

## Chapter Five

“*Sorpassato!*”

“*Nuovo qual era*” he said flamboyantly of his *Saffo* in his memoirs “...*per Napoli, poichè una generazione era intieramente passata dal tempo che il mio nome non aveva più risuonato in quell vasto recinto del San Carlo*”<sup>i</sup> suggesting, with characteristic hyperbole that a whole Neapolitan generation had sprung up in five years. Any such statement must be taken with a whole handful of salt – especially as it enabled him to wax-lyrical on the successes to come with the same strategic impact and extravagance of his *ultimi giorni*.<sup>ii</sup>

What exactly happened when his name was *no longer resounding*? It soon became clear: it meant no interruption whatsoever to his feverish activities. Perhaps he wrote a little less music and this music lost its brio now and then but that is all. Certainly in the short term he paid more attention to the school he had started at Viareggio than to writing operas. But his didactic concerns had started much earlier: his *Cenni storici sulla musica e trattato di contrapunto* was published long before he had decided he was “*sorpassato*” and the long list of his educational scripts to come show that he was perfectly able - when he wished - to combine a theatrical vocation with teaching. His *Sulla originalità della musica melodrammatica italiana del secolo XVIII: ragionamento* (his century of sentimental resort) was published in Lucca in 1841 soon after his *Saffo* had put his feet on a brand-new pedestal.<sup>iii</sup> For someone whose education had been so patchy and episodic this composer was surprisingly erudite.

And then his disenchantment with the stage was no more than fiction, his attention to its protagonists in no way diminished. This is made obvious by his ready collaboration with Donizetti, Mercadante, Pier-Antonio Coppola and Vaccaj in supplying the opening section of a joint cantata in memory of the heroine of his *Irene*, tragically dead after a tempestuous vocal stint at Manchester. *In morte di M.F.Malibran de Bériot* staged at La Scala on 17 March 1837 with a text by Antonio Piazza<sup>iv</sup> was a curious assemblage of music by composers not all of whom had featured notably in her career but in which his own heartfelt contribution - its opening the *Introduzione e quintetto, recitativo e stretta “Il cippo di Manchester”* - being so detailed and so florid that it is almost unsingable - its tormented manuscript so dense in blots, blurs and tear-stains that it was heavily cut before it could appear

on stage (its orchestration asked for a pair of harps appropriate to her new place of residence!)

Nor was he overlooked in any way whatsoever, whatever he claimed later. That same year, 1837, Venice invited him to reopen the opera house of the notorious scam (destroyed by fire in 1836) giving him precedence over Donizetti and Mercadante as well as a host of lesser claimants. But he did not respond to the invitation, the season at La Fenice produced *Maria de Rudenz* and *Le due illustri rivali* (by these two illustrious rivals) but silence only from Pacini. His own theatre at Viareggio took up all his time and energy; for its second season he had composed an inaugural cantata for the sympathetic dowager Queen Maria Isabella of Naples who solemnly gave the tiny stage a Royal baptism with a mini State-Visit capped by revivals of his *Cesare in Egitto* and *Il talismano*.



**Maria Isabella di Spagna, Regina Delle Due Sicilie**

A Mass he wrote at the same time for his Viareggio pupils and then a *Vespro* let loose a trickle of religious music that turned into a flood. Hardly, however, had his Viareggio school and its theatre become a reality than Duke Carlo Ludovico di Lucca (at the urging of his aunt Maria Isabella) invited Pacini to open a far more ambitious school in the walled confines of his Duchy, as a result from 1837 onwards Pacini began a slow move from Viareggio to its grander site and destiny, given the imposing title of *Istituto musicale di Lucca* and with Giovanni as *Direttore*; Eugenio Galli as *professor of counterpoint*; and Massimiliano Quilici as *professor of harmony*.<sup>v</sup> With its spacious premises and judicious curriculum this music school became truly functional only in 1842 but it would honour all Italy in due course. In an unimaginable future the “*Istituto Musicale Pacini*” would supply the first news of the arrival of Alfredo Catalani and Giacomo Puccini on the operatic horizon.<sup>vi</sup>

His fame as a teacher surprised his detractors. Those *forestieri* who had treated his musical skills with contempt were obliged to change their tune. And indeed, a pedagogic crown would be conferred publicly: not long after its establishment Rossini invited him to accept the post of *Director* of the Bologna *Liceo Musicale* (where both he and Rossini had taken a few early steps) a post he refused on the modest grounds that he was not “*capable of so much*” (by this time his operatic career had blossomed anew and in no way was he going to let the Jupiter of the day off the employment hook he had so unwisely assumed for his temporary place of refuge from France!)

Lucca became his musical base with the foundation of his *Istituto*. He seems to have discovered a sudden need for roots, to consolidate his growing family on “ancestral” soil.

It was in these transitional years of rediscovered Tuscan affinity that he launched a whole series of idiosyncratic operatic revivals: he staged a *Bellezza e cuor di ferro* at the Belluomini Villa - a re-run in all probability of Rossini’s *Matilde di Shabran* with the three pieces he had composed at his mentor’s request in a light-hearted resurrection whose score has not survived; other retrospective delving included a transcription of Mayr’s *Elisa* in a similar nostalgic mood as well as a re- evocation of Coccia’s *Clotilde* (as *La foresta d’Hermannstadt*) - both these last in happy paternal souvenir.<sup>vii</sup> They were summer caprices, memories of poignant moments

recollected in family tranquillity and brought to life by brother, sisters and their friends.

An oratorio *Il trionfo della religione* too made its appearance, in 1838, and began a long saga - coming and going in endless re-editions with endless titles throughout this whole period, re-emerging momentarily at Rome in 1847 and enhanced and utterly transformed for Lucca in 1858 when it was called *Il trionfo della fede* and conducted by Pacini himself.<sup>viii</sup> Sacred dramas of this recurrent nature had a vegetative role in replacing operatic trauma at all the more tender phases of his career.

In the autumn of 1839 Cencio Jacovacci<sup>ix</sup> induced him to return to the ring. “*Tutto ciò mi faceva seriamente pensare all via, in cui di nuovo m’incamminava.*”<sup>x</sup> His acceptance may have been intended to be no more than a testing of the temperature of the water, he may have been sincere in stressing the immense effort it took to get him to give his consent. Jacopo Ferretti, always helpful and supportive offered an unproblematic *Furio Camillo* so that Pacini – misty-eyed over *Togas* and *Triumphs* once again (*pace Pompei* and *Paolina*) - eventually agreed to accept the contract. Needless to say, when he claims that this opera was composed with the firm intention of deleting all traces of his earlier manner he was pulling wool over the eyes of the readers of his memoirs. Various sections of the autograph manuscript of *Furio Camillo* give every indication of having been written at an earlier date and even intrinsically the opera is far nearer to *Corsaro* than to *Saffo* which soon would revitalise his career.

But *Furio Camillo* does indeed offer one small step forward – an advance to a more substantial artform even if the listener would be disappointed if he expected to hear an opera without familiar traits: Pacini never dispenses with the switch of moods, the energetic burst of frenzy at key moments, and the characteristic surrender to a show-stopping vocal meltdown at moments of enlightenment - everything thrown at the score to achieve a *dénouement* as might be expected.

Nor was anyone deprived of *fioriture*; Carolina Ungher’s music in particular has a decorative rococo lavishness we hear almost for the last time. The enormously long and ambitious *scena ed aria* ‘Io d’Imen m’affretto all’ara’<sup>xi</sup> a species of *racconto* with declamatory passages and choral interventions may have been something in the nature of an adieu to the past but in practise she sang it to such effect, with so much *slancio*, that it made a dated impact at the dawn of Verdi.

The plot was minimal. Ferretti admitted he had grafted a love interest onto a crude example of Roman in-fighting but Pacini's efforts to create a *tinta locale* owed more to his imagination than to impact in a city deaf to aural imponderables and where he had been dismissed by young bloods. On 26 December 1839<sup>xii</sup> innovation did creep in even so: <sup>xiii</sup> the vehemence of the duetto 'In si feral momento' with its complex rhythmic and harmonic contrasts really does revoke the suspicion that *Furio Camillo* was conceived before he was "*sorpassato*." Its central *andante religioso* with the protagonists wrangling furiously against a *pianissimo coro* shows just how soon he would become an exponent of real stage drama.

And at least he was not discouraged by its reception, he had 1000 scudi in his pocket. On revival further south at the San Carlo in 1841 *Furio Camillo* was praised but its brief exposure - two performances only - reveal that this opera, however beckoning to the future, was viewed as a backward step after audiences had heard *Saffo*.<sup>xiv</sup>

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It would seem that no longer was he the supremely over-confident Pacini. The actual genesis of the masterwork that would become integral to his survival on the world's stages was fraught with doubts; without Salvatore Cammarano to underpin his resolution *Saffo* might never have been composed.

Of its actual engendering all we know is that in June 1840 he was offered a text by the most celebrated librettist of the day. Little has survived of the actual contract for the S. Carlo except that it was signed by Vincenzo Flauto.<sup>xv</sup> John Black gives the best account of what happened: he had received a "*programma*" from Cammarano (ie a skeletal resumé of the plot) and the first verses were on his desk almost by return of post. But Pacini had serious doubts about his ability to go ahead and with a few folios of the piano score in his hand travelled unhappily to Naples in September with the firm intention of asking the librettist for some other plot as he could not - he felt - do justice either to him or to his genius.

Pacini sat down at the piano and sang through the opening music: the poet turned pale, seized him, threw his arms round the composer's neck and cried

***"For Heaven's sake continue with your work; you will give Italy a masterpiece."***<sup>xvi</sup>

With the schoolboy diligence we have encountered earlier a reanimated composer put himself to study as many of the accounts of his heroine as was feasible: historical and unhistorical; scandalous and scatological; genuine and generic of the Lesbian poetess - meditating long and painfully upon Hellenic metrical conventions; Pythagorean precepts; Doric, Ionic and Lydian scales; diatonic, chromatic and enharmonic modes with the inevitable result that he fell ill, victim to operatic indigestion in a compound of mid-career anxiety and self-consciousness he had never experienced before.

It was a predictable response, according to popular opinion the *Saffo* text he was offered was one of the very best libretti ever to emerge in the Italy of the day and set the standard for theatrical poetry for years to come - "*Worthy of Saffo*" was praise for decades.<sup>xvii</sup>

But it was Parthenopeia that came to his assistance - the complete score of *Saffo* was ready for rehearsal in twenty-eight days, a potent Hellenic subsoil having supplied the pace for a truly Olympian feat: the *gran 'scena finale* of the opera, the most protracted *tour-de-force* ever to be offered on the Italian stage in that fertile era – an extraordinary vocal sequence consisting of *coro funebre*, *recitativo*, *improvviso alla Greca*, *tempo di mezzo* and *cabaletta di forza* after which amazing immolation the romantically deranged heroine throws herself off the Leucadian cliff having been composed in two hours according to its composer!<sup>xviii</sup>

Written without respite, the *prima* of *Saffo* on 29 November 1840 was as fabulous and sensational as any of his first career. Pacini was so very nervous that his contractual obligation to sit at the keyboard was waived and he took his seat in a box. Three friends escorted him to the third tier of the S. Carlo cheerfully reminding him that the cast had been whistled in all the previous operas. From the very first notes the music took fire. Every item was greeted with deafening applause, the artists were awed by standing ovations and demands for repeats; at the end of the *finale primo* – one of the most sustained and impressive of concerted movements ever to be heard that century - with the house in an uproar - everyone turned to look towards the box where Pacini was sitting but he was nowhere to be seen.

