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‘A Debt contracted in Italy’: Ferdinando Tenducci in a London court and prison

The soprano castrato Giusto Ferdinando Tenducci (c.1735 – 1790) was one of the most colourful figures of late eighteenth-century musical life. Much of his long and illustrious career was spent in Britain, where he sang at many of London’s major concert venues, including the pleasure gardens at Ranelagh where Lydia Melford of Tobias Smollett’s *Humphry Clinker* reported thinking herself ‘in paradise’ on hearing him. His success took him further afield, to Oxford, Salisbury, Manchester, Edinburgh and also Dublin where, in 1765, he met the young Dorothea Maunsell, youngest daughter of a wealthy barrister, with whom he subsequently eloped; the ensuing scandal resulted in the singer being charged with abduction and imprisoned in the common jail in Cork.¹ However, this was not the first time that Tenducci had found himself in trouble with the law; indeed, he was frequently in debt and was incarcerated for that offence as early as 1760. Commentators have tended to attribute his financial difficulties around that time to extravagant living, doubtless taking their cue from the not entirely undeserved reputation of castrati for vanity and profligacy.² A legal case recently discovered among the records held by The National Archives at Kew in London elaborates on the circumstances surrounding Tenducci’s imprisonment and adds substantially to our knowledge of his early years in England.³ It also sheds light on one of the relationships within the ‘hybridized, family structures’ that, according to Martha Feldman, took shape around a castrato at the outset of his career.⁴ Surrogate son to his teacher/manager, the young singer also had recourse to a widespread and shifting network of fellow musicians, poets, impresarios and patrons for economic and social support. However, the communal bonds that developed from such contacts, though close, were not

indissoluble; indeed, in Tenducci's case, when a dispute over money arose with one of his 'fictive kin', their relationship proved to be particularly fragile. [\[Illustration 1 near here\]](#)

Tenducci first arrived in London in October 1758, having been contracted to sing *secondo uomo* for the upcoming season of *opera seria* at the King's Theatre in the Haymarket.⁵ Although still only in his early twenties, the castrato had already enjoyed some success as a singer of comic as well as serious operatic roles on the stages of Palermo, Lucca, Venice, Vienna, Dresden, Genoa, Milan, Naples and Padua, and the printed wordbooks for his earliest London appearances list him as 'Il Sig^f Ferdinando Tenducci, detto il Senesino, Virtuoso di S. A. E. il Duca di Baviera'.⁶ The pseudonym 'Il Senesino' alludes to Tenducci's birthplace, Siena; the 'Duca di Baviera' was Maximilian III Joseph, Prince-Elector of Bavaria 1745-77, who probably bestowed the title on the singer during his travels through Germany and Austria in 1755.⁷ The 1758-59 season at the King's Theatre opened with a couple of pasticci, followed by Gioacchino Cocchi's *Il Ciro riconosciuto*. Tenducci's performance in that work brought him the approbation of the composer, teacher and music historian Charles Burney, who considered his singing superior to that of the company's leading man, Pasquale Potenza.⁸ After playing Mercurio in the single performance of *Il tempio della gloria* on 20 February, Tenducci's first London season closed with David Perez's *Farnace*, in which he sang the role of Pompeo. The company then took this 'new opera' to Oxford on 9 July as part of an extended weekend of high-profile events celebrating the installation of the Earl of Westmorland as the new Chancellor of the university. Having discharged his duties for the season, Tenducci went on tour to other provincial cities, including Norwich, during the summer and autumn of 1759.⁹ Also in that year he participated in the private Sunday concerts organised by the accomplished musician, writer and artist Ann Ford.¹⁰

The King's Theatre management again contracted Tenducci for the 1759-60 season, and its planned run of six productions opened with the pasticcio *Vologeso* on 13 November. Perez's *Farnace* was revived for a further seven performances, including a benefit for Tenducci on 3 March, during which he was advertised as singing 'three new Airs'.¹¹ Alongside his busy schedule in the theatre, which included roles in Cocchi's 'new opera' *La clemenza di Tito*, Perez's *Arminio*, and the pasticcio *Antigona*, Tenducci was increasingly active on London's concert scene. On 14 February 1760, at a subscription concert in the Great Room in Dean Street, Soho, he sang in a pastoral entitled *Charlottenburg festeggiate*, composed by Frederick the Great and his court musicians.¹² Most of the concerts in which Tenducci participated, however, were given in support of other performers; such events, or 'benefits', were an important means of supplementing musicians' salaries throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Tenducci sang Henrico in Jommelli's serenata *L'isola disabitata* for the benefit of King's Theatre colleagues on three occasions: 13 March, at Dean Street, for Gaetano Quilici (singer); 27 March, at the Little Theatre in the Haymarket, for Signora Provenzali (dancer); and 29 April, at Hickford's Room, for Laura Rosa (singer).¹³ Announcements for the latter event specify that Rosa had 'sustained the Loss of her Salary by the late Failure at the Opera-House', and it is possible that Tenducci's indebtedness around this time may have been at least partly attributable to the financial difficulties experienced by the King's Theatre during the 1759-60 season.¹⁴ The castrato also performed for the eight-year-old dancer and singer Polly Capitani, whose benefit at the Little Theatre in the Haymarket on 5 June was to be his last public appearance for almost eight months.¹⁵ Tenducci did not sing in the final offering of the season, Cocchi's *Erginda regina di Livadia*, which opened on 31 May, probably because the management was aware of his impending legal difficulties. The title role in this production was played by Colomba Mattei, who

