

## Chapter Three

### “Una indiscrizione da alcova”

As soon as the clouds of (volcanic) dust had settled Barbaja proposed a nine-year contract to the happy composer - to write two operas a year - on the same terms he had offered Rossini, that is, two hundred ducats a month; his travel paid; and his living expenses covered on tour. It was the benevolent slavery offered to the most favoured as a gauge of their worth. The maestro, dizzy with acclamation, his future assured, escorted his new wife north to meet his family, then set off for Milan leaving Adelaide pregnant with a daughter they would call Paolina.<sup>i</sup>

Optimistic and freed from imperial bondage Pacini set to work with an appetite rare in recent years. The libretto he accepted gave him no trouble at all but *La gelosia corretta* has given rise to trouble ever since - it had exactly the same title as Michele Carafa's early opera (Naples 1815) but a plot that was entirely different, and a Romanelli text that was compelling enough to be taken up by Domenico Gilardoni and reset to music by Donizetti - this time under the title of *Francesca di Foix* (Naples 1831).<sup>ii</sup> These operas have frequently to be disentangled. Pacini's *semiseria* score was feather-light in contrast to the comic duo above, his music poured-out with the usual breath-taking speed, taking on board some mildly unexpected features: an offbeat *introduzione*, a dearth of items in the punctual places and a refreshing absence of predictable routines. Instead there was sensibility, even a wistfulness that may have echoed his newfound domestic bliss. This pleasing opera basked in a flat calm; with uncharacteristically benign settings by Alessandro Sanquirico *La gelosia corretta* arrived onstage at La Scala on 27 March 1826 and

was given sixteen performances, the composer says of it modestly “*che non dispiacque.*” But though it was a sunny score and had many revivals (difficult as it is to separate them from those of Carafa) it turned out to possess a flawed *business model*, or so it did at its prima. For one simple reason - his bosom-friend Giovanni David courted disaster with his high-camp gestures and effete use of falsetto - so much so that he invited rude noises whenever he set foot on stage. Even worse, after he ceased singing there was complete silence - especially after his fabulous *aria di sortita* sung with amazing skill. No one in the vast house relished the provocative physical postures he adopted on stage and often it seemed as if he was sending-up the opera, his role, and the audience all at the same time. The composer ground his teeth at a parade of grimaces, posturing and pirouetting that the celebrated tenor seemed unable to control. After several evenings of *La gelosia corretta*, when David had been heard in an ominous silence now cut by a thin thread of hissing - he refused to sing at all. This threatened the future of his attractive opera, Pacini would have to take the star in hand.

In contrast to all this the maestro was earning praise from unexpected circles. The ease of his score and its rejection of modish formulae won him plaudits from many improbable voices: *Harmonicon*, even, came up with frothy enthusiasm: “*With respect to Pacini, he deserves top rank as one of the best among the apostles of Rossini, and is by no means devoid of fancy. In the present instance he furnishes two duets of no ordinary power; and if he had no higher merit, could at least claim that of having the courage to omit the fashionable crescendo, which is called Rossinian, but which Mosca claimed as his property.*”<sup>iii</sup> (Pacini might have believed he was back among Papa’s aged reactionaries with this British musical rag but

endorsement for his *duetti* was long overdue). At any event *La gelosia corretta* pushed-off his new contract into choppy waters for a memorable voyage, the *catanese* composer's nine years in the galleys began well and Barbaja revived this opera eagerly in later years (most notably at Vienna in 1827).

Returning without delay to Naples its successor opera would be something in the nature of a swan-song. A brilliant burst of fireworks in the tufa-paved capital before the city was claimed by a further *catanese* contender. In a matter of months Pacini would find a jealous rival yapping at his heels. Barbaja gave him a superlative cast for this particular consecration: four world stars:-the great Luigi Lablache, Carolina Ungher, Giuditta Pasta and Giovanni-Battista Rubini all at their peak and all destined to endorse Italy's claim for international vocal supremacy. As for the opera they would create together - *Niobe* - it would have a claim of its own for supremacy as Franz Liszt surprisingly enough was to confirm.<sup>iv</sup>

Earmarked for another Royal Gala, the newly-liberated maestro supplied a torrent of music for his *Niobe* that was vehement, anguished, amorous and threatening in turn in the cause of a brilliantly gory bloodbath erupting among the inhabitants of Parnassus. A score set-off by jaunty syncopation and vocal flights at the very limit of physical credibility.

Arriving headlong after a family summer<sup>v</sup> Pacini set Tottola's unremarkable verse without taking breath, it was yet another exploration of antique fantasy with an *embarrass* of scenic side effects and an integral *ballabile*, processions and choral pomp culminating in a neo-hysterical augmented vocal climax. Homer's sanguinary tale being spared nothing the nineteenth-century romantic

score could offer, and with Pacini prepared to spare nothing either vocally or imaginatively to bring-off yet another coup,

As far as the circumstances of its first performance on the principal Neapolitan stage was concerned *Niobe* was just as strenuous as *L'ultimo giorno di Pompei* (but for the absence of a comprimario volcano). The same theatrical parameters were in place: a house full to bursting; finery in all the boxes; rows of military in the parterre and no applause unless the monarch deigned to lead it (which was only when someone from the *Real Cappella* was singing). This is how the scene was set on 19 November 1826, but *Niobe* created a precedent even so, and without the theatre collapsing around the ears of the maestro perched on his stool before his “cembalo,”<sup>vi</sup>

Crammed with the rich and powerful and ill-attuned to anything resembling disorder no one could imagine a less-suitable moment for an audience to take the reception of an opera into its own hands. But music of galloping rhythms, pounding bass and crazily testing vocal acrobatics soon put an end to any semblance of aristocratic calm. Not long after the curtains parted the incredible voice of Lablache with his “*Sogno d’Anfione*’ followed by that of Pasta with her cavatina sent shivers through the ranks in all the regions of the house, but as Pacini records in his memoirs, it was Giovanni Battista Rubini who was the undoing of the rule of silence. Act I Sc.6 was to blame. The *primo tempo* of his cavatina ‘Il soave e bel contento’ saw the audience turn and stare hard at the Royal Box: but when it came to the cabaletta ‘I tuoi frequenti palpiti’ a hoarse cry of pain came from the sea of faces peering towards the immobile monarch. From among them came a cry “*E se tu non batti, battimo nui!*”<sup>vii</sup> at which King Francesco I made a feeble gesture and the entire house exploded. After that everything was *furore* with the cadet members of the royal family joining-in and

a house delirious with applause and counter applause. Pacini had judged his fellow citizens with great skill, he had dressed this cruel drama of posturing revenge in Parnassus with a wardrobe of exceedingly colourful vocal garments of every popular shape and dimension. Everyone present was conscious of a of a joyous tearing-up of the vocal rule book, an impulse to rebellion that had been in the gift of this composer since his earliest years.

The reception of *Niobe* was truly momentous, it went down in operatic lore. But born as an exploitation of topical indulgence into popular rhythms and vocal mannerisms specific to Naples it could be no surprise that it made such a short appearance on the Italian stage – a dependence upon the very greatest voices allowed for only nine repetitions.<sup>viii</sup> Like *L'ultimo giorno di Pompei* earlier, its cumbersome *mis-en-scène* could only have guaranteed the most restricted of shelf-lives.

