

Chapter Four

“*Un misérable eunuque*”

He had his Spring contract, his librettist was by his side and he had sympathy galore - no one whatsoever in musical circles in Milan could have been unaware of the Venetian scam,ⁱ from now on the guilty pair would be viewed askance by operatic managements throughout the peninsula. The direction of La Scala - only too willing to be supportive - agreed against all their usual caution to a religious heroine to fulfil Pacini's contractual engagement and *Giovanna d'Arco* was the result - a saintly martyr bedevilled not just by the familiar occult and heretic foes but by the dilatory behaviour of the librettist in question - Gaetano Barbieri - who confessed that only half his text was actually in hand when rehearsals began in February 1830.

Even if the great theatre was not unduly dismayed by the delay that resulted it put the opera and its composer into bad odour with its audience, after excuse after excuse and postponement after postponement of the *prima*, Pacini was obliged to ask the Chief of Police to impose a measure of calm and it was only at the very last gasp of the season that the curtains parted on his *Giovanna* and then before a sea of angry faces. The composer was hissed as he took his seat at the *cembalo* but smiled merely as they were confronted by a genuine novelty: Henriette Méric-Lalande in bed asleep. Her “*dream aria*” in which the *bienheureuse* greets her sacred destiny met with murmurs (Italian audiences seldom warmed to devotional intimacies on stage) but her truly seraphic cavatina, immaculately sung, brought them down to earth like a perfect miracle. Librettist and composer had thrown caution to the winds with the plot, *Giovanna* was allowed her “English” lover (Leonello) that Schiller had put into his play - an entanglement regarded as sacrilegious even when sung by Rubini (Temistocle Solera with his “*diluted Schiller*” of fifteen years later for a far more timid Verdi cut him out); Antonio Tamburini made everyone laugh with his portrayal of the tongue-tied Dauphin (Carlo VII in the opera), and so did Méric-Lalande in her *décolleté* suit of armour - her second-act entrance provoked such a gale of laughing that she was left momentarily helpless. Instead of an odour of sanctity this historical confection turned out to be an opera of unexpectedly good humour, of cheers and counter-cheers, and replete with all the awaited belcantist moments

of glory. Cambiasi gave it a “*Buono*” on 14 March 1830 (three days after the perjured *Capuleti* in Venice) and it stormed through the remaining dates of the season. Each night Giovanna’s *rondò finale* was heard “*con trasporto*” according to the press and arias and duets from this opera by Pacini found themselves applauded in profane Italian drawing room surroundings in the next decade.

Once the season had come to a close and he had taken stock of the immediate situation Pacini took coach to Paris where his *L'ultimo giorno di Pompei* was scheduled to appear at the Théâtre-Italien. He left with a sigh of relief. In no hurry, taking his time to get there arm-in-arm with the *contessa* Samoyloff they set foot on the famed cobbles of the “*operatic capital of the world*” early in July only to find them being torn-up to throw at the army of the Bourbon successor of his Carlo VII, Charles X. ⁱⁱ The theatre closed almost immediately and his opera was shelved. After a week they set off home. This useless visit was a portent: he never took to France and France never took to him. He did, however, bring back some ideas for future operatic fodder from the load of books that came back in his carriage - a speculative *Maria Stuarda*ⁱⁱⁱ (thanks to his recent reflections upon decapitated queens) and a *Conte di Lennox*. By the time they got back home he had alighted upon a plot he had found in a volume in his lap: the poems of Lord Byron. Though “dead and damned” in smart circles in his native country George Gordon, Lord Byron was deified across the channel largely because his treacherous muse made more sense under skies wider and more dangerous than those of London. *Byronic* expertise in a Barbieri translation being thin-on-the-ground, Jacopo Ferretti - the hard-pressed librettist recruited for his next opera - chose to extract a ready-made argument from a sleezy five-act ballet scenario *Il corsaro* by Giovanni Galzerani first danced at La Scala on 18 August 1826.

It was not a wise choice.

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His affiliation with the papal capital not quite extinct, Pacini had received a flattering commission from the Teatro Apollo to inaugurate a spectacular season on its sumptuously restored stage. The former lover of the *principessa* Borghese responded almost sentimentally and the Duca Torlonia - who owned the Apollo

made him feel at home. Preparation went well: Ferretti's completed text was in his hands by the first week of November and the orchestral score was ready for rehearsal by 12 December. Alas the best laid plans would lead to the most solemn fiasco of his career. One erasing all recollection of previous shipwrecks.

All the ingredients for success were in place on the night of 15 January 1831. An auditorium decked with flowers; enough illumination to light the entire Piazza del Campidoglio; ranks of gilded Roman *noblesse* with their irreverent progeny spread out in the surrounding tiers of boxes *en grande tenue* for a gala occasion, with the Duca and his aged mother at the centre - Giulia Samoyloff at their elbow so extravagantly garbed that she was ironically applauded when she made her entrance...

As a bonus the twenty-two year old Felix Mendelssohn had taken his seat in the parterre. He would be an important witness to a major discomfort - eager to be just but far from dispassionate he was travelling around Italy with his German rectitude like an outsize suitcase bumping into his good intentions. Despite a general wish to be pleased finding himself quite unable to cope with Italian *désinvolture* and taste for last-minute improvisation. A very young man programmed to suspect any music beyond the heaven-sent barrier of the Alps and never willing to grasp the fact that audiences went to the opera to be entertained and not to be cowed by imposing conceptions.

He wrote two days after the prima of Pacini's *Il corsaro*: "*performance here is quite out of the question. The orchestras are worse than anyone could believe...the great singers have left the country, Lablache, David, Lalande, Pisaroni...sing in Paris*"^{iv}

After this priceless piece of misinformation, he undertook a graphic description of the ensuing disorderly prima so well-chosen for his theme. To everyone else the evening was probably exceptionally diverting – certainly memorable, Pacini was cheered when he sat down at the *cembalo*, everyone was determined to have a good time even though the opera opened abruptly without either overture or prelude and the curtains parted with most spectators still deposing wraps and settling into their seats (some having waited five hours to get into the house)

But things began well. Mendelssohn reported that the singers bowed to the State Box (Rosa Mariani after her cavatina) and the *maestro* below. But before long things began to get out of hand: a cross-dressed Corrado engaged himself

in distinctly outré embraces with two female lovers (Ferretti made weak excuses for these Galzerani touches in his printed text) which provoked some tittering. It encouraged the young bloods in the boxes to make subdued comments - echoing the transports on stage and singing-along slyly with the music. A crescendo of discontent gradually mounted: the jeunesse signalled to their friends, they pulled faces and enjoyed themselves hugely. By the time of the *finale primo* the house was simmering, in ferment with whistles, catcalls, protests at the catcalling, rude gestures and reproaches at the rude gestures by the elders. The Ducal proprietor left abruptly, the *contessa* Samoyloff too (or swooned – according to a malicious press). Pacini abandoned his *cembalo* and bolted backstage.