was to take over directorship of the King's in 1760-61 and who in August announced her roster of singers for the forthcoming season. Unsurprisingly this did not include Tenducci, who on account of his earlier committal to prison was replaced as second man by Giovanni Sorbelloni.

Let us now look more closely at the details of the lawsuit itself. On the first day of Hilary term (23 January) 1760 one Francesco Giuliani initiated bill proceedings against Tenducci in the court of King's Bench. The preamble to the litigation states that the action belongs to the type known as 'trespass on the case', that is, an action to recover damages that are not the immediate result of a wrongful act but rather a later consequence. Although the bill is relatively straightforward and typical of its kind, a few words of explanation concerning the legal background will help us better understand its various twists and turns. The action used to enforce trespass on the case was known by the Latin name 'assumpsit' ('he undertook'). Because the plaintiff alleged that the defendant, being indebted ('indebitatus') in a certain sum of money, promised to re-pay that sum, the appropriate form of pleading was called 'indebitatus assumpsit'. It was necessary to show how the debt had arisen, but the details of the transaction needed only to be set out in summary form. Thus there developed a small number of standard formulae – the so-called indebitatus or 'common' counts – to cover the situations that arose most often. For instance, a shopkeeper wishing to bring an action for the price of goods against the purchaser would use the common count 'for goods sold and delivered at his request'; or a carpenter suing for wages would count that his client was indebted to him in £*n* for 'work and services performed', and so forth. Even if there was no sum certain, as when, for example, the defendant ordered goods or services without first agreeing the price to be paid for them, an action could still lie; the plaintiff would simply base his claim on an assessment of the reasonable value of work done ('quantum meruit' – 'as much as he deserved') or of goods supplied ('quantum

valebant’ – ‘as much as they were worth’). These various types of count were very commonly used in the alternative, that is, the plaintiff was free to allege several versions of the same claim in multiple counts; no limit was imposed on the number of these alternatives, which were quite fictional and not necessarily consistent with each other. The reason for the apparent redundancy and prolixity of alternative pleading was that it provided a form of insurance against the unpredictable nature of the trial process. One of the lawyer’s most difficult tasks was to identify, from the mass of information uncovered in bringing a case to court, the particular facts that would depict most persuasively the contentions of his client. Furthermore, situations frequently arose in which one simply had no way of knowing, in advance of trial, which of several equally convincing versions of his claim would be supported by the evidence. Multiple counts were therefore introduced as a means of providing the lawyer with the maximum ‘wriggle room’ as the testimony unfolded. Examples of such flexibility are in evidence in the following commentary on Giuliani versus Tenducci.

In his declaration Giuliani states that on 23 November 1756 he prepared an account of the various sums of money owed to him by Tenducci, which they both agreed amounted to 369 Florentine ruspi.¹⁶ [Illustration 2 near here] According to the plea roll this reckoning was drawn up ‘at Westminster in the County of Middlesex’; this cannot be correct, however, for Tenducci was still in Italy during the final months of 1756, and did not set foot in England until the autumn of 1758. The untrustworthy nature of the legal record at this point is attributable to a peculiarity of the English common law system, namely its use of legal fictions. In a nutshell, these were procedural dodges that preserved matters of legal form while allowing the law itself to evolve; but they have a downside for the unwary researcher today in that they give rise to statements that are likely to be misinterpreted if taken literally. Under normal circumstances the King’s Bench

could not hear a case in which the cause of action lay in another country; but if the plaintiff contrived to bring his suit and all supporting evidence within the jurisdiction of the English legal system, then the court could take cognizance of it and adjudicate accordingly. It was therefore necessary for Giuliani's attorney fictionally to change the venue – that is, the location where the events giving rise to the lawsuit allegedly took place – and move it from Italy to Westminster, where the court sat and where the defendant in the case happened to reside. This was an unusual step to take, but it was not unprecedented.¹⁷

