

Chapter Six

“Tanti guai”

1850 was a year in crisis - a mid-century crisis - too many key players had left the musical arena and as the months advanced an intrusive continent above the Alps leaned more and more heavily upon theatrical fortunes below. Even more disconcerting, once the false dawn of 1848 had faded the embattled régimes that made-up the peninsula went on the run, a *terremoto* of dismay and indecision became all too evident in the *cartelloni*. As had been the case in the first few years of the century when invasion and political mayhem had driven a tidal wave of *farse* across the great opera houses of Italy so now a species of *bitter comedy* drew breath and *opera seria* beat a hasty retreat. Masked by Verdi, serious operas by his rivals dropped like stones from the billboards and in their place the mid-century took to its bosom a cynical cargo of derision and doubt - confections like *Don Bucefalo*ⁱ, *Crispino e la comare*ⁱⁱ, *Don Checco*ⁱⁱⁱ, *Le precauzioni*^{iv} and *Tutti in maschere*^v fell like manna on provincial ears and stayed there, irrespective of Milanese condemnation, until a watershed *fin-de-siècle* swept them all away.

As for Giovanni Pacini, though his year of confrontation had proved as pyrrhic as might have been predicted he was on stage again a few weeks later. His choice of plot went against all the canons of good taste: the general view was that *La regina di Cipro* was an attempt to take advantage of the disappearance of his Bergamasc rival. In point of fact Alessandro Lanari who commissioned the opera had paid for its text on 13 October 1845 - a date far too early for news of Donizetti's fatal illness to have reached him but purely and simply because *Caterina Cornaro* had been jeered on its traumatic first appearance in Naples^{vi} - and as its composer's sad fate had now become common knowledge - the general opinion, whatever quibbles there had been about its timing and commission, was that Pacini's *La regina di Cipro* was tantamount to offensive behaviour.

In view of this fact, once the dire news had reached them, both composer and poet went to almost bizarre lengths to disassociate themselves from the earlier setting. Though dependant upon the same source^{vii} they imposed a mood, an impetus that made the historical certainties of Donizetti's opera - especially its optimistic dénouement -

seem as remote as Mars, in their place offering a virulent tale of continuously amorous frustration in which the derision and cynicism of the day made its presence felt. The love duet of the blighted lovers in *La regina di Cipro* 'De'miei sospir, de palpiti' degenerates immediately into violence and an angry concertato with machine-gun versification and a fervid tension as if ideas and motifs are emerging so rapidly that emotional control has been lost or put aside. The *prima donna soprano* immediately takes the spotlight in this version of the tale: everyone in it is angry and aggressive while she is the epitome of distress. The enormously long and strenuous *Atto secondo* sums up the opera as a whole: it is nothing other than an extended *scena* for the distraught heroine ranging over the entire gamut of her famous voice: from the recitative 'Cadde tutta mia speme' - passing over the soothing intervention of the *pescatori* on the canal outside her window - to the cantabile 'Quest'orfana figlia che piange' with its cabaletta 'Alfin pietoso, amico' as she tries to come to terms with her destiny; a black *tempo di mezzo* inserts itself here as Mocenigo enters and threatens Caterina with the death of her lover unless she agrees to marry the King of Cyprus; as a consequence the act arrives at its conclusion with a climactic *stretta* - its dramatic nexus - her duetto with the tragic Gerardo in which she is obliged to renounce him to save his life. Furiously dismissed by her uncomprehending lover, Caterina's despairing 'Cessa, o Gerardo. ah tu non sai' 'Ma spergiura non son io'; his insensate rejection 'Va, ti scosta, a chi t'adora'; and her heartrending response, are, not only fine examples of textbook belcantist-revival pathos but an epitome display of the Pacinian willingness to throw every conceivable vocal nuance at the apotheosis of a celebrated soprano voice.

The heroine of *La regina di Cipro* is no *consorella* of Donizetti's *Caterina*. She engages in enormous duets with every major opponent, one after another, replete with the encyclopaedic contents of Pacini's unparalleled compendium of vocal ornament. She has two gigantic arie. In this *dramma lirico* the composer took every possible advantage of Erminia Frezzolini's fabulous timbre to write arias of exquisite anguish (a mood not at all present in the preceding triad) to which he even augmented on its revival in Naples with the same primadonna. Above all, *La regina di Cipro* is an opera in which a protracted and engorged vocal line throughout ensures that the

audience shares both her despair and her exhaustion, An opera in no way a votive offering to the fainthearted.

