

Chapter Three

“Una indiscrizione da alcova”

Once the clouds of (volcanic) dust had settled Barbaja proposed a nine-year contract to the delighted maestro - 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 - a gauge of their worth. His immediate future assured, Pacini escorted his new wife north to meet his family then set off for Milan leaving Adelaide pregnant with a daughter they would call Paolina.ⁱ

Optimistic and freed from imperial bondage the now officially endorsed composer set to work in a carefree mood rare in recent months, the libretto he accepted gave him no trouble at all, but has given endless trouble ever since *La gelosia corretta* had exactly the same title as Michele Carafa's early opera (Naples 1815) but a plot that was completely different and a Romanelli argument compelling-enough to be taken up by Domenico Gilardoni and set to music by Donizetti under the title of *Francesca di Foix* (Naples 1831).ⁱⁱ These operas need to be disentangled. Pacini's *semiseria* score is feather-light in contrast to the comedy duo above, his music poured-out with its usual breath-taking speed taking on board some mildly unexpected features: a zany *Introduzione*, a wayward distribution and a dearth of the usual vocal items in the usual places - instead there was a sensibility, a wistfulness even that may have echoed his newfound domestic bliss. This pleasing opera basked in a flat calm. With 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 a sunny score with many revivals (difficult as it is to separate them from those of Carafa) it soon proved to have a flawed "*business model*" for one disconcerting reason, its star - his bosom-friend Giovanni David - courted disaster with his high-camp gestures and effete use of falsetto inviting rude noises whenever he set foot on stage, worse still, when he stopped singing there was complete and utter silence. Most especially after his

fabulous *aria di sortita* sung with amazing skill. No one in the enormous opera house enjoyed the suggestive physical postures he adopted on stage giving the impression that he was sending-up the cast, his role and the plot all at the same time. The maestro ground his teeth at a succession of grimaces and pirouetting he seemed unable to control. After one embarrassing instance when the celebrated contraltino had been heard in an ugly suspense cut by a thin thread of hissing he walked off stage and refused to sing any longer. Only after frantic urging by his fellow singers did he agree to return. Its star performer put the opera in danger and Pacini had to nerve himself to take him in hand.

In contrast with this unwelcome development, the maestro was earning praise in unexpected places; the ease of his score and its rejection of conventional structure won him plaudits on unlikely sides of the critical spectrum. Even *Harmonicon* 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.*”ⁱⁱⁱ (Pacini might have believed he was back among Papa’s aged reactionaries with this condescending endorsement, but praise for his *duetti* was long overdue)

All considered, *La gelosia corretta* pushed-off his new contract into choppy waters but the sprightly composer’s nine years in the galleys began with applause and Barbaja revived the opera promptly and even brilliantly (most notably at Vienna in 1827).

Returning to Naples, its successor would be something in the nature of a meridional swan-song - a burst of Parnassian fireworks in the tufa-paved capital city before it was put under siege by a younger *catanese* contender. In a matter of weeks Pacini would find an antagonistic operatic pretender at his heels. Barbaja gave the maestro a superlative cast for this new consecration with a constellation of four of the world’s greatest singers: Luigi Lablache, Carolina Ungher, Giuditta Pasta and Giovanni-Battista Rubini, all at their peak and all destined to confirm the peninsula’s claim to be at the head of a league-table of international operatic champions. And as for the key drama they would create together, Pacini’s *Niobe* would have its own claim to international renown.^{iv}

Earmarked for yet another Royal Gala, the reanimated maestro launched into a torrent of music that was vehement, anguished, amorous, and threatening in turn on behalf of a bloodbath in the sky - set-off by inhuman vocal flights of fancy almost at the very limit of physical credibility.

Arriving headlong after a family summer^v Pacini set Tottola's unexceptionable text without taking a breath; he had been offered yet another retro drama with a further *embarrass de richesses* of scenic marvels and baroque phantasmagoria, another *ballabile*, more processions and choral pomp, and arriving – comfortably is not quite the term - at a vocal apotheosis only marginally less violent than that of *L'ultimo giorno di Pompei*, Homer's sanguinary tale omitting nothing a nineteenth-century taste for gothic horror and gore would consider unworthy of operatic exposition. With the composer eager to spare his cast nothing, either vocally or dramatically, the opera was to bring-off another coup if not exactly with the same kind of outcome.

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As far as the material circumstances of the prima of his *Niobe* were concerned his task was no less strenuous than that of his votive offering to Vesuvius but for the absence of its comprimario status. The same theatrical parameters were in place: a house full to bursting - a royal gala - diamonds in all the boxes - a soldier at attention on either side of the stage and rows of military in the parterre with no applause at all unless the monarch deigned to lead it (which, as far as Francesco I was concerned, was only when someone from the *Real Cappella* was singing). *Niobe*, however, was to create a precedent on 19 November 1826 . With no one fearing theatrical collapse.

No one could have imagined a more improbable setting for revolution: with the Neapolitan establishment in situ and ill-disposed to anything resembling disorder but the *music* of *Niobe* was their undoing - all galloping rhythms, irresistible syncopation, pounding bass and amazingly testing vocal acrobatics from beginning to end of the score. Soon after the curtain rose the amazing cantabile voice of Lablache with his "*Sogno d'Anfione*" sent a shiver through the massed ranks of listeners, but as the composer recounts in his memoirs it was the tenor's cavatina that undermined monarchical subservience. Act I Sc.6 was to blame, the *primo tempo* of Rubini's '*Il soave e bel contento*' saw the entire

house turn and stare hard at the Royal Box, but when it came to the cabaletta - the soon to be immortal 'I tuoi frequenti palpiti' - a moan of pain came from the throng peering towards their immobile sovereign; from among them came a cry of distress: "*E se tu non batti, battimo noi!*"^{vi} at which Francesco made a feeble gesture and the house exploded.