Running to the box the three friends found that he had fainted. This cynic, this joker, this irreverent tease whose last real success when he had been fêted, honoured and praised had been all of fifteen years earlier, who had suffered indecent intrigue,

tricked by mindless antagonists, who had despaired of ever hearing such plaudits again, was found lying on the floor.

Brought to the footlights he looked speechlessly at a raging house. It was the *furore* of a lifetime. The whole theatre *shook* according to a breathless witness, like that of *Pompei* a musical millennium before.

*Saffo* does inaugurate his second style. For the first time he had achieved a flawless commentary underpinned by an insistent and almost mechanical pulse which runs through the score. Searching for comparisons it has been commonplace to claim the impact of this opera to be that of his Greek heredity – his island birthplace - but nothing of his defunct rival quite equals the fundamental energy of this exceptional opera nor anything as lyrical *per se*. Friedrich Lippmann has described Pacini as either “*Before, or After his time,*” an especially perceptive intuition<sup>xix</sup> this is an opera that presages the veristic psychopathology of the end of the century. An organic rather than conceptual continuity here transcends itself, climax upon climax, to reach a succession of peaks of emotion whose sheer desperation tears apart a bel canto envelope.<sup>xx</sup> Though *arie* are singled-out, especially that of the tenor Faone with its undermining prelude the opera stands and falls on the prima donna’s climactic leap to eternity - at once touching, outrageous, painful and lost. The composer’s extraordinary insight into regret and self-absorbed angst achieving a resolution that for the first and last time in his *œuvre* has a contour that, if not Greek or classical, has the timelessness of legend.

A cumulative effect begins from this momentous prima onwards to dominate his musical development, inset with surprises, digressions and orchestral sophistication to be sure but to pervade almost all the operas to come. There is an intoxication in his melodic extravagance that was never there before. His fascination with remote keys dates from *Saffo* as would be the case from now on. Pacini here rejects the onset of routine together with an instrumentation as strange as science fiction (or as strange as audiences could swallow) That he understood this was his turning-point is clear: *Saffo* is perhaps his only opera to escape modification or extra music to the amazement of those in the business of publication.<sup>xxi</sup>

His cast had not been entirely predictable. The soprano of the title role was not an obvious candidate for *furore*, but Francilla Pixis unexpectedly carried everything

before her,<sup>xxii</sup> Eloisa Buccini, Orazio Cartagenova and Gaetano Fraschini found themselves with the audience at their feet. After the astonishment of the final jump the curtain-calls went on until the early hours.

This heroic reception was repeated ten times in Naples that season and twenty-seven times the next, *Saffo* would have eleven different productions in Naples in the nineteenth century. This opera, the first Pacini score to earn international star rating went on to revivals world-wide, it has been played subsequently in almost every operatic centre. The composer, both proud and protective, made the rather touching point of being present at as many performances as he could for nearly three decades. An unexpected accolade came from Giuseppina Strepponi: "*Saffo continues to enchant and we are all called out and then recalled every night. My favourite pieces are the second act finale and the third-act aria after which I am called to the footlights five or six times. You know I tell the truth...*"<sup>xxiii</sup>

And the most absurd revival was in Parma, the city of her husband; in the carnival of 1842 on the night of 9 January 1843, after ten or so more-or-less normal performances, the impresario had the brilliant idea of beginning with Act III, this was followed by a violin recital after which *Saffo* clawed her way back up the cliff and sang Acts I and II. It seems the stunt man who jumped was obliged to go home early!

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As a result of the upturn in his fortunes, commissions poured in on all sides. Impresarios silent for a decade wrote to remind him of their close association. Even Barbaja – in the last year of his life – recalled his prized associate and urged on him a commission for the Teatro Nuovo in Naples which Pacini magnanimously accepted even though such a stage ill-accorded with his newfound elevation to glory. The opera that transpired was a strange sort of codicil to *Saffo*, a wild child conceived in a haze in tandem with Neapolitan cronies and composed in fits and starts. Was the composer overcome by the disequilibrium of success? There is something slightly nonsensical about his acceptance of a stage-weepee almost completely dominated by men's voices and based on Sir Walter Scott's 'The Black Dwarf' [*Il nano misterioso*] a bucolic *semiseria* fantasy replete with Lowland Scots worthies with Neapolitan accents, one of them singing in dialect (and one of them in drag). Together with its librettist - the dilettante marchese Domenico Andreotti,

Pacini nonetheless succeeded in making his *L'uomo del mistero* acceptable to audiences eager only to hear *farse*. With an expert comic line-up: Raffaele Cassacia - son of the great *buffo* Carlo Cassacia (“Cassaciello”) and a clutch of adept rascals its composition was far from smooth. Pacini despatched the first two parts with his usual alacrity and sent them to Naples in July 1841. Then came a long silence. No one knows why. But Barbaja was obliged to plead for the remaining portion. The maestro replied that he had already sent it but enclosed a second copy. As a result of this delay the celebrated impresario was deprived of staging his last Pacini opera. He died on 19 October 1841. *L'uomo del mistero* reached performance three weeks later and had a happy reception (Pacini says “*esito felicissimo*”). The tartan gothic transports of this chaser to *Saffo* pleased its rather special audience, it got twelve performances in 1841 and seventeen more the following year with revivals in Turin and Rome - after which it went the way of similar spoofs written for specific voices and specific stages. Some items were printed.

## His second career

Maybe this Scott-inspired intermezzo should not be dismissed as a trifling extra. It is from now on that he began to take his sources with the utmost seriousness. From henceforth it was literary integrity combined with his special flair for vocal definition that emerges as the compulsive factor in a long series of historical tragedies - a chain of over-life-sized scores which forms the bedrock of his second career. Dramatic portraiture will be its most obvious feature; not only a concession to emerging tastes but designed to enable the shape, strength and emotive distinction of theatrically compulsive arguments in which a runaway energy will be all his own.

Cammarano of course was high on this agenda. In the summer of 1841 Pacini had persuaded the *Presidenza* of La Fenice in Venice to accept a refurbished version of Cammerano's *Il conte di Chalais*, a text Giuseppe Lillo had set in 1839<sup>xxiv</sup> now prudently retouched with the new title of *Maria contessa di Rohan*. This project was approved in July. Pacini had already sketched some of the music and progress was made to the extent even of disputing the casting - the maestro having doubts about a contralto *primadonna*, but nothing survives to explain why such a promising project simply vanished.<sup>xxv</sup> All the more baffling as Cammarano had forwarded an autograph

manuscript poem for the occasion. Possibly the casting was insoluble (Venice having a *faible* for sonorous female voices dug it's heels in, and Pacini simply had to desist?) but much more persuasively he had been warned by friends in Naples that Donizetti intended to set the "*Chalais*" text himself (Donizetti's *Maria di Rohan* with the Cammarano libretto would emerge in 1843). For this reason it may not be entirely speculative that Pacini's substitute for the *Rohan* text - his *Il duca d'Alba* - was *tit-for-tat* the Bergomasc having been obliged to discard his *Le Duc d'Albe* (with a Scribe libretto) as a result of conflicts of interest in the Paris of 1840.<sup>xxvi</sup>

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In his memoirs Pacini would have us believe that he began work on his *La fidanzata corsa* in the autumn and winter of 1841. But the libretto for this opera was not submitted for the censor's approval until October 1842 so unless he began composing without any text at all (which could of course be the case) he has got his dates wrong yet again. In fact the winter of 1841 was devoted to the composition of *Il duca d'Alba* with its poem to be supplied by Giovanni Peruzzini. It was not a good choice of poet, he was ill and could only manage to complete two thirds of the verses, Pacini was faced with the task of writing the rest of the libretto himself. As he had made strenuous efforts to select an argument in accordance with his new literary precepts and based directly upon Goethe's 'Egmont' there were delays and struggles with translation. But while scribbling ineffectually at all hours he came across a prentice bilingual versifier in the house of a friend.

This was a far more momentous event than it seems. It was Francesco Maria Piave, star to be of an emergent Verdian heaven. Piave was not yet bloodied on the operatic stage: he had made one essay only in theatrical poetry<sup>xxvii</sup> but was instantly recruited to polish up the crude stanzas of the overwhelmed maestro. For this reason, it is Pacini who has the honour of claiming Piave for the operatic merry-go-round and not the pitiless tormentor of a well-documented destiny.

Piave was the only stroke of good fortune he had. Problems with casting predominated; he was trying to persuade the *Presidenza* that Fanny Goldberg - their choice of *primadonna* - would not be suitable for his heroine - and that Francilla Pixis should be engaged instead; he had been assured before arriving in Venice that La Pixis would be contracted and she would receive 18,000 Austrian lire (the composer -

to be paid a fraction of that amount - was outraged) but when he set foot in La Fenice there was La Goldberg waiting! Furious at this *fait accompli* an instant recasting of his score for mezzo-soprano became mandatory, many pieces were cut, ensembles were mutilated, with the result that the opera – when it emerged - showed disastrous signs of haste; unequal in its two halves the first act was now very choral, and the second too long, strident, episodic and unbalanced with stretches of verse (*pace Piave*) that were almost painfully tedious.

Nonetheless the season began well. Fanny Goldberg had a triumph in *Saffo* which had twenty repetitions. Pacini was obliged to pay his respects to the lady (who fortunately knew nothing of his efforts to get rid of her!) <sup>xxviii</sup> His *Il duca d'alba* reached the stage on 26 February 1842.<sup>xxix</sup> The audience detected the fractured nature of the score immediately: after a noisy and shapeless Act I they discovered that Act II had the remarkable distinction of dispensing with the duke of the title-role almost completely and though his victim - the count of Egmont (Egmondo) - had a vibrant death scene composed expressly for Napoleone Moriani (“*tenore della bella morte*”) only the excessively dramatic *concertato finale* succeeded in silencing exaggerated yawns. By which time rows of seats and many of the boxes had been vacated. Pacini's displeasure was made loud and clear. Nine months later he gave *Il duca d'Alba* a second chance, this time in Naples and with the golden cast of Sofia Loewe, Gaetano Fraschini and Filippo Coletti with the score rebalanced <sup>xxx</sup> and retitled *Adolfo di Warbel* (the Duke of Alba now called “Duca di Herz”). Staged at the S. Carlo on 4 November 1842 it gave rise to a tepid enthusiasm in a season that would be full of glory.

