Gli Arabi nelle Gallie at New York's Italian Opera House

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It seems unlikely indeed that a Pacini opera would be one of the biggest hits of the season in New York. But precisely that happened in 1834 when *Gli Arabi nelle Gallie* triumphed at Italian Opera House, the earliest theater in the United States built especially for operatic performances.. The brief history of the house, the opera company for which it was erected, and the largely unknown singers who performed there is a fascinating chapter in the theatrical history of New York, and one that invites further exploration.

The house was built in 1833 with money contributed by some of the wealthiest families in Manhattan, and its principal promoter was none other than Lorenzo da Ponte. In keeping with the status of its patrons, it boasted sumptuous amenities and resplendent decor. The glittering opening night of November 18, 1833– attended by all the society of Manhattan - featured a performance of Rossini's *La gazza ladra.* The following day's the Evening Star painted a vivid picture of the house's interior:

The stage is large, very large - too much so, probably for operatic representations alone. The dome is most richly painted with representations of the muses, and other decorations, which equal, if it does not surpass, in lightness and elegance, any theatrical dome in Europe – it is the chef d'oeuvre of the house. The pannels which divide the first and second tier of boxes, are painted in gold and crimson devices, on a light ground exceedingly brilliant and rich; indeed, for a theatre, crimson should be a paramount color, as it has effect on the dress circle. The sofa seats, and seats in the pit, have mahogany arms and moulding, and blue damask covering. The second tier are all private boxes, which are richly decorated and ornamented with gold and satin, according to the taste and liberality of the proprietors; some of them are truly splendid. The general drop-scene represents an Italian landscape.[1]

A company of talented singers, instrumentalists, and theatrical professionals – most of them Italian - had been specially recruited.[2] In a letter posted from Paris on July 30, 1833, the house's manager Vincenzo Rivafinoli reported that he and the new company were due to set sail for the United States on the 24th of August. He assured subscribers that New York would now have a company "selected for its talent, beauty, and irreproachable conduct." [3] The jewels in the troop's crown were the prima donna soprano Clementina Fanti and the young contralto Luigia Bordogni. Fanti's sister Rosina was also employed as a comprimaria. Rivafinoli had already engaged one tenor – Sign. Fabi - and was in the process of negotiating a contract with a second, unnamed in the letter but almost certainly Luigi Ravaglia. It was to be an Herculean season – between the November opening and April (when the company toured to Philadelphia) eight different operas were given,[4] with many benefit concerts that included music from other works. At any given time, the cast would be rehearsing one opera while another was being performed on alternate nights. It was a

grueling schedule. During the run of La donna del lago, *Gli arabi nelle Gallie* was announced as being in rehearsal. Its North American premiere took place on January 20, 1834.

With any production of *Arabi* the issue arises of what version was performed. As Alexander Weatherson noted in Newsletter 96, from the time of its 1827 premiere up to its revival in Paris in 1855 Pacini repeatedly dismantled and re-assembled it, deftly adding, subtracting, and revising pieces in what amounted to a musical shell-game. To muddy the waters further, the New York production of *Arabi* did not only include music by Pacini. The notices in the press made the opera sound like something of a Frankenstein monster. The Morning Courier's discussion of the score began by distinguishing *'that portion of it composed by Pacini'* [5] from the parts believed to have been transplants. The press – despite an apparent lack of comfort and familiarity with some of the prevailing performance practices in Italian opera – took a very favorable view of these substitutions, even encouraging them. The conductor Carlo Salvioni apparently took notice, for when the Morning Courier expressed dismay at the lack of an overture he was reported to have obliged by grafting on *Anna Bolena*'s sinfonia at the February 1 performance! [6]

