

Chapter eight

“*Nuovi tormenti e nuovi tormentati*”

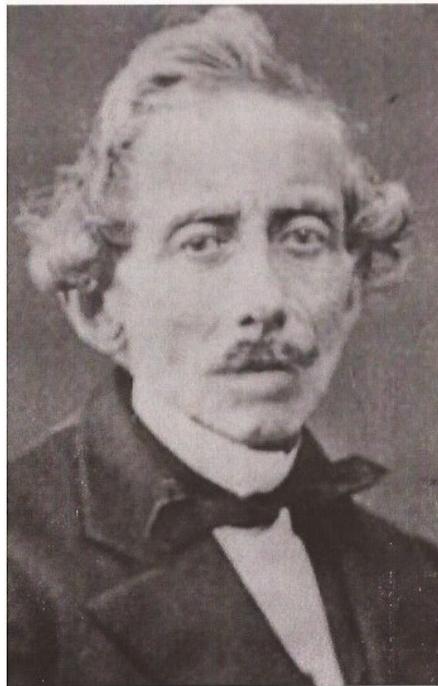
False starts and frustration would be the hallmark of his final years. The eclipse of the sovereign states of a divided Italy would put paid to any fragile protection he might have had from the winds of change - would put paid too to the need for a cultural identity in the various states so that the wave of *scrittura* offered two or three times a year - the thirst for new operas for the traditional *stagioni* - now dried up. An operatic *terra ferma* ceased to exist. The certainties formerly under-pinning the musical objectives of the lyric stage fled, in most cases for good. An all-Italy audience began to emerge, less specific, better informed, and far more concerned with revivals than with innovation.

Pacini's persistence however remained. He rushed frenetically from one end of the peninsula to the other in the first months of 1859 to stage his *Il saltimbanco* in Turin, Venice, Naples and Palermo - with Piacenza alone bringing a rare boost to his ego. Though its carnival had consisted of nothing but an extended banquet for its local hero, his *Saffo* - like an exotic entrée - was given no less than ten ovations and he found himself crowned with a welcome gold wreath.

Much of this year was spent tinkering with *Berta di Varnol* – a further Piave collaboration that would prove contradictory; traditional in conception, improbably gruesome, set in seventeenth century Westphalia and impossibly verbose in contrast with the poet's severe texts for the all-conquering rival - yet another project for La Fenice before it could be staged the *nobile Presidenza* slammed the door in protest at Austrian provocation leaving Pacini to fend for himself. *Berta* was discarded: “*Quando il cielo lo permetterà*” said the composer in feigned resignation.ⁱ

These years, 1859, 1860 and 1861 were not years of easy existence for Italian operisti. Austria invaded Piedmont in 1859; Garibaldi landed in Sicily in May 1860 and was in Naples the following September; the first all-Italian parliament sat in Turin on 14 February 1861. Verdi – voting for Parma's annexation as an independent state - was given honorary citizenship in Turin. His compatriot composers, those resident in Italy that is, kept a low profile, with a weather-eye open for random commissions *pro or contro* the state of the country and its fate.

Pacini found himself in limbo. His cherished titles and orders of knighthood dropped into the side-drawer of his desk: ⁱⁱ one moment he had been Director of an important music school, the next he was unemployed. He read that he had been summarily dismissed from his musical posts in Firenze in a newspaper during a stop at an auberge *en route* for the Tuscan capital!ⁱⁱⁱ Such was this new unity for a swathe of the most talented. In due course an all-Italy sovereign would offer replacement honours and titles to the demoted but not much in the way of employment - in the case of Giovanni Pacini - without being unpatriotic or unrealistic regretting his “*augusto Mecenate*” ^{iv} and the vanquished Leopoldo II with whom he continued to exchange letters on musical topics.



The composer in his last decade

He would find refuge in revamping old scores, in 1858-9 rewriting his oratorio *Il trionfo della religione* of 1838 composed for Longiano and now (pointedly) retitled *Il trionfo della fede* ^v and offered to Rome - the one city whose foundations were sufficiently robust – or so at least he thought - whose operatic *scritture* would be protected from last-minute *door-slamming à la Veneziana* under heavenly ægis. He would not be mistaken. The contract was for *Gianni di Nisida*, an outsize summation of much that had gone before, its librettist Giuseppe Ccchetelli offering an argument taking to its heart almost every operatic set-piece then in vogue with enough Pacinian invention for several such scores - a busy confection whose pace and indulgence would supply enough bombast and

visceral excitement to excel any other of his apogee. Out of focus in every way but a declaration of faith in Rome.

Cencio Jacovacci had contracted the rising diva Luigia Ponti Dell'Armi and Pacini poured into his *Gianni di Nisida* all the wild children of his last years in a ruthless denial of Verdian concision: sprawling, with a kind-of wide-screen vulgarity, *Gianni di Nisida* was an opera the very antithesis of the narrowing operatic vision then emerging - a plot to frame a *super-bitch* soprano and tailored to a noisy score with cruelty its prime motivation as well as its saving grace. Restless, over-inventive, and perfectly representative of the untrammelled compositional surge that had long been his forte, this *dramma lirico in quattro atti*, though successful on first hearing would prove an unhappy portent. Its fate emblematic of much that was to come.

In the changed conditions in which he had found himself, cloistered within a papal enclave under siege, Pacini set himself immense tasks. This four-act marathon tackled so many issues, taking so many risks that its rumbustious prima tested the audience to the limits. Anticipating later verismo parameters with a colourful procession of overlifesize characters with huge voices in an excess of imposing melodies *Gianni di Nisida* took the spectators by the scruff of the neck. No confrontation missing, every kind of *scena*, duet, trio, *ballabile popolare* was featured including a momentous curse followed by a whispered *largo* - a noisy mid-term dénouement (the Act II finale) with no dramatic trick missing. It paid off. At the Teatro Apollo on 29 October 1860 every artist was vigorously applauded: Luigia Ponti fulfilled all the nastiness of a role so testing that she alone was willing to sing it (which she repeated on a subsequent staging) even if her on-stage suicide from the usual poison needed something in the nature of a papal dispensation to appear at all.^{vi} She was supported robustly by Geremia Bettini in the title role, Davide Squarcia (a pacinian faithful who had earlier sung in *La distruzione di Gerusalemme*) Raffaele Laterza and Eufemia Barlani-Dini. All this major cast was fêted with warmth. *Gianni di Nisida* was an uncontested local success, worthy of the reputation of any composer, in among the big score pieces as impressive as any he was to compose so late in life.

But such a roaring début was far from ensuring any kind of shelf life. Its success alerted the opposition. Revived again in Rome in April 1861 with the

same prima donna it survived a change of cast ^{vii} but a further revival, to open the next carnival season at the Pergola in Firenze, failed abjectly, Pacini did not hesitate to point to the reason. An insignificant ballet called *Il conte di Montecristo* had been cheered to the roof rafters but *Gianna di Nisida* was whistled unmercifully from the first notes. A *claque* prominently installed made it impossible to hear both singers and orchestra^{viii} as a result his contracts for revivals at Modena and Genoa were broken-off. “Someone” took the trouble to notify them of the “failure” of *Gianni di Nisidia* in the Tuscan capital. Calumny^{ix} he says, with justice - pointing a finger in the direction of Milan but such a disgrace was happily endorsed by his supplanters in a city in no way disposed to approve his music. He would find it very hard to make any sort of impression in Tuscany forthwith.

Whatever the praiseworthy intentions, historic justice and general euphoria national unity supplied vicious weapons to unprincipled musical adventure. A hungry hegemony of music publishers – once limited by unnatural boundaries now extended its tentacles over the whole of the peninsula; the impresario (Novaro) of the Carlo Felice (Genoa) broke his contract with Pacini in the Spring of 1862 after physical threats had been made to him, Managements were informed that they would not be permitted to hire or stage Verdian operas if they persisted in mounting works threatening the supremacy of their investment. This commercial *ostinato*, with every underhand dischord at its disposal, was a major feature of musical life even into the following century. ^x

As the score of *Gianni di Nisida* remained Pacini’s own property it was never revived again, and a friendly letter from Leopoldo II congratulating him upon his Roman success rubbed salt into the wound.^{xi}

The monetary impact of this painful impasse was underlined by an incident later in 1861. The Teatro di S. Carlo had shown an interest in Pacini’s most recent opera; Nicola De Giosa^{xii} composer-conductor and fervent defender of lost causes wrote to Francesco Lucca, Ricordi’s publishing rival, in indignant fury:

“Un momento si parlava del Gianni da Nisida (sic) di Pacini, che per mio riguardo, avendogli scritto, domandava e pel nolo dello spartito e per la venuta qui, 1500 ducati. Allora questa impresa ardi propormi di offrìre ad un Pacini, 50, dico, cinquanta ducati!!!, denaro che non basta neppure per la copia della partitura...”^{xiii}

De Giosa withdrew one of his own operas in disgust at this treatment of a colleague no longer defended by an enfeebled status quo. Hard times were upon those outside the authorised perimeter.

