

# Mayr in London

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He made his *début*, not entirely respectably, in the handbags of visiting primedonne. London-bound *dive* kept a supply of his more imposing *arie* tucked into the lining of their luggage simply to spark-up those operas insufficient for their fame. For this reason precisely, though Mayr's first complete opera to be heard anywhere in the city would be his 1798 triumph *Che originali* (with the less original title of *Il fanatico per la musica*) at the King's Theatre in the Haymarket on 19 June 1806, the musical "blockade" by Napoleon had been breeched two years earlier on that same stage when the latter's discarded mistress, Giuseppina Grassini, in league with the *evirato* Giuseppe Viganoni, had interpolated (pointedly no doubt) the duetto 'Parto, ti lascio' (from his 1796 *Lodoïska*) into Gaetano Andreozzi's *La vergine del sole*. It made a *furore* and Andreozzi was ignominiously reduced to sacrificial status instead of his heroine - his *vergine* was packed with *arie da baule*, a whole trunkfull of which, mostly by Mayr, took over to such an extent that more than one critic claimed that Andreozzi had been quietly deposed in favour of *Alonso e Cora* (of 1803) by the *bavarese* with much the same plot. Thus, the date of 14 January 1804 could be given as that of his actual *début*.

As for *Il fanatico per la musica*, it too suffered from an influx of *arie da baule*. Though largely intact it was "greatly heightened by many introduced pieces by Signor Naldi" as the press admitted. Naldi was the impresario and also sang the title role!<sup>i</sup>

Such was the destiny of composers in London in those days. But it was mainly due to these *arie da baule* that *Che originali* long retained its vogue in the city, its vaudeville-like plot and wayward subject-matter making it a perfect vehicle for a succession of unprincipled artists perfectly indifferent to the integrity of operatic scores. Having first sung the role of the zany Donna Aristeia in 1808, the incorrigible Angelica Catalani - to cite the most flagrant example of all - was still appearing in this key role (written for a tiny stage and under the vast proscenium of the King's Theatre) as late as 28 February 1824 by which time almost every note of the "original" music had long gone, the management calling it "*Il nuovo fanatico per la musica*" complaining of "*injudicious additions*" and "*extraneous matter*" and adding with despair that "*some new air was, on each performance, introduced to display the power of the Catalani.*"

Not that she had it all her own way:

*“The vibrating body of tone, the torrent of voice, that seemed beyond the power of space to diminish, still thrilled and astonished the ear. The success of the first night was prodigious; but the “Fanatico” in his present guise, was found so repelling, that repetition of this opera, again and again, diminished the audience most perceptibly...”* <sup>ii</sup>

In fact neither she nor Grassini had been the first to play havoc with Mayr, nor with Andreozzi. Three years earlier still Marianna Vinci, who had created the title-role in Mayr's first opera *Saffo* at Venice in 1794, had quietly inserted his seductive air ‘Già un dolce raggio’ into poor Andreozzi's *La principessa filosofa* at the King's Theatre (on 5 May 1801) where, described as a “rondo” and performed “with sweetness and taste” it was encored every night and Andreozzi suffered a baptismal upstaging. Nor were such sacred monsters the only ones to treat composers with disdain, Luigi Marchesi - *sopranista par excellence* - also plundered *Lodoïska* for insertion arias. He had himself created the role of Lovinski in that opera in 1796 so no doubt he had the right to do so but showed a special fondness for the aria ‘Oh quanto l'anima or mi consoli’ written for him by Mayr in the slightly-later *Lauso e Lidia* (of 1798), a genuine showstopper that he inserted not only into revivals of *Lodoïska* on every possible occasion but almost everywhere else too when he had the chance.