The source of most of these borrowings was alleged to have been Rossini. The Evening Star reported: *"Added to* [Pacini's] *own music, we notice a selection from Il Mose* [sic], *one or two from Bianca e Falliero, and another from Ricciardo e Zoraide, which, in addition to their own excellence, are judiciously and aptly introduced."* [7] The Courrier des Etats-Units too mentioned the insertion of two pieces into Act I: the duet 'Serbami ognor si fido' from Rossini's *Semiramide*, and unspecified material from *Ricciardo e Zoraide*. [8] Though none of the first three operas mentioned above had been produced in the United States, an inventory of items held by the manager Rivafinoli shows that the scores of *Anna Bolena, Mosè in Egitto, Bianca e Falliero* , and *Ricciardo e Zoraide* (among others) were all at Salvioni's fingertips.[9] **[See Table]** Examination of the New York libretto confirms that the *Semiramide* duet was lifted wholesale from that opera with only a few words changed to adapt it to its new home. But the remaining music was all by Pacini. Ezilda's preghiera, 'Lo sguardo suo signor' was composed for the San Carlo's 1827 production. In a clear indication of the opera's checkered history, both of Leodato's arias were originally crafted as alternate arias for Ezilda, but were subsequently transposed down for Leodato – the sortita, 'Quando core a te ridenti', at the behest of Rosa Mariani in 1828. The cabaletta 'Quel volto sereno' of Agobar's Act II aria was originally composed for the Milan premiere, but was not sung until the revival at Trieste in 1831. The *aria di sorbetto* for the Abbess, Zarele, 'Quanto più s'affanna un'alma' which includes an introductory recitative for her and Gondair, was composed for the 1830 production in Livorno; and Ezilda's second aria 'Fra tante angoscie e pene' was a popular *aria da baule* composed for an earlier opera. [10] The verses of all other pieces in the New York libretto – with the exception of a few inconsequential lines of recitative that were dropped – exactly match those of the Milan premiere. With the exception of the *Semiramide* duet, the putative raiding of Rossini scores reported in the press was, therefore, a figment of the reviewers' imagination.

Comparison of 1827 Milan to 1834 New York Libretti
(shaded portions occur in New York libretto but not in Milan)

1827 Milan	1834 New York
No overture	No overture on January 20, 22, 24, 27. Overture purported to be that of *Anna Bolena* inserted beginning with February 1 performance.
Act I	**Act I**
Introduction: Chorus Ahi! Qual tremendo suono!	Introduction: Chorus Ahi! Qual tremendo suono!
Recitative (Leodato, Gondair): Ad Ezilda...ahi! qual memora! Aria (Leodato): La bella speme	Recitative(Leod./Gond.): Al suo tramonto è giunta Aria (Leodato): Quando core a te ridenti (By Pacini, 1828 alternate aria for Meric-Lalande, later adapted for Rosa Mariani)
Recitative (Leod., Gond.): Fra le sventure o prence	Recitative: Fra le sventure o prence
Recitative (Leod. Ezilda): A te, Leodato	Recitative: A te, Leodato
Duet (Ezil., Leod.): Se mal s'esprime il labbro...Se avvien, che l'alma	Duet (Ezilda, Leodato): Serbami ognor si fido (Borrowed from *Semiramide*)
Chorus: Se indomito talor	Chorus: Se indomito talor
Cavatina (Agobar): Non è ver, che sia diletto	Cavatina (Agobar): Non è ver, che sia diletto
Recitative: Si, faccia pur la fuggitiva turba	omitted
Recitative (Mohamud, Chorus): Gli usi del suol nativo	omitted
Recitativ (Zarele, Ezil.): Principessa, onde mai	Recitative (Zarele, Ezil.): Principessa, onde mai
Aria (Ezil.): Qual sei, signor, per prova	Aria (Ezil.): Lo sguardo suo signor (Written by Pacini for Naples, 1827 production)
Recitative (Ezil., Gond.): Che rechi?	Recitative (Ezil., Gond.): Che rechi?
Finale I: La turba fuggitiva...questo acciar	Finale I: La turba fuggitiva...questo acciar
Act II	**Act II**
Preludio	Preludio
Recitative (Moha.): La libertà concessa	Recitative (Mohamud): La libertà concessa
Recitative (Ezil., Agob.): L'armi han tregua Duet Va menzogner	Recitative (Ezil., Agob.): L'armi han tregua Duet Va menzogner
Recitative dopo il duetto(Aloar, Gond.): Che al solo suo apparir	omitted
Recitative(Moha., Chorus): Alle oziose tende	omitted
Chorus(Moha., Chorus): Noi della cuna	Recitative and Aria (Leod.): Misero che farò...oppresso dal duolo (written by Pacini for Naples, 1827 (for Ezil.) adapted for Leodato prob. Verona 1828-29)
Recitative(Leod., Agob.): Che intesi mai!	Recitative: (Gond., Zar.) Oh in che tanto hai senno Aria (Zarele): Quanto più s'affanna un'alma (Written by Pacini for Livorno, 1830)
Duet (Leod., Agob.): La destra mia all'armi usata	omitted
Chorus (Zar., Chorus): Già sospirasti assai	Chorus (Zar., Chorus): Già sospirasti assai
Recitative (Zar., Ezil.): Perchè mesta così	Recitative(Zar., Ezil): Perchè mesta così
Aria (Ezil.) Nel suo rapido passagio	Aria (Ezil.) Fra tante angoscie (borrowed from earlier Pacini opera)
Recitative (Gond., Leod.): Parte Agobar Terzettino(Ezil., Leod., Gond.): Clodomiro in Agobar	omitted
Chorus (Moha., Chorus): Abbiano pure i Franchi	Recitative (Moha., Chorus): Finger tema, o prudenza (original order of this and the following piece were reversed)
Recitative (Moha.): Finger tema, o prudenza	Chorus (Moha., Chorus): Abbiano pure i Franchi
Recitative (Alo., Agob.): Signor, la sorte tua Aria (Agob.): Le dirai ch'io serbo ancora	Recitative (Alo., Agob.): Signor, la sorte tua Aria (Agob.): Le dirai ch'io serbo ancora
Cabaletta (Agob.) Di liete immagine	Cabaletta (Agob.) Quel volto sereno (by Pacini, first sung at Trieste 1831)
Recitative (Tutti): Lo stato suo	Recitative (Tutti): Lo stato suo
Finale Secondo (Tutti): Prendi l'estremo amplesso	Finale Secondo (Tutti): Prendi l'estremo amplesso

