GIOVANNI PACINI

AND

'MARIA TUDOR'

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Giovanni Pacini's Maria regina d'Inghilterra or Maria Tudor (the title of the Victor Hugo play on which it was based, and the shorter, more distinctive title by which the opera, too, was often known) was revived by Opera Rara at the Camden Festival of March 1983. Despite the interest aroused by that revival, the full history of the opera still remains untold, just as its composer, despite revivals of this opera and his most famous work, Saffo, still remains but little known. In this study, Jeremy Commons seeks to contribute towards a better understanding of both the composer and of Maria Tudor.

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In the ten years from 1791 to 1801, Italy gave birth to five composers who were destined to become major names in the operatic world of the nineteenth century. Three of them are still of major importance today: Rossini (1792), Donizetti (1797) and Bellini (1801). The fourth, Mercadante (1795), fell into long neglect after his death, and has only in recent years begun to reassume his rightful place in our appreciation of the period. The fifth, Pacini, was similarly forgotten, and still scarcely stirs from his long sleep of obscurity.

Giovanni Pacini was born in Catania on 11th February 1796 (1) and died at Pescia on 6th December 1867. Together with Verdi, he enjoyed probably the longest career of any 19th century Italian composer. His first opera was produced in 1813, the year of Rossini's *Tancredi* and *L'Italiana in Algeri;* his last (apart from one that was given posthumously) only seven months before his death in 1867, the year of Verdi's *Don Carlos.* It is only necessary to compare these titles to realise the enormous change in musical styles and taste that took place during the fifty-four years he was composing.

If none of Pacini's contemporaries wrote for so long, it would also be true to say that none of them wrote so much.

He himself claimed to have composed over 100 operas, and though modern estimates would be more conservative - since several of the works he listed were revisions, and a number of them more strictly oratorios and cantatas than operas - even the most rigorous estimate would put the total at over 70.

His family is believed to have come from Tuscany: certainly it was only be accident that he was born in Catania, for his parents simply happened to be there on tour at the time of his mother's confinement. His father, Luigi, was a singer who, beginning his career as a tenor, ended it as one of the best known buffo basses of his day. He was Rossini's first Don Geronio in *Il Turco in Italia* and his later roles included several in his son's early operas. They even, on one occasion, sang together; in Bologna in 1810, when Giovanni was a boy of 14, studying under the celebrated Padre Mattei, the teacher of Rossini and Donizetti. In a production of Mayr's *Elisa* Giovanni sang the tiny part of Germano, consisting of a single scene of recitative, while Luigi sang the more important role of Jonas.

The family background was steeped in music, for two uncles were men of theatre, too. They were ballet dancers, one of them a choreographer, which helps explain why, as a child, Giovanni himself began to train as a dancer - until he ran away from class and persuaded his father to let him switch to composition. Some idea of the continuing musicality of the family may be gained from the fact that in 1832 he wrote a small opera called *Il convitato di pietra* ('The Stone Guest'), a version of the Don Giovanni story, for performance by his relatives. His father sang the bass role of Ficcanaso, the equivalent of Leporello, and his brother Francesco the tenor part of Don Giovanni. Zerlina (soprano) was taken by his sister Claudia, and Donna Anna (contralto) by his sister-in-law Rosa. The only members of the cast who were not also members of the family were two friends, one of whom sang Ottavio while the other doubled the roles of Masetto and the Commendatore. In addition to all this, the second of Pacini's three wives, Marietta Albini, may also have been musical: providing she was, as has been surmised, the same Marietta Albini who sang in the first performance of his opera, *Il corsaro*, produced in Rome in 1831.

As a composer, Pacini never seriously rivalled Rossini, Donizetti, Bellini and Verdi. Indeed a cynical observer might conclude that his reputation rested less on his music than upon his numbering among his mistresses Paolina Bonaparte, the sister of Napoleon, the Giulia Samoyloff, a Russian countess with, it would seem, an avid appetite for composers and tenors (2). This would, however, be to do Pacini a grave injustice. His early operas, like those of every Italian composer of the 1820's, were written unedr the influence of Rossini, and, happy to be recognised as the disciple of a greater master, he was content to earn for himself the soubriquet of 'il maestro delle cabalette'. These early operas included a number which were highly sucessful, such as *Il barone di Dolsheim* (Milan 1818); *Cesare in Egitto* (Rome 1821); *Alessandro nell'Indie* (Naples 1824); *L'ultimo giorno di Pompei* (Naples 1825); *Gli arabi nelle Gallie* (Milan 1827); and *Il contestabile di Chester* (Naples 1829). But eventually, realising that he was composing too much too quickly, and sensing the inadequacy of this predominantly imitative mode, he retired from the stage, and between 1835 and the

beginning of 1840 devoted himself to teaching.

It was when he returned to the theatre after this absence that he achieved his greates successes and was most in demand throughout Italy. It was, admittedly, a time of hiatus, for Bellini had died and Donizetti had left Italy; Verdi was still only a beginner. If fortune favoured him in this, one must add that his success had also more valid justification, for this was the period in which he came closest to achieving a distinctive, personal voice of his own. Abandoning the 'operas of agility' he had previously written, he now consciously sought a musical expression which, without being any less melodic and lyrical, would be truer to the dramatic situations he was treating. As one of his contemporaries, writing late in 1843, expressed it

> *In this which we may call his second period, he has followed more closely melody and dramatic truth; he has studied profoundly the action of the dramas he has had to express in the language of harmony, as well as the character, the customs and the temper of the times of each argument he has undertaken to treat; so that his new operas appear like so many pictures, in which there is no subtle tint or fleeting shadow that does not correspond harmoniously to the total effect...* (3)

Even so, thoughtful, integrated, and moving though his music could be, it lacked the rugged energy and urgent sense of drama to withstand the onrush, within the next few years, of the Verdi of *Rigoletto*, *Il trovatore*, and *La traviata*. Like nearly all his contemporaries - Mercadante, Petrella, Pedrotti and many more - Pacini lived to see virtually all his operas eclipsed and driven from the stage. In later life, living in sadly reduced circumstances, he showed a pathetic gratitude whenever his most successful work, *Saffo*, 'la mia prediletta figlia', was performed. He would travel anywhere in Italy to give it the benefit of his presence and supervision. At the same time, genuinely distressed by the changing style of singing in his day - or, as he saw it, the degenerating standards of singing - he inevitably resented the vigorous, often brash influence of Verdi which he believed responsible. He had, after all, grown up in an age when the primary concerns of singers were still purity and beauty of tone. Of Nicola Ivanoff, who created the role of Riccardo Fenimoore in *Maria Tudor*, it was said that, 'working in his highest vocal cords, with that kind of singing which is called a *mezzavoce*, he produces effects of deeply-felt emotion in those same moments where other tenors move [their audiences] with an outburst of voice'. (4) As this quotation shows, Ivanoff was a member of the old school, whereas his younger contemporaries, less concerned with delicate shades of nuance, were aiming at dramatic effect through power. Verdi was regarded as the culprit responsible for this change: he was widely condemned as an abuser of voices, and not without some reason, for much of the expression and feeling he required of his characters - of Lady Macbeth, for instance - fell well

outside anything earlier composers had called for. As he himself said with deliberate exaggeration when he heard that Eugenia Tadolini was to sing Lady Macbeth in Naples: 'Tadolini sings to perfection, and I don't want Lady Macbeth to sing at all. Tadolini has a wonderful voice, clear, flexible, strong, while Lady Macbeth's voice should be hard, stifled and dark. Tadolini's voice is angelic; I want Lady Macbeth's to be diabolic.'

Today, when all the operas of Verdi have been revived and we are delving more and more deeply into the works of his contemporaries, we are discovering that the resentment of Pacini, Mercadante and others was not simply a case of sour grapes. Their operas occupy a middle position between the older styles and Verdi's vigour. They differ from Verdi's in the way they move: they are more elestic, they allow their lyrical passages more time to grow and expand. Verdi's operas are undeniably more taut and gripping in their onward drive, and it is right that they attracted the attention they did. But it should not be thought that their universal triumph on the stages of Italy was all gain. Inevitably much was lost that was different, besides much that was inferior.

Pacini's most successful and individual period was the decade between 1840 and 1850, when he composed at least ten operas which would repay reconsideration today: *Saffo* (Naples 1840); *La fidanzata corsa* (Naples 1842); *Maria regina d'Inghilterra [Maria Tudor]* (Palermo 1843); *Medea* (Palermo 1843); *Lorenzino de'Medici* (Venice 1845); *Bondelmonte* (Florence 1845); *Stella di Napoli* (Naples 1845); *La regina di Cipro* (Turin 1846); *Merope* (Naples 1847); and *Allan Cameron* (Venice 1848). If ever his music is to return to favour, it may confidently be expected that his reputation will rest on these works.

In his later career Pacini still enjoyed successes, such as *Il saltimbanco* (Rome 1858); *Gianni di Nisida* (Rome 1860); *Don Diego De Mendoza* (Venice 1867), and the posthumous *Niccolò dei Lapi* (Florence 1873). But his successes became rarer, for these are only a few among the many operas he composed during his later years. What was responsible for his declining popularity? Was it that his powers were waning, or was it that musical taste was changing more quickly than his style of composition? Initial examination of the scores of this period suggests no great changes of style, but that he was trying to 'modernise' familiar formulas through an excessive use of chromaticism. But this is only a tentative comment: it would need a major revival of his later works to determine the answers to these questions.

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Maria Tudor was first produced at the Teatro Carolino, Palermo, on Saturday 11th February 1843. Pacini's own account of the production, contained in his memoirs, *Le mie memorie artistiche* (Florence 1865), deserves to be quoted in full

> The Prince of Cutò, intent on giving lustre to his native soil, wished to assume the management of the Teatro Carolino of Palermo, and in these circumstances I was honoured with the task of composing a new work for that stage for the carnival of 1843. My friend, signor avvocato Tarantini, furnished me with the libretto of *Maria regina d'Inghilterra*, which in a short time I had ready for the eminent artists, signora Marini (equipped with the most smooth voice and manner of singing), Merli-Clerici (now the Princess of Cutò), the celebrated Ivanoff, and the distinguished baritone Superchi. *Maria regina d'Inghilterra* excited such enthusiasm that it was the cause thereafter of unpleasant consequences to many of my friends, among whom I may mention the worthy Benedetto Castiglia, Bertolami, Errante, etc. etc., and this on account of a chorus of tumult for the populace which took place in the [third] act. The celebrated Marini, Ivanoff, Merli-Clerici and Superchi moved the public to fanatical demonstrations, and in consequence I was carried in triumph from the Teatro Carolino to the seaside house of the Prince of Cutò, which he had placed at my disposal, passing through streets which, as if by enchantment, were all lit up an hour after midnight.