After this royal rout everything was *furore*, with the junior contingent in the Palco Real joining their fellow citizens in applause and counter-applause. Pacini had judged them with great skill - he had dressed his cruel drama of revenge in high places in a panoply of compelling vocal garments of every popular shape and colour, everyone present was conscious of an irreverent tearing-up of the rule book - of lyrical revenge in high places that had been in the gift of the composer since his earliest years.

The reception of *Niobe* was momentous. It went down into operatic lore. But as a celebration of popular taste and vocal mannerisms specific to Naples together with its reliance upon the very greatest voices of the age, *Niobe* would remain on stage for nine repetitions only.^{vii} Its unrepeatability and legendary *mise-en-scène* ensuring the very shortest of shelf life. No one dared revive *Niobe*. It could never be a repertory offering.

In utter contrast, Rubini's cabaletta went round the world. Its catchy tune, syncopation and testing tessitura not just putting an end to the sovereign's rule of silence but finding a place in innumerable contemporary operas everywhere for a term of years.^{viii} "*Jusqu'à present nous avons regardé l'exécution de la cavatine de Niobe comme une telle merveille, qu'il nous semblait impossible, à Rubini lui même, de jamais dépasser les limites qu'il s'était tracées...*"^{ix}

The greatest tenor of the day interpolated 'I tuoi frequenti palpiti' into every opera he could find irrespective of its context - most disrespectfully of all possibly into Bellini's *La straniera* in Paris in 1832 (daring fatal palpitations from its composer). But he was not alone in this; Giuditta Pasta did the same, she sang it everywhere too subjecting her lyrical theft to a downwards transposition (she never forgave Pacini for writing Rubini's music too high for her!). She chose 'Il soave e bel contento' as an unsolicited *sortita* for Desdemona in Rossini's *Otello* at the Vienna Kärntnertortheater in 1830 and in the years to come repeatedly inserted it into interminable operas, it became a core item of

her concert repertoire^x a sonnet even being printed to commemorate this proud achievement:

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

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

And she was not alone, another of Rubini's fellow singers in *Niobe* had similar intentions: Carolina Ungher (who sang Asteria in *Niobe*) replaced 'Ah! bello a me ritorna' with 'Il soave e bel contento' in *Norma* at Rome in 1835 and as late as 1853 a Pacinian superstar of a later generation, Angiolina Bosio, sang Rubini's *pièce de résistance* as the "Lesson scene" in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* at the Royal Opera House Covent Garden (the only time Pacini got a foot in *that* particular closed door)

Franz 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;^{xi} it was repeated on stage at the *Opéra* on 19 March 1837 as an entr'acte between sections of Louise Bertin's opera *Esmeralda* and a ballet by Adam. But its fashionable coronation was to come ten days later when Princess Belgiojoso succeeded - on 30 March - in inveigling both Liszt and Sigismond Thalberg to take turns on the monumental grand piano in her house in the Rue d'Anjou - Thalberg to play his *Moïse Fantasy* and Liszt his *Niobe Fantasy* in a prestidigitator-to-the-death confrontation for the benefit of the Princess's charity "*Italiens indigens*".

We don't know who won, but the *Niobe Fantasy* of Franz Liszt - a series of reflections upon 'I tuoi frequenti palpiti' has never been out of print, the same cannot be said for Thalberg's operatic souvenir but the latter was praised by Berlioz!

The day after the prima of *Niobe*^{xii} (the account in his memoirs is typically convoluted)^{xiii} 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^{xiv} 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.^{xv}

Maybe Bellini felt piqued at not receiving the warm congratulation he believed to be 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 from henceforth Pacini always referred to his *concittadino* with a sweet smile as “*Il divino Bellini*”)

Unaware of any impending operatic gaffe and now financially secure the composer continued to La Scala where *Alessandro nell'Indie* was to open the carnival season. It did not get a good reception despite the fact that he had supplied Giovanni 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 protest at the way he sang.

The maestro, however remained close to this tenorino even though now *both* were reported to be lovers of the beautiful *contessa* Samoyloff in the gossip circles of the city. This Russian expatriate deserves more than a footnote. Her name appears more than any other as the dedicatee of opera scores of the day.^{xvi}



She reigned over the most modish musical circles in Milan, a vision of exotic elegance, mad about the arts, her box at La Scala the focus of every pair of binoculars every evening she attended. Her penchant for tenors – lyrical ostinato of her bedroom - ensured that they all got booed whenever they set foot on stage - not through any conspicuous vocal failing, very much the reverse - but because she was a keen supporter of the Austrian occupation of northern Italy. (As she was also the most charitable woman in the city no one dared attack her directly). Her affair with Pacini was probably an aberration; he never attempted to sing and was always at his desk but it was a relationship based on love as not one of their critics ever detected. For the moment this purported *trio* of effete tenor, *femme fatale* and ex-imperial lover was content to raise the hackles of the theatrical coterie, their comings and goings a source of eager 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 despite the reception of his friend.

That he succeeded is undeniable; he did it with his remarkable *Gli arabi nelle Gallie ossia Il trionfo della fede*. A triumph of his faith in his musical birthright.