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La regina di Cipro proved no less an achievement than the three huge scores of 1845 but made only too clear that the mid-century crisis was about to become a *mid-life crisis* for its composer. La Frezzolini^{viii} would be almost the last of her line. Rarely in the future would he have such virtuosity at his disposal, such a capacity to underpin every single vocal command, her stupendous stamina combined with an apparently fragile timbre made her the supreme operatic *vittima* in Italian opera at the very apex of a national lyrical investment in such a role.

If he was now to face competition on a daily basis - if he was now progressively to lose status - it was primarily because his operas became undone from within. He could no longer rely upon the inner support his art demanded.

Imaginatively presented, staged, and costumed *La regina di Cipro* opened at the Teatro Regio in Turin on 7 February 1846 following Verdi's *Giovanna d'Arco* which was hissed. Erminia Frezzolini was pelted with flowers when she appeared side-by-side with the enchanted composer at the final curtain. He had dedicated the score to her. The opera had fifteen repetitions, but its revival proved contentious, even flawed, this score too became a disputed property. The composer's insistence on being his own agent was beginning to pay sour dividends - even in the face of such a benevolent impresario as the enlightened and enterprising Lanari. Initially at least it had revivals only within his catchment area of Lombardy, the Veneto and Modena, with the one key revival in Naples,^{ix} but once freed from this jewelled circuit found greatly extended support in the wider world. The popularity of this opera was remarkable in a country like Portugal, in Latin America it held-out for more than a decade (even perhaps manifesting itself obscurely in Paris in 1856 in French - it is far from clear) With some twenty revivals in Italy, though it put the opera of the great Bergamasc completely in the shade, is has yet to be revived anywhere in the twentieth century and beyond.

A premature withering? Not one of his subsequent theatrical offering would have the reception it deserved.

The hiccup took no time to arrive. With the concurrence of this same Florentine impresario and a libretto by Francesco Maria Piave, Pacini's *Elnava ossia L'assedio di Leida* was doubly stillborn, creating problems equally for its poet, impresario and maestro and resulting only in two neglected complete manuscript full scores on the shelves of the Fondo Pacini in his sanctuary of Pescia.

Where was this *Elnava* intended to appear? For which theatre? At the end of 1846 Lanari wrote to Pacini to say that “*the censura was asking for modifications and he was returning the text of Elnava to Piave for correction.*”^x But to which censors was he referring? A week or two later - early in 1847 Piave himself wrote to the composer explaining that he was still at work, that “*L'assedio di Leida*” had been delayed to his regret, but asking him not to be discouraged “*anche fra Piavetto e Pacinone abbiamo ancora a far qualcosa di buono*”^{xi} A few of the celebrated librettist's more endearing terms are scarcely imaginable in reference to any other maestro - could an “*adorabile Verdinone*” ever have been contemplated?

By April 1847 discussion of the casting was underway and *figurini* had been prepared.^{xii} And then? Nothing at all.^{xiii} The two manuscripts in the Fondo Pacini add to the puzzle. The first of the two (mostly in Pacini's hand) is dated 1847 as can be expected; the second is a completely new version, fully autograph, written – as the manuscript makes clear - in 1859. It seems that Pacini has found time to rewrite the whole score anew in his mature sophisticated vein, passionate, fluent and florid, as taxing as any other large-scale melodramma in his long career. More protracted, more imposing, with a greatly enhanced orchestra and with the grandiloquence then filling the Italian theatre but with the same plot and text even if greatly modified (by the composer himself?)^{xiv}

Where did he intend to stage it? How could a composer still in popular demand afford to write the same opera twice and then leave it on a shelf? These are mysteries that will remain central to this composer. How many scores did this workaholic take-up, elaborate and then discard? He claimed *one-hundred* operas from his pen. Perhaps, in a final analysis it was not a complete exaggeration?

There is the briefest of codas to *Elnava*. Our composer judged the highly successful *L'assedio di Leida* (La Scala, 4 March 1856)^{xv} by the schoolboy he once glimpsed in

the refectory of the Naples Conservatorio to be “*puerile*”. On this one single occasion he had found himself on the same wavelength as Giuseppe Verdi!

As usual, in moments of crisis, Pacini returned to the past. The projects for the rest of the year were a journey back to the world of his parental old men. He had received a commission to compose the incidental music for a production of Sophocles play *Edipo Re* (*Edipus in Kolonos*) having been second choice as *maestro compositore* for a prestigious recreation (though it is doubtful if he knew of his *second* place), a grandiose production to be mounted especially magnificently in the fabled Teatro Olimpico of Vicenza. The original intention had been to use a score by Mendelssohn conserved in the Royal Library in Berlin but for reasons undisclosed the idea was dropped.^{xvi} No one seems to know quite how or why Pacini was chosen to take his place (not only was Mendelssohn discarded but for more obvious reasons of safety so was the idea of lighting the ancient structure with gas lamps) But there would be illuminating consequences in the choice of composer - neither the enterprise in toto, nor the cast, nor the antiquarian concept was to the taste of everyone or it would appear judging by the local press but against all the odds it was Pacini who came out best...