Whatever version was used, *Arabi* proved to be a sleeper hit. While the house was often only half-full or less for some other operas, *Arabi* consistently packed the it to the rafters. No fewer than seventeen performances were given between January and July; at one of Luigi Ravaglia's benefits a single act was given, and selections from the opera were performed in recitals throughout the first season. In addition, the production delighted audiences at the Chestnut Street theater when it was taken to Philadelphia in April.

The audiences' rapturous response to the opera was partly due to lavish stagecraft -the Courrier des Etats-Units called the opera the most beautiful spectacle ever given in New York.[11] Set designer Mario Bragaldi – a fine artist who had also painted the interior of the house's dome and the drop-scene – achieved a new level of celebrity. The audiences were so enchanted by the moonlit ruins of an ancient castle in Act II that they loudly called for him to appear on stage on at least four different evenings, and at the premiere he even was accorded a standing ovation. Alberto Bazzarri's costumes, which included sumptuous velvet gowns for Clementina Fanti and Bordogni's glittering plumed helmet were *"surpassing in magnificence and grandeur."* Even the chorus and supernumeraries – of which there were reported to be a hundred in the most spectacular scenes – wore raiments that were *"costly in the extreme."* [12]

The high quality of the production extended to every facet; the orchestra was said to be excellent; in particular the bassoonist Mr. Willant became an unlikely celebrity on the strength of his magical solo in the prelude to Act II - many who had believed the bassoon a clumsy and inexpressive instrument found themselves surprised by his versatility. He became a favorite soloist at benefit concerts. The supporting cast included Fanti's gifted younger sister Rosina in the comprimaria role of Zarele, and her dramatically pointless aria di sorbetto was encored at one performance, so movingly did she interpret it.[13]

There were of course some kinks to be worked out. The choristers (at least initially) were not so polished as the principals, and were said to be out of tune and nearly a beat behind the conductor at times. But they continued to improve with successive performances. The audience, too, was responsible for at least one embarrassing incident. Some occupants of the box seats had been tossing flowers onto the stage during the duet between Fanti and Ravaglia. Ravaglia gallantly presented the flowers to Fanti during the applause; both singers stepped out of character to take bows. On the night of February 4, the practice escalated to a new and somewhat macabre level when *"an Arab in the third tier of boxes"* trussed up a pigeon with two floral wreaths and threw it onto the stage during the duet for Ezilda and Agobar. The singers and the orchestra stopped completely in the middle of the piece, and Fanti and Ravaglia retrieved the wreaths and crowned one another to the laughter of the audience. [14]