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He had supplied two seriously imposing offerings to the stage. Now he projected a third: a supremely engrossing melodrama that could fulfil all possible operatic expectations and repel all the slings and arrows of the intimidating stage of his native land. It was the brief destiny of *Niobe* that determined his decision, with *Gli arabi nelle Gallie* he would make a *statement*: he would supply an opera that would be infinitely variable, would be devised for every possible season, for every size or scale of performance - that could overcome every obstacle to production, be adaptable to any roster of singers, any theatre, outlive any other operatic favourite and be as different as possible from the immutable scores cherished by his rivals whose precious offerings were set in stone, copyrighted,^{xvii} and backed arrogantly by printers and publishers who held the destiny of the composer in their hands.

With an argument based on the *vicomte* d'Arlincourt's 'Le Renégat' of 1822^{xviii} extolling outcasts, seclusion and the trauma of lost-love^{xix} the composer alighted on an all-purpose blueprint: not actually historical but romantically persuasive, tragic and searing, with an unverifiable setting and time-scale, but certain to capture the

imagination of operatic Europe. Its *mise-en-scène* infinitely variable, inviting unlimited additions and subtractions, to be an elastic confection to be expanded or contracted ad lib at the behest of singer or management so that there would be at least one version of the opera to the taste of any listener. An opera (as unlike *Niobe* as possible) for any stage or cast or timescale and readily adjustable to the restraints of any management.

It was to be the most extraordinary operatic proposition of the day. Between its prima in 1827 and 1855 and in revivals worldwide, every consistent part of *Gli arabi nelle Gallie*, every aria, every duet, every trio or ensemble was rewritten - wholly or in part - sometimes over and over again, in order to conform to the different requirements of successive singers and productions. As too was every *coro*, every *concertato*, every *preghiera*, every *finale* even in an urge to fulfil unlimited performance usage. Everything could be changed or re-adapted. Even the highly successful induction to the plot was not sacrosanct, as for the tragic *finale ultimo* - one in which Giovanni David, moribund, singing his terminal fragments of pathos against a failing thread of music was concerned, expiring in staccato utterances before a lachrymose circle of friends - the ultimate weepy adieu - it could be abandoned, the Moor-cum Merovingian hero could be obliged to depart his stuttering *dénouement* so that the primadonna soprano or mezzo-soprano could take the limelight. Music and plot were at the composer's disposal. Pacini, who presided personally at revivals whenever he could, prided himself on being able to overcome every obstacle to a happy reception.

The vast pile of music that resulted led to performing material at least six times the length of the original score! *Gli arabi nelle Gallie* was like a Rubik cube whose faces could be turned to achieve any number of permutations, for each new cast for each new theatre, there was an ever-growing choice of *arie* and ensembles, each of the *comprimari* could find a solo spot in one or another of the available editions. No key or tempo was ever finite, solo instruments were always negotiable. As further items were added - the choice became ever greater so that new music written for this or that production could be crossed with the music of all the previous stagings *ad infinitum*. Music at almost every level of difficulty was at the disposal of theatres, managements, *impresari*, and artists great and small.

The extant *prima stesura* autograph score^{xx} 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.^{xxi} One only parameter remained utterly constant; thanks to the problems of Giovanni David, *Gli arabi nelle Gallie* was to be a tour-de-force for the *tenor*. The soprano (even if she snatched the finale) would be obliged to take second place.^{xxii}

With an optimum *prima* at La Scala on 8 March 1827, with Stefania Favelli and Brigida Lorenzani as co-stars, it provided maximum excitement for all that remained of the season. David, restored to life (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, this image encapsulating the major impact of this romantic opera upon the annals of the day. The cast at the *prima* had a runaway triumph; Giovanni David, created a conscience-stricken changeling with his Agobar - returned Merovingian prince turned Moorish-warrior - a martyr to love and country his *bella morte*" not just conquering the fickle *milanesi* but presaging whole vistas of enjoyable tenorial extinction in the decades to come. A *terminus quo* few rival composers were able to ignore. 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 reputation. *Gli arabi nelle Gallie* began a 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 - not only had the opera been packed with extra pieces written for Naples - but Henriette Méric-Lalande as Ezilda - had a new cavatina^{xxiii} and duet and was allowed her to interpolate her famous slow cabaletta from *Amazilia* (unheard in Milan) 'Parmi verderlo, ahi misero' with utterly sensational results.

The flood of extra music with which this opera was constantly amended 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;^{xxiv} and at least two further arias for Agobar (including one slightly more modest for Giovanni Battista Verger 'A quell'anima oltraggiata' to let tenors off David's strenuous hook). 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 nickname) and with 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); the small role of Gondair accumulated such great names as Luigi Lablache (in Naples), Vincenzo Galli (in Torino), Celestino Salvatori (in Verona) and Michael William Balfe (in Bergamo, Milano, and Piacenza). Giovanni David continued singing the role of Agobar until 1838 (in Bergamo). It got to Vienna in 1827 and 1830, Paris, Madrid and Dresden in 1829, Barcelona in 1830, London in 1832, New York and Philadelphia in 1834, Lisbon in 1834, Havana in 1838, Odessa in 1839 and Mexico City in 1842. It was the second Parisian edition, however, that gave it an imperial apotheosis: at the express wish of Napoléon III who had heard Pacini’s opera in exile in Rome (on 17 January 1829) and retained a vivid memory of its emotional impact, a brand-new version was commissioned for the Théâtre-Italien. Staged in *neo-grand-opéra* mode on 30 January 1855 with a refurbished text by Achille de Lauzières replete with patriotic semaphoring and a piety foreign to the original, its new pieces with a brand new *preghiera* ‘A te, signor dei popoli’ for Ezilda and conferring a respectable Christianity upon the recusant Agobar at the express wish of the Empress Eugénie! ^{xxv}