He had been required to supply a *sinfonia* and five choruses one of which should incorporate a tenor solo, a musical intervention upsetting poetic purists while delighting those who found antique drama declaimed by specialists in archaic costumes to be a bit too effortful for popular consumption (the *Gazzetta musicale di Milano* commented sourly that “*La musica...fece tirannna della poesia*” which was no doubt true)

It was a high-profile proposition however. Angelo Mariani was to conduct an augmented orchestra drawn from local talent to which an undeterred Pacini asked for an additional six cellos and four more brass, while offering to help with the actual preparation.^{xvii} The role of Edipo was to be declaimed by the celebrated actor Gustavo Modena no less - Pacini is excessively polite about him in his memoirs - not entirely endorsed by the local press (“*Il Modena omise molti pezzi e recitò male gli altri...*”^{xviii}) but gave a special puff to Francesco Ciaffei (the tenor) who both sang and spoke the role of Eupompo.^{xix} Meanwhile indulging luxuriously in self-effacement in respect of his own contribution. He need not have been so modest, there was general praise for his six pieces and their impact on the antique surroundings when the prima took place

on 18 September 1847. Even if rather quirky, his contribution – based on the simple metrical forms he believed to be Greek which had swum tantalisingly before his eyes ever since *Saffo* - was considered to be worthy of the event and won genuine applause. Though the clamour of his added brass put the ancient building at risk this *Edipo Re* was a success. His score was published. Gasparo Spontini, a composer highly appreciative of decibels, in succession repeated the music and choruses at a concert performance in Berlin which won Pacini a cross and yet another ribbon for his buttonhole. Pacini, genuinely moved by the action of such a touchy compatriot later wrote a *Messa di Gloria* in honour of Spontini which was sung at Jesi when a bust of the latter was unveiled.

The opera that shared its birth pangs was equally antique and as confrontational though with a totally dissimilar scale and implications. It had been planned at exactly the same time. In the late autumn of 1847 he set out for Naples, in Rome *en route* presiding over a revival of his 1838 oratorio *Il trionfo della religione* in the Sala del Campidoglio. Some of the text of the new opera was in his portfolio and it is certain that sections of *Merope* were dashed-off in moments of reflection between the Papal Capital and the Capital of the Two Sicilies. A plot “*Vecchio come Noè*”^{xx} with a vengeance (Cammarano claimed the text of his *Merope* was based on Voltaire with an input from Metastasio, Alfieri and Scipione Maffei)^{xxi} but as its symbiotic origin owed so much to *Edipo Re* its composer decided to give each of the principals of the new venture an Olympic way of singing: “*A Merope destinai il canto appassionato; ad Egisto il canto energetico e concitato; a Polifonte il canto represso, dissimulato. Ciò mi occupai di fare, lusingandomi di ottener lode*”^{xxii}

All of which may have been amusing to contemplate; even would win him praise in antiquarian circles further north - but for Naples was frankly suicidal. The Teatro di S. Carlo was not a place in which to try out anything vocally unprecedented.

As was to be expected Pacini’s *Merope* got a mixed reception when it opened on 25 November 1847 but the opera was not in any way whatsoever the *fiascone* he would have us believe. According to his memoirs only the “*rondeau final...eseguito divinamente dalla celebre Barbieri*” was applauded and the opera “*non venne più riprodotta.*”^{xxiii} All of which is complete and utter nonsense. A more accurate account was printed in the *Gazzetta musicale di Milano* which itemised all the plusses

and minuses of this operatic blockbuster: Gaetano Fraschini's aria was badly received and discarded after the first night; no one seems to have liked Francesco Gionfrida as Polifonte (who was almost certainly thrown by his "*canto represso*") but the overwhelming Marianna Barbieri-Nini had a completely unblemished *furore* with her "*canto appassionato*" from one end of the opera to the other and not just with her *aria finale*.

