

## Chapter two

### *“L’alacrità prodigiosa”*

From now on he could hear his tunes whistled in the streets. The *Fiera del Santo* (St. Anthony of Padua) of 1818 saw him in that city following a commission in the wake of Pasta’s success in his much fêted *Adelaide*. His choice of plot emerged as another benchmark - dictated by a desire to find another vehicle for such a great singer and such great singing<sup>i</sup> *Atala*, a highly-emotional effusion of impeccable archi-romantic origins was intended to press his modish point home.<sup>ii</sup> But the opera’s overripe setting and resplendent cast went hardly any way to mitigate a clockwork adherence to convention on the part of its poet, Antonio Peracchi’s pedestrian delving into Chateaubriand’s exotic farrago broke no new ground whatsoever. All it did was confirm Pacini’s strengths: his fluent invention, his ease in gaining the ear of the house and a willingness to deluge his audience in a cascade of shameless virtuosity. The potential of the plot went for nothing. Though an ability to create a mood was in evidence throughout it seldom went beyond a series of promising *ritornelli*.

This notwithstanding *Atala* was a huge success with audiences at the Teatro Nuovo of Padua. The composer was able to claim that *Adelaide e Comingio* and *Atala* “*furono ammesse all’onoranza di riprodursi su tutti I teatri della nostra Penisola*”<sup>iii</sup> with only a slight exaggeration.

Alas, his *Atala* had followed Rossini’s *Elisabetta regina d’Inghilterra* in the cartello and its proximity seems to have upset Pacini’s reformist resolve by undermining his seedling romantic intentions : “...*per potenza di quell Mago che si chiamava, come dissi Rossini*” he confessed. Thus, despite a radical mindset *Atala* was merely a pause in an evolutionary progress. For two years he would shadow the *sommo pesarese* even if not quite as slavishly as his critics would have us believe.

This decision proved both prudent and timely. Towards the end of its run his father succeeded in opening the door of La Scala for him (by using a form of blackmail<sup>iv</sup>). Instant compliance being part of the package the enchanted offspring concocted a score on the spot: adapting music from the disreputable “Monti” farse, adding a fine overture and a clutch of new *arie* among which was the soon-to-be-famous cavatina ‘*Cara adorata immagine*’<sup>v</sup> and a brilliant finale. All of which *fritto-misto* was bent to a libretto supplied in haste by Felice Romani. The result was not less than sensational.

Fruit of paternal graft and musico/political expediency *Il barone di Dolsheim*, staged on 23 September 1818 went on to be performed forty-seven times. From the *Sinfonia* onwards the audience applauded everything. Like the *pesarese*, Pacini could make a *rifacimento* seem like new.

One thing *was* new. It was now that Pacini began to codify his *pezzi di bravura* to create a *cabaletta* template for all seasons and all *Stagioni* - with tic-toc rhythms and infectious syncopation, following convention to be sure but unmistakably his own thing, rocketing up and down like a roller-coaster, infinitely extendable and as challenging as possible vocally the maestro would be ready to exploit its blueprint for the rest of his circuit of the stage. From henceforth in Italy his name would be inseparable from its visceral excitement.

Romani, too, had achieved a comic breakthrough. This paragon of classical melodrama had masterminded a comic model true to his own tastes - a *bande-desinée* sequential *Il barone di Dolsheim* that reduced Frederick the Great of Prussia to legendary entertainment in parallel with a Peter the Great of Russia soon to follow - a remarkable pairing of Realpolitik monsters lowered to farce thus enabling Italian audiences to view political events *oltralpe* with an improbable good-humour.

Pacini discovered a light-hearted strain in this improvised score; the title-role sung by Giacomo Rubini (elder brother of the celebrated sibling<sup>vi</sup>); Violante Camporesi a favorite soprano and Luigi his father sang together perfectly irresistibly (Stendhal praised their “*duo superbe*”); the music was rushed into print and went round Italy instantly. Probably its most prestigious staging was at Trieste on 20 December 1819 with Giuditta Pasta once more heading the cast, with Luigi Sirletti, and Luigi Pacini; then at the San Carlo of Naples in 1821 with Giovanni Battista Rubini in the title role created by his big brother. Donizetti staged it at Palermo in 1825 (let down by a hopeless orchestra) and La Scala mounted it anew that same year with Joséphine De Méric as prima donna when it reappeared twenty more times. Abroad it collected new titles: “*Federico II re di Prussia*”; “*Il barone di Felcheim*” and “*La colpa emendata dal valore*” (in Germany one did not fool around with Frederick the Great). It had its feeblest revival of all in London at the King’s Theatre in the Haymarket on 22 January 1822.

Paradoxically the *enfant terrible* had achieved respectability with his scandalous music. Such a barefaced appropriation of Rossini’s delirious catalogue of foolery, mocking invention, and apparently limitless musical resource did him no harm at all -

unashamed parody (his own special *forte*) allowing him to side-step the slavish imitation that sank so many rivals. And there was one special boon. Following a wave of enthusiasm for his ‘Cara adorata immagine’ he set about writing operatic “hits” in response. This aria had been the first of many to find a place on every piano in Italy.

As if pursued Pacini rushed to Venice without taking a breath to fulfil a commission from the Teatro San Benedetto. Gaetano Rossi had offered him a perfectly zany libretto so excruciatingly funny that in some ways it could claim to be the most promising he had ever set to music, with verses of a rare distinction almost describable as “*serious opera semiseria*.” An incredibly inventive spoof to which he responded so urgently that his score was conceived entirely on his lap *en route*, *La sposa fedele* had a pungently picturesque setting sent-up with dilapidated castles, bosky groves, rivulets and gothick caverns in cardboard mountains (as in Act I, Sc. 13) - its poet mercilessly guying most of the precious ingredients of his own cherished *semi-seria* mode. Pacini’s music rose to the occasion. Mocking, modish, cunning and infinitely varied, delivered with such unblushing panache that few in the San Benedetto were able to resist the seduction of its fantastic propositions bolstered by utter recklessness.<sup>vii</sup>

On 14 January 1819 the audience found an opera as gay and compelling as any light-hearted score by any his predecessors at their comic apogee. There were extraordinarily varied vocal opportunities in *La sposa fedele* for everyone in the cast. One or two of the more memorable *pezzi* summed-up Pacini’s current eclectic mode: the tenor *aria con coro* ‘Si venite a me d’intorno’ is a good example,<sup>viii</sup> its recitative stilted and almost prosaic; its *cantabile* underpinned by rhythms borrowed unashamedly from Neapolitan popular song underscored by swooning-strings; the whole arriving at a concertato in crescendo of irresistibly infectious verve. No wonder Rossini took note of Pacini’s potential. And no wonder his rivals trembled. A revival at La Scala later that same year was nothing less than a *furore* for Violante Camporesi. With its brilliantly dead-pan décor by Sanquirico *La sposa fedele* was repeated seventeen times. For a revival at the Teatro Carignano in Turin in 1820<sup>ix</sup> Pacini wrote a new cavatina for Giuditta Pasta: this was ‘Lungi dal caro ben’ which featured in concert programmes to the end of the century. *La sposa fedele* circulated widely, printed extracts fluttered all over Europe transposed up and down for every kind of voice. It was the first of Pacini’s operas to appear in print in France (as an arrangement for flute and piano by Nicolas Charles Bochsa).<sup>x</sup>

Three months later he was on stage again. At La Scala once more and with yet another *bande dessinée* proposal - but this time with new music throughout. Its hero *Pietro il Grande* managing to combine Big Bad Wolf with Fairy Godmother at cross purposes with a *Magistrato* (Luigi Pacini) and pointed confrontations at every moment in the score. This *Il falegname di Livonia* proved also to be an unexpected milestone. Performed at La Scala on 12 April 1819 it was to be his first clash with Gaetano Donizetti whose *Pietro il grande, Kzar delle Russie* made an appearance eight months later at the Teatro San Samuele in Venice on 26 December 1819 with exactly the same argument.

In point of fact there was no comparison between the composers neither now nor later. Though they shared several plots they were never on the same wavelength. Pacini's riotous comedy went on to be performed into the 1830's<sup>xi</sup> and the two libretti were not comparable: Romani's perfectly fabulous text was sly, witty, and replete with a delirious literary fantasy, every character was a vignette of sorts with verses so apt that they could be savoured as well as sung. The opera's starring role (not *Pietro* but the *Magistrato*) was a *buffo* masterpiece at the very apex of the theatrical poet's art, hilarious, imbecile, with patter at a level of drivel so inspired that there was no moment for the audience even to draw breath. Though snobbish to excess and perfectly idiotic as purported history this *Cenerentola-in-trousers* had more than enough wit and ingenuity to keep the house on the edge of its seat to the last notes.

As was to be expected, Donizetti took a quite different view of the same story. His music too is witty but much less a slave to *brio*. His libretto more rambling and introspective and his roles such as those of *Madame Fritz* and the *Magistrato* in particular protracted almost to excess - his starring *buffo Magistrato* eked-out interminably as if well aware that he would have to live-up-to the challenge of Luigi Pacini. Donizetti's characters are less pointed, more ingratiating and more prone to sentimentality (which was never Pacini's *forte*). Though his poet, the ingenious *marchese* Gherardo Bevilacqua-Aldobrandini cannot be compared with Felice Romani he does make some good points (the duet between the *Magistrato* and the incognito Emperor after the latter has turned the tables by pulling rank is especially deft and invites a cunning setting by the Bergamasc). But Donizetti's score has not the same clarity nor quite the same finesse. Pacini's experience shows.<sup>xii</sup> And Bevilacqua's plot

is more earthbound, he short-circuits the theatrical fuse painfully at the end of Act I.

Donizetti's *Il falegname di Livonia*, however, to give it the title he preferred, marks a major step forward in the theatre of the day: his *Pietro* is no *deus-ex-machina*, this alone indicates a sea-change on the stage. Whereas the Bergamasc maestro is bent on a recognisable humanity in his opera the gilded grandiloquent post-Metastasian kitsch of the opera by Romani/Pacini [*'Oh generoso' 'Oh grande!'*] such as even then still engaged the great Rossini seems now out of date. Audiences had changed, the public had not the same deference. The power of rulers was up for bids. To this extent Donizetti emerges as a composer of a later generation than his rival -- despite the single year that lay between their dates of birth.

But Pacini's opera had a far more generous reception (Cambiasi gives it *Buonissimo*) and all sorts of great singers were to appear in it. It would also bear witness to a characteristic faible of its maestro: revision. As originally composed this opera did not offer a role for a *prima donna soprano*<sup>xiii</sup> unimaginable as it seems. At some unspecified date [after 1825] Pacini put the record straight and corrected its gender-specific priorities. A manuscript score in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France includes a *Caterina* expanded to a point where she now has the leading role in *Il falegname di Livonia*. She has a brand-new 'Gran scena ed aria' in Act II; she has enhanced participation in *duetti* and *terzetti* throughout, and takes charge of a completely transformed *quintetto* that becomes the pivot of the drama - the '*Quintetto ossia Aria di Caterina*' which now is the moment when she cuts everyone down to size - including her imperial husband.