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The year had been infuriating. It began with a begging letter from Temistocle Solera, since 1846 in the operatic wilderness and now almost an outcast, asking Pacini to send him “300 franchi” in return for a new libretto. In turn distressed by the abandoned poet’s misery he sent him the money on 16 January 1861^{xiv} but a libretto was never forthcoming. The early months were spent polishing^{xv} the second Roman commission, one intended to reclaim the thematic range he had always considered his own. *Il mulattiere di Toledo* was a comedy, if a wry example of humour with its underlying social commentary; the composer had persuaded his Bolognese friend Giuseppe Cencetti to adapt the 1854 livret Adolphe d’Ennery and Louis-François Nicolae (pseud. Clairville) had supplied to Adolphe Adam^{xvi} - in no way an inappropriate project for Rome - the embattled capital was certain to fall eagerly for plot featuring a king obliged to disguise himself as a mule driver - amusingly appropriate in view of its continuing role as a bolthole for exiled crowned heads.

His versatility undimmed, Pacini was thus able to fight his current woes with a stream of romances and songs to point all the charm of which he was capable. In a Toledo more Neapolitan than Spanish and some heavyweight casting, with Luigia Ponti Dell’Armi and Giuseppina Tati in roles the antithesis of those they normally sang, with Luigi Fioravanti, Pietro Bignardi and Ludovico Buti in gigantic ensembles this *commedia lirica in tre atti* (heavily cut) tuneful and irreverent carried *Il mulattiere di Toledo* to a clamorous reception at the Teatro Apollo on 25 May 1861. There were surprises, ballads, and high-jinks galore; a chorus of bassi buffi was a riot. Enthusiastically applauded, cheered, it was never revived. It received just this one Roman staging. Fantasy was hard to sustain in 1861, the dates were all wrong - the future was far too uncertain especially for satirical amusement to obtain more than a brief grimace. Perhaps Jacovacci put too much of a ring-fence around its dissemination^{xvii} - made it so difficult to repeat that it never *was* repeated and the score is now lost. ^{xviii}

If he was dismayed he was in no way silenced. The Roman Spring of 1862 with a Viareggio summer *Dixit* composed for voices and orchestra to please the Abate Francesco Guerra, it was this vocal endorsement from heaven that witnessed the first scribblings on scraps of paper of *Le mie memorie artistiche* - that passionate if treacherous quasi-testament which despite incoherencies, evasions, mistakes and omissions - dependant on publishers in an unfaithful Firenze^{xix} - has never been far from the desks of music historians indifferent to his destiny.

Initially intended to amuse his friends, full of sly asides, he may well have thought the venture to be no more than a pastime. But once begun, his high spirits and propensity for anecdotes raised the surrounding gloom to the extent that the literary challenge was pursued with the same extravagance formerly expended on *cadenze* and *cabalette*. He also resumed writing chamber music. Since 1858 he had occasionally supplied a String Quartet for the *Società del Quartetto di Firenze*, an enterprise dear to the heart of his publisher-friend Giovanni Gualberto Guidi to which he had contributed since initiation.

In these fruitless months he wrote two more String Quartets, completing six before 1864. They were compositions he may have believed to be of pedagogic worth only but brought forth a kind of contemplative refinement which seldom found a place in his music for the stage or church. Two were published promptly (one by G.G.Guidi a second by Giudici e Strada^{xx}). All repay investigation. It was in this period too that he composed his *Ottetto in fa maggiore per oboe, fagotto, corno, tre violini, violoncello e contrabasso* which proved surprising:

“V’è in tal musica, dissimulata sotto lo smalto di una mondana disinvoltura e tra piacevoli reminiscenze teatrali spinte talora al limite di una consapevole auto-ironia, un’assoluta conscienziosità artistica, una sorprendente sicurezza nell’affrontare e risolvere per vie niente affatto scolastiche delicati problemi di equilibrio fonico e di quadratura formale.”

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Sent to the same Società for performance an un-familiar Pacini was revealed – one who largely eludes even his admirers.

It was lucky he had these distractions: the end of 1861 was so devastating that Pacini simply deleted it from the memoirs so recently begun.^{xxii} Florence failed him so traumatically that he scarcely went there willingly ever again.

After ten years on the shelf his *Belfagor* finally made an appearance. Its librettist Antonio Lanari had many of his father's traits and talents. In 1844 he had taken an eight-year lease of the Teatro Argentina in Rome to which he shortly added that of the Teatro Comunale at Faenza. He was not at all unworthy of the family reputation for prudence and flair but proprietorial gifts did not necessarily combine either with taste or dramatic flair or an ability to handle experienced composers with tact. There were on-going Roman irritants: Pacini's firm friendship with Jacovacci irked. The composer's unwilling conformity, Pacini was something of a relic in the Tuscan capital but in no way shrinking or subdued.

He was especially vocal about the quality of Antonio's text; based on Macchiavelli and thus more-or-less *hors concours* in the city but with an admixture of malodorous French vaudeville far too close to pantomime unrelieved either by wit or irony. Pacini himself had retouched Antonio's ten-year-old libretto without much faith in its outcome against a frieze of second-thoughts and last-minute additions from the poet as well as antagonism from the hosts at the projected venue. The composer was writing new music until the curtain rose.

The libretto for the *prima* was actually printed *twice* - there are two different editions - the first so full of errors and misprints that it ends in a long list of amendments. The opera's eventual inauguration at the Teatro Pergola on 1 December 1861 saw purgatory turn swiftly into theatrical damnation: *Belfagor* was received in a sulphurous cloud, the principals semaphoring vainly in a hell of hissing and whistling at the fall of the curtain. Pacini - confirmed in his opinion as to its demerits - kept his head down, prayed that it would go away, but it lingered stubbornly thanks to a faithful cast determined upon success. This utterly predictable fiasco put an end to a second attempt at revival of *Gianni di Nisida* scheduled to succeed *Belfagor*.

Thus musically tarnished, Antonio Lanari's feelings are not known but he married the Scottish prima donna Helen Macleod ("*Elena Maklod*") just three days after his opera's sad demise. And then the death of Antonio's father - for long years the *bras-armé* of so much of his earlier career - Alessandro Lanari

a few weeks later - must have put a cap on Pacini's feeling of humiliation on what he had liked to claim as his home ground.

His fame at a discount, his rival now at the top of every agenda, despairing almost - of survival he turned his face as far away as distant as possible from home and *VIVA VERDI*. Providentially he had received what he may have believed to be a lifeline from a city where his flame had never burned brightly if at all.

How, precisely, Pacini became embroiled in the London International Exhibition of 1862 is a matter of considerable guesswork. The finger points at the all-powerful *voire* dictatorial composer Sir Michael Costa, the talented, ruthless, massively bearded Caliban wielding a baton in place of a club at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden where he was principal conductor. In his youth a fellow-student of Bellini in Naples and a friend of Rossini, Pacini may have known him as a very young man.^{xxiii} Michele Costa had become a pillar of the established musical authority in the Victorian metropolis. Early in 1862 the Secretary of Her Majesty's Commissioners for the projected *Window on the World* F.R. Sandford had written to Costa that the Exhibition Commission wished to receive compositions from

"...artists representing France, Germany, Italy and England" to be performed at the opening ceremony: "They have requested Messrs, Auber, Meyerbeer and Verdi to supply each a new piece of music (and) having invited contributions from artists of such eminence, and having assured them, that all means of adequate execution will be provided...the Commissioners feel that they cannot hope to fulfil their engagement more satisfactorily than by inducing you to undertake the direction and management of the musical arrangements."^{xxiv}

All very flattering of course but these sentiments were inevitably to fall on stony ground as a result of a certain unfamiliarity with the maestro in question: Costa loathed Verdi,^{xxv} despised Meyerbeer and barely tolerated Auber; as for the unfortunate William Sterndale Bennett – imprudently chosen by innocent political minds to represent England, Costa knew him as a Teutonic ingrate

whose music he had always refused to accept at Covent Garden under any circumstances whatsoever.

Whatever the international intentions, musically speaking the venture was destined to crash even on its launching pad: Costa ordered Meyerbeer out of Covent Garden and gave his score to an assistant;^{xxvi} Verdi was told on arrival at Dover that his *Inno delle nazioni* would *not* be performed. The indignant *bussetino*, brandishing his letter of invitation, travelled to London where he wrote to “The Times” to complain of his reception. With belated pressure from above, the *Inno* was diplomatically shunted to the Her Majesty’s Theatre where it duly emerged - its solo voice intended for Tamberlick transposed a little for Thérèse Tietjens - on 24 May 1862 and not of course sung at the opening ceremony and not of course conducted by Sir Michael Costa.^{xxvii}

Did, however, the enterprising Michele Costa approach two of Verdi’s most prominent rivals in order to replace him? Early in 1862 Pacini began composing a vast cantata dedicated to the recently defunct Prince Albert. At much the same time Felice Romani put pen to paper to create an honorific showpiece:

“*Sospiri d’Italia all’Inghilterra. Elegia di F.R. posta in musica dal M^o ...M... nei solenni dell’esposizione di Londra*”

intended for, no doubt, but never in fact composed by, Saverio Mercadante.^{xxviii}

Pacini, was quicker off the mark than *Maestro...M* and supplied his cantata, or very nearly did. With a text as far as can be determined by himself, his ample composition is a voluble affair with a cast of *Italia, Favore tutelare, Gallia* and *Genio inglese* each of whom attempts to out-sing the other in the way all too familiar long before the European Union took it to new lengths. With a vast mixed chorus and an even vaster orchestra giving the composer full rein to draw upon his extensive experience of contentious composition.