This *Gazzetta* notice is especially revealing about the prolific maestro himself: "*Pacini often starts out wonderfully promisingly but is addicted to changing his mind, his tempi, his keys and his themes with too rich a profusion of ideas that only very few of his pieces come to a proper conclusion.* Such faults, if this is what they were, led to the celebrated apocryphal conversation that Donizetti is supposed to have had with Rossini: the Bergamasc is reputed to have said that it was shame that Pacini "*did not know music*" to which the *pesarese* is supposed to have replied: "*What do you mean, a shame? It is lucky for us otherwise no one would be able to resist him!*"^{xxiv}

Merope suffers from too much declamation, from too many people standing in the middle of the stage holding forth, but the well-worn plot is not without a certain statuesque *andamento* and Pacini's score has real dramatic potential.^{xxv} It survived its flawed prima, even gained momentum, was given twelve times before Christmas and ten more times in the new year. Though not a wild success elsewhere it was certainly not "*non più riprodotta.*" Six revivals have been traced, one of them in Rio de Janeiro and another in Malta (in 1866)^{xxvi}

Its true impact can be gauged by the following rabid exchange between Mercadante (absent in Venice) and his improbable friend Francesco Florimo, an effective witness to the decline of Neapolitan musical propriety in the years when the operatic flower that had bloomed under an enlightened Bourbon monarchy was already withering:

"Il tuo veritiero resconto dell'esito del Merope, che perfettamente si trova d'accordo con quello del nostro Tomaso (Persico) ci ha fatto piacere mentre questi giornali qui di Venezia, gridano vittoria, entusiasmo, capo d'opera e cose simili, e provano che l'invadenza di quell'ciarlatano è stata comunicata per mezzo di denaro, a tutti questi banditori dell'efimera gloria di quest'imbecille vecchio compositore, che reso da smodata brama di Gloria, scrive quattro Opere in un anno e distribuisce il guadagno agli adulatori, a giornalisti, a danno dell'arte e del suo vero interesse – Lo stesso accade qui con Verdi...La Gerusalemme ha fatto fiasco a Parigi, mentre qui si stampa sfacciatamente furore."^{xxvii}

Other rabbits (pace Mercadante) were ready to be pulled out of the hat. Very different in shape and size. *Ester d'Engaddi* was partially under way even before *Merope* had reached the stage and full of the lofty sentiments and vocal restraints that were appropriate to its distinguished literary source (a play by Silvio Pellico). Both the composer and his poet Francesco Guidi had been commissioned to repeat their success with *La regina di Cipro* at the Teatro Regio of Turin, Pacini traversed almost the whole length of the country to the Piemontese capital city at Christmas with the score of *Ester d'Engaddi* almost complete under his arm, but immediately was embroiled in an acrimonious dispute with Alessandro Lanari which simmered persistently up to curtain rise. Three weeks of rehearsal were accompanied by heated correspondence, misunderstandings and a persistent huffiness on all sides, which communicated itself to the cast. The composer was indignant because he had been promised Erminia Frezzolini and had tailored his music accordingly (an impasse recurring yet again for this composer) too late he had found that she had “*taken herself off to Russia*” and he had Eugenia Garcia in her place. As she was now a mezzo-soprano - as on earlier traumatic occasions - he found himself obliged to recast all the music of the title role. Being French^{xxviii} and congenitally vulnerable to changes of temperature she immediately fell ill.^{xxix} The opera – scheduled for 12 January - had to be delayed and Donizetti's *Don Sebastiano* was rushed back instead; when she reappeared *Ester d'Engaddi* had a royal prima (on 1 February) but she was in such poor voice that it was immediately taken off and *Sebastiano* once more returned to grace the stage. A search was organised to find a replacement; Emilia Dielitz, a German soprano, learned the Frezzolini version at high speed and *Ester d'Engaddi* began again on 12 February, the warm reception for Dielitz encouraged Garcia to recover her voice and from 4 March onwards she sang three performances until the season closed. All this reduced the composer, poet (and the costume and wigs department of the Teatro Regio) to a state of depression and confusion, so pervasive indeed, that the composer insists in his memoirs that with *La regina di Cipro* he had abandoned “*Lo stile declamato*” of *Merope*, when what he actually meant was this particular accolade had in fact been reserved for *Ester d'Engaddi*.^{xxx}

Indeed Guidi's poetry did not invite experiment. Teething troubles only encouraged routine and playing for safety. Pacini tapped a vein of formidable sobriety. The opera is notable for its tremendous *cori*, while Ester's dying *scena* (she has been poisoned among a series of operatic clichés) is really very moving - the composer in his state of desperation fed into it music of genuine depth and feeling. The critics were sympathetic; it was not a failure but had only one revival. Lanari resurrected it in Firenze in 1851 with an inferior cast. The inevitable dispute over ownership of the score put paid to any further interest (including that of the composer)^{xxxii}