The same cannot be said for its music, one particular fragment from *Niobe* was to reappear at regular intervals for more than three decades. Rubini's cabaletta made a worldwide operatic circuit - its catchy pulsation not just putting an end to a sovereign's rule of silence but intervening into every likely and unlikely opera under every kind of ægis...<sup>ix</sup>

*“Jusqu'à present nous avons regardé l'exécution de la cavatine de Niobe comme une telle merveille, qui'il nous semblait impossible, à Rubini lui même, de jamais dépasser les limites qu'il s'était tracées...”<sup>x</sup>*

There would be many grotesque examples of him passing the limits, misuse of this cabaletta became almost legendary: Rubini himself inserted 'I tuoi frequenti palpiti' into *La straniera* at Paris in 1832 (daring the fatal palpitations from its composer!)<sup>xi</sup> and as for

his *Niobe*, Giuditta Pasta did not hesitate to misappropriate her rival's swansong (though in a downwards transposition) on every possible occasion. She chose 'Il soave e bel contento' as Desdemona's *sortita* in Rossini's *Otello* at the Kärntnertortheater in Vienna in 1830 as well as interpolating it into operas by Mercadante and other composers, most especially those unfriendly to its author. It became a core item of her concert repertoire<sup>xii</sup> a sonnet being printed to commemorate such a prestation:

ALLA CELEBRATISSIMA SIGNORA  
GIUDITTA PASTA  
CHE CANTÒ LA PARTE DI NIOBE  
SONETTO

*Tenacemente ardità in tuo pensiero  
Niobe, al pari di questa un dì ne andavi  
E a turbar della Diva il queto impero  
Alto core e forza equal mostravi...*

Almost all Pacini's operatic contemporaries fell victim to Rubini's showpiece: Carolina Ungher (who had created the role of Asteria in *Niobe*) replaced 'Ah! bello a me ritorna' with 'Il soave e bel contento' in *Norma* at Rome in 1835 and even later still (1853) - as far away as London - Angiolina Bosio used this well-worn scena for the "lesson scene" of *Il barbiere di Siviglia* at Covent Garden. The one time Pacini managed to get inside those forbidding portals. Liszt's *Niobe Fantasy* (originally "Divertissement") was first heard in public on 18 December 1836 in the Salle du Conservatoire in Paris as part of a concert shared with Berlioz; it was repeated more emphatically at the Opéra on 19 March 1837 when the lionised virtuoso played it in an

entr'acte between sections from Louise Bertin's *Esmeralda* and a ballet by Adam; its real ascent to glory came a few days later, however (on 30 March) when the *principessa* Belgiojoso persuaded Liszt and Sigismund Thalberg to compete on the same piano at her house in the rue d'Anjou, the latter playing his *Moïse Fantasy* and Liszt countering with his *Fantasy* from *Niobe*, prestidigitation almost to the death for the benefit of the Princess's charity "*Italiens indigens.*" Liszt's *Niobe Fantasy* has never been out of print.

The day after the prima of of this opera<sup>xiii</sup> (the account in his memoirs is typically convoluted)<sup>xiv</sup> Giovanni Pacini was escorted around the Conservatorio di S. Pietro a Majella in Naples by its director Niccolò Zingarelli. In the *Refettorio degli Alunni* he encountered Vincenzo Bellini face to face for perhaps the first time<sup>xv</sup> among a crowd of students who threw bottles and plates in the air in his honour. That the meeting between the *concittadini* did not go well this welcoming chorus notwithstanding can be taken for granted. No doubt the condescending presence of the current star composer, championed by Barbaja was interpreted as hostile by the student. In point of fact Pacini had come to see the new building at Zingarelli's invitation not to meet the pupils.<sup>xvi</sup>

Maybe Bellini felt piqued at not receiving the friendly congratulation he believed to be his due from a fellow *catanese*? At any event that they began on the wrong foot and remained on the wrong foot until Bellini believed he had dismissed Pacini for good is a fact of history (and henceforth Pacini referred to his concittadino with a sweet smile as "*Il divino Bellini*")

Unaware of any such operatic gaffe the triumphal composer of the day continued on his way to Milan where *Alessandro nell'Indie* was to open the carnival season. It did not get a good reception despite the fact that he had supplied David (still furious at his reception in *La gelosia corretta*)

with no less than *five* different *cabalette* for his aria di sortita, not one of which succeeded in stifling audible protests at the way he sang. The maestro, however remained close to this extraordinary tenorino, even though *both* now were reported to be lovers of the fatal *contessa* Samoyloff (but such a report can be taken with a Bellinian pinch of salt!)

This exceptional Russian expatriate is worth much more than a footnote. A very beautiful woman indeed, her name appears more than any other as the dedicatee of opera scores of the day<sup>xvii</sup> she reigned over the most fashionable musical circles in Milan. Seven years younger than Pacini, supposed (without a shred of truth) to have been an Imperial mistress back home, separated from her husband, she diverted the city with her flamboyant lifestyle and reckless generosity.

Followed by a trail of dogs and indigents dependent on her charity, a vision of exotic elegance, mad about the arts, her box at La Scala was the focus of every pair of binoculars every evening she attended. She hosted performances in her own theatre of reduced versions of operas currently in vogue. Her weakness for tenors – lyrical ostinato of her bedroom - did them no good at all; as she made no bones about being an advocate of Austrian rule they all got booed whenever they set foot on stage. (She herself was carefully respected). Her affair with Pacini was probably an aberration because he never attempted to sing and was always at his desk. Both were socially extravagant; as both were capable of following any interest whatsoever to its extremes they had much in common, both were restless and inventive and both were easily bored. Their amorous liaison did not last long - two or three years at the very most - but they remained close until his death some forty years later. It was a relationship based on love as not one of their host of critics ever detected. He was proud to be hissed on her account.



For the moment this purported trio of effete tenor, *femme fatale* and ex-imperial conquest was content to raise the hackles of the operatic coterie in Milan. Their comings and goings a source of constant conjecture. But Pacini never lost sight of his musical objectives: if *Alessandro* failed to please he would *make* the scaligeri applaud whether they liked it or not. That he succeeded is undeniable, he would do it with *Gli arabi nelle Gallie ossia Il trionfo della fede*. A triumph of faith in his own compositional birthright.

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*Gli arabi nelle Gallie* is the only opera by Pacini to feature in Bellini's jealous correspondence with grudging respect. Its plot had been chosen with unusual prescience; based upon the *vicomte* d'Arlincourt's extravagant 'Le Renégat' of 1822<sup>xviii</sup> breathlessly extolling outcasts, seclusion and the trauma of lost-love, the composer alighted squarely on a blueprint to be exploited by all his rivals. It was a hyper-emotional topos about to capture the imagination of operatic Europe. That his opera was planned with exceptional care is certain; it was to be another major theme to follow *Pompei* and *Niobe*. The still-extant *prima stesura* autograph<sup>xix</sup> written months before the La Scala *prima* shows that a number of embryonic features failed to emerge in its initial composition - that some were discarded and a few were earmarked for usage only many years later during the opera's long tenure of the stage.<sup>xx</sup>

Thanks to the vocal problems of Giovanni David this opera also proposed a coup: *Gli arabi nelle Gallie* was to be a tour-de-force for the tenor. The soprano was to be obliged to take second place.<sup>xxi</sup> Thus anticipating a vocal parameter to emerge in the operas of his rivals. In his memoirs Pacini speaks mostly of David's lyrical impasse, but this factor proved to be of much less importance than its immediate impact upon

audiences: *Gli arabi nelle Gallie* emerged as a *stereophonic* statement with its introductory chorus deployed across the whole width of the proscenium, divided, marching and countermarching, swelling and diminishing and engaging with a single soloist. The prototype opening for a scenic spectacular before long to be the mode. With drum-rolls and trumpets repeated from side to side, with dotted rhythms and noisy syncopation, a spacious battleground *alla Meyerbeer* laying the scene for his own cherished concept of theatre. This captivating stereophonic opening was to be the only fragment to survive three decades of rewriting, the destiny of this opera would be a saga of renewal, every single item of *Gli arabi nelle Gallie* would be rewritten over and over again - every aria, every duet, every trio, ensemble and each of the concertati being recomposed, revised or recast sometimes several times in the long series of revivals of *Gli arabi nelle Gallie* to come. All the principal arias would have alternative music, nothing would ever be inviolate, each dramatic confrontation could be reversed, the whole plot could be in a state of flux. The opera's final resolution could be an *aria finale con coro* of triumph or of despair in every possible configuration - with any number of credible (or incredible) possibilities in-between. It could be a *rondo* of athletic virtuosity, or a *vaudeville* of corporate satisfaction with everyone on stage rejoicing irrespective of the d'Arlincourt tragedy that had given birth to the plot.

The composer claimed the right to amend his opera as and when he pleased. With well-publicised nonchalance Pacini wrote new music for any artist on simple demand, turning the dramatic sequence upside-down at the whim of theatre managements or to fulfill the requirements of any stage of any dimensions whether modest-and-provincial or imposing-and-Metropolitan.

*Gli arabi nelle Gallie* was to be fully representative of a philosophy for

operatic performance that ran counter to the strictures of an emergent generation. Opera should be thematically alive, not a packaged product. Performing Rights should *not* dictate the artform. A stage-work could be *different* every night instead of always the same. A stance defiant of the production stranglehold, against the tide championed by the commercial imperatives of music publishers and about to become the norm. The motive was clear: *Gli arabi nelle Gallie* was to have all the ingredients for success whatever the scale of production, whoever, wherever or whenever it was to be performed, thus fulfilling the requirements of the audiences of Pacini's heyday accustomed to attending an opera house every night. .