Pacini wrote nine new numbers for this Parisian *rifacimento* with the major voices of Angiolina Bosio (Ezilda) and Carlo Baucardé (Agobar), let-down only by the famed contralto Adelaide Borghi-Mamo in the *musicò* role of Leodato - moustachioed commander-in-chief of the Frankish Army who, viewed askance by the knowing spectators was so obviously pregnant that they could not stop giggling.^{xxvi} This did not add to the length of the opera’s run, but the production was much more than a *succès d’estime* and thanks to poor dead Paolina the composer was greeted with special warmth by her nephew all too aware of the service to the Bonaparte family he had played by keeping her amused and out of trouble. Pacini left Paris for home with the *Légion d’Honneur* and a diamond encrusted snuff-box embellished with the Emperor’s cipher. ^{xxvii}

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Hardly had the season closed than Barbaja began a Viennese *stagione* and Pacini set off for the Austro-Hungarian capital with David in 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. Irrespective of a frosty reunion, the season went well. Pacini had the lion's share of the Kärntnertortheater season with four operas “*bene accolta da quella fredda, ma intelligente udienza*,”^{xxviii} 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 sharing some roles with Savino Monelli fearing exhaustion.^{xxix} Pacini made a great deal of money and had an impact he had not quite dared to expect.

The return to Milan was traumatic, when he got back to Italy he found it had changed. Bellini had taken Milan by storm in his absence with *Il pirata* on 27 October 1827 and neither *his* life, nor that of his *concittadino*, would ever be the same again. The insignificant rival had become a star. At once Pacini overdid his response as he would do so many times later: he was on stage in Naples in three weeks and made the error of imitating himself (*not* imitating Bellini as the latter always tried to maintain^{xxx}) *Margherita regina d'Inghilterra* was the first *real* fiasco of his career. He had an optimum cast with Adelaide Tosi in the title role and Lablache in full flow; an opera plot invoking Meyerbeer who would be the key to many of his scores in the decade to come,^{xxxi} but the S.Carlo staging on 19 November 1827 fell short of his expectations. The spectacular scenic effects seemed repetitive of his earlier works and he had lost the pulse of the S.Carlo stage - the opera was under-rehearsed and rushed on and off with indecent haste.^{xxxii} The composer's “*Non cadde no, precipitò di sella*”^{xxxiii} reveals that it had been confined to oblivion as far as he was concerned.^{xxxiv}

Back in Milan news of Pacini's intention to challenge his *concittadino*'s triumph spread rapidly. Rumours of its “scale” and “spectacle” became rife, especially as *Sanquirico* was known to be hard at work on sensational sets. Bellini himself wrote that “*I cavalieri di Lara*”^{xxxv} was to be a “*spettacolo straordinario*” and congratulated himself on being able to write operas without “*battles, ballets and eruptions of Vesuvius*”.

How, precisely, Pacini assembled his forces^{xxxvi} for the his response to *Il pirata* is conjectural but that retaliation was masterminded by Gaetano Rossi - an actual witness to the Anelli librettistic feud some twenty years before - cannot be doubted. He and Felice Romani (poet of *Il pirata*) were at loggerheads over the possession of

Giacomo Meyerbeer^{xxxvii} which had left empty pockets and a web of jealous fury. Pacini's forthcoming *I cavalieri di Valenza* would be the tangible result of a bitter struggle between the self-esteem, pride, hard cash and poetic pre-eminence of two conflicting librettists...

The contrast between Bellini and Pacini was physical and fundamental, not simply musical but a contrast of dress, deportment, and social prowess, Pacini was in-and-out of palaces, Bellini was self-centred, reclusive, and *shed blood* to summon his lyrical muse. In the eyes of the ex-lover with an imperial past Bellini was a bloodless beginner with limited means practicing his sentimental tunes on a provincial piano.

News of the "*cavaliere maestro*" and his intention to challenge the vogue for Bellini's opera spread rapidly in Milan, rumours of its scale and spectacle were rife especially as Sanquirico was known to be hard-at-work on challenging sets, Bellini himself even reporting that "*I cavalieri di Lara*"^{xxxviii} was to be a "*spettacolo straordinario*" and unwisely congratulating himself on being able to write operas without "*battles, ballets and eruptions of Vesuvius.*"

There was also a painful complication: it was while he was composing *I cavalieri di Valenza* that Pacini's young wife Adelaide died in childbirth, 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.^{xxxix} This loss would have a negative impact not only upon Pacini's immediate behaviour but on the future of opera itself: harassed by funeral debts and marital collapse the hapless composer accepted as many commissions as he could (more than he could possibly fulfil) with the result that Bellini found himself without any contract at all for the following season. It would prove a grave error.

The great success of *Il pirata* had been traumatic for its composer. Bellini became instantly vulnerable, obsessed with enemies and attacks from more prolific composers who threatened his triumph. Almost every one of his interminable letters is filled with monothematic fantasies about *nemici* of all kinds but most especially about the "*cavaliere maestro*" and his dangerous creativity; every page peppered with "*Pirata*" and "*Pacini.*" the most absurd of which being that of 24 March 1828 invoking Felice Romani and his resentments, claiming that Adelaide Tosi "*mi ha detto che Pacini spacconeggiava contro di me, fulminando minacce*" 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 là si trovava."^{xl} This wonderfully unbalanced fantasy must have been reported immediately to Pacini with amused embroidery by Giovanni David. Can anyone be surprised that the son of the great *buffo* decided he had to respond. Bellini lost his head after *Il pirata* and it went missing for much of his remaining existence.