Clementina Fanti had a significant career on Italian stages, singing principal soprano roles in *La straniera, Il pirata, Semiramide, L'assedio di Corinto*, Vaccai's *Zadig ed Astartea*, and Pacini's *I crociati a Tolemaide*. Accounts in the American press unanimously judged her a seasoned and tasteful musician and a fine actress. They expressed astonishment at the ease and fluidity with which she could switch from dramatic to comic roles. Her Ninetta in *La gazza ladra* at the house's opening was greatly admired

and the assessment of one critic would set the tone for almost all the New York reviews she later received : *Signorina Fanti is a handsome woman, a good actress, and has a sweet voice – at times powerful, when thrown out with energy and force – generally thin, yet melodious – making her points with the intelligence of a good musician.* [15]

In *Arabi*, Fanti enjoyed a major triumph in the role of the besieged heroine Ezilda. Of her second performance in the premiere, the Morning Courier raved: *"The music alotted to her character was given with a tenderness and pathos that touched the hearts of the audience. Where everything was so well done, we shall find some difficulty selecting the best..."* [16] Reviewing the second performance, the Evening Star marveled at her impeccable pitch, the execution of her coloratura, and the emotion with which she infused her singing, singling out her first act preghiera and the duet 'Di quelle trombe' with Ravaglia as examples of her skill.[17]

The role of the hero, Agobar, was assumed by the Luigi Ravaglia.. He too, had substantial experience, having sung roles in Donizetti's *Il borgomastro di Saardam* (opposite Carolina Unger at La Scala), Mercadante's *Elisa e Claudio*, and Rossini's *Mosè in Egitto* and *Sigismondo*. His successful debut at the Italian Opera House was in the *Barbiere* in December, 1833. Of the two tenors in the employ of the house, he was more comfortable singing higher parts such as Giacomo (opposite Signor Fabi's Rodrigo in *La donna del lago*). Ravaglia's notices had been generally good, but like many tenors of today who specialize in Rossini, there were detractors. His excursions into the falsetto range rankled certain critics, who appeared to simply dislike the tenore-contraltino species. A review of one benefit concert – at which he performed a selection from *Eduardo e Cristina* – scolded *"we advise Signor Ravalglia never again to sing the aria...he adds nothing to his fame, by whistling in falsetto..."* [18] He did not heed the advice.

Ravaglia continued to be warned against these stratospheric notes while he was performing *Arabi*, [19] but he found the high-flying Giovanni David role of Agobar tailor-made to his abilities. In spite of this criticism, there was general agreement that this portrayal was the best he had yet offered, and his fine musicianship and expressiveness in the role earned for him the respect of the press and the adoration of the public. The New-York Mirror wrote *"Of Ravaglia we cannot speak too highly. He looked, acted and sung his part as well as it permitted, and in 'Affetti teneri' delighted us more than in any other piece we have heard him sing."* [20]

But the most fascinating of the principal singers was undoubtedly the precocious contralto Luigia Bordogni, who donned the garb of a warrior as the Prince Leodato. Variously reported to be 17 or 19 years of age, she clearly possessed great natural talent, no doubt inherited from her father, the tenor Marco Bordogni. Some sources claim she had had success in Paris before coming to New York; others stated that the season with the Italian Opera were her first stage appearance. On January 17, 1834, the Evening Star described her benefit concert earlier that week in glowing terms:

"...magnificently attired, exceedingly handsome, scarcely nineteen years of age, [she] *sang the non pin mesta* (sic) *in a new and exquisite style of sweetness and embellishment. Some of her notes, although low, were singular and extraordinary, and were most effectively given, and crowns of*

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The music by the celebrated *Maestro Pacini.*

The principal characters by

Signorina CLEMENTINA FANTI,

Signorina Luigia Bordogni,	Signor Rosini Fanti,
Sigr. L. Ravaglia,	Sigr. A. Porto,
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roses and bouquets from all quarters were thrown on the stage, amid deafening applause." [21]

She was considered a great beauty and was the popular favorite of the company. And from the Morning Courier's account of the "numerous Almavivas...which crowded the pit at the lady's benefit*"it is evident too, that even at this early stage, she was attracting a sizable crowd of male admirers"* [22]