An intermission ballet (not by Pacini) *Barbebleu* was whistled like a fully-fledged tornado. This notwithstanding, Act II of the ill-fated *Corsaro* was at the nadir of all fiaschi; barracked from beginning to end with the singers struggling to be heard against a ground-bass of slow-handclapping from the *jeunesse dorée* and the performance reduced to a siege-economy of useless gestures and vocal marking.

Mendelssohn was outraged, especially at the treatment of Pacini. How could a civilised people so behave? The dignity of music was at stake (not the dignity of Italian opera - he dismissed *Il corsaro* though of course he never heard it performed or studied the score) “*I should have been angry if the music had created a furore, because it is so wretched as to be beneath criticism. But that they should turn their back on their adored Pacini, whom they wanted to garland on the Capitol, ape and caricature his melodies, makes me angry too and it shows how low a composer stands in their general esteem. On another occasion they would carry him home on their shoulders*”.^v

Once the adored Felix Mendelssohn, his self-esteem fully intact, his judgement in place had shaken off the dust of the venerable capital with its despicable mœurs *Il corsaro* picked up and went-on to be applauded - even if Pacini was not carried home on anyone’s shoulders (*Barbebleu* having been suppressed). But audiences were thin and after the first four performances ticket prices were reduced. Its composer was understandably indignant, complaining of the circus mentality of Roman youth. He had thought well of his score, its

qualities and potential had fallen to infantile caprice (a criticism that might also be extended to that of the visiting prodigy)

The history of this opera needs special coverage. The fact is there are two *quite distinct versions* of Pacini's *Il corsaro* - each vastly different irrespective of inexpert comment and unprepared antagonists.^{vi} Had any Roman or the German perception been present it would have been able to relish the most engaging series of duets and trios for every combination of the soprano/contralto timbre the post-belcanto stage could devise. Graceful to a fault, a light-headed feminine spoof clothed in some of the most delectable music the composer would ever write. History has not yet finished with these two *corsari*. But the age was not enlightening ^{vii}

Summer in Viareggio was not marked by the annual rush to complete a score, its sole venture was a birthday cantata for Giulia Samoyloff upset by theatrical misadventure - a votive offering for a vestal but no longer in all probability a mistress.^{viii} The cantata was sung by members of his family at the Villa Pacini on 28 July 1831.^{ix} Nor was the following winter in Naples especially full of music; he worked on a recuperative revision of the score of his *Il corsaro* commissioned for Milan but otherwise supplied only another royal cantata - but an especially important one - for the wedding of Ferdinando II of the Two Sicilies^x to the later beatified Maria Cristina of Savoy. A suitably lavish score for a national celebration.

But this year of confrontations, celebrations and disasters would continue to the very end. The event on the horizon would be Bellini's *Norma*. Did Pacini engage a clique to *jeer* his rival's masterpiece at La Scala on 26 December 1831?

It would have been perfectly understandable had he done so. His grievance was obvious. Further to the shamelessly unrepentant glee of the Venetian duo it is clear that *Norma* was an additional taunt - a deliberately provocative *rifacimento* of an earlier opera by Pacini^{xi} chosen by the poisonous poet to avenge both the culprits for the operatic disdain they encountered everywhere for their scurvy behavior.

But there were other contestants in the ring where the initial booing of *Norma* was concerned. For some time Milan had been split musically: La Scala and

the Teatro Carcano had been disputing an innovative operatic crown. The Duca Litta - head of a celebrated musical dynasty as well as that of the triumvirate that ruled the Carcano - had featured Giuditta Pasta and Giovanni-Battista Rubini together on its smaller stage for the brilliantly successful prima of Donizetti's *Anna Bolena* as the carnival opening the preceding year.^{xii} The discarded English queen was a role Pasta would cherish to the end of her singing career. Carcano's triumph had been especially persuasive for its operatic status in the city and the noble Duca had become obsessed with idea of taking over La Scala in its highly applauded wake.

But the Imperial and Royal rival put up a spirited defence. To the fury of the Carcano triumvirate the La Scala impresario Giuseppe Crivelli managed to lure away Pasta with an offer of vast sums of money in order to embellish *his* next carnival, and this time with a *cartellone* only feasible by a truly powerful establishment: a *prima* by Bellini; another by Donizetti; a revival of *Anna Bolena* on its much larger stage^{xiii} and adding – so as not to take sides – a consoling reedition of Pacini's blighted *Il corsaro* revoking the sins of Rome. However well or badly intentioned thus bringing into play all the major composers; all the major musical contestants; and most of the truly celebrated singers - invoking all the current conflicts and thereby ensuring that *Norma* would bear the brunt of one of the most memorably unjust brandings of operatic legend.^{xiv}

Pacini's much later attempt to blow out the candles burning before the shrine of his (by then defunct) rival is here worthy of recording: "*Bellini era affabile, di maniere gentili, aveva però (sia detto con qualche riserva) aveva un poco troppo di eccessivo amor proprio.*"^{xv}

It is clear that both La Scala and *Norma* were to become a target for ducal wrath. The Carcano triumvirate was insistent that Crivelli and his purloined diva Giuditta Pasta should pay dearly for this betrayal^{xvi} - this seduction of their star singer together with the opera it had commissioned. What part did the fatal *contessa* play in the standoff? She was a kinswoman of the Duca Litta, she was the "*maitresse en titre*" of his intolerable *nemico*. Bellini did not hesitate to

blame her for the events that ensued.^{xvii} All the booing and disruption of Norma's *prima*. As so often with the angelic maestro any theatrical *setback* he suffered must be attributed to the failings of anyone but himself.

The *contessa* being perfectly indignant at his crass behavior had every reason to punish Bellini and possibly she booed with all the rest (behind her fan). But organising a *claque*? That is something a Russian aristocrat could not do. And Pacini? He insists he was present.^{xviii} But his presence is an irrelevance. It was a matter of indifference to him who controlled La Scala or where Pasta sang^{xix} and he could have had no illusions about Bellini's ability to compose for any theatre he chose. He will have remarked only that *Norma* was a final resting place for various earlier *pezzi* that in this opera found a better home but did not take the trouble to point it out loud and clear. If he was in fact present at the contested *prima* it is equally certain he took no active part, he was too conspicuous a figure to join in a *claque* in view of the bad blood that had been shed. Everyone would have kept him in view. In any event history has not bothered to record that his own *Corsaro* would receive an equally crass reception from Bellini's posse of admirers with an equally disruptive *début*.