As a consequence this desirable item dropped into the handbag of his original Lidia, none other than Angelica Catalani, who appropriated it for insertion into her London seasons, singing it (completely inappropriately) in Marcos Portugallo's *Il ritorno di Serse* (on 24 February 1806) and on innumerable occasions later into *Il fanatico per la musica*. The incongruous apotheosis of this particular *aria da baule* in London, however, took place during a patriotic concert at Covent Garden on 2 March 1812 when, to the astonishment of the audience and in the middle of Haydn's *Creation*, she sang ‘O quanto l'anima or mi consoli’ which she capped with *Rule Britannia!*

Under such dubious auspices the music of Mayr became familiar in London, indeed it became faintly notorious. Even so, as a composer he was exceptionally well-placed in the city, he enjoyed an uncontested entrée into the Italian operatic world without ever alienating the powerful German lobby - then a growing force - thanks to his cross-border credentials.

A remarkably provocative event of that same year was the opening of the Pantheon Theatre in Oxford Street at the behest of a group of unhappy contemporaries eager to escape the baleful influence of Madame Catalani. Their opening salvo was none other than Mayr's farsa *Il careto del venditore d'aceto* on 27 February 1812 starring Teresa Bertinotti-Radicati - a determined antagonist of the divine superstar, she impudently followed this up with an opera by the diva's favorite, Marcos Portogallo *Il diavolo a quattro ossia Le donne cambiate*, subsequently capping both these cheeky items with *Le nozze di Figaro* (on 2 May) in which her famous opponent was about to make her first sortie as Susanna (at the King's Theatre). It is a comment upon the tastes of London audiences at the time that in this provocative series Portogallo was much preferred both to Mayr and Mozart.

These years were those when Rossini was conquering opera houses throughout Europe, with London impervious to his charms. He crossed the channel only in 1818. It was Cimarosa, Paisiello, Guglielmi, Pucitta, Mayr, Paër and Portogallo who made all the running in the British capital. A portentous offering was put forward on 10 January 1815, this was Mayr's *Adelasia ed Aleramo* which not only enjoyed a long run on the major musical stage but had a cast of exception. The title-page of the printed libretto reads:

***Adelasia ed Aleramo***  
***a serious opera, in Two Acts, as performed at The King's***  
***Theatre, in the Hay-Market, London. Sold at the***  
***Opera-House and no where else, 1815***

Marianna Sessi featured *as prima donna assoluta*, but the cast more momentously marked the very first appearance anywhere in the world of the French baritone Nicolas-Prosper Levasseur, soon to be a Donizettian stalwart but at this date merely a pupil of Mayr. These performances, with their intimation of a nascent romanticism, at last succeeded in moving Mayr beyond the realms of *farse* in the capital. This notwithstanding, he remained the composer of choice for *arie da baule* throughout the period, the all-conquering *pesarese* even - when finally he emerged at last in London - was in no way proof to Mayr's attractions. A *Cenerentola* starring Teresa Belloc on 8 January 1820 for example prompted a stampede for tickets by the fashionable of the day but added little to their levels of discrimination, among the "extras" added on this particular occasion, was a brilliant duet by Michele Carafa and "a good quintett (sic) in the first act we trace to its legitimate author, Mayer, of Venice".<sup>iii</sup>

In compensation, that same year, there was a novelty staging for the

same gratin - a revival of Mayr's *dramma sentimentale Elisa* (as *Il monte di San Bernardo*) in a handful of private performances under the roof of a music-loving Member of Parliament, Colonel Hughes. This forgotten one-acter of 1804 was staged in the drawing room of his London townhouse at 75 South Audley Street in fashionable Mayfair "For the benefit of the celebrated buffo Giuseppe Ambrogetti." Under such modish auspices, beginning, on 25 May 1820, the opera made quite a splash, it was professionally staged with a small orchestra and some high-calibre singers, the title-role being sung by Frances Corri and including Gennaro Placci, Eliodoro Bianchi and Paolo Deville, with Ambrogetti in the comic role of Jonas.