According to the agreement struck with Giuliani, Tenducci undertook to pay off the debt he had incurred in four instalments over a three-year period, as follows: 69 ruspi after the 1757 carnival season, 100 ruspi during the following November, 100 ruspi in the course of November 1758, and the balance a year later. These were not randomly selected dates but significant points in the operatic calendar, as is evident from the following list of Tenducci's professional engagements for the period 1757-59 (relevant dates in bold):¹⁸

Date	City	Title	Composer	Role
Carnival 1757	Milan	<i>Ezio</i>	Baldassare Galuppi	Valentiniano
8 May 1757	Naples	<i>Farnace</i>	David Perez/Niccolò Piccinni	Pompeo
4 Nov 1757	Naples	<i>Nitteti</i>	Niccolò Piccinni	Amenofi
18 Dec 1757	Naples	<i>Temistocle</i>	Niccolò Jommelli	Lisimaco
20 Jan 1758	Naples	<i>Arianna e Teseo</i>	Antonio Mazzoni	Alceste
? June 1758	Padua	<i>Demofonte</i>	Baldassare Galuppi	Cherinto
11 Nov 1758	London	<i>Attalo</i>	(<i>Pasticcio</i>)	Idaspe
16 Dec 1758	London	<i>Demetrio</i>	(<i>Pasticcio</i>)	Fenicio?

16 Jan 1759	London	<i>Il Ciro riconosciuto</i>	Gioacchino Cocchi	Cambises
20 Feb 1759	London	<i>Il tempio della gloria</i>	Gioacchino Cocchi	Mercurio
21 April 1759	London	<i>Farnace</i>	David Perez	Pompeo
13 Nov 1759	London	<i>Vologeso</i>	<i>(Pasticcio)</i>	Aniceto

However, by 1 January 1760 Tenducci appears to have made none of the scheduled payments, and Giuliani had lost patience. According to the plaintiff's first count, the money was owed 'for Meat Drink Washing Lodging Cloathing and other Necessaries' provided by him at the singer's request 'for a long time then Elapsed'. He then repeats this count using slightly different language, adding a quantum meruit claim to the effect that Tenducci had promised to pay him 'so much Money ... as he therefore reasonably deserved to have', estimated at 'other [i.e. 'another'] Three hundred and Sixty Nine Florentine Ruspi'. This latter figure is quite fictitious in that it is not additional to the original demand, but an alternative to it. The next part of the bill is structured according to the pattern established in this count; common counts for 'Work and Labour Care and Diligence done performed and bestowed', and for 'divers Goods Wares and Merchandizes Sold and Delivered' are followed by quantum meruit, and a demand for 'other' 369 ruspi. Giuliani rounds off his declaration with three more of the common counts – for 'Money laid out Expended and paid', for 'Money Lent and Advanced', and for 'Money had and Received' – to ensure he has all bases covered. Separate claims for 369 ruspi are attached to each of these additional counts. Giuliani then gives a sterling equivalent of the sum owed, which he calculates to be worth 'One hundred and Eighty pounds of Lawful Money of Great Britain'.

Tenducci was not present in court to answer Giuliani's bill but appeared through his attorney, who denied the charge without formally entering a plea. The case was therefore

adjourned until 12 February, when the court required Tenducci to make answer. He absented himself again on the day, and as a consequence of not instructing his attorney, he lost the case by default. An interim or ‘interlocutory’ judgment was awarded against him, and the court’s decision was recorded in the Entry Book of Judgments the next day.¹⁹ The sheriff was ordered to empanel a jury of twelve honest men from his bailiwick to assess the plaintiff’s damages, and on 17 March following they reported back that Giuliani had sustained damage of £170 12s. 4d. with charges of twenty shillings. He was also awarded an additional £13 17s. 8d. in costs, bringing Tenducci’s total liability to the round figure of £185 10s. Final judgment for the plaintiff was entered on 28 April.²⁰

£185 10s., which in today’s money would have the purchasing power of about £14,000, was clearly a sum Tenducci could ill afford, particularly in view of the fact that Giuliani was not his only creditor at the time.²¹ On 3 June 1760 the singer was arrested ‘for want of Bail’ at the suit of one John Olivier, to whom he owed £50, and placed in the custody of the Sheriff of Middlesex, whence he was transferred to the King’s Bench Prison in Southwark three days later. Unfortunately the Olivier case no longer survives on the plea roll, our only knowledge of it coming from an entry in the prison’s Commitment Book, which also makes reference to Giuliani’s lawsuit (see Illustration 3).²² [Illustration 3 near here] Tenducci was therefore committed to the King’s Bench Prison twice on 6 June, firstly in respect of the Olivier case, and then ‘in discharge of his Bail at the Suit of Francesco Giuliani’.