The opera that followed on that stage was almost to rival *Saffo*. *La fidanzata corsa* is perhaps the most satisfactorily balanced of all of Pacini's operas and in many ways the most deserving of fame - even in the face of so many scores to come. The composer himself had chosen the source for the plot: based on a lurid melodrama by Victor Ducange ‘*La Vendetta ou La Fiancée Corse*’ staged in Paris in 1831<sup>xxxii</sup> and far too bloody according to Cammarano who described it as “*too savage*” and that it needed time to tame its excesses. Did he try to avoid the challenge? Even though he had written to say that he knew the composer “*had another Saffo boiling in his veins*” <sup>xxxiii</sup> *La fidanzata corsa* took an “unconscionable” time to get off the ground. Indeed there could have been some truth that Pacini began writing the music much earlier (though not a year earlier) as the *Sovrintendente* of the Royal Theatres of Naples felt impelled to send him a stern message: “*composers are not to begin work on a text*

*until it has been approved.*”<sup>xxxiii</sup> in a reproof fully emblematic of the irrational administration of that theatre. The opera was scheduled for appearance on 10 December, its libretto was approved only on 10 November - which left *one month only* to compose the score, design the sets, paint the scenery, make the costumes, rehearse the artists and get the whole thing on stage. Pacini, like all his peers, treated such nonsense with the contempt it deserved.

*La fidanzata corsa*, a Hitchcock thriller in music, trumps *Saffo* in one respect only, its refusal of any sort of digression whatsoever. There is an urgent convergence between composer and poet which creates a nail-biting tension rising to its final indecorous coup. At once a superb overview of his talents the opera focuses on what he now knew to be his strongest cards: his ability to “place” his arias impeccably, to engage his audience almost physically in the drama and seduce them with orchestral colour.<sup>xxxiv</sup> Above all, in this *melodramma tragico*, he succeeds in having his trademark “cake” and eats it momentarily: he has both a *lieto fine* replete with the ecstatic *fioriture* everyone anticipated and yet ends with a curtain of spectacular horror! The final moments of *La fidanzata corsa* demolished the audience at its prima: as Rosa turns ecstatically from the altar at the end of her *aria finale* by the side of the husband she has won against all the odds she is shot dead (by her rejected suitor). The curtain falls on the wide-open mouths of the spectators.

Some of the music of this opera is so attractive that it undoubtedly impeded revival. Pietro Zampardi’s cavatina ‘Per me tacque una vendetta’ with its cabaletta ‘Sento fra voi quest’anima’ is one of the peaks of the baritone repertoire so seductive that it has made casting directors freeze and yet it is one detail only of an *Introduzione* that also includes a memorable *duetto* between Ettore and the tragic Rosa that is at the very apex of the art.

It is clear that both *Roberto Devereux* and *La fidanzata corsa* have propelled Cammarano into challenging territory. Of the two, Pacini’s opera suffers more from epic casting; two extravagantly combative but contrasted tenors are required (sung at the prima by Giovanni Basadonna and Gaetano Fraschini), it also needs a Lucia-like Rosa who is both *lirico* and *spinto* (sung by Eugenia Tadolini). On 10 December 1842 given a near-perfect performance at the S.Carlo, *La fidanzata corsa* took the audience by the throat almost literally leaving the press, the management, and the composer in near delirium: “*il successo fu pari, se nol supero, a quello della Saffo*”

<sup>xxxv</sup> was an accurate summary.

With five performances immediately and twenty-eight the following year - like his *Saffo* his *La fidanzata corsa* was to reappear at regular intervals throughout the rest of his life. Some thirty productions are recorded.<sup>xxxvi</sup> The two-tenor requirement was an expensive headache, <sup>xxxvii</sup> during the carnival of 1845-46 La Scala attempted an economic solution with one of the them replaced by a mezzo-soprano (Elena Angri) but with bathotic consequences. A slightly bolder Paris put on a revival at the end of that same year (Théâtre-Italien 17 November 1846) with Fanny Tacchinardi-Persiani, Coletti, Mario (and a modest tenor in Fraschini's role of Ettore) "*Plusieurs morceaux ont été applaudis*" was the sum-total of its lukewarm reception - but it was published in vocal score.

In contrast it was a huge success in his homeland whenever enough finance could be found to foot the bill, it flourished in South America, even reaching Russia. Revivals persisted to the very end of Pacini's existence - the most moving perhaps - a last burst of ecstatic applause and the fourth time the opera had been revived in Naples, on 11 December 1866 at the S.Carlo conducted by Nicola De Giosa <sup>xxxviii</sup> barely a year before Pacini's own final departure.

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The pace, now as intense as in his youth, and describing himself portentously as "*Cavaliere Professore Giovanni Pacini, Maestro Direttore della Reale Cappella e Pubbliche Scuola di Musica del Ducato di Lucca*" he set out for Palermo. He had been delighted to receive an invitation to write for the Teatro Carolino. Only Pacini would ever have accepted such a commission at such short notice, with just two or three weeks to spare as the opera was intended for the coming *carnevale* - and only accepting then because he had a suitably daring libretto.<sup>xxxix</sup> The inducements were many: Rossini's protégé Nicola Ivanoff was to be its star and he wanted to be seen to excel on a stage associated with Donizetti (not Bellini). And apart from any such attractions the *principe* di Cutò, Intendente of this the major opera house in Palermo, had offered him his seaside villa to work in. The verses he had in his hand were by Leopoldo Tarantini, a Neapolitan lawyer with a new taste for glory, a specialist in simple fare for modest composers the text he had offered Pacini was emblematic of renewed ambition - derived from Hugo's 'Marie Tudor' it was intended to give him the chance to upstage Cammarano with a composer who had set one of his momentous texts.<sup>xl</sup>

It is clear that the maestro would be writing at maximum pressure - the autograph of *Maria regina d'Inghilterra* has vanished so it is not possible to know the extent of the adjustments or short cuts he made or if any significant compositional struggles are concealed behind the smooth surface of this very long work. In some ways parodying *Roberto Devereux* with an even more travestied argument, <sup>xli</sup> echoing its regal fury, anguish, unwelcome lovers and vocal exaltation, in Pacini's case it added an invasive Funeral March. But the opera has the same kind of rapt absorption and bold portraiture - the same authentic contour against all historical odds like that of his Bergamasc rival. The *palermitani* - however - liked to believe that Pacini was trying to lay the ghost of Bellini with this score and certainly the Maria/Clotilde duets sound familiar with their shared distrust of men and sisterly tears in thirds *à la Norma*. But Pacini's portraiture is much sharper and his reliance on *cantabile* much less. And the plot is more complex than either *Norma* or *Roberto Devereux*: several remote strands intertwine and the gloomy scaffold theme of the opening *preludio* weaves in and out of the score - re-appearing at the central climax and at the opera's crux, while the action comes to a head in another of those Pacinian dual-purpose endings - the very reverse to that of *La fidanzata corsa*<sup>xlii</sup> and now going from dark to light - Maria's unworthy lover having been decapitated despite her cunning expedients she is in despair - but all at once - enheartened by her loyal subjects - she switches from misery to exalted emancipation in her *aria finale* acknowledging a ray from heaven that falls on her throne 'Un raggio di luce' and the opera comes to a head in headlong flurries of quavers and demisemiquavers.

The opera had a real triumph on 11 February 1843; Ivanoff sang as he had never sung before; Antonietta Rainieri-Marini as Maria - with her regal impediment (she was too fat) sang as if inspired; while Teresa Merli-Clerici as Clotilde capped them all - not only by singing magisterially but by marrying the *principe* di Cutò in its wake.

After the *prima* Pacini's coach was dragged back to his princely abode in a torchlight procession with crowds hailing him as Bellini's heir.<sup>xliii</sup>

It is necessary to ask - especially in view of this very long score - to what extent did such a composer expect his opera to survive intact in performance? *Maria regina d'Inghilterra* is a protracted drama with a string of discrete scenes simply asking to be discarded, a philosophy totally opposite to the aesthetic proclaimed by Bellini and Verdi. Did he deliberately offer theatre managements the opportunity to make a

performing edition of their own choice?<sup>xliv</sup> If so the calculation was misguided. A La Scala revival later that year<sup>xlv</sup> was a damp squib, the opera was cut to shreds and Ivanoff out of voice. At Genoa in 1844 with both original ladies<sup>xlvi</sup> its reception did not correspond to its merits (the critics said the music “*rarely corresponds to the words*”) but this is an opera where modern recording has turned the tables on disreputable journalistic slurs from the past.<sup>xlvii</sup>

The remainder of this year of 1843 was given up to the extremes of Pacini’s repertoire: he composed a solemn Mass for Pope Gregory XVI which was sung before him at Sant’Appollinaire in Rome; a Requiem Mass published by Ricordi;<sup>xlviii</sup> and a feather-light *melodramma giocoso* once more for the Nuovo in Naples. Were all three on his desk at the same time? It is most likely. He spoke of “*Il multiforme Donizetti*” in his memoirs but he himself revelled in feats of mixed composition - this year too saw the birth of *Medea* - one of his most vehement offerings which upstaged *Luisetta o La cantarice del molo* at the Nuovo. This latter, with another poem by Tarantini may well have been written first but it was *Medea*, a follow-up at the Teatro Carolino, that got in earlier:

“Gli spettacoli del 1843-44 furono contrariati da molte malattie di attori a da turbolenze di pubblico, le quali costrinsero le autorità ad anticipare di qualche giorno la chiusura del teatro. All’organizzazione tecnica era stato chiamato il Pacini, al quale, dopo l’ottimo successo dell’anno precedente, si rinnovò la scrittura per altra opera nuovissima...”<sup>xlix</sup>

The above introduces *Medea*, a wise choice for a turbulent Palermo with a plot prudently remote from political turbulence and a Sicilian librettist under the aegis of another local patron. Pacini’s view of the Colchican princess is refreshingly modern, even feminist, she is no sorceress - a jilted wife only fighting to recover her unfaithful husband. Indeed some of his own grievances against mindless denigration may well have been woven into his defence of an anti-heroine for whom he insists upon sympathy from the start.

For such a well-received opera (and *Medea* travelled the western world getting to New York and South America before being revived in modern times) its history is elusive. There is much additional music but when and for whom it was written remains imprecise.<sup>1</sup> It is not at all clear for example on which occasion the *sinfonia* (a resumé of some of the prominent themes) was added, and extensive changes were made to the

libretto even before the *prima* (resulting in the virtual disappearance of one of the characters - Cassandra); alternative music of all kinds abounds but the principal features of *Medea* – and especially the two extravagantly structured duets (for the title-role and Giasone and the title-role and Creonte) - remain constant being among the most irresistible items in the whole of his corpus of memorable music.<sup>li</sup> All in all he seems to have collated the superb emotions of his two previous heroines in *Medea* adding a dignity and prosaic realism upon which neither of the earlier pair had focused.