Far from exaggerating, Pacini here errs on the side of brevity for with *Maria Tudor* he scored one of the most electric and memorable successes of his career. Fortunately a great deal of documentation concerning this opera still survives: letters written to Pacini by the Prince of Cutò and Tarantini, original reviews and accounts by those who were actually present in Palermo, police reports of the disturbances occasioned by later performances. With the aid of so much information we may piece together a fascinating story, and amplify nearly every phrase of the composer's account.

Alessandro Filangeri (or Filingeri - both spellings are found), Duke of Misilindino and Prince of Cutò, came from a distinguished and old-fashioned family of Sicilian and Neapolitan aristocrats. His father, Niccolò, had twice been Governor-General of Sicily, (5) and Alessandro himself, though he held no political office, was Gentleman of the Bedchamber to Ferdinand II of Naples. Nor was the family without intellectual pretensions. Upon his death Niccolò bequeathed a considerable library to the city of Palermo, and Alessandro was the author of a number of farces and comedies, written for performance by his relatives and household.

By his wife, Maddalena Barretta, Duchess of Simmari, Marchioness of Mesagne and *Dama della Croce Stellata*, he was childless, but at some date previous to 1842 he had entered into a liaison

with the young Milanese singer, Teresa Merli-Clerici. She bore him three children, the first of whom was born about 1843, when he was a little over forty and she in her early twenties. Eventually, in 1850, presumably after the death of Maddalena Barretta (and before the birth of Teresa's third, legitimate daughter), they were married. Alessandro Filangeri, Prince of Cutò, died in 1854 at the age of 52.

In January 1842, Pacini received this unexpected letter from the Prince

Excellent signor Maestro Cavaliere,

It is many years since we saw each other. You used to come often to the house of my late father in Naples in 1824 at Pizzofalcone.

Since I have taken the management of the Royal Theatres of Palermo, beginning on 30 September 1842 and ending for the first year on the Saturday of Passion Week 1843, I should like you to write an opera for my company, with the obligation of not being able to write for any other theatre of Palermo at the same time. I should like to have the said opera for the end of October 1842, and should wish you to come to rehearse it. And also to stage your Saffo.

Three singers are already engaged, [including] Teresa Merli-Clerici mia amica, [and] the tenor Berardo Winter...

Since La Clerici is engaged in her quality of prima donna assoluta, you must let me know your conditions, which I flatter myself will not be too excessive when you consider our long-standing friendship.

Although Pacini's answer to this letter has not been traced, it is known that he responded warmly, welcoming the opportunity of seeing his native Sicily once more, and of composing for Palermo. He was not, however, able to accept the invitation for the end of October, the autumn season, since he was already committed to producing an opera at that period in Naples: *La fidanzata corsa*, which was eventually staged at the Teatro S. Carlo on 10th December. He suggested that the engagement for Palermo might be put back to the following Carnival season, and the Prince, after briefly hoping that the opera might be ready for 12th January, the birthday of Ferdinand II, eventually agreed to the end of January. The fee he offered was 'board and twelve hundred ducats'.

Pacini also mentioned that he hoped to obtain his text from Salvadore Cammarano, the librettist who, following the series of operas he had written with Donizetti in the later 1830's, had become the most sought-after author of operatic texts in Italy. For Pacini he had already written *Saffo*, and they were currently working on *La fidanzata corsa:* it was a collaboration which was to continue to prove fruitful in the future. On this occasion, however, Pacini was to be disappointed. Cammarano

apparently received his approach well, but when the date came for the delivery of the libretto he found himself so overburdened with other commitments that he sent word that he was unable to finish it. Pacini thus found himself, at an alarmingly late date in the procedings, without a text, and without even a subject. In this emergency he turned to a lesser librettist, Tarantini.

Leopoldo Tarantini was a lawyer before ever he took to writing for the theatre, and it was as a barrister in criminal law that he later won such renown that in 1875 he was elected a deputy to the Italian Parliament. (6) By that time his theatrical career was far behind him, but in his younger days, from about 1836 until about 1844, when he was in his later twenties and early thirties, he wrote a large number of operatic texts. He was never a *poeta di nome*, a librettist of the first rank, and with the conspicuous exception of Pacini most of the composers he worked with were of local reputation only. *Maria Tudor* and *Luisetta, o la cantatrice del molo* (Naples 1843), the two texts he supplied for Pacini, marked the highpoint of his theatrical career. (7)

And yet *Maria Tudor*, far from being a new libretto, had been lying on his desk for several years. Early in 1840 a text entitled *Maria d'Inghilterra*, very probably this same one, had been submitted to the theatrical censors of Naples. None of the documents so far traced reveals whether it was then approved, or even the identity of the composer who was expected to set it. Clearly, however, no opera eventuated, for now, in 1842, Tarantini was still able to offer it to Pacini. And Pacini accepted it: it suited the company which had been engaged for Palermo; it was immediately available; and Tarantini was willing to make such changes as were necessary, including the addition of a scene for Merli-Clerici for the beginning of Act III. Tarantini was even prepared to accept a reduced fee for it, as he explained to the Prince of Cutò when he met him in Naples in January 1843: *'I pointed out that my proposal was prompted, not by the custom which regulates payment for such works, but by the consideration that my work was a revision and not something I had started from scratch, and that Palermo was a theatre of limited resources.'*

Maria Tudor was thus an opera which had to be written in haste. Not only had the subject been settled at a late date, but Pacini, for all his eagerness, had his hands full in preparing *La fidanzata corsa*. It was not until mid-December that he was free to leave Naples and sail for Sicily, arriving, apparently, without a note of *Maria Tudor* on paper. Not surprisingly, the Prince promptly incarcerated him in his seaside villa. But like nearly all Italian composers of the time, Pacini had the ability to work, and work well, under pressure. He composed his opera, it is said, within the space of twenty-three days.

The company he found himself writing for was greatly superior to that originally proposed to him. Although Teresa Merli-Clerici was still described as prima donna assoluta, her right to choose her roles was restricted to comic operas, a qualification which 'placed' her in the hierarchy of singers, since the comic repertoire was considered of less importance than the

serious. Her voice, described as a soprano with a restricted range that was happiest towards the top, suggests that she would have been more at home in lighter, less demanding roles, though it must also be borne in mind that she was still very young, barely twenty-two. She had made her debut only two years earlier, in 1840. As Michele Bertolami,one of Pacini's journalist friends in Palermo, wrote: *'Signora Merli-Clerici, in the tenuity of her powers, is a commonplace artist, though not to be despised: she studies her utmost to render easy expressions, and has no thought to give to those that are more difficult.'* (8). Though one suspects that this judgement was unnecessarily severe, it is hardly surprising that in Pacini's opera she was allotted the second female part, that of Clotilde.

To give the company the extra lustre it required, two other *prime donne assolute* had been engaged, one for the early part of the season, the other for the later. The one who fell to Pacini's lot was Antonietta Raineri-Marini, nowadays remembered as the creator of the role of Leonora in Verdi's *Oberto conte di San Bonifacio*. Pacini himself, as we have seen, described her as *'equipped with the most smooth voice and manner of singing'* and it was, in fact, her technique and her beauty of tone that had made her name. As an actress, both in gesture and in voice, she had less to offer, and Pacini's Palermitan friends, again prone to harshness, had greeted her engagement with scant enthusiasm. *'La Marini'*, wrote Benedetto Castiglia, *'is no great acquisition: extremely cold in her acting, regular in her singing, beautiful in her mezzo-soprano voice, she has nothing, either in her singing or her gesture, to lift her to prominence and move an audience.'* (9) Again the double attitude of an age can be detected. Here was a singer who clearly belonged to what today we should call the older *bel canto* tradition, concentrating on purity of tone and precision of technique. The younger, more avant-garde spirits of the age, looking for dramatic impact and wishing to have their emotions stirred, remained unimpressed. Pacini - Janus-like - preserving the older vocal traditions but seeking to infuse them with new feeling, must have valued her more highly than Merli-Clerici while still having reservations ...

He would have had no reservations, however, concerning his tenor. The Prince of Cutò had originally spoken of Berardo Winter, an elderly singer whose career had been at its height in the 1820's. Though a worthy artist, he was no longer calculated to evoke great enthusiasm, even in a town as remote as Palermo. Since first mentioning him, however, the Prince had achieved a major scoop: he had succeeded in engaging the much more sensational Russian tenor, Nicola Ivanoff. As already indicated, Ivanoff, too, was an exponent of the older traditions of singing, but in this instance his prowess left no room for dissident voices. Pacini can have had no hesitation in choosing him, rather than Winter, for the part of Fenimoore.

The fourth member of Pacini's quartet of principals was a promising though not large-voiced young baritone, Antonio Superchi who, a year later, was to earn his place in history as Verdi's first Don Carlo in *Ernani*.

The season had not begun auspiciously. A 'moderate' success (Rossini's *Otello)* had been followed by polite unenthusiasm



for a work by a local composer (*Matilde di Monforte* by Paolo Fodale). The musical complexities of Mercadante's *Le due iillustri rivali*, in which Ivanoff had made his first appearance, had left the public bemused: and *Maria degli Albizzi*, the work of another Sicilian composer, Placido Mandanici, was set to a libretto so confused and obscure that its reception had become *increasingly* frigid as its performance wore on.

Even worse, open jealousies and rivalries were splitting the company into factions. The Prince of Cutò, though he had engaged other prima donnas to give the season the éclat that Merli-Clerici could not bring to it on her own, was determined that no one should overshadow her. When she proved less popular with the public than Antonietta Marini, he began to distribute free tickets to all who would applaud her and hiss her rival. (10).