Evidence relating to life in King’s Bench Prison c.1760 is at times contradictory, but it is possible to piece together a picture of what it might have been like for Tenducci.²³ Debt was endemic in eighteenth-century England, and his fellow inmates would have included people from a wide range of social classes and backgrounds. King’s Bench was the largest debtors’ prison in

the country, with around six hundred people being committed there each year.²⁴ Although the prison also held those convicted on the court's Crown (i.e. criminal) side, debtors formed the great majority of its predominantly male population, and were allowed to bring their wives and children with them - a situation that made it difficult to ascertain exact numbers regarding prison population.²⁵ Even so, King's Bench was acknowledged to be preferable to either the Marshalsea or the Fleet, which were the other main debtors' gaols in London, and was therefore chosen by professional gentlemen and others with the means to pay for its superior facilities.²⁶ Tenducci would have been housed somewhere in the second King's Bench Prison, which in 1758 had relocated from its original cramped position in Borough High Street, Southwark, to a four-acre site on the southern outskirts of the city, chosen for its clean air and healthy qualities.

Accommodation inside the new gaol was, as in many London prisons, divided into two: the Master's Side, offering eighty-four rooms for better-off inmates, and the Common Side, with twenty-four rooms for those of more slender means. Those who could afford to rent a Master's Side room were charged a very reasonable 1s. 6d. a week and given their own key.²⁷ As very little in the way of basic amenities was provided by the institution itself, and with prisoners needing to pay their own way, a complex internal economy developed whereby debtors had the opportunity to make money by providing services to other inmates. Tenducci himself was said to have 'embellished that residence by his talents, and amused its inhabitants', and there is no reason to believe that such entertainment would have been provided without the expectation of financial reward.²⁸ Indeed, it is likely that the castrato would have been actively encouraged in this endeavour by John Ashton, marshal of King's Bench Prison 1749-67, who was a music enthusiast and active patron of the arts. He is listed among the subscribers to Lewis Granom's *A Second Collection of Favourite English Songs* (1760?), alongside such worthies as the Dukes of

Marlborough and Devonshire and the composers William Boyce and James Nares (see Illustration 4).²⁹ [Illustration 4 near here] Following Ashton's death in 1768, the inventory of his household goods put up for auction included 'a fine ton'd spinnet'.³⁰ Furthermore, he seems to have been a principled and kindly man, a portrait that is somewhat at odds with that of the stereotypical eighteenth-century turnkey. According to a moving account published shortly after his death, 'Mr. Ashton . . . was always distinguished for his humanity and compassion to those under his care'.³¹

Among the various privileges that King's Bench debtors were able to buy were those that permitted some freedom of movement, including the system by which certain prisoners could reside in private accommodation outside the walls of the prison itself, within a restricted area called 'the Rules'.³² Aside from those living in the Rules, all debtors could apply to the marshal or other designated official for a 'day Rule', a sort of day pass allowing them to leave the prison to transact business on condition that they were accompanied by a keeper and returned by nightfall.³³ It was presumably this arrangement that enabled Tenducci 'to attend evening concerts elsewhere, attended by a *garde du corps*. But on these occasions, a Jewish lady, his patroness, carried him in her carriage to the performance, and conducted him safe back with his attendant to his limited residence'.³⁴ The relatively lax security for those on 'day Rule' would have made escape much easier, and the system was inevitably abused; some debtors committed to country gaols even paid for a writ of habeas corpus to enable their transfer to King's Bench Prison in order to escape via its Rules.³⁵ Indeed, Tenducci himself made the most of the opportunity; on 4 September, some three months after his incarceration, the newspapers announced that he had escaped from prison and issued a detailed description of the fugitive to expedite his speedy recapture. This description is particularly interesting in that it provides a personal profile of

Tenducci that has hitherto gone unnoticed, and verifies popular accounts of the somewhat peculiar physical characteristics of castrati:

‘ESCAPED from the King’s Bench Prison, Southwark, Ferdinando Tenducci, an Italian Eunuch, who performed last Year at the Opera House in the Haymarket; speaks very little English, and that very bad; about six Feet high or upwards, very thin, and ill made; appears to be about Two and twenty Years of Age, of a pale Complexion, his Ears bored, wears his own black Hair, commonly dress’d in a Kew; large Feet, and very broad over the Toes, has a large Mark on one of his Arms below the Elbow, speaks very effeminately; went away in a blue Suit of Cloaths with a Gold Binding, and a plain Hat with a gilt Button and Loop.

Whoever gives an Account of him, so that he may be retaken, shall receive Twenty Guineas Reward of John Ashton, esq; Marshal of the said Prison.’³⁶

The singer’s bid for freedom was short-lived, however; he was apprehended on the evening of Thursday 4 September, having been discovered ‘at a public house at Dock-Head’.³⁷ Dockhead was at the lower end of St Saviour’s Dock, an inlet on the south bank of the Thames not far from the prison, whither he may have gone with the intention of negotiating his passage out of the country.