Even at this crucial date, however, a momentous development was about to take place, one ensuring that Mayr would achieve a genuine renown in London despite the fact that its theatres had fallen abjectly under the spell of Rossini (or perhaps *because* they had fallen abjectly under the spell of Rossini). A supreme *primadonna assoluta* would once more be the *fons et origo* of his vogue in the city and she brought with her, as *cavallo-di-battaglia*, an opera that was truly emblematic of her imposing style.<sup>iv</sup>

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*Medea in Corinto* was frankly unknown in London, that the Callas of the age - Giuditta Pasta - should have chosen it for revival at that time may well have been her own sly comment upon the Rossini-mania that had swept through the city only two years before, when Isabella Colbran-Rossini (who had been the first *Medea* in Naples) had failed so lamentably on her much-vaunted first appearances at the King's Theatre. Irrespective of any kind of willful *schadenfreude* however, it was a bold choice both for her and for the operatic élite. The opera

*"afforded, it must be obvious, abundant scope for the exercise of talents like those of Pasta, to whom the delineation of overwhelming and consuming passion was natural. The hurry and distraction of a mind convulsed with emotions as inconsistent as ungovernable, the thirst for vengeance, and the wild achievements of despair, were portrayed (sic) by this inimitable actress with a fidelity (that was) almost terrific"*<sup>v</sup>

*Medea in Corinto* made its first appearance at The King's Theatre on 1 June 1826. The press did not hesitate to announce that "it was reserved for a Pasta to introduce him (Mayr) to a British public in his true character, that of a serious composer of the highest order"<sup>vi</sup>

These notices did not stress that she had a supporting cast of some of the greatest singers of the age: in the first instance the basso role of Creonte was sung by Carlo Porto (in later revivals he was replaced by Luigi Lablache); the high tenor role of Egeo was sung by by Benedetto Torri (who would be succeeded later by Giovanni Battista Rubini in the revivals of 1831, 1833 and 1837); Creusa was sung by the famous Rosalbina Caradori-Allan and the key role of Giasone by the seductive and suitably macho Alberico Curioni (replaced in 1833 for one staging only by Domenico Donzelli). With such a series of casts and with such a tremendous primadonna the opera became the success of the decade. Pasta was unforgettable as Medea. The press had a field-day celebrating her comet-like arrival, the music retouched for the occasion by the composer. Vast crowds flocked to hear her.. The public witnessed a press campaign in itself innovatory, with a succession of portraits and images of the extra-terrestrial artist - material proof of mass-media insistence more familiar in our day than in hers: Pasta clutching a dagger; Pasta clutching her children; Pasta pleading; Pasta cajoling; Pasta bating Giasone; Pasta threatening; Pasta full of bile and costumed magisterially as if she was a reincarnation of the Empress Joséphine in a bad temper - with a neo-classical goitre worthy of Ingres.



**Giuditta Pasta as *Medea* in London in 1826**

A legion of writers and critics took a hand in recording her exceptional presence in this opera. It was soon recognised as an

epitome representation of opera in London at one of its rare moments of glory - with the triumphant diva at the very apex of her dramatic powers - her huge voice with its purity and compass in an unforgettable compact with music of force and conviction. To the credit of the composer it was the ensembles that made the greatest impression: the duetto 'Cedi al destin'; and the quintetto 'Ah! se manco a te di fede' in the *finale primo*, together with the duetti 'Non palpitar, mia vita' and 'Ah! D'un alma generoso.'<sup>vii</sup> But she drew tears with her agonised aria 'Ah! che tento? Oh figli miei!' which entailed acting of a span hardly ever to be encountered in the music-theatre of the day or in that city and left audiences weeping. Both the first and the second act finali were sensational.

Mayr too was subject to adulation, if not without a measure of *faint praise*. The general consensus was that *Medea in Corinto* was well-made, worthy of an honoured place in the repertory, but rather backward-looking, more than a trifle dated, its mise-en-scène of witchcraft, incantation and its culminating dragon merely redolent of the past:

*"The place assigned by several critics of eminence to Mayer in the scale of art is between Mozart and Rossini, but more near to the former than the latter. The Germans have distinguished him by the appellation of the diminished Mozart."*<sup>viii</sup>

The musical journal *The Harmonicon*, however, softened the above diminishing remark with a further comment:

*"Like the latter immortal composer, he abounds with melodies of the most original and expressive kind, What amateur is unacquainted with his 'Oh quanto l'anima; 'Già un dolce raggio' and 'Chi vuol la bella rosa?'"*<sup>ix</sup>

thus paying homage to his permanent crown - his *arie da baule*. The King's Theatre did him every honour, the printed libretto included a "*Biographical memoir of the Celebrated Composer.*" a commendation that was a true balm especially at the very moment when his dismay at the extent of Rossini's universal triumph was at its apogee.