Excited hopes of a war between composers were not to be disappointed. When Pacini's *I cavalieri di Valenza* opened at La Scala on 11 June 1828 operatic aficionados were enchanted to discover that their summer boredom was to be relieved. That they had before them a wicked parody of *Il pirata*, boasting the same *primadonna*^{xli} in identically dramatic situations, with an identical exiled lover returning from the same sea in the same way and a parade of identical conflicts and confrontations in a series of encounters as teasingly parallel to those of Bellini's exquisite drama as was feasible. The ravishing dénouement of his masterpiece being rudely derided in *Valenza* by a culminating knockabout *sea-battle* worthy of Meyerbeer (financially responsible for the dissenting poetry).^{xlii}

High on the agenda was Gaetano Rossi's verbal mimicry; whereas Gualtiero of *Il pirata* had sung 'Nell'furor delle tempeste' his counterpart Gusmano of *I cavalieri di Valenza* sings 'Nell'orror di mie sciagure' (which Pacini mockingly exploited in the press by pretending that it referred to his own embarrassment at the success of Bellini!) Every situation of *Il pirata* had its mirror image in *I cavalieri di Valenza*: each member of the cast had a vocal *doppelgänger* with simian mockery high on the agenda from beginning to end. Bellini's antagonists had selected their target with care, not actually *imitating* him,^{xliii} that would have been too easy, but tormenting him with infantile derision and comic-book caricatures. And then to add to his rival's discomfort, Pacini's opera had a vivid score, replete with engaging melodies, a succession of memorable arias in a staging with soloists of the very highest order.

This operatic parody unleashed an undignified polemic in the musical journals of the day. Everyone took sides; the critics riposted; both the composers added fuel to the fire. Bellini hurried to insist that Pacini's opera had been a "colossal fiasco" but this was not even remotely true like most of the claims he made, Pacini's wicked paraphrase was the draw of the season; Cambiasi gave the opera a *Buonissimo* rating and it went on to receive twenty-five performances making it the most popular opera of the season. Accusations of *plagio e furto* were cast to and fro by those taking sides. Pacini

defended himself in a flurry of facetious claims in the press that became vicious before the end of the season. And he did have the last word on *plagio e furto*: his reference to the sources Bellini (unwisely) claimed as his own as “*una vera pirateria*”^{xliv} enchanted his supporters. From an audience point of view it was all very enjoyable, Sanquirico’s sets were widely circulated in coloured lithographs and the vocal score of *I cavalieri di Valenza* published by Ricordi sold-out at once. To cap his offensive, Pacini dedicated this score to the contessa Samoyloff who had presided over the conflict with perfect composure in her box.

Could this affair be described as a pyrrhic victory? A further Venetian confrontation was to follow. Gaetano Rossi’s disreputable verbal teasing would bear sour fruit. The painfully prickly Romani was affronted at a routine librettist *daring* to make fun of his sublime verses. He would take the battle into Rossi’s home waters and things would go from bad to worse in a matter of months.

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For a brief interim the stage was large enough to keep the combatants apart. The next score by Pacini – written for Trieste - was distant enough for acrimony and amusement to subside marginally at least. In the autumn he staged *Gli arabi nelle Gallie* at the Teatro Grande with - as a chaser (but perhaps provocatively) - the last of his Meyerbeer-inspired operas: *I crociati a Tolemaide*. It should not 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^{xlv} and based upon Sophie Cottin’s well-worn ‘Mathilde’ a novel that had given birth to endless operatic progeny. There were *longueurs* galore and it ended with everyone dead (or almost). Hurriedly composed it arrived on stage on 13 November 1828 and displayed every sign of triumph - the audience full of enthusiasm for a lavish supply of bravura vocal offerings at the head of which was an exceptionally brilliant aria^{xlvi} Pacini had supplied expressly for Rosa Mariani in the role of Malek-Adel to keep her quiet (he had been obliged to supply this notorious troublemaker with a brand-new double-aria to sing in the preceding *Gli arabi nelle Gallie*)^{xlvii}

The critics, however, sung another tune; according to them *I crociati a Tolemaide* was too full of *cori*, too stretched and too monotonous. The fact is there was a gulf emerging in Pacini’s composing at this time, there were lapses appearing that were not to be resolved for a decade. Was it the fraught encounters in Milan that had given rise to a musical mid-life crisis? A dilemma was apparent in this score where a romantic

attenuation was now appearing - with the action halted by too many intermezzi - as Pacini struggled to add an orchestral richness to music persistently stymied by the brilliant vocalism expected by his fans. In compensation he extended the *cori*, but this was merely cosmetic. His music began to fall between the two stools that would remain in place until 1840 and his *Saffo*. But *Tolemaide* was enjoyable for whatever reason and extracts in vocal score were published widely, Pacini was not displeased with its reception, “*che’ebbe successo felicissimo*” he said and despite these early doubts the opera survived and was revived widely.