It may have become feasible because Luigi Pacini was on the point of retiring from the stage and relinquishing his famous role. But it might equally have been due to a new mistress for the maestro!<sup>xiv</sup> At any event in its first form this Pacini comedy had many brilliant revivals: at Florence (1830); Genoa (1832); and Bologna (1832). At Naples (Teatro San Carlo 13 November 1823) with Giovanni-Battista Rubini as *Pietro* its ecstatic reception confirmed Pacini as Rossini's successor<sup>xv</sup> as *Direttore de' reali teatri* an honour he would endure impatiently until a welcome lyrical upheaval allowed him to escape.

The immediate impact of all this was operatic wear-and-tear. His constant travelling, scoring, rehearsing, placating singers, finding lodgings, finding copyists, searching out

new libretti and librettists, negotiating new contracts with an ever-widening circle of theatres, had, if only momentarily perhaps, taken its toll. Uncharacteristically he toyed with a *Gli Illinesi* and abandoned it semi-composed.<sup>xvi</sup>

And then a major musical change was under way in Italy: the supremacy of comedy in the opera house was on the wane. Once the only respite for hard-pressed audiences prey to war and invasion *opera seria* had returned to favour with the defeat of Napoleon – the *Restaurazione* urgently needing retro tales of glory to bolster the lost historical authenticity of their restored régimes. Together with barbaric foreign authors like Schiller, Walter Scott and Shakespeare with their medievalising phantasmagoria and troubadouresque nostalgia, historical escapism took hold anew of opera houses and librettists Italy-wide. Not one to fail to put his ear to the ground, Pacini was as early as any in coming to terms with all this. The next two operas were prophetic.

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Pacini insists that *La sacerdotessa d'Irminsul* was written in twenty-eight days and in 1817<sup>xvii</sup> in one of the more wayward statements in his memoirs. After half-a-lifetime he may be permitted a margin of error, no doubt he would have *preferred* this opera to have been composed earlier than it was given the conflict he was to encounter later with *Norma*, its composer, and its poet. But in fact *La sacerdotessa d'Irminsul* and its companion score *Vallace o sia L'eroe scozzese* were composed more or less together in the last months of 1819 with the first – the more difficult to cast – finding a stage *after* the other.

*Vallace* was a fashionable choice. Both Pacini and Romani were ready to respond to the sporrans and claymores that the Tottola/Rossini *La donna del lago* had scattered over the S.Carlo stage in September 1819. Both were willing to take part in a Highland fling but Romani unwisely chose to revert to pseudo-Ossian for his plot. Textually *Vallace* is *vieux jeu* but has some almost triumphant moments. Pacini dismisses his score, he says that the quintet from Rossini's *Bianca e Falliero* which preceded *Vallace* at La Scala was worth more than the entire opera<sup>xviii</sup> but the *Vallace* text – even if outmoded – is far superior to that of *Bianca* and his opera was let down only by a storyline that was far too virtuous to survive a contemporary audience. Pacini's music has effective moments – trademark duets, which Carolina Bassi (in the trouser role of Wallace<sup>xix</sup>) and Violante Camporesi (as Elena) made memorable. Key extracts became popular in the opera's sillage among them the cavatina 'Prodi amici' and the fine extended *duetto* 'Ah se dal caro principe' which was received with near-ecstatic cheers.

Opening at La Scala on 14 February 1820 *Vallace* had the best of receptions and was repeated thirty times (*'Buonissimo'*). And whatever his negative views, this opera had reassuring revivals and one major rifacimento, that at the Teatro Pergola in Florence in 1821 with Fanny Eckerlin as Elena in which *Vallace* was retitled *Odoardo re d'Inghilterra* to reflect drastic major readjustments to the plot. And then, after the despised La Scala staging, Pacini found himself with seven hundred francs in his pocket, a small fortune.

If neither *Vallace* nor its twin *La sacerdotessa d'Irminsul* with its intriguing title had much more than a hint of real romantic fervour, both shared a proto-emotional orchestration with a surfeit of local colour, thus eroding the predictable structures and catchy rhythms then in vogue but not yet displaying the pacing, exaggeration and emotional excess of the operas Pacini would be writing before long. Romani had stooped to conquer with the second of these operas, taking the argument of *La sacerdotessa d'Irminsul* - not from his lofty literary library - but from a flimsy Parisian vaudeville *'Clodomire ou La Prêtresse d'Irminsul'* by J.P.J.Noel and Henri Lemaire, a source as distant from Marmontel as Soumet's *'Norma'*. This notwithstanding, the *mise-en-scène* of Druids, sacred oak tree, and Romilda's apparent betrayal and paternal anguish would be enough to arouse Pacini's indignant fury when Romani later, and with long contemplated malice, furnished a rival text for Bellini's *Norma*<sup>xx</sup> the proud poet had been embarrassed by anyone remembering *'Clodomire.'* On the other hand Pacini's insistence on the precise date of its genesis meant only that he continued to cherish his score.

A musico/political conflict would be generated between Pacini and Bellini in due course: while *Norma* was to be a vehicle for its primadonna, *Irminsul* had been a showpiece for Giovanni Bettista Velluti - the one surviving castrato on the operatic stage who put pressure on composers to endorse his florid reputation

Pacini took great care with his opera. There was a substantial overture – not without atmosphere (but resorting to *banda*) and a plethora of that kind of duet he would develop in the next years – prolonged, discursive, quasi-continuous with a string of cantabile episodes, *ariosi* and dramatic interludes like currants in a cake, evolving organically and ending unlike any Rossinian formula with a big tune. *Irminsul* did make attempts to establish a mood but in a discontinuous manner, its frantic vocal athletics leading to the paper-thin happy-ending in which Velluti came into his own.

But the response of the critics will surprise those who believe the opera to have been

an irrelevance: at the prima of *La sacerdotessa d'Irminsul* at Trieste on 11 May 1820 this *melodramma eroico* attracted rave reviews: “Una bella musica, ricca di soavissime”, “un sentimento di sublime tristezza”<sup>xxi</sup>. As the last remark implies the opera harks back to *Adelaide e Comingio* and offers at least a hint of the grand style and extravagant emotions of Pacini’s maturity and, found favour in a long series of revivals<sup>xxii</sup> in which Velluti’s role was taken-over- if less strenuously- by a succession of contraltos and mezzo-sopranos including Vaccai’s diva Adele Cesari and Rosmunda Pisaroni-Carrara. *Brani staccati* were published worldwide and manuscript copies of the full score found their way to distant shores.

Any elegiac intimations in these two operas were soon to be put aside. The plot to which he now turned his hand proved yet another step in his now increasingly bitter divorce from Felice Romani: a certain “Vittorio Pezzi” (a pseudonym?) had purloined the plot of Basily’s *Il califfo e la schiava* with its Romani libretto (La Scala 21 August 1819) apparently at paternal behest! How Pacini (or Pezzi or his father) hoped to get away with this theft is a mystery<sup>xxiii</sup> especially as the Pezzi opera was intended for performance in the poet’s fief of Torino. If it was Luigi’s doing, his wish to end his reign in the opera house with a role in which he could shine without even trying<sup>xxiv</sup> would bring incalculable trouble to his son.

On 28 October 1820 the Teatro Carignano was overflowing for *La schiava in Bagdad* - the fruit of the Pezzi robbery. Giuditta Pasta sang the title role of Zora and with the memory of a fabulous ‘Lungi dal caro bene’ to her credit carried her growing popularity to fever pitch. Luigi’s *Mustafà* - a mirror-image of the role he had sung in the Basily score - carried everything before it - yet another turbaned *buffo* in which a baffled Ottoman potentate is tricked into getting “drunk” and, in this case, committing “incest” was very much to the taste of the audience. Every nuance of his father’s comic repertory was exploited to the last hilarious detail by his son.. As for Pasta, she triumphed, her ‘Donne, voi che siete amanti’ the resplendent *rondo finale* of joy with its violin *obbligato* and brilliant variations was encored every evening. As “incest” was an especially popular notion on Italian stages *La schiava in Bagdad* won an extended lease of life.<sup>xxv</sup> Revivals continued for a decade.<sup>xxvi</sup>

Mustafà was the final role supplied for paternal exploitation. An important marker had been passed. Nino now was free to write serious operas to his heart’s content!<sup>xxvii</sup>

With the Luigi's absence lightening his portfolio, he arrived in Rome on 2 December and was taken that evening to hear Cimarosa's *Il matrimonio segreto* in which he was surprised to hear his aria 'Si venite a me d'intorno'<sup>xxviii</sup> from *La sposa fedele* applauded by a full and enthusiastic house. It was the happiest of auguries.

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It was not the only augury. In the Teatro Valle and under the aegis of Cimarosa's maltreated masterpiece Pacini found himself bending over the hand of the fabulous and feckless *principessa* Borghese, Pauline Bonaparte, for the very first time.<sup>xxix</sup> Napoléon's sister had asked that the popular young maestro be brought to her box. He was twenty-three years old and it would be the last of her great passions.



**Pauline Bonaparte, Principessa Borghese**

She preferred composers to music. Her highly orchestrated romance with Felice Blangini<sup>xxx</sup> had been conducted under disapproving imperial eyes in Paris in 1807 but in the papal redoubt her cultural profile was sufficiently marked to allow her to indulge in unlimited musical variations. Pacini was certainly aware that she had featured prominently among those friends of Paisiello who had set out to wreck the début of Rossini's *Almaviva ossia L'inutile precauzione* aka *Il barbiere di Siviglia* in Rome in 1816. She would represent a distinct shift in his operatic orientation.

His public image promptly took a turn for the better but it made almost no difference to his working schedule. While Paolina rehearsed his songs in her salon at the Palazzo Borghese and engaged Ester Mombelli, Carlo Zuchelli and Nicola Tacci to give a private performance of his *La schiava in Bagdad* with the maestro at the piano, he spent his days – if not his nights – in composing against the clock. But the celebrated encounter had drawn immediate endorsement from the Roman operatic establishment: a *scrittura* to write for the Teatro Valle had followed within days and it is against his new social backcloth of dinners, receptions, unlimited flattery and wealth, and against all the odds, that *La gioventù di Enrico Quinto* came into existence..

Away from palaces and princesses he discovered that he was competing with Saverio Mercadante. The latter's *Scipione in Cartagine* was due to open the Roman *carnevale* in the biggest theatre in Rome, the Teatro Argentina. The libretto Pacini had been given for the Teatro Valle based not on Shakespeare but on a ragbag of Parisian sources by Filippo Tarducci was not impressive, nothing anglo-saxon in the plot but its London setting and its verse in need of urgent correction by Romani and Jacopo Ferretti.<sup>xxxii</sup> Appropriately enough, however, in this Roman context, the plot struck a romantic note. There was not much excitement, few *cabalette* (three only and all for the prima donna) but a great many of the long, long engaging duets fast becoming his *forte*. The cast was modest, with the young tenor Amerigo Sbigoli<sup>xxxiii</sup> in the title role and a *primo musico* Eduardo sung by Cecilia Smith – a true anglo-saxon – as a result of whom this boy-gets-girl story ends as girl-gets-girl one of them singing a taxing aria finale. It was an attractive proposition, even so, and no less than four composers were to take up the plot in the next years.<sup>xxxiiii</sup> Staged on 26 December 1820 the same date as *Scipione in Cartagine*, a big reversal of theatrical fortunes took place in the Papal Capital that evening; the *gratin* abandoned the Argentina and flocked to the modest

Teatro Valle - real-life imperial events taking preference over pasteboard regalia where theatrical worth was at issue, Scipione didn't stand a chance, Paolina and Pacini side-by-side in the same box offered a spectacle of the first magnitude. As for the now rather blasé composer - his opera pleased, he was a social draw, he had won the favours of a famous beauty and far less easy to win he had a commission to write for the Teatro Argentina the following season.