But Bordogni was also a very inexperienced performer, and it showed in her acting, singing, and stage presence. Starry-eyed critics were so enchanted by her shy, girlish demeanor and feminine pulchritude that some were eager to minimize her shortcomings as a performer. One review speculated that "[Her] *defects are sure to please. I have known many, who had no taste whatever for scientific music, declare that they were delighted with Madame Malibran's personation of the Count in the Devil's Bridge, because she seemed so interesting when she spoke English with her foreign accent. So it is with Bordogni's bashful timidity on the stage. We are aware that our opinion may clash with that of more competent judges; but we nevertheless take the liberty to express it frankly: Bordogni is the retiring, Fanti, the commanding beauty...."* [23]

In the same vein, the Mirror offered a revealing account of her voice and stage presence in its review of her Rosina in *Il barbiere di Siviglia: "...her extreme youth and evident embarrassment added much to the interest inspired by her beauty and grace of movement, and when she commenced, so absorbed was the attention of all, that not a note of her low and bird-like warbling was lost upon the ear."* [24] Though her Rosina and Cenerentola were celebrated, she found the plumes and armor of the warrior prince Leodato an uncomfortable fit. The Morning Courier teased, *"Bordogni, the pretty Bordogni, played the character of Leodatus, Generalissimo of the armies of Charles Martel, with a pair of mustachios which a dragoon of ten years' service might well envy! After this, we shall begin to think that no absurdity can be too great for introduction into Italian opera."* [25]

She was reputed to have gained confidence as the role became more familiar, but on February 4 the same critic patronizingly wrote *"Our little favorite, the general favorite, Bordogni, still continues to do her best in the character of Leodatus, but we would much rather see her in Rosina or Malcolm. She possesses no qualities for a field marshal."* [26]

Many considered her vocally unsuitable for the role, too. Her instrument had apparently not matured sufficiently to acquire the requisite heft. The Morning Courier speculated (incorrectly) that the role was written for Pisaroni, who *"combines a person of masculine mould with the most wonderful contralto voice ever heard, possessing a depth and [power] equal to any tenor-singer"* [27] Clearly, Bordogni did not fit this mold. Furthermore, she was faulted by many for the extravagance of her ornamentation - not only in her exploits as Leodato, but nearly all her performances. Though no one could object to her technical prowess in executing even the most elaborate cascades of coloratura, the placement of these decorative flourishes was seen by some as jarringly disruptive to the melodic lines of the pieces she sang. The next fall, American Musical Journal recalled of Bordogni: "[Her] *good voice could not compensate for*

her bad delivery, her want of methode; she should have remained under her master a year or two longer.." [28] Even so, she remained for some the darling of the company; she did grow in confidence, and the Evening Star critic – who was far more favorably disposed toward her - wrote that *"A finer looking soldier than Bordogni never mounted helmet or dared the fierce Mussulman."* From his perspective it was inconceivable that she had not appeared on stage before her New York season. [29] The Act I cavatina was *'beautifully given'* and her singing and appearance called to mind that of Malibran. [30]

The teen celebrity's vocal performances were not the only subject of media scrutiny, however. She found herself at the center of a public scandal when Sign. Corni and Sign. Fagotti from the wind section - two of her "Almavivas" - came to blows during a rehearsal. They agreed to a duel the following morning in New Jersey, and only the pleadings of Rivafinoli and the intervention of the police averted bloodshed.[31] The final irony? It was Mr. Willant, the virtuoso bassoonist, who led her down the aisle. The two musicians who nearly fought to the death over her were left empty-handed.

Though *Arabi* was the first Pacini opera produced in North America, [32] Pacini was not an entirely unknown quantity there - excerpts from his operas had already been performed in recital, [33] and reports of performances of European productions of his works occasionally turned up in American newspapers and magazines. Estimations of Pacini's abilities by New York critics were mixed. The Mirror featured an article on Bellini, Donizetti, Mercadante, and Pacini in its November 23, 1833 issue. Some of the highest praise and the harshest criticism in the article were reserved for Pacini: *"Pacini, formerly pianist to the Princess Borghese, has given to the world a great quantity of very good and very bad music. His opera Margaritta* (sic) *Regina d'Inghilterra, contains a duet for the soprano and bass, which for depth of expression and purity of style, and beauty of melody, we scarcely ever heard surpassed; but there is so much vapid trash in various other parts of this piece, so "much ado about nothing," that is has never been, nor will it ever be a favorite with the audience...his first rate subjects, treated in a first-rate manner, stand side by side with commonplaces, which would bring discredit on the veriest tyro in existence..."* And, unable to resist an opportunity for salicious innuendo, the columnist added that *"...some strange tales are told concerning his intimacy with Napoleon's fair sister."* [34]