If the season was to be saved, it was clear that a resounding success was needed. And that success came with *Maria Tudor*. Of the rehearsals we know little, except that Pacini had to conduct them on his own, legal duties retaining Tarantini in Naples until the last possible moment. (11). Since it was the task on an experienced librettist at this period to organise the staging of an opera - his functions embraced those of both present-day producer and stage-manager - this absence was serious. Tarantini did his best to make amends for it by letter, sending Pacini notes of the sets, costumes and properties. It is also interesting that he tried to anticipate difficulties in the production. *'Remember in the first chorus,'* he wrote, *'to make the women sit in the boats with the supernumeraries. The men will sing from the wings because they must be dressed as bravos so that they can appear at once with Raoul.'* (12) He was similarly concerned about the last scene: *'I have made it so that the executioner should be visible through the door. If you think that this glimpse will not be effective, arrange it so that he too passes behind the [tranparent] curtain as the Funeral March is sounding, with his axe on his shoulder, several paces ahead of the condemned man.'*

The first performance, on 11th February 1843, proved one of those rare and magical evenings when the atmosphere inside an opera house ignites: when singers excel themselves, inspired by the music they are interpreting, and by the growing rapport they feel with their audience. But above all it was a triumph for Pacini himself. *'The clamour of applause aroused by the first performance knew neither limits nor measure; the desire to see and féte the composer was never satisfied; his calls were innumerable. The triumph he carried off was complete, and entirely his own...'* (13) To cite but one among many surviving description of this and the second performance, the following paragraphs are taken from the Neapolitan journal, *Salvator Rosa*, of 15th February 1843

> On the first evening the music ... obtained the following success:
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> All the pieces were applauded to the point of enthusiasm, and among them the first act duet between Ivanoff and the bass Soperchi [sic] was repeated twice, the second act duet between Marini and Merli-Clerici twice, and the chorus of townspeople in the third act three times. Ivanoff's aria in the same act caused a decided furore. The composer at every duet and aria was called on to the stage two or three times, so that on this first evening he was called out about 42 times, and that cultured public paid tribute to him with the most lively and sincere applause accompanied by a rain of flowers and garlands. At the end of the performance many members of the public accompanied him home with lighted torches...
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> On the second evening, that is to say Sunday 12th, the same furore, and those warm and generous-hearted Sicilians reached the point where, aftyer crowning the composer on the stage with laurels, they accompanied him after the opera (14) with military bands and lighted torches, crying 'Viva Pacini' and racing through the principal streets of the city. Wherever the triumph passed...all the inhabitants came on to their balconies and repeated 'Viva Pacini', and the cries of the friends who accompanied him mingled with those of the rest of the inhabitants. When they arrived in this way at his dwelling, the composer, who was beside himself with joy and emotion, appeared on the balcony and cordially thanked everyone. For some little time the cries of 'Evviva' continued to heard in the distance, together with the applause with which those generous and grateful young men paid tribute to their friend and illustrious countryman...

The excitement was still running high when Pacini left Palermo on 14th February, but it was at this point that the opera began to run into trouble and provoke those 'unpleasant consequences to many of my friends' which we have seen him refer to. The following incidents strike twentieth-century eyes as nothing more than a storm in a teacup, but they illustrate most vividly that even here in Palermo, where the censorship of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies was considerably less strict than in the capital, Naples, the opera house was regarded with suspicion as a place where explosive public feeling could all too easily escape control.

The fourth performance of the opera, on 15th February, was attended by the Governor-General of Sicily, De Majo, the Duke of S. Pietro. By this stage the public was coming to know the opera well, and certain items were standing out as popular favourites. First among these was the chorus in Act III, *'Morte, morte all'infame Scozzese'*, which, with its dynamic onward rush and extraordinary last lines

> *Morte, strage, sterminio, sciagura,*
> *Londra tutta oggi un rogo sarà!*
>
> (Death, destruction, extermination, disaster,
> The whole of London today will be a funeral pyre!)

- was eminently calculated to raise the pulse of an audience, and even, with a little willing oversight of context, to rouse

its hearers to political fervour. On this occasion, those present were so eager to have it encored that, urged on the by the first violinist, one Leonardo de Carlo, they applaused long and loud. The Governor-General, in a moment of sudden alarm, ordered the lowering of the curtain and the suspension of the performance. The following day he instructed the police to search out the ringleaders in the applause, and, although the official documents do not specifically name all those who were arrested, it was doubtless in this rounding-up that Pacini's friends, Benedetto Castiglia, Michele Bertolami and Vincenzo Errante, found themselves detained. They were, however, comparatively small fry among those drawn in by the police net; the principal catch consisted of three hot-headed young aristocrats, two of whom were temporarily banished to provincial castles while the third was lodged in a 'house of correction' in Palermo. A day later, on 17th February, De Majo issued an edict which, reviving the old Neapolitan proclamation of December 1815, prohibited the repetition of any piece of music in the public theatres. A month later, on 15th March, a further edict brought Palermo even more closely into line with Naples. Audiences were forbidden to call forth an actor more than once, and any actor who was so called was ordered to make his appearance without delay. Even the manner in which audiences were to applaud was precisely regulated: *'not immoderately, or with shouts, but with a natural voice'*. As a final precaution, members of the audience were forbidden to enter the auditorium with walking-sticks.

Despite this strong official reaction, *Maria Tudor* was not actually prohibited. Replaced on 16th February by *Le due illustri rivali*, it was back in performance by 20th February, and both on this occasion and two nights later the Prefect of Police was able to report that there had been neither disturbances nor calls for encores. Indeed the public, with a rather greater sense of humour than the Governor-General, gained a token revenge on 8th March, when De Majo again attended a performance and, seeking to ingratiate himself with the audience, began to applaud those pieces which had met with popular approval. The rest of the audience remained silent. At the end of the evening he again tried to lead applause, but succeeded only in provoking hisses and reproofs directed against himself. This experience, too, would seem to have rankled, for later in the year he issued yet another proclamation modelled on Neapolitan practice, in which it was laid down that *'Whenever the Governor-General...as the representative of His Majesty the King occupies the royal boxes, it is forbidden to applaud the actors unless the Governor-General himself has first given the signal'*.

But the extreme touchiness of the authorities was most vividly illustrated by a very minor incident which occurred on 28th February, the last day of Carnival. To avoid the ill consequences of excessively high spirits, the Palermitan authorities had for some years forbidden theatrical performances on this day. But on this occasion the ailing and ineffectual Superintendent of Theatres, Giuseppe Alliata, Prince of Villafranca (15), allowed a performance of *Maria Tudor* because, as he put it, *'the persons who go [to the theatre] after supper [on the last day of Carnival] are for the most part priests and monks'*.

Mostly priests and monks they may have been, but among those

present there was a certain Domenico Gallo, a turner by trade, who occupied a place in the first tier of boxes. At the end of Act II, only a moment after the curtain had come down, he exploded an inflated chicken bladder, causing consternation similar to that which might result if someone were to let off a fire-cracker in a theatre today. There could be no question of his denying the offence, for when he was apprehended he was found to be carrying a second bladder, still intact. In his defence he pleaded that the last day of the Carnival was traditionally a day of high spirits and practical jokes, but added that he had had no intention of exploding the bladders inside the theatre: it was simply his misfortune that one of them burst as he sat on it, inadvertently, after standing up to applaud. This plea was not considered sufficently convincing to justify his release, and he was imprisoned for an indefinite period pending the pleasure of the Governor-General. His relatives supplicated on his behalf, and the Prefect of Police - fortunately a man with a due sense of proportion - soon afterwards described the incident as *'of very little importance'* and as *'a levity which has no connection with the previous disturbances at the Carolino'*. It comes as something of a relief to know that an order for the release of Domenico Gallo was issued on 11th March.

How long Castiglia, Bertolami and Errante remained in prison is not known, but one of the most heart-warming sidelights on this whole sad affair is the profound concern Pacini showed for their welfare. On 2nd March Tarantini, who as a result of his legalistic training was a considerably more hard-headed observer, wrote to him at his home in Lucca

> *Do not distress yourself further over the events which the first performances of Maria have provoked. If Castiglia, Errante, Bertolami and other friends are in prison for having applauded the chorus of the opera too warmly, it is not your fault. If anything it is I who should be upset, since I wrote the poetry, which is, however, in no way inflamable. Believe me, those gentlemen of the police push people around too much, and I am sorry for our friends, and for you, and also for this ugly way of carrying on. But let's stop there. We'll talk about it when we meet. But when will that be? They tell me that you are constantly engaged in trying to secure the relase of those in prison, and yet, besides involving yourself in unpleasantnesses, they are driving you out of your mind. An artist like you should have unbroken quiet... (16)*

* * *

When, at the second performance of *Maria Tudor*, Antonietta Marini had spontaneously stooped, gathered up a garland of golden flowers and crowned the composer, she had been likened to a

'muse crowning the brow of Apollo'. (17) The simile reveals strikingly how the Sicilians thought of the opera and its creators. As for Pacini himself, he must have hoped that he had written another work which, like *Saffo*, would go the rounds of the Italian opera-houses and carry his name abroad. On 28th October of that same year these hopes looked like being fulfilled, for at the Teatro Carignano in Turin *Maria Tudor* 'pleased very much', and Luigia Abbadia, who sang Maria, was 'overwhelmed with applause'. (18)

But success for an opera in those days was something very fragile and insecure. It depended quite as much on the whim of an audience, and on the momentary popularity of a singer, as on the music. Unfortunately the success of *Maria Tudor* proved ephemeral.

At La Scala, Milan, opening the Carnival season on 26th December 1843, it failed to live up to expectation, even though it had the benefit of the presence of Ivanoff, making his La Scala debut. The rest of the cast, with the exception of the young Adelaide Moltini as Maria, was considered undistinguished, and it was noted that *'the opera being mounted without any precision, on the first night there were several uncertainties and errors on the part of the executants'*. (19) The second and third performances went better, and by the end of the season the opera had been given as many as sixteen performances (as well as an extra performance of Act I on a night when most of the programme was given over to a piano recital). Nevertheless, the damage had been done, and adverse initial impressions were little if at all modified.