But something brought composition to a halt. No doubt Verdi’s letter to “The Times.” Pacini’s manuscript was never quite finished, beginning with a Queen-soothing “*Sul marmo del principe Alberto*” the long score lacks its final pages. Yet another abandoned project? It can only be regretted; an ambitious Lisztian ebullience and sentiments worthy of the United Nations are not to be despised. Pacini’s perfidious cantata would have been thoroughly worthy of its time and place.^{xxix}

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This year of 1862 he described as “*L’anno di poi mi riposai*” was not even remotely true, not just because of the cantata but primarily because he had signed a contract (despite considerable misgivings) with Bartolommeo Merelli to write an opera to open the Scala carnival of 1862-3. Most of the latter part of the year was spent on its conception, composition, scope and possible impact. Unusual care had been taken in the strategy of this opera at a key moment in his future survival; *Carmelita*, as it was to be called, had a libretto by Piave, one of his bolder efforts (“*Meyerbeerian*” Pacini liked to call it *pace* Costa) replete with subtly dramatic effects intended to take the new sophisticated audiences by storm. A remarkable cast had been selected at a very early date with Adelaide Borghini-Mamo in the title role, Carlo Negrini and Giovanni Gucciardini as the embattled Don Diego and Don Enrico respectively, their roles carefully tailored from the very outset.

It was a project as ambitious as any for the now sixty-five-year-old maestro, full of surrealist phantasmagoria and based on a “Don Giovanni di Marana ou La chute d’un Ange” by an overripe Dumas. Verdi could have warned Pacini about accepting projects from Merelli but the unflagging composer worked “*con amore...con quella coscienza artistica che ad uomo di matura età solo è compagna*,”^{xxx} he relished the outré dramatic situations, the opera began and ended well – a sure-fire factor –and the *finale ultimo* he described as “*superiore a quello della Saffo*”.

No one was to find this out for several years. With the finished score on his desk Merelli, failing visibly as an impresario, brutally reneged on the contract. He could not afford to stage such an ambitious opera, the production was aborted and the costumes used for something else. “To tell the truth” says Pacini “what happened to me in Milan in the carnival of 1863 had never happened before:

“Povera arte! Poveri artisti! In tal modo sono rispettati I contratti, e si amministra la giustizia? Dov’è più la buona fede? A che valgono le lettere di rispettabili persone poste alla teste di una Direzione teatrale!”^{xxxi}

He was not alone in finding the new world deficient in morality.

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This truly was a major blow and for the first time ever he stopped composing “...ai tempi che corrono” he would write to Vincenzo Capecelatro “*la musica...è posta da un lato.*”^{xxxii} It was almost true, in 1863 he set about writing didactic works in an all-but manic compensation: his *Memoria sul migliore indirizzo degli studi musicali*; his *Lettere ai municipi italiani per una scuola musicale*; and his *Progetto pei giovani compositori* were all written this year. His *Cenni storici sulla musica e trattato di contrapunto* was revised and published the following year. A mood of bitter reflection, combined with thoughts of the past provoked by the writing of his memoirs also turned his mind to earlier struggles. 1863 witnessed his first attempt to placate the Bellinian shade. He wrote letters supporting the project of bringing the ashes of his celebrated *concittadino* back to Catania from their grave in Père Lachaise. Later this year he composed a “*conchetto fantastico*” with a text by the *catanese* Raffaele Abate intended to be performed at the ceremony of re-interment. It had to wait thirteen years to be heard. Entitled *Apoteosi di Vincenzo Bellini* it was first played in the Piazza degli Studi of Catania University on 22 September 1876, an episodic cantata for soprano, mezzo, tenor, bass and full orchestra (and in part reusing some of the music from the cantata written the year before for London - it was one small step it seems from the grave of Prince Albert to that of the *catanese* Cigno) it turned out to be an adroit compendium mixing Bellinian themes with his own that was much praised at the time. Its composition was capped in 1864^{xxxiii} when he set about writing a *Messa di Requiem* for this hostile voice of his youth: “*Ebbene! io vi diro...che, rivolgendo il pensiero alla mesta santa cerimonia...mi sono occupato frattanto di comporre una nuova grandiosa messa di Requiem*” he wrote to Raffaele Abate on 24 October 1864.^{xxxiv} This was of course an infinitely more substantial work but consisting of a *Kyrie* and the *Dies Irae* sequence only, blessed with fleeting melodic beauties and with a whispered diminuendo final cadence in an unresolved key, desolate and deeply disturbing. Indeed a touching reflection upon his futile confrontation with Bellini.^{xxxv} Pacini was a sensitive and reasonable human being and would have made an *amende honorable* at any time if his insensate genius of a rival had ever been willing. But even this pious undertaking had to wait many years to appear.^{xxxvi} It was first sung for Pacini’s

own funeral at Pescia in 1867. After his death it was sent to Catania by his widow, Marianna Pacini, but despite an endorsement by Pier-Antonio Coppola^{xxxvii} who considered it to be a masterpiece and despite the encouragement of the Municipio of Catania which was ready to endorse his choice the Archbishop of Catania refused to have it sung in any of his churches because there was a soprano soloist and women's voices in the coro. A *Messa di Requiem* by Coppola, composed in a hurry for male voices only, was sung instead at the ceremony of re-interment at Catania Cathedral in 1876.^{xxxviii}

Indeed, though opera itself may have been “*da un lato*” at the time he now wrote his fourth and best String Quartet^{xxxix} and turned his attention to forward planning of a politic kind. He sent a fulsome letter to the Committee formed to erect a statue of Rossini at Pesaro proposing the composition of a cantata to mark the occasion, an offer that the Committee accepted gratefully (or found hard to refuse). Mercadante was enjoined to write an *Inno*, the great maestro, however, even if amused by these votive efforts of his behalf by old friends and enemies, elected to stay at home.

He knew what he was doing, the actual singing of Pacini's cantata *Rossini e la patria* was marred by poor planning. 21 August 1864 began with Pacini busying himself importantly with the niceties of the staging of *Guillaume Tell* at the Teatro Rossini; his cantata was programmed for the end of a long day which began with the unveiling of the statue to the strains of Mercadante's *Inno* about which Pacini waxes positively effusive (the *altamurese* being able to take advantage of the current Amnesty with Bellini): “600 professori erano in bell'ordine disposti per eseguire l'inno di Mercadante.. .Gli evviva, gli applausi furono interminabili”^{xl} For the Pacini cantata he had the cast of *Guillaume Tell* which included Helen Macleod-Lanari, Angelo Zamboni, the German tenor Georgio Stigelli (*nom-d'arte* of Georg Stiegel), and Davide Squarcia, the conductor being Angelo Mariani.^{xli} But it got off to a very bad start. Hardly had the music begun than a great heaving behind the painted backcloth caused the conductor to put down his baton, the backcloth had to be raised to release a host of unauthorised listeners. Pacini, with recent Florentine experiences in mind suspected deliberate trouble-making but once more on track the cantata seems to have pleased, if not extravagantly. He would not have cared, it was aimed primarily at the absent *pesarese* whose friendship, warmth and support he had

enjoyed throughout his career and which he now wanted to record: it repeated carefully, and several times over, “Di tanti palpiti” with a deliberately heartfelt recapitulation and emphasis! In succession he enjoyed the honorary citizenship of Rossini’s home town.

Without taking breath he left for Ponte Buggianese in which Tuscan village his friend the Abate Francesco Guerra was mounting a two-day festival primarily of sacred music where three works by Pacini were to be sung, two of them brand new: a *Componimento a quattro voci* with an idiosyncratic accompaniment of strings, harp and organ; a *Messa e Vespro* for full orchestra and soloists; and a work already published by Lucca: a *Messa a cappella* for three male voices, organ and string bass.^{xliii} He puts in a claim here to have written more than sixty sacred works but it is scarcely ever possible to be sure about the exact number of his compositions in any genre. In any event, in this “silent” period he was busy with compositions of many kinds including another quartet (“*Offersi al chiaro signor maestro Taglioni di Napoli*”), two piano trios and a romance composed for a musical journal.

His back was not quite turned to the stage, in 1864 he did manage to revise his twenty-year-old *L’ebrea* which had never had a proper showing, for a rather zany exhumation at Viterbo (it was retitled *I romani in Siria*), but this year in essence indeed was a retrenchment with painful didactic attempts to retrieve his lost fame. Despondent, his wife had frequently to remind her cash-strapped husband that he was “*un celebros maestro*”. The year was not made more cheerful by disappearances of many in his circle - most notably that of Michele Puccini, his colleague whose patronymic, though no one would ever have guessed it at the time, would one day replace his own in their beloved Lucca. His *Messa di Requiem* for Michele Puccini set the mood for the whole year as far as Pacini was concerned.^{xliiii}

1865 was not dissimilar, he received an invitation from the publishing house of Fabbricatore in Naples to compose an opera on an unperformed text by Cammarano which he turned down, seemingly, as they did not offer him enough money, adding with some bitterness: “*Di noi vecchi non sanno più che fare, ed il giovin, se vuole, ha da pagare.*”^{xliv} Instead the early months of the year were given over to diverse music, notably his *Sinfonia Dante*, an *Inno a Guido*

Monaco, another for the *Vicerè d'Egitto*, a *Messa in otto parte reali* for S.Croce in Lucca, a *Messa in tre parti* to be published by Lucca [of which, in another world, the *De Profundis*, the *Crucifixus* and the *Agnus Dei* would be sung at the funeral of Pope John Paul II] and a *Messa di Gloria* for his own church the Chiesa del Monte in Pescia where, indeed, he himself would find permanent refuge before the end of the decade.^{xlv}

There was another burst of *Discorsi*, some of which to be published: the *Discorso nel primo pubblico esperimento degli alunni dell'Istituto musicale in Lucca* for instance, another, his *Considerazione sulla musica e sul miglior indirizzo da darsi agli studi musicali* was actually expounded in some pomp at the Accademia del Reale Istituto musicale di Firenze of which he had once been Honorary Director which represented a response to the indignity he had encountered in that city at the time of *Belfagor*.