As far as London was concerned *Medea in Corinto* would be Mayr's adieu to the city <sup>x</sup> but not without taking a long time to do so. Pasta repeated her *Medea* on a regular basis - in 1827, 1828, 1831, 1833 and in 1837 - this last date being more-or-less the opera's farewell anywhere in Europe in its century of origin. One further London revival of this opera remained, however, this time overshadowed by Verdi rather than Rossini

and without Pasta as its interpreter. But at the *behest* of Pasta even so. On 12 March 1850 *Medea in Corinto* reappeared and opened the season at Her Majesty's Theatre (as the King's Theatre was now known due to the advent of Queen Victoria). Pasta's letter of gratitude to the management on hearing of this prospective restaging has survived: "*Piena di riconoscenza*" "*Oh! beata l'Inghilterra! Che Dio la renda sempre piu felice!*"<sup>xi</sup> a letter recording the effusion with which the veteran *diva* had pressed her favorite pupil, Teresa Parodii, upon a reluctant management which dutifully responded positively. The cast was not without distinction and the opera was well-staged with Parodi in the title-role, Giovanni Battista Belletti as Creonte, Enrico Calzolari as Giasone and with Mademoiselle Giuliani (Mme Jullian van Gelder) as Creusa.

But according to the lofty *mœurs* of the day it had a cool reception, the music now deemed by a smarter generation to be "*tedious and almost commonplace*" it had "*owed its reputation to the correctness of its cold classicality... to the powerful acting of Pasta*" But even if not destined to remain long on the stage "*Parodi's performance created a lively interest, stamped, as it was, with the traditions of the great vocal Siddons of the Italian stage. It was powerful, impressive, and, of its kind, brilliant.*"<sup>xii</sup>



**Medea departs on the back of a dragon in London in 1850**

These salving words notwithstanding, Mayr's masterpiece was taken off swiftly and replaced by *Nabucco* (with Parodi as Abigaille). The city would hear no more of the bavarese composer for one hundred and twenty years. One brief query remains of the Pasta-era in London. On 4 June 1830 there had been an exceptional benefit at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane in honour of Mme Vestris with the intervention of a *primadonna* no less momentous than Giuditta Pasta - the incandescent Maria Malibran. The modern reader notes with some surprise that she was billed as singing the role of "*Giulietta, in the third act of Meyer's Italian opera Romeo e Giulietta*". Whatever could it have been?<sup>xiii</sup>

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It would be neat and tidy to claim that *Medea in Corinto* was both the *last* music by Simon Mayr to be heard in London in the nineteenth century as well as the *first* of his music to be heard again in the twentieth. But it would not be true. Though *Medea in Corinto* was certainly the first *integral* opera by Mayr to reach the ears of London after a long verismo winter an exceptional concert of operatic extracts presented by Opera Rara to order his re-launch at St. John's Church, Smith Square, on 14 November 1970, was decidedly a mixed bag. There were three soloists: Margreta Elkins, Lissa Gray and Athole Still and an orchestra conducted by Alun John. The concert offered overtures from *L'amor coniugale* and *Adelaide di Guesclino*, arias and duets from *Alonso e Cora*, *Ginevra di Scozia* and *Elisa* (an echo-aria frequently interpolated into *Medea in Corinto*), from *Che originali*, *Medea in Corinto* and *Le finte rivali*, plus a trio from *La rosa Bianca e la Rosa Rossa*. Indeed a wide foretaste of the forgotten potential of the maestro using manuscripts from the Opera Rara collection and featuring a prophetic introduction from its co-founder Don White. (Most of this concert would appear on a vinyl Opera Rara disc - ORH102 ).