It was during the Roman run of *La gioventù di Enrico Quinto* that Pacini had his unnerving interview with Cardinal Consalvi, the powerful and dictatorial Secretary of State. His self-deprecating account of this encounter is worthy of recording (especially in view of his recent if unwitting offence against Cimarosa). Confronted by the sacred potentate at Montecavallo the following conversation ensued:

*“Tell me, young maestro, do you know the music of Paisiello and Cimarosa?”*

*“Yes your Eminence”*

*“Good, which of the two maestri do you consider to have the most genius?”*

*“Your Eminence, both are equally great masters”*

*“No! No! I want to know which is the more important in your opinion”*

In the face of this insistence Pacini crossed his fingers and plumped for Cimarosa, at which the burly Cardinal rose to his feet, grabbed the maestro by the scruff of his neck and frogmarched him into his library where were ranged all the manuscript scores of Cimarosa:

*“Kneel, young maestro”* commanded the Man of God: *“Love the music of this genius and model yourself on him so that in time you could possibly do something worthy”*.

Pacini knelt and fled, wondering what could possibly have happened had he chosen Paisiello<sup>xxxiv</sup>.

Of course he did nothing of the kind. His mentor continued to be his antiquated mentors even if now with diminishing returns. Early in February (Pacini had just

dashed off a cantata for Trieste *Lo schietto omaggio* given on 12 February 1821) when he was stopped in the street by yet another sacred potentate: Gioacchino Rossini. The musical idol of all Italy invited him to help complete his *Matilde di Shabran* which was falling behind schedule<sup>xxxv</sup> farming out to him the texts of three pieces. The young composer's pleasure at this flattering collaboration was tempered only when *Matilde* was given a poor reception at the Teatro Apollo on 24 February (the opera, full of novelty, had been only half-rehearsed). In great good humour Rossini proceeded to blame him for the fiasco while re-writing Pacini's three sections as soon as he could.

Rome had other compensations, he stayed with Paolina at Frascati throughout the spring and early summer and in her company (with the excuse of restaging *La sacerdotessa d'Irminsul*) travelled to Lucca – a city that would become his home in due course of time. With Emilia Bonini and Carolina Bassi the opera was such a success at the Real Teatro del Giglio that the sovereign Duchessa di Lucca, Maria Luisa di Borbone, Infanta di Spagna<sup>xxxvi</sup> (one of those glittering children featured in Goya's celebrated family portrait of Carlos IV and his wife) made him her *Maestro di Camera e Cappella*, an honorary post that would tie him to Tuscany for the rest of his life. From henceforth it was in Viareggio, or Lucca, or Pescia that he took refuge.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

In the autumn they returned to Rome for his Argentina commission. Quite how he accepted the fustian plot of *Cesare in Egitto* is unknown unless *Scipione in Cartagine* needed a further nail in its coffin, or simply because he needed an acknowledgment of his Roman kudos (it was in rejecting such a plot later that Bellini came out with his contemptuous "*Vecchio come Noè*"). In the event, instead of suffering from the cobwebs hanging over the argument Pacini's music was found to be too cheerful, too jaunty, his cast too extrovert and his score one of almost continual brio. Against all the odds *Cesare in Egitto* was to be praised for its originality!<sup>xxxviii</sup>

Roman audiences were divided at this time, the Valle had just closed for redecoration and its company removed to the Apollo, thus the Argentina had become ultra-sensitive about its status as a serious house. The prima, on 26 December 1821 was applauded enthusiastically. Pacini's vaunted "*sistema di melodie semplice – strumentale facile*" had paid off, the score was suitably elegant. Ester Mombelli who was receiving the incredible sum of two thousand one hundred scudi (no doubt thanks to Paolina) excelled herself as Cleopatra, as did Domenico Donzelli in the title role. Such vocal excess would be the undoing of *Cesare in Egitto*; two weeks into the run, the second tenor Amerigo Sbigoli singing Tolomeo attempted to imitate an *ad lib in alt* by Donzelli in

the Act II *quintetto*, to the horror of everyone in the theatre a brilliant jet of blood gushed from his mouth, the curtain fell and the performance was abandoned. He had burst a blood vessel in his throat and died soon after, leaving a widow and four children. Though the opera survived and continued on stage until 27 January (with Tolomeo sung by an unhappy substitute) it was thoroughly blighted.

This tragedy threw a shadow over the score. <sup>xxxix</sup> *Cesare in Egitto* never had much luck forthwith, though it had a revival at the Teatro Valle in 1831 the opera was not considered to be *buffa* enough for that house and the critics decided it was “*outmoded*.”

It was during the Spring of that year that Pacini began to build a house at Viareggio, it would be complete by 1824. It due course it would house his mother, brother Francesco, both his sisters Claudia <sup>xl</sup> and Giuseppina <sup>xli</sup>and – from 1825 onwards – his father whose last real contract (with the *cavaliere* Glossop) had expired in March that year. Building concerns apart, he spent most of the year shadowing Paolina, in the summer to the Bagni di Lucca, in the autumn to stay with her in the Palazzo Toscanelli in Pisa, notable only for the fabulous relic she bestowed on him within its walls: of a scarcity almost comparable with that of the toe of the Buddha - a lock of Napoléon’s not too copious hair. <sup>xlii</sup> Not just did the Emperor lose his hair himself but Pacini lost it too. He left it in a drawer of the hotel where it was stolen by a chambermaid. It is improbable that Paolina ever forgave him.

On 25 July 1822 *Lucchese* citizenship was conferred on the composer by the duchess Maria Luisa (thus winning *carte blanche* to escort Paolina in the city and without comment as the princess had acquired a villa at Monte San Quirico on 12 August of that year<sup>xliii</sup>). These domestic honours never impinged on his incessant composition: during the year he wrote another cantata for Trieste – the onorific *Il puro omaggio* to celebrate yet another visit by the Austrian Emperor as well as an *Album of Romanze* but around him great names were plunging into the void. Generali, Pavesi, Morlacchi, Paër – even Mayr - though still in existence - were scarcely audible, Mercadante and Donizetti were yet to find a voice strong enough to make a real impact.

As for Pacini, he was about to embark upon foreign conquest. A commission for a new *La Vestale* from La Scala truly represented a major challenge, Milan was prepared to offer material support for a version to rival that of Spontini who had subjected a proudly Roman theme to outrageous Parisian embroidery! La Scala was ready to supply grandiose settings by Alessandro Sanquirico to fill its immense stage.

It was the prospect of outsize Roman columns, Roman prestige, and the outsize cast of Teresa Belloc-Giorgi, Isabella Fabbrica, Savino Monelli and Luigi Lablache that persuaded him to take on the monumental challenge.

The primary feature of his *La Vestale* would be its orchestration; following some delving into authentic classical precedent he came up with a grossly augmented orchestral score which of course had the effect of enraging the critics who true to their limitations would complain of “...a want of finish in the parts and an extraordinary mis-employment of wind instruments.”<sup>xliv</sup> It is true that in this opera unwonted decibels tended to drown an overlaid vocal line (set very low for Belloc) but of course he had to endure an immediate cacophony of critical voices raised in protest against Pacini’s “sacrilege.”<sup>xlv</sup> The prima, however, on 6 February of 1823 justified all his research, it would be operatic spectacle that would be Pacini’s way forward for almost a decade.

Almost certainly

Paolina was the real source of Pacini’s interest in French Opera, its merits and its challenge. Did he select *La Vestale* in defence of her Roman rights? Was it his discovery of Winckelmann in Paolina’s library that suggested that the Gallic distortions for Spontini needed to be corrected? In any event Paolina and her sisters had no reason to perpetuate the glory of its original dedicatee.<sup>xlvi</sup> Irrespective of the highly praised Belloc and of Lablache’s brilliant *entrata*, this was an opera of ensembles and *tableaux vivants*<sup>xlvii</sup> that came up to all the idiosyncratic demands of its Milanese audience.

Its subsequent history was typical of Pacini’s taste for revision. Probably the excuse he would have made was that every opera needed to be brought up-to-date; that every new cast needed changes and that no score of his was ever sacrosanct. Whatever the explanation it was the *re-appearance* of Pacini’s *La Vestale* in Florence on 4 April 1831 that won his *La vestale* a certain immortality thanks to the negative contribution of Hector Berlioz.<sup>xlviii</sup>

The Teatro Pergola had offered Pacini a revival of *La vestale*. Pacini turned the opera upside-down for the occasion, only five items from the original opera survived.<sup>xlix</sup> The music of the title role had been raised to accommodate the *spinto* voice of Giulia Grisi, twinned with another soprano Anna Del Serre as a musico Licinio; the orchestra was reduced (for a house only half the size of La Scala) and the plot amended. The score now reflected the changes in style which had emerged in the

interim, that is, with less formula and more immediacy.

None of this cut any ice with Berlioz in Italy for a belated *prix de Rome*, he effected, or so he says he did, an exit after only a few moments, muttering “*wormwood, wormwood.*”<sup>1</sup> Had he stayed longer he might have justified his *bourse*. The vocal score was republished and dedicated to the “*Contessa Giulia Samoyloff, nata contessa di Pahlen*” a far more welcome contributor to the opera of the day.<sup>li</sup>

\*

It was his Tuscan affiliation that earned him his next *scrittura* but Rossinian precedent that reflected his choice of plot. *Temistocle* - like *Semiramide* - being a Metastasian revision modified by a much lesser poet with up-to-date views.<sup>lii</sup> Fully aware of this, *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* commented predictably on the “*strong smell of Rossini*”<sup>liii</sup> of *Temistocle* but to those with less predictable nostrils the hallmarks of a rebellious Pacini were far more strongly in evidence. That he was in the process of taking wing was obvious. The Real Teatro del Giglio in Lucca offered him a cast of supernatural virtuosity including Rosmunda Pisaroni-Carrara in the *musico* role of Serse, Santina Ferlotti as Aspasia and the veteran Niccolò Tacchinardi in the title role. The auspices were good, the plot was heroic, and the preparation exhaustive with the composer present throughout. It was the temperature that lost the battle. Opening on 28 August 1823 the theatre was suffocating, everyone – artists, audience and maestro were completely exhausted - under such circumstances the weight of florid music proved completely unbearable. Pisaroni’s heroic virtues were legendary but she was tested to the limits by her *aria di sortita* with its horn obbligato (redolent of the *sortite* in so many operas to come) an exordium of frightening virtuosity. Much of the tessitura was testing; but the score itself gloried in a precocious lilt and lyricism that was certainly more romantic than anything the Italy of the *pesarese* had been accustomed to hearing. There were fabulous items, like the languishing oboe introduction to the *scena e preghiera* of *Temistocle* beautifully blending with his contraltino accents and many studied set pieces - a *gran duetto* between Serse and *Temistocle* at the height of the drama ‘E istinto di natura, l’amor del Patrio lido’ of perfectly staggering complexity and emotive colouring being at the very apex of current vocal allure - but none of these things made any impact at the first appearance of the opera. *Temistocle* was a disaster. Pacini was thoroughly upset by such a check

on his home ground primarily because *Temistocle* ran in tandem with Mercadante's *Didone abbandonata*, which – more fortunate in temperature at its Lucchese revival - had far less a limp reception with exactly the same cast. Happily for Pacini's *amour propre* - when the two operas were put on again in tandem at Livorno - *Temistocle* triumphed and *Didone* died abandoned by its audience.