Once again he was not too pleased with the cast he was offered; Geltrude Bortolotti as *Medea* would not have been his first choice even though she had scored a big success in *La fidanzata corsa* six weeks before,<sup>lii</sup> he had wanted Rita Gabussi whose voice he almost worshipped,<sup>liii</sup> *Medea* depended wholly on its *primadonna*. This notwithstanding the opera, staged on 28 November 1843, was greeted with rapture with Giovanni Pancani making a seductive impact as the perfidious Giasone. Though the press found it less pleasing than *La fidanzata corsa* and *Maria regina d'Inghilterra* the *palermitani* were completely bowled-over and even commissioned a bust in Pacini's honour. Sculpted by Rosolino Barbera, when he saw it in place for the first time the composer noted dryly that “at last he had been put on the same level as Bellini!”<sup>liv</sup> *Medea* did as well in revival as both the two earlier scores and it got to Buenos Aires even as late as 1866. There was a grandiose revival at Naples in 1853 with Carolina Alaimo (some of the extra music was certainly written for this occasion in a venue where Mercadante's *Medea* had failed!); Bortolotti herself revived it at Madrid in 1847 with Tamberlick as Giasone. An amazingly forthright Adelaide Cortesi with balletic determination sang the title-role for ten years or more - including stagings at Ancona, Florence, Forlì, Ravenna, Rome, Venice, Vicenza, Mexico City, New York and Havana. Her last appearance as *Medea* was in 1861 at Caracas.<sup>lv</sup> Rita Gabussi never sang it at all.

Without taking breath Pacini rushed back to Naples to stage *Luisetta* two weeks later. Though it had been composed in parallel<sup>lvi</sup> no opera could ever have been in greater contrast. Confounding the murderous *Medea* its plot was as near to sentiment as Pacini could contrive. The tale of a street singer whose trilling earned her a contract for La Scala but who abandons all her acquired glory to marry the young fellow who had accompanied her on his barrel organ, Tarantini's text is touching. If Pacini stooped-to-conquer he stooped to good effect,<sup>lvii</sup> for once, as he notes in his memoirs, people threw bouquets (instead of insults) at the composer. *Luisetta o La cantatrice del molo* is an *opéra comique* of traditional form with all that implies of ballad-like

songs and spoken dialogue, the plot allowing for self-parody in that its excursions into La Scala could be “borrowed” from his own repertory and while describable as a distaff *Postillon de Longjumeau*<sup>lviii</sup> the heroine’s orgies of roulades are sent up gloriously. After 13 December 1843 amazing those of the audience who had only just adjusted their responses to *Saffo* and *La fidanzata corsa* this slight opera became a favorite, reappearing regularly at the Nuovo until 1867 updated regularly with new quotes from Pacini’s later operas. All Naples was enchanted by this light score, with the exception of Bellini’s bereft Francesco Florimo who felt obliged to write “*the only composer who was never liked in Naples was Pacini*” (Old grudges live to compile theatrical chronologies!)

In fact, it was precisely in this year of 1843, that Bellini became finally irrelevant to Pacini, an even more intransigent competitor was now treading on his toes. The Verdian threat can be noted clearly with this misleading announcement of 1843:

“*Nuove scritte del maestro Pacini...In autunno è scritturato per la Pergola a Firenze, ove esporrà un nuova opera, Alzira. con poesia di Cammarano, da eseguirsi dalla Frezzolini, dal tenor Poggi e del basso Colini*”<sup>lix</sup>

Did Pacini intend to compose an *Alzira* or is this a complete fantasy? Whatever the truth it reveals the name of the composer who from now on would compete for the favours of the best librettists and be a thorn in his flesh for the rest of his life. Perhaps the report was in error? *Alzira* is a plot too close to his *Amazilia* - but Giuseppe Verdi’s *Alzira* with a libretto by Cammarano would surface in 1845.<sup>lx</sup>

He had already accepted a text by a fellow *catanese*. Giacomo Sacchero’s<sup>lxi</sup> libretti had wide exposure but were emerging only now with real *reclâme* when set with maximum skill by Federico Ricci for his *Corrado di Altamura*.<sup>lxii</sup> The coming opera would repeat all the problems he had with *La Vestale*: the critics eager to accuse him of purloining the plot (in this case from Halévy and Scribe but not with any scholarly insight as the information was printed in the libretto). Pacini’s *L’ebrea* was born somewhere between Naples and Lucca over a chaotic Christmas distinguished only by Pacini’s elevation to a senior rank in the Order of San Ludovico (the order of his patron the Duca di Lucca). In this opera he would again have trouble with his prima donna - in this case even worse than usual, the title-role was written for Antonietta Montenegro whose remarkable voice was almost untrained and who had no real professional

experience. Donizetti had failed with her at Vienna when her Elisabetta (in *Roberto Devereux*) had been disastrous irrespective of his patiently sympathetic coaching.<sup>lxiii</sup> As far as *L'ebrea* was concerned the score was ready in good time, rehearsals began, but after thirty-five piano rehearsals - Pacini tells us in his memoirs - she still could not remember the words! To support her he had Marietta Alboni, Ignazio Marini and Nicola Ivanoff but there was a hole in the middle of his opera. And Ivanoff too gave him trouble this time – not because he was out of voice, very much the reverse - but because he was so enthusiastic about his *scena* in Act IV ‘In quei di clemente il cielo’ with its fabulous cabaletta ‘Non sollevo più gli sguardi’ that he had sung it repeatedly in concerts in Milan to Pacini’s disquiet and many people already knew it by heart!<sup>lxiv</sup>

*L'ebrea*'s prima on 27 February 1844 was unremarkable, not actually a failure but everyone agreed that La Montenegro deserved her boiling oil at the end whatever her good intentions. But it had felicitous moments, he says of the opera “*mi ebbe non pochi applausi*”.<sup>lxv</sup> *L'ebrea* has a vibrant score, with numerous potent ensembles, much novelty in its structure, and is as eloquent and impressively orchestrated as any opera of its day. Sacchero’s libretto was fully worthy of success, neat, economical and emotionally devastating to a fault. Nor did *L'ebrea* vanish quite as quickly as has usually been stated in operatic chronologies. True, it failed to find revivals in Italy but was especially favoured by the tenor Enrico Tamberlick<sup>lxvi</sup> who succeeded in restaging it twice at the Teatro Principal in Barcelona in 1848 and 1850; like Ivanoff he had fallen in love with Manlio’s music. The composer himself presided over a very dim re-staging at Viterbo in 1864 when it was re-titled *I romani in Siria*, a version which seems to have re-surfaced in Venice in the fatal year (for Pacini) of 1867 when it was greeted, or so it was reported, “*with general approval.*”

Even if not up to his expectations he made a special manuscript copy of the autograph of *L'ebrea* to keep in his personal library. This confirms his own opinion of its merits: *L'ebrea* must be an especially tempting candidate for revival.

He was now at the zenith of his skills. Even if he never aspired to be “learned” in any Teutonic sense he had everything, urgency, inventiveness, unparalleled fluency and a melodic reserve that never failed him to the end of his operatic parabola. He had bent the orchestra to his will, tamed his vocal line and succeeded at last in having a dramatic whole. He had already received the libretto of *Bondelmonte* from Cammarano<sup>lxvii</sup> and began working on it immediately. Why then was there a sudden interval?

There were big changes in the business of opera under way. With the arrival of a Verdian era backed by a crushing music industry in the North, easy packaged productions of operas for hire, score and parts, complete with printed libretti began to appear. Cheap, standardised and readily available. The *non-localizzato* libretto now made its appearance, at first with adhesive labels naming the theatre and cast in question: later, after 1850,<sup>lxviii</sup> without indication either of theatre or listing any of the singer or roles, *professori* of the orchestra or production details in a meagre reduction of an artform that once had taken pride in its quality and singularity. Opera had to pay a price for becoming a commercial product. Together with this, a gradual elimination of the *minori* began which would cut the number of composers on the boards by two thirds. At the same time a cult of revival began to undercut stagioni which no longer commissioned new operas for audiences. This heralded opera as it has been known ever since.

It was in the summer of 1844 that Pacini decided upon confrontation: he would write three operas in one year, three historical portraits, three body blows against this tide of institutional deterioration - three operas expressly composed for his three most important historical sites and taking-on three of his major opponents.

In all probability, since the historical Lorenzino had been murdered in Venice in 1548 it was the composer's wry sense of humour that selected *Lorenzino de' Medici* for that particular city. He was fully prepared for the same fate. Only twelve months before his *La fidanzata corsa* had failed to get to the end of its second act at La Fenice as a result of the jeering of an ultra-professional clique sent from Milan in an attempt to wrest control of the repertoire. Verdi, even, felt constrained to protest on Pacini's behalf but such unwonted charity did not prevent him from trying to get hold of *Lorenzino de' Medici* - its cowering poet having now become the subject of a tug-of-war between the two composers.

It is far from clear who alighted upon the plot of *Lorenzino de' Medici* in the first place. Did Piave suggest it to Pacini or Pacini to Piave? Or could it have been someone else? In any event the browbeaten poet felt obliged to unburden himself tremblingly to his new mentor on his shameful commitment to the detested rival who had begun his professional career...

With unconvincing nonchalance Verdi had replied:

*"By all means agree to write for Pacini, but try not to do Lorenzino, because this*

*we can do together some other time. But if you can't avoid it, then do Lorenzino. Act in your own interests"* (Letter of 22 May 1844)<sup>lxix</sup>

With His Master's Voice ringing in his ears Piave did just that. At the date of this letter not one word of the text of *Lorenzino* had been written and even in October Piave sent Alessandro Lanari a note to say that "*as soon as I have finished I due Foscari I shall finish Lorenzino for Pacini.*"<sup>lxx</sup>

Had Pacini read this letter his secondary ranking would have been painfully clear, but the plot he had chosen had undoubted merits, the real-life Lorenzino, born in 1514, was more genuinely colourful than any opera plot; a fabulous Renaissance anti-hero, at once handsome, noble and deadly, a brilliant memorialist, ruthless lover, traitor, assassin and dissident, all at the same time. The perfect model for those shifts of tempo, *crescendi*, cadenzas and codas integral to the opera of the 1840's as well as being a Brutus clone whose political acumen could be viewed as an advance of the Risorgimento to come.

As far as Pacini was concerned it was to be an opera designed to snatch the laurels from the Verdian crown; dealing gingerly with chronology as well as with the truth Piave created in a fictional *affaire du cœur* for him, turning his back as much on the sordid underside of his hero as too on the Florentine strife that would have drawn his hawkish rival like honey to a bee. Set during a nasty moment in the Carnival of 1537 nothing at all survives in Piave's libretto of Lorenzino's literary feats (his 'Aridosio' or his 'Apologia') and only a hint of his political ideals, he is unstable, duplicitous and double-dealing, of his altruism (if it existed) there is scarcely a mention. There is violence and vehemence, an authentic setting (the Bargello prison), but the action is tamed, political passion devolves primarily upon Filippo Strozzi (rival banker to the Medici among a lot else) rather than upon the title-role, while the opera's dénouement - the off-stage murder of Alessandro de' Medici is for all those sentimental circumlocutions of the *melodramma romantico*.