We do not hear of Tenducci again until 16 January 1761, when he published a moving ‘Petition’ addressed to the ‘distinguished Benevolence of the Nobility and Gentry of this Kingdom, imploring their Compassion towards an unfortunate Stranger in Distress’, and at the same time craving the honour of their company at a concert to be held for his benefit on

Wednesday 28 January at the Great Room, Dean Street. Tenducci states that ‘he was arrested for a Debt contracted in Italy, and has been detained in the Prison of the King’s Bench eight Months, great Part of that Time confined to a Sick-bed, where he must have perished for Want of Necessaries and Attendance ... destitute of Friends, and reduced to the utmost Indigence and Misery’.³⁸ This picture is very different from the rosy view of King’s Bench Prison portrayed by his fellow inmate Tobias Smollett in *Sir Launcelot Greaves*: ‘Except the entrance, where the turnkeys keep watch and ward, there is nothing in the place that looks like a jail, or bears the least colour of restraint . . . Here the voice of misery never complains, and, indeed, little else is to be heard but the sounds of mirth and jollity’.³⁹ It is possible that Tenducci exaggerated his circumstances in the hope of maximising the generosity of sympathetic patrons. He himself took part in the benefit event, which was well supported by professional colleagues including Charles Frederick Abel, who directed the programme and played a solo on the viola da gamba, the singer Angiola Calori, Joseph Tacet (flute), the oboist Redmond Simpson ‘and all the Rest of the principal Performers in Town’.⁴⁰ Tickets were available from various coffee houses and other outlets in London and Westminster, and from ‘Mr. Tenducci, at the King’s Bench Prison’. If the aim of the concert was to raise funds, clear his debts and obtain his release, it did not achieve its purpose immediately, for he was not discharged until 9 February 1761.⁴¹ Smollett, who was serving a three-month sentence for criminal libel, allegedly secured the singer’s freedom by paying off his creditors.⁴² However, if there is any substance to this story, it is likely that Smollett merely settled that part of the debt not covered by the proceeds from the benefit. Tenducci regained his liberty in time to perform in Thomas Augustine Arne’s *Judith* at Drury Lane on 27 February. He had evidently undertaken to sing in the oratorio while still incarcerated, for his participation was said to be subject to the agreement of his creditors:

‘We are assured, that in the said Oratorio, Signor Tenducci has obtained Permission from his Plaintiff, to sing the Part which Signora Eberardi was so obliging as to understudy for him, in case he could not obtain such Indulgence.’⁴³

The list of performers at the front of the British Library copy of the wordbook reflects this late change of personnel, Eberardi's name being struck through and Tenducci's written above.

Given the key roles played by John Olivier and Francesco Giuliani in proceedings against Tenducci in 1760, it is a matter of regret that virtually nothing is known about them and one can do little more than speculate regarding their identities. Of the half dozen or so John Oliviers living in London and its environs around the middle of the eighteenth century, the most likely candidate is the ‘John Olivier Esq.’ who subscribed to Granom’s *Second Collection of Favourite English Songs* – the same publication that John Ashton supported (see above, p.000). The composer was evidently Roman Catholic, for he witnessed the marriage of Joan Granom in the Portuguese Embassy Chapel in October 1733.⁴⁴ Furthermore, the registers kept by a Catholic priest who ministered to the faithful in the neighbourhood of Gray’s Inn and the Sardinian Chapel in Lincoln’s Inn Fields tell us that ‘Lewis Christian Austin Granom Esquire’ became godfather to Louis, son of Jean-Jacques and Charlotte Lecounte, on 25 April 1751.⁴⁵ At least two John Oliviers lived with their families within the same Catholic community, one in the parish of St Martin in the Fields in 1750-52, and another in Lincoln’s Inn Fields in the mid 1760s, and it is possible that one of them was Tenducci’s legal adversary in 1760.⁴⁶

Evidence that helps us to identify Francesco Giuliani is scarcer still, but the very specific wording of the first count in his bill offers a clue as to the possible relationship between him and Tenducci. In early modern Italy it was not uncommon for singing teachers to provide their