Pisaroni loved this opera, and revived it (with Claudio Bonoldi as Temistocle) at La Scala in 1824 when it had twelve performances; together with Tacchinardi she sang it at La Pergola that same year. Tacchinardi sang it with Carolina Bassi at Trieste with a new cavatina for the tenor. A manuscript score in London reveals that a staging with Giuditta Pasta was projected and extracts published in vocal score but the performance never got beyond the first hurdles, Pacini was no more on the urgent revival list in London than in Paris, even if Pasta sang the Serse entrata to torrents of applause in concerts!<sup>liv</sup>

The following months were stressful. Paolina fell ill. Was it anaemia or anorexia? Most probably it was leukaemia. Certainly it was one of those languid states that decimated young women in the nineteenth century leaving them sofa-bound - becoming paler and weaker every day - a focus for sympathy and concern with a poetry book dangling from a feeble hand. She was not an endearing person but she had charm and courage: “*I dined with a beautiful and famous personage, who thinks of nothing but her little handsome person and of her dress. She is illiterate, and amusing when she does not attempt to read Tasso. Her court is made up of singers, some sycophants, and of handsome young officers*”<sup>lv</sup>. No doubt she found Pacini diverting and energetic, whether he returned the compliment is not certain. Even at the time of their first meeting she was a shadow of her former voluptuousness, probably he enjoyed her entourage even if there was more kudos than entertainment in their company. The noble contacts he made were useful - even reassuring in the face of his wayward *métier*. Paolina supplied the social equivalent of the *cabalette* that epitomised his music in the public mind - her dizzy existence the perfect corollary to his whirlwind of composition sending him flying from place to place, prima to prima.

On the other side, the impossibly fertile composer must have seemed like a life force to the dying princess. In his memoirs he is always discreet about his long ago *affaire*, at the time of writing not only did he have a possessive third wife but the Bonaparte dynasty was again a power in the land. Did she make him famous? She certainly made him notorious. Did she make him rich? It seems not. Barbiera <sup>lvi</sup> insists that she

showered him with gifts all of which he disdained or discarded - the Emperor's forelock (which he could ill-afford to lose) being a fine example. This fabled romance remains shadowy: legend has it that the Borghese family begged Pacini to return the gilt-edged beauty to the bosom of her husband; the chronology of events appears to indicate that he would have done so had he been able. She is reputed to have said "*I shall return to my family only when you marry*" with the unflattering consequence that he got married one week later. To this extent only, are legends born. His loyalty was to his art.

Her illness encouraged him to spend Christmas at home for once S.Stefano (the opening of the carnival season) failed to tempt him. He had two commissions in any case, a cantata and another important *scrittura* for La Scala. The first of these *La reggia di Astrea* was given on 12 February 1824 at the newly rebaptised Teatro Grande in Trieste and once again in honour of Francesco I (whose stoicism in this respect must have been extraordinary) came as a background to reproaches from the fractious Paolina at his absence, reproaches which appear to have put him off his guard in respect of the second contract. The opera *Isabella ed Enrico* – staged in one of the weakest seasons ever at La Scala (four operas in succession failed including a revival of Rossini's *Maometto II*) – and the administration of the great theatre totally collapsed. The score was not one of the composer's more impetuous creations and had not the constitution to survive inadequate staging and an absence of rehearsals. The prima on 12 June 1824 had a surface glow, but his anxiety about the lack of a real *primadonna* seems to have been born out. *Harmonicon* in an unusually succinct account does something to balance Cambiasi's "*Cattivo*":

*"...it was received with great applause. And at the conclusion the maestro and principal singers were called for to receive the congratulations of the public. On the second evening, however, the applause was much less: neither the maestro nor the singers were called on the stage, and on the third evening the theatre was empty".*

*"...the present opera, the introduction and the finale excepted, possesses nothing remarkable, except it be that the violoncellos are, without any apparent reason, kept hard at work during every part of it"*

A later issue gives some further information: the *sinfonia* was "*brilliant*", the accompaniments "*noisy...he loves trumpets (like Rossini) and the trombone*" and that "*he can never give his hearers too much for their money*"<sup>lvii</sup>

Here the truth was out, and the real explanation for his welcome appearance on so many stages in Italy. He was always prodigal with his melodies, duets, trios and cori, even if of unpredictable quality. He knew when to strike effectively but seldom sensed

when enough was enough. In the case of *Isabella ed Enrico* Pacini regretted its poor poem (by Luigi Romanelli) and railed at its “*semifiasco*”, he refused even to mention the cast in his memoirs. The opera appeared seven times, he later insisted (as so often when struck by fate) that he was studying the great masters at the time, Lulli, Rameau and Grétry - but no evidence of this auspicious study remains in his score.<sup>lviii</sup>

The following months were far from restful. The composer spent two weeks of August with Paolina in a cloud of recrimination and reproach; leaving for Trieste again a letter was flung after him on 21 August telling him it was all off. It was merely a tiff. In no way perturbed Pacini set about reviving *Temistocle*, first at Trieste (2 September), then at Milan (4 September) during this whistle-stop existence writing another opera for Naples. As a result he soon fell ill, and it was put about that he would retire from the stage. Neither illness, nor exhaustion, nor irritation (with Paolina) stemmed the musical flow nor put him off his stride, Pacini was an obsessional. His antiquarian nature reasserting itself under such stress he sought a companion for *Temistocle*, and searched for another Metastasian *rifacimento*. With the complicity of the poet Giovanni Federico Schmidt (whose real name was Vincent Smith and of English descent)<sup>lix</sup> he alighted upon *Alessandro nell'Indie*, Schmidt's verses (with some help from Tottola) were set to music, approved by the censors, rehearsed and ready for staging in record time. It would be a huge score, taking the spectacular possibilities offered to great lengths and its timing was perfect: with Rossini in Paris, with Donizetti dismayed by two failures, with Mercadante dismayed by three failures and absent, and with Bellini not yet on the horizon he had the vast stage of the S.Carlo to himself. He had every excuse to be bold, innovatory and extravagant and to the astonishment of all, *Alessandro nell'Indie* made a good claim to be all three.

With its prima on that vast stage on 30 November 1824, with its frieze of dramatic set-pieces designed to be worthy of its Metastasian origins, with two stellar voices – Adelaide Tosi and Andrea Nozzari, with the vocal “hit” of Tosi's cavatina ‘se d’amor fra le ritorte’ received with *furore*<sup>lx</sup> (even Pacini was bowled over by its success: “*Dio! Dio buono*” he says in his memoirs “..in tal modo avrà assicurato l’avvenire ai miei genitori ed all’intiera mia famiglia”<sup>lxi</sup> and happily all of them were there in the theatre – mother, father, brothers and sisters) this opera by Pacini was widely, if erroneously, reported as having had seventy performances<sup>lxii</sup> on its first appearance. King Ferdinand was in the Royal Box. *Harmonicon* rose to the occasion with a priceless piece of misinformation and malice:

*“Pacini’s new opera Alessandro nell’Indie, has just been brought out here: it is a meagre imitation of Rossini, as all his compositions are. An order is just issued here, from the Sovereign, prohibiting all persons from hissing at the Teatro San Carlo, and also commanding that none shall presume to encore anything, till his Majesty sets the example!”<sup>lxiii</sup>*

Cheered to the echo, the king received Pacini in his private box at the side of the stage (and came to the opera every few days throughout its long run). Replete with subtleties, highly coloured, this *Alessandro* threw Pacini into the hands of Domenico Barbaja who made every effort to “place” him on the stages he controlled - no little boast as by 1826 he would be running no less than three of the world’s bravest sites: the S. Carlo, La Scala and the Kärntnertortheater in Vienna. Pacini, only too aware of the mantra of the proto-rossiniani (as above), tries to give credence to a German influence in his orchestration:

*“Mi applicai pertanto a rintracciare pensieri puri e semplici, non tralasciando però di accurare la parte concertata ed istrumentale, nella quale era andato di mano in mano pregredendo, studiando gli effetti delle varie famiglie degli strumenti, a facendo ognor più tesoro dei sommi musicisti alemanni”<sup>lxiv</sup>*

But there is no need to make such exotic claims, though the orchestration was unusually dense and vigorous in this quasi-barocco pastiche the audience responded mostly to his inventive duetti and its spectacular impact. In Naples – Rossini’s erstwhile capital – his junior tasted real glory - up to now an assimilator, he began to break chains<sup>lxv</sup>.

In a state of near collapse the diminutive maestro was escorted back to Viareggio by his family. Here, other chains awaited. The sequence of events has never been quite clear. Paolina’s illness had become common knowledge; now she was in steep decline. Once again the carnival season passed without an opera. That they met at this time in certain; Paolina was in Florence; some sort of repeat performance of their earlier tiff ended the *affaire* for good. Pacini merely records that an “*alta relazione che in forza delle circostanze (onde il mio nome non ne soffrisse) dovetti troncare*”<sup>lxvi</sup>. From the stricken princess a little later, on 29 April 1825, there came a sad letter to her former *dame d’atour* Madame d’Hautmenil “*I remain alone and lonely, but nothing matters to me now...*” (I have) “*dismissed my musician Pacini and sold my horses*”<sup>lxvii</sup>. But maybe the embers took a little longer to cool: *Le mie memorie artistiche* gives a more specific timing. At the end of May Pacini rushed out of his house shouting that he was going to Naples to find a wife. <sup>lxviii</sup>

After a courtship of eight days he did so marrying Adelaide Castelli the daughter of a family friend. They left on honeymoon in the first days of June to stay in a house in Portici belonging to his parents-in-law. On 9 June 1825 Paolina died alone in Florence. There was one final coquetry, the still-beautiful princess insisted that there should be no *post-mortem*. She died smiling and pale like Canova's famous marble statue having written her will that very last morning<sup>lxi</sup>.

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All at once everything had changed. In 1825 Naples had a new king, Lucca a new duke. Musically too there were changes, Rossini's legacy was dwindling fast, his Frenchified scores had met with resistance in Italy.

Married in Naples, applauded in Naples, with two commissions for Naples, whole new vistas opened-up for Pacini in that city. Ferdinando I had died in January, his son Francesco I preferred an iron hand without the velvet glove of streetwise geniality of his father but the Royal Theatres continued undaunted with their customary rush of operas and cantatas; Pacini in his element lost no time in coming back to the stage.