No opera could have a better beginning. The cast at the prima won a runaway triumph, Giovanni David in the role of the returned Merovingian prince turned Moorish-warrior created a conscience-stricken changeling with his Agobar, a martyr both to love and duty his "*bella morte*" not only conquering a reluctant audience but presaging whole vistas of enjoyable tenorial extinction in operas to come on that and interminable other stages in Italy, its stricken hero faltering his adieu in broken words and phrases, terminal fragments of pathos against a failing thread of music. Almost every rival composer in Italy took note of this affecting terminus-quo in the decades to come.

Pacini had pruned David's head-voice with *cantilena* in the place of strained virtuosity, creating a virile but fallible hero in which he recovered both his form and vocal esteem. With an optimum prima on 8 March 1827, with Stefania Favelli and Brigida Lorenzani as co-stars it provided maximum excitement during all that remained of the season. David, restored to life (literally), hissing and catcalling forgotten, appearing before the final curtain arm-in-arm with Pacini to deafening cheers. He was painted in his magnificent costume by Hayez, the image encapsulating

the colourful impact of this opera upon the annals of the day.

*Gli arabi nelle Gallie* began an interminable circuit of the world's opera houses immediately but its revival on that same stage in Milan a year later on 26 February 1828 was seminal for Pacini's operatic profile in that city - not only had the opera been packed in the interim with extra pieces in Naples but for Henriette Méric-Lalande as Ezilda he extended her role with a new cavatina<sup>xxii</sup> and a strenuous duet, but allowed her to interpolate her famous *scena* from *Amazilia* including the moving 'Ah! non fia mai ver' and its slow cabaletta 'Parmi verderlo, ahi misero' with utterly sensational results. *Gli arabi nelle Gallie* was the first of Pacini's opera to get to New York.

The flood of extra music with which this opera was constantly amended for almost every stage of his day is not only astonishing, it is unique, as the composer intended it should be. During the next few years he composed four more arias for Ezilda; four more for Leodato; <sup>xxiii</sup> and at least two further arias for Agobar (including one only slightly more modest for Giovanni Battista Verger 'A quell'anima oltraggiata' to let tenors off David's strenuous hook). Unsurprisingly, in view of the composer's stance *all* the *comprimario* roles were given the chance to shine at the footlights in the interminable later versions of the opera!

Great Ezildas included Giulia Grisi (in Lucca), Violante Camporesi (in Trieste), Luigia Boccabadati (in Rome), Emilia Bonini (in Vicenza), Virginia Blasis (in Genova), Desiderata Derancourt (in Firenze) and Marietta Albini (his second wife – in Madrid and Rome); great Agobars included Domenico Reina (in Lucca), Pietro Gentili (in Genova), Lorenzo Bonfigli (in Torino), Napoleone Moriani (in Pavia, in which the "*tenore della bella morte*" found his vocation) and Giovanni Battista Rubini (in Vicenza); Leodatos included Rosa Mariani (in Trieste, Genova, Roma and London), Amalia Schütz-Oldosi (in Trieste), Adele Cesari (in Milano and

Livorno) and Clorinda Corradi-Pantanelli (in Padova), while the small role of Gondair accumulated such great names as Luigi Lablache (in Napoli), Vincenzo Galli (in Torino), Celestino Salvatori (in Verona) and Michael William Balfe (in Bergamo and Milano). Giovanni David continued singing the role of Agobar until 1838 (in Bergamo).

It was the final version, however, of *Gli arabi nelle Gallie* that was its true apotheosis. At the express wish of the Emperor Napoléon III who had heard Pacini's opera with emotion in exile (in Rome on 17 January 1829 and retained a vivid memory of its impact upon his rejection by his fellow citizens) a brand new edition was commissioned for the Théâtre-Italien in Paris. Staged momentarily on 30 January 1855 with a refurbished text by Achille de Lauzières replete with patriotic semaphoring at a quite indecent level and with a piety completely foreign to its original plot - a new *preghiera* 'A te, signor dei popoli' for Ezilda, Gondair and coro - conferring a respectable Christianity upon Agobar at the express demand of the Empress Eugénie.

Pacini wrote nine new numbers for this Parisian *dramma lirico* in its quasi *grand-opéra* guise, blessed with the outstanding voices of Angiolina Bosio (Ezilda) and Carlo Baucardé (Agobar) and let-down only by Adelaide Borghi-Mamo as Leodato whose moustachioed commander-in-chief of the Frankish Army was so blatantly pregnant that audiences could not stop giggling.<sup>xxiv</sup> Thanks to Paolina, Pacini was greeted in quasi-kinship by Imperial cousins and found himself with the Légion d'Honneur and a diamond encrusted snuff-box embellished with the Emperor's cipher in his pocket.<sup>xxv</sup>

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Hardly had the 1828 Milan season closed than Barbaja began a Viennese *stagione* and Pacini set off for the Autro-Hungarian capital with David sharing his carriage. It was a carefree jaunt along flowery alpine roads,

interrupted by picnics, sightseeing and general frivolity so much so that Barbaja – who had started out several days later than the composer and from Naples - got there first. But despite a testy encounter on stage the season went well.

Pacini had the lion's share of the Kärntnertortheater cartellone with four operas "*bene accolta da quella fredda, ma intelligente udienza*,"<sup>xxvi</sup> especially *Amazilia* (now in two acts), but also *La gelosia corretta*, *Gli arabi nelle Gallie* and *L'ultimo giorno di Pompei*. David sang in almost all of this quartet but shared some of the roles with Savino Monelli fearing exhaustion.<sup>xxvii</sup> Pacini made a great deal of money. But when he got back to Italy he found it had changed. Bellini had taken Milan by storm with *Il pirata* on 27 October 1827 and neither *his* life, nor that of his *concittadino*, would ever be the same again.

In one sole coup Bellini had become a star. Prey to apprehension at a challenge he understood perfectly Pacini over-reached his response. He was on stage in Naples scarcely three weeks later and made the fatal error of imitating himself (not imitating Bellini as the latter liked to pretend<sup>xxviii</sup>). *Margherita regina d'Inghilterra* was the first real fiasco of his career. He had a wonderful cast with Adelaide Tosi in the title role and Lablache in full flow, it too invoked Meyerbeer<sup>xxix</sup> but the S.Carlo staging on 19 November 1827 fell completely flat. The spectacular scenic effects he asked-for seemed like a parody of those of *Gli arabi nelle Gallie* opening with an *Introduzione* of acoustic aspirations. It was a characteristic example of the S.Carlo chaos known to every composer: scandalously under-rehearsed and rushed on and off-stage with indecent haste. Two years later a remorseful management revived *Margherita regina d'Inghilterra* (4 October 1829) with an almost identical cast when it was discovered to have all kinds of merit. It was too late. The composer's comment "*Non cadde no, precipitò di sella*"<sup>xxx</sup> reveals that it had been

confined to oblivion as far as he was concerned.

Ill at ease, aware that he would have to change, would need to tackle a fundamental crisis where no longer would his expertise, elegance and virtuosity be enough to arouse frantic applause he attempted to evade these issues by reverting to comedy, setting a slight text by Bartolomeo Merelli<sup>xxxii</sup> with the title of *Per Dio non intendo cosa dice*, an opera buffa whose score seems to have been completed but which never saw the light of day.<sup>xxxiii</sup> 1828 began in this way but at some point he seems to have determined upon a counter-attack - to tackle the ugly mood of triumph that Bellini and his list of champions maintained at his discomfiture.

How precisely he assembled his allies<sup>xxxiii</sup> is not easy to know at this distance, possibly some form of retaliation was suggested by Gaetano Rossi. Maybe a war between librettists took hold of their imagination as it had done ten years earlier with the *Anelli farse* - Gaetano Rossi and Felice Romani (librettist of *Il pirata*) were at bitter loggerheads over money - both had courted the deep pockets of Giacomo Meyerbeer and the struggle<sup>xxxiv</sup> had left a deep web of resentment. Pacini's *I cavalieri di Valenza* would be a sour *compte rendu* of this struggle.

No one could doubt it, the contrast between Bellini and Pacini was one of character, but it was also one of fashionable dress and deportment. Pacini was buoyant and worldly, Bellini was self-absorbed and *shed his blood* to give life to his scores. Pacini enjoyed mocking this pallid newcomer from the catanese sticks - as so he appeared to this ex-lover of her Imperial Highness the princess Paolina Bonaparte - for this high profile musical competitor he was merely a charlatan practicing his sentimental tunes on a provincial piano. News of the former's intention to challenge the new and dangerous rival's vogue spread rapidly in Milan. Rumours of scale and spectacle were rife especially as Sanquirico was known to be

hard at work on some challenging sets, Bellini even reporting that “*I cavalieri di Lara*”<sup>xxxv</sup> was to be a “*spettacolo straordinario*” and congratulating himself on being able to write operas without “*battles, ballets and eruptions of Vesuvius*”.