Calm having been restored Pacini set off for La Fenice and Venice where he was invited to fulfil his blighted contract of two years before.^{xx} He took with him the almost complete score of *Gusmano d'Almeida ossia Il rinnegato portoghese* with a libretto by Luigi Romanelli, but on arrival at La Fenice and witnessing at first hand Domenico Reina's poor vocal condition (among other undisclosed factors) decided to shelve *Gusmano* and write a replacement opera on the spot.^{xxi} It is thus that his *Ivanhoe* came into existence. With a text by Gaetano Rossi, the poet *in situ* who supplied a voluble argument that Pacini set to music without taking breath (in one month but with some small sections borrowed from *Gusmano d'Almeida*)

Ivanhoe was yet another Scott paraphrase if not quite as bowdlerised^{xxii} as earlier examples and in which Pacini made an attempt to evoke the world of the Templars crossed with Robin Hood. This opera had a decided ease; appearing very late in the season on 9 March 1832, just like *Giovanna d'Arco* having the shortest of runs, it was cheered to the echo. Rosalbina Carradori-Allan as Rebecca (a star in *Capuleti*) made a *furore* with her florid cabaletta 'Dal cielo mi

scende'; there was an extraordinary series of *terzetti* in Act II; as for the despised Reina in the role of Briano de Boisguilbert he had a brilliant reception with music perfectly tailored to his restricted means (Pacini was probably the most expert musical couturier of them all). "*Cantante pieno d'anima ed attore perfetto*" he calls him shamelessly in his memoirs.

Ivanhoe became a favourite, though revivals were kept for special occasions - the opera's medieval mystique, colourful instrumentation and cunning *mise-en-scène* did much to advance a Waverley vogue that would feature in this decade. And contemporary publicity recognised its worth: a widely circulated lithograph in Europe depicted Bellini with *Norma* under his arm, Donizetti with *Anna Bolena*, and Pacini with *Ivanhoe* clasped to his bosom.

Our operatic world has forgotten such an image.

And its success in fact concealed a false dawn. Pacini now was increasingly out on a limb. The operas that followed were consumer products that failed to sell. The summer was given to feverish composition: Pacini found it hard to stop writing without devising any new initiative. He claims he was studying Haydn and Mozart and perhaps he was on this occasion as he dashed off an *Il convitato di pietra* for a family gathering in the salon of the Belluomini home of his sister. Very little documentation for this bucolic enterprise has survived. It would appear that the active perpetrator was Gaetano Barbieri among whose published translations^{xxiii} was a "Don Giovanni ossia Il convitato di Pietra" a translation of Molière's 'Dom Juan' of 1665 which would seem to have been his sole qualification for compiling the composite text for his friend. Pacini's family opera is an offering high on nostalgia, mixing affectionate souvenirs of Papa's cronies – Gazzaniga and Foppa - with echoes of his own adolescent theatrical baptism (*Gli sponsali de'silfi* of 1815 for example) and other stints of significance to himself, his close-knit family, and a small knot of valued aficionados. There was a musical backing of flutes, piccolo and strings to be consigned to a band of willing dilettante but the vocal requirements of this mini-operatic spoof were anything but *amateur*: his sister Claudia as Zerlina - the *primadonna* of the piece - has a show-stopping 'Sento brillarmi il core'^{xxiv} which she sang triumphantly; his brother Francesco as Don Giovanni was required to sing a Barbieri *Romanza* written for Rubini,^{xxv} Francesco's wife Rosa (in the

role of Donna Anna) together with a probable pupil of Luigi Pacini - Giovanni Billé (singing both Masetto and the Commendatore) had important roles while Luigi himself was cast hilariously as Ficcanaso, an all-purpose Leporello set up with mockingly geriatric patter to echo a career that had conquered the stage. A tiny all-male chorus faced notable vocal challenges.

The two acts of *Il convitato di pietra* based on a mismatch of texts proved to be a tender introduction to a truly trying year. By mid-August he was back in Naples ^{xxvi} where he completed the unfinished *Gli Elvezj o sia Corrado di Tochenburgo*, an opera he had begun sketching two years earlier as yet another installment of his contract. No doubt its librettist Gaetano Rossi had urged him to look at it again. If so, it was not good advice. The score was slow in gestation, always a bad sign with Pacini, staged on 12 January 1833 it proved an excessively lachrymose diatribe not at all suitable for the birthday celebrations of anyone - certainly not the King who was eager only to hear his favorite *primadonna*, the opulent Giuseppina Ronzi De Begnis (“*bella quanta brava*”) who had been given the gloomy role of Idalide against all practical considerations.

Nothing caught fire, there were endless recitatives and neither Lablache (in the title role) nor the tenor of the moment Nicola Ivanoff had enough to sing as the audience complained bitterly (Ivanoff had no real aria - only a declamatory interlude, anathema in Naples, and small parts in ensembles!) An audience eagerly awaiting vocal fireworks from such stars expressed themselves suitably - that is, the opera was heard in silence not due to the presence of the king but as the only option (booing was not feasible at a royal gala). Idalide’s *scena finale* “Ode un sospir che lugubre” put an obvious dampener on everyone and everything.

Pacini refers to this *Gli Elvezj* as “*questa mia debolissima opera.*” ^{xxvii} Hardly pausing to take this check in his stride, he had another score ready for the San Carlo by the early summer. It was the even more “*debolissima.*” *Fernando, duca di Valenza* which not only had a routine text by that *cavaliere* Paolo Pola (the poet who had wrecked Giuseppe Persiani’s incipient fame in Venice) but boasted a lacklustre series of events and an unconvincingly benevolent hero whose name was intended to flatter its royal dedicatee. ^{xxviii} At the mercy of the same disillusioned cast as the last opera (but now with Reina instead of Ivanoff)

and despite extravagant scenery and costumes, limped on stage on 30 May 1833 and off again after two meagre evenings. It is doubtful if Ferdinando II was enchanted by the depiction of his adored soprano as a schoolmarm. Pacini was dismayed. He felt that even if these two scores did not quite live up to his chain of successes in the past they were not devoid of merit but merely victims of his slavish contract.

Escaping an incandescent summer of Naples he was in Florence in July (where he wrote an album item for a primadonna heroine to feature in an unknown future Augusta Albertini-Baudardé), and then was home in Viareggio by August. If morale was lacking and there was a hint of a career in crisis - he managed to conceal it.

Or at least he managed to conceal it from his close friends. One of the best descriptions of the composer comes from the travel diary of John Orlando Parry^{xxix} a British musician and entertainer who spent some months in Naples in the later part of 1833. This diary supplies the most detailed account of life in the southern capital at its ultimate musical flowering.

He arrived there in time to hear a revival of *I fidanzati* (*Il contestabile di Chester*); or more strictly, a part of it, as the routine evening at the San Carlo consisted of a mixed-bag of bits from various current scores pumped-up with ballet and an assemblage of random scenery and costumes.

In this way the evening of 29 September 1833 consisted of Acts I and II of *Il contestabile di Chester* followed by a new ballet *Il conte di Pini* with music by Paolo Samengo, its star ballerino. This was the actual draw: most of the spectators arriving just as the operatic component was coming to an end. It was as well. There was no libretto for the two acts of Pacini's opera, no singers were announced, the music began without overture or introduction of any kind and the artists scampered through their roles attracting very little attention from a half-empty house. In the course of the singing, the King - who had earlier been seen passing through the streets of Naples preceded by an equerry on horseback brandishing a flaming torch - stole quietly into his private box at the left of the stage (it consisted of three small boxes thrown together, hung with azure silk and ablaze with lights). In vain this discreet royal entrance - ignoring the opera on stage and everyone else, all the officers in the parterre rose stiffly to attention,

saluted, and the King bowed. Parry was far more impressed by the ballet than with the opera, and for good reason; *Il conte di Pini* was truly spectacular, coming to an climax with a ballroom-scene full of walzing couples which was suddenly blown to smithereens to the huge delight of a now thronging audience. The San Carlo ballet thrived on spectacular depiction of the most expensive and revolutionary kind.