For Pacini it was of course Luisa Strozzi who took most of his attention, as usual the primadonna soprano held all the cards. She emerged in the person of the stupendous Marianna Barbieri-Nini,<sup>lxxi</sup> paramount 'Cantante di Camera di S.A.I. e R. il Granduca di Toscana' who would be both the triumph of *Lorenzino de' Medici* and its principal stumbling-block for any successful revival. Pacini himself said of her: "*Questa eletta cantante, oltre ai doni di cui fu prodiga natura, concendendole una voce che niun mi*

*ricorda, flessibile, toccante nelle corde medie, ed estesa, possedeva tale maestria (acquisitata col perenne studio) da farla a buon diritto proclamare una gemma del Teatro italiano.*"<sup>lxxii</sup> Rival sopranos found her impossible to follow. In the opinion of one of them, Caterina Hayez <sup>lxxiii</sup> "To sing this opera you need an extraordinarily powerful voice such as the Signora Barbieri can boast, but I, instead of force, have a graceful timbre, as you know very well." (Letter to Alessandro Lanari 27 October 1847). It was a refusal many other sopranos would subsequently be obliged to echo. The rest of the cast of *Lorenzino de' Medici* at La Fenice on 4 March 1845 was relatively restrained in spite of its glorious heroine, Filippo Strozzi was sung by Sebastiano Ronconi and not by his more famous brother; Alessandro was sung by the basso profondo Giuseppe Miral; and Lorenzino was created by the modest Andrea Castellan.<sup>lxxiv</sup> Though *Lorenzino de' Medici* had a freezing début, Donizetti who had passed through Venice reported: "La neve, la neve...inverno - cosi rigido che interpidisce il genio in certi mesi ... anche Pacini fece tre quarti di fiasco" [Note the "anche" Pacini] (Letter to Teodoro Cottrau 19 March 1845<sup>lxxv</sup>). Semi-freddo, indeed, not a semi-fiasco, with nine performances to its credit, and ending the icy carnevale, *Lorenzino de' Medici* was soon to inflame imagination throughout Italy and abroad.

Pacini's characteristic response to the challenge of Verdi was to write absolutely tremendous arias. He had confronted Bellini with cantilena,<sup>lxxvi</sup> stood-up to Donizetti with concertati, but as the hue and cry of the *bussetano* became really strident behind him gathered-up all his vocal skills to invest his plots with solos to kill. Marianna Barbieri-Nini's cavatina 'Povero cor!' which opens the second part of Act 1 is perhaps unique in Pacini's oeuvre in that not only is it almost superhuman - one of the most arduous arias ever to confront a trembling soprano taking the stage - but remained more or less intact throughout a long series of revivals uncharacteristically sticking to its steeplechase of vocal hurdles even into the major Neapolitan revision of 1858. Clearly it was a Pacinian lynchpin despite the nightmare challenge it proved for a whole generation of *primedonne* to come. Then she has a second huge aria in Act 2. Both Alessandro and Filippo have mammoth vocal stunts, most of them *con coro* (Filippo even keeping his coro with him in prison!) but these monumental solos, the very antithesis, it would seem, of the urgent dramatic propulsion favoured by his great antagonist are not in fact backward-looking or anticlimactic, instead they anticipate a fin-de-siècle model - the artist alone on stage - cynosure of all eyes and ears engulfed

in a technicolour surge of unrestrained lyricism to such an extent that it is almost impossible to hear them without rediscovering the full-throated phonograph scratching of a Battistini or a Caruso of a very different world to come.

A similar pre-echo applies to Lorenzino's huge *Scena ed aria* that begins Act II, an epitome aria of Pacini's maturity, subsequently fitted-out with no less than three different *cabalette*. After its Venetian debut *Lorenzino de' Medici* went on to a strenuous reception almost everywhere - both with and without its formidable primadonna and with and without cuts. At Trieste on 14 February 1846 Anna De La Grange had a huge success as Luisa with Luigi Mei as Lorenzino, a performance made memorable by the fact that it was mounted by Luigi Ricci whose wife Ludmilla Stolz ("Liddy") had been recruited to sing the seconda donna role of Assunta. The capricious Verdian primadonna Sofia Cruvelli sang Luisa at Rovigo in 1847. Here and there the assassination of a Florentine ruler proved too much for the local censors and the opera ended with Luisa's suicide instead (as at Reggio Emilia in 1845), a cut Pacini accepted philosophically. But many unclouded successes followed during the 1846-7 season, Pacini notes with pride that *Lorenzino de' Medici* was staged with such furore at the Teatro Pergolesi of Jesi that a bust of him was put in the foyer of the theatre (it seems not to have survived)

Some thirty initial revivals are recorded, many with drastically modified settings, changes of title, personaggi and plot: Rome heard the opera in 1854 with the title of *Luisa Velasco* and in three acts with Barbieri-Nini as its star; for a nervous pre-Risorgimento Florence in 1857 it was retitled *Elisa Velasco*.<sup>lxxvii</sup> An 1858 re-edition as *Rolandino de' Torrismondi* in Naples (with a text jointly by Domenico Bolognese and Pacini himself with many changes to the music)<sup>lxxviii</sup> had the curious side-effect of ensuring the revival of the opera in its original form elsewhere: at La Scala on 22 October 1959 *Lorenzino de' Medici* made a belated debut (Cambiasi gives it 'buono') with Giacinto Ghislanzoni as Lorenzino, Giovanni Corsi as Filippo and Elisa Galli as Luisa, the latter clearly rejoicing in her freakish vocal range as only two or three weeks before she had sung Gilda in *Rigoletto* - scarcely a Barbieri-Nini role! This La Scala version offered yet another replacement cabaletta for Lorenzino's Act 2 aria. There followed similar revivals at Vienna and Barcelona that same year (this last with Barbieri-Nini, still singing Luisa after almost fifteen years in the role - something she neither attempted or proposed for her historic Lady Macbeth) as well as many others in

the 1860's. According to Neapolitan sources the *Rolandino de'Torrismondi* version had revivals too: at Chieti in 1868, and another as late as 1899.

The second partner of the triumvirate, *Bondelmonte*, with its libretto by Cammarano staged at La Pergola on 18 June 1845 was no less momentous an offering. A larger-than-life epic unlikely ever to have attracted Verdi, sprawling and extravagant, replete with a plethora of outrageous climaxes, full of frightful imprecations and uncontrolled animosities enshrining a number of the well-worn themes dear to its librettist: an interrupted wedding; insanity; and a painfully sanguinary final curtain in which the soprano *primadonna* dabbling in the blood of her murdered lover shrieks 'Or...sei pago...disumano' to her psychopathic brother and then dies in his arms, echoing *Lucia*. Just as its "target" (Donizetti of course<sup>lxxxix</sup>) was less clearly defined, *Bondelmonte* was markedly less critical in its overall intentions - despite its gore and mayhem. It had a much longer genesis: as early as 1833 Alessandro Lanari had been instrumental in persuading Felice Romani *not* to write a *Bondelmonte* for the Bergamasc - a factor all the more ironic in that Donizetti's forbidden *Maria Stuarda* should have re-emerged briefly in Naples under the title of *Buondelmonte* the following year. For Pacini, Lanari had retracted his earlier ukase and proposed it for confrontational purposes. Its complete libretto had been on Pacini's desk much longer than the previous opera and its argument even more a pertinent to its place of debut: the celebrity Bondelmonte, as recorded by Dante<sup>lxxx</sup> all in white and riding a white horse, had been cut-down on the Ponte Vecchio in broad daylight after jilting a daughter of the arrogant Amedei in 1215. It seems that Pacini relished this one-man-between-two-women rather more than *Lorenzino* and considered it had better verse as was certainly the case; in contrast with *Lorenzino* having taken even more care with its finishing was not inclined to tinker with it subsequently in revivals.

There was a remarkable input of quality items in the music of *Bondelmonte*, a whole series of *brani staccati* were regarded as momentous. The *Sinfonia* (an integral part of the score and not an after-thought); the *terzetto finale* of the Parte Prima 'Dell'ingrato all'alma'; the duet for the two men in the Parte Seconda and the amazing finale to this section; *Bondelmonte's* aria in Parte Terza 'Scendea la notte' and its cabaletta 'Ah! quant'ella seppe amarmi'; above all Beatrice's horrendous *scena finale*.

*Bondelmonte's* trajectory began in triumph at La Pergola: because it remained the

property of the composer (whatever it says in the printed libretti) it was not immediately toured round the Lanari empire but took off on its own volition - more than doubling the revivals of *Lorenzino* and interpreted by almost every major artist of the day. The role of Beatrice was subsequently sung by Fanny Salvini-Donatelli (at Bologna, Faenza, Ferrara, Milan, Reggio Emilia and Venice), Marianna Barbieri-Nini sang the same role in no less than fifteen productions (including four revivals in Spain), the role was also sung by Teresa Brambilla, Isabella Galletti-Gianoli and Clelia Forti (who had sung Isaura at the *prima* – this latter performance at Catania on 20 November 1852 must have given Pacini great pleasure as it also included his own baritone nephew Pietro Giorgi-Pacini as Amedei). Singers in the title role included Emilio Naudin, Settimio Malvezzi, Lodovico Graziani and Carlo Miraglia; Amedei's included Sebastiano Ronconi, Filippo Colini, Felice Varesi and Filippo Coletti. Once it had run through most of western Europe it had staging's in Argentina, Uruguay, Greece, Mexico and then Russia and outliving *Lorenzino* by almost a decade.<sup>lxxxix</sup>

It is surprising that *Bondelmonte* did not reach the twentieth century. But operas of this quality, like its hero - did not die a natural death, they were squeezed out of the repertoire by force.