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His orientation in flux, for whatever reason – his tussle with Bellini, the death of his wife, a disenchantment with his earlier idols, all could be the explanation. A distinct split in his musical mode was now to emerge. Two operas in the second half of 1829 showed the way the wind would be blowing. In all probability Gaetano Barbieri was the catalyst for change, at Pacini’s shoulder in the Bellinian confrontation in Milan he was one of those fringe figures essential to musical debate.^{xlviii}

They began their actual collaboration at the start of this year when Barbieri revamped the text of a showpiece aria for Luigia Boccabadati to sing in *Gli arabi nelle Gallie* in Rome^{xlix} but it was his renown as a translator that attracted Pacini - in no way a composer unaware of the fashionable nature of the competition he faced he turned again to the literary shooting star of the age for his next opera: Sir Walter Scott. The Pacini/Barbieri *Il talismano ossia La terza crociata in Palestina*^l was the result. La Scala, ignoring any earlier contretemps had offered him another *scrittura*, with Rubini and Tamburini and another décor by Sanquirico. Pacini took his time, almost six months which means that he took the very greatest care.^{li} Indeed, this opera’s leisurely pacing heralds a change in his aria forms, together with a suffocated crepuscular mood that could be attributed to emotional advance. Significantly the most enthusiastically received item in the opera would be the *recitativo e romanza* ‘Luna conforto al cor’, carefully drawn-out and marked *sotto voce* with a dreamy recitativo ‘Soave notte’ followed by a languid cantabile for Rubini raised in contemplative reflection - not a Pacinian trait in recent years but archi-significant on a stage where conflict with his contender had taken place. Not that *Il talismano* would be without surprises, in the vocal exchanges that followed the romanza the tenor astonished everyone in the house by throwing out an interpolated top C (a *do del petto* or so it was 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). Apart from this, Emilia Bonini, Antonio Tamburini and his wife Marietta Tamburini-Gioja together with the buffo Giuseppe Frezzolini (poet and composer had attempted to do justice to Scott's usual mix of comic and tragic characters) formed the heart of the cast.. Thanks to Barbieri's literary gifts, there were pungently authentic encounters; a textbook Tamburini/Rubini duetto (Atto I Sc.VII) with every kind of lyrical twist and turn and ending in the *stretta* 'L'alta fiamma che strugemmi il petto' led by Rubini was sensational enough to make the reputation of any composer; a cabaletta for Bonini "Soave immagine" actually evoked the triumphs of his youth, while Giuseppe Frezzolini had buffo interventions of real fascination, But the opera in toto was a vehicle for Rubini: his tremendous solo "Qual vi torno, oh notte nera" (Atto I ScXV) goes some way to explain his intense loyalty to Pacini and to musical integrity in the events to follow. But everyone in the cast had a splendid reception. Staged on 10 June 1829 *Il talismano* was repeated sixteen times and in October it returned for eighteen more. The composer blessed his poet and Sir Walter (especially as Bellini's *Bianca e Fernando* had languished in between those two dates!)

Enchanted with news of its continuing success on that stage reaching 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 printed praise at its libretto, the music and its reception in Milan: "*il tuo Pacini gode qualche riputazione nella Partenope Capitale.*"^{lii}

He continued to receive commissions, all noted bitterly by his rival. One of them for Genoa - masterminded by Bartolomeo Merelli - he had refused preferring an *Annibale in Torino* offered him by the Teatro Regio of 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 a libretto by Felice Romani (whether an old one or a new one is not known)^{liii} but his acceptance was thoroughly intemperate as for precisely the same carnival 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 interim Naples had all his attention. Most specifically a royal commission for an honorific cantata on behalf of one of his princess pupils; this was *L'annuncio felice* following the announcement of a request for the hand of Princess Maria Cristina by the much-married Ferdinando VII of Spain (her uncle).

This led to another of those glittering launchings in the S. Carlo with every available star on stage. Mounted on 7 September 1829, of the “*cantata con balli analoghi*” *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 wrote his music in eight days.^{liv} And at this time he was busy writing a further Scott opera to follow *Il talismano*. Friedrich Lippman in his *Giovanni Pacini: Bemerkungen zum Stil seiner Opern*^{lv} though oddly convinced that all 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*”. It is true, the opera confounded his most severe critics: based on ‘The Betrothed’ (and not of course on Manzoni’s ‘I promessi sposi’ as is often supposed, an error endorsed by the “*I fidanzati*” Pacini himself used) *Il contestabile di Chester* is a remarkably dense score, full of bouncing rhythms, special effects, surprising interventions and so much innovation that audiences were left in a state of exhaustion. Its début was initially delayed owing to Adelaide Tosi’s illness (intended for a royal opening on 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) formed an excellent team and *Il contestabile* made a powerful impact from the start. Even Fétis in his *Revue Musicale* in Paris gave it *chef-d’œuvre* status making the Gallic complaint that as Pacini had broken precedent by writing-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 23rd 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^{lvi} left the audience unrestrained in the manifestation of their enthusiasm.”^{lvii}

Pacini himself, however, insists that *bravura* elements had given way to as many *cori, ritornelli*, marches, fanfares and through-composing as he thought the Neapolitans

could stand, that 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 material existence suffer from it but too the masterwork of a fellow composer; the integrity of a famous librettist; and the continuing existence of a tragic antagonist on a Venetian lagoon.

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Was he ill? It has never been confirmed. It was now December 1829. He had signed contracts for operas at Turin and Venice for the coming carnival not one note of which had yet been committed to paper. More than this, under the terms of his standing contract with Barbaja he was obliged to supply a third opera for La Scala in the Spring. It was a commitment enough to undermine the health of any maestro. Had he been in optimum health he might well have composed all three, as it was this near-impossible commitment gave an opening to Bellini who had been refused a Venice *scrittura* due to his exorbitant demands.^{lviii} He was an expensive composer. His trump card was Felice Romani, the poet engaged to supply the text for two of Pacini’s commissions. For several weeks 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. For the moment Bellini assuaged his fractious muse with encouraging news from the direction of the Grand Canal; following a hint from Venetian insiders, he heard that in the event of Pacini’s defection he would get the chance to take his place.