Parry gives a candid description of the Real Teatro in terms worthy of any English Mendelssohn:

“I now saw the great size of the stage for when the lady (prima donna!) came near the foot lights she looked like a dwarf. We could hardly hear her, the band was all “smothered like”, no distinction, yet they played very well & it is a tremendous orchestra, upward of 100 performers. But of all poor, stupid, dismal operas I have ever heard this was the worst – Pacini is idolised here! The singers were most wretched, everyone sang as sharp as possible! Oh! Horrible!”^{xxx}

The entertainment, such as it was, was not expensive for the audience. He paid five *carlini* for his seat which he explains was the equivalent then of two shillings (€0.08). Parry’s visit was followed by another in Naples - to the miniscule Teatro Fenice where *farsa* was the rule with a twice-nightly programme. Here he paid even less, sat in a cellar-like auditorium (the theatre was partly underground), and amid a stifling pack of spectators heard a revival of Luigi Ricci’s *Il diavolo condannato nel mondo a prender moglie* (the devil having been obliged to marry a Frenchwoman who made him suffer), a triumphantly xenophobic comedy which had been playing in Naples for more than a decade. The twenty-strong orchestra played expertly and Parry was entranced by the wit and immediacy of the Italian popular stage, the women were pretty, the audience very involved everyone shouting back at the singer’s sallies in Neapolitan dialect:

“The whole of the performance did ample justice to the very pretty & pleasing music of Signor Ricci... There was a man who played a Creditor & is supposed to be sent mad, by enchantment – he was dreadfully thin, and very funnily dressed, and when his mad fit came on he put himself in most horrid and ridiculous shapes & and improvised poetry etc etc – that convulsed the people with laughter... Altogether I do not know when I was more pleased & delighted with a piece... the opera was over by 11 (poor things they had been performing since four!”^{xxxi}

John Orlando Parry met Pacini in person on the Sunday evening performance (27 October 1833) of *Guglielmo Tell*^{xxxii} at the San Carlo. Once more he was unawed:

“The piece was (with the exception of Lablache) very badly executed - ! horrible dresses, scenery...I never saw anything worsely done – Signor David’s singing was the most wretched! No voice! No effect! No music! And they applauded him to the skys (sic)!” In the middle of the performance Pacini came into the box and he made his acquaintance: *“He is such a funny man! Full of frolic! Full of wit – in less than five minutes we were all as well acquainted as if we had known each other for years.”* It cannot be said in fact that in this stressful period the composer was behaving well. On 29 October they met again this time at the Real Teatro del Fondo to attend the *prima* of a new opera by Tomás Genovès, a Spanish maestro whose operatic fortunes had never been sparkling. Parry’s description of this secondary Royal Theatre is devastating:

“Of all the horrid, dirty, filthy, mean, poor, despicable shabby places I ever saw, this beat them! - It is really dropping to pieces for the want of a bit of paint etc – Dreadfully dark! – the ceiling – with holes knocked thro’it - ! Cob-webs hanging from it etc etc & filth too much to name – However the Neapolitan gentry suffer it to remain in such a shocking state – is a great wonder! The orchestra (or rather I should say) the front of the stage is quite circular – where the foot lights are – so that the light is thrown more on the actors and scenery – than in our theatres – & besides the singer or performer comes more into the house – when he has anything particular to communicate”^{xxxiii}

It seems there was very little to communicate on this “circular” stage on this occasion. Genovès’ opera *Bianca di Belmonte*, despite the presence of Lablache in the cast, went the way of all the rest of his operas - it was Pacini who provided the entertainment of the evening (especially for the inhabitants of the boxes nearby) sweeping cobwebs down with a giant broom he had found outside and making jokes: *“He made us laugh very much”*. His pranks on this occasion, his disrespect for a fellow contender for operatic fame (and Genovès was a friend) was the stuff that provoked the alarmed distaste of the prissy Bellini, his bosom pal Florimo and the envious Mercadante.

He would reap this whirlwind. Pacini was staying in the Palazzo Barbaja, a fellow guest with Maria Malibran for whom he was writing a new opera to be staged one month after the *Bianca* of the unfortunate Genovès. Her fame was so mesmerising that no composer could ever hope to achieve a complete collaboration - being too cowed to assert themselves according to some of his rivals - but Pacini had fallen under her spell on hearing her Ninetta in a performance of Rossini's *La gazza ladra* that had bowled him over.

It was a subjugation shared by John Orlando Parry: "*twas in some parts really too much. What a splendid creature she is! - what a voice.*"

It is in these terms only that we can witness Malibran's impact. Accused of an addiction to champagne and frivolity Pacini leaped to her defence; he reported that she behaved admirably to everyone, rich or poor, noble or otherwise, that she spoke five languages, scarcely ate or drank even though her energy, caprice, resilience and repartee displayed some of the unfeminine attributes of an Amazon. They seem to have spent more time in high jinks in a happy cohabitation than in rehearsal. Pacini accepted the libretto of *Irene o L'assedio di Messina* even though he felt it flawed to an extent that he was obliged to apologise for its defects in advance publicity - invoking a specifically *catanese* claim that this improbably bloody tale of historical Sicily was based on an account written by a *palermitano* hero!

Parry was present at the *prima*:

"*It is called "Irene" or "The Siege of Messina". - It is very well cast, - with Malibran - Rinzt (sic), Lablache, David (!), Reina - Ambroggi (sic) etc etc., Malibran has several showy duets, scenes and a grand dashing finale (à la "Non piu mesta"). - David sung as usual up to the moon - attitudinising - etc etc. The Introduction is very good indeed...there was some hissing at the end and also a great deal of applause. - Malibran, Pacini, Lablache & David were called on after it was finished. But it has not made that "furore" that was expected - "The little Woman" made a great deal of her Finale, which she sang most splendidly...it was so dreadfully long - began at ^{1/2} 7 and did not finish until 11!"*^{xxxiv}

To some extent the composer concealed his disappointment with the reception of *Irene o L'assedio di Messina*. Not much more than a *succès d'estime* on 30

November 1833 it appeared six times only with a further attempt at revival in 1834 (but without Malibran - it was without an audience!)

Many of its numbers were praised; most notably the duet for Malibran and her half-sister^{xxxv} Giuseppina Ruiz-Garcia, as well as an unusually effective coro in Act II, while the amazing *aria finale* was received with unreserved *furore*.^{xxxvi} In his *memorie artistiche* the composer simply observes that Malibran astonished everyone, and that it was she and Lablache who sustained his “*fragile edificio*.”