As for the third score of the triumvirate, *Stella di Napoli* put Cammarano in a terrible quandary, indeed not very far from panic. The journal *La Fama* summed-up its reception at the S.Carlo: “*Se questo non è un trionfo compiuto, non sapremmo a qual successo debbasi dare titolo somigliante.*”<sup>lxxxix</sup>

The poet had given the composer an ultimatum, he could have either the libretto of *Orazi e Curiazi* or of *Stella*. With Mercadante waiting for Pacini to make up his mind Cammarano made his own opinion clear: his letter of pained reproach to Giovanni Pacini is dated 5 September 1845:

“...I hoped that all your unfortunate prejudice against the plot [*Orazi*] had vanished, but your silence has led me to suspect the opposite... with one bold stroke we can put everything to rights. *Stella di Napoli*, which so much appealed to you, serves as my excuse: when you regretted having left me to choose between *Stella* and *Orazi*, you wanted to return to *Stella*, but I could not, because I had not yet then overcome the obstacles which the role of the father put before me. Afterwards, while versifying *Orazi*, my thoughts turned every now and again to the beloved *Stella*, and these obstacles fell away, and now I can undertake the poetry. It is late, you'll tell me; no, it is not late when two men fervently desire something, one of them daring to want a great success, the other being Pacini, strong in the inexhaustible power of his genius.”<sup>lxxxix</sup>

Late indeed it was, but *Stella di Napoli*, with Pacini's music, would open at the S. Carlo – the maestro's terrible scribble deciphered, parts prepared, sets painted and the opera fully rehearsed making a momentous début on that stage on 11 December 1845 when the plot had been settled only twelve weeks before!

This innocent seeming missive, however, opens an incredible can of worms. Why should the poet have been so upset? We read of “*obstacles*”: of Pacini's resistance to *Orazi* - a tremendous neo-classical *farrago* eminently worthy of his *Pompei* (and upon which Mercadante pounced with glee<sup>lxxxiv</sup>) We hear too of his uncharacteristic insistence upon *Stella*... and on nothing but *Stella*.

Why, exactly, did this subject “*so much appeal*” to the sig. maestro *cavaliere* Giovanni Pacini?

The explanation is not without comedy. Or mischief. The argument of *Stella di Napoli* was based on the very same play that had given birth to Mercadante's only recognised masterpiece, *Il giuramento*, and was to be played under his nose on the supreme stage in Mercadante's fief of Naples!

Cammarano knew that he would have to be very clever if he was not find himself in the same position as Piave – harried by the operatic dogs of war. The source in question was none other than Victor Hugo's play ‘Angelo, tyran de Padoue’ first staged in Paris in 1827. A much later Ponchiellian distribution based on this same source helps identify the roles in their Pacinian guise: Stella is *La Gioconda*; Marta is *La Cieca*; Olimpia d'Acri is *Laura*; Armando is *Enzio* and D'Aubigni is *Alvise Mocenigo*. In Pacini's *Stella di Napoli* these roles would be sung with exactly the same voices that Amilcare Ponchielli chose so memorably. Even more significantly perhaps, Cammarano's dilemma - as he makes clear in the letter above - (“*the role of the father*”) parallels the identical dilemma of Boito for *his* composer: how to articulate the *causus-belli* (how to turn the wretch, spy and seducer that would in *La gioconda* be *Barnaba*) into the heroic Gianni da Capua?

Cammarano applied himself to the making of red-herrings; Gaetano Rossi's convoluted text for *Il giuramento* was of great assistance (even repeated hearings do not make Mercadante's opera much more than obscure) he further obfuscated the *ugolian* chronology<sup>lxxxv</sup> throwing in a few local landmarks of his own, upstaging Rossi (and Boito). he bent his site to Calabria and a historical paraphrase thus cleverly pulling

wool over the eyes of the Mercadantian lobby in the S. Carlo.

But as a result, the motivation of *Stella di Napoli* is thoroughly improbable yet offers an unexpected foretaste of operatic *chiaroscuro* to come: plunged in Aragonese gloom, despairing, sinister, with a violence and unmanly intimations of *Il trovatore* yet to emerge, *Stella di Napoli* would be heavily dependent on gypsies, prophesy, prisons and sacrifice.

Timing was the issue. Once they agreed to go ahead the actual forging of *Stella di Napoli* set out at an unimaginable pace, Pacini had arrived in Naples early in September<sup>lxxxvi</sup> and got to work immediately; on 10 October 1845 he wrote to Cammarano:

“...vi aspetto domani mattina alle ore 12 per rivedere la Stella, so tratta di cambiare alcune parole. Tutto il resto non ammette eccezione, Laus Deo. Avete pensato al vostro Pacini?”<sup>lxxxvii</sup>

To have been able to forget the maestro might have been difficult. With the role of Gianni da Capua to his satisfaction the text was ready for a final submission to the censors on 6 November 1845 by which time most of the score had already been composed. The libretto was passed without a murmur; this notwithstanding Cammarano thought it prudent to supply a long prefacing *argomento* to the printed text in the libretto whose contents threw very little real light on the plot or the concerns of the censors but helped to muddy the waters usefully à propos its composer’s malicious intentions and the dogs of war...

With such a traumatic genesis and even better received on 11 December 1845 than its two predecessors in the triumvirate, *Stella di Napoli* insolently called upon all the exceptional vocal resources of the city, with Eugenia Tadolini in the title-role, Gaetano Fraschini as Armando, Eloisa Buccini as Olimpia d’Acri and Filippo Coletti as Gianni it had twenty-six performances extending into 1846. With its chain of deft coups lavish with instrumental obbligati even Pacini’s severest critics found themselves obliged to concede that *Stella* “racchiude alcuni brani assai pregevoli per *fattura e melodia*” together with a momentum, freshness and vitality that took the S. Carlo habitués by surprise. *Stella*’s cavatina, for example, is a tour-de-force prefaced by a long arcane exchange, its andante affettuoso ‘Ove colui dimora’ graceful

and airy with its polished vocal definition that Eugenia Tadolini explored ecstatically; its cabaletta, ‘Ove t’aggiri o barbaro’, with a pounding rhythmic pulse and terminal whiplash of *fioriture* slyly caricaturing the Verdian manner and the obvious intention of putting *Alzira* (its Verdian rival in Naples <sup>lxxxviii</sup>) in the shade.

*Stella di Napoli* leans quite heavily on deliberate emulation - not all of it malicious, some of it entrancing. It was reported that *Stella*’s tunes were whistled in the streets for a whole season. As a result of its fraught genesis Cammarano’s text is perhaps its weakest point - a rag-bag of circumlocutions with an ending no more convincing than that of his *Alzira* - it made many problems for its composer, but Pacini - at the very height of his confidence now - no longer *sorpassato* - exceeded himself stupendously with this score.

Utterly demanding, in revival it seldom achieved optimum results after its brilliant *prima*, the standards of virtuosity it required at all costs becoming harder and harder to accomplish as the mid-century approached. *Stella di Napoli* did have a dozen or so revivals in Italy and two or three abroad but never with the same *éclat*; Isabella Galletti-Gianoli twice made a stab at it in Rome in 1858 when it was well-praised though the supporting cast was incapable of fulfilling the maestro’s demands.

The merits of *Stella di Napoli* had been noted in Milan. What Mercadante thought of it has not been recorded. Whatever glee Pacini may have felt he kept to himself. Ricordi purchased the score and impeded its revival so that Verdi could persuade himself it did not exist. <sup>lxxxix</sup>

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i Pacini op cit 81

ii Including not just *L’ultimo giorno di Pompei*, but also *Alessandro nell’Indie*, *Gli arabi nelle Gallie* and *Niobe* among other Neapolitan *ultimi giorni*

iii A far from exhaustive list of his didactic writings includes the following:

1. *Cenni storica sulla musica e trattato di contrapunto compendiatosi dal cav. Giovanni Pacini, maestro di camera e cappella (1834), reprinted 1864*
2. *Sulla originalità della musica melodrammatica italiana del secolo XVIII; ragionamento (1841)*
3. *Corso teorico-pratico di lezioni di armonia (1845)*
4. *Principi elementari col metodo del meloplasto (1849)*
5. *Memorie sul migliore indirizzo degli studi musicali (1863)*
6. *Progetto per i giovani compositori (1863)*

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7. *Considerazioni sulla musica e sui miglior indirizzo da darsi agli studi musicali* (1864)

(His *Corso teorico-pratico* (34pp of lessons in Harmony) for use of his Lucca students was published by Ricordi. His *Principi elementari di musica* was published by the Tipografia Baroni of Lucca in 1849 as indicated above and not at the time of his Viareggio School as he implies in his *Memorie artistiche*. Some of the annual *discorsi* he was in the habit of delivering to his pupils were also published. His *Principi elementari col metodo del meloplasto* was a domestication of the theories of the mathematician Pierre Galin (1786-1821) *Méthode du Méloplaste pour l'enseignement de la musique* (Paris 1824) and Emilio Chev  (1804-1864) with, as a fundamental principle, the use of numbers instead of notes as an educational tool)

<sup>iv</sup> Antonio Piazza (1794-1872). Cfr Alexander Weatherson *Malibran recalled (Harps and tears) The Malibran Memorial Cantata of 1837* [in] Donizetti Society Newsletter 128 (June 2016), 11-20. Pacini's is the opening vocal section (following a *sinfonia* by Donizetti); it is clear that only a very abbreviated version of Pacini's *Introduzione e quintetto, recitativo e stretta* in fact reached performance, almost certainly due to its indecipherability and length, the autograph manuscript in the Ricordi Archive is barely legible. If the printed vocal score is to be taken as a guide, in performance all the very brilliant and demanding orchestral *Introduzione* was omitted at La Scala, it opened after eight bars of a rising phrase marked *pianissimo* with the *coro di donne* "Gitiamo narcissi mortelle", the quintetto seems to have been intact with some very elaborate and testing singing for the two soprani (Benedetta Colleoni-Corti and Marietta Brambilla) followed by a very jaunty *stretta* "E della voga immagine" with its emphasis on male voices. This, as well as much of the music by the other contributors, would have needed very protracted rehearsal and the relative "failure" of the cantata was due, it can only be surmised, to its absence

<sup>v</sup> Adelmo Damerini *L'Istituto Musicale "Giovanni Pacini" di Lucca* (Firenze 1942), 74-5

<sup>vi</sup> The *Istituto Pacini* is now re-named after Luigi Boccherini by a grateful twentieth century Lucca. (this last - master of the salon string ensemble - was born in Lucca and made his career in Vienna, Paris and Madrid where he died)

<sup>vii</sup> The casting of these ephemeral operas may well have been similar to that of *Il convitato di pietra* of seven years before though uncertainly including his father - possibly they were performances in *honour* of Luigi. His mother Isabella took no part though still alive - a letter from Giovanni Pacini to his mother dated 24 December 1861 is conserved in the Fondo Ferrajoli of the Biblioteca Vaticana] The Belluomini villa at Viareggio, possessed its own tiny stage, of the three brothers, Giuseppe had been a former Tuscan Minister while Giacomo was not only the architect of Paolina Bonaparte's villa but was also a person delegated by her to inform Giovanni that the abandoned princess would "not answer any of his letters after their break." (There is no evidence to suggest that Pacini ever sent any). All three of these family performances had a hidden agenda relating to the past. Indeed *Elisa* may well have been a final offering to his father who died on 2 March 1837; Luigi Pacini had starred in Mayr's *Elisa* singing the role of Jonas and the opera represented an especially poignant souvenir for his son aged 14 who had made a precocious stage appearance in the tiny role of Germano alongside his Jonas at Bologna in 1810. Some fragments survive of both *Hermannstadt* and *Elisa*.