Such an appetiser would soon be followed by more substantial fare. On 18 June 1972 at the Queen Elizabeth Hall on the South Bank was given the first modern concert performance of *Medea in Corinto* under the baton of Roderick Brydon in a version of the score especially prepared by Patric Schmid and Robert Roberts again under the ægis of Opera Rara. The title role now taken by Milla {Ludmilla) Andrew confronting a Giasone of Ramon Remedios. To endorse its historical significance a substantial souvenir programme was printed, lavishly illustrated with many of those brilliantly unflattering drawings of the never-to-be-forgotten Pasta together with a reprinting of a contemporary libretto in Victorian English for the edification of a bemused public. But the opera had far more than an antiquarian acclaim and duly made its mark for its surprises and the serious nature of both Mayr and its Opera Rara sponsorship.

The following season was bolder still. On 1 March 1973 *L'amor coniugale* - which had never been performed in Britain before - was given its first real hearing in modern times by Opera Viva in an edition by Arrigo Gazzaniga in tandem with the Mayr expert John Allitt. Sung in concert form at St. John's, it was given complete: Zeliska was sung by Lois McDonald, Amorveno by Richard Gandy, the tyrant Moroski by Ian Caddy, Peters the Jailer by John Tomlinson and his daughter Floreska by Susan Lees. The conductor, most memorably, was Leslie Head. To



complement this important event - nothing less than a revival of a forgotten opera with Beethoven intimations - its music was published in full score.

Pro Opera, in association with the newly founded (1973) Donizetti Society, then followed this up, also at St. John's Smith Square, on 2 April 1974 with Mayr's oratorio *La Passione* of 1796 under the baton again of Leslie Head. The role of Mary, Mother of Christ taken by Wendy Eathorne, St Mary Magdalene by Anne Collins, St John by Charles Corp and St. Joseph by Rodney McCann. As a chaser, Pro Opera gave a further concert at the same venue, this time featuring the Mozart *Missa solennis in C Major* edited by Leslie Head from a transcription by Simon Mayr, together with the first performance in modern times of the 1805 *Te Deum* for the Coronation of the Emperor Napoleon as King of Italy in Milan, with, as soloists, Wendy Eathorne (soprano), Cynthia Buchan (mezzo), Ian Thompson (tenor) and Michael George (bass). This concert once more in association with the Donizetti Society and given on 16 March 1976 with the Opera Viva chorus and Pro Opera orchestra directed by the irreplaceable Leslie Head.

Such sacred revivals induced some rare initiatives not all of them London-based. The most remarkable was perhaps the RTE (Ireland) broadcast on 8 May 1986 entitled "Introduction to Mayr" which featured Ian Caddy under the baton of Proinsias Ó Duinn and included the Sinfonia to *Elisa*, arias from *Elena* and *La Passione*, but most notably included the cantata *Annibale a Cartago* with Ian Caddy as soloist and David Carmody's horn obbligato. With the latter initiative in mind BBC Radio 3 took up the challenge making a recording of a special Mayr concert with Ian Caddy, Keith Swallow (piano) and the Northern Sinfonia conducted by Richard Hickox and offering a compilation including the *Sinfonia Piccola* in D Major (1797) derived from *L'intrigo della lettera*, Mayr's Piano Concerto No2 in C Major (cadenza by Keith Swallow), plus the Sinfonia from *L'amor coniugale*, an aria from *La Passione* and repeating the cantata *Annibale a Cartago*. This concert was broadcast twice: on 2 April 1988 and on 16 May 1989. On 16 May 1991 at St. John's Smith Square,, the Hanover Choir together with the Hanover Wind Ensemble performed Mayr's arrangement of Haydn's *Requiem for voices and wind instruments* in E<sup>b</sup> Major with Fiona Firth-Spiller (soprano), Maria Jagusz (mezzo), Richard Reaville (tenor), Ian Caddy (bass-baritone), Mark Newport (organ) and with Natalie Seymour as conductor. RTE Radio 1 responded with another important series of Mayr rediscoveries on 17 December 1991, this time with the Sinfonia from *Ginevra di Scozia* (first version and a complete performance of the *Tre Cantate pel Seminario* (1816):

1. *Annibale* (John Finucane - clarinet)
2. *Annibale a Cartago* (David Carmody - horn)
3. *La moglie di Asdrubale* (Alan Smale - violin)

with Joan Merrigan (soprano), Emanuel Lawler (tenor), Ian Caddy (bass-baritone) and the RTE Concert Orchestra conducted by Proinnsias Ó Duinn.