He was being modest. He was right, the opera is a substantial offering to the stage. Had he not been gallant he would have made the point that Malibran was never very happy with unfamiliar music. She was more at home *out-singing* her rivals in competition with well-worn pieces. This was her speciality. Her voice was no longer at an optimum level, she was ill-at-ease and she knew it - a defect to be made clear not just in Pacini's bloodthirsty *Irene* but also in Carlo Coccia's far less testing *La figlia dell'arciere* which flopped painfully one month later. She had been singing too much and too much was expected of her.

The cabal of critics in the city who tried to blame Pacini for the opera's lukewarm reception found it imprudent to point a finger at Malibran or the entire pack of operatic fanatics would have been out for their blood. Needless to say this has given much scope for critical posturing ever since: Arthur Pougin with the usual shallowness of hagiographers in his “Marie Malibran” of half-a-decade later, says of Pacini's *Irene* that “*the music was so feeble that it proved an utter failure*” without seeing or hearing a note of the score.^{xxxvii} His diva, however, cherished Pacini's superb *aria finale* specifically conceived for her voice without seeking the French pundit's permission and in due course it found its way into the hands of her sister Pauline Viardot and the Bibliothèque Nationale.

Once the applause died down (there was “*a great deal of applause*” as Parry bears witness) Pacini had to face the fact that his musical graph was falling sharply.

At the end of 1833 his contract with Barbaja expired and he sought new pastures. The 1865 edition of *Le mie memorie artistiche* falls into two halves, the first half ends with the envoi:

“*Principiai a conoscere ch'io doveva ritirami dalla palestra – Bellini, il divino Bellini, e Donizetti mi avevano sorpassato*”

Was it true? Most of what he says about “retreat” - now and later - is not true at all. Certainly he became aware that he must revamp his style, operas reliant mainly upon vivacity and continuous brio were falling behind in the face of a new middle-class taste who for historically credible portraits on stage in response to the stream of Victorian literary stereotypes now to reside on their sofas.

At the start of 1834 Pacini had no commissions at all, and Bellini who scented victory turned his attention to a less elusive nemico Gaetano Donizetti (who remained either unaware or immune to ticks in the musical undergrowth). In the interim Pacini’s one spark of hope was Malibran’s request for a *rondò* to terminate Rossini’s *Tancredi* in her accredited style. This was ‘Dopo tante e tante pene’ which she sang at the Fondo on Maria Isabella’s name-day 19 November 1834 and won one of the most riotous receptions of her career. ^{xxxviii} That summer led only to a surprising crossing of the ways with exQueen Caroline Murat, now fat and living in Firenze to whom he dedicated three romances and a nocturne, this encounter at Viareggio with Paolina’s youngest sister was emblematic of the favorable reception the Bonaparte family always extended to her former innamorato. Despite his long-term Bourbon affiliation they never forgot him, tried to assist him, and forgave his scandalous behavior with the lock of the Emperor’s hair.

Happily, at the very last moment, La Fenice came up with a *scrittura* for the carnival of 1834-35. This contract, or so he liked to insist, led to a tactical abandonment of his former easy command of the stage which later he described as being “*sorpassato*”.

Like most of his preceding operas, the score of *Carlo di Borgogna* was simply too long. The critics - few of whom actually condemned-it, complained instead that there was enough music for two or more operas. Politically it was not a good choice of plot, this never-ending tale of improbable Burgundians out-classed by the cunning Swiss was perhaps too close to home for comfort to their Italian neighbours. The cast was good only on paper. Certainly Henriette Méric-Lalande had got back some of her vocal sheen in revivals of Meyerbeer’s *Il crociato in Egitto* but the thrilling vibrato of her heyday even as recently as *Giovanna d’Arco* was now a wobble, though she could still sing effectively the

fabulous delicacy of her ecstatic singing was gone. Giuditta Grisi was miscast, her booming Estella provided a love-interest but was more determined and dogged than convincing; Domenico Donzelli in the title role had a voice that was drying-up, his friend Donizetti rather cruelly ridiculed his assumption of romantic roles saying that he looked too old. Rehearsals were notable for cuts at every session. Of course there was scope for brevity, that was obvious, but Méric-Lalande insisted on dropping the key soprano/basso duet upon which the composer had pinned all his hopes of a *furore*. Her instinct was not to blame, the audience was to be tried to its limits. The *prima* of what we now know to be a rich and fascinating opera^{xxxix} *Carlo di Borgogna, a melodramma romantico in tre parti* staged at La Fenice on 21 February 1835 was an ordeal for everyone concerned. One scholar insists that the opera was performed without intervals and was reduced to two acts!^{xl} Could it possibly be true? What is true is that the whole house wilted, even Carlotta Grisi (dancing an *Intermezzo* supplied to her by Antonio Cortesi) failed to raise any spirits. The “*generoso veneto pubblico*” as Gaetano Rossi liked to call them were generous with their yawns and involuntary gestures of boredom. Pacini – desperate for novelty - had even suppressed his terminal burst of fireworks which habitually brought even the most weary of audiences to its feet at the end.^{xli}

Its initial poor reception was not to be fatal, this long opera was performed nine times whatever Pacini says. He insisted that it “*riusci squallidissimo*” which is not correct but *Carlo di Borgogna* was not revived in his lifetime. His “*Ecco com’ebbe termine la mia prima carriera*”^{xlii} reads only like a literary attempt at a coda.

It was nothing like the truth. He made his way back to Viareggio and built a small theatre (in ninety days with the usual Pacinian alacrity) capable of seating 800 people he staged *Ivanhoe* in its first season together with *L’elisir d’amore*. In the summer he went to Naples to stage *Ivanhoe* in a new edition with two performances at the San Carlo and five more at the Fondo, so much for his retirement from the stage. And he began teaching on a daily basis. Was it true that Bellini and Donizetti had surpassed him? The principal evolution of Italian Opera since the start of the century had been left to Rossini whose stylistic serendipity had endured for decades, but it was other composers – and not

always Italian composers - who supplied the cultural framework within which Bellini and Donizetti now displayed their wares. Though Bellini appeared more *singular* and Donizetti more *concise*, Pacini was able to raise the temperature of an opera house more than any other contemporary in the years before Verdi.^{xliii}

1835 was the year when voices became secondary to real theatre. It was not that *Pacini* was *sorpassato* as the virtuoso dependency upon which he had thrived.

“Il mio strumentale non è stato mai abbastanza accurate, e se qualche volta riusci vago e brillante, non accade per riflessione, ma bensì per quel naturale gusto che Iddio mi concesse” reads more like advice for his students than a stance for his future.

More than anything else, the world had turned: Bellini had died; Donizetti left for France and then did then same; Maria Malibran, Giuditta Pasta and Henriette Méric-Lalande left the stage and their quite extraordinary timbres were not replaced. Verdi makes it clear in his letters that his dramatic scope was encouraged by the unavailability of superstars. No one could follow Rubini; Lablache’s vocal empire became fragmented - from henceforth there would be baritones and basses all the varieties of which had once been unified in his one huge frame.

It soon became clear, however, that even if Pacini was awed by this cataclysm, he was no spent force.