charges with 'Meat Drink Washing Lodging Cloathing and other Necessaries' in exchange for a percentage of any current or future earnings within a specified time.⁴⁷ As repayment was dependent on the student finding gainful employment, the role often evolved into the teacher acting as agent/manager, thereby assuming a certain level of control over the young musician's developing career.⁴⁸ Martha Feldman goes rather further, suggesting that this relationship was typical of the 'networks of what we now call "invented" or "adopted" families' that formed around castrati as soon as they were removed from the parental home to undertake their intensive musical training.⁴⁹ These arrangements were frequently regulated by a set of indentures similar to those found in apprenticeship contracts; at the Conservatorio della Pietà dei Turchini in Naples, where the young Tenducci studied, it was usual for boys to be bound as apprentices for as many as ten or twelve years.⁵⁰ Having entered the conservatoire in 1748, Tenducci may not have been released from his contract until 1758 at the earliest, the year in which he left Italy and moved to London. One possibility is that Giuliani acted as a kind of surrogate father figure and supported the young singer after he left the conservatoire around 1753, arranging accommodation, food, clothing, travel etc. on the understanding that he would be repaid as the work came in. Pressure may have been put on Tenducci to settle up in late 1756, when he reached the age of twenty-one and became legally responsible for his liabilities. The fact that Giuliani had initially required the debt to be repaid in 'Florentine Ruspi being Money of the Dominions of the Grand Duke of Tuscany' provides a further clue to his possible identity, as presumably he was living in that region at the time of the agreement.⁵¹ This may suggest an association with the composer and conductor Giovanni Francesco Giuliani, who was born in Livorno, on the Tuscan coast, in about 1760, studied violin with Pietro Nardini in Florence, and remained in that city as leader of the orchestra at the Teatro degli Intrepidi from 1783-98.⁵² The

name, location and dates all point to at least the possibility of Giovanni Francesco being the son of Francesco Giuliani. A rather more tenuous, but still plausible, family connection might be suggested between Francesco and the soprano Angiola Giuliani, who sang alongside Tenucci on the opera stages of Venice in 1753 and 1754.⁵³

If in the autumn of 1758 the young singer had imagined that by moving to England, and putting some 900 miles between himself and his Italian creditor, he would weaken the latter's resolve in prosecuting the case against him, he was seriously mistaken. Giuliani was not so easily shaken off. Indeed, he might well have been encouraged to press his case by the fact that his former charge was now forging an operatic career in high-earning London, and so should be in a position to pay back what he owed. There can be no doubt that Tenucci's performing career was well established by the time the matter finally came to court, but there are a number of reasons why it might not have been possible for him to settle his debts in 1760, not least the financial difficulties in which the King's Theatre management found itself that season, and pressure exerted by Tenucci's other creditors at the time. The documentation generated by the case of Giuliani versus Tenucci is significant for a number of reasons. It provides a rare example of litigation in which the venue in a dispute between two foreign nationals was relocated from Italy, where it originally lay, to England, where one of the parties was then living. The precise dates of Tenucci's committal and discharge from King's Bench Prison can now be established, confirming the eight month period specified in his newspaper petition. Although some questions remain regarding the nature of Tenucci's indebtedness, the case illuminates one of the more secluded recesses of the castrato's biography, and adds to our understanding of the experience of Italian singers coping with the vicissitudes of life in mid-eighteenth-century London, where so many fell victim to the city's temptations and its cut-throat business ethic.

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¹ For a detailed account of Tenducci's marriage and its subsequent annulment, see H. Berry, *The castrato and his wife* (Oxford, 2011). I am grateful to Professor Berry for commenting on an early draft of this piece.

² See, for example, R. Fiske and D. E. Monson, 'Tenducci, Giusto Ferdinando', *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (henceforth *NGD*). 29 vols. (New York and London, 2nd ed., 2001), xxv, p.281.

³ The National Archives (henceforth TNA): KB 122/296, rotulus 856.

⁴ M. Feldman, 'Strange births and surprising kin: the castrato's tale', in *Italy's eighteenth century: gender and culture in the age of the Grand Tour*, ed. P. Findlen, W. W. Rowarth, and C. M. Sama (Stanford, 2009), pp.175-202, at p.183.

⁵ *The Public Advertiser* (14 October, 1758). His predecessor at the opera house, the *sopranista* Salvatore Pazzaglia, had sung there since 1756; see *The London Stage, 1660-1800. Part 4, 1747-1776*. 3 vols, ed. G. W. Stone Jr., (Carbondale, 1962), where his name is sometimes spelled 'Passagli'. For his subsequent career in Florence, see E. Gibson, 'Earl Cowper in Florence and his correspondence with the Italian opera in London', *Music & Letters*, lxxviii (1987), pp.235-52; J. A. Rice, 'An early Handel revival in Florence', *Early Music*, xviii (1990), pp.62-71; J. A. Rice, 'The Tuscan piano in the 1780s: some builders, composers and performers', *Early Music*, xxi (1993), pp.3-26.

⁶ See, for example, the wordbooks for *Vologeso* (London, 1759) and *La clemenza di Tito* (London, 1760). 'S. A. E.' is an abbreviation of the title 'Serenissima Altezza Elettorale'.

⁷ D. Monson, 'Galuppi, Tenducci, and *Motezuma*: a commentary on the history and musical style of opera seria after 1750' in *Galuppiana 1985: studi e ricerche; atti del convegno internazionale* (Venezia, 28-30 ottobre 1985), ed. M. T. Muraro and F. Rossi, *Quaderni della rivista italiana di musicologia*, xiii (1986), pp.279-300, at p.284.