It was while he was composing *I cavalieri di Valenza* that Pacini’s young wife died in childbirth.<sup>xxxvi</sup> Though he turned to his desk “*tornare alla musica...il dolore abbelliva il canto d’Orfeo*” there is no doubt of his devastation. He was left a widower with three infant children.<sup>xxxvii</sup> Bellini extended his condolences via a go-between but it was the last time there would be any civil communication between them. This loss would have a negative impact on Pacini’s future - even on the future of opera itself - as harassed by funeral debts he accepted as many commissions as he could (more than he could possibly fulfil) with the result that Bellini was squeezed and without any contract at all. It would prove a grave error for the decorous operatic future of both these composers.

The response to *Il pirata* was traumatic on both sides. Bellini had become obsessed with rivalry. Almost every letter is peppered with repetitive monothematic fantasies about *nemici*, about the “*cavaliere maestro*” and his imaginary sins, every page sprinkled with “*Pirata*” and “*Pacini*” - the most fantastical of which being that of 24 March 1828 invoking Felice Romani and his resentments, claiming that Adelaide Tosi “*mi ha detto che Pacini spaconeggiava contro di me, fulminando minaccie*” and relating that he had confided to Giovanni David his great theory - his “*gran coglioneria*” - that the poor reception of his *Il pirata* in Vienna had been masterminded by Pacini’s father “*che lá si trovava.*”<sup>xxxviii</sup>

This completely unbalanced nonsense must have been reported immediately to Pacini with amused embroidery by Giovanni David. Can anyone be surprised that the offspring of the great *buffo* decided he had to respond in kind? *I cavalieri di Valenza* was the result. Bellini lost his



head after *Il pirata*, and it went missing for most of the rest of his life..

Excited hopes a war between composers were not to be disappointed, when *I cavalieri di Valenza* opened at La Scala on 11 June 1828 the audience discovered to its great joy that their summer boredom was to be enlivened by a jeering parody of *Il pirata* featuring the same *primadonna*<sup>xxxix</sup> in similar dramatic situations; an identically despised lover returning from exile, and a ghostly web of shadow confrontations thematically and musically challenging Bellini's exquisite melancholy; the whole climaxing with a noisome sea-battle worthy of that bone of contention Giacomo Meyerbeer (who, quite unintentionally and unaware was financially and artistically the *deus ex-machina* of the whole affair)<sup>xl</sup>

Shades of Angelo Anelli high on the agenda was Gaetano Rossi's taste for verbal mimickry; whereas the returned exile Gualtiero of *Il pirata* had sung 'Nell'furor delle tempeste' the returned exile Gusmano of *I cavalieri di Valenza* sang 'Nell'orror di mie sciagure' (a transcription Pacini joyously exploited with comic dismay by pretending it referred to his own plight at the rise of Bellini!). Every situation of *Il pirata* had a sly mirror image in *I cavalieri di Valenza*, each member of the cast had a vocal *doppelgänger* with simian mockery throughout from beginning to end. There is no doubt that Bellini's antagonists had selected their target with care, not actually *imitating* the unfortunate composer<sup>xli</sup> but tormenting him mercilessly with infantile derision and comic-book caricaturing of the original creation.

This operatic conflict unleashed an undignified polemic in the musical journals of the day. The critics sharpened their pens. the audience at La Scala took sides; Bellini, dismayed, as was his nature hurried to report to his family at home in Catania that Pacini's opera had been a "*colossal*

*fiasco*” but this was not even remotely true like most things he wrote to them. Audiences found Pacini’s naughty opera to be the most compelling musical draw of the season. Pompeo Cambiasi gave it a rating of *Buonissimo*, It went on to receive twenty-five performances and was most successful opera of the summer stagione.

With such a tremendous spectacle as its background the critics had a field-day. Accusations of *plagio e furto* were cast to and fro by Pacinian and Bellinian aficionados, Pacini defiantly defended himself in a flurry of facetious statements in the press that became patently vicious before the end of the season. But he did have the last word upon *plagio e furto*: his witty reference to Bellini’s own sources as “*una vera pirateria*”<sup>xlii</sup> enchanted his supporters.

Sanquirico’s sets were widely circulated in coloured lithographs. The vocal score of *I cavalieri di Valenza* was published by Ricordi and sold out at once. To cap his campaign, Pacini dedicated this score to the contessa Samoyloff who had presided over the conflict in her box. Could the whole affair be described as a pyrrhic victory? There was no victory in sight, a further Venetian confrontation was to follow. Gaetano Rossi’s verbal teasing would bear bitter fruit, the prickly Romani was affronted by people making fun of his verse. He would take battle into Rossi’s home waters. Things would go from bad to worse in a matter of months.

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Antonio Ghislanzoni’s thumbnail sketch of the composer is especially revealing:

*“Pacini ebbe statura mediocre, occhio vivace, fisionomia non bella ma espressiva, persona snella ed elegante. Tuttochè*

*amabilissimo e qualche volta cortigiano, non conosceva l'arte di c  
attivarsi le simpatie. Si creò non pochi nemici; fu ingiustamente p  
erseguitato e fatto oggetto di basse calunnie”<sup>xliii</sup>*

For a time the peninsula was large enough to keep the combatants apart. The following score – designed for Trieste – was distant enough for acrimony and amusement to subside in the distance. In the autumn he staged *Gli arabi nelle Gallie* at the Teatro Grande of that city with, as a chaser, the last of his Meyerbeer-inspired operas: *I crociati a Tolemaide*. It should never have won over the *triestini*, both its star singers Violante Camporesi and Rosa Mariani were at the end of their careers; Calisto Bassi's text was routine<sup>xliiv</sup> and based upon Sophie Cottin's well-worn 'Mathilde' which had given birth to innumerable offspring. There were *longueurs* and it ended with everyone dead (or almost dead). Hurriedly conceived and composed it arrived on stage on 13 November 1828 with every sign of pleasure, the audience galvanised by the especially brilliant aria<sup>xlv</sup> Pacini had supplied for Rosa Mariani in the *musico* role of Malek-Adel in order to keep this notorious troublemaker quiet. (He had been obliged to supply a brand new double aria for her to sing in the preceding *Gli arabi nelle Gallie*<sup>xlvi</sup>)

The critics were harder to please, according to them *I crociati a Tolemaide* was too full of *cori*, was stretched and too monotonous. The fact is there was a gulf emerging in Pacini's composing subject to stylistic lapses that were not resolved. Was it the fraught encounters in Milan that gave rise to what amounted to a musical mid-life crisis? A dilemma was apparent in this score where (thanks to Bellini possibly) a species of romantic attenuation was now inserting itself - if inconsistently. The action was halted by too many intermezzi as Pacini struggled to add an orchestral richness to music stymied by the bravura vocalism expected by his fans. In compensation he extended the *cori* but this was merely cosmetic. *I*

*crociati a Tolemaide* did well in revival however and extracts in vocal score were published widely. Pacini was not displeased with its reception, “*che’ebbe successo felicissimo*” he said and despite some initial doubts the opera was no failure.

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His orientation in flux, for whatever reason – his tussle with Bellini, the death of his wife, a disenchantment with his mentor Meyerbeer, all could be the explanation - a softening of his musical mode now began to emerge. Two operas in the second half of 1829 showed the way the wind was blowing. In all probably Gaetano Barbieri was the catalyst for this change, at Pacini’s shoulder in the Bellinian confrontation, he was one of those fringe figures essential to musical debate in Italy.<sup>xlvii</sup> They began their actual collaboration at the start of this year: Barbieri had revamped a text for Luigia Boccabadati to sing in *Gli arabi nelle Gallie* at Rome<sup>xlviii</sup> but it was his renown as a translator that attracted Pacini. In no way unaware of the nature of the competition he now faced he turned to the literary shooting star for his next opera: Sir Walter Scott. The Pacini/Barbieri *Il talismano ossia La terza crociata in Palestina*<sup>xlix</sup> was the result.