ⁱ No composer in Italy ever completely trusted Felice Romani again – with the exception of Saverio Mercadante - a Bellinian *epigono* who was consistently let-down by Romani’s repeated failure to supply texts for which he had been begged on bended knees [*voire* Mercadante’s *I briganti*]. Bellini’s thoroughly sinister bonding with Romani would end catastrophically with *Beatrice di Tenda*

ⁱⁱ The July Revolution dethroned Charles X - the brother-in-law of Marie Antoinette, the *comte d’Artois*

ⁱⁱⁱ As a result of this momentary interest the UTET dictionary (voce Pacini 535) lists a *Maria Stuarda* among his works

^{iv} Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy *Lettere dall'Italia* (Ed. Raoul Meloncelli] (Turin 1983), 146

^v *Ibid* It is as well that Pacini did not hear the *piano concerto* the young man was composing during his stay in Italy. Even his refractory audience would have joined him in despising what they would have considered to be a cascade of empty virtuosity and vulgar thematic material - a work suggesting that though Leipzig audiences remained in the grip of discipline when tormented by music they were far less discriminating in their choice of repertoire

^{vi} Especially from the serried ranks of Verdiani. The second version was to appear at La Scala on 10 January 1832 following the noisy prima of Bellini's *Norma* "*Espressamente ridotto e posto in iscena dall'autore*" The amendments he made to the plot and score are highly significant, the composer turning Ferretti's fallible intrigue into something nearer to a cynical recipe worthy of a more sophisticated century while remaining true to its brilliant vocal expenditure.

Did Verdi do better? History has not equated him with any triumph. Even in the wake of the disorderly prima of *Norma* the second version of *Il Corsaro* went on to sixteen performances *pace* a not totally incorrect "*Cattivo*" from Cambiasi for its immediate reception at the hands of vindictive Belliniani

Il corsaro, in both versions, is worthy of greater consideration than either Mendelssohn, Cambiasi, or history has accorded it. Certainly its plot (like that of Byron) is extremely foolish but unlike the Verdian version its absurdities are gloried-in rather than obscured; this operatic travesty has a Rosenkavalieresque relish for parody when Medora puts on men's clothing in search of the cross-dressing Corrado - a sly piece of clowning fully anticipatory of post verismo kitsch

^{vii} Berlioz reviewed Pacini's *La Vestale* in Florence in April and wrote with his innate elegance (to his sister): "Puis un misérable eunuque, nommé Pacini, a fait une Vestale..."

^{viii} She had a passing liaison with Giovanni David perhaps (though he was a loyal husband) but would soon turn her attention to the husband of Eugenia Tadolini, Antonio Poggi, who would thus become the following tenor to be booed at La Scala

^{ix} It differs from the much slighter cantata offered to the *contessa* as recorded by Opera Rara

^x Francesco I of the Two Sicilies had died in 1830, the widowed Maria Isabella of Spain would continue to be an eager patron at the S.Carlo for many years to come. *Il felice imenèo* with its spectacular scenic effects was sung and danced on that stage on 15 January 1832 with a cast that would have made even Felix Mendelssohn review his list of absentees - it included Luigi Lablache, Giovanni David and Nicola Ivanoff and some unusual *corifei* like Giuseppina Ronzi De Begnis, Paolo Ambrosini and Michele Benedetti whose pirouettes must have shaken the stage

^{xi} *La sacerdotessa d'Irmisul*

^{xii} Donizetti's *Anna Bolena* with a libretto by Felice Romani had first been staged at the Teatro Carcano on 26 December 1830

^{xiii} Rubini, whose success as Lord Henry Percy in *Anna Bolena* at the Carcano had been as momentous as that of Pasta, did not sing in this La Scala revival of Donizetti's opera. He maintained the mistrust (even detestation) of this "*prima donna assoluta*" that first emerged in Pacini's *Niobe* and avoided singing with her whenever he could

^{xiv} The sequence was truly remarkable and reveals that Giuseppe Crivelli - impresario until the autumn of 1832 - tried to avoid taking sides:
Norma 26 December 1831 (Pasta, Giulia Grisi)
Il Corsaro 10 January 1832 (Schutz, Giulia Grisi)
Anna Bolena 25 February (Pasta, Giulia Grisi)
Ugo conte di Parigi 13 March (Pasta, Giulia Grisi)

^{xv} Cicconetti letter *ibid*

^{xvi} A view Bellini cultivated is that he was blameless and easily led astray by Felice Romani. That he was also led astray by the *maitresse femme* - that Giuditta Pasta

ruthlessly “frog-marched” him to her villa at Como to take control of his *Norma*, the cherished tale that his ‘Casta Diva’ had to be written and rewritten time after time before being found to her satisfaction - is an integral part of this myth even if vehemently denied by recent biographers

Cfr Kenneth Stern *Giuditta Pasta – A life on the lyric stage* (2011)

^{xvii} “*A dispetto d’un partito formidabile, a me contrario, perché suscitato da una persona potente, e da una ricchissima, la mia Norma ha sbalordito, e più jer sera, che fu la 2^{da} rap[resentazio]ne, che la prima. Il giornale ufficiale di Milano puo aver dato la nova di un fiasco deciso, perché nella prima sera il partito contrario, mentre il giusto applaudeva, zittava; e perché la persona potente è padrona e può ordinare che il giornale scriva come ad essa piace. La persona potente fa questo perché e un nemico acerrimo della Pasta, e la ricca perché è l’amante di Pacini, quindi mia nemica...*”

Letter to his uncle Vincenzo Ferlito, 28 December 1831. Neri op cit Letter No.168, 203

The “*persona potente*” is the Duca Litta, and “*la ricca*” is the *contessa* Samoyloff. He does not actually dare name the Duca Litta here out of fear that he might in fact become Master of La Scala before long

^{xviii} A letter of more than a quarter-of-a-century later, from Pacini to Filippo Cicconetti (now in the Museo Belliniano of Catania) states that he was indeed there, and confirms [see Neri Letter No. 168] that *Norma* was indeed poorly received on its second and third performances:

“*Rivido Bellini in Milano, nella circostanza in cui fece rappresentare il suo capo lavoro la Norma, e ben mi rammento che alla prima, seconda e terza rappresentazione, quel sublime lavoro ebbe esito quasi sventurato lo che afflisse il giovane compositore, e lo vidi versare qualche lagrima. Io lo rincorai e gli feci conoscere che molti altri capi lavori erano stati sogetti a tale disgrazia, ma che presto o tardi avevano trionfato. Il mio asserto, com’Ella ben conosce, si avverò.*”

Letter of 24 April 1855. That protest was mounted against Pasta (rather than Bellini) and was continuous and not confined to one evening as is sometimes stated: Cicconetti, lawyer and biographer and far too young to have known Bellini - the context makes it clear - had requested first-hand memories of Pacini’s contacts with the rival *catanese* composer but whether they were objective in these fraternal recollections is debatable, the tearful reconciliation he claims existed with the *concittadino* is frankly implausible if not impossible. Pacini was well-aware that candour seldom pays dividends with biographers, however friendly, and in any case enjoyed making amusing adjustments to the truth...