Discord of an unmusical kind was now to be imminent. Six weeks later Pacini was on stage again but the brevity of the staging was not the fault of any impresario or cast. Hardly had he set foot in Venice when insurrection broke loose. He was putting a final polish to his politically sensitive *Allan Cameron* on 17 March 1848 when a revolt freed the two patriots Daniele Manin and Niccolò Tommaseo from the prison into which the Austrian authorities had thrown them. His opera appeared on the stage of La Fenice on 21 March, the very next day was proclaimed a *Governo Provvisorio* with Manin as *Presidente*. In a matter of hours the *città lagunare* was in a state of total chaos. (Pacini waspishly describes its citizens as being "somewhere between hope and timidity"^{xxxiii})

Where he stood in the matter is not known for sure. His memoirs give a coolly disingenuous account of the troubles: he maintains that he was recruited to head a company of volunteers to defend the San Marco sector of the city (an honorific title of "Major" in the Urban Guard of Viareggio conferred on him earlier being his only qualification) which turned out to be a linguistically inaccessible and inebriated rabble including many Croats – whose antics were completely decorative as they had no weapons (though they raided the famous Armoury near the Doge's Palace and came out with halberds and an operatic array of medieval pikes and breastplates) and no inclination to take part. In among an unfunny disorder ^{xxxiii} he managed to compose overnight a laudatory *Ronda della Guardia Civica*^{xxxiv} which was sung between the acts of the second performance (23 March) of *Allan Cameron* with himself in the chorus.

This opera fitted the occasion perfectly (except perhaps for its happy ending). The plot was a throwback to Verdi's projected *Allan Cameron* of 1843 based on a "Scott-

derived” Parisian confection covering the flight of Charles II of England from the Roundheads. That particular ‘*Allan Cameron*’ was based on a Gallic travesty by Pierre-Auguste Callet and Javelin Pagnon (1841) which claimed to be translation of Scott’s ‘Woodstock or The Cavalier’ (1826) ^{xxxv} but Verdi’s hankering after the potential and kudos of Victor Hugo put paid to the project: after insisting upon changing its title to “*Cromwell*” and trying to insert at least an echo of Hugo’s play of 1827 into the second act, he jettisoned the entire project in favour of an uncomplicated *Ernani* with Hugo in undiluted ascendance.

This left the “*Allan Cameron*” project to fall into the hands of Pacini. Five years later on it made its appearance in Venice. The maestro was happy to rejoin Piave once more and on his home ground but needless to say there were problems both before and after the new opera reached performance. He had been offered the tenor Domenico Conti for the key role of Carlo but his out-of-tune singing had just sunk the unfortunate Antonio Buzzola’s *Amleto*, ^{xxxvi} only with gritted teeth had Pacini allowed him to sing at the *prima*. The second night he was replaced with Raffaele Mirate who joined Annetta De la Grange and Felice Varesi for two disorderly nights in front of an audience in full disarray – grinding out political chants, whooping anything deemed to be inflammatory, flag waving, standing on seats with riotous applause and with a cheering only coincidentally due to the opera or its representation on stage.. On the third night the opera was removed and the theatre closed.

Thus *Allan Cameron* vanished. At least, initially vanished. Pacini almost forgets it in his memoirs. Its true *prima* came three years later in that same theatre on 11 January 1851, very much longer and now in 4 acts with much the same cast as had been intended with Felice Varesi (who must have felt at home in a kilt again after *Macbeth*); that of the fugitive Carlo sung once again by the Neapolitan tenor Raffaele Mirate, but with one notable change - Annetta De la Grange who had sung like an angel in the disorder of 1848 had been replaced in by Teresina Brambilla, Verdi’s first Gilda and the wife of Amilcare Ponchielli whose Editta proved no less spectacular. [Two months later this same team would emerge as the starring trio of *Rigoletto* born on that stage at the end of the same season] but Pacini’s opera became a popular success and had eleven performances. Replete with romantic imagery, rousing choruses, bagpipes (fortunately off stage), and an immensely imposing *finale primo*. The final act was full

of invention and ended with a remarkable vocal stint for the prima donna. Whatever its tumultuous genesis this *Allan Cameron* brought no dishonour to its composer.

It was a revival in Modena that put a term to its survival. Some five months later, on 12 July 1851 *Allan Cameron* was staged again, this time at the Teatro Comunale in Modena with Mirate once more in his royal role. No one can imagine, even for a moment, that Pacini could leave any score of his untouched for five months. And so it proved.

The libretto for this Modena edition makes much of the fact that Pacini staged the opera himself and the impresario's dedication to the Duca di Modena, Francesco V, really goes over the top:

“... ho divisato di far rappresentare nell'anzidetto Teatro l'appauditissima Opera *ALLAN CAMERON*, dell'illustre Pacini, e d'invitare lo stesso Compositore a derigerne la esecuzione, perchè questo suo felice ultimo parto musicale consegua maggiore universale suffragio, e quindi più brillante successo.”