Of all these initiatives the *Sinfonia Dante* was the most singular and a work which he took to be emblematic of his current non-operatic distinction. Intended to celebrate the sixth century of the birth of the poet this decidedly quirky orchestral poem was intended to redress the levity of which he had long been accused. It is divided into four parts

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|----------------------|--|
| 1 st Part | <i>Inferno</i> |
| 2 nd Part | <i>Purgatorio</i> |
| 3 rd Part | <i>Paradiso</i> |
| 4 th Part | <i>Il ritorno trionfale di Dante sulla terra</i> |

Over and above its literary programme (which may have had some reference to his musical parabola and aspirations) it was an essay in a kind of free orchestration he was almost never permitted, replete with piano solo and thematic digressions which if not all that profound at least have the merit of departure from routine. Melodically linked, *Inferno* undershoots somewhat its hopeless theme; *Purgatorio* is a lilting triple-time *allegretto* with a greater emphasis on *speranze* than *sofferenze*; *Paradiso* is an endearing *larghetto angelico* while *Il trionfo di Dante* is rousingly catchy, modish with swooning strings and sprightly instrumental colouring that brings this *sinfonia* to a beguiling if not notably symphonic conclusion.^{xlvi} First heard on 15 April 1865 conducted by his close friend Teodulo Mabellini at the fatal Teatro Pergola in tandem with his *Inno a Guido Monaco* as well as by music by Mabellini and Mendelssohn the work did

not lack admirers and even if it did not ensure any kind of return triumph on earth for the composer was soon published.

The April edition of L'Omnibus commented "*che fuoco! che vivacità*" and the 1875 edition of *Le mie memorie artistiche* dutifully reprints a letter Mercadante addressed to its composer after the *Sinfonia Dante* had been played to him on his piano in the presence of Florimo, Carlo Conti and other antagonists of earlier years effusively praising its form and freshness^{xlvii}. Through the good offices of a student Pacini sent a copy of the *Sinfonia Dante* to Liszt whose generous letter in reply remains in the Fondo Pacini at Pescia. He must have been astonished to receive news from the author of *Niobe*.

Possibly it was the generosity of its reception that persuaded him to put his memoirs aside – the portion published in his lifetime ends with the *Sinfonia Dante* and a reference to the "*Città dei fiori.*"^{xlviii} But even after a considerable section of abandoned material was incorporated into the text posthumously by Ferdinando Magnani a vast pile remains, much of it illegible. There are many plausible reasons for his withdrawal from the project: the pained reaction of Rossini who believed he was mistreated; those of many of his friends unhappy with the uncovering of musical skeletons; and the acid tone which now was ousting the detachment of the earlier installments. He may have felt that such public heart-searching was doing him a disservice.

He detested the current operatic scene "*Il vaso di Pandora seguitando a spandere I suoi malefici profumi*" he said in one with almost all his remaining contemporaries. All loathed the voices obliged to strain to surmount enormous orchestras in outsize opera houses with conductors calling the tune. All resented the power of the pit and the monopoly of publishing houses. But any resolution to turn his back on the theatre began to waver this year, thanks to Nicola De Giosa who persuaded him to write an *Inno* that might possibly encourage the Viceroy of Egypt – planning an operatic inauguration of the Suez Canal – to offer him a commission.^{xlix} It came to nothing of course but was not unnoticed as a declaration of intent. In 1866 he found himself once more in demand. It is an exaggeration to claim that impresarios from Venice and Naples beat a path to his Pescia door but he was not being ignored: the town of Fucecchio commissioned a *scena*, *il Canto del prigionero* with a text by a local hero, sung there on 22 August 1866; as for Naples, Pacini was eager to reply in kind to the excitement

attendant upon the belated appearance of Mercadante's *Virginia* long refused stubbornly in the Bourbon era.¹ All at once to his great surprise he found himself with a contract in the same theatre. In the late autumn he made up his mind to take the plunge, with *Berta di Varnol* under his arm he set out for the Parthenopean city arriving just in time to take part in a revival of *La fidanzata corsa* (11 November 1866) with Giorgio Stigelli in the role of Alberto and Luigia Bendazzi-Secchi as Rosa. He was given a tremendous reception and called on stage no less than twelve times after the Act II finale, greatly moved he greeted the blind Mercadante who had attended to meet his erstwhile foe.

But the S.Carlo had scarcely evolved. The management did not fail to live up to its reputation for disorder on a heroic scale, there was no one contracted to sing *Berta*, no scenery and no costumes. He was offered 2000 francs *not* to stage it in the *carnevale* as planned in his contract but to present it later in the less prominent slot of April. Pacini was indignant and others were indignant on his behalf, but with a magisterial flash of his old adaptability he succeeded in worming out an alternative carnival *scrittura* for Venice. Thus he left Naples in mollified dudgeon very shortly after he had arrived. If this was a false start, it was in no way a false step, he proposed now to stage his *Carmelita* but an opera totally transformed (but nominally "*espressamente composta*"). The opera now is called *Don Diego De'Mendoza*; the tenor of the title-role has much more to sing, the text much extended and the score greatly cut. *Carmelita* herself is now Donna Mariquita - though other roles remain mostly as planned for La Scala five years before. That Pacini understood *Don Diego De'Mendoza* to be a valedictory offering in a city that had been so loyal over so many decades is clear from the dedication in the libretto:

ALLA NOBILE PRESIDENZA
DEL GRAN TEATRO LA FENICE
CHE PARI IN VIRTÙ
AI SUOI MAGNANIMI CONCITTADINI
SALDA NELLA SUA FEDE
NON PIEGÒ A STRANIERE VOGLIE
ATTESTATO D'AMMIRAZIONE
QUEST'ULTIMA SUA FATICA
G.PACINI

Pacini's confidence in his opera was not misplaced. Nor was that of his *aficionadi*, it turned out to be something of a field-day with its bizarre coups-de-théâtre and outrageous animosities. *Don Diego De'Mendoza* is a tale of estranged brothers not unlike an uneasy partnership between *Il trovatore*, *Crispino e la comare*, *La Dame Blanche* and *Faust* with good and bad devils, a deranged sister who takes the veil, ghosts, a statue that comes to life and an overabundance of vengeance and religiosity. It was intended to astonish and it did. The opening scene was worthy of any contemporary *giallo*: the curtain rises on a darkened stage, a cavernous room above a strangely discordant tremolo from the orchestra, from a lighted doorway at the rear of the stage comes the hoarse cry of a dying man "*Enrico...mio figlio!*" at which point the whole setting opens-up to reveal a brilliantly lit apartment with people dining and a vast statue of an Angel holding down Satan with its foot.

Pacini's music rose tirelessly to the outré challenges of this plot, highly declamatory, frenchified, with hardly any *cabalette* and these slow and momentous and for male voices only; Donna Mariquita (sung by Signora Tiberini) has a ballad-like aria in the *Quadro Secondo* with a very brief explosion of joy but that is all. Piave had been reasonably faithful to Dumas' *Mystère en cinq actes et sept tableaux*, the huge list of characters reduced to three principals and six comprimario (with the banishment of two angels), a teeming plot to which the maestro has added a hectic pace and a kind of resilient spring of vehement melody in no way pruned by age and experience. Venice had supplied him with a remarkably effective cast, the conductor – in an ultimate touch of bizarre fantasy, proving to be Verdi's prostrate amanuensis Emanuele Muzio!

Without an extended rehearsal period *Don Diego De'Mendoza* took the stage on 12 January 1867. The settings were impressive, the cast superlative and the house full to bursting: blood-and-thunder, death and retribution so emblematic of popular taste made the day, but fate was on the side of the devils, on the night of the fourth performance Venice was swamped by one of the most damaging floods ever to be remembered. *Don Diego De'Mendoza* was drowned never to be revived anywhere owing to its length, complexity and vocal demands.

But also owing to the amour propre of its author who was the proprietor both of the music and its libretto. He refused publishing rights to Ricordi and Lucca

in the days following the *prima*. [Only relenting on 20 May when at last he signed over the rights to Francesco Lucca for 1000 lire just at the very period when too much water had gone under the bridges to revive it painlessly with its original cast, Lucca published some extracts the following month, had Pacini lived a little longer *Don Diego* would certainly have been heard again^{li}]

He raced back to Naples on 21 January, via Pescia and Rome, hearing with maximum emotion his *Saffo* en route with the Marchisio sisters in a very high-profile production at the Teatro Apollo.^{lii} The tremendous applause for their championship of his most famous opera left him on top of the wave but Jacovvaci's offer of a further contract for the next carnival he declined.