^{xix} Pacini never wrote again for Pasta, or set another word by Felice Romani (a prohibition echoed by Vaccaj)

^{xx} The loyalty of the “citta lagunare” to Pacini was to be remarkable and consistent, he would receive commissions to the very end of his life. Whereas Bellini would receive a bruising comparable to that of Pacini when the by-then squabbling duo mounted their *Beatrice di Tenda* in that city with an opera scarcely endearing Giuditta Pasta to their audience. The Presidenza of La Fenice was in no way unaware of the underhand plotting of the miscreants in 1830

^{xxi} *Gusmano d’Almeida* never saw the stage. An opera seria, it was derived from a ballet, a five-act azione mimico-tragico by Antonio Monticini with its prima at Parma but restaged at the Canobbiana of Milan in the Spring of 1835. Only fragments of the dismantled score have survived. Domenico Reina was to have sung the title role.

^{xxii} The printed libretto goes on to bended-knees and insists that the change of opera was due to “*unfortunate circumstances*” and that the authors “*of both the music and the words displayed the most noble indulgence, and generously encouraged by the goodwill of the kind, cultured and intelligent Venetian public...*” had hurried together the new score. Soft-soap essential as Reina (who was contracted to sing in the new opera, had been booed (both in *L’ultimo giorno di Pompei* - Reina was completely unable to sing a role written for Giovanni David - and in *La straniera*). But the lack of bowdlerisation in *Ivanhoè* is only relative, it was based primarily upon a curious confection by Emile Deschamps and de Wailly staged in Rossini’s name at the Odéon in Paris in 1826, thus Scott was doubly distanced. Pacini, however, made a respectable attempt to recreate the original, aided, no doubt, by the fact that Rossi had probably prepared most of his libretto for some other composer

^{xxiii} Cfr Prof. Gaetano Barbieri *Repertorio scelto ad uso de’teatri italiani* 8 volumes (Milan 1823-4), a collection of foreign plays set into Italian verse, mostly classic French plays (mainly Molière) but also plays by Delavigne, Planard, Duval, Sewrin and others, some of them contemporary. ‘Don Giovanni’ is No.22 in this collection

^{xxiv} Claudia Pacini (1805-1883) was married to doctor Antonio Belluomini in 1823, they separated in 1843. She must have been a lyric soprano of some accomplishment, her

brilliantly florid aria in Act II was taken from *Gli sponsali de'silfi* of 1815

^{xxv} Francesco Pacini would seem to have sung this 'Luna conforto al cor' at the piano with his brother when the completed *Talismano* and *Rubini* were still in the future

^{xxvi} Pacini says he arrived in Naples "*Sul finir dell'ottobre*", actually he had been there more than two months with Giulia Samoyloff. According to Donizetti who cast a sardonic eye over the activities of this exotic duo "*Pacini, riappattumato colla russa dea ha fatto venire Rossi da Milano a sue spese (vedi generosità)*" [Gaetano Rossi in his role as librettist had travelled from Venice at Pacini's expense: letter to Ferretti of 18 August 1832 [in] Alberto Cametti *Donizetti a Roma* (Torino 1807), 88] She elected to stay as a guest at the "Villa Estherazi" (Esterhazy) at Chiaia while he put-up as usual at the Palazzo Barbaja. While she was there she became godmother to one of Giovanni David's children. Donizetti, in a further letter, adds "*Pacini e David, diavolo e croce (dicono) ecco il termometro del giorno*". Letter to Gaetano Melzi 27 September 1832. *Zavadini* 302

^{xxvii} "*La bella quanto brava Ronzi-De-Begnisi, il caro tenore Iwanoff (allora esordiente e che dipoi divenne sì celebre), non che il papà Lablache (così si chiamava da tutti questo sommo artista di voce potente, di nobile sentire, cantante per eccellenza, colto, ottimo amico e padre di famiglia), formavano la triade eletta a sostegno di questa mia debolissima composizione. Un solo duetto più meritare qualche elogio per l'eleganza della frase del largo, e per la vaghezza della cabaletta*".

Pacini op cit 67

It should be added that *Gli Elvezj* was not abandoned by this excellent cast with quite the ease implied, despite a determined claque it was given three times at the S. Carlo with a fourth performance at the Teatro del Fondo, with at least two of its items published in vocal score (by Girard and Lucca). Among these the vast duetto (referred to above) 'Quei che m'uccise il figlio' was one of those extraordinarily extended encounters full of drama, *tremolandi*, snatches of cantilena and pounding *insieme* which were his trademark throughout his mature career, with improbable emotional coups but wonderfully tailored to the voices of Ronzi and Lablache, the cabaletta – a truly rip-roaring affair 'Meco omai più barbaro' - sung partly unisone, was as good an example of his power to capture his audience as any of his earlier years

^{xxviii} "*Fernando Duca di Valenza, che pure mi riuscì di niun pregio*". Pacini idem.

^{xxix} John Orlando Parry (1810-1879) was something of a chimera: a pupil of the harpist N.C.Bochsa (who had eloped with (Sir) Henry Bishop's wife, a Donizettian diva under the name of *Anna Bishop*) moving freely in smart musical circles but with a taste for burlesque "Drag" performances which must have plumbed the depths even of Regency vulgarity. His travel diary for the years 1833-34, published under the title of *Victorian Swansdown*, edited by Cyril Bruyn Andrews and J.A.Orr-Ewing (London 1935) manages to combine detailed vignettes of life both in sophisticated and (very) unsophisticated circles in Italy and France with extraordinary candour. He knew everyone it seems, and was welcomed by *Grande*es and low-life characters alike. Piquantly, early in September 1833 he dined in Paris with "Mr.Lewis (*of Regent Street London*)" [p92] under whose suburban roof Bellini would expire in solitude two years later. Louis-Samuel and Frederick [Frédéric] Lévy [Lewis] were jewellers of French-Canadian origin whose parents had emigrated from Canada to Birmingham in the Industrial Midlands of England, they had learned their craft in Birmingham, subsequently transferring to London and opening a depot in Paris, winning in that last city sufficient musical connections to enable them to let out rooms to foreign artists in London (at 61 Regent Street). Musicians and singers to whom they were especially useful in view of their unique freeway for covert financial transactions - their *coffre-forts*, crossing the channel were a viable means of conveying Customs-Free sums of gold across the channel. This was a business that thrived between 1820 and 1850. French-speaking their shop at 128 Regent Street - opened in 1833 - was called the "*Magazin de Bijouterie*" (sic) and they imported and exported gems and gold coins to and from Paris where the senior Mr.Lewis had both a base and a wife (a Mlle Olivier, with a similar background). Bellini - whose lodgings in Old Burlington Street during his brief stay in London were just round the corner from 128 Regent Street - made their acquaintance early in his stay in the British capital and was offered their courier assistance. It was a kindness uniquely endorsed by an open friendship to which was later added the privileged use of their villa in Puteaux which retreat became a refuge for the *catanese* who needed peace and quiet to write his music.