⁸ *The Cyclopaedia, or, Universal Dictionary of Arts, Sciences and Literature*. 39 vols, ed. Abraham Rees (London, 1819), xxxv, [no pagination] s.v. 'Tenducci'.

⁹ P. H. Highfill Jr., K. A. Burnim, and E. A. Langhans, *A biographical dictionary of actors, actresses, musicians, dancers, managers and other stage personnel in London, 1660-1800*. 16 vols. (Carbondale and Edwardsville, 1973-93), xiv, p.393.

¹⁰ P. Holman, 'Ann Ford revisited', *Eighteenth-Century Music*, i, no. 2 (2004), pp.157-81, at pp.165 and 168.

¹¹ *The Public Advertiser* (3 March, 1760).

¹² *The Public Advertiser* (12 February, 1760).

¹³ *The Public Advertiser* for those dates.

¹⁴ See O. Baldwin and T. Wilson, 'Tenducci, Giusto Ferdinando (c. 1735-1790)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* online.

¹⁵ *The Public Advertiser* (5 June, 1760).

¹⁶ The significance of this currency is discussed later. In 1760 a ruspo (also called a 'fiorino' or 'zecchino') was worth about 10 shillings sterling (50 pence in today's money). A larger denomination, the ruspone, had the value of three ruspi; see Illustration 2.

¹⁷ See Joseph Harrison, *The present practice of the court of King's Bench* (London, 1761), p.89, which cites the case of the Dutch West India Company v. van Moses. The defendant borrowed money from the company and promised to repay it in Amsterdam, but failed to do so and subsequently moved to England; the company pursued him thither and brought its case before the court of Common Pleas at Westminster, which fictionally relocated the venue for the transaction 'at London in the parish of St Mary le Bow in the ward of Cheap'.

¹⁸ After Monson, 'Galuppi, Tenducci, and Motezuma', at p.280.

¹⁹ TNA: KB 168/16, s.v. 13 February 1760.

²⁰ TNA: KB 125/156.

²¹ Information on contemporary monetary equivalence is derived from TNA's currency converter: see <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency/>

²² TNA: PRIS 4/3, f. 84, item 463.

²³ For a first-hand account of another musician's experience of prison life, albeit some thirty years earlier in the Marshalsea, see *Handel's trumpeter: the diary of John Grano*, ed. J. Ginger (New York, 1998).

²⁴ J. Innes, 'The King's Bench Prison in the later eighteenth century: law, authority and order in a London debtors' prison' in *An ungovernable people: the English and their law in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries*, ed. J. Brewer and J. Styles (London, 1983), pp.250-98, at p.263.

²⁵ Innes, 'The King's Bench Prison', p.261. Criminals held in King's Bench Prison tended to be minor offenders, those implicated in more serious crimes being committed to Newgate.

²⁶ J. White, 'Pain and degradation in Georgian London: life in the Marshalsea Prison', *History Workshop Journal*, lxxviii (2009), pp.69-98, at pp.71 and 74.

²⁷ Innes, 'The King's Bench Prison', p.265. Rental fees were decided by the court of King's Bench in 1760; costs were kept significantly lower than their market value.

²⁸ *The Cyclopaedia*, xxxv, s.v. 'Tenducci'.

²⁹ Lewis Christian Austin Granom, *A second collection of favourite English songs, with their full accompaniments* (London, 1760?). Ashton is also listed among the subscribers to Richard Burn's *Ecclesiastical Law* (London, 1763).

³⁰ *The Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* (10 May, 1768).

³¹ William Penrice, *The extraordinary case of William Penrice, late Deputy Marshal, or upper turnkey of the King's Bench Prison* (London, 1768), p.9.

³² This area comprised all of St George's Fields and a small part of Southwark; see also M. C. Finn, *The character of credit: personal debt in English culture, 1740-1914* (Cambridge, 2003), pp.121-22.

³³ *The London Magazine, or, Gentleman's Monthly Intelligencer*, xxxi (1762), p.10.

³⁴ *The Cyclopaedia*, xxxv, s.v. 'Tenducci'; the identity of this lady is unknown. John Grano was granted similar dispensation from the Marshalsea Prison in order to perform in concerts for his own benefit; see *Handel's trumpeter*, pp.82-4, pp.99-100 and pp.209-11.

³⁵ N. Stirk, 'Arresting ambiguity: the shifting geographies of a London debtors' sanctuary in the eighteenth century', *Social History*, xxv (2000), pp.316-29, at p.319; Finn, *The character of credit*, p.122.

³⁶ *London Evening Post* (2-4 September, 1760)

³⁷ *The Public Advertiser, or, Daily Register of Commerce and Intelligence* (6 September, 1760).