*Amazilia* appeared on 6 July, this unusual husband had spent his honeymoon at his desk. *Amazilia* had been scheduled for the birthday of the new Queen<sup>lxx</sup> so no delay or dilution could even be contemplated. Once again he had a plot in essence no novelty in Naples<sup>lxxi</sup> but he supplied music of a remarkable quality, progressively inventing new and fluent aria-forms, its ten items culminating in a *trio finale* that was a complete surprise – the distribution with Joséphine Fodor-Mainvielle in the title role, Luigi Lablache and Giovanni David was a revelation. In this opera too Pacini modified his own cabaletta template with a *slow* cabaletta - the compelling 'Parmi vederlo...ahi misero,' a war-horse later of Henriette Méric-Lalande and even now a sensational item<sup>lxxii</sup> while David repeated his rocketing cavatina and cabaletta "Come mai calmar le pene' almost everywhere he could. Pacini said of the opera "*Piacque non poco*" - an understatement. Revived by Barbaja in Vienna in 1827 Pacini extended it into 2 acts<sup>lxxiii</sup> adding much new music and with *both* acts now ending with a *trio*.<sup>lxxiv</sup> No one expected one-act operas mounted for royal occasions to last so long; Loreto Garcia sang the title role at La Scala (1826); Tamburini sang Cabana at Palermo (1827); Méric-Lalande supported by Lablache and Savino Monelli raised the roof with it at Vienna (1827). Perhaps its most disturbing appearance of its music was at Paris in 1832 when

Wilhelmine Schröder–Devrient decided to interpolate ‘Parmi vederlo...ahi misero’ into Bellini’s *Il pirata* (Théâtre-Italien 2 February 1832 adding a duet that supplied a happy ending... The music of this version was published immediately.

The Royal Gala for *Amazilia* was deprived of the new King. Francesco I returned on 17 July after a visit to Milan and Rome to confer with his allies. The evening of his return saw a visit to the S.Carlo and in his best laudatory vein Pacini dashed off an *Inno con ballo analoghi* (the *Inno* by Pacini - the *ballo* with music by Luigi Carlini) which “*riuscì brilliantissimi*” according to the press and whose outrageously obsequious libretto was interpreted by a cast of no less quality than Fodor, Tosi, David and Lablache. It was repeated on 19 July – a signal honour for musical ephemera.<sup>lxxv</sup>

But it was the Pacini opera which followed that confirmed his place in operatic history. The working title *La distruzione di Pompei* (which survives on the earliest printed extracts) and the overwhelming impact it made, reflecting, not just the need for a splash – not just the rare absence of rivals - but also the truly momentous changes taking place in Naples.

To what extent this opera, a deliberate and scarifying theatrical coup, had been masterminded by the architect of the S.Carlo, Antonio Niccolini, who was responsible for its staging, has never been made quite clear. This *scenografo ed architetto de’ reali teatri* knew better than anyone what would draw attention to his magnificent edifice.<sup>lxxvi</sup> Yet the portentous concept of the staging has an opulence and extravagance worthy of all the Baroque masterpieces of Pacini’s antiquarian peers. Whoever conceived the opera, its setting and climactic nature were to become synonymous with Pacini’s reputation,<sup>lxxvii</sup> its cross-fertilisation with France - processions punctuated by *ballabile*, *tableaux vivants* and religious rites - to confirm his tastes for the future. As for its volcanic climax, it was French *grand-opéra* that would follow Pacini, not the other way round.<sup>lxxviii</sup> An utterly painful realism was to carry all before it with the Neapolitan populace. On the night of the prima of *L’ultimo giorno di Pompei* opera became *real*.

Niccolini had contrived a décor where the monolithic columns on either side of the vast stage of the great theatre had been repeated in a huge mimic classical curve of wood and plaster dummies to frame the action on the stage. On the night of 19 November 1825 the scene was set. When the opera reached its climax – when the dark depiction of Vesuvius at the rear of the stage suddenly flashed into blinding light

and exploded with a deafening crash this mock entablature split, crumbled, and began to fall away. At once the audience rose like a man - the S.Carlo was falling around their ears - and ran for the exits. Even the King stood up in his box, but warned in advance, the Queen put her hand on his arm.<sup>lxxxix</sup> The whole stage - statues, monuments, vast temples crumbled in a thudding cloud of dust. From one side to the other of the stage a chariot crossed drawn by a white horse carrying the opera's heroine Ottavia and her family to safety; layer after layer of gauze descended progressively obscuring the stage through which fires glowed and flames rose higher and higher (they were painted on a roll of cloth which oscillated from side to side like an elephantine typewriter ribbon)<sup>lxxx</sup> In a monstrous foretaste of cinemascope horror, the opera house cowered before such a vision of nemesis, driven by Pacini's relentless percussion in repeated shock-waves of drumming and cries. The curtain fell on a half empty auditorium and pale faces too shaken to applaud. Naples and Vesuvius were old foes.

It is of note that the music of *L'ultimo giorno di Pompei* forced itself into public consciousness – less by its *cabalette* which were few – than by two neo -duets, the Act I 'Fermati Ottavia', and the Act II 'Squarciami il core o barbaro'.<sup>lxxxi</sup> The opera discarded his familiar quirks and even if only limited structural changes were made to the sum-total of his *pezzi* he achieved a through-composed effect with music that was far more eloquent, more harmonically linked, more discursive and far more responsive to the text than usual. Even though lilting, dancing, beguiling even, at times, he made no attempt to charm. His familiar solid core of operatic expertise loosened, he took daring risks to achieve something nearer to verbatim truth. Tottola too excelled himself, the *personaggi* of *L'ultimo giorno di Pompei* are memorable. This frequently under-rated versifier offered truly convincing vocal portraits: the vain and unwitting Sallustio; the unheeding and cruel Ottavia; and one of opera's most sardonic creations Appio Diomede - the Roman Tribune who explains carefully in one of the composer's most captivating arias - that the reason he has condemned Ottavia to death is because he loves her! The cast at the S. Carlo prima on 19 November, on the Queen's nameday was superb with the fabulous trio of Adelaide Tosi as Ottavia, Luigi Lablache as Sallustio and Giovanni David as Appio Diomede; its eighteen repetitions must have been the despair of the stagehands obliged to put back all the fallen debris every night! And this fantastic spectacle proved irresistible in Naples for long years; Charles de Bériot (composer-violinist husband of Malibran and a rare unbiased witness in the

turbulent city) said in 1835 that *L'ultimo giorno di Pompei* was one of the three operas that had *genuinely* succeeded on that stage, all the operas now so praised had been whistled and booed at times.<sup>lxxxii</sup> It was even revived in the tiniest theatres of Naples (how they could have done so is a matter for amazement.<sup>lxxxiii</sup>)

The opera went on to be a runaway success almost everywhere theatres were prepared to stage it.<sup>lxxxiv</sup> It gathered together all the major voices: Méric-Lalande, Tamburini, G-B Rubini, Rosalbina Carradori-Allen, Domenico Cosselli, reaching Lisbon (1828), Stuttgart (1829), Madrid (1830), Prague (1834), Budapest (1835) and Mexico City (1838) where its volcanic climax must have been viewed with dismay. Vienna had a staging on 17 July 1827 which Pacini supervised himself. The Théâtre-Italien in Paris put on a bungled staging at the dawn of the July Revolution which did Pacini's reputation no good at all (Rossini, who had proposed it, had wisely departed). Even with Henriette Méric-Lalande and a miscast Domenico Donzelli on the stage: "*Vésuve flambant, peint par Ferri, machiné par Marti*" its *chœur* singing "*horriblement faux*"<sup>lxxxv</sup> its impact was nil. In perfect mimicry London put on a pop-up-book style staging on 17 March 1831 with Giovanni David and Miss Paton.<sup>lxxxvi</sup>

With its scale, ambition, its passionate colouring and staging this opera aspires to the same romanticism as the classical fortunes dear to Berlioz et al but – this time with a bitter relevance to the life and death around them all...

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<sup>i</sup> Pacini - willfully or carelessly - it is not clear which, insists in his memoirs that it was the success of his *La sacerdotessa d'Irminsul* at Trieste that earned him this Padua commission, but the latter was not begun until 1819. [Pacini op cit 14] It may have been simple confusion, both operas concerned tragic priestesses

<sup>ii</sup> *Atala* was set in central America, a much favoured venue for opera as witnessed by the long series of *tragédies-lyriques* based-on Jean-François Marmontel's 'Les Incas, ou La destruction de l'Empire du Pérou' (1777) - a seminal plot of the French Revolution (Louis XVI could be equated with the defeated Inca Atahualpa). At least twenty subsequent stageworks followed afterwards all featuring religious and/or royal "despotism". In view of such prominent entertainments with the same roots like Spontini's *La Vestale* (1807) and *Fernand Cortes* (1809) Chateaubriand was simply jumping on a bandwagon rolling in his youth. Pacini himself would have known Simon Mayr's opera *Cora* (1815) also based on the Marmontel plot, whose volcanic eruption anticipated key scores of his own

<sup>iii</sup> Pacini op cit 15

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iv Asked to fill a role at La Scala – according to legend - in a desperate emergency, Luigi Pacini had agreed only if his son was given a contract to write an opera for that famous stage

v Atto primo Sc.V. She sang it while reading a romance, just as Adina would do in the more rarified world of Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore* with the same librettist

vi Giacomo and Geremia Rubini were both tenors like their celebrated brother: their sister was Serafina Rubini, a soprano of real temperament who had made a splash in the "Monti" farse: Pacini had a decided affinity with this family

vii A special distinction of *La sposa fedele* was its innovative orchestration, Pacini even uses a hurdy-gurdy to boost his bucolic colour with a boldness that anticipates Donizetti's *Linda di Chamounix* (1843) by twenty-four years. (The Bergamasc composer could have heard Pacini's opera in Naples early in the 1830's – and both operas share the same librettist Gaetano Rossi). For a study of the operatic dimensions of the *ghironda-vielle* (the hurdy-gurdy) Cfr Emilio Sala *La "Vielleuse" e il Savoiaro :Tradizione e drammaturgia* [in] 'Donizetti, Parigi e Vienna': Atti dei Convegni Lincei 156 (Rome 2000), 47-77

viii Atto primo Sc.II. Infinitely varied it incorporates dialogue with individuals and climaxes in a *concertato*

ix Gaetano Rossi had slightly adjusted his funny plot in accordance with Pacini's extra music: the heroine has been rechristened "Matilde" (instead of Teodora) and Arrigo conte di Provenza has been raised to the rank of *principe*

x As turbulent a figure as Pacini himself, but considerably less respectable, Nicolas-Charles Bochsa (1789-1856), distinguished French harpist, swindler, and seducer, eventually fled Europe leaving a trail of lawsuits and important publications, including a still valid 'Tutor' for the Harp. He died in Australia

xi Donizetti's opera lasted only two or three years on the stage, Pacini's *Il falegname di Livonia* was revived very much longer. Most theatrical chronologies have automatically attributed this opera to Donizetti when they have encountered an "*Il falegname di Livonia*" in the lists but, after 1825, all the revivals known were of Pacini's opera

xii It was Pacini's twentieth opera, Donizetti's fifth

xiii At a revival of Pacini's *Il falegname di Livonia* at Casal Monferrato for instance in 1823 Giuditta Schiroli singing the role of the aria-less Caterina interpolated Rossini's 'Tanti affetti' from *La donna del lago* into Act II with the opening words of the rondò changed to 'Fra lo sposo e fra il germano' thus letting the dramatic cat-out-of-the-bag with a vengeance (presumably Carlo was out of earshot).

xiv The contessa Gulia Samoiloff counted the family of *Caterina* (the Empress Catherine I of Russia) among her ancestors

xv Rossini had departed from Naples on 7 March 1822 -the city of his greatest triumphs - never to live in that city again. To its bereft citizens Pacini seemed like a natural heir. Donizetti, however, would soon wrest this distinction from his hands and in the following decade there would be a great deal of coming-and-going in the role, *direttori artistico dei reali teatro di Napoli* being appointed by ephemeral managements and changing abruptly; it was a far-from enviable post, Carlo Coccia became Artistic Director of the S.Carlo for part of 1834-5 and

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relinquished this post with relief after relentless hostility from rival composers

<sup>xvi</sup> A *Gl'illinesi* (Romani) had been begun by Pacini in 1819 – the need for abandonment and dismemberment of this score before any attempt at staging was probably due to the poet who had received payment only very belatedly for his libretto by Francesco Basily (1767-1850 and whose *Gl'illinesi* had opened at the start of the year at La Scala (26 January 1819). Romani was always furious (as we shall see) when composers did not pay-up on time and liked to offer the text to rivals as soon as possible to get his revenge!