In December his Venetian prospects suddenly brightened: not a *scritturta* but an invitation to stage *Il pirata* during the forthcoming carnival, he discovered too that Romani had as yet written little or nothing of the two texts he was supposed to be supplying – both for Turin and Venice – for his tormentor! Who can doubt that the creative possibilities of this situation were discussed in detail?

Romani’s relations with Pacini had failed with *La schiava in Bagdad*. Once a fervent admirer of Vincenzo Monti this proud poetaster judged Pacini’s compliance with Gaetano Rossi in the parodies of *I cavalieri di Valenza* to be a calculated blow to his fame. But Pacini was not alone. There was another nemico, the *marchegiano* Nicola

Vaccaj whose *Giulietta e Romeo* had brought fame to them both but had refused to pay for the libretto of *Saul*^{lix} he had supplied and had the effrontery to ask Tottola to make necessary changes to the text in the face of Romani's refusal to write one line more without cash down. Both these maestri were going to pay for their sins.^{lx}

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In Naples Pacini awaited the arrival of one or another of the texts for the coming carnival. Nothing arrived. When, exactly he was obliged to renounce his Turin contract is not clear.^{lxi} In the interim Bellini had arrived in Venice. He had left Casalbuttano on 17 December though *Il pirata* was not due to appear on stage in Venice until at least a month later but needed to be on the spot for the realization of their joint project. The weather was frightful. The lagoon was frozen and shortly after his arrival the city was cut-off from the outside. No one could arrive or leave, come or go. 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.^{lxii} The young composer's fledgling renown vanished overnight. This rebuff notwithstanding the *Presidenza* refused to listen to Bellini's insistence that he should replace Pacini, his heart-rending account of the latter's "illness" was received with scepticism. But *Il pirata* was moved forward: "*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.'^{lxiii}

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

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 pmo atto e porzione del 2^{do}, che in nostro intima confidenza è più insulso dell'istessa freddezza in persona*"^{lxiv} with wide-eyed innocence seeing that the poet was even then beside him in Venice of necessity to turn Vaccaj's

Giulietta e Romeo into Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*.^{lxv}

That plans for this *rifacimento* 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 prenderò 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*”^{lxvi}

On that same day of 5 January Pacini arrived in Milan in search of Romani.^{lxvii} He was not of course to be found. No one knew where he was. In a matter of hours Pacini recognised the true nature of the *fait accompli*. It was defeat. Romani had killed two birds with one stone. The few lines of the libretto never supplied to Pacini for his *Olga ou l’orfano moscovita* could be comfortably used in Bellini's *La sonnambula*.^{lxviii} Thus all loose ends were tied

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...*”

And so it transpired, *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*, ready and waiting in Venice, was staged and received by “*quasi tutto Venezia*”...^{lxix}

But nemesis has its own *scrittura*. It was from water in a polluted well in the frozen city that Bellini contracted the amœbic infection that killed him five years later.^{lxx} When he got back to Milan a commission from the Teatro Regio in Turin awaited him for the following *carnevale* but Bellini had no further interest in Turin.

ⁱ Pacini's sense of humour was not entirely 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

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

ⁱⁱⁱ Harmonicon 1826, 206

^{iv} Liszt's 1836 piano transcription of *I tuoi frequeti palpiti* initiated at least thirty years of popular performances

^v It was a summer when his music began to be performed abroad - with mixed results. At the Odéon in Paris for example was staged a pastiche (Paris was a gross-consumer of these confections) called *Le Neveu de Monseigneur* with a première on 7 August 1826, officially attributed to Morlacchi - but tarred with a Rossinian brush by the press - and which included music by Pacini, Rossini, indeed, could well have had had a hand in the staging. 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

^{vi} Pacini op cit 46-7

^{vii} One of them - 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*"

^{viii} 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 may well have been those of Pacini himself)

^{ix} Revue des Deux Mondes, Paris March 1835, 724

^x Cfr Alexander Weatherson *Frequent palpitation* [in] Donizetti Society Newsletter 133

^{xi} Berlioz probably shuddered, but getting any attention at all from the Conservatoire was a compensation for him

^{xii} 20 November 1826

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

^{xiv} Pacini, as artistic director of the S. Carlo may or may not have attended rehearsals of Bellini's *Bianca e Gerardo* in May 1826 as he later claimed, but there is no evidence that they met

^{xv} Among the students encountered on this visit were Luigi Ricci and the very young Errico Petrella who was later to compose a highly successful opera, *Jone* (1858), with a catastrophic culminating eruption of Vesuvius in the manner of *L'ultimo giorno di Pompei*

^{xvi} Pacini's first dedication to the contessa dates back to 1826. Bellini made sporadic efforts to wrest her from his rival and hopefully dedicated the vocal score of his *Bianca e Fernando* to her. She sent him a gold watch and chain in acknowledgment

^{xvii} True *copyright* of course was yet to exist

^{xviii} The choice of plot - *pace* d' Arlincourt'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 his son by setting the text of his *Il barone di Dolsheim* (St.Petersburg 1828)] As for d'Arlincourt; *poete et romancier* Charles-Victor Prévost d'Arlincourt *dit vicomte* d'Arlincourt was born at Magny-les-Hameaux in the château de Mérantais near Versailles on 26 September 1788 and died in Paris on 22 January 1856. He was a cult figure of the day whose most famous work 'Le Solitaire' (1821) says everything about his poetical niche

xi^x This feature in Pacini's opera preceded that of Bellini's *Il pirata* of course