³⁸ *The Public Advertiser* (16 January, 1761)

³⁹ Tobias Smollett, *The adventures of Sir Launcelot Greaves*. 2 vols. (London, 1762), ii, pp.158-59. For a less sanguine view of prison life, see P. Woodfine, 'Debtors, prisons, and petitions in eighteenth-century England', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, xxx (2006), pp.1-31.

⁴⁰ *The Public Advertiser* (27 January, 1761).

⁴¹ TNA PRIS 4/3 f. 84r, item 463. The scribe is using the old form of dating, in which the new year started on 25 March, and consequently dates his release as 9 February 1760.

⁴² See R. Chambers, *Smollett: his life and a selection from his writings* (London and Edinburgh, 1867), p.115; repeated in A. Parker, 'Tobias Smollett and the law', *Studies in Philology*, xxxix (1942), pp.545-58, at p.554; and P. M. Young, 'Observations on music by Tobias Smollett', *Music & Letters*, xxvii (1946), pp.18-24, at p.21n16.

⁴³ *The Public Advertiser* (23 February, 1761). Presumably Tenducci also sang in the private performance or 'rehearsal' of *Judith* given on 21 February 'at the House of a Lady of Quality'. There is some confusion over the allocation of roles, the wordbook and John Walsh's score of the work being occasionally at odds with each other; see T. Gilman, *The theatre career of Thomas Arne* (Newark, 2013), p.327.

⁴⁴ *Registers of the Catholic Chapels Royal and of the Portuguese Embassy Chapel 1662-1829*. Vol. 1: Marriages, ed. J. C. M. Weale, Catholic Record Society, xxxviii (1941), p.163. Lewis Granom was the younger brother of John Grano; the family's Catholic connections are reviewed in *Handel's trumpeter*, pp.15-18.

⁴⁵ See C. R. Lindsay, 'Catholic registers kept by the Rev. Bruno Cantrill, O.S.F., in London? 1726-55', Catholic Record Society, xix: Miscellanea xi (1917, for 1915-1916), p.168.

⁴⁶ C. R. Lindsay, 'The Catholic registers kept by the Rev. Arthur Pacificus Baker, O.S.F., Lincoln's Inn Fields, London 1747-1773', Catholic Record Society, xix, pp.180 and 182; C. R. Lindsay, 'The Catholic registers of the church at Lincoln's Inn Fields, London. An instalment of baptisms and marriages from 1759, with collections of previous entries', Catholic Record Society, xix, pp.269, 288 and 307-8.

⁴⁷ There are some parallels to be drawn with an earlier King's Bench case in which the young castrato Giuseppe Manfredini brought suit against the composer and impresario Francesco Geminiani; on 1 December 1749 they entered into a quasi-contractual agreement that bound the older man to provide 'lodging diet and washing' for the singer during his brief period of employment in London; see C. Duncan, 'Castrati and impresarios in London: two mid-eighteenth-century lawsuits', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, xxix (2012), pp.43-65.

⁴⁸ J. Rosselli, *Singers of Italian opera: the history of a profession* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 96.

⁴⁹ Feldman, 'Strange births and surprising kin', p.184.

⁵⁰ Rosselli, *Singers of Italian opera*, p.95.

⁵¹ Tenducci's agreement with Giuliani is the only evidence we have that he was in Tuscany during 1756. He sang in Genoa in the early months of that year and in Quirino Gasparini's *Artaserse* in Milan in December, but apart from

those engagements his whereabouts are uncertain; see R. Giazotto, *La Musica a Genova nella vita pubblica e privata dal XIII al XVIII secolo* (Genova, 1951), p.339.

⁵² L. Finscher and G. Fornari, 'Giuliani, Giovanni Francesco', *NGD*, ix, p.910. Giovanni Francesco died in Florence some time after 1818. The following compendious studies mention a Francesco Giuliani on several occasions, but it is apparent from context that the references are all to Giovanni Francesco; see C. Sartori, *I libretti italiani a stampa dalle origini al 1800*. 7 vols. (Cuneo, 1990-94); M. de Angelis, *La felicità in Etruria. Melodramma, impresari, musica, virtuosi: lo spettacolo nella Firenze dei Lorena*. (Firenze, 1990); M. de Angelis, *Melodramma, spettacolo e musica nella Firenze dei Lorena: Francesco I – Pietro Leopoldo Ferdinando III (1750-1800)*. 2 vols. *Inventari e cataloghi toscani 37* (Milano, 1991); R. L. Weaver and N. W. Weaver, *A chronology of music in the Florentine theater 1751-1800: opera, prologues, farces, intermezzos, concerts, and plays with incidental music*. *Detroit Studies in Music Bibliography 70* (Warren, 1993).

⁵³ I. Alm, *Catalog of Venetian librettos at the University of California, Los Angeles* (Berkeley, 1993), pp.704, 706, 709 and 711.