1992 and 1993 saw revivals in London of the *Stabat Mater* No. 5 and two performances of the *Missa per la Domenica di Palme* (one of which was liturgical). Elsewhere in Great Britain between 1994 and the end of the decade, emerged repeat performances of the *Mass for voices and wind instruments* in E<sup>b</sup> Major; of the *Te Deum* for the coronation of Napoleon as King of Italy; the *Messa con strumenti da fiato* and the *Sinfonia a due violini obbligati*.

[The *Te Deum* for the Coronation of Napoleon as King of Italy was repeated at St John's Church, Wolverhampton on 23 March 1996 with Susan Lees (soprano), Shirley Thomas (contralto), Peter Field and Ovidiu Haidu (tenors) and Ian Caddy (bass-baritone) together with the Wombourne Choral Society conducted by David Parkes in a performance that had a reception worthy of the capital]

The last word must go to Opera Rara, legendary champion of scrupulous revivals of neglected music from its base in London. The first volume of recorded anthologies in compact disc (a series alas fated never to be completed) “**A Hundred Years of Italian Opera 1800-1810**” begun in 1984<sup>xiv</sup> contains an important selection of elusive works by Mayr - including the duetti ‘Per pietà, deh! non lasciarmi’ from *Ginevra di Scozia*; and ‘Il pesciolin guizzando’ from *Le finte rivali*; the aria ‘Rendi il consorte amato’ from *L’amor coniugale*; the Tempest-Scene ‘Dove salvarmi?’ from *Adelasia ed Aleramo*; and the Sinfonia from *Elisa*. The second volume covering the years 1810-1820 (issued 1989) contains the trio ‘Dovè la destra, infida’ from *La Rosa Bianca e la Rosa Rossa*; the aria con coro ‘Amiche cingete... Caro albergo’ from *Medea in Corinto*; the aria ‘Ah! se mirar potessi’ from *Elena e Costantino*; the quintet ‘Sempre uniti insieme saremo’ from *Cora* with the romanza ‘Ovè la bella vergine’ from *Alfredo il Grande*; while the third and last volume from this regretted unfinished series for the years 1820-1830 (issued 1994) contains one item only from Mayr - the important andantino section of the *gran’scena finale* of *Fedra* ‘Se fiero, Ippolito’. All the above compact discs boasting a long series of important soloists and with major orchestras conducted by David Parry.

This succession of rediscoveries by no means exhausted the concern of this innovative musical entity (then) under the controlling hand of Patric

Schmid with his special interest in the music of the *bavarese*. In 1994 Opera Rara had finally issued a comprehensive recording of *Medea in Corinto* with four major appendices of additional music, thus as complete as was feasible at that time - with Jane Eaglen as Medea, Alastair Miles as Creonte, Raoul Gimenez as Egeo, Bruce Ford as Giasone and with Yvonne Kenny as Creusa, and once again conducted by David Parry. The booklets enclosed with all the above recordings containing exhaustive texts by Jeremy Commons, furnishing an invaluable series of fonts quite unrivalled for erudition and scholarship.

To cap the above, Opera Rara issued an initial recording of *Ginevra di Scozia*. This emerged as a revival in 2001 at the Teatro Verdi in Trieste “*Nel duecentesimo anniversario della prima rappresentazione assoluta.*” the first performance of this opera indeed having taken place in that magical city's Teatro Nuovo on 21 April 1801. This Opera Rara recording, issued in 2002, conducted by Tiziano Severini, features Elisabeth Vidal as Ginevra, Daniela Barcellona as Ariodante and Antonino Siragusa as Polinesso.

In this way, if only obliquely, Mayr has arrived in the millennium with something of a British cachet, and even if in this instance with a contested edition of one of his major scores - London was able to offer an uncontested boost to his world fame as it existed in his day, and as it now exists, even more convincingly, in ours.