<sup>xvii</sup> Pacini op cit 13-14

<sup>xviii</sup> Pacini idem 18

<sup>xix</sup> Carolina Bassi's first *musico* role dated back to 1812, when almost all her rivals were *castrati*

<sup>xx</sup> It was at this moment that conflict with the acrimonious Felice Romani really began its long festering trail of destruction. It would reach a climax after many disturbing episodes, especially those surrounding the sour polemic of *I cavalieri di Valenza* in 1828. After the débâcle of his Venice commission “purloined” by Bellini in 1830 and capped by *Norma*, Pacini set no more Romani texts

<sup>xxi</sup> *Osservatore triestino* 25 May 1820, 252

<sup>xxii</sup> Occasionally retitled *La foresta d'Irminsul* under which title many *brani staccati* were published, thus causing some confusion with *Norma* which too had extracts published under this name.

Significantly perhaps, Velluti had sung earlier in Stefano Pavesi's *Celanira* with a not totally dissimilar “Irminsul” plot (libretto by Gaetano Rossi and first performed at Venice in 1815) in its Trieste revival a few months earlier (1819). The source and *lieto fine*, however, of the Pavesi opera, reflects neither that of Pacini nor that of Bellini. Ominously enough, Gaetano Rossi and Felice Romani were to clash noisily in the future, leading quite near to open warfare

<sup>xxiii</sup> It is not impossible that Felice Romani is in fact “Vittorio Pezzi” himself, thus getting paid twice for the same libretto and his revenge upon Basily after his spat with that composer over *Gl'illinesi* the year before (and an additional revenge for Pacini)

<sup>xxiv</sup> The plot of *Il califfo e la schiava* (1819) would be commandeered once more, this time by Rossini for his *Adina o Il califfo di Bagdad* (libretto by Gherardo Bevilacqua-Aldobrandini) staged at Lisbon in 1826. [It had been composed much earlier, Weinstock *Rossini* 89, gives a date of 1818 - but also insists that Aldobrandini “quoted intact” some of Romani's verses. This being the case the date of “1818” for Rossini's version is improbable. More interesting is the conjecture that Pacini had known that Rossini was interested in this plot - did it offer a sly challenge on his part?]

<sup>xxv</sup> Note, however, that Michele Carafa's *Abufar ossia La famiglia araba* fell foul of the Viennese censors over implied “incest” (Kärntnertortheater, Vienna 28 June 1823, based upon yet an even more distant relative of this libretto by Romani). They insisted that the paternity of the “Schiava” be spelled out from the start, thus ruining the plot

<sup>xxvi</sup> A revival in London some six years later where the music was popular enough to be printed aroused the hilarious antagonism of *Harmonicon*, apologist of everything German in the capital:

*“Pacini is an imitator of Rossini, and, it has been well observed, belongs to that class of*

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composers who rather find than make their operas - whose talent lies in distinguishing between their own sterility and the abundance of their more gifted contemporaries and predecessors, and in appropriating the conceptions of others instead of attempting to draw anything from their own slender resources. This aptitude is particularly apparent in the finale to the first act, most of which is borrowed from Rossini, who himself obtained many of the materials thus retaken from him, by loans from others". Adding that "there are some few, though very few, brilliant things in this opera" with praise for Rosalbina Caradori-Allan, Curioni and Zuchelli. As for poor Giuseppe De Begnis, he unleashed the Anglo-saxon backlash with a vengeance: "...his introduction of "English" into his dialogue, cannot but displease those who exercise their judgment at an opera: the jokes may be very interesting to Italians, and to all those who do not understand our language, but to Britons the humour of them-if they possess any - is quite undiscoverable"

*Harmonicon* 1827 37-8

F.F.Chorley later, put this hostility into perspective:

"A third Italian composer, already of some home note, living and writing in 1860, fared, and has always fared, worse in England ... Signor Pacini was not unknown here; for a comic opera by him *La Schiava in Bagdad* had been performed some years earlier, the rondo finale of which - a varied air with violin obbligato - survives to this day as a show song. This contempt is the more singular because Signor Pacini has shown in such tunes distinct originality. Three or four of his airs of parade are admirable, and his own - let me instance 'Il soave e bel contento' (Niobe), and 'Lungi dal caro ben' (I forget from which opera), in the last movement of which there is an early example of those syncopations which have been since so largely used and abused by the Riccis, Lillos, Coppolas of modern Italy, and most of all by Signor Verdi. Yet in spite of this claim as a melodist, not one opera by Signor Pacini ...has kept the stage for a month in London or Paris".

Henry.C. Chorley *Thirty Years Musical Recollections* (London 1862) 18

This London staging (King's Theatre 30 December 1826) of *La schiava in Bagdad* (the full score in the Fondo Pacini at Pescia calls it "*La schiava di Bagdad*" as Pacini himself did at times but also says rather ingenuously "poesia di Romani" thus letting the cat out of the bag?) was a most compromised edition, justifying at least an iota of the foolish *Harmonican* notice above: Carlo Zuchelli interpolated Rossini's 'Sento destarmi' into the score (no wonder Pacini was accused of imitating the *pesarese* when singers insisted upon merging their music), and Alberico Curioni sang a cavatina 'Chi sa dir se in queste sponde' in a brand-new version he had requested expressly from Pacini for the occasion. This music was published in London by Goulding and d'Almaine. Carlo Coccia conducted the performance in 1826

xxvii Exception has to be made only for *Il convitato di pietra*, a pasticcio written in 1832 for a family celebration and in which his father - who had finally retired from the stage in the last years of the previous decade - sang the role of the comic servant Ficcanaso.

xxviii Sung by the tenor Erardo. Atto primo Sc.II

xxix The principessa Paolina Borghese (1780-1825) is the subject of a chapter in Raffaello Barbiera's *Vite ardenti nel teatro* (Milan 1831) where her liaison with Pacini - some half her age - is investigated with enthusiasm and very small regard for fact. Rossini, who probably took a poor view of the famous beauty, commented upon their liaison in inimitable fashion in the following celebrated exchange:

Rossini: "Caro Pacini, mi compiaccio per i vostri successi. Tutti le opere vi vengono applaudite;" Pacini: "Oh, non tutti Maestro!" Rossini: "Eh ... ma bona parte si!"

A very factual, if mostly garbled hearsay rather than reliable account of their actual meeting, is given by Joachim Kühn *Pauline Bonaparte, Napoleon's Attendant Star* (London 1937), 266:

"...the cause was to be found in a new and final infatuation by which she was seized in

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December, 1820 - to be precise, on the 2nd December, the Bonapartes' Day of Victory. Its object was the young Sicilian composer, Giovanni Pacini, who was presented to her at a performance of the *Matrimonio Segreto* in the Teatro dal Valle. One of his arias had been introduced into Cimarosa's opera and had been enthusiastically applauded, and this applause had led Pauline to ask that the composer, of whose presence in the house she had been told, should be brought to her box. When he entered it she had experienced one more of those electric shocks which in former years she had so passionately sought but which she had not experienced since (the Baron) Duchand had vanished from her sight. Pacini was as beautiful as a god, full of temperament, a brilliant singer and pianist, in short, a blending of Canouville and Blangini; his operas were played in all the theatres of Italy, his contemporaries thought of him as an equal rival of the young Rossini, whose star had been shining triumphantly for a short time previously in the musical firmament. Reason enough for Pauline to encourage Pacini's advances. She gave a musical direction to her salon in his honour; she herself played on the spinet and on the harp songs which Pacini - Nino, as she had christened him - had set to music for her; she engaged Mombelli, Zuchelli and Tacchi (sic) to sing in his *Schiava di Bagdad* in her house, he himself playing a piano accompaniment; and, so that they might serve as foils to him, she drew other composers of the time into her musical circle; Caraffa (sic), who appealed to her in that he had been originally a Neapolitan officer and had accompanied Murat as an orderly officer on the Russian campaign; Mercadante, whose *Geloso Raveduto* fascinated all hearers; and above all, Rossini, Pacini's rival, who rendered for her the air of Bartolo from the *Barbier de Seville*. This won such a storm of applause that Pauline became reconciled to him - she had regarded his masterpiece as almost a sacrilege against Paisiello, whose setting of the *Barbier* was one of her favorite operas. In order to wreck Rossini's *Barbier*, she had actually distributed free tickets for the first performance to people who were pledged to hiss it! Evil tongues declared, however, that she did this less from enthusiasm for Paisiello than from regard for the tenor, for whom Rossini would not make the alterations he wanted".

xxx Felice Blangini (1781-1841) Ridiculously snobbish, one-time Parisian suitor of Pauline Borghese whose Imperial title, if not her descent, attracted him, composer of *Notturmi* and opéras-comique of short duration on the stage, he consorted only with the highest nobility and his works were dedicated to as many crowned heads as was feasible. With the advent of Louis-Philippe and a bourgeois court he took himself off to the country and died.

(Leaving a volume of memoirs: *Felix Blangini Souvenirs*, publiés par son ami Maxime de Villemarest (Paris 1834)).

xxxii Though the libretto for Pacini's opera says "*poesia nuova*" Tarducci had in fact written the text originally for Luigi Carlini for a staging at Naples in 1819, an opera which was revived at La Scala only three months before Pacini's Roman prima. Romani and Ferretti had a hand in the large number of additions and subtractions that were made to *La gioventù di Enrico Quinto* over the years, it was an especially far-flung score with staging's at Munich (1822); Lisbon (1823); Madrid (1824); Zara (1826); and Copenhagen (1831 in Danish); a staging at the Teatro Re in Milan in 1823 gave it the odd title of *La bella tavernara ossia Le avventure d'una notte* (the Teatro Re repeated its production of *La gioventù di Enrico Quinto* in 1832. It is interesting to reflect that Verdi may well have taken note that the leading role in this "Shakespearian" romp was called Rocester); Rubini sang the title role at the Teatro del Fondo in Naples in 1826. The opera was still going at Cagliari in 1848 when the world was changing.

xxxiii See *Cesare in Egitto*

xxxiiii The list included Morlacchi (Dresden 1823), and Mercadante (Milan 1834) - this last with a text by Romani, a changed setting, and a Falstaff among the roles (the opera failed)

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xxxiv Pacini op cit 19. The account has to be taken with a big pinch of salt. It was common knowledge that Cimarosa had willed his manuscripts to Cardinal Consalvi, his friend and patron. These scores, after the death of the Cardinal-connoisseur, were turned over the library of the Conservatorio di S.Pietro a Majella in Naples where they remain today

xxxv The pieces contributed by Pacini to the initial version of *Matilde di Shabran*, all in Act II, were as follows:

1. Introduzione (Act II)
2. Terzetto (Act II ScV) ‘Deh! serena il mesto ciglio’
3. Duetto (primo tempo)  
(Act II Sc 12 ‘No Matilde, non morrai!’)