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

xxiⁱ In particular the lack of emphasis on the role of the soprano was very marked (the *musico*, indeed, has a rather more important role). The soprano got a major foothold only in later editions

xxiiⁱ Probably in response to Pasta's outrageous behaviour in appropriating the music of Rubini in *Niobe*. Pacini was never to warm to Pasta. Nor she to him

xxiiiⁱ Bellini, awaiting the outcome of this aria for the soprano who would become his *Imogene* in a matter of weeks - and 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 later *Amazilia* interpolation certainly did

xxivⁱ A manuscript score in London's British Library (of c1832?) presents a version of *Gli arabi nelle Gallie* where Leodato has the main role in the opera including a new aria expressly composed for Rosa Mariani (also an aria for the comprimario Zarele). These changes may not have been performed in London as undoubtedly the contracted *primadonna*, Giulia Grisi, would have held out against them and Pacini did not attend

xxvⁱ Her Spanish ancestry was scarred by a Moorish past

xxviⁱ She gave birth to her baby as Azucena in the opera that followed (a baby in no danger of being thrown on a bonfire!)

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

xxviiiⁱ Pacini op cit 52

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

xxxⁱ Bellini, with scant justification, was to cultivate the accusation that both Pacini and Donizetti appropriated the tragic colouring, key structure and protracted delirium of his heroine in *Il pirata* as if there had been no earlier precedents. His fear of 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 insistence that it was *he* who persuaded Barbaja to give Bellini the La Scala *scrittura* (which could have been true) only compounded his paranoia

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

xxxii Two years later a remorseful management at the S. Carlo revived *Margherita regina d'Inghilterra* (4 October 1829) with an almost identical cast, when it was discovered to have all kinds of merits

xxxiii Pacini op cit 53

xxxiv In 1828 he attempted to evade these issues by reverting to comedy, setting a slight text by Bartolomeo Merelli with the title of *Per Dio non intendo cosa dice*, an opera buffa whose score seems to have been completed but never saw the light of day

xxxv The working title of *I cavalieri di Valenza*

xxxvi Pacini never lacked allies in the musical press of Milan. *I Teatri*, edited by Gaetano Barbieri (a Pacinian librettist) 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

xxxvii They had alternated in the "possession" of the Teutonic goldmine: Rossi first took possession with *Romilda e Costanza* (1817) and *Emma di Resburgo* (1819), but then Romani managed to seduce the maestro and supplied texts for *Margherita d'Anjou* (1820) and *L'esule di Granata* (1822). But Rossi snatched the crown back with *Il crociato in Egitto* (1824) whose success was nothing less than worldwide. Romani deeply resented Rossi's triumph and tried to oust Rossi from several contracts with other composers, so the latter reciprocated in kind and a major reciprocation would be Pacini's *I cavalieri di Valenza*

xxxviii The working title of *I cavalieri di Valenza*

xxxix Adelaide Castelli had died after complications following childbirth, her child, christened Maria Amazilia, was immediately adopted by the *contessa* Samoyloff who brought her up like a daughter. An infant son, Carlo Ludovico (named after the *duca* di Lucca), had died only a few weeks before aged one year

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

xli 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)

xlii "...*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.

xliii Bellini accused Pacini of pouncing-upon the tragic colouring of *Il pirata*, 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 the time Bellini was writing *Il pirata* (as well as being sung by the same cast for whom he was composing!)

xliv Pacini alluded to the fact that the plot of *Il pirata* - whatever Romani's purported source, was frankly another variant of the Gabriella di Vergi story that 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)

xlv 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*

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

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

xlviii 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'teatri 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 especially 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*")

xliv 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

¹ A Meyerbeer valedictory title with Sir Walter Scott as its catalyst, - thus he made a bridge with his operas in the coming decade

li It is clear (from his family opera *Il convitato di pietra*) that Pacini had tried out the music of *Il talismano* upon his siblings in rehearsals at home - this was almost certainly a practice he had initiated from his earliest years

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

liii 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 of his unprofessional collusion with Bellini in Venice by subterfuge

liv *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 absurd - in such a time he would have composed an entire opera!

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

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

lvii *Harmonicon* 1830, 90

lviii 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*

lix The *Saul* affair was truly unfortunate, especially for Vaccaj, this *tragedia lirica* with an excellent libretto by Romani 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 for the libretto (he was *careful* with money - like Romani himself) fell foul of the latter. 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 ever *paid* for his services – probably not!):

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 originally 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

lx Rubini, who had sung in *Saul*, wrote to Vaccai to warn him of Romani's disreputable intentions to turn his *Giulietta e Romeo* into an opera for Bellini as a form of revenge

lxi Almost certainly he had pleaded illness as an excuse for renouncing his contract with Turin thus enabling Bellini to trumpet in Venice that illness would oblige him to renounce there too. Only when the Romani/Bellini *coup* against Pacini and Vaccaj had been achieved did Romani write an *Annibale in Torino* text (for Luigi Ricci. Teatro Regio, Turin 26 December 1830)

lxii 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

lxiii *Revue Musicale*, Paris 1829, 594

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

lxv It is obvious that Romani's presence in Venice was essential for the *rifacimento* of Vaccai's text as in all previous collaborations with Bellini. And once there he could not leave. 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 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 of the new 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"

lxvi 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.

lxvii "*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

lxviii 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 certain that Pacini's unfinished *Olga* text was subsumed into the libretto of *La sonnambula* the following year, thus Romani could satisfactorily present his friend Bellini with an unassailable *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]

^{lxi} 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 fraudulently manipulated, and offered Pacini contracts for the rest of his life...

^{lxx} For a clinical account of Bellini's illness and death [see] (Dr) Nino Cannavà *La causa di morte di Vincenzo Bellini* (Catania 2002)