La Scala offered a *scrittura*, he had Rubini and Tamburini and another décor by Sanquirico, Pacini took his time, almost six months (!) which meant that he paid the very greatest care with his score.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, this opera’s leisurely pacing heralds a change in his aria forms – a further indulgence in mood with a grace new to his pen. Significantly the most enthusiastically received item in the opera was the *recitativo e romanza* ‘Luna conforto al cor’, carefully drawn-out and marked *sotto voce*. A dreamy recitativo ‘Soave notte’ followed by a languid cantabile with the

voice of Rubini raised in contemplative reflection. Reflection! Not in recent years a Pacinian trait but it is necessary to reflect that this was the stage on which Rubini had triumphed in the indisputable success of his rival.

Not that Pacini's opera lacked digressions; in the vocal exchanges that followed swiftly on the *Romanza* the tenor astonished everyone by throwing out an interpolated top C from the chest (or so it is claimed) and then repeated it and sustained it in a *messa di voce*. Night after night this feat was awaited and so much applauded that by the eighth performance he was recorded as singing no less than fourteen of these wondrous *acuti* that he broke a clavicle in the process (but went on singing). Emilia Bonini, Tamburini and his wife together with the buffo Frezzolini (both Barbieri and Pacini had attempted to do justice to Scott's mix of comic and tragic characters) all had splendid receptions. A modish troubadouresque confection now à la mode, staged on 10 June 1829, *Il talismano* was repeated sixteen times and in October it returned for eighteen more. The composer blessed his new poet (and Scott) especially as Bellini's *Bianca e Fernando* had languished in between these two dates. The diminutive maestro was enchanted when news of its continuing success reached him in Naples where he had gone to supervise a revival: "*Il nostro Talismano in Napoli si canta in tutte le Società, e fa furore*" he wrote to Barbieri where the press there had praised both libretto and music: "*il tuo Pacini gode qualche riputazione nella Partenope Capitale.*"<sup>li</sup>

Bellini or no Bellini, *Pirata* or no *Pirata* he still was getting commissions galore, all of them noted bitterly by his *catanese* competitor. One of them – for Genoa – masterminded by Bartolomeo Merelli he had rejected in favour an *Annibale in Torino* offered by the Teatro Regio in Turin, which Barbaja (*Il mio Sultano*) had approved as one of his series of contractual scores. Intended for the *carnevale* of 1830 it was to have had a libretto

by Felice Romani (whether it was to be an old one or a new one we do not know <sup>lii</sup>) but for precisely the same date he had signed an agreement to compose a new opera for La Fenice! The fatal outcome of accepting *both* these commissions for the same *carnevale* will soon be seen.

In the meanwhile Naples had all his attention. His evident fame earned him a royal commission for another honorific cantata; this was *L'annunzio felice* which came about as a result of the announcement of a request for the hand of Princess Maria Cristina by the much-married Ferdinando VII of Spain. It led to another of those glittering launchings in the S. Carlo with every available star on stage. Mounted on 7 September 1829 this “*cantata con balli analoghi*” was somewhat modified when it came on stage: *Harmonicon* says that “*the best pieces are a duet and a quartet. The music was admirably executed by Madame Fodor, the Tosi, Lablache, and Winter. Pacini had written a cavatina for Fodor but the singer substituted for it one in Bianca e Falliero.*” Pacini, it was claimed, had written his music in eight days.<sup>liii</sup>

All this time he was writing a second Scott opera (like Donizetti he was prone to doing things in pairs); Friedrich Lippman in his *Giovanni Pacini: Bemerkungen zum Stil seiner Opern* <sup>liv</sup> though resolutely convinced that the operas preceding it were simply servile imitations of Rossini - attributes to *Il contestabile di Chester* a frontier role in that its “*dark colouring*” was “*absolutely foreign to the Rossinian heredity*”. The opera has indeed confounded his most severe critics in his day and ours. Based on Scott’s ‘The Betrothed’ (and not of course on Manzoni’s ‘I promessi sposi’ as is often supposed - an error endorsed by the title Pacini himself used “*I fidanzati*”) it is a remarkably lively score, full of bouncing rhythms, special effects, surprising interventions and so much invention and innovation that the audiences were deposited outside in a state of exhaustion. The vocal recipes necessary to ensure their fullest attention

retained, but their components becoming longer and asymmetrically stretched throughout the entire score. Its début was initially delayed owing to Adelaide Tosi's illness (intended for 19 November it had to wait until the 23 November), Pacini and "Giraldoni" (the composer never managed to master the spelling of Gilardoni's name) had formed an excellent team and *Il contestabile di Chester* made a powerful impact from the start. Even Fétis in his *Revue Musicale* in Paris gave it *chef-d'œuvre* status making only the perverse complaint that as Pacini had broken precedent and written-out all the vocal ornaments the talents of the singers were not fully employed!

*Harmonicon* went overboard:

*"Pacini's new opera, Il Contestabile di Chester, was received with rapturous acclamations on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of November. The applause daily becomes more enthusiastic and general. All agree that this work is the author's masterpiece; and he is censured only for having sacrificed all the parts, even those of Lablache and Madame Boccabadati, to that of La Tosi. This latter lady is said to be admirable in the new opera, though she was but recovering from a severe indisposition, when the first performance took place. She was applauded con furore in all her pieces, but particularly in the cavatina, in her duet with Boccabadati, and in the trio with that lady and Lablache; and in her final air, a piece in which Pacini has brought together all kind of difficult and delightful combinations. The composer and the singers were several times called on the stage, both separately and en masse, a mark of approbation extremely rare at Naples. The absence of the court on the present occasion<sup>lv</sup> left the audience unrestrained in the manifestation of their enthusiasm."*<sup>lvi</sup>

Pacini however insists that his score was cut, and indeed *bravura* had given way to as many *cori*, *ritornelli*, marches, fanfares and through-composing as he thought the Neapolitans could stand. With its battles and willfully discursive ensembles *Il contestabile di Chester* is long it is true, but also touching and jaunty. If memorable arias are in short supply, instead there is urgency, energy and good tunes. By no means an unwise formula

for success in Naples.

Fétis concluded his review “*Pacini était engagé pour écrire un opéra à Milan; mais une indisposition grave le retient à Naples.*”

We are to hear much of this “*indisposition*”. Not only would his health suffer but also his pocket.

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Was he ill? It has never been confirmed. It was November 1829, he had accepted two major commissions for the coming carnival not one note of which had yet been committed to paper. Moreover, under the terms of his contract with Barbaja he was obliged to supply a third opera for La Scala in the Spring. This was enough to make anyone ill. Had he been in optimum health he might well have composed all three, as it was, this near-impossible over-commitment that gave an opening to Bellini who had failed to secure a Venice contract due to his exorbitant demands for money.<sup>lvii</sup> He was an expensive “*provincial*”. His trump card was Felice Romani, current crony and poet contracted to supply the text for two of Pacini’s commissions. For several months Bellini had been wringing his hands over Pacini’s determination to go ahead with his obscene (as he saw it) hoard of contracts which he took as a personal insult. If his resentment was expressed mainly in literary bile and exchanges within a circle of kindred spirits - that of Romani had a more material expression. Indeed were as much to do with his pocket as poetic pride.

Romani is the key to all the coming events. For the moment Bellini assuaged his fractious muse with comforting news from the direction of the Grand Canal; following a lead from Venetian insiders he heard that in the event of Pacini’s defection at La Fenice he would get the chance to take his place. With this salving thought in mind he set about investigating Pacini’s torinese engagement. In October 1829 he took coach to Romani’s



fief of Turin to spread as much Pacinian discomfort as possible (and miss the revival of *Il talismano* at La Scala). It bore scant fruit apart from a saccharine reception by local bigwigs. But back in Milan in December his Venetian prospects suddenly brightened, he obtained a compensatory invitation to stage *Il pirata* in the watery city and too became aware that the dilatory Romani had written little or nothing of the two texts he was supposed to be supplying to his rival *concittadino*. Who can doubt that the creative possibilities of this situation were discussed together in considerable detail?

If Bellini rejoiced in his *nemici*, so did Romani. His relations with Pacini had not been cordial since *La schiava in Bagdad*. A fervent admirer of Vincenzo Monti he had always looked askance at this collaborator of his youth and Pacini's amused indulgence in Gaetano Rossi's parodied verses in *I cavalieri di Valenza* was judged completely inadmissible. An even more urgent target was Nicola Vaccaj, the author of *Giulietta e Romeo*, whose libretto for *Saul*<sup>lviii</sup> had never been paid-for. Worse, the wretch had had the effrontery to ask the miserable Tottola to make changes to the text in the face of Romani's refusal to write a line more without cash down. These two maestri would pay for their sins.

