (Versailles, Domaine de Madame Elisabeth, 1987), 32.

19 LecerfC, 183.

20 Archivio di Stato, Compagnie religiose soppresse da Pietro Leopoldo 2071, October 25, 1643.

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Such an ascent may have been facilitated by the state of his fortune, to which a second marriage may have contributed. In 1647, one year after the departure of Giovanni Battista for France, Caterina died. The register of deaths of the church of the Ognissanti indeed mentions that at this date, March 5, "Caterina di Lorenzo Luli" (sic) was interred in the sanctuary.<sup>21</sup> Having been widowed, the miller lost no time in marrying Alessandra, the daughter of Domenico Campani, on August 2, 1648.<sup>22</sup> This second wife evidently was much younger than he, for she lived until 1693.<sup>23</sup> This difference in age may have led some to believe that she was Giovanni Battista's sister.<sup>24</sup> Today we know that Alessandra remained Lorenzo's wife until the end of his life and that she brought to the marriage a handsome dowry valued at 200 *scudi*,<sup>25</sup> but there is no evidence in the presently known documents that the marriage produced any children.

The first will and testament of Lorenzo, drawn up on May 19, 1655, is clear on this point.<sup>26</sup> It specifies that only one son from his marriage with Caterina survived and that he thereafter had no further descendants. The document in which he recorded his last wishes is impassioned: Giovanni Battista is mentioned three times. Lorenzo made him his sole inheritor, leaving him his worldly goods and all his "outstanding claims, accounts and notes of all kinds present and future." Should the beneficiary die childless, the inheritance would pass to Alessandra and, upon her death, to Lorenzo's brothers, Cosimo and Filippo. The miller also named an executor of his will: an oat merchant named Giovanni Battista di Vincenzo Zampettini, who conducted business on the "Piazza del grano" in Florence.

Nor were the religious institutions of the town forgotten. In addition to the charities of the cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore, to which Lorenzo appropriately made a financial contribution to validate the notarial forms, he made bequests to several Franciscan confraternities with the request that

21 Florence, Archivio della Curia arcivescovile, S. Salvatore in Ognissanti, morti, March 5, 1647.

22 *Ibid.*, matrimoni, August 2, 1648.

23 *Ibid.*, morti, March 24, 1693.

24 PrunièresL, 61.

25 From the second will of Lorenzo Lulli. Florence, Archivio di Stato, Notarile moderno protocolli 14151, July 1, 1666.

26 Archivio di Stato, Notarile moderno protocolli 14150, May 19, 1655 (see Appendix 2, p. 12 below).

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they celebrate masses for the salvation of his soul. Along with the confraternity “del Terzo Ordine,” the “Compagnia di Santa Maria Maddalena e Francesco” related to the church of Santa Croce is mentioned.

In this regard Lorenzo was very active. First, as of 1650, he was a “camerlingo” (chamberlain),<sup>27</sup> with functions which he fulfilled two years later in the former congregation<sup>28</sup> and which consisted of managing the current financial accounts. This was already a clear sign of confidence. From 1659 until 1663 he would occupy a much more prestigious post: that of “proveditore” (steward or purchaser). His role was no longer limited to that of a financial manager but henceforth permitted him to participate in making important decisions. He kept the books on outstanding debts and claims, overseeing expenses including those for fabrics and candles from Venice. Moreover, the institution he served enjoyed a reputation of great prestige in Florence, having been founded by Lorenzo the Magnificent at the close of the fifteenth century.<sup>29</sup> In his will Lorenzo Lulli asked to be interred upon his death in the cloister of Santa Croce, the seat of the “venerable” confraternity. His request was subsequently carried out on April 19, 1667.<sup>30</sup> Lorenzo’s brother Filippo had the same right of interment, probably thanks to Lorenzo’s intervention, for Filippo died ten years before him in 1657.<sup>31</sup>

Lorenzo’s declining health may have prompted him to prepare another will on July 1, 1666, just nine months before his death.<sup>32</sup> From this point on he left 10 *scudi* to each of the children of the late Filippo, the same sum to his brother Cosimo and 500 *scudi* to his wife Alessandra, including 400 to thank her for having been a good spouse. But for Giovanni Battista, by then absent for twenty years, nothing was provided. The name of his only surviving son does not even appear in the document.

How can this omission be explained? It certainly appears that there was a marked change in attitude on Lorenzo’s part regarding the son whom

27 *Ibid.*, Compagnie religiose soppresse da Pietro Leopoldo 1402, February 26, 1650.

28 *Ibid.*, 2066, October 13, 1652.

29 Ludovica Sebgondì, “Lorenzo de’ Medici confratello illustre,” *Archivio Storico italiano, Studi su Lorenzo dei Medici e il secolo XV* 150/552 (April–June 1992), 319–341.