But irrespective of his *applauditissima* status the illustrious Pacini had made radical changes to his music. A new broom had swept away practically all the pieces that had been so applauded in Venice. Pacini has now opted for a full-frontal dramatic surge and spectacle if not at all Verdian in its political stance. The major protagonist is now the tenor; though the Modena *primadonna* was none other than Fanny Salvini-Donatelli (of *Traviata* fame to come) she has lost her ecstatic *aria finale* so eminently suitable to her Violetta-voice as well as her key place in the plot; ^{xxxvii} the Roundheads, so prominent earlier, are now almost silenced; (their impressive Act IV chorus eliminated and Cromwell demoted) and much of the romantic disorderly colouring of the first versions of the opera (noises-off, ruins, stormy seas) discarded. There is a new *cantabile* for Allan and two reworked duets; the momentous *finale primo* (at the end of Act II) has been re-articulated to rival the finale primo of *Rigoletto*; the coro is ever-present and the whole opera is shorter, bolder, rejecting emotive deviation - the orchestra enhanced and the *finale ultimo* deprived both of sentiment and heaven. Huge changes: no filial devotion, no vocal athletics, all replaced by a grandiose *insieme* to make a final curtain of truly imposing dimensions; Charles II (Carlo) is no longer shuffled-off ignominiously behind Editta's skirts and upstaged as in the earlier versions

of *Allan Cameron* (as in real life perhaps) but on his feet at the end in the centre of a triumphal tableau in a rainbow of glory.

Who supplied the amended text? Almost certainly the composer himself. What supplied the impetus? It can be laid at the feet of political dissent. Pacini had failed to recognise the dangers of insurrection to the art he defended. The opera, set in 1651 was to strike a positive chord in 1851 - a message of encouragement to the beleaguered *status quo*. That particular message, as we know well fell on deaf ears (especially in Modena). One of Pacini's more rewarding scores had been laid at the feet of political reaction. It had one more revival at Verona in 1854^{xxxviii} and then vanished for good.

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ⁱ Antonio Cagnoni, 1847

ⁱⁱ Luigi and Federico Ricci, 1850

ⁱⁱⁱ Nicola De Giosa, 1850

^{iv} Errico Petrella, 1851

^v Carlo Pedrotti 1856

^{vi} *Caterina Cornaro* (1844) was the last new Donizetti opera to be staged in his lifetime

^{vii} *La Reine de Chypre* by Jules-Henri de Saint-Georges and Fromental Halévy had been staged at the Opéra in Paris in 1841. This source was acknowledged in the printed libretti

^{viii} Erminia Frezzolini-Poggi (1818-1884)

^{ix} Kaufman op cit 143-4. During the Naples revival of *La regina di Cipro* on 10 October 1846 the composer was heaped with praise for “*having restored the antique virtues of bel canto*” indeed the Naples cast was truly superlative with Frezzolini, Gaetano Fraschini and Pietro Balzar at their finest and with many items of the score especially retouched. *Caterina's* heart rending *aria finale*, passing from tragedy, to hope to ecstatic prayer has been recorded under the aegis of Opera Rara in London

^x Letter from Alessandro Lanari to Pacini of 20 November 1846. *Cfr* Marcello De Angelis (a cura): *Le cifre del melodramma: L'Archivio inedito dell'impresario teatrale Alessandro Lanari* (Florence 1982), 333. Details of the argomento e sceneggiatura of *Elnava* are contained in Cassetta 9.4cc 1-4 of this archive, which is conserved in the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze

^{xi} Letter from Francesco Maria Piave to Pacini of 9 February 1847. Fondo Pacini, Pescia. Letter No. 1408

xii Marcello De Angelis op cit 337. No.150. Correspondence between Lanari and various others on this projected opera by Pacini continues until 16 April 1847 and then ceases completely

xiii In 1853 the *recto* of the first printed edition of the libretto of *La traviata* at La Fenice lists a copy of the libretto for a *L'assedio di Leida* by Piave, with music by Pacini for sale. Was the opera intended for Venice? If so it came to nothing.

xiv The earlier of the two manuscript scores, both in upright folio: (1.D. 17/18), a copyist score with autograph corrections in two volumes is titled *Elnava* (with “*ossia L'assedio di Leida*” added on the Prologo). The later manuscript: (1.D. 14/15/16) is titled *Elnava* (only) and is wholly autograph in three volumes; it is dated by the composer at the end of volume 16 : “*Fine dell'opera li di 5 ottobre 1859: compiutto il lavoro*” (sic). Piave's manuscript libretto of *Elnava* (in folder 2.6.10 of the Fondo Pacini at Pescia) is heavily overwritten by Pacini himself, this overwriting being principally relevant to the second of these scores.