Pacini was present at this production, and would seem to have made several alterations to the text. The duet for Maria and Fenimoore in Act II was given a new cabaletta, and both the duet for Ernesto and Gulatiero at the end of Act I and the first scene of Act III (Clotilde's aria and the chorus preceding it) were supressed. While one can accept that Pacini himself was responsible for the first of these changes, and at least went along with the others, it is difficult to imagine his acquiescing in further cuts which took place in the course of the season. A note pasted into one copy (20) of the libretto indicates that the Act II duet for Maria and Clotilde was dropped (an extraordinary omission, since at Palermo it had been one of the most applauded items), and that the scene for the same characters in Act III, following the passing of the procession to the scaffold, was considerably shortened. It is also on record that, since La Scala was a much larger house than the Teatro Carolino, Pacini reinforced the orchestration, and so inevitably 'distanced' what had originally been a more intimate score.

This semi-failure at La Scala clearly discouraged other impresarios from mounting the opera, especially when a further production, at the Teatro Carlo Felice in Genoa on 1st February 1844, proved such a dismal fiasco that only one performance could be given. This failure was all the more surprising and regrettable since both Antonietta Marini and Teresa Merli-Clerici were singing in their original roles, and both were artists already known and popular in Genoa. But *'the public waited long and vainly for some aria or duet in order to attest their*



satisfaction in seeing Marini once more... Their impatience had to wait right to the end' when the last aria was found *'of some beauty'*, sufficient to justify *'unanimous and prolonged applause'*. For the rest, the music was judged *'rarely to correspond to the words and to express the sentiments of the poet. The action, which is of a grave and tragic character, requires severe and profound concepts; but Pacini, who, when composing this music, was thinking of anything else but Mary of England and the scaffolds she raised within the Tower of London, paraded thoughts and cantilene that are lightweight in character rather than otherwise.'* (21)

Before leaving these earliest productions, we should take cognisance of one further document: a letter written to Pacini by the Prince of Cutò on 17th April 1843. It contains evidence that the Prince had been approached by both Ricordi and Francesco Lucca with offers to buy the score, and that the price offered by Lucca, the eventual purchaser, was 8000 Italian francs. It also states that Merli-Clerici was hoping to make her debut at the Teatro S. Carlo in Naples as Clotilde - a production which never eventuated, perhaps for reasons of censorship. But most interesting of all, it contains evidence of Pacini's dissatisfaction with some of the music he had written for Clotilde. The Prince wrote

> *Since you have written to me that you would like to make changes in Clerici's part...I wish to propose to you that you might add a duet of rendez-vous with the tenor in the first act, and that the bass [ie Ernesto], hearing the thread [of their discourse], should then attack the famous duet with the tenor, while [Clotilde] Talbot retires into her house. Many believe that this would be appropriate, and it would avoid the letter which Fenimoore makes Ernesto read - and which, with Tarantini's permission, even a wretched schoolboy would find insupportable.*
>
> *Clerici's aria in Act III should be lengthened in the largo and interrupted by the chorus so that she does not remain alone [on stage]... Perhaps it was your penchant for Marini and for theatrical conventions that made you resolve to write it as you did.*

It is no use speculating how Pacini reacted to this rather officious and insulting letter: our only evidence lies in the text of the opera as subsequently performed. Suffice it to say that he never adopted the suggestion that Clotilde should sing a duet with Fenimoore in Act I, but that in the libretto printed for the Genoese production there is, in her Act III aria, a four-line intervention for the chorus between the slow section and the cabaletta. On this occasion Pacini - or someone else - certainly rewrote the scene so that Merli-Clerici did not have to remain on the stage alone.

Even if the opera's initial lease of life was short, Pacini at least had the consolation of knowing that his interpreters still believed in it. On 7th June 1843, when the Prince of Cutò had apparently still not made up his mind whether to sell

the score to Ricordi or Lucca, Ivanoff had written to Pacini

> *I am going to Marseille to sing, in July and August, and I should have greatly desired to propose Maria; but alas! she groans beneath the keys of the Prince!! I know that Lucca wants to acquire her. See if you can straighten out the difficulties, and then I would perform her in all the theatres where I am sought after.*

As has been seen, within a year of its original production, three of the opera's four original interpreters - Ivanoff, Marini and Marli-Clerici - had sung it elsewhere.

But the most extraordinary testimony of continuing faith took place outside Italy, a good year and a half after the opera had, at least for the present, disappeared from the boards at home. In the autumn of 1845 it was mounted in Barcelona, and if we can believe a review which appeared in the Neapolitan newspaper, L'Omnibus, (22) Merli-Clerici sang the part of Maria. It seems extraordinary that she, a high soprano, should have essayed a mezzo-soprano role, and one can only assume that it was much transposed. Her temerity met, however, with success. Though an indisposition of the tenor qualified the total effect of the evening - his Act II aria had to be omitted - most of the opera was well received, and Merli-Clerici herself met with considerable acclaim. After reading of her restricted range and *'the tenuity of her powers'*, it comes as a pleasant surprise to learn that *'In Merli-Clerici were admired the fine school of singing, a dramatic accent, and a pleasing and extended soprano voice.'*

* * *

Nothing more was heard of *Maria Tudor* for seven years. And then, in 1852, it was decided to revive it in the same city where it had enjoyed its first success, Palermo, with the same tenor who had first created it, Nicola Ivanoff. It was to be part of a larger package which would bring Ivanoff before the public in several operas, including a new one to be specially composed by Pacini. In theory it sounded an excellent idea, but unfortunately time had passed since 1843.Tastes were changing: Verdi had passed over the stage of the Teatro Carolino, just as he had elsewhere. And Ivanoff, now an older man, had been in retirement for two years. In *Le mie memorie artistiche* Pacini writes of the episode as briefly as he can

> The tenor Verger (23) in 1852-53 assumed the management of the Teatro Carolino of Palermo, and besides mounting a completely new production of *Maria regina d'Inghilterra* made me an offer to compose a new work for that theatre. The afore-

said Verger, knowing what an impression the celebrated Ivanoff had created in Palermo, wanted me to negotiate a contract [with him] to satisfy the wishes of the public. I thought, however, that it would be more appropriate if my friend Rossini were to act in the matter, since he loved Ivanoff as one loves a son, and was equally loved in return.All was arranged. I betook myself to that smiling city where so many honours had been showered upon me contrary to my merit. But this time it was a case of saying

Fortuna prende multiforme aspetto.
(Fortune takes many shapes).

The reproduction of *Maria regina d'Inghilterra* was no longer received with enthusiasm. I had assumed the obligation to compose the *opera d'obbligo* at La Scala for the following Carnival of 1853, and for this reason I had to leave Palermo at the end of November to fulfil the contract which bound me to signori Pirola and Cattaneo of Milan. Ivanoff, even though the public rendered him justice, after my departure wished to be released from his contract. I was to return to Palermo during Lent to mount *Rodrigo di Valenza* (24) which was already almost finished; but since Verger had released Ivanoff - who was the subject of so many memories and for whom I had written the part of Rodrigo - without informing me, and had engaged another tenor, who, however meritorious, could not perform what I had composed, I decided not to fulfil my obligation. I returned therefore to Milan...

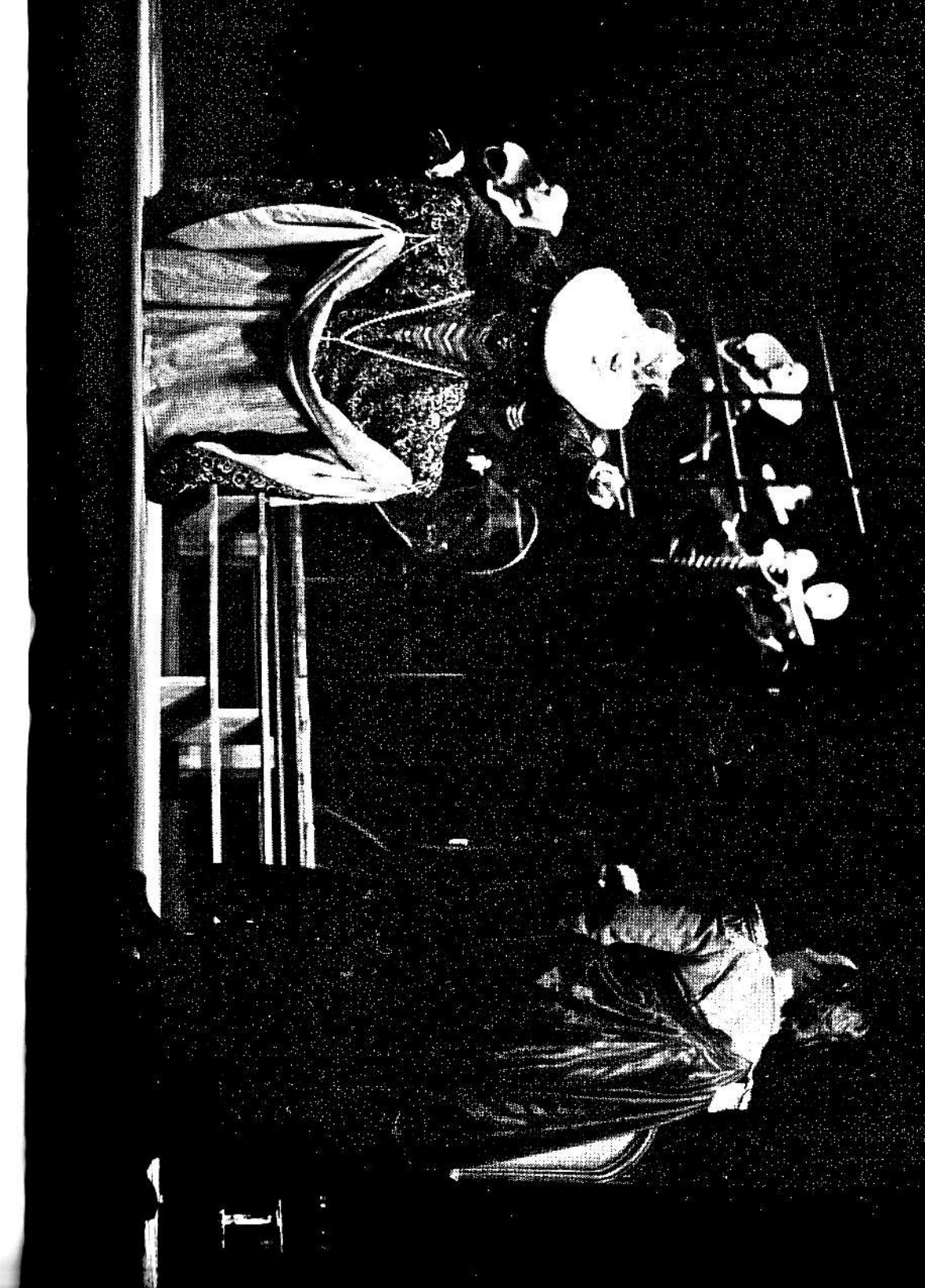
Although acceptable as far as it goes, this statement falls short of complete truth. Pacini would seem to have been anxious to spare his old friend Ivanoff, who, at the time he was writing - 1865 - was still alive. *'The public rendered him justice'* is a highly equivocal way of describing what really happened.

