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A DOCUMENTARY STUDY OF GIUDITTA PASTA ON THE OPERA STAGE

*City University of New York*

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A DOCUMENTARY STUDY OF GIUDITTA PASTA  
ON THE OPERA STAGE

by

Kenneth Stern

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty  
in Theatre in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,  
The City University of New York

1983

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Theatre in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

21 April 1983  
date

Edward O'Donovan  
Chairman of Examining Committee

21 April 1983  
date

Terese Sawyer Roberts  
Executive Officer

Glen M. Long  
Benjamin O'Connell

Supervisory Committee

The City University of New York

## FOREWORD

Giuditta Pasta (1797-1865) was one of the most influential and important singers of the first half of the nineteenth century. She was one of the few performers whose acting ability was judged to be on a par with her vocal talents. In an age where opera performances were little more than concerts in costume, Pasta managed to approach the ideal of opera; her unification of vocal and mimic arts created believable characters on stage. Pasta's histrionic ability was a revelation to her contemporaries. Her simple, relevant attitudes and effective stage movement appeared stunningly real. The mechanical and often inappropriate gesticulation that frequently disfigures opera on the stage even today was noticeably absent from Pasta's performances. Though it was not a perfect instrument, Pasta's voice had an encyclopedic range of colors and shades; even with only a few notes she could make a profound impression upon her listeners. It is, of course, impossible to re-create the actual sound of Pasta's voice, but the effect of her art is certainly suggested in the great operas written especially for her: Donizetti's Anna Bolena and Bellini's La Sonnambula and Norma.

It is curious that, for an artist of such diverse talents, there has been no full-length biography. In his Vie de Rossini, however, Stendhal devoted an entire chapter to Pasta, and there

are incomplete and sometimes inaccurate sketches of her life in biographical dictionaries, such as Jean-François Fetis' Biographie Universelle des Musiciens, and encyclopedias, such as Eugenio Gara's article on Pasta in the Enciclopedia dello Spettacolo. Non-scholarly works such as George Ferris' Great Singers are largely anecdotal and derive much of their information from Stendhal. There has been one previous attempt at a biography of Pasta. At the turn of the century, Maria Ferranti, the wife of Pasta's grandson Leonardo, put together a very selective collection of Pasta's letters and reviews of her opera performances. Ferranti's book was printed privately, in a limited edition of one-thousand copies. It is now extremely rare. Ferranti's Giuditta Pasta e i Suoi Tempi (1935) is incomplete and often deliberately inaccurate and unreliable. Ferranti has altered words in the letters she quoted, changed dates on letters, and sometimes combined one letter with another without alerting the reader. Newspaper reviews have been "edited" by Ferranti to eliminate any negative references to Pasta.

In an effort to create a meaningful document of Pasta's life and art, I have taken the utmost care to transcribe accurately letters written either by or to Pasta. I have kept these letters in their original languages and, to preserve their value as historical documents, I have not corrected the spelling or grammar of the authors. Often their form is as important as the content. I have also left the newspaper reviews in their original languages. Since many of the contemporary newspaper

reports included a wealth of specific information about Pasta's voice and stage business, I have resisted the temptation to paraphrase and have quoted verbatim.

I would like to express my thanks to Clelio Moretti of Blevio, Italy, for his permission to quote from the letters in his vast collection and for the unique opportunity of living for several weeks in Villa Pasta. I also owe a debt of gratitude to Edward O. D. Downes, Glenn Loney, and Benito Ortolani, who read drafts of my dissertation and made valuable suggestions. I gratefully acknowledge receipt of the 1982-83 Milton Brown Dissertation Award in the Arts.

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CHAPTER I

Giuditta Pasta was born on 26 October 1797, in the small village of Saronno, located between Milan and Como in northern Italy. Her baptismal certificate, preserved in the Chiesa dei San Pietro e San Paolo in Saronno, confirms that she was baptised the following day. The names given at her baptism were Angiola Maria Costanza. Giuditta was added later in a different ink; there is no documentary evidence to establish when or why this name was included. Though her baptismal certificate clearly states her date of birth as 26 October, Giuditta always celebrated the anniversary of her birth on her name-day, 28 October (St. Jude's day). Giuditta's father, Carlo Antonio Negri, was a pharmacist and had married Rachele Ferranti in 1796.

Giuditta Negri was brought up a Catholic. There is no documentation to support F. J. Fetis' claim that she came from a "famille israelite,"<sup>1</sup> or that any of her relatives were converts. The belief that Pasta was Jewish persists to the present day, but this is not true. The first suggestion of Pasta's being Jewish can be traced to a statement in the Paris newspaper L'Aristarque on 24 January 1826. In that year Pasta had firmly established herself as one of the great singers of the decade. Her chief rival was Joséphine Fodor-Mainvielle. Pasta and Fodor-Mainvielle had recently waged a public feud over

who had the right to sing the title role in the first Paris performance of Rossini's Semiramide. Fodor-Mainvielle won the right, but her performance was a catastrophe; the soprano literally lost her voice. Pasta sang the second performance and was an enormous success. The critic for L'Aristarque wrote:

"A quelles honteuses et pitoyables ressources sont réduits les partisans de Mme Fodor [-Mainvielle] pour la consoler d'une chute dont elle ne peut plus se relever, et pour la venger des succès de sa rivale; quelques-uns, pour mieux gagner encore leur salaire, en sont déjà même aux injures. L'un lui reproche d'être juive, parce qu'elle s'appelle Judith. Mme Pasta n'est point juive; et quand cela serait, qu'en faudrait-il conclure?"<sup>2</sup>

Did the rumor that Pasta was Jewish persist in Paris, and was this the source of Fetis' statement? No other newspaper mentions it.

By 1799 the Negri family had moved from Saronno. Giuditta was entrusted to the care of her maternal grandmother, Rosalinda Ferranti, who lived in Como with her son Filippo. Rachele and her husband were in Bologna where Carlo Antonio was employed as a customs agent; apparently he had given up being a pharmacist. Giuditta's uncle Filippo Ferranti was an architect and an amateur on the violoncello. It was he who first taught Giuditta music. In 1809 Ferranti petitioned to have his niece accepted in the Collegio Reale in Como. She studied there two years and also took private lessons in singing with Bartolomeo Scotti, maestro di cappella of the Duomo in Como. On 11 April 1811, Rosalinda

and Filippo Ferranti moved to Milan; Giuditta went with them. Fetis wrote that Giuditta Negri attended the Conservatory of Milan, but again there is no documentation to support this. It is certain, however, that Giuditta studied with an assistant maestro at La Scala, Giuseppe Scappa. One of Scappa's pupils at the time was a young lawyer and would-be tenor by the name of Giuseppe Pasta.

On 17 January 1816, Giuditta Negri married Giuseppe Pasta, thereupon assuming a name that she was to make immortal in the annals of opera history. It is ironic that the most dignified singing-actress of the early nineteenth century should have adopted so unsophisticated a surname. She did not hyphenate her last name; indeed, "black pasta" would hardly have been an improvement.

Git and Peppino, as the young couple were familiarly known, were provided rooms in the Negri residence. They had little opportunity for privacy. Professional concerns had to be dealt with immediately. In less than a month after their wedding, Giuditta and Giuseppe Pasta were scheduled to make a joint appearance in Milan at the Teatro