This music was piously conserved by the composer and was resurrected in a private staging of Rossini’s opera - or a version of it - at Viareggio in 1836 sung by members of Pacini’s family. There remains in the Fondo Pacini at Pescia an otherwise mysterious rondò for Matilde among the unidentifiable pieces which may either have been originally written for this initial version, or possibly for the Viareggio resurrection under the title of *Bellezza e Cuor di ferro*.

xxxvi Maria Luisa di Borbone - a short lived but effective sovereign of Lucca - had been made Queen of Etruria by Talleyrand at the Treaty of Lunéville on 19 February 1801 and was given the Duchy of Lucca in compensation after the Napoleonic rout, in 1817. She died at Rome on 13 March 1824 but not before making a real impact upon the walled city (even though local adepts still noisily applaud Elisa Bonaparte whom she displaced). Maria Luisa founded the Cappella Reale in 1818 and it would form the basis of a music school headed by Pacini in which – so many decades later - Giacomo Puccini would begin his musical training

xxxvii Pacini’s three Tuscan places of residence can be equated with his three wives: that at Viareggio with his first wife; that at Lucca with his second wife; and that at Pescia with his third wife. The palazzo Pacini at Viareggio (an urban-seeming villa of some mild distinction) no longer exists but was intended - according to tradition - to be a home for his mother. It was kept up throughout his life as a holiday residence often being let to friends (photographs remain of its façade). He would build a theatre adjacent during his brief period of retrenchment in the mid-1830’s (which too no longer exists). The Lucca house was dim (like his second marriage); the third - the bungalow-like Villa Marianna, remains in Pescia and is named for his third wife. It stands on the flank of the hill upon the summit of which rises the church in which the maestro is buried. His widow put flowers on his tomb every week until her own death (1895) some three decades later. The number three continued to dominate his life: he had three children by each of his three wives (three of these children died in infancy).

xxxviii Mario Rinaldi *Due secoli di musica al Teatro Argentina* (Firenze 1978), 583

xxxix Another casualty was the youthful Donizetti whose important opera *Zoraida di Granata* was due to follow *Cesare in Egitto* at the Argentina; he was obliged to recast his *Zoraida*, with its prima of the 28 January he cut three numbers and gave Sbigoli’s role to a mezzo Adelaide Mazzanti as was so often the only possible expedient in those days. The two composers commiserated with each other it would seem even if they were never very close (Donizetti’s initial *Zoraida di Granata* (1822), exceptionally well-received, owed much to Mayr and thus scored political points as a kind of reproach to the sophisticated entourage of Paolina Borghese and Pacini. On its revival in Rome in 1824 as “*Zoraide di Granata*” it was discovered that Donizetti had surrendered to Rossini and the opera had a much less fervent reception!)

xl Claudia Pacini (1805-1883) married a successful businessman Antonio Belluomini in 1823,

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they were separated twenty years later. At their villa were given many musical parties. Antonio's brother Giacomo was a part-time architect for Paolina Borghese

xli Giuseppina Pacini (married Gaetano Giorgi of Rome; their baritone son Pietro Giorgi (1826-1882), had a successful career singing under the name of Pietro Giorgi Pacini; he married a Spanish bride, Felizia Tomasa Quintero, and their third child, Regina Isabel Luisa Giorgi Pacini (1871-1965) became one of the most celebrated *verismo* sopranos in the Latin- American world with a resounding international career which she capped by marrying Marcelo Torcuato Alvear, President of the Republic of Argentina in 1922

xlii Pacini's casual treatment of this important relic can only be condemned. He forgot it!

xliii The Duchess Maria Luisa had a certain sympathy with Paolina (she too had a Napoleonic past even as a Bourbon princess) and, perfectly ready to accept her Maestro di Cappella as the official lover of the princess, wrote at least once to Pacini to make discreet enquiries about her health (letter of 14 April 1823)

xliv They had failed to read Luigi Romanelli's preface :  
"Malgrado tutto ciò, il maestro di cappella implora l'indulgenza del pubblico per aver introdotti nell'azione...alcuni stromento di fiato, che Roma in quell'epoca non conosceva".  
Did Pacini feel that he should apologise on behalf of an orchestra unable to fulfil his antiquarian demands?

xlv The librettist Romanelli made it clear, in the preface to the printed libretto, that his opera was based primarily upon the ballet by Salvatore Viganò, its final dénouement indeed owes more to decorous balletic modes than to the strenuous (if equally improbable) ending of Spontini : the goddess Vespa appears and on behalf of Pallas Athene, Venus and Cupid, frees poor Giulia from her living tomb and the opera ends with a *vaudeville finale*. The *La Vestale* of Vincenzo Pucitta (born in Civitavecchia) librettist unknown, has both an authentic birthright and is loyal to Winckelmann; staged in London in 1810 where Spontini's opera was both inaccessible and undesirable it was composed as a vehicle for one the greatest sopranos of all times - Angelica Catalani - and in great measure musically has greater strengths than the rival version by Spontini

xlvi Its original dedicatee was the Empress Joséphine - a fact that almost certainly disposed Paolina to urge Pacini to take up the Milanese *scrittura* and supply a legitimate Roman replacement

xlvii In its mature form (that of the 1831 version) the opera contained no less than seven cori, two big ensembles and two *concertati*, though far from deprived of *arie* it was a monumental score appropriate to its plot.

xlviii The devotion of Berlioz to Spontini was perhaps the most bizarre trait among many

xlix From Act I survived the *cavatina* for basso: the *recitativo e cavatina* for the prima donna; the *aria* for tenor; and the *terzetto* (which had been partly recomposed); in Act II the *preghiera* survived. The *sinfonia* had been dropped in favour of a very brief *preludio*

<sup>1</sup> The translation is that of David Cairns [in] *The memoirs of Hector Berlioz...1803-1865* (London 1969)

This revised version of Pacini's opera was wildly dramatic and certainly as far as possible from the frigid French *tragédie-lyrique* so revered by the Gallic visitor, and asking for those kind of gestural *tableaux vivants* that we should now associate with silent film; in both the Pacini

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versions, Licinio makes his entry into the temple via an underground passageway appearing like a ghost before the lovelorn Giulia “*Hammer-Horror*” style, and in some respects the plot now anticipates both Pacini’s *L’ultimo giorno di Pompei* (1825) so soon shatter the Rossinian carapace and also *Saffo* (1840) which would restart his operatic career. Not only does the entombed victim now resemble (vocally at least) Ottavia in the first of these operas, a soprano as here with a similar *gran scena*, but the Gran Sacerdote Erennio is revealed - like Alcandro in *Saffo* - to be the father of a long-lost daughter threatened with instant death thus anticipating the ironies of his own masterpiece at its apogee. Three signals preface Giulia’s demise -just like those of Donizetti’s *Maria Stuarda*! Berlioz was deaf to any of this naturally

li Giulia von der Pahlen (born in St.Peterburg 6 April 1803) was a grand-daughter on one of the generals of Catherine II claiming descent from the family of the Empress Catherine I née Marta Skavronskaia (cfr Kristen Regina “*Love letter to a goddess*” [in] Apollo 1<sup>st</sup> June 2007) a family linked - via the Order of Malta - to the Ducal Litta family who had donated a Villa near Lake Como to her ancestors. She was an intelligent, archi-luxurious, rich, exotic and eccentric siren, invariably followed by a train of dogs and with a penchant for tenors (as she was also a supporter of the Austrian domination in Italy these tenors were always booed whenever they appeared on stage.) Her arrival in Pacini’s life co-incident with his declining *affaire* with Paolina Bonaparte, thus his first marriage neatly papered over the departure of a princess mistress and the arrival of the beautiful countess mistress substitute. In every way one lady handed him over to another, the countess had divorced her first husband Count Nicolai Samoilov in 1824 just in time. Pacini seems to have relished his status as sexual currency. She lived in the Via Borgonuovo in Milan in a palazzo with its own theatre where she presided over a dotty assemblage in which Austrian sympathers were conspicuous but otherwise was charitable, kind, and in great demand as a patron. She bathed regularly in ass’s milk which her admirers made into ice cream. There was scarcely any time when she was not the centre of attention, her actual liaison with Pacini did not last long and was over by 1829 when she moved on but they remained faithful supporters of each other, she adopted his daughter Amazilia, and was in contact with the maestro up to the time of his death in 1867. She went through a brief marriage with a basso-profondo in 1845 but this excursion into the F clef was not a success: in 1848 she refused to close her house to Austrian officers as requested politely by Italian patriots and instead left for France where she remained more-or-less for the rest of her life, marrying for the third time the Comte de Mornay in 1863. She was painted by Karl Briullov (Hillwood Estate Museum).and died in a famous chateau near Paris in 1875.

(Pacini revised his *Il falegname di Livonia* after the year 1825 in which the near-ancestress of his new mistress, Caterina, is suddenly given a greatly enhanced role - quite possibly on her behalf)

lii In Pacini’s *Temistocle* the modifications to Metastasio were made by Giovanni Anguillesi

liii AMZ November 1823, 774 “*Pacini composed here a new opera Temistocle. However, when one heard it, it had an exceptionally strong smell of Rossini, generally it had a cold response. Among the singers were Pisoni, Ferlotti and Herr Tacchinardi. And those one mentions with pleasure.*”

liv The aria has long formed part of the concert repertoire of Montserrat Caballé and a recording distributed worldwide

lv [Colonel the Hon.) Henry Hely-Hutchinson [in] Osbert Sitwell *Left Hand, Right Hand* (London 1946). The writer was his great-grandfather and made this note in a travel diary of 1817.