It may have been a premonition, but his eyesight was weakening after a lifetime of scribbling at his desk or was no more than simple precaution. By 16 February he was back at the S.Carlo to fulfil his April contract with *Berta di Varnol*. To coincide with his reappearance, the Teatro Bellini revived *Luisetta* (14 March 1867) and the audience joyfully repeated the floral feat of 1843. He was pelted with flowers in his box. Alas, in its turn, the S.Carlo also was ready to live up to its past performance. Pacini kicked his heels for a month then sinister forces emerged. The cast became aware that threats were being made against the staging of *Berta di Varnol*. Nicola De Giosa, who had taken over the direction of the opera learned that a malicious campaign of disparagement had been hatched. As a result, the Direction of the S.Carlo announced out of the blue that *Berta* would not appear! De Giosa, outraged, promptly assembled all the cast: Luigia Bendazzi-Secchi, Giorgio Stigelli, Giuseppina Tati, Luigi Colonnese, Giuseppe Benedetti and Pacini's former pupil Marco Arati (most of whom had sung in *La fidanzata corsa*) and in a band together with the coro, the *comparse*, and most of the orchestra they marched *en masse* to confront the Management which immediately capitulated without a whimper in the face of such forces. *Berta* not only was staged as originally planned but ran to the very end of the season. In the sequel to his memoirs Pacini returned the compliment emotionally praising to the skies: "...un orchestra che solo puo trovarsi a Napoli quando diretta da un De-Giosa" (sic) "uomo di cuore, d'intelleto e modello di onesta".^{liii}

Some delay had been inevitable. *Berta* is a big score with a *sinfonia* (rare in Naples), many *concertati*, and Act I ended in an orgy. It demanded all the skills

of the Architetto decoratore with an interminable list of exotic cori and extras: “*popolo di Detmolda, Sorveglianti della notte, allegre Fanciulle (sic), Minatori, Fonditori, and Montanari del Teutoburgerwald*”.

Presteau, the impresario, had placed *Berta di Varnol* immediately after a staging of Gounod’s *Faust* - an opera itself greedy for rehearsals, but which he thought might not be to local taste. So there were further delays, even so the curtain rose on 6 April 1867 under the baton of De Giosa: “*it had all the Pacinian qualities and defects*” observed the press the day after but the audience responded in kind and the composer was called to bow before the footlights no less than twenty-eight times at the prima. L’Omnibus made the priorities clear “*after the first evening the dreadful libretto was forgotten and one listened only to the music and the singing.*” The *sinfonia* was much admired (!) the *cavatine* of both Bendazzi and Colonnese were cheered to the echo; Giuseppina Tati’s *romanza* and the orgy were riotously applauded. *Berta*’s seven-year genesis paid off. No one liked the plot or the verses but Pacini’s immense vitality freshness and ingenuity carried the day.

It would be his final tribute to this nirvana of his youth and as if aware of this fact before leaving Naples took care to call on every old friend and acquaintance, writing a memorial stave in the album of every admirer. He even called on Francesco Florimo under the pressure of times past.^{liv} His journey back to Pescia was leisurely. Valedictory embraces retarded his return in the many cities he traversed. Up to this last year he had kept his image as a wiry, restless, indefatigable music-machine and though he had sometimes pleaded indisposition he never stopped work on his scores, was never a recluse and scrawled illegible letters daily to people as required (these had frequently to be rewritten by his wife). Key figures kept him abreast of theatrical gossip most notably ex-pupils like Marco Arati, loyal supporters like Raffaele Abate, critics and scholars like Abramo Basevi and Alessandro Biagi. Rossini wrote to him on a regular basis, Giulia Samoyloff too, her letters from Paris continued to his death. He paid the maximum attention to his pupils and though now retired delivered yet another discourse in this very last year, his *Discorso nel secondo pubblico esperimento degli alunni dell’Istituto musical* was published in Lucca in 1867 and he remained at the disposal of its staff and governing body to the end.

The extent to which *Il carcere Mamertino* may be considered a completed work

remains contradictory. It was intended to grace the *Diciotessima ricorrenza centenaria di San Pietro* but was decided upon when? In Rome at the time of the *Saffo* of the Marchisio sisters? Or much earlier? He was supplied with a text by Francesco Massi. but when was it actually composed? Much of its music could well have been written while waiting for *Berta* to make her belated appearance in Naples. In a two-act form and without him being present *Il carcere Mamertino* was performed on 27 May 1867 in the Sala di Campidoglio in Rome, the printed libretto makes it clear that this *melodramma in due atti* - as much an opera as an oratorio - was incomplete and that Act I Sc. 2 had not been composed. No one knows why this should have been, perhaps time was too short, possibly failing sight impeded composition but it is appropriate that this his final offering to Rome should have been such a stately composition with Isabella Gianoli-Galletti in the leading role. Once home at the Villa Marianna and at leisure in the following months Pacini composed a third-act to *Il carcere Mamertino* and made a present of it to the poet whose text he much admired^{lv}.

He was not present either when a concert of his music was given in San Marino on 3 September when his *Inno alla vetusta Repubblica Sammarinese* was given its first performance, together with a votive Mass he had composed in a concert which included arias from *Don Diego De'Mendoza* sung by Luisa Kopp and Ludovico Buti. In recognition the Republic of San Martino sent him its Sovereign Order and a gold medal. Later that month he delivered his final *Discorso* and composed an *Elegy* for a friend. October saw the composition of a beatific *Inno alla Vergine* and in November he began to write yet another Mass.^{lvi} It was still incomplete when he went to visit his old friend and Lucchese ally the conte Bernardini. On his return after a stay of four days he caught a chill. By the end of the month he was seriously ill with pneumonia. Dr. Morandi who had looked after his health for twelve years consulted the specialist Prof. Fedeli but Pacini died uncomplainingly on 6 December. Fully articulate to the last, his wit and amusement remaining intact in contrast to that of the people at his bedside; surrounded by four of his children, by Marianna and her relatives, his brother, and a host of distraught friends he interviewed each and every one saying farewell to every colleague in turn; to the weeping Cesare Perini he delivered his final instructions, consoling his friend with such serenity that poor Perini stumbled out of the room without ever having managed to utter a word.

Giovanni Pacini was given a civic funeral and buried in the Chiesa del Monte just a few yards up the hill from the room in which he had died and in which he had spun so many notes. He was buried as he wished:

“Circa i disattesi voleri del Maestro che voleva essere sepolto nella quiete del monte incaricando di questa ultima volontà al confessore. Al contrario i pesciatini volevano subito seppellirlo in Duomo ma che la vedova e i figli si opposero proprio per questo desiderio umile”

For the next twenty-five years Marianna Pacini put flowers on his tomb. A bust was erected above it. Requests for the transfer of his body to Catania have always been refused. Much later Antonio Ghislanzoni commented ironically on the response of his fellow citizens:

“Alla famiglia superstite furono non lieve conforto gli onori che in alcune città d’Italia si resero alla memoria di lui. Arezzo decretò all’autore della Saffo uno splendido monumento. A Napoli, per iniziati vadei signori Torelli e Colucci, vide la luce una Strenna funebre dedicata alla vedova dell’illustre maestro - esequie solenni si celebrano a Pescia ed a Lucca - e in altre insigni capitali del Regno. Gli Italiani non sono ingrati coi.... morti.” ^{lvii}

Naples announced a memorial Mass but nothing came of it. Ferdinando Magnani however persuaded the Management of the S.Carlo to commission an *Ommaggio a Pacini* ^{lviii} from Mercadante (!) It was sung more than a year later, on 8 December 1868 with his long-time antagonist sitting in the third tier of boxes. It was a huge success and was repeated on four successive evenings. Even Pacini’s obsequies had a *bis*. This he would have approved.

*

Pacini’s restless spirit was not quieted by his disappearance, the snowball of *Niccolò dei Lapi* continued rolling, the loyal Perini ensuring its momentum. Excluding an improbable staging in Malta the opera had made two credible appearances, neither of them finite^{lix}; the score he had sent to Rio^{lx} was never performed but another staging remains on the edge of credibility, the published *cronache* of performances at the Teatro delle Muse of Ancona ^{lxi}lists a *Niccolò*

dei Lapi by Pacini for the year 1864; if, indeed, this opera *was* by Pacini it would have been a maverick tentative on the part of the composer (in no way improbable but no hint remains in his papers) or was one of those unauthorised stagings which were such an abusive feature of the day. By insisting on handling his own affairs he had no impresarial muscle to redress theft of his property. In any event all modern sources claim *Niccolò dei Lapi* to be a “posthumous score” which made its début at the Real Teatro Pagliano of Florence on 29 October 1873.

Scarcely a note of the score begun in 1852 had remained unchanged in fifteen years of updating, not only the music but the text was constantly amended and its setting changed according to political sentiment, only the casting remained more-or-less static until its ultimate appearance. But at no time did the composer attempt to conceal that *Rodrigo di Valenza*, *Lidia di Brabante*, *La punizione*, *Lidia di Bruxelles* and *Niccolò dei Lapi* et al were one and all the same opera as an undated letter to Gatti makes perfectly clear^{lxii}.

Nonetheless *Niccolò dei Lapi* was his last word, few composers have made deliberate provision for posterity but this very large score was a calculated codicil to a hectic career bequeathed to a lost public, polished in private and deposited as a final *coup* of operatic deviousness from the safety of the grave.