xv Libretto by Domenico Bolognese.

xvi Mendelssohn's permission may have been sought but he died that year.

xvii The orchestra for this *Edipo Re* was already very large and strange, with a vast chorus, a huge doubling of wind instruments (plus a *serpentone*, but no high strings!) the composer supplies a very conservative *compte rendu* in his memoirs (op cit 97): the theatre, built in 1585, must have been as much at risk from sonic vibration as from the gas lamps. But there were lyrical rewards, Ciaffei's *romanza* ‘Edipo, o misero’, despite its gloomy text, delivered in the fourth intervention of the chorus, was very elegantly constructed, a most beautiful melody, and excellently delivered

xviii Gino Nogara *Cronache degli spettacoli nel teatro olimpico di Vicenza dal 1585 al 1970* (Vicenza 1970), 25

xix The other roles (all spoken roles) were as follows: Rosalind Caruso (Giocasta); Tommaso Pomei (Creonte); Luigi Braccini (Tiresia); Luigi Forti (unSacerdote); Massimo Vedova (un Corintio); Napoleone Colombino (un Pastore); Ernesto Rossi (un Nunzio).

xx. He had, maybe, noted the dramatic possibilities of the plot as early as 1829 at Turin when a revival of his *Gli arabi nelle Gallie* (which he attended) had been accompanied by Antonio Cortesi's ballet ‘Merope’, a ballo eroico in cinque atti (with music by Luigi Viviani). Any attempt to stigmatise as “*retro*” Pacini's taste for “classical” plots is remarkably blinkered: (“The hallmark of Italian Romanticism was precisely its rejection of the classical past”) as if operas like *L'esule di Roma*, *Belisario* or *Poliuto* (not to mention *L'ultimo giorno di Pompei*) had no current application or relevance. *Merope*, like *Gli Orazi e i Curiazi* or *Virginia*, enjoyed an enthusiastic championship by the leading librettists even in Verdi's heyday. A more acute understanding of the role of tradition in the Italian theatre is basic for an appreciation of librettistic choice in the primo Ottocento.

xxi His preface to the printed libretto for the S.Carlo is brief but certainly one of his most engaging

xxii Pacini op cit 102-3

xxiii Ibid 103

xxiv “*Guai se conoscesse la musica! Nessuno potrebbe resistergli.*” Cfr Dario Della Porta (a cura) *Dentro Donizetti* (Bergamo 1983), 224. Though many times quoted, the precise origin of this dialogue appears never to have been traced

xxv It is not a coincidence that the décor of *Merope* was by Antonio Niccolini the architect of the S.Carlo

xxvi Kaufman op cit 144-145. (South American revivals are difficult to determine as they were usually undertaken by touring companies with stagings in theatres and cities where chronologies are poor or non-existent, for this reason especially the number of revivals of an opera like *Merope* may well be greater than those recorded here). Many reliable scholars, have, however, been quite happy to reprint Pacini’s mock modest dismissal of his own work

xxvii Cfr Santo Palermo *Saverio Mercadante* (Fasano di Puglia 1985), 255. Letter from Mercadante to Florimo of 7 December 1847. At this date Mercadante, one year older than “*quest’imbecille vecchio compositore*” was increasingly conscious of his rapid decline, his three next operas: *La schiava Saracena* (1848), *Medea* (1850), *Statira* (1853) would all fail. The letter reveals the furious antagonism that was the background to the genesis of Pacini’s *Stella di Napoli*. It has to be read side-by-side with the appallingly hypocritical letter he wrote to Pacini on 11 February 1867 after receipt in Naples of the latter’s ‘Sinfonia Dante’ and one of his string quartets:

“*Pregiatissimo Commendatore, Il nostro archivistica cavalier Francesco Florimo mi die subito parte del prezioso dono che Ella si e compiaciuta fare alla Biblioteca di questo Real Collegio, della sua grande partizione Sinfonia Dante ...quella freschezza e vaghezza d’idee sempre figlie del suo inesauribile genio, di modo che l’ho rinvenuta opera ben degna della rinomanza dell’autore e dell’altezza del soggetto che ha impreso a trattare.... Gradisca perciò gli attestati della mia inalterabile stima e riconoscenza...Il suo devotissimo ed affezionatissimo S.Mercadante*” Ibid 299-300

xxviii The cast also included a gallic Prosper Dérivis as Jefte who proved more impervious to cold

xxix Eugènie (Eugenia) Garcia (1815-1880) was the wife of Manoel (Manuel) Garcia and thus sister-in-law both of the defunct Malibran and of Pauline Viardot (whose range and style she attempted to rival). She had begun as a light soprano but in Turin was undertaking mezzo-soprano roles thus Pacini had to effect some downwards transpositions with deleterious effect to the ensembles and orchestration of *Ester d’Engaddi*. De Angelis op cit 289 (Letter of F.Guidi to Lanari of 6 February 1848). The substitution of Emilia Dielitz involved further adjustments to the title-role.