After his tragic death, alone, in the abandoned house and garden at Puteaux, the proprietors having made themselves scarce fearing he was suffering from cholera, the shady business activities of these hosts were enough to ensure complete silence from their many clients in Paris and in London. A total silence underpinned by all those who had no wish to be caught-up in a police investigation in Bellini's wake. Many, if not all of those present at the moving funeral of the famous and tragically youthful composer,

must have known these useful people well, but no one would open his mouth - other than to sing in the aisles of the church during the Requiem Mass. Thus Bellini's - and John Orlando Parry's - "*Mr Lewis*" - has long remained in the shadow, if not precisely an enigma. Villified ever since by Bellini's family and friends in Sicily (but not, of course, by Rossini or anyone else in the know).

These brothers had a cadet - soon to preside in [Lower] Regent Street also - indeed at the other end of the musical spectrum - the Benjamin of the family - best known to operatic history as Benjamin Lumley [né Lévy] (born in Birmingham 1810 - died in London 1875). The famous impresario kept his elder brothers at a considerable distance.

Regent Street, an elegant thoroughfare built by John Nash, was also tempered by music: Rossini had lived at 90 Regent Street in 1823-4; Vaccaj had lived at 172 Regent Street in the 1830's; Napoleone Moriani wrote to Benjamin Lumley from 61 Regent Street in 1849 (See LIM Catalogue 33 (2001), item 66]

^{xxx} Cyril Bruyn Andrews & J.A. Orr-Ewing *Victorian Swansdown: Extracts from the Early Travel Diaries of John Orlando Parry the Victorian Entertainer* (London, John Murray 1935), 124

^{xxxi} Ibid 147-8

^{xxxii} Rossini's *Guillaume Tell* sung in Italian

^{xxxiii} The Teatro del Fondo had an apron stage. Ibid 158

^{xxxiv} Ibid 169

^{xxxv} Maria Malibran called her "*sister*" not without justification, Josefa Ruiz-Garcia was the daughter of the composer-tenor Manuel Garcia by his first wife Maria Morales. She was a fine artist in her own right, she and Malibran had a notable partnership at La Scala in 1834 when they caused a sensation with their vocal twinning in *Norma*, Giuseppina singing Adalgisa. The performance was "*Ottimo*" according to Cambiasi

^{xxxvi} The Scena ultima in which its heroine commits suicide instead of killing her lover (Manfredi sung by Giovanni David) 'Se un mio desir', 'Cedi al duol' and cabaletta 'Ira del ciel'

^{xxxvii} Cfr Arthur Pougin *Marie Malibran* (London 1911), 166 Had he waited a little longer for the Malherbe bequest to reach its shelves he could have seen the copy of the *aria-finale* from this tragedia lirica *Irene o L'assedio di Messina* in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris bearing the signature of that revered apostle of vocal probity of his day - her [real] sister Pauline Viardot. Cecilia Bartoli sings the *aria finale* from Pacini's *Irene* in her album "Maria" of 2007: the *primo tempo* 'Se un mio desir, se un voto ascolti, o padre' the *cantabile* 'Cedi al duol' the *tempo di mezzo* 'Al mio pianto, al mio lamento' capped by the ferocious *cabaletta con coro* 'Ira del ciel, tu sangue, innanzi a Dio chiedesti?'

^{xxxviii} 'Dopo tante e tante pene' has a fabulous history: Mercadante had "borrowed" a *terzetto* from Pacini's *Amazilia* to insert into his *Gabriella di Vergy* in Portugal (Lisbon 1828) where he could easily get away with stolen music. But on revival in Italy (Turin 1832) he was obliged to replace it with a *terzetto* of his own composition. Pacini, who had observed all this theft with a sarcastic eye, "borrowed" a strophe of the text of the reborn *Gabriella di Vergy* *terzetto* and set it for Malibran: *Dopo tante e tante pene* - an ironic *tit-for-tat* registered grimly by Mercadante in the audience on 21 November 1834. Cecilia Bartoli sings this *rondo* in the "Maria" album listed above.

^{xxxix} The general view of the critics is that concealed in this very long score is a very good opera. The concert performance of *Carlo di Borgogna* recorded by Opera Rara in 2001 reveals much astonishing invention - clearly Pacini's muse had not suffered by his sense of being overtaken by his rivals. Above all that many of the musical advances claimed for his operas after *Saffo* (1840) were not in "embryo" in *Carlo di Borgogna* but fully in existence - note that the confrontational duetto 'Qual d'un angelo nel core' between Estella and Leonora [MS and S] of *Carlo di Borgogna* is almost a mirror-image of that between Maria and Clotilde [MS and S] of Act III of *Maria, regina d'Inghilterra* of 1843. He was trying too hard in the face of so many much vaunted scores - not only those of Bellini but those now by Donizetti - his fantastic powers of imagination overflowing and distinctly out of control

^{xl} Thomas Milholt in his *Le opera dimenticate del melodramma italiano* (Ravenna 2016) 79 insists that "*L'opera venne rappresentata per tre ore di seguito, senza pause*" and

that afterwards – though he gives no source for his strange information - that “*Pacini ridusse l’opera a due atti per le successive rappresentazioni*”

^{xli} Leonora (Méric-Lalande) having her last florid word in the penultimate cabaletta [Sc VI *Parte Terza*] ‘La cara spoglia esanime’ (though Carlo is not yet dead!) while the *scena ultima* is a bloodbath for the hero and a coro of triumph for the Swiss. There is a suspicion that Leonora’s cabaletta had been originally intended to close the opera but Pacini had moved it to an earlier place to achieve dramatic novelty

^{xlii} Pacini op cit 70

^{xliii} Friedrich Lipmann in his many distinguished studies [Cfr Friederich Lippmann *Giovanni Pacini: Bemerkungen zum stil seiner Opern* [in] Chigiana Vol.24 No.4 (Siena 1967) vividly compares Pacini with Bellini when in any real context it might be more appropriate to compare Bellini with Pacini - the Bellinian oeuvre can only be put-up against one-third of Pacini’s output: Bellini wrote no *opera buffa*, *Adelson e Salvini* is not a convincing *opera semiseria* and as for serious *melodrammi* the Pacinian scope is far wider than any opera of Bellini. The younger maestro is more focused and marks his listener more indelibly but these distinguishing characteristics have their limits - which is what Rossini implies when he attributes “*genio*” to Pacini and not to the rival *catanese*. Professor Lipmann identifies with characteristic sharpness many of the features that militated against real success in such operas as *Carlo di Borgogna*: pointing to his overloaded scores; pointing to stylistic extravagance, music that is too jaunty, too passionate, too self-indulgent and so on. But they never militated against his potential and he always paid attention to the needs of his audience which was in a state of flux throughout this period. Often - in the first half of his career - his melodies fly in the face of the text (but what poor texts they were – maybe it can be understood). *Saffo* begins the second stage of his career (and not *Furio Camillo* which shows every sign of being composed earlier) in which there is an intensification and integration as well as a lyrical intoxication which has a cumulative effect upon the sacred music of Pacini’s maturity in contrast with that of Bellini and Donizetti who in this respect are thoroughly *sorpassato*