In Naples Pacini awaited the arrival of one or another of his texts. No text of course arrived as was to be expected. When, exactly he renounced his Turin commission is not clear.<sup>lix</sup> In the interim Bellini arrived in Venice. He had left Casalbuttano on 17 December though his *Il pirata* was not due on stage in Venice for another month. He wanted to be sure that he was on the spot to act decisively. The weather was frightful, the lagoon had frozen over, everyone in Venice was shivering and shortly after his arrival the city was cut-off from the outside. The La Fenice season began

as badly as possible, Giuseppe Persiani whose slender reputation was at stake, had accepted a contract to open the *carnevale* but finding the libretto he was given to be utterly impossible had tried to withdraw. In the face of legal threats by the *nobile Presidenza* he set *Costantino in Arles* to music in two weeks and it failed abjectly.<sup>lx</sup> The young composer's fledgling renown vanished overnight. This rebuff notwithstanding the *Presidenza* refused to listen to Bellini's pestering that he should replace Pacini; his tales of the latter's "illness" were received with scepticism. *Il pirata* was staged as intended: "*Le second opera*" (after Persiani's *Costantino*) "...qui sera joué au théâtre de la Fenice, est *Le Pirata* (sic) de Bellini; le troisième, *Olga ou l'Orfana Moscovita*, de Pacini; et le quatrième, *Malek-Adel*, de Guillon" stated the 'Revue Musicale.'<sup>lxi</sup>

The fact that this notice was in the wake of Persiani's opera ("*une musique monotone*") reveals that even so late in the day the *Presidenza* was not yet completely aware of the conspiracy contrived by the poetical plotters.

On 5 January 1830 the *Presidenza* agreed that Bellini should replace Pacini only if the latter's score was not in their hands by 20 January. Bellini held all the cards. On 15 January he wrote to Gaetano Cantù: "*non só se sia finito ancora*" (ie Romani's text for Pacini) "*perché io ne ho letto il p[ri]mo atto e porzione del 2<sup>do</sup>, che in nostro intima confidenza è più insulso dell'istessa fredezza in persona*"<sup>lxii</sup> with a wide-eyed innocence seeing that the poet was even then beside him in Venice working on the transformation of Vaccaj's *Giulietta e Romeo* into *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*.<sup>lxiii</sup>

That plans to do so had been made well in advance is revealed by his letter to Alessandro Lanari of that very 5 January day: "*Qualora il Maestro Pacini manchi al suo Contratto di venire a scrivere la sua Opera al Gran Teatro La Fenice, dietro l'invito da voi fattomi mi prenderó l'impegno di*

*scrivervi io il Libro, Giulietta, e Cappellio da Romani restringendomi all'Onorario di Napoleoni d'oro effettivi – Trecentoventicinque – dico Napoleoni d'oro N.325*<sup>lxiv</sup>

On that same day of 5 January Pacini arrived in Milan in search of Romani.<sup>lxv</sup> He was not of course to be found. No one knew where he was. But by then Pacini had recognised the nature of the *fait accompli*. It was defeat, Romani had killed two birds with one stone. The few verses he had supplied for Pacini's aborted *Olga* could be comfortably re-used in the libretto for Bellini's *La sonnambula*.<sup>lxvi</sup> Thus all loose ends were tied.

And Bellini could congratulate himself. As he wrote in his letter of 15 January: “..il governo e quasi tutto Venezia mi ha tanto pregato, che se Pacini non verrà per scrivere egli l'opera nuova, bisogna che lo facci io...” *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* duly ready and waiting, was staged and received with rapture.<sup>lxvii</sup>

But nemesis has its own agenda. It was from water in a well of the frozen city that he contracted the amœbic infection from which he died five years later.<sup>lxviii</sup> When he got back to Milan a commission from the Teatro Regio in Turin awaited him for the next *carnevale*. Bellini, however, had no further interest in Turin.

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<sup>i</sup> Pacini's sense of humour was not quite independent of his family planning: Paolina Pacini (1826-1847) was the first of three children each born at nine-monthly intervals to his first wife, the last of whom, Maria Amazilia (named after the opera) would be adopted by the *contessa* Samoyloff

<sup>ii</sup> *Françoise de Foix* was the title given to an opéra by Berton (Paris 1809) in which this particular plot had its origins

<sup>iii</sup> *Harmonicon* 1826, 206

<sup>iv</sup> Liszt's 1836 piano transcription of the cabaletta *I tuoi frequeti palpiti* from *Niobe* initiated at least twenty years of continuous popularity of the aria in concert form

<sup>v</sup> It was a summer when his music began to be published abroad - with mixed results. At the Odéon in Paris for example was staged a pastiche (Paris was a gross-consumer of such

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confections) called *Le Neveu de Monseigneur* (première 7 August 1826) officially attributed to Morlacchi but which also included music by Pacini - both tarred with a Rossinian brush by the press (Rossini may in fact have had a hand in the project). The libretto was by Jean-François Bayard, Augusta Kernoc de Chamilly (pseud. Romieu), and Thomas-Marie-François Sauvage and based upon an episode in the life of Madame de Pompadour as recounted by her maid. Pacini's contribution could indeed have been selected by Rossini as arias from his operas had been in print in Paris and London for some time and there is no certainty that he acknowledged their use in this instance

<sup>vi</sup> Though the *secco* recitative had been discarded in Naples in opera seria - thanks to the French régime of Murat - the cembalo itself still made an appearance and the maestro was still obliged to sit at it for three uncomfortable days - a confrontation both of praise or blame on the part of habitually disrespectful audiences

<sup>vii</sup> Pacini op cit 46-7

<sup>viii</sup> One of them, unusually, and in order to exploit a house full to overflowing every evening, was for charity: Pasta notes in her diary that on 27 November was given a "*Niobe per poveri*"

<sup>ix</sup> But it was invariably lowered in key, there were no contenders for Rubini's top register. The autograph version of 'Il soave e bel contento' is in Eflat Major (with an *acuto* of D in alt), the published version (Ricordi) is in Bflat Major with an equivalent *acuto* of B flat (but the amendments to the fioriture of this latter version may well have been supplied by Pacini himself)

<sup>x</sup> *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Paris March 1835, 724

<sup>xi</sup> He also inserted it into his *Il pirata*, into Rossini's *Donna del lago* and *Mosé*, as well as into Pacini's *L'ultimo giorno di Pompei*. In an opportune fashion it was interpolated into revivals of *Gli arabi nelle Gallie* in none of which operas was it in the least bit appropriate

<sup>xii</sup> Cfr Alexander Weatherson *Frequent palpitation* [in] Donizetti Society Newsletter 133 (February 2018) 9-12 Can anyone imagine Maria Callas singing 'Di quella pira'?

<sup>xiii</sup> 20 November 1826

<sup>xiv</sup> Cfr Alexander Weatherson "*Nell'orror di mie sciagure*": *Pacini, parody and Il pirata* Atti del Convegno Internazionale 'Bellini : Verso l'edizione critica' (Siena 2000). Italian translation [in] Chigiana Vol. XLV: '*Nell'orror di mie sciagure*' *Pacini, La Parodia e Il Pirata* [in] 'Vincenzo Bellini Verso L'Edizione Critica'(Olschki, Firenze 2004), 219-244

<sup>xv</sup> Pacini, who had been appointed artistic director at the S.Carlo in 1823 may or may not have attended rehearsals of Bellini's *Bianca e Gertrude* in May 1826 as he later claimed. There is no evidence that they had actually met before this occasion

<sup>xvi</sup> Among the students encountered on this visit were Luigi Ricci and the very young Errico Petrella who was later to compose *Jone* (1858) with its catastrophic culminating eruption of Vesuvius in the manner of *L'ultimo giorno di Pompei*

<sup>xvii</sup> Pacini's first dedication to her dates back to 1826. Bellini made unsuccessful efforts to wrest her from this important rival and hopefully dedicated his *Bianca e Fernando* to her; she sent him a gold watch and chain in acknowledgment