Ivanoff,from the moment he accepted the engagement to reappear in Palermo, was apprehensive of facing the public once more, and with good reason. On 25th October, Pacini wrote home to his wife

> *The rehearsals of Maria continue; but Ivanoff is in very poor voice.' God grant that the rumours may not prove true: that he has lost all his powers.'...Imagine what a disaster that would prove for your Nino [ie Giovanni, a diminutive form]. Enough: let us hope.'*

If not entirely true, these rumours were very nearly so, for the performances of *Maria Tudor,* beginning on 4th November, proved a traumatic experience for the once-famous tenor. Though he retained his high notes, the middle of his voice had largely gone. At the first performance he was heard in silence until he reached his great scene in Act III. Then, mustering all his remaining powers, he managed to sing his well-remembered aria with much of his old magic of line and sweetness of tone. The house erupted into applause and gave him the ovation his past history and reputation deserved.

It was, however, a precarious victory. The press was divided, at best guarded. Moreover, Ivanoff's form fluctuated from night to night. At the fourth or fifth performance he was so indisposed



that he had to omit both his Act III aria and his Act II duet with Maria. Hardly surprisingly, the opera did not hold the boards for very long: it was given seven complete performances, followed by a performance of Acts II and III in conjunction with a ballet.

Two nights after this last incomplete performance, on 27th November, Ivanoff made his appearance in the second of the operas he had agreed to sing, Bellini's *I puritani* (given under the title *Elvira ed Arturo*). If he had managed to sustain himself in Pacini, Bellini now proved beyond him. He was heard in unrelenting silence until the last act, when, to the embarrassment and distress of many of those present, he began to be hissed. At the end of the performance, there was, according to Filippo Colini, the baritone who was singing Riccardo, *'a menacing silence'*. The humiliation was too much for Ivanoff. Pleading the need for a change of air, he sought-and was granted-a relase from his contract.

Colini, who had also sung Ernesto in *Maria Tudor*, summed matters up in a letter he wrote to Pacini on 29th November. After describing the first night of *I puritani*, he went on

> *That is how the contract of Ivanoff came to an end. Certainly with the public he finds no sympathy on any grounds, and although he has not done so intentionally, it is nevertheless true that he has ruined the management, scrificed us, and embittered the public. The public, on the other hand, has shown itself most severe towards an artist who not only roused it to enthusiasm on a previous occasion, but who even now in the aria in Maria created such an extraordinary impression that all had to break into loud applause.*

If Ivanoff had been in better possession of his powers, there is little reason to doubt that *Maria Tudor* would have enjoyed at least a moderate success. Admittedly there were some who complained that *'as a whole the opera is too full of largo movements and of recitatives which, however beautiful, make it at times long and boring. It is evident that maestro Pacini did not write it with his watch in his hand...'* (25) But Pacini's music still had its warm supporters, and all the other singers met with approval. The vivacious Noemi De Roissi, who at Pacini's personal request had accepted the less important role of Clotilde as more suited to her vocal register, was called forth numerous times. Eufrosina Marcolini (as Maria) was applauded in all her important items, even if Colini, in another letter to Pacini, could state that she *'continues to excite the antipathy of the public'*. As for Colini himself, he was semi-indisposed at the first two performances, and it was not until the third that he was able to sing an aria which Pacini had composed especially for him. Then, we read, *'a finer and more deeply felt execution could not be desired. Precision, intelligence, grace, and singing which may be likened to painting in miniature are the gifts which everyone knows of Colini'*. (26)

As these last sentences reveal, the text of the opera had again been changed. Indeed before these performances in Palermo took place, rumour had so misrepresented the facts, accusing

Pacini of lowering keys and changing melodies, that he sought to justify himself in a letter published on 6th November in the Palermitan *La Lira*. There he acknowledged that there were three new items in the score: the cabaletta of the Act II duet for Maria and Fenimoore, the stretta of the Act II finale, and the cabaletta of Clotilde's aria in Act III, scene I. These, he explained, were *'all pieces which in the original score seemed to me of little effect'*. He also added that since Colini was such a favorite with the public, he had composed an aria for him. *'These are the only changes I have made... Please believe my good intentions'*.

When does a composer reveal the whole story? Pacini omitted to reveal that Clotilde's new cabaletta was not new at all, but was borrowed, with slightly altered words, from *Stella di Napoli* (Naples 1845). Nor did he mention that the addition of Colini's new aria necessitated the omission of the very beautiful duet for Ernesto and Clotilde in Act III, scene 2.

The revival in Palermo sparked off a second, minor series of performances of *Maria Tudor*. In January 1853 it proved a fiasco in Messina. A production also took place in Lisbon in October of the same year. But this second lease of life was no longer-lived than the first. The cards were, by now, stacked against success: it was no longer a new work; it no longer conformed to the popular style of the day; and it had nothing better than semi-failure in Palermo to recommend it. The last known 19th century production took place at Valletta in Malta during the carnival of 1857-58.

* * *

Every good opera needs a good libretto, and one of the decisive reasons why *Maria Tudor* failed to establish itself in the 19th century repertoire was that it is based on one of the more involved of the melodramas of Victor Hugo. Such an assertion may come as a surprise, for Hugo's plays were eagerly sought after as source-material for operatic plots, and it has often been remarked that their highly dramatic construction and sense of stage-movement made them more successful as operas than as spoken plays. But whereas in *Lucrèce Borgia* and *Le Roi s'amuse* the action was clearcut and provided Donizetti and Verdi with strong straightforward plots, *Marie Tudor* offered twists and turns of motivation: a tangle of plotting and counterplotting. While the spoken word could disentangle this complexity, it was basically unsuited to operatic treatment. Any librettist who approached the play was faced with a problem of how to thin the trees without destroying the wood: how to simplify the action while retaining its salient situations and essential characterisation.

Tarantini's achievement should not be underestimated. His libretto at least fulfilled the musical requirements of the opera of the day: it provided strong situations for a string

of varied solos and duets. He recognised, moreover, that the play provided an atmospheric and dramatic first act, an excellent halfway finale in the confrontation of Fenimoore and Clotilde, and a fine climax as Maria and Clotilde watch the veiled prisoner being led to the scaffold. All these major theatrical situations have been preserved in the opera as its most heightened moments.

It was in simplifying detail that Tarantini encountered difficulty. Two examples may serve to illustrate his problems:

In act I of the play, Hugo introduced a Jewish moneylender, an old man who knows the whole of the history of Jane (Clotilde) and has documents to prove it.He is stabbed by Fabiani (Fenimoore) but before he dies he manages to pass the documents to Gilbert (Ernesto). Tarantini's reaction was to omit such a short-lived character. Yet once he had done so, he found he no longer had any documents to prove Clotilde's identity. Solving one problem had created another. To extricate himself, he fell back on that oldest of all dramatic chestnuts: the amulet round the neck of the foundling child...

If his resort to such a tired convention raises a smile, it at least causes no difficulties of understanding as we read the libretto or listen to the opera. But the second example concerns a point which in the operatic libretto is genuinely bewildering. Why, at the end of Act III, is Ernesto led away to prison? Why, by the beginning of Act III, has he been condemned to death? Surely, for revealing a plot which purports to be directed against the life of the Queen he deserves reward and gratitude? The explanation is that Tarantini has here oversimplified the action, destroying the logical concatenation of events. In Hugo, when Gilbert (Ernesto) sells himself to Simon Renard (Gualtiero), he is really selling himself to the Queen. For it is the Queen who is intent on collecting evidence and even manufacturing circumstances to incriminate her faithless favorite Fabiani (Fenimoore). Ultimately it is Maria's complexity of character that Tarantini has simplified and impoverished. In the play she is more devious: an arch-schemer. She herself concocts the story of Fabiani's inciting Gilbert to assassinate her, and to give it colour she persuades Gilbert to simulate an attempt to stab her. Then, no sooner does he comply, than she has him apprehended. In Hugo his apparent guilt is thus manifest to the whole court, and his condemnation follows as a matter of course. In the opera the condemnation necessarily remains, but the earlier incident that made it credible - the apparent attempt on the life of the Queen, actually enacted in front of the audience - has disappeared.

Tarantini had other reasons, besides a wish to simplify, for altering aspects of Hugo's play. One category of changes is particularly interesting: those made either by the censors, or, more probably, to avoid provoking the censors. Victor Hugo, for example, named his hero-villain Fabiano Fabiani, and made him a Neapolitan. *'Italien, cela veut dire fourbe!'* exclaims the Queen, *'Napolitain, cela veut dire lâche!'* Since one of the avowed aims of the censorship of Naples was a patriotic preservation of the good name of Italy and her citizens, it



should occasion no surprise to find that in the opera Fabiani has been transformed into Riccardo Fenimoore, a Scottish exile.