The snowball effect had quality as well as quantity, the definitive *Niccolò dei Lapi* of 1873 was a summation at once vocally as orchestrally of all he knew of the theatre, flaunting a sumptuous compilation of every quirk in his own musical make-up. As far as he was concerned this vast *melodramma-tragico in tre attic con danze analoghe* was a swan song grand-opéra with everything on a large scale, every ensemble extended, squeezed vocally to the maximum, massive, protracted with over-the-top treachery and excessive despair, excessive gloom and excessive joy in a tragedy too distressing to be borne. Every cliché, in fact, of his operatic age in epic proportions.

He had made concessions to the decline in vocal standards of his apogee, though voices were tested to their limits (“*sedotto dagli esempi del Verdi e del Mercadante, ha dato alle parti del canto tessitura più che eccezionali e faticosissime*”^{lxiii} he had said wickedly) he had kept virtuosity to a minimum. He merely asked for singing that was loud and lyrical. In compensation the instrumentation was doubled or trebled even insisting that this “opera colossale” should feature what he called a “*gariglione armonico*”^{lxiv} not unrelated to the

keyboard sonorities he hankered-for in his later works ^{lxv}in the interests of “*un’eseecuzione orchestrale perfetta e una direzione d’orchestra assai valente*”^{lxvi} that he was destined to obtain from Teodulo Mabellini, fellow figure of the Tuscan ancien-régime.

His spirit must have been assuaged by the reception of this work. The opera’s reception in the former capital was tremendous, several of the arias and duets were amongst his most imposing, the Act II finale left audiences thunderstruck (almost literally, such was the concerted impact), and though the Teatro Pagliano was a very large theatre indeed it is reported that even at the third performance some four or five hundred people were turned away. The first edition libretto claims that Pacini wrote both the words and the music, an assertion that is thoroughly mendacious ^{lxvii} but the impact of *Niccolò dei Lapi* was all-embracing. It was all there, heart-stopping confessions of love, hate and repentance, thunderstorms, torture, political insurrection and the defeat of benign forces by tyrannical conspiracy in the most lachrymose settings imaginable. He knew his audience. And Pacini expressly bequeathed all this to Florence, the city that had jeered him. The words of Lamberto amid the storm of the Act II finale put it in a nutshell:

*Fratelli, amaro è il calice
Che apprestano i tiranni;
Incerto e pien d’affanni
E il torbido avvenir.
Ebben, prostriamci e al simbolo
Del nostro Re giuriamo
Che liberi vogliamo
Combattere o morir.*

his own scathing views upon the new order that had ordered his demise.

The Roman musical journal *La Riforma* ended its long review by saying that Pacini’s final offering “*merita di avere uno dei posti distinti tra le opere melodrammatiche dei grandi Maestri italiani*”^{lxviii}. It was nothing less than the truth. It had five subsequent productions’s until 1887 never very wide of the Tuscan orbit. Then it vanished owing to what Filippo Cicconetti called “*la grossa ignoranza degl’impresarii.*” ^{lxix}

The least reticent of important Italian composers, he was also the most abused;

“*Si creò non pochi nemici; fu ingiustamente perseguitato e fatto oggetto di basse calunnie...*” ^{lxx}

“*Pacini fu il più odiato e pericoloso competitore milanese di Vincenzo Bellini,*

Essendo ben organizzata negli ambienti austriacanti dell'Italia settentrionale grazie a numerose amicizie altolocate e ai suoi intrighi d'alcovia."

Is the flower of a catalogue devoted to an unwary Giuditta Pasta published in 1997.^{lxxi}

Resilient and wide-ranging, his versatility made him the most feared composer on the music stage of his day, his energy and imagination were dreaded, a factor reflected in the hagiographic essays devoted to his rivals. But his instinct for *slancio* had a curiously devious effect, this is apparent even in his very earliest works, he liked to initiate strange modulations – taking an oblique path through a web of key changes but arriving at a home key with the squarest of rhythms and most-obvious of melodic structures whose principal target was excited applause. Hence his title of “*maestro delle cabalette*”. No one seems to know whether he enjoyed this title or not. Few composers could ever have been more gifted or more prodigal, such a lavish endowment struggled for survival with conventional structures in the earliest phase of his career but gained a freer and freer rein once the climactic of *Saffo* had been past. Of course he wrote far too quickly. He did it for survival, but there is no evidence that taking more time led to greater inspiration, he relied upon the same kind of instantaneous solution of problems as a painter or poet. He did not laboriously elaborate his music (“sweat blood”), it emerged on the page intact, speed and spontaneity were not simply his *modus vivendi* but his *raison d'être*. He gloried in complex compositional feats, writing two or three different operas all at the same time. Correspondingly, he could handle complex musical structures from a very early age, he never lacked technical skills and there are very elaborate concerted pieces even in the most juvenile of his compositions. He was not a lucky composer, but was far too proud to persist with works which had been dismissed too easily, he simply laid them aside. Some of his ill-luck was self-inflicted, most of his operas – especially those in revival – were simply too technically demanding to survive the negligent rehearsal standards of the day, he knew this but was not prepared to fight his corner by reducing his demands. And then, paradoxically enough, it was not his outrageously difficult arias – those that ensured him renown - that caused opera after opera to be abandoned after the original staging - it was the presentation that he found essential and whose dilution he would not accept, it was the lavish props, the extravagant instrumentation often little short of bizarre (in

La fidanzata corsa he had insisted upon having *chitarre nazionali* to give local colour. However were these be assured in revival?) as well as the hugely specific tailoring of music to a compositional formula where recitative and aria were to be increasingly blended.

But he did suffer greatly from making perilous demands on famous singers for whom his major roles were written; at a revival of *Gli arabi nelle Gallie* in London in the summer of 1832, both Berardo Winter and then Domenico Donzelli made an attempt at singing Agobar but neither was capable of singing a role created for Giovanni David. At his height, in the 1840 and 50's, he favoured an organic development, sometimes, an entire act would consist of almost nothing but an enormous duet or a generic series invoking one-by-one a different palette of surprises, wasteful and extravagant with different elements of confrontation, different colours and melodies any one of which might have supplied material for a complete statement by another composer. Even at his most adroit his music was far more vulnerable than that of Donizetti and Bellini, the eccentric modulations he chose, the sequence of fleeting melodic propositions he favoured (especially in the works that followed *Saffo*) were both hard to sing and to sustain. No wonder these works kept the stage so briefly. He tried to insert ballet into his operas in the teeth of opposition and gales of whistling, this began as early as *L'ultimo giorno di Pompei* and continued stubbornly to his belated *Niccolò dei Lapi*. Pace Rossini's unforgettable contribution, he could claim to be the first Italian maestro to warm to *grand opéra*, his taste for spectacle, processions, the stereophonic disposition of his orchestral forces and interminable concertati judged to be *un-Italian* are the proof - nothing deterred him.

The full-scale battle of *I cavalieri di Valenza*, was both emblematic of his operatic stance and of his chosen arena of combat vis-à-vis his rivals; Raffaele Colucci - writing in the final year of life of the composer - can be given credit for his most searching epitaph:

“Egli ha avuto entusiasti da legare e detrattori colla schiuma all bocca; più volte è stato trascinato nella polvere, più volte è stato li li per essere canonizzato. Il certo è che anche i suoi più implacabili nemici – i lividi pedanti della stampa, intendiamoci – hanno dovuto riconoscere in lui un ingegno

ⁱ Pacini op cit 199. In the text of the *Memorie artistiche* of the 1875 edition of his son-in-law there are additional pages which contradict Pacini’s original version of events. In this later edition, despite earlier insistence that the work was put-aside simply through political disorder, Pacini is persuaded to say that he only began serious work on the opera in 1866: “*Concluso l’affare, e stabilito il libretto ch’io già possedevo da qualche anno, intitolato Berta di Varnol (lavoro di quel Piave, oltre il dovere malmenato da chi sa criticare al solito, ma che non sa fare o non vuol fare), mi posi al lavoro.*” The autograph score, however, has an appended terminal date of “1859.” But no doubt some rewriting and amendment took place at the later date

ⁱⁱ Where they remain. The desk in question stands in the rooms devoted to him in the Fondo Pacini at Pescia



The Imperial Order of the Rose awarded to Pacini by Dom Pedro II of Brazil

ⁱⁱⁱ Cfr AAVV *Ricordo dei Parentali a Teodulo Mabellini in Pistoia* (Firenze 1899) 30-31. Pacini had written a cantata in honour of the Grand Duke in c1859 (Fondo Pacini, Pescia) which seems never to have reached performance

^{iv} Carlo Ludovico di Borbone, son of his first patron and Duca di Lucca; later Duca di Parma

^v The oratorio had been revamped for a performance at the Teatro del Giglio in Lucca with its new title (whatever Pacini says in his memoirs) on 20 September 1858, with Emilio Bianchi as the Demon and the rest of the cast (angels and devils) divided amongst a group of aristocratic dilettanti. The following year he extended it orchestrally into two parts, with a bold quasi-theatrical impact worthy of a later evolution and with enhanced principal roles: Demonio (basso) and S.Agnese (soprano) and solo tenor - its title now borrowed confusingly from the alternative title under which *Gli arabi nelle Gallie* had sometimes been performed. This version, with a new text by Prinzivalli, was intended for Rome in honour of Pius IX but performance details remain uncertain

^{vi} Permission had been granted as early as 22 December 1859 by no less than three Vatican authorities, the *Eminentissimo Vicario*; the *Revisore Politico*; and the *Deputazione de’Pubblici Spettacoli* having given the text a detailed scrutiny. The date confirms the long gestation this plot entailed and the precision of its presentation