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xviii The choice of plot - *pace* d'Arlicourt's 'Le Rénégat' which is the official source of Pacini's libretto - was not without a backward glance at the *Gli arabi nelle Gallie* of Franz (Francesco) Schoberlechner (1797-1843) which Pacini may have come across at Florence in 1815 and was revived at Lucca under the auspices of Pacini's patron the Duchess Maria Luisa di Borbone in 1819. The Austrian maestro was a friend of his father and had created a starring role for him in his *I virtuosi teatrali* at Florence in 1817. [Later, Schoberlechner may have returned the compliment to the son by re-setting his *Il barone di Dolsheim* (St.Petersburg 1828)] As for d'Arlicourt; *poete et romancier* Charles-Victor Prévost d'Arlicourt dit *Vicomte* d'Arlicourt was born at Magny-les-Hameaux in the château de Mérantais near Versailles on 26 September 1788, and died at Paris on 22 January 1856. He was a romantic cult figure of the day, the title of whose most famous work 'Le Solitaire' (1821) says everything about his poetical niche

xix In the Biblioteca del Conservatorio di S.Pietro a Majella in Naples . It dates from the last weeks of 1826

xx In particular, the modesty of the role of the soprano is very marked (the *musico* even at the beginning has a rather more important role). The soprano got a major foothold in later editions.

xxi Probably in response to Pasta's outrageous behaviour in appropriating the music of Rubini in *Niobe*. Pacini was never to warm to Pasta again

xxii Bellini, awaiting the outcome of this aria for the soprano who would become his Imogene in a matter of weeks, anxious that the *primadonna* should not upstage the music he was writing for her, said fearfully "*Certo faran furore*". In the event the cavatina did not "*faran furore*" but the *Amazilia* interpolation certainly did

xxiii A manuscript score in London's British Library (of c1832?) presents a version of *Gli arabi nelle Gallie* where Leodato has the major role, including a new contralto aria probably composed for Rosa Mariani (also an aria for the comprimario Zarele). These new changes may or may not have been performed in London as certainly the *primadonna* soprano Giulia Grisi would have held out against them

xxiv She gave birth in the following *Trovatore* where, singing Azucena, such an infant was in danger of being thrown on a bonfire it is to be supposed

xxv Cfr Alexander Weatherson *One size fits all/Pacini's Gli arabi nelle Gallie* [in] Donizetti Society Newsletter 96 (October 2005) 17-24

xxvi Pacini op cit 52

xxvii The Viennese public liked his operas, though the critics (as usual) did not; Pacini takes issue with those who simply wanted to denigrate Italian Opera '*ciò per volere abbassare gli Autori italiani*'

xxviii Bellini, with scant justification, was to cultivate the paranoid accusation that both Pacini and Donizetti maliciously appropriated his tragic colouring, the key structure and the protracted delirium of his heroine in *Il pirata* as if there had been no earlier precedents! His detestation of both these rivals - paradoxically - had its real genesis in the unclouded success of this work of genius which his limited self-esteem was never able to accept. But Pacini's earlier disdain in Naples was endorsed by the animosities of rival librettists. The letter's insistence that it was *he* who persuaded Barbaja to give Bellini his La Scala contract (which may perhaps have been true) compounded this paranoia

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xxix Meyerbeer's *Marguerite d'Anjou* (French version 1826) was unmistakably the inspiration for the plot and shared the same Pixérécourt source

xxx Pacini op cit 53

xxxi Bartolomeo Merelli (1793-1879) a pupil of Mayr, writing libretti both for Donizetti and Nicola Vaccai, he would later achieve notoriety as the *bête noir* of Giuseppe Verdi during the long years (1836-1850 and 1861-1863) when he was impresario at La Scala

xxxii Merelli [Cfr Marcello De Angelis *Le cifre del melodramma: l'archivio inedito dell'impresario teatrale Alessandro Lanari nella Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze (1815-1870)* (Firenze 1982) [Letter No. 103, 299] wrote from Milan to Alessandro Lanari on 20 August 1828 to say that *Per Dio non intendo cosa dice* was ready for staging, together with the costumes. He requests Lanari to beg Pacini not to renounce the project as the "Governor" has given permission to go ahead. But apparently Pacini did renounce the project

xxxiii Pacini never lacked allies or enemies in the musical press of Milan. *I Teatri*, edited by Gaetano Barbieri, invariably took up the cudgels on his behalf as did *La Fama*. These publications were mobilised for the forthcoming struggle he envisaged at this time.

xxxiv They had alternated in the "possession" of this particular goldmine: Rossi took possession first beginning with *Romilda e Costanza* (1817) and *Emma di Resburgo* (1819), but then Romani managed to seduce the wealthy maestro and supplied the texts for *Margherita d'Anjou* (1820) and *L'esule di Granata* (1822); unfortunately for this last, however, at the very crisis moment (it would be Meyerbeer's last Italian opera) Rossi snatched the crown with *Il crociato in Egitto* (1824) whose success was nothing less than sensational. Romani deeply resented Rossi's triumph and subsequently tried to oust Rossi from several of his contacts while the latter reciprocated in kind. One major reciprocation would be *I cavalieri di Valenza*

xxxv The working title of *I cavalieri di Valenza*

xxxvi On 26 April 1828

xxxvii Adelaide Castelli had died in childbirth, her orphaned child, christened Maria Amazilia, was immediately adopted by the kind *contessa* Samoyloff who brought her up like a daughter. She lived with her adoptive mother until she married the lawyer Achille Manara. An infant son, Carlo Ludovico (named after the *duca* di Lucca), had died only a few weeks before, aged one year

xxxviii Cfr Carmelo Neri *Vincenzo Bellini: Nuovo Epiostolario 1819-1835* (Aci Sant'Antonio 2005), Letter no 26, 57

xxxix Cfr Alexander Weatherson "Nell'orror di mie sciagure": Pacini, *La Parodia e Il Pirata* [in] Vincenzo Bellini verso L'edizione critica, Atti di Convegno Internazionale, Siena 2000, 219-244 (Olschki Firenze 2004)

xl "...dunque attacca il finale che è un tal porcheria inenarrabile con l'aggiunta che il Largo...è rubato dal quintetto di Meyerbeer nel Crociato: O cielo clemente e con l'istessa ripresa" Letter of Bellini to Florimo of 14 June 1828.  
Cfr Carmelo Neri op cit [Letter No. 43], 82-84.

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xli Bellini accused Pacini of pouncing-upon the tragic colouring, key structure and protracted delirium of his heroine in *Il pirata*, but it is not true, sometimes Pacini shadowed the obvious features of *Il pirata* for provocative reasons but that was all, when it came to the important features of the score, *I cavalieri di Valenza* was radically different. Bellini's accusation that his rival's opera was "all in a minor key" parroted critical jibes that Pacini had written a duet in a minor key throughout, refusing a resolution in the major, but Pacini - whose duets had long been full of bold tonal experiments - had long preceded Bellini in this respect - his gran'duetti were in full display in *l'ultimo giorno di Pompei* - an opera actually on stage at La Scala at precisely the time Bellini was writing *Il pirata* (as well as being sung by the same cast for whom he was composing)

xlii Pacini alluded to the fact that the plot of *Il pirata* - whatever Romani's purported source - was simply another variant of the Gabriella di Vergy story which had been going round Italy for a decade (*Gabriella di Vergi* by Michele Carafa - a friend of Bellini - had initially been staged at the Teatro del Fondo in Naples in 1816)

xliii Antonio Ghislanzoni (1824-1893) *libro serio* (Milan 1879), 18

xliv Calisto Bassi (1800-1860) was the poetic standby at La Scala, his name is not mentioned in the printed libretto of *I crociati a Tolemaide*

xlv The aria 'Occulto a lei che adoro' was one of his all-time showpieces, florid but irresistibly haunting with its triple-time lilt

xlvi On 27 September 1828, together with two new pieces for Camporesi

xlvii Barbieri was the author and publisher of a series of translations "trasporta in versi italiani dal Professore G.Barbieri" entitled "Repertorio scelto ad uso de'teatrici italiani (pub. 1823-4), including translations of Moliere and other French plays. In early life he had made his living teaching Italian to tourists, he had graduated to music journalism only in 1827 publishing the periodical *I Teatri* in Milan in partnership with his printer and a friend. His rather odd struggle to survive in earlier years endowed him with a romantic aura *sui genesis* and his erratic fount of knowledge proved useful to the composer (who, characteristically, made fun of him, insisting that he had taught mathematics in his youth and that "le formole algebriche mal si confanno colla poesia")

xlviii The aria was the celebrated 'Immagine adorata' (Ezilda) first sung at the revival of the *Gli arabi nelle Gallie* at the Teatro Argentina on 17 January 1829

xlix A Meyerbeer valedictory title with Sir Walter Scott as its catalyst, thus he made a bridge with his operas in the coming decade