To give a further example of this kind of change, Victor Hugo began his play with a scene in which a group of noblemen (Gualtiero's followers in the opera) vividly painted the woes of the country. Against a backdrop of the setting sun - an imaginative designer would surely show us a blood-red sky - they deplored the political irresponsibility of the Queen and her favorite

> A merry life! A Merry life! While the Queen laughs, the people weep, and the favorite gluts himself. He eats silver and drinks gold, this man!... What a tyrant this is who governs us from his bed! Never has so harsh a fate hung over England... There are seventy new gallows at Tyburn; the pyres are always glowing and never ashen; the headsman's axe is sharpened each morning and by evening it is blunt...My lords! My lords! It is an ungodly disgrace that all these English heads should roll for the pleasure of a wretched adventurer who is not even an Englishman! It is a frightful and insupportable shame to think that a Neapolitan favorite may draw out as many executioner's blocks as he likes from under the bed of this queen!

Nothing of this appears in the libretto. Writing for a regime which was sensitive regarding politics and the image of royalty, Tarantini replaced this vivid opening with an innocuous picture of London lit up as for a festival, with pleasure-boats passing to and fro on the River Thames, their occupants celebrating the beauty of a clear and untroubled night.

We may doubt whether it would even have crossed Tarantini's mind to try to preserve Hugo's opening. The censor's reaction would have been a foregone conclusion. Indeed what we have here is probably an excellent example of what William Ashbrook has called the 'most crippling' and 'most insidious' aspect of nineteenth century theatrical censorship in Italy: the 'intimidation of librettists'. (27)

* * *

One need listen to only half-a-dozen bars anywhere in *Maria Tudor* to appreciate how completely Pacini belonged to what we nowadays call the Italian *bel canto* tradition. His knowledge of the human voice and his sensitivity in writing for it are everywhere apparent. Everywhere one feels that he is writing for particular voices, catering for their individual needs and making full use of their individual strengths.

It is significant that when he was a young man, learning

his art, he was the friend and rival of Rossini, for Rossini similarly exploits his artist's vocal capacities to the full. Indeed, no other composers of the century expected their singers to be such virtuosi. How often, only a few years ago, when excessively robust Verdian tenors were to be heard emitting strangulated sounds as they struggled to perform Rossini's serious operas, did one hear it remarked that Rossini's writing was excessively and emptily florid? Only now, when a new generation of singers is emerging who can cope with the composer's deemands, are we at last hearing his music to advantage and realising that, for Rossini, floridity and eloquence were synonymous. The same holds true for Pacini. His first rule was certainly 'Know your voices'. *'I believe'*, he wrote in *Le mie memorie artistiche, 'that just as the good tailor knows how to cut and adapt his suit to the man, hiding the defects of nature, so an expect maestro ought equally to study the means of the artist, and above all ought never to deviate from those precepts prescribed by the art of music for the tessitura of the different registers, lest he force the voices in such a way that he rapidly renders them unserviceable as instruments.That is an unpardonable error...'* But knowing his voices and their registers in this way, his second rule would just as certainly have been not to write for them guardedly and unadventurously, but, within the limits prescribed by art, to write to the very top - to the very zenith - of their abilities.

The music he composed for Fenimoore, for example, immediately makes it clear that Ivanoff's voice lay very high - Pacini does not hesitate to take him to sustained top C's - and that he had a sweet, light, vibrant tone and a flexibility that enabled him to articulate feathery *fioritura*. Sung by such a voice, the music is magical, but performed by a voice of less than virtuoso stature, the effect would surely be disastrous. The writing for Maria invites similar comments. Antonietta Marini, though a mezzo-soprano, clearly had an extensive upper range with an extremely bright ring to it: Pacini frequently takes her to B flat. Nowadays, if such a voice is not forthcoming, one has no alternative but to 'adjust' the music - as was done at the Camden Festival - that is to say, to rewrite passages of it at a lower pitch. One may legitimately regret such a necessity, but when a singer appears who has the right bearing, the right temperament and the right vocal technique for a part, a certain ammount of adjustment is a small price to pay for the maximum vocal effect it is aimed at allowing the singer to produce. Such a procedure is, moreover, in keeping with the practice of Pacini's own day: whenever a score was performed by artists other than its original interpreters, it was customery to modify it to suit the needs of the new voices.

While writing with this brilliance and yet with this care for his voices, Pacini also aimed, during his maturity, at giving each of his works its own individual colouring: a colouring which would be appropriate to the nature of the subject, its period, its setting and its characters. In *Le mie meorie artistiche* he speaks of his efforts to give such a colouring - a classical colouring - to *Saffo* and *Merope*. Of this aspect of *Maria Tudor* he says nothing, but as one listens to the opera one realises that for both composer and librettist it belonged

to a highly romantic past: to a 'tapestried' period of history that was rich if sombre in its colouring. This is a tale of palaces and prisons, of clandestine assignations, of amorous intrigues, with, as its climax, a melodramatic and extremely 'visual' procession to the scaffold. The means by which Pacini achieved this colouring of his music were many. But, above all, in *cantabile* sections he almost invariably chooses to write in triple time - 3/8 (a *popolaresco* measure for Fenimoore's serenade), 3/4 (a modified *popolaresco* rhythm and melody for Fenimoore's *'Ah! m'amò qual aman gl'angeli'*), 6/8, 9/8, 12/8. Even the death march is in 3/4 time, with its beat frequently subdivided into triplets. Especially in the more long-drawn of these rhythms (9/8, 12/8 - see, for example, Maria's arias), he likes to build up rich, lyrical, Bellinian sequences of melody. Once created, each sequence will almost certainly be repeated. Triplets will give the movement extra elasticity; doubling the melody in the orchestra will make it sound even more gorgeously opulent.

In his fast sections, on the other hand, Pacini favours short-phrased, more obvious melodies in common time-signatures. Opera, he seems to be reminding us, is a popular art,and succes depends quite as much on keeping the gallery happy as on pleasing the cognoscenti. In such unashamedly 'barn-storming' movements as *'Il giuro tremendo'* at the end of Act I, the stretta of the finale of Act II, and the off-stage chorus of tumult in Act III, he is every bit as 'popular' in his approach as early Verdi.

Indeed, if *Maria Tudor* looks back to Rossini and Bellini in its *bel canto* aspects, in its more dramatic 'naked' writing it anticipates Verdi. Quite as much as Donizetti's *Maria Padilla* and *Maria di Rohan*, for example, it deserves the appellation 'pre-Verdian'. Many of Pacini's 'colouring' devices will be found to enhance both the historical flavour and the drama: his choice,for instance,of instrumentation (eg the solo *obbligato* which introduces Fenimoore's prison scene), (28) his predilection for flattened 6ths, or the unexpected harmonies he likes to introduce into final cadences. If the funeral march in Act III is one of the most memorable moments in the score it is because he is using so many colouring devices: writing in the minor with marked chromaticism and rich clashes and dissonances. The effect is to build up tension, anguish and anxiety - emotions that are released in the more mellifluous major section that follows.

Perhaps it is in his handling of recitatives and bridge-passages that he looks furthest forward. A recitative for Pacini was not a dry passage of declamation punctuated by chords. It was indeed declamation - highly expressive declamation - but it was set over constantly changing orchestral textures: a kaleidoscopic succession of short passages of melodic accompaniment, constantly changing as the sentiment of the words changed constantly enlivened by accidental harmonies and shifts of key. His melodic extravagance in composing his recitatives was noted by his contemporaries: an opera by Pacini, it was said,contained enough melodies for two or three normal operas, and many of them,far from being developed and used to the full,were wantonly jettisoned as soon as they were heard. *Maria Tudor* offers a veritable cornucopia of examples, particularly in the last scene



where there is not a single recitative in the conventional sense of the word at all. Pacini's fertility of melodic invention in his recitatives is so remarkable that one is tempted to claim for him a major place in the evolution from *recitativo secco* to a through-composed, continuous musical fabric.

And yet he remains a transitional composer, for he is pouring all this new wine into old bottles. As a composer who cherished the older traditions of singing, he also cherished the forms in which, all his lifetime, they had been enshrined. Donizetti, when writing *Lucrezia Borgia*, and Verdi, when composing *I Lombardi*, might quarrel with their prima donnas because they -the composers- wished to drop the convention of the *aria finale* in favour of a more natural, realistic ending. Pacini, on the other hand - and it is presumably Pacini who is responsible rather than Tarantini - uses Victor Hugo's startling ending - the line for Simon Renard (Gualtiero) to the effect that he has saved both the Queen and England - not as an ending but as a pivot, since he is observing the convention of ending with an *aria finale*. Nor is this the only example of a change to conform with convention. Victor Hugo began his second act with Fabiani (Fenimoore) repeating his Act I serenade, but ironically singing it no longer to Jane (Clotilde), but to Maria; and with Maria pretending to be all gentleness and effection, but really playing with her faithless lover as a cat plays with a mouse. It comes as a disappointment to realise that Tarantini and Pacini sacrificed these rich dramatic ironies and started their second act with items which are thoroughly conventional in form: an introductory chorus and an *aria di sortita* for Maria. Convention is similarly observed in the provision of solo arias for Fenimoore and Clotilde - neither of their solo scenes in Act III has any equivalent in Hugo.

Pacini was not a composer who had any wish to revolutionize the form of opera. He was happy working within the conventions as he found them. Indeed, one can go further and say that a concern for the overall construction and movement of his operas does not seem to have stood high on his list of priorities. He was not even a composer who always succeeded in maintaining the interest of his music over long stretches, though in *Maria Tudor* there are no lapses, fortunately, such as the jejune chorus *'Al crin le cingete la rosea corona'*, which mars the opening of Part II of *Saffo*. In *Maria Tudor* he comes as close as ever he comes to achieving a satisfying growth in dramatic tension within each act. Some of the credit for this must go to Tarantini. Together, rather than separately, they achieved the impeccable construction of Act I. From an unashamedly introductory chorus and bass solo, we move through a lyrical duet and the 'diversion' of the tenor's barcarolle to two highly dramatic duets. The growth in tension could hardly be bettered. The second act is not dissimilar though appropriately more concentrated. From an introductory chorus and the prima donna's *aria di sortita*, we move through two duets to the concerted finale, the 'crisis' or 'turning point' of virtually every opera of the period. Again we have both conformity with convention and a sense of sure dramatic growth.