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<sup>i</sup> Giuseppe Naldi (1770-1820) was to play an important role in London's musical life, a renowned basso buffo, an excellent pianist and entertainer, he organised, masterminded and sang in *Il fanatico per la musica*. He was a friend of Maria Malibran's father, the celebrated tenor Manuel Garcia, in whose Parisian kitchen he was accidentally killed when a prototype pressure-cooker he had come to view exploded in his face. The Donna Aristeia of this 1806 *Fanatico* was Mrs Elizabeth Billington (1765-1818) a London-born soprano who is credited with provoking Vesuvius into eruption when she sang at the S. Carlo of Naples in the 1790's - according to one half of the audience, because of the supreme beauty of her voice - according to the other half, because she was a protestant heretic. Her remarkable vocal span was equalled only by her waistline.

Mayr's *Originali/Fanatico* -with and without such advocates as Naldi, Elizabeth Billington and the divine Angelica Catalani - remained on stage in the Britain for many decades, reaching Edinburgh in 1828 and Liverpool in 1836.

<sup>ii</sup> John Ebers *Seven Years of the Kings Theatre* (London 1828), 216

<sup>iii</sup> “The Morning Chronicle” 10 January 1820 [in] William C. Smith *The Italian Opera and contemporary ballet in London 1789-1820* [London 1954]. 165. British authors went on referring to Mayr as “*Mayer of Venice*” for two decades after he had shaken off the shadow of the watery city. This was the same year that Belloc created the title role in Mayr's *Fedra* at La Scala with considerable acclaim.

<sup>iv</sup> Pasta had tried-out *Medea in Corinto* earlier, in Paris at the Théâtre-Italien on 14 January 1823, where it had been welcomed only for its great interpreter. The Parisians - fashion

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conscious to the core - treated this ten-year-old opera as a pathetic antiquity and judged Mayr to be an outmoded rival of the idol-of-the-moment, Rossini, despite a number of interesting modifications to the score (one of them by Donizetti?) Meanwhile Pasta's histrionics, though already impressive, had greatly evolved in the interim and came to a head in London. Thus, despite reservations about its vintage the opera returned to the repertory as a result of its staging *outré-manche* ,

v Ebers op cit 301

vi Quoted in the preface of the libretto for the London revival of the opera in 1831

vii A duet which had been composed in the first place for *Adelasia ed Aleramo* in 1806 and was regularly sung by Pasta in *Medea in Corinto* in Paris and subsequently.

viii Quoted in the preface of the printed libretto of 1831.

ix A fascinating question indeed in the face of the activities of Marchesi, Catalani and others. *The Harmonicon* XLIII , (London) July 1826, 134 [which contains a "Memoir of Simone Mayer" and a comprehensive resumé of the libretto of *Medea in Corinto* (pp134-140)]

x A revival of *La Rosa Rossa e la Rosa Bianca* at The King's Theatre on 16 February 1828 makes no amendment to this statement as it was a pasticcio - only nominally by Mayr. Its only distinction lay in the presence of its *primadonna* Giuditta Pasta. It was given three times. Henry F. Chorley *Thirty Years' Musical Recollections* (London 1862) dismisses the confection out of hand, but Pasta made a huge impression "*The impression of those three nights was indelible, as a 'thing of beauty', of might, belonging to the highest world of high art, which nothing could overpass.*" Two pieces of the music only were praised "*redeeming much of a dull opera*", both of them *arie da baule* by Michele Carafa: 'O cara memoria' and 'Mi vedrai nel ciglio ancor.

xi Benjamin Lumley *Reminiscences of the Opera* (London 1864), 242

xii Ibid 271

xiii The choice is between Zingarelli and Vaccai.

xiv The pioneering first volume of this series was initially issued on black disc, it contained two only items by Mayr: the Sinfonia from *Elisa*, and the aria from *L'amor coniugale* 'Rendi il consorte amato' sung by Eiddwen Harry. These two items would later be included in the compact disc issue.