30 Archivio di Stato, Arte di Medici e Speciali 259, April 19, 1667.

31 *Ibid.*, December 12, 1657.

32 Archivio di Stato, Notarile moderno protocolli 14151, July 1, 1666.



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he had identified in 1655 as his principal heir. One event may have contributed to this. Between the times of the two wills, in 1662 when his marriage contract was drawn up, the composer claimed that he was “the son of Laurent de Lully, a Florentine gentleman.”<sup>33</sup> Indeed, at that time in Florence, there was a respected family of that name. The Ceramelli papers preserved in the Archivio di Stato<sup>34</sup> include reference to a member named Lorenzo, according to indications in 1666 and 1668. Did Giovanni Battista know of this? Did he hope in this way to deceive informers likely to investigate his origins? The deception, it appears, was quickly exposed in France, and probably also in the Tuscan capital, where it may have come to the attention of the miller, who increasingly frequented the well-born society of the town.

Lorenzo, moreover, may have been disappointed by his son's attitude. There is no evidence that they exchanged letters after their separation in 1646, nor does it appear that the king of France's favorite musician ever sought to send any of his earnings to his father or even to learn news of him. A letter from the famous castrato Atto Melani,<sup>35</sup> sent to the grand duke of Tuscany, for whom he had become a secret agent, allows us to surmise. In this document dated March 31, 1687, just after the composer's death, Melani asked if Lulli still had “sisters or relatives” in Italy and “if it is true” that Lully had refused help to the father to whom there remained the only child. Such ingratitude would thus have justified the writing of Lorenzo Lulli's second will and testament in 1666.

Lorenzo's widow Alessandra also had her last testament recorded twice. In a first will, dated July 9, 1687,<sup>36</sup> she bequeathed 10 ducats each to several of her nephews, whose names are mentioned: Michele, Giovanni, and Santi Lulli. She also expressed a wish to be interred at the church of San Salvatore and she lived until the end of her life in the via Borgo Ognissanti,<sup>37</sup> probably in the house where Giovanni Battista was born.

33 Paris, Archives nationales, Minutier central, XLVI-85, July 14, 1662.

34 Archivio di Stato, Ceramelli Papieri 2833 (Lulli). I gratefully thank Professor Warren Kirkendale for having drawn my attention to the genealogical papers conserved in the Archivio di Stato.

35 Archivio di Stato, Mediceo 4802.

36 *Ibid.*, Notarile moderno protocolli 17165, July 9, 1687.

37 After indications of the domicile in the second will: Archivio di Stato, Notarile moderno protocolli 20597, March 17, 1693.

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The Archivio di Stato also holds the final will and testament of Santi Lulli.<sup>38</sup> This son of Filippo, whom Alessandra wished to reward, had been ordained as a priest. In a notarial document of April 12, 1713, he mentioned another member of his family: his sister Josepha, by then the widow of Antonio Feraci. His most ardent concern, however, remained his desire to be interred at the Compagnia della Maddalena, “like his brothers of the confraternity,” with his father and his uncle.

What conclusions can we draw from this research conducted in the archives of Florence? The discovery of these documents permits us to verify the modest origins of the composer which he, upon arriving in France, tried to conceal. We knew he was the son of a miller. Now, the baptismal register of San Cresci permits us to glimpse the rural roots of his father’s family, thus revealing even humbler beginnings. Though imprecise, the remarks of Lecerf de la Viéville de Fresneuse become significant when he asserts: “Lulli was of Florence, apparently a peasant of the region.”<sup>39</sup>

This situation, from which the musician must have suffered during his career, should not however obscure another fact hitherto unnoticed: the remarkable social ascent of Lorenzo Lulli. The latter succeeded in becoming wealthy himself and in rising in Florentine society, preoccupations which were certainly common in the capital of the grand Duchy, but which he augmented with exceptional personal qualities. Like Giovanni Battista, he revealed himself to be remarkably gifted in business. One senses also that he was motivated by an uncommon character, rigorous and headstrong, which was stimulated by exceptional energy. He nonetheless remained no less committed to deep religious feelings. The role he played in several Franciscan confraternities gives proof of this and permits one to advance the hypothesis maintained by Lecerf de la Viéville that the young Lully must have been initiated into music by a “Cordelier.” Research into the brotherhood of these orders, known for the education that they offered to young people, especially those of the “Compagnia del Sacramento” situated close to the church of San Salvatore,<sup>40</sup> has unfortunately afforded no further evidence on this subject.

38 *Ibid.*, 23060, April 12, 1713.

39 Le CerfC, 182.

40 Archivio di Stato, Compagnie religiose soppresse da Pietro Leopoldo 1761 and 1762.