<sup>viii</sup> "Il trionfo della fede" was of course the sub title of *Gli arabi nelle Gallie!* In 1859 Pacini worked on the oratorio again, extending it instrumentally and dividing it into two parts. Cfr LIM Catalogue 56, 61-2 A markedly Christian theme dominated his music throughout this period, most notably emerging in his *la distruzione di Gerusalemme* with a libretto by

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Fioretti - an ominously apocalyptic ex-Oratorio staged in the grand-ducal capital of Firenze in June 1858

ix Cencio (Vincenzo) Jacovacci 1811-1881 longtime impresario of several of the most important theatres of Rome, well known for his committed support of many of those composers suffering a Verdian ukase

x Pacini op cit 7

xi In fact arriving on stage full of mystery, her hair in disorder, archi-dramatic in text, incongruously archi-brilliant in musical substance, and going through every possible mood swing before arriving at a predictable *cabaletta* of joy

xii Ferretti wrote an extraordinarily long and apologetic preface to his text: "*Parole storiche e apologetiche del verseggiatore*" full of a candour all too rare in theatre poets.

xiii In particular the *finale ultimo* of the opera which belongs to the tenor (Domenico Donzelli in the title role) and a bold step despite its predictable heroics  
'Voce di Gloria- vi parli in core/Per voi Vittoria - scintillerà'

xiv *Saffo* overwhelmed the repertoire at the San Carlo in this particular year.

xv Flauto, who had taken over the "*Società Impresaria*" at the S.Carlo was the almost indestructible publisher of libretti in Naples with several decades of presence in that city. Bartolomeo Merelli is also reputed (without much evidence) to have had a hand in the commissioning of *Saffo*

xvi John Black *The Italian romantic libretto - a study of Salvatore Cammarano* (Edinburgh 1984), 72

xvii Idem 74

xviii Pacini op cit 8i

xix In any comparison with other operas of that day - it is of note that Verdi wrote *Un giorno di regno* and Donizetti wrote *La Favorite* in 1840 - In contrast Pacini's opera would appear to be on another planet

xx Probably the most convincing evidence of such a cross-fertilisation between the primo Ottocento at its apex, as here, and of verismo at its apogee, comes from the memorable performance of Eugenia Burzio in the revival of *Saffo* at La Scala on 29 January 1911. Her singing of the title-role in Pacini's opera, extraordinary for its force and concentrated emotion and sounding fully contemporary, survives on disc as an amazing witness to the enduring relevance of this music.

xxi A view reflected by its modern *revisore* Rubino Profeta after the 1967 revival at the S.Carlo of this opera, when he wrote in the review 'La Scala' (Milano 1967):

*"A noi bastera ricordare come alcune pagine - quali il duetto Saffo-Climene, quello Saffo-Faone, e le "arie" rispettive dei quattro protagonisti - deliziarono per lunghi anni i nostri nonni, che non disdegnarono di porre Giovanni Pacini sullo stesso piedistallo degli idoli piu famosi dell'Ottocento operistico."*

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xxii Francilla del Castillo Pixis-Göhringer was the adopted daughter of the German pianist Johann Peter Pixis and no beginner as she had been given lessons by Rossini as well as by Joséphine Fodor and Henriette Sontag. She already had a Parisian *Semiramide* to her credit alongside Grisi and Tamburini. She retired from the stage, however, painfully early after her marriage in 1845.

xxiii Cited by Jarro (pseud. G.Piccini) [in] *Memorie d'un impresario fiorentino* (Florence 1892), 156. Letter written to Alessandro Lanari of 28 January 1842. Despite the fact that Strepponi was later (in her last role of all as “Signora Verdi”) to attempt to expunge both Pacini and his *Saffo* from her memory she wrote to Lanari in this instance to reconcile the latter with the composer as they had not been on good terms in recent months. According to her account *Saffo* was received with such enthusiasm at the Carlo Felice that not only was every member of the cast obliged to sing an encore at the end of the opera, but, on the evening in question, the stuntman who had stood in for her on her terminal leap from the Leucade, was obliged to do his jump again at the insistent demand of the audience!

xxiv It is to most probable that for reasons unknown (probably illness) Lillo had not paid for this libretto - thus Cammarano made it available to other composers; Pacini was well known to be punctilious in paying his librettists. The harried but impoverished librettist had a large family and was overcome by debts so naturally he was eager and willing to defend Pacini's interests in Naples and elsewhere

xxv Black op cit 75-76

xxvi Donizetti's unfinished *Le Duc d'Albe* was later to be reset to an Italian text with its music augmented by Matteo Salvi and others to appear in 1882 as *Il duca d'Alba*. Its argument differs from that set by Pacini.

xxvii Piave had written, tentatively, a *Don Marzio* for the Venetian composer Samuele Levi that was never set to music.

xxviii From as early as 25 April 1841 (in a letter to the *marchesa* Martellini) [Cfr Richard Macnutt Quarto 17] as well as in similar missives to the *Presidenza*, Pacini had made rude remarks about Fanny Goldberg, who, he claimed “*is not a singer capable of taking the part of Saffo*” and trying to replace her with Francilla Pixis in both operas. In response to which he was assured that La Goldberg had not been engaged and he happily communicated this good news to the *marchesa*. In the event Pixis never sang at La Fenice, in his *Memorie* the composer goes out of his way to describe La Goldberg as “*bella e brava*,” the twenty performances of *Saffo* in which she sang with distinction quite outweighing the disappointment of the five she modestly received in his *Il duca d'Alba*. Cfr Pacini op cit 86.

xxix It was in the wake of an opera by a virtual beginner whose text, to Pacini's fury Peruzzini had managed to complete. This opera was *Pietro Candiano IV* by Giovanni Battista Ferrari who died tragically not long after. Pacini made light of Peruzzini's inconsistency and praises the youthful maestro in his memoirs but was seriously annoyed at the time

xxx Pacini had corrected the musical and textual imbalance to some extent, notably with a rewritten *stretta* to the Act I *duetto* between Margarita and the Duca and a revised orchestration but despite his efforts (and his personal supervision of the Naples production) the score cannot be said to have come together in either version. For Piave, however, this essay in the *melodramma romantico* at its peak may have initiated a taste for strong drama. *Il duca d'Alba* was nonetheless published in vocal score so it cannot be accounted a failure.

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xxxvi The Paris press, upon the staging of *La fidanzata corsa* in that city described it as a “*facheuse adaptation de Colomba*.” But the opera is in no way based on this work by Mérimée, almost certainly the reviewer was confusing ‘Colomba’ with Mérimée’s ‘Mateo Falcone’ of 1829 which has a trifling resemblance - but the error has been repeated *ad nauseam* ever since. Pacini’s steely melodrama had a much-less prestigious source so confusion and pretence were to be expected in Paris. The reviews began promisingly: “*Nous avons une prédilection bien prononcée pour la musique italiennne, et nous étions prévenus en faveur de la musique de Pacini, a qui l’on doit quelques œuvres distinguées*” they soon took up the more normal Parisian vein: “*La Fidanzata corsa ne contient, en effet, que deux morceaux dignes d’être cités, un chœur et un duo ...le livret est un des plus détestables que les poètes italiens aient produit depuis longues années*” (Ducange was thus deprived of his birthright). Going on to complain that, as this score did not contain any obvious “*morceaux-de-salon*” (unlike, one can only presume, the salon inspired works of Berlioz or the unhappy Wagner), such an opera was not likely to *naturalise itself in France*. An interesting remark but in no way complimentary to the musical tastes either of the reviewer or his *concittadini*. (Pacini had made some slight changes to the text, and several transpositions for this Paris version of the score mostly for Fanny Tacchinardi-Persiani’s Rosa)

xxxvii Black op cit 79

xxxviii Pacini op cit 84

xxxix In this score he uses Corsican guitars

xl Ibid

xli Cfr Thomas G.Kaufman *Verdi and his major contemporaries* (New York and London 1990), 128-130

xlii It continues to be a problem, as a tentative for revival at the Festival of Radio France Montpellier –Languedoc-Roussillon in 2001 failed on precisely this issue.

xliiii With a decor by Fausto Nicolini, *La fidanzata corsa* (with Luigia Bendazzi as Rosa, Giorgio Stigelli as Alberto Doria, Remigio Bertolini as Ettore, and Luigi Colonnese as Piero Zampardi), conducted by Nicola De Giosa, had thirteen performances; *Il trovatore*, which preceded it, had five performances. Pacini was in the audience to see his former pupil Marco Arati singing the role of Guido Tobianchi which he had created two decades earlier.

xliiii All plots based upon Victor Hugo were frowned upon in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies

xliv Cfr Jeremy Commons *Giovanni Pacini and “Maria Tudor”* [in] *Donizetti Society Journal* 6 (London 1988), 57-92. Tarantini later became renowned for his highly dramatic eloquence in the courtroom.

xlv Queen Mary I (“*Bloody Mary*”) is represented as a conventional lovelorn English Queen in the opera enamored of an unsuitable adventurer from whose clutches she is extracted by a patriotic courtier, in this instance, by an earlier member of the family of Sir Winston Churchill! Tarantini was obliged to sanitise Hugo’s (already nonsensical) original of 1833 in order not to offend his fellow Italians and renamed the heartless lover Fabiano Fabiani (a would-be Concino Concini) sung by Ivanoff, giving him the identity of Riccardo Fenimore a Scottish parvenu.