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lvi. “*Temeva che le sfruggisse a ogni momento, e s’illudeva di trattenerlo coi regali. Egli non ne accettò alcuno ...*”

Raffaello Barbiera *Vite ardenti nel Teatro* (Milan 1931) 96

lvii *Harmonicon* XXIII 1824, 213

lviii He nonetheless tenderly preserved extracts from the score in his archive

lix Pacini sometimes uses his real name in his memoirs, he came from a colony of English catholics who had sought refuge at Livorno

lx Such was the triumph of this cavatina that it later appeared in the printed vocal score of *Norma* in its French-language version, where, as ‘Vois, grand Dieu! vois ma détresse’ it appears as a bravura *scène* for *Adalgise* (No. 6 in the published vocal score) inserted after the trio that is supposed to end Act I

lxi Pacini op cit 37

lxii These “70 performances” are a result of over-enthusiasm on the part of the composer. (Pacini op cit 38) A more modern reckoning puts it at 38 repetitions during the year 1824-5 at the S.Carlo. But this figure is not to be dismissed lightly, the opera was indeed a tremendous success

lxiii *Harmonicon* XXIII 1824, 212. This delicious review is one of the most engaging of that sad publication. Indeed *Alessandro nell’Indie* was of course heard in silence (without any hissing) at the prima, as the King was there in State. Etiquette forbid applause; on the second night the audience rose to a reception that even *Harmonicon* could not have mistaken for anything but the most emphatic *furore*

lxiv Pacini op cit 34. Tutonic aspirations of this kind should not be viewed with complete cynicism, Mayr’s continuous reference to German composers was fully in evidence in the education of Donizetti, and Rossini was permanently accused of betraying his orchestration to the “*oltremontani*”. Only the Germans themselves disagreed

lxv *Alessandro nell’Indie* went on to almost a decade of revivals, the most important being those where a new tenor took the title role, most notably that with Giovanni David (La Scala) and that with Niccolò Tacchinardi (La Fenice), for both of whom Pacini supplied a new cavatina, changing the tessitura throughout the opera in its wake

lxvi Thus, Pacini briefly dismissed the *affaire* that had fascinated the tabloids of his day. He never mentioned her again, he named his first child after her, that is all. His extremely friendly relations, however, with other members of the Bonaparte family at the time of the Paris revival of *Gli arabi nelle Gallie* in 1855 when he was greeted with open arms - most notably by Napoléon III who made him a Chevalier of the Légion d’honneur - bely the possibility that any kind of blame could have been attached to his behaviour by her long-suffering relations

lxvii Letter of 29 April 1825. *Catalogue d’autographes Etienne Charavay* (Paris 1888), No.14. On 21st August 1824 she had written to Giacomo Belluomini from the villa he had built for her near Viareggio in order to be near Pacini, à propos this latter: “*I had told him before that his first lie would mean a breech. I have already forgiven him so often that I am tired at last of being deceived by a man on whom I have rained kindnesses. I have come to the firm decision*

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to break with him completely and to leave him to his lies and dishonesties - I am not less distressed as to them... All in all, I am wounded to the heart, I was not accustomed to such coldness, it is a shame and he will be sorry one day; then he will understand what he has lost [Kühn op cit 280]. But this was before the musical horse had bolted, the beautiful princess was not used to playing second fiddle to an opera, the lady who had left behind in the Hôtel Charost in Paris (when she sold it to the Duke of Wellington after Waterloo) a chiming clock in every room of the house each one a gift from each of her lovers in turn, had her reputation to defend. Pacini undoubtedly found her impossible, boring, made every excuse to avoid her, and finally shed her from his life. She had been an irrelevance in the life of a busy composer, almost from the start

lxxviii “*Sei pazzo*” said his father

lxxix She was buried in the family vault in Rome, her small casket placed between two Borghese Popes

lxxx Maria Isabella of Spain, the second wife of Francesco I, married in 1802 and equipped with what the French like to call a “*cuisse légère*” she would prove to be an important patron of Pacini

lxxxi The history of *Amazilia* confounds its actual timing. Staged on 6 July 1825 it had originally been commissioned for performance more than a year earlier, for the birthday of Ferdinando I on 12 January 1824. A manuscript libretto was prepared for this projected performance but something seems to have gone wrong, the text was not approved by the censors until the 20th January 1824 and the performance postponed. Regal and political (not to say amorous) problems appear to have intervened. In the interim the libretto was turned upside down (to disguise its resemblance to Mayr’s *Cora* staged in Naples in 1815?): the original role of Paromba had become Cabana; that of Iglow had become Orozimbo; two roles had vanished - Atala intended be sung by “Signora Gorini”, and Zalmiro by Teresa Cecconi. Whether it was poet or maestro or some other who was responsible for these adjustments is not clear

lxxxii It is the concluding section of the Gran’scena e rondò following the cantabile ‘Ah! non fia mai ver ch’io viva’ in the two act version of *Amazilia*

lxxxiii *Amazilia*’s subsequent division into two-acts was not difficult to achieve, there was already a central concertato in the one-act version (ie the important first terzetto) which could be promoted to the status of *finale primo*, and this refashioning simply involved the addition of two scenes - an opening duetto for soprano and bass ‘Tu sprezzar gli affetti miei’, and the ensuing coro, scena ed aria for tenor ‘Affanno spietato’ which was especially conceived for Savino Monelli in the role of Zadiro at Vienna. Though the famous *cabaletta* ‘Parmi vederlo ahi misero’ (later to be interpolated regularly into revivals of his triumphant *Gli arabi nelle Gallie* (1827) at the instance of Henriette Méric-Lalande) had already a place in the one-act score it was partly recomposed for the subsequent revivals at La Scala and the Kärntnertheater

lxxxiv The first is the furious ‘Frena quell labbro audace’, the second the serene ‘Dovè sei mio dolce amore’ with its ecstatic *stretta* ‘Mio cor, ah si, ti sento’

lxxxv The *Giornale del Regno Delle Due Sicilie* took the trouble to stress that *all* the stars took part in this repeat, so perhaps some urging had been necessary to get them together again

lxxxvi Antonio Niccolini (1776-1850) (a manuscript autobiographical note he supplied in 1848 at Naples confirms these dates) was of Tuscan origins, an architect of neo-classical

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taste and training (ironically his first juvenile engagement was to make alterations to the theatre at Pescia – now called the Teatro Pacini) in 1806 he had become *Direttore delle scene* at the S.Carlo, in 1816 he rebuilt the great theatre attached to the Royal Palace after a disastrous fire when it became one of the most famous opera houses in the world. He staged many operas by Mayr, for whom he seems to have cherished a decided warmth and who was commissioned to reopen the S.Carlo after the fire (with *Il sogno di Partenope* 12 January 1817), Mayr's *Cora* (27 March 1815), with its volcanic eruption, seems to have been the immediate precursor of Pacini's opera. In *Cora* the *finale primo* curtain is lowered upon a volcanic catastrophe, also in *Cora* – the volcano itself - as in the Pacini/Tottola opera - plays something of the role of protagonist at salient points in the plot. Almost certainly it was Niccolini's taste and choices that lay behind both this opera and the Pacini opera that came just before it, *Amazilia*

lxxvii Neither its title nor its plot owes anything to Edward Bulwer-Lytton's famous novel (published in Italy as 'Gli ultimi giorni di Pompei') which was not written until nine years later and may, in fact, have owed much to the opera which was staged badly in London in 1831)

lxxviii There is of course a direct link between Pacini's *L'ultimo giorno di Pompei* and Parisian *grand-opéra*. Before the première of Auber's *La Muette de Portici* (Opéra, Paris 29 February 1828) - an work often supposed to be the real genesis of *grand-opéra* - its designer Pierre-Luc-Charles Ciceri (1782-1868) *peintre-en-chef* at the Opéra made a trip to Milan in order to see a revival of *L'ultimo giorno di Pompei* at La Scala (16 August 1827) to study the mechanics of the terminal eruption of Vesuvius necessary for Auber's own *dénouement*. This puts Pacini's opera into its correct historical perspective.

[Cfr Catalogue *Auber et l'opéra romantique* (Paris 1982), 24]. Ciceri had contacts with the great Parisian theatre for almost all his life, the son-in-law of the painter J-B Isabey he had quasi-total responsibility for the décors of the Opéra in the vital period for grand-opéra between 1822 and 1831 – seeing the advent equally of *La Muette de Portici*, *Guillaume Tell* and *Robert le diable* ).

lxxix During his singing lessons with the princess daughters of the King that morning Pacini had warned them not to be frightened. They had passed the message on to their mother whose birthday it was. These princesses, due to be Queens and Empresses throughout Europe and beyond, carried Pacini's music to many exotic places – his kindness and sympathy with these gilded children led one of them – now the Empress Teresa Cristina of Brazil - to urge her husband Dom Pedro II to commission an opera from Pacini to open a new opera house in Rio

lxxx Cfr John Black *The eruption of Vesuvius in Pacini's L'Ultimo giorno di Pompei* [in] Donizetti Society Journal 6 (London 1988), 96-104

lxxxi An absence obliging Giovanni Battista Rubini – in compensation - to interpolate his all-purpose 'I tuoi frequenti palpiti' from *Niobe*, yet to be written, at the re-edition of the opera at La Scala in 1827 thus not only achieving personal celebrity but the opera had forty-three more repeats

lxxxii Cfr Donizetti Society Newsletter 79 (February 2000), 12. This throws an interesting light on the reception of Bellini and Mercadante in Naples: the other two operas he cited were *L'esule di Roma* of Donizetti and *Inès de Casto* of Giuseppe Persiani

lxxxiii It was revived at the Teatro Fenice in Naples in 1826/1827/1828/1835/1840; the Teatro San Ferdinando in 1829/1840; the Teatro Partenope in 1835 and the Teatro Nuovo in 1842/43.

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lxxxiv A major irony derives from this opera: the music of the fêted patriotic chorus from Mercadante's *Donna Caritea* 'Chi per la Patria muore', sung on one momentous occasion by two tragic dissidents en route for the scaffold, was "borrowed" by the *altamurese* (and not the only fragment he purloined from this composer) from a chorus in *L'ultimo giorno di Pompei*, staged in honour of the "reactionary" Bourbon monarchy in Naples!

lxxxv *Revue Musicale*, Tome IX 9 Livraison (Paris 1830):

*"Il faut avouer que tout cela est bien pauvre et mérite peu d'être rangé parmi les productions de l'art. Pacini n'est pourtant point dépourvu de tout talent. Il a de la facilité, une certaine habitude de la construction dramatique à la connaissance des effets d'instrumentation. Mais tout cela est gâté par sa négligence habituelle, et par ce mépris de l'art auquel parviennent les musiciens italiens habitués à fabriquer leur musique plutôt qu'à la composer... Que dis-je? Il lui sont funestes; car ils inspirent le dégoût d'une belle et noble partie du plus puissant de tous les arts"* [Fétis] This refrain by a failed composer of operas does not permit repetition except to point out that the opera was mutilated in this incompetent Paris staging; ill-cast (Donizelli as Appio Diomede was incapable of singing a role written for Giovanni David and he sang throughout only in a downwards transposition, omitting the show-piece of the opera - the grand air for tenor in Act II [*"Le public a marqué par sa froideur pendant la représentation de cet ouvrage, et surtout pendant le seconde acte"*], Méric-Lalande was in vocal crisis (she had been replaced as Bellini's favorite soprano by Giuditta Pasta) and the opera was a travesty – fully worthy of Fétis. Only his final statement *"je ne crois point que L'ultimo giorno di Pompei ait une longue existence à Paris"* had a ring of truth. (p278)

The production was totally unsupervised, though Pacini had gone to Paris for the staging, the outbreak of the July Revolution had obliged him to leave and the opera was staged belatedly on 2 October that year as a pitiable rump and with a negligence that was truly staggering. Fétis makes great play of his status as an authority, of his knowledge of previous successful operas by Pacini, but the only music he had actually heard had formed part of a pastiche put on at the Théâtre de l'Odéon on 1 August 1826, *Le neveu de Monseigneur*, which even with the very young Gilbert-Louis Duprez at the start of a great career, was not more than a farce

lxxxvi A pupil of Carlo Coccia. Chorley gave the performance a snub: "In one of his (Giovanni David's) favorite operas, *L'ultimo giorno*, by Signor Pacini, he was unlucky as having to sing with Mrs. Wood (Miss Paton) who, whatever might be her merits, did not number among them any knowledge of the modern Italian style."

Chorley op cit 19