But it is in the third act that Pacini and Tarantini reached their highest achievement. Maria Callas once said that one

of her criteria in choosing an opera was that the last act should eclipse all that had gone before: *'If the last act is not superior to all the rest, you may as well not sing it'*. Less patterned than the first two acts, the last act of *Maria Tudor* appears at first a little diffuse. But the principle of dramatic growth still operates. The first scene is introductory: an excuse to give Clotilde her solo moment. The second is more dramatic, contrasting as it does the chorus of off-stage tumult with a lyrical duet of reconciliation between Clotilde and Ernesto. And then, in the last two scenes - the tenor's prison-scene and the final tense scene of the execution - the opera reaches its culmination.

From beginning to end - from its melancholy, florid prelude, through its meltingly elegiac slow section to its buoyant cabaletta - the tenor's prison-scene represents Pacini at his finest melodically. We are reminded of *Roberto Devereux* (though the cabaletta here is superior to Donizetti's), for like Donizetti, Pacini is infusing his music with the maximum of feeling. Another relevant comparison is with Faone's *'Ahi! giusta pena io colsi'* in *Saffo*: in both these operas Pacini gives a pentultimate moment of supreme beauty to his tenor.

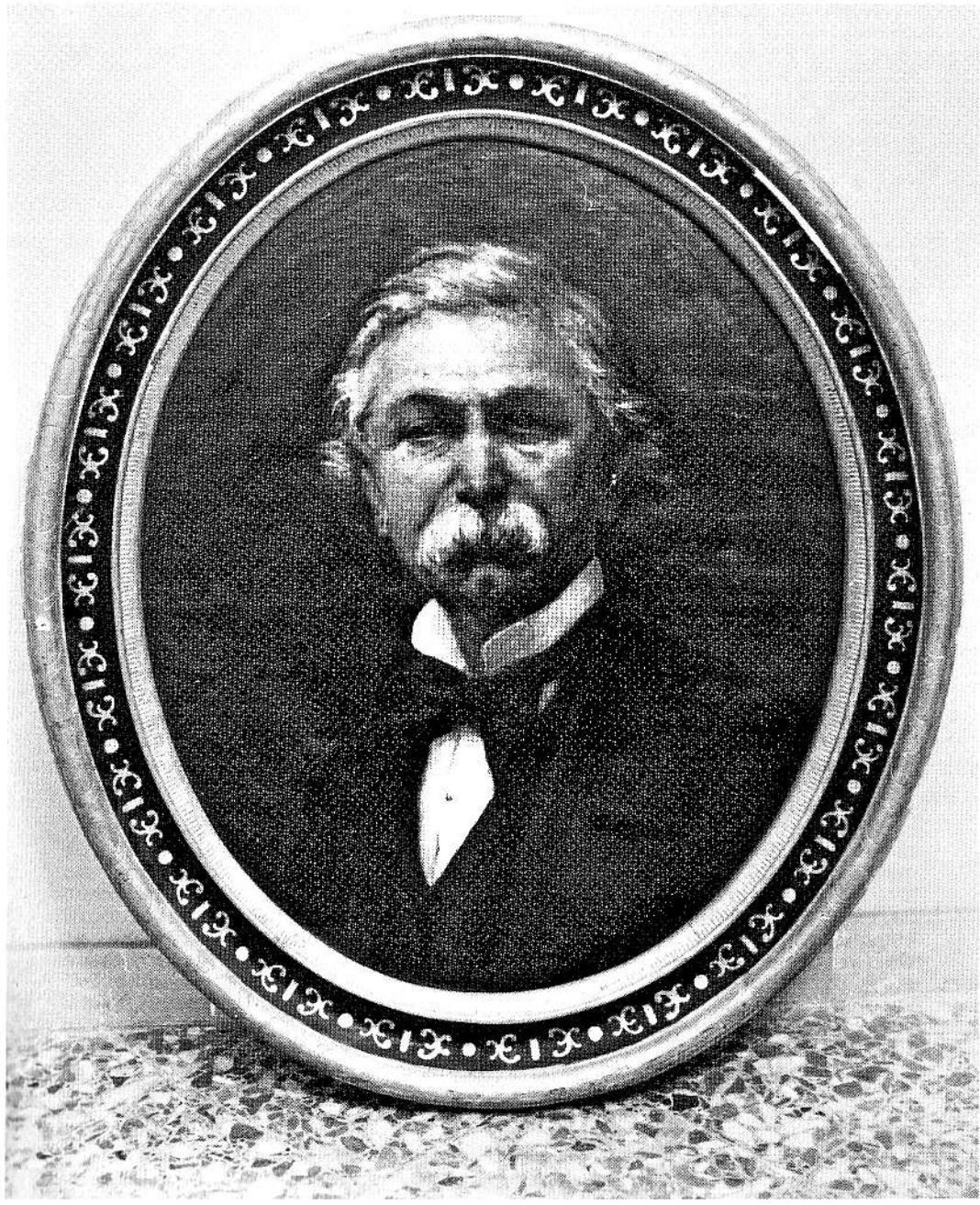
If this pentultimate scene shows his lyrical gifts at their best, the last scene is his crowning dramtic achievement. A duettino for Maria and Clotilde, in which the voices interweave and join in thirds, is flanked on either side by the owerful funeral march. As Michele Bertolami wrote, the *'funeral march contains the most heart-rending harmonies that have been heard since Beatrice di Tenda'*. *(29)* The dramatic climax is reached in the scene that follows, half recitative, half arioso - a remarkable example of the kind of kaleidoscopic transitional scene already mentioned. The actual moment of climax - Victor Hugo's original ending - provides no pause, but leads straight into the prima donna's *aria finale*, florid and expressive in the long 12/8 lines of its *cantabile*, emphatic and brilliant in the single verse of its *allegro vivace*.

But even when we have discussed the opera and analysed its music in this way, have we yet explained why the young Palermitan intellectuals of 1843 should have applauded so deliriously, and led Pacini home amid shouts of joy? Can we account rather more exactly for the renewal of their enthusiasm at one performance after another? Sicilians, they were applauding the work of a composer they regarded as a fellow-Sicilian. Nor was this simply blind patriotism. Bellini, it must be remembered, had died in 1835, leaving Sicily bereft of its *cigno*, its 'swan'. Donizetti had left Italy in 1838. Italians in general were looking for a new star to rise on the musical horizon, and Sicilians in particular were looking for a successor to Bellini. To many observers in the early 1840's, Pacini seemed destined to be the Elisha who donned the mantle of Elijah.

There is a particular appropriateness in the fact that Benedetto Castiglia, one of Pacini's friends whom we have seen cooling his heels in prison, should have tried to analyse the greatness he saw in both Bellini and Pacini, for, a man of perspicacity and ambition, he was soon to become the librettist of Pacini's next Palermitan opera, *Medea*. In a long article published early in 1843 in the Sicilian journal *L'Osservatore*, he pointed out

that Bellini could do two things, and do them sublimely. The first was to spin most exquisite, finely-drawn melodies, and then to make them follow and express the changing nuances of the character's feelings. The other, even though he wrote in only one style, was to be able to colour that style: to conceive his musical thought in terms of the essential nature of the people, the period and the emotions he was portraying. For all Bellini's uniformity of style, we do not mistake *La sonnambula* for *Norma*, while *I puritani* is different from either. Of Bellini's contemporaries, Donizetti was very nearly his equal, Castiglia believed, as a creator of melody, but never showed any sign of being able to give his musical thought a colouring that should be individual and inevitable in each separate work. Pacini, on the other hand, had both gifts: he approached Bellini in his long-drawn *cantabile* lines, and he, too, aimed to give each of his operas an individual colouring. It was this second feature which particularly impressed Castiglia. *'There is only one who aspires to this - and there is only one who achieves it - and that is Pacini'*.

History has pronounced against Pacini. For all his affinity with Bellini, he was not destined to be remembered as his successor: the one composer is still a living force in the opera-house, the other has been almost forgotten. But we live in an age of operatic rediscovery and reassessment, and those of us whose delight it is to recreate and relive the operatic past will surely try to suspend the judgement of history, to turn back the years, and listen to this music with the ears of Benedetto Castiglia and his companions of 1843. Then we, too, may well find ourselves crying *'Viva Pacini'*, and we shall relish *Maria Tudor* as one of the operas which, for something like a decade, made Pacini's fellow-Italians regard him as the most vital of all living operatic composers.



(Opposite) Leopoldo Tarantini towards the end of his life. A painting in the collection of the Biblioteca Nazionale, Bari.

A note on the text of 'Maria Tudor'

Pacini's autograph of *Maria Tudor* is lost. We would expect to find it in the Ricordi archives in Milan, for there is evidence (see Ivanoff's letter of 19th August 1852, quoted below) that all the material of the opera, originally sold by the Prince of Cutò to the publisher Lucca, had passed to Ricordi before the revival of 1852. (And, even supposing that the autograph itself had remained in Lucca's possession at this time, it should have passed to Ricordi when Giovannina Lucca, the publisher's widow, sold out to her rival in the 1880's). It is not, however, to be found in the Riccordi archives, nor yet in either of the other two major present-day Pacini archives - in the Biblioteca Comunale, Pescia, and the Biblioteca Nazionale, Rome. A search in Palermo has similarly failed to locate it. Some catalogues state that it is preserved at the Naples Conservatorium of Music, S. Pietro a Majella, but they are confusing this opera with Pacini's earlier *Margherita regina d'Inghilterra [Margherita d'Angiò]* (Naples 1827).

Fortunately the absence of the autograph does not mean that the opera is irretrievably lost, for there is a copy-a manuscript prepared by a professional copyist-in the Milan Conservatorium. This is the only known orchestral score.

A vocal score was published by Lucca, presumably soon after he purchased the opera in 1843.