In spite of the crowds it inevitably drew, the opera itself was viewed with measured disdain by the critics. Having glutted themselves a steady diet of Rossini, they were perhaps not able to appreciate Pacini's many innovations. The press largely viewed Pacini's opera as a second-rate imitation of Rossini. The February 8 Mirror credited the *"reasonable degree of public favor"* the opera had won to the *"judicious additions and improvements"* made by Salvioni. [35] And the Morning Courier's January 23 review, which grudgingly admitted that many pieces *"are of a pleasing description"* declared that the opera's reputation was ill-merited.. Pacini was indicted for imitating Rossini's pecadilloes rather than his strengths, and said there were no striking harmonic innovations or melodies. The Mirror bemoaned the lack of taste in New York's audiences, charging that

supposedly worthier pieces such as *"Matrimonio Segreto"* had drawn smaller audiences than *Matilde di Shabran* and *Arabi "for want of tinseled supernumeraries and see-saw choruses"* [36]

Yet the reviews did not criticize any particular piece of music; in fact, the pieces by Pacini garnered more praise than the *'judicious improvements'* of the added overture and *Semiramide* duet. Surprisingly (given the rather hostile attitude exhibited by French critics toward Pacini) it was the Courrier des Etats-Units that was the most complimentary toward the opera, praising the introduction – which it deemed worthy of the greatest maestros – and the brilliant cabalettas and beautiful duets. [37]

The choruses, too, earned encomiums. The Evening Star praised the magnificent introduction, with special mention made of the innovative orchestration. One march and chorus (probably 'La turba fuggitiva') was judged to be of *"an imposing and unusual style"* - the reviewer could recollect nothing like it. Likewise, the chorus preceding Agobar's sortita was highly thought of, and was judged to be one of the best numbers in the opera. The first act quintet was heralded as *"a sterling piece"* and *"replete with varied beauty,"* in part on the strength of the rich accompaniment of its stretta. Many other pieces also became favorites, including the contralto sortita, Ezilda's first act preghiera, the second act prelude with its elaborate bassoon obbligato, and the pilfered *Semiramide* duet for Fanti and Bordogni.

It was, however, the electric confrontation scene between Ezilda and Agobar that elicited the most fervid tributes. The Evening Star called it *"superior in pathetic eloquence and tenderness of subject"*, and further said *"we have seldom heard music which delighted us more"*. Here again, attention was brought to Pacini's orchestration. Yet, after praising practically every major number in the opera, the reviewer unaccountably concluded that *"with respect to its musical excellence, is not equal to others given by this company"*. [38] But the popular success of *Arabi* was not sufficient to keep the listing Italian Opera afloat. Though the operas were generally enjoyed, audiences were often sparse. The disreputable neighborhood, riddled as it was with open prostitution and violent crime, undoubtedly kept some potential attendees away. Patrons had to be careful from what direction they approached the house. One retrospective written years after the house was gone recalled: *"Real estate must have been cheaper there than elsewhere. There was a viler neighborhood in the city, but it was a quarter of a mile distant, in the villainous precinct of the old brewery, and the 'Five Points'"* [39] Perhaps, too, New York audiences simply had not yet 'caught the bug' for Italian opera and were not ready to support a dedicated opera house yet.

Financially, the whole enterprise was disastrous. The first season had racked up a staggering deficit of $30,000. During the summer of 1834, the management stopped paying the artists' salaries. The supposedly timid Bordogni stood her ground, and "being in arrears of part of her salary...and unwilling to wait for the payment, refuse[d] to aid said company with her services" [40] Though she did perform in *Arabi* through the final performance in July, she did not return for the second season. Her subsequent career is shadowy; but she is known to have made appearances at the San Carlo and at Venice's Teatro Apollo.

The second season was much rockier; the deficit of the company nearly doubled. The dizzying variety of the first season was a thing of the past. Long and ominous silences between announced performances were followed by desperate pleas for support. By the spring of 1835 is was clear that the Italian Opera was a doomed enterprise. The building was finally auctioned off, becoming the National Theatre and performing plays, but this incarnation was even more ill-starred. The National burned down twice: in 1839, and finally in 1841, after which it was not rebuilt. Both fires were widely suspected to have been arson but no culprit was ever apprehended.[41]

After *Arabi*, it would be another 13 years before New Yorkers would again enjoy a fully staged Pacini opera when his masterpiece *Saffo* debuted at the Park Theatre in 1847, starring Fortunata Tedesco as the Greek poetess.