^{vii} The casting was appropriately convulsive given the worsening political situation but Pacini staged the Rome revival himself. A letter of 8 January 1861 (Fondo Farrajoli in the Biblioteca Vaticana [5466]), as an example of the convulsion reveals that the contracted Bartolini (engaged to sing Squarcia’s role of Roberto) was ill, and that he was to be replaced by Filippo Coletti who Pacini welcomed enthusiastically (“*un colpo di maestro*”) and that he would enjoy working with him [but in the event the role was sung by Lodovico Buti]. Fulfilling contracts had gone by the board in the political mayhem all over the peninsula

viii Staged for S.Stefano on 26 December 1861 the cast included both Luigia Ponti Dell'Armi and Eufemia Barlani-Dini but was otherwise unworthy of the event. The score had been heavily cut.

ix Pacini op cit 122

x Until Giacomo Puccini, Ruggero Leoncavallo and Pietro Mascagni broke the mould. A supercilious view of Italian Opera in worldwide intellectual circles in the twentieth century was to be its legacy: “*it's only Verdi*” would be a cry taken up widely [taking in its stride such twentieth century landmarks as: “*A Night at the Opera*” and the Disney “*Donald Duck and Clara Cluck*”]

xi The letter from the exiled Grand Duke is in the Fondo Pacini at Pescia

xii Nicola De Giosa (1820-1885), Naples-based composer-conductor and one of the first Italian conductors to attain a genuinely international circuit including tournées in Egypt and Argentina. He set his face against a repertoire inimical to actual musical merit as practiced by several dominant publishers

xiii Letter of 3 December 1861 cited in: Franco Schlitzer *Mondo teatrale dell'Ottocento* (Naples 1954), 190

xiv Solera's letter, undated, and its reply (dated), are in the Fondo Pacini, Pescia

xv *Il mulattiere di Toledo* had been written in tandem with *Gianni di Nisida* - both scores side by side on his desk - no unusual feat of course for this composer. Pacini had written to Jacovacci on 27 September 1860, when on his way to Rome to stage *Gianni* to say that he would be in the Eternal City on 5 October with the completed score of *Il mulattiere* under his arm (Letter in the Fondo Farrajoli, Biblioteca Vaticana [5465])

xvi *Le muletier de Tolède* by Adolphe d'Ennery and Louis-François Nicolae pseud. Clairville is an *opéra comique en trois actes* (Paris, Théâtre-Lyrique 1854) and published in 1857. It was used also as a basis for Michael William Balfe's *The Rose of Castille* (London 1857) of whose existence some details may have been known by Pacini most especially as its heroine had been Maria Malibran

xvii The printed libretto contains the following note:

Il presente libretto essendo di esclusiva proprietà del Sig. *Vincenzo Jacovacci*, a la Musica essendo di proprietà dell'Autore Sig. *Cav. Pacini*, quanto al libretto resta diffidato chiunque dalla ristampa del medesimo, o dalla introduzione e vendita non autorizzata dal proprietario, quanto alla musica resta diffidato chiunque dal ritenerla, contrafarla, noleggiarla e farne qualunque traffico non autorizzato dal proprietario: per cui entrambi I suddetti procederanno con tutto il rigore delle leggi verso chi si rendesse colpevole di simili infrazioni a'loro diritti di proprietà.

xviii It is not inconceivable that the score of *Il mulattiere di Toledo* may have been destroyed by accident

xix But the actual brainchild for his *La mie memorie artistiche* was his Florentine friend the editore G.G.Guidi together with Abramo Basevi, as the brief (but extravagant) preface to the first assembled edition of the separate articles (1865), published by Guidi, (the name of the original editor appears in this simple publication but is omitted in later printings) makes clear:

Dichiarazione

Invitato dal benemerito sig. *G.G.Guidi* a voler far parte dei Collaboratori che d'ora innanzi illustreranno il Giornale “BOCCHERINI” ed istigato dal dotto e chiarissimo sig. Prof. *Abramo Basevi* a scegliere per tema la mia VITA ARTISTICA, io a dir vero (pensando quanto poco valgo), non sapeva decidermi ad accondiscendere alle officiose istanze che ad onoranza mi venivano fatte....

This brochure of 148 pages, ending with his celebrated envoi “*Fiaschi, trionfi, piante ed altri guai*”, is notable in that it makes the only mention of Giuseppe Verdi in this entire Pacinian publishing venture: the back cover advertises for sale Basevi’s *Studio sulle Opere di Giuseppe Verdi* for 4 Lire. The monthly journal “Boccherini” was primarily the work of Basevi, and featured contributions from Alessandro Biaggi, Luigi Ferdinando Casamorata, Baldassare Gamucci, Ricardo Gandolfi, Alberto Mazzucato and others. For a history of the publication see Bianca Maria Antolini (a cura) *Dizionario degli editori musicali italiani 1750-1930* (Pisa 200), 191

xx Having been refused by Giulio Ricordi, in that this kind of music “*non avea mercato*” Cfr Guido Salvetti *Una vecchiaia avventurosa* [in] *Intorno a Giovanni Pacini* op cit 269-270

xxi Cfr Giovanni Carli Ballola *Divertimento all’Italiana* (Olschki, Florence 1876), 336. The Pacini *Octet*. rvsn. by Giovanni Carli Ballola, has been published in the *collana* ORPHEUS ITALICUS by Edizioni Suvini Zerboni – Milano 1981

xxii His *Belfagor* will not appear in *Le mie memorie artistiche*, it is mentioned only in the ‘Specchio delle opere teatrali di Giovanni Pacini’ appended posthumously in the 1875 edition by his son-in-law

xxiii Michele Andrea Agniello Costa, *anglicised* as Sir Michael Andrew Angus Costa (1808-1884) a composer/conductor of Sephardic descent, had enjoyed Bellini as his “*maestrino*” first at the Conservatorio di S. Sebastiano then later that of S. Pietro a Majella in Naples - his début opera being given a Conservatorio staging when he was eighteen years old in the same year as Pacini’s *Niobe*. The latter certainly set eyes on him during his ill-fated visit to view the new premises at the invitation of Zingarelli. They shared the friendship later of such international stars as Maria Malibran and Giulia Grisi.

xxiv Letter detailed in the Lisa Cox Catalogue No.4 (1985), item 102.

xxv It was a detestation that would bear especially bitter fruit later when Verdi’s *Don Carlos* was staged with maximum publicity in Paris in 1866 thus putting Costa’s earlier *Don Carlo* of 1844 forever in the shade. Donizetti, however, did set a fragment of Leopoldo Tarantini’s text for Costa, presumably for his own satisfaction, the incipit survives in the Malherbe collection

xxvi Cox Catalogue *op cit*. Costa had delegated the rehearsal of Meyerbeer’s work to an assistant, the perfectionist maestro had requested ten rehearsals and was given two!

xxvii Cfr Herbert Weinstock *Rossini* (New York 1975), 474, np321 It was played however several times conducted by Luigi Arditi

xxviii Cfr Richard Macnutt Catalogue No.110 (1980). item 126

xxix The unfinished manuscript of the cantata was later in the hands of Pacini’s *lucchese* friend Massimiliano Quilici. It is currently in the hands of the author

xxx Pacini *op cit* 123

xxxi *Ibid* An elaborately detailed account of the abortive negotiations between Piave, his opera *Carmelita/ Don Diego de’ Mondoza*, Pacini, Merelli and his *genero* Leoni can be found [in] *Intorno a Giovanni Pacini: Bianca Maria Antolini La collaborazione tra Piave e Pacini nelle lettere della Biblioteca Nazionale di Roma* (Pisa 2003), 206-216. These letters reveal that the name change from *Carmelita* to *Don Diego* was as late as 30 August 1866

xxxii Letter of 6 August 1864 (private coll.) The *marchese* Vincenzo Capecelatro (1815-1874) who had taken a few lessons from Pacini in the 1830’s, author of a trio of operas and several ambitious religious works (in one of which Pacini had consented to sing as a chorus member) was unfortunately reputed to have the “evil eye” and was thus avoided even by his best friends. There is

a letter from the unhappy Capecelatro asking Pacini (in fragile health at the time and feeling vulnerable) to find him some summer accommodation for himself and his family at Viareggio, to which Pacini, who loved him dearly, replied that his house was let, everything was full, no rooms anywhere near, not even on the entire coast and so forth... There is celebrated account of Giuseppe Verdi contemptuously dismissing such superstitious nonsense ostentatiously greeting Capecelatro backstage – and almost immediately missing death by inches when a huge piece of scenery fell from the wings

xxxiii 1864 began solemnly with a *Messa di Requiem* for Michele Puccini (1813-1864) father of Giacomo and erstwhile teacher at the Istituto Pacini whose funeral at Lucca in February was conducted by Pacini

xxxiv Letter published in: *Strenna del Corriere* (Milan 1878), 21-3

xxxv Pacini was known for several earlier Requiems, most notably that published by Ricordi in 1843 (Pl. Nos 14371-14379) for soprano, contralto, tenor and bass and orchestra which contains the entire litany for the rite, including a very substantial *Dies Irae sequencia, Sanctus, Benedictus* etc.

xxxvi *Ibid* note p.22

xxxvii Pietro Antonio Coppola (1793-1877) After a successful if turbulent international operatic career had returned to Sicily writing much sacred music in his later years. His *Requiem per Bellini* was almost his final work.

xxxviii *Cfr* Maria Giordano *Pietro Antonio Coppola* (Lucca 2003), 29

xxxix It was dedicated to Abramo Basevi and published by G.C. Guidi of Florence

xl Pacini *op cit* 147 (1875 Ed.)

xli Pacini waxes equally euphoric about the role of Mariani (“*O tu, mio Mariani!*”) *ibid* but the printed notice says the conductor was Teodulo Mabellini!

xlii In fact, apparently a revision of the *Messa a Quattro voci reali a due cori*, which is a *Messa di Gloria* published by Lucca in 1840 (Pl.No. 4434), but abbreviated chorally and orchestrally while retaining its alternative organ accompaniment and featuring the celebrated *Crucifixus* for tenor and bass.

xliii Michele Puccini (1813-1864) scion of a long established family of musicians in Lucca had been engaged as a teacher at the Istituto Pacini. Highly respected author of sacred compositions he had had some educational contact with both Donizetti and Mercadante in earlier life, thus in some ways is an involuntary catalyst between these masters, Pacini, and the *veristi* of the early twentieth century.