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- xlii A formula that had been essayed as early as 1833 in his *Gli Elvesj*
- xliii He may even have been trying to lay the ghost of *Carlo di Borgogna* as some of the duets recall those of this opera - a work that had its fateful *prima* in the year of Bellini's death
- xliv This after all, is what he did with *Gli arabi nelle Gallie* with its endless supply of extra music
- xliv 26 December 1843. The Samoyloff factor still militated against a Pacini success in Milan and the cast was modest indeed. Cambiasi said "Cattivo"
- xlvi Teatro Carlo Felice, Genoa 1 February 1844. Apart from the two ladies the production was scandalous, the long climactic duet between Maria and Clotilde to the sound of the funeral march - the highest point of Act II Sc.XI if not the whole opera - immediately before the Queen hears the drum-roll announcing the decapitation of Fenimore, had simply been cut. (A performance indeed that "*rarely responded to the words or music*" of the composer!)
- xlvii Opera Rara's recording of *Maria regina d'Inghilterra* of 1998 with a cast of Nelly Miricioiu as Maria, Bruce Ford as Fenimore, Mary Plazas as Clotilde and Alastair Miles as Gualtiero Churchill has proved a milestone in Pacinian rediscovery. In its wake the opera has been put forward for further revival despite the hurdles this particular score invariably presents.
- xlviii *Messa di Requiem* for soprano, contralto, tenor bass and orchestra (composed 1843-4) Pl. No 14371-9
- xlix Ottavio Tiby *Il real teatro Carolino e L'ottocento musicale palermitano* (Firenze 1957), 190
- <sup>1</sup> For the simple reason that in most instances the original text was supplied with new music, a change that is undetectable in printed libretti.
- li *Cfr* Alexander Weatherson *Il maestro delle cabalette* [in] notes for the Arkadia recording of *Medea* AK 146-2 (1994)
- lii Teatro Carolino, Palermo 28 October 1843
- liii Tiby op cit 191
- liv (Palermo) "*nella cui Villa Reale si sta innalzando all'illustre maestro un busto in marmo da collocarsi appo quello di Bellini...*"  
Corriere delle Dame No.17 23 March 1843
- lv The vividly compelling performance of Adelaide Cortesi-Servadio (1828-1889) in this opera of Pacini carried it forward into the age of Verdi (who paid close attention to its career, even requesting a manuscript copy of the *entrata* of the primadonna, this copy, with Verdi's signature, is conserved in the library of the Padua Conservatorio). The style of the cabaletta to this *entrata* is Verdian: who actually initiated the characteristic Verdian cabaletta remains to be determined.
- lvi He may also have composed an oratorio *Il giudizio universale* at Palermo *in his spare time!* [Quadorno dell'Istituto verdiano 5 (Milan 1988), 102 ] but care should be taken that the work

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is not confused with Pietro Raimondi's oratorio of this title first performed at Palermo in 1844 (pub. Lucca c1845)

lvii The plot bears some slight resemblance to that of *Il saltimbanco* (1858) which would be one of his very last triumphs.

lviii It was based on a French vaudeville by Michel and Fontaine, *Louissette, ou La Chanteuse des rues* of 1840, as a consequence of which - for a proposed French revival for which Pacini may have supplied some new music - it was deemed prudent that *Louissetta* should be renamed "*Luisella*". This gave rise to confusion later. A few items of the music of *Louissetta* were published in Paris as from "*Luisella de Pacini*"; as such Casali, Dassori and notably Grove VI all list *Louissetta o La cantatrice del molo* erroneously as "*Luisella o La cantatrice del molo*". To add to this confusion, Francesco Lucca - getting his copy from an undisclosed French source (possibly from Pacini himself?) - published several items in Italy as from "*Luisella*".

lix Corriere delle Dame No.17 op cit (23 March 1843) p.133

lx Verdi's *Alzira* with a libretto by Cammarano would be staged at the S.Carlo on 12 August 1845

lxi Giacomo Sacchero (1815-1875)

lxii Federico Ricci's *Corrado di Altamura* had been received with great praise at La Scala on 16 November 1841. Cambiasi "Ottimo"

lxiii Montenegro was a tardy replacement for Teresa De-Giuli Borsi who had been originally contracted, alas she had intonation problems and memory lapses which Pacini shrugged aside blithely merely remarking that "*Le stonazioni non furono poche*" and selecting some of the opera for praise "*malgrado ancora la mancanza di memoria per parte della nuova arrivata.*"

lxiv The *scena*, an elaborate set-piece, proved a favorite *cavallo di battaglia* for Nicola Ivanoff who even interpolated it into Donizetti's *Caterina Cornaro* when this opera was revived at last successfully at Parma on 6 February 1845 to Donizetti's great joy (though it is not known if he was ever told of Ivanoff's Pacinian *pezzo da baule!*)

lxv Pacini op cit 93.

lxvi Enrico Tamberlick (1820-1889)

lxvii Cammarano began work on *Bondelmonte* immediately - an opera whose Florentine setting was especially appropriate for a staging at La Pergola, the permanently hard-up poet was even paid for his text in advance - as early as 24 August 1843 (Cfr Black op cit 87). No less than three operas passed through Pacini's hands (*Medea; Louissetta; L'ebrea*) before he could begin composition in earnest and *Lorenzino de' Medici* was staged in Venice in Pacini's presence before *Bondelmonte* could receive its final polish.

lxviii It is this period - the early 1850's - that he renounced the services of Ricordi and other publishers to become his own agent, writing and negotiating his own contracts, thus, while his *Lorenzino de' Medici* was handed-over to Alessandro Lanari who had commissioned it his *Bondelmonte* he kept to himself. The questionable wisdom of all this will be apparent in due course

lxix Giuseppe Verdi *Copialettere* 426 (trans.Charles Osborne). Not only had the *bussetino* laid

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claim to Piave but insisted upon his right to possess the best libretti that came from his hand. That Pacini had made the first move cannot be doubted; in Verdi's list of *Argomenti d'opere* begun in March 1844 which lists the subjects suitable for him in the coming period there is no mention of "Lorenzino de' Medici" it only manifests itself when Verdi - in discussion with the poet or with Lanari's son - Verdi had contracts with Antonio Lanari, had been told of Pacini's choice of plot and decided it would be more suitable for himself.

The graciously conceded permission to write for Pacini, and the magnanimous "*Act in your own interests*" rings painfully false in view of the following: Antonio Lanari did not obtain the lease of the Teatro Argentina in Rome for which house Verdi had s *scrittura* until April 1844. Verdi wrote on 18 April 1844 for permission to write a "Lorenzino de' Medici" which the censors refused

lxx Francesco Maria Piave, letter to Alessandro Lanari of 16 October 1844

lxxi Marianna Barbieri-Nini (1820-1887)

lxxii Pacini op cit 96

lxxiii Catherine Hayes (1818-1861)

lxxiv Andrea Castellan was not wholly to the taste of the composer so it seems, his name was willfully omitted by the maestro in his memoirs who mentions only Giacomo Roppa, Verdi's first Jacopo Foscari a year earlier, who sang the role of Lorenzino many times most notably vis-à-vis la Barbieri Nini, at Florence later in 1845, at Forlì and Reggio too that same year, at Padiue in 1847 and Trieste in 1848.

lxxv Zavadini op cit 625 but Donizetti was passing-on information he had received from a hostile source in Venice.

lxxvi Pacini's success in Venice re-established his social status in that city, a factor of some importance in the coming decade. Even to the extent of finally quashing the shadow of Bellini. On 8 March 1845, for example, he wrote two album-items in Venice: the first for "Mlle Barbieri "(ie Marianna Barbieri-Nini); the second for Giovanni-Battista Perucchini, Bellini's longtime champion (the latter album-item was a *Kyrie* perhaps intended as a prayer that the unhappy past be buried for good)

lxxvii *Elisa Velasco* saw the setting mutated to a less politically-sensitive fifteenth-century Spain: Lorenzino now rechristened Vellido Dolfos, Alessandro as Don Sancio, Filippo as Fernando Velasco (sometimes Valasco) and his daughter as Elisa, of course. Also a Donna Uraca degli Alcares (Assunta), Diego and Gomez. The libretto by Piave was more-or-less unchanged - only the roles and their off-stage problems. This hispanified version (with Pacini's blessing) had a wide distribution – actually opening the carnival season at Terni in 1853, then appearing at Florence and Pisa in 1857, and at Bergamo in 1859. [The Bergamo revival could especially be said to have had a *Verdian* pedigree: with Elisa Galli - a very resourceful patriot - in the title role outfacing a line of Austrian officials in the front row at the Teatro Sociale, the intrepid soprano '*con foga appassionata e con malcelate intenzioni*' deliberately pointed the words of her electrifying Act 2 cabaletta

‘O fratelli, sorgete, sorgete,  
d’amistade la man vi porgete...’

with the result that the audience joined-in every evening. An indignant stand-up protest from one of the Austrian officers led finally to an excuse for a violent demonstration outside the theatre, sufficiently bloody for at least one of the insurgents to have to flee the country]. *Elisa*

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Velasco obtained huge plaudits from across the Atlantic [Cfr Dwight's *Journal of Music* (New York 1858). 395-6] It is clear that the correspondent had heard the revival of 26 December 1857 at the Teatro Pagliano in Florence with a cast of G. Ghirlanda-Tortolini as Elisa and Giuseppe Limberti as Vellido Dolfos. The reviewer, pen-name "Trovator", goes on to make very unflattering comparisons between Verdi's *I Lombardi* and the opera of Pacini: "...this *Lombardi* is most decidedly what I should call a brown sugar opera :- that is, there is a constant striving after effect, and a vehemence of noise, and a repeated bolstering up of puny melodies by resorting to effects of brass, of bands behind the scenes, that have a corresponding effect on the ear to that of very sweet, brown second quality sugar on the palate...but Elisa Velasco has been withdrawn to make room for *I Lombardi*, and Pacini is forced to yield before Verdi. It must be said that the latter shines but poorly in comparison."

lxxviii *Rolandino de'Torresmondi* had been refashioned into two acts ("quattro parti"); the text of the original had been much modified; there were four new arias; a duetto had been turned into a quartetto; there was yet another new cabaletta (written at the very last moment) for "Rolandino" and there was a new *finale primo*. The *scena ultima* had been abridged, it was now far more abrupt – Pacini's former expansiveness now much pruned as befitted the operatic climate of the 1850's. To pacify the censors, the setting of the opera had been retrograded from sixteenth-century Florence to thirteenth-century Belluno.

lxxix Donizetti's own "*Buondelmonte*" had been created in 1834 to replace his aborted *Maria Suarda* in Naples - employing the music written for the earlier opera: it had the briefest of stage exposure but some additional pieces in it were later to be salvaged

lxxx "*O Bondelonte, quanto mal fuggisti  
le nozze sue per gli altrui conforti!*"

lxxxix The last recorded performance of *Bondelmonte* seems to have been in 1885 (Teatro Carcano, Milan) Cfr Kaufman op cit 137-142

lxxxii *La Fama* (Milan) 29 January 1846. The review added that "neither Foscari nor Alzira was ever produced again after this *Stella paciniana*" a fact that will have been noted grimly in the Ricordi headquarters.

lxxxiii Black op cit 100

lxxxiv And turned into his one of his very best scores

lxxxv Irrespective of any Mercadantean clique in the S.Carlo, obfuscation was mandatory as all Hugo's plays were viewed with horror by the Neapolitan *censura* – his very name was anathema.

lxxxvi Soon after arrival he combined composition with attendance at the *VII Congresso degli scienziati italiani* to which he had been invited. It was the brainchild of the cultivated but feared *marchese* Nicola Santangelo, Minister of the Interior, who had selected the delegates from all branches of the arts and science. Inaugurated by Ferdinando II it went on for three weeks (20 September-5 October). It seems to have been a hotbed of political invective despite a grand ball and visits to the crater of Vesuvius. The Neapolitan view was to call the delegates "*scroscienzati*". What the composer felt about it he never bothered to disclose.

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lxxxvii *Cfr* Gallini catalogue Inverno 2006/7. Item No. 575 (the date and the opera have been misread)

lxxxviii *Alzira, prima* S.Carlo 12 August 1845

lxxxix In 1845 Ricordi published Pacini's *Corso teorico-pratico di lezioni d'armonia*, not disdaining a money-spinner unthreatening to its major protégé.