Portrait of Clementina Fanti (Courtesy Harry Ransom Center, Univ. of Texas at Austin)

[1] Evening Star, November 19. 1833
[2] The company was engaged for two seasons - and paid at a higher rate for the first - due to the long sea voyage and the risk of illness resulting from the change of climate. The Fanti sisters were engaged as a "package" and paid $793.25 for the first season, and $634 for the second. Bordogni was paid $625 for the first season, $500 for the second. Ravaglia was less-well compensated at $423.68 for the first season, and $335 the second. The dollar in 1834 was worth approximately $24 in 2007 U.S. dollars. The documents showing the company's salary information are held by the New York Historical Society.
[3] The New-York Mirror, September 21. 1833 p94
[4] These were: *La gazza ladra, La donna del lago, Il barbiere, Cenerentola, Matilde di Shabran, Gli arabi nelle Gallie, Il matrimonio segreto* and the conductor's own composition *La casa da vendere.*
[5] Morning Courier and New York Enquirer. January 23 , 1834. Emphasis as in the original.
[6] Ibid February 4, 1834
[7] Evening Star, January 29, 1834
[8] Courrier des Etats-Unis, January 22, 1834, p663
[9] The inventory is held in a box of loose documents at the New York Historical Society
[10] I am indebted to Alexander Weatherson for identifying the sources of the aria for Zarele, the second-act aria for Ezilda, and Agobar's cabaletta 'Quel volto sereno'
[11] Courrier des Etats-Unis, January 22, 1834, p663
[12] Evening Star, January 29, 1834
[13] The lesser roles of Gondair, Mohamud and Aloar were taken by Sig. Porto, Placci and Sapignoli who were almost completely ignored by the press.
[14] Morning Courier and New York Enquirer, February 4, 1834. The article describes the pigeon as "maimed" at the time it was thrown on the stage, but it is unclear whether it was merely injured or dead
[15] Evening Star, November 19, 1833
[16] Morning Courier and New York Enquirer, January 23, 1834
[17] Evening Star, January 23, 1834
[18] Morning Courier and New York Enquirer, December 7, 1834
[19] Ibid February 4, 1834
[20] New York Mirror, February 8 1834, p255
[21] Evening Star, January 15, 1834
[22] Morning Courier and New York Enquirer, January 17, 1834
[23] Evening Star, January 31, 1834
[24] New York Mirrir, December 7, 1833 p121
[25] Morning Courier and New York Enquirer, January 23, 1834
[26] Ibid February 4 1834
[27] Ibid January 23, 1834
[28] American Musical Journal, October 1, 1834, p18
[29] Evening Star, January 29, 1834
[30] Ibid January 23, 1834
[31] Morning Courier and New York Enquirer, February 26, 1834
[32] Later, *Saffo* enjoyed a significant number of productions between 1847 and 1866 and a single modern revival in 1982; *Medea* 's fortunes were mixed at Niblo's Garden in New York in 1860 when one and a half performances were given especially for the contravsersial diva Adelaide Cortesi for whome the title-role was a favorite.
[33] The cabaletta 'I tuoi frequenti palpiti' from*Niobe* was a common recital number
[34] The New York Mirror "Music and Musicians: Bellini - Pacini -Donizetti- Mercadanti (sic)" November 23, 1833 p166-167. The critic harshly judged Bellini's *La straniera* and *La sonnambula* too, charging that they presented a *"lamentable deficiency of genius and paucity of invention"*. Mercadante was deemed merely a highly talented imitator of Rossini though his orchestration was said to sometimes surpass that of the pesarese master. Only Donizetti escaped censure entirely, with the critic gushing over his*L'esule di Roma.*
[35] New York Mirror, February 8, 1834, p255
[36] Ibid April 19, 1834, p335
[37] Courrier des Etats-Unis, January 22, 1834, p663
[38] Evening Star, January 29, 1834
[39] From an unidentified newspaper article in a scrapbook held by the New York Public Library
[40] New York American, June 21, 1834
[41] At the time of writing, its former location on the northwest corner of Church and Leonard is occupied by a 200,000 square foot office building leased to the City of New York