Pacini's discourse upon the death of his colleague, delivered in 1864, subsequently appeared in print:

Ne'Funerali di MICHELE PUCCINI/Maestro in Musica/Discorso/Di GIOVANNI PACINI/letto il di 18 febbraio 1864/nella Chiesa de'Santi Giovanni e Reparata

It included a famous prophesy worthy of any orator:

“Voi, fratelli diletteissimi, a cui i sensi di cristiana carità si caldamente parlano al cuore, ben volgerete un pensiero alla ottuagenaria Madre, ad una desolata Sposa, a sei tenere fanciullette, ad un garzoncello, solo supersite ed erede di quella gloria, che i suoi antenati ben si meritavano nell'arte armonica, a che forse potrà egli far rivivere un giorno.”

The *garzoncello* in question was Giacomo Puccini.

Cfr Discorso reprinted in *Le mie memorie artistiche* edizione a cura di Luciano Nicolosi e Salvatore Pinnavaia (Maria Pacini Fazzi, Lucca 1981), 337-346

^{xliv} Pacini op cit 155

^{xlv} One of these late Masses (it is not clear which) provoking a letter from Rossini which managed to combine some degree of regret for his “*gran diavolo*” jibe; praise for the music he had received; and a more poignant plea for a further supply of olive oil from Pacini’s Lucchese friend, conte Bernardini:

“*Giovanni mio carissimo, derogando alle mie abitudini, riscontro a volo di posta l'affettuosa tua, datata col 2/8, piuttosto che col 2/4; locché ringiovanische di 4 mesi e meglio mi prepara alla lettera del tuo “bel Kyrie”, nobile incominciamento della tua Messa, testè ricevuta e che ho cominciato tosto a percorrere col massimo interesse. È questo un prezioso dono che mi vien fatto dal collega e dall'amico, che ho ognora amato con sincere tenerezza e pel quale mi dichiaro riconoscentissimo. Seguo la mia “lettura”. Eccomi al Gloria. Ti richiami altre volte un gran diavolo! Oggi m'è forza chiamarti un gran profeta! L'aver tu incominciato il tuo Gloria colle parole “et in terra pax hominibus” (cosa inusitata) mi è prova che, allorquando tu componevi la tua Messa, “leggevi nell'avvenire” e sentivi che dobbiamo modestamente augurarci la pace fra gli uomini, negata essendoti (per ora) dal cielo la “Gloria”! Le barbarie sociale, letterarie e artistica non ti rattristino; ripeti con pace il mio - “Laus Deo” -*
[Letter of 7 August 1866. Pacini op cit 260-1]

^{xlvi} A live recording of the *Requiem per Bellini* (Bongiovanni) includes the *Sinfonia Dante*. Both were recorded at the Chiesa di S.Francesco at Lucca on 3 June 1988

^{xlvii} The honeyed tone of this letter from Mercadante of 11 February 1867 [Pacini op cit 262-3 (1875 Ed.)] is not easy to swallow after the vicious personal skirmishes of earlier years. Peace, however, had officially been declared before the statue of Rossini at Pesaro in 1864. The composer had offered Francesco Florimo (equally amnestied, it would seem, even though an appendage of Bellini) a copy of the *Sinfonia Dante* for the Conservatorio Library at the time of the momentous revival of *La fidanzata corsa* in Naples in November 1866

^{xlviii} Firenze

^{xlix} It is probable that he had in mind, should such a commission materialise, his *Niccolò dei Lapi* was constantly under revision and already assured of some sort of international status. In the event the only recompense for his cantata was membership of the *Istituto Egiziano*!

^l Mercadante’s *Virginia* was first staged at the S.Carlo on 7 April 1866

^{li} That Pacini did not give up hope of revival both of *Don Diego De’Mendoza* and *Berta di Varnol* is demonstrated by a letter from Pescia of 28 May 1867 to Alessandro Biaggi [Catalogue of Autographs: Leonardo Capicciarella item 164 (Florence 1956)]:

“*Il tuo vecchio amico ed ammiratore ti pregherebbe...di rammentare le ultime mie due produzioni cioè Don Diego di Mendoza (sic) e la Berta di Varnol...un tuo cenno nella “Nazione” potrebbe far decidere qualche appaltatore...a farle rappresentare in Firenze...”*

Alas nothing came of this. Neither opera has ever been revived either in Florence or anywhere else at the time of writing.

^{lii} This celebrated staging had begun on 15 January. The sisters Marchisio, Barbara (1833-1819) contralto and Carlotta (1835-1872) soprano, were a phenomenal duo who attracted a maximum attention from the press, though they were primarily Rossinian specialists their *Saffo* (with Carlotta in the title role, and Barbara as Climene) was one of their more spectacular ventures and

repeated elsewhere. They put on an especially sensational performance of this opera in St. Peterburg two years later (1 November 1969)

liii Giovanni Pacini *Le mie memorie artistiche* (1875 ed.) 222 [*Autobiografia riscontrata sugli autografi e pubblicata da Ferdinando Magnani*]. The grateful accolade to De Giosa confirms that Pacini was ready to keep on adding to his memoirs in the years after official publication had ceased.

liv It was a paper-thin reconciliation and did not prevent an unrepentant Florimo from continuing to misrepresent Pacini's music and achievement in the Neapolitan chronologies he compiled and published when most of his friends and victims were dead. In the echo of the twenty-eight curtain calls for *Berta di Varnol* it is not difficult to perceive the deficiency of a scholar who could insist that "*the only composer who was not well-received in Naples was Pacini.*"

lv The performance history of the Roman *Il carcere Mamertino* is oddly similar to that of his earlier sacred opera/oratorio, the Florentine *drama tragico, La distruzione di Gerusalemme* of 1858. That he could not have been present at the first performance (it was almost incredible that Pacini should have been absent from a prima) of *Il carcere Mamertino* at the Campidoglio is confirmed by the date of the letter he wrote from Pescia on 28 May 1867 (see note xiv above)

lvi This was a Messa a tre voci, its incomplete manuscript at Pescia has the following words signed by Marianna Scoti on the final page: "*ultime note scritte dal mio diletto consort/ Marianna Pacini nata Scoti.*"

lvii Ghizlanzoni *Libro Serio* op cit 18

lviii Mercadante called it "*La mia Fantasia in quattro parti consecutive ed a Grande Orchestra*" and not a "*Sinfonia*" which is sometimes used to describe this *Omaggio a Pacini*. In essence it is a compendium of motives from the Pacini operas known in Naples.

lix *La punizione* of 1854, and *Lidia di Bruxelles* of 1858

lx To the Emperor of Brazil in 1855

lxi Cfr Antonio Fazi *I teatri di Ancona* (Ancona 1979)

lxii Letter from Pacini to Nazzareno Gatti nd (Fondo Pacini, Pescia) Letter No.580

lxiii Pacini quoted [in] "*Un opera postuma di Pacini*" published as an Appendix to the Roman Journal *La Riforma* [reprinted in : Pacini *op cit* 304 (1875 Ed)]

lxiv A bell-ringing contraption related to a Glockenspiel sometimes supplied with a keyboard.

lxv The *Sinfonia Dante* requires similar exotic instrumental components.

lxvi "*Un opera postuma*" *op cit* 302-3

lxvii The Pagliano libretto states on its frontespiece:

POESIA E MUSICA DEL MAESTRO GIOVANNI PACINI

On revival at the Teatro Principe Umberto in Florence on 8 July 1879 (also conducted by Mabellini) the frontespiece states very clearly however:

MELODRAMMA-TRAGICO IN TRE ATTI
CON DANZE ANALOGHI
DI CESARE PERINI
MUSICA
DEL MAESTRO
Comm. GIOVANNI PACINI

lxviii “*un opera postuma*” *op cit* 309

lxix Filippo Cicconetti “*Nella morte di Giovanni Pacini*” [in] *Pacini op cit* 314 (1875 Ed)]

lxx Ghizlanzoni *op cit* 19

lxxi Cfr “*Son regina son guerriera*” catalogue per la mostra in occasione del bicentenario della nascita [di] Giuditta Pasta (Saronno 1997), 135

lxxii Raffaele Colucci [in] *L’Emporio pittoresco* Anno IV, N.129 (Venezia 1867),99