The manuscript in the Milan Conservatorium does not solve all the problems. We cannot be certain, for example, whether it is the original, rather more lightly scored, Palermo version, or the reinforced Milan version. Dismayingly too, it is incomplete, lacking Act III, scene 3, Fenimoore's prison-scene. For Opera Rara's revival of the opera in 1983, this scene had to be re-orchestrated by Robert Roberts from the vocal score. We thus do not know what instrument originally played the elaborate *obbligato* in the prelude to this scene (strangely none of the original reviews mentions it), although we may safely assume that it was a member of the woodwind family. In Robert Roberts' reconstruction it is given to the clarinet. Strangely, too, the orchestral material of this scene was hard to come by even in Pacini's day, popular though Fenimoore's aria became. On 19th August 1852, before the Palermo revival, Ivanoff wrote to Pacini: *'At this moment I have withdrawn the music from Ricordi's stockroom, but I have found the orchestral score of the aria missing. I hope you will find it, since I set great store by it, and it is very difficult to procure'.*

Of the additions made by Pacini to the score at various times, Clotilde's cabaletta may be found, not in the form it appeared here, but in its original form as part of *Stella di Napoli*. All the other additions - including the aria Pacini wrote especially for Colini - would appear to be lost.

Opera Rara's performance, it should be added, was based on the Milan Conservatorium score throughout, except for the tenor's prison-scene, already discussed, and Clotilde's cabaletta, where the *Stella di Napoli* alternative was substituted. A number of performing cuts were made - most seriously in *'Morte, morte all'infame Scozzese'* - and the part of Maria, as already mentioned, was extensively adjusted.

Maria Tudor comes close to illustrating how easy it is for operas to disappear without trace. We are totally dependent on one - incomplete - score. But, in the words of the proverb, half a loaf (in this case a great deal more than half) is better than no bread at all.

Notes

Quotations from letters written by the Prince of Cutò, Tarantini, Ivanoff, Colini and Pacini himself (apart from that published in *La Lira*) are all taken from originals or copies in the Pacini archives in the Biblioteca Comunale, Pescia, and the Biblioteca Nazionale, Rome. Quotations from edicts and official documents concerning the first production of 1843 come from the files of the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Police in the State Archives of Palermo.

1. Not 17th February, as stated by some authorities.
2. Besides enjoying a brief liaison with Bellini, she was at one time or another the mistress of the tenors Giovanni David and Antonio Poggi.
3. Luigi Mira, in *Il Sibilo* (Naples), 12th October 1843.
4. *L'Occhio* (Palermo), 18th January 1843, describing his singing in Mercadante's *Le due illustri rivali*.
5. In 1816 and 1821. It is also interesting to note that Niccolò and Alessandro were the great-great grandfather and great grandfather respectively of Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, author of *Il Gattopardo*. Lampedusa wrote of the family and their estates in 'I luoghi della mia prima infanzia' (*I Racconti* 1961).
6. It would be difficult to overestimate the brilliance and importance of Tarantini's legal career. His *arringhe* ('harangues': speeches in defence of the accused persons he represented) were so celebrated that they were collected and published. His bust may be seen in the Hall of Jurists in the law-courts of Naples,

and his portrait is in the Biblioteca Nazionale, Bari.
7. Other noteworthy libretti include *L'osteria d'Andujar*(Naples 1840), the most successful work of Giuseppe Lillo, adapted from Scribe's libretto for Auber, *Fra Diavolo;* and *Don Carlos*(London 1844), composed by Costa.
8. *La Rivista* (Florence), 23rd March 1843.
9. *La Ruota* (Palermo), 15th January 1842.
10. According to Ottavio Tiby, *Il Real Teatro Carolino e l'ottocento musicale palermitano* (Florence 1957), p188.
11. Tarantini sailed from Naples on 30th January, at a stage when the first performance was expected to take place on 4th February. He is known to have attended at least two performances, for on the first evening he was called forth twice and on the second evening three times.
12. In the definitive opera it is not Raoul, the Lieutenant of the Tower, who appears at this point, but Gualtiero Churchill, the Lord Chancellor. Probably a slip of the pen on Tarantini's part.
13. *La Fata galante* (Palermo), 15th February 1843.
14. This second performance was a matinee on Sunday afternoon and ended at 7pm, so it is definitely the first that Pacini had in mind when he spoke of being carried hom in triumph *'an hour after midnight'*. Clearly both performances were accompanied and followed by demonstrations of exceptional enthusiasm, but it was the second especially which, in the words of Bertolami, *'certainly marked the finest page in the life of Pacini' (La Rivista,* 23rd March 1843).
15. The documents of the day are full of complaints of Villafranca's inefficient fulfilment of his duties. He must, however, have been in failing health, for he died a little under a year later, on 18th January 1844.
16. Lest it should be thought that the Palermitan authorities were totally without justification in their heavy-handed measures, it is as well that a word should be added on the careers of Benedetto Castiglia (1812-1877), Vincenzo Errante (1813-1891), and Michele Bertolami (1815-1872). All eventually made their names both as literary men and men of politics. Besides being poets and critics, all three were patriots, growing up in post-Napoleonic days when the restored Bourbons were finding it increasingly difficult to suppress the seeds of liberalism and nationalism that were the legacy of the Napoleonic era. At the time of *Maria Tudor,* censorship of the press allowed little room for the expression of political aspirations,and the energies of these men had to find their outlet in 'cultural' journalism. With the coming of 1848, however, they were all involved in the revolutionary movement and in the secessionist government which was set up in Sicily. The failure of that government to arm Sicily and so secure her independence is a matter of history; in the face of advancing Neapolitan troops it collapsed in May 1849, and forty-four of those who had participated found themselves trudging the roads of exile. Castiglia went to Paris, Errante and Bertolami to Piedmont. Eventually, after the unification of 1860, all three sat as deputies in one or more of the subsequent Italian parliaments.
17. *La Fata galante,* 15th February 1843.
18. *La Toletta* (Naples), 20th November 1843.

19. *Il Sibilo* (Naples), 4th January 1844.
20. In the possession of Richard Bonynge, who is to be thanked most warmly for making this information available.
21. *Gazzetta di Genova,* 3rd February 1844.
22. 30th October 1845.
23. Giovanni Battista Verger had earlier enjoyed a considerable career as a tenor. He had created roles in three Donizetti operas, *Pietro il Grande, Kzar delle Russie [Il falegname di Livonia]* (Venice 1819), *Olivo e Pasquale* (Rome 1827), and *La Regina di Golconda* (Genoa 1828), as well as Pacini's *Isabella ed Enrico* (Milan 1824), and Mercadante's *I Normanni a Parigi* (Turin 1832).
24. This opera was referred to at the time as *Lidia di Brabante.* From this date onwards it keeps recurring in the list of Pacini's works with different titles: *Lidia di Bruxelles, La punizione,* and, eventually, *Niccolò dei Lapi.* To what extent the text was changed with each change of title is not known.
25. *Il Buon Gusto* (Palermo), 8th November 1852.
26. *La Lira* (Palermo), 13th November 1852.
27. William Ashbrook, *Donizetti* (London 1965), p48. According to Carla Vannini, author of an unpublished thesis on Pacini written in 1954-1955, Tarantini did incur a reputation as a trouble-maker. She reports that there are letters in the Pacini Archive in the Biblioteca Comunale, Pescia, written by friends of the composer warning him not to continue collaborating with Tarantini, lest he become involved in further 'unpleasantnesses' like that occasioned by this opera. In fact after *Maria Tudor* they wrote only one more work together: *Luisetta, o la cantatrice del molo* (Naples 1843).
28. But note that we do not know the instrument for which this was written. See 'A Note on the Text'.
29. *La Rivista,* 23rd March 1843.

Acknowledgments

On several occasions in 1973 and 1975 I was fortunate to meet Cavaliere David Bartolozzi of Pescia, and his wife, Signora Adele Bartolozzi, who, in her first marriage, had been the wife of Pacini's last surviving grandson and last direct descendant, Giovanni Pacini. Both Cavaliere and Signora Bartolozzi are now dead, and if this article may be allowed to carry any dedication, I should like it to be to their memory. To both I owe a warm debt of gratitude for the unceasing encouragement and the great ammount of information they gave me.

Many others have also helped me in my research into Pacini's music and particularly into *Maria Tudor.* To all I should like to express my thanks, but in particular to Signora Anna Mondolfi-Bossarelli, formerly in charge of the library at S. Pietro a Majella, Naples; Signora Giuliana Angeloni and her colleagues at the Biblioteca Nazionale, Rome; Dottore Architetto Camillo

Filangeri del Pino of Palermo; and Bliss Johnston, who in June 1977 played the score through to me at the Sydney Opera House.

As always, my warmest thanks are also due to Patric Schmid and Don White, the Directors of Opera Rara, and to John Black, for their tireless cooperation and help.

Jeremy Commons

ILLUSTRATIONS

Facing page 70 — Giovanni Pacini, *Maria Tudor*: Production by Opera Rara at the Camden Festival, London in March 1983.
Act I Clotilde (Marilyn Hill Smith *soprano*), Ernesto (Christopher Blades *baritone*).

Facing page 74 — Act II Maria (Penelope Walker *mezzo-soprano*) accuses Fenimoore (Keith Lewis *tenor*) of infidelity.

Facing page 78 — Act III The finale of the opera, with Maria (Penelope Walker *mezzo-soprano*) giving her consent to the marriage of Clotilde (Marilyn Hill Smith *soprano*) and Ernesto (Christopher Blades *baritone*), while Lord Churchill (Assen Vassilev *bass*) looks on.

Facing page 82 — Act III The finale of the opera, with (*from left*) Clotilde (Marilyn Hill Smith *soprano*), Ernest (Christopher Blades *baritone*), Maria (Penelope Walker *mezzo-soprano*), and Lord Churchill (Assen Vassilev *bass*).

(Photographs by Jeremy Commons)

(Overleaf) A reconstruction of the last devastating scene of Pacini's opera *L'ultimo giorno di Pompei* as it must have appeared at its prima in Naples in November 1825. After the principal actors had left the stage leaving only a handful of cowering slaves, the false columns at either side of the stage and an entire false entablature collapsed giving the impression that the S. Carlo was about to disintegrate, to the horror and dismay of the audience - many of whom made a quick exit.