<sup>l</sup> It is clear (from his family opera *Il convitato di pietra*) that Pacini tried out the music of *Il talsmano* on his siblings in preliminary rehearsal - but this was almost certainly a practice he had initiated in earlier years

li Pacini to Gaetano Barbieri, letter of 8 July 1829 (Private Collection)

lii In all probability this was the libretto that would be set by Luigi Ricci at the end of the year (*Annibale in Torino*, Teatro Regio, Turin, 26 December 1830). Its text was published as by "N.N" but was in fact by Romani who made repeated attempts to cover his tracks by subterfuge in this particular period of theatrical deviousness

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liii *Harmonicon* 1830,42: The reason for the change of cavatina is relatively simple, Joséphine Fodor-Mainvielle sang ‘Della rosa il bel vermiglio’ from *Bianca e Falliero*, whose recitative (‘Come sereno il di’) was considered more appropriate to the occasion than the text supplied to Pacini by his librettist Emmanuele Vaccaro. *Harmonicon* also insists that Pacini took twenty-four days to write his music which is highly improbable – in such a time he would have composed an entire opera!

liv Friedrich Lippman *Giovanni Pacini: Bemerkungen zum Stil seiner Opern* [in] Chigiana (Siena 1968)

lv Queen Maria Isabella had been deprived of the Royal Gala on her name day (19 November) as a result of Tosi’s illness

lvi *Harmonicon* 1830, 90

lvii On 13 April 1829 Vaccai had reported in a letter to his friend Viezzoli “*Egli mi assicurò che Bellini non è ancora scritturato per la seconda Opera giacchè avanzò le sue pretese troppo esagerate, a cui il Crivelli non intende di accedere.*”

Cfr Commons ed. *Il carteggio personale di Nicola Vaccaj, Vol 1*, Letter 235, 753

lviii The *Saul* affair was truly unfortunate, especially for Vaccaj, this tragedia lirica with an excellent libretto by Romani it had been delayed from month to month. Scheduled for performance at the S. Carlo in the autumn of 1828, as a letter in the Archivio di Stato from the *Segretario di Stato per L’Affari Interni* of 22 January 1829 makes clear, the Soprintendente de’Teatri thought that, on mature consideration, “*Saulle*” was too serious for the projected Royal staging “*Fu risoluto. D’accordo coll’Impresario, di darsi la rappresentazione di quest’opera in un altro epoca*”. Cfr Fascia 4661 Gran’Archivio di Stato, Napoli.

As a result, Vaccaj who had not paid the poet for the libretto (he was *careful* with money), fell foul of Romani. When he was offered another date for *Saul* with a brand new cast he asked Romani to make changes but Romani insisted upon cash-down before he wrote another word. Irritated, Vaccaj asked Tottola to do the changes instead thus doubling his offence. The following quite extensive portions were revised or rewritten by Tottola. (Was Tottola *paid* for his services?):

Act 1	Sc 6	Cavatina Se il braccio mio guidasti’ (except recit.) (David)‘
	Sc 7	[all this scene] Duetto (Micol/David)
Act II	Sc 1	[all this scene] Duetto (Saul/Achimelech)
	Sc 2	[all this scene] Duetto (Pitonessa/Saul)
	Sc 6	Final quatrain Cabaletta (Micol)
	Sc 8	[all this scene] Duetto con coro (Gionata/David)
	Sc 10	Final two lines of Cabaletta (Saul)
		Finale- Intervention of Saul

In the event, as it transpired, *Saul* had been delayed so long that the original cast had come back to Naples and Vaccai reversed all the Tottola changes and the opera was received very happily at the S. Carlo on 11 March 1829 with the verses Romani had supplied in the first place. But Romani never forgave him (was he ever paid?) and it led to the dereliction of the libretto of his one real success - *Giulietta e Romeo* - handed over to Bellini in an act of malice

lix Almost certainly he had pleaded illness, enabling Bellini to broadcast widely in Venice that his illness would oblige him to renounce there too. Only when the Romani/Bellini *coup* against Pacini and Vaccaj had been accomplished in Venice, did Romani supply an *Annibale in Torino* text for Luigi Ricci. (Teatro Regio, Turin 26 December 1830)



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lx The librettist was the *cavaliere* Paolo Polo, a local dilettante; the prima of Persiani's opera was not 15 December 1829 as given in the *Cronache* of the Teatro La Fenice by Dalla Libera, but 26 December (S.Stefano) as is confirmed by the Bolognese Journal 'Teatri, Arte e Letteratura' of 7 January 1830

lxi *Revue Musicale*, Paris 1829, 594

lxii Neri op cit Letter No. 105, 156-7

lxiii It is obvious that Romani's presence was essential for the *rifacimento* of Vaccai's text as in all previous collaborations with Bellini. Important autograph portions in full score of *I Capuleti*, however, from the end of Sc. 2 and the whole of Sc.3 of Act I; including the famous cabaletta 'La tremenda ultrice spada' for Romeo, are dated 1829 (ie well before there was any question of Pacini's "defection"). They were sold as from the collection of Giovanni Battista Perucchini by Christies in London on 10 May 1977: "*The present MS has been compared with the earliest known vocal score of I Capuleti published by Ricordi in circa 1830, and with a modern full-score issued, also by Ricordi, in circa 1955: in both of these texts the particular sections of the opera represented by the MS., there basically in A flat, are transposed a semi-tone down into G major. This probably indicates an alteration made for Giuditta Grisi: and either that A flat was the original key, and that this was subsequently lowered in the score as finally performed and published in G major to suit the mezzo-soprano compass; or that the present MS. was a temporary revision in A flat, designed to show off her high notes to better advantage. In possible support of the first mentioned suggestion, it should be noted that Tibaldo's recitative 'Di tanto bene mi persuade amor'... which immediately precedes the section under consideration, does indeed close on a convenient cadence of A flat.*"

[Note by the compiler of Christies catalogue]

This, and other comments, readily confirm that the scheme to replace Pacini was initiated well before the actual *coup*, and that some of the new text had already been supplied ('La tremenda ultrice spada' was not part of Vaccai's original text) indeed - in spite of insistence upon the "haste" with which Bellini was "obliged to compose his score" - some of it had only to be tailored to the Venice cast. Some instrumentation would also appear to be in evidence, however provisional, at this early stage. Bellini was a guest of Perucchini during "part of his stay in Venice"

lxiv Neri op cit Letter No. 101, p153. *Cfr* De Angelis op cit (n23) 27. The affairs of La Fenice had been handed-over to Giuseppe Crivelli, Bellini was trying to go over his head such was the prize almost within his grasp. It should be made clear that whereas Romani's motivation in replacing Vaccai's libretto of *Giulietta e Romeo* with that of *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* for Bellini was that of revenge, that of Bellini in replacing Pacini was that of money. He resented Pacini's ability to undercut all his rivals.

lxv "*Pacini arrived here on the 5th of January, to complete the composition of the opera of Romani, which he had undertaken to prepare for the Carnival*". *Harmonicon* (reporting from Milan) 1830, 133

lxvi A draft only of *Olga* remains in the Fondo Galletti of the Archivio di Stato in Milan, it was certainly derived from the play by Jacques Arsène Polycarpe François Ancelot 'Olga, ou L'orpheline moscovite', a *tragédie en cinq actes* of 1828, but more pertinently was yet another *semi-rifacimento* of the text supplied to Rastrelli in 1824 for La Scala: *Amina o L'innocenza perseguitata*, which failed and whose argument Ferretti had had the intemperance to emulate for his *L'orfanella di Ginevra* (1829) with music by Luigi Ricci [Additional sources may well have included Giovanni Galzerani's ballet 'L'orfanella di Ginevra' and Luigi Marchionni's prose version *L'orfanella della Svizzera* which was going the rounds]. It is probable that

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Pacini's incomplete *Olga* was subsumed into the libretto of *La sonnambula* the following year thus Romani could happily present his friend Bellini with a perfect *compte rendu* of all possible and impossible antagonists. [Donizetti also (another "nemico") had set some of Rastrelli's text under the mysterious title *La bella prigionera* (a brief section in vocal score only remains) but which may simply have been composed for a pasticcio opera attributed to Giacomo Cordella with exactly this title given at the Teatro del Fondo in Naples (Lib.N.N) in 1826]

<sup>lxvii</sup> Its prima at La Fenice was on 11 March 1830. The *Presidenza* would soon be aware, however, of the extent to which their season had been manipulated, and offered Pacini compensatory contracts for the rest of his life

<sup>lxviii</sup> For a modern clinical account of Bellini's illness and death [see] (Dr) Nino Cannavà *La causa di morte di Vincenzo Bellini* (Catania 2002)