xxx Pacini op cit 105. *La regina di Cipro* had, of course, preceded *Merope*. Such misinformation is a *sine-qua-non* of *Le mie memorie artistiche* but the muddling of the sequence of his operas (due probably - quite simply - to faulty memory) has some justification in that *La regina di Cipro* in some measure does revert to his “*prima maniera*” a quality reflected in the praise of *La regina di Cipro* by the Naples critics for its “*bel canto*” credentials.

xxxi There was always trouble extracting music from operas commissioned by the Teatro Regio, but Pacini’s abandonment of this opera forthwith, of an opera with very marked qualities and paralleling his dismissal of *Merope* (though the latter had a better fate), indicates the onset of a kind of fatalism in the face both of the relentless commercial hostility of the Verdi/Ricordi partnership and of theatrical ill-fortune. These factors he attempted to put-aside solely by reliance upon his incredible

ability to produce score after score, but in due course even this philosophy and resource began to flag. In the event the publisher Francesco Lucca, Ricordi's rival, acquired the rights for *Ester d'Engaddi* but even then it failed to make a reappearance...!

xxxii Pacini op cit 98

xxxiii He describes (Ibid) the bitter skirmishes between the patriots and the Austrian soldiers as "*piccole scaramucce*" (little farces) adding "*some of them got thrown in the canal and some got stabbed*"

xxxiv Michele Girard and Franco Rossi *Il Teatro La Fenice* (Venice 1989), 186 give this cantata the title of "*Inno alla Guardia civica*"; while Pacini's own title is certainly correct, his statement in his memoirs that it was sung at the prima is incorrect as Mirate was among the soloists. The author of the text of the *Ronda* - the hot-headed 23-year-old Dalmatian political activist Federico Seismit Doda (1825-1893), born in Ragusa (a member of Pacini's corps of volunteers?) is certainly his most unlikely collaborator in all his long list of poets. Pacini characteristically could not remember his name properly: "*Il carissimo amico Federigo Schmit*" he calls him [Pacini op cit 101] being especially misleading of course

xxxv Cfr Julian Budden 'The Operas of Verdi Vol 1' (London 1973) 140. Budden, who has not identified the source, doubts the claim of the authors, adding, in a footnote "Assuming, however, a confusion between the two Charleses, ie Charles II and the Young Pretender, *Allan Cameron* could be seen as a remote descendent of *Waverley*"

xxxvi Antonio Buzzola (1815-1871). His *Amleto* had been staged at La Fenice on 24 February 1848

xxxvii She retains her splendid Act I *cavatina* but is otherwise restricted almost entirely to duets. Maybe Pacini subsequently felt guilty, as in his memoirs he goes out of his way to give her an unexpected boost "*...Salvini-Doniatelli, il cui talento emerge ancora...non che quella di Editta, con plauso universale nel mio Allan Cameron, nella primavera [sic] del 1851*" Pacini op cit 119

xxxviii On 7 February 1854 at the Teatro Filarmonico of Verona, once again with Salvini-Donatelli in the role of Editta, but this time *post-Traviata* with some of her florid music re-instated (or so it would seem). It nearly had another revival in the interim: in point of fact Rossini had written to Pacini on 22 October 1851 proposing that his protégé Nicola Ivanoff (1810-1880) would like to sing in *Allan Cameron* in a projected appearance at Palermo at the end of the year: "*Egli vorrebbe fare il suo debutto nella tua opera Opera intitolata Alallan (sic) Cameron sempre che tu la metessi in scena.*" In the event, despite Pacini's influence ("*Tu sei meritemante idolatrato a Palermo*") this opera was not revived in the Carnevale, Pacini rapidly assessed the poor vocal condition of the Russian tenor - Ivanoff was desperately out-of-voice and failed badly in a restaging of *Maria regina d'Inghilterra* whose role of Fenimore he had created. The humiliated tenor left Palermo in a huff, closely followed by the composer
Cfr LIM catalogue 62 (Lucca 2010), item 72

xxxix Not entirely for good as the aria finale for Editta 'O d'un re martire' from the original version of *Allan Cameron* was one of the most successful items in the selection of arias etc in "Paventa insano" ORR236 (2005) a very fine compilation CD published by Opera Rara at its very

apex. Sung by Annick Massis (with Alan Opie) its brilliance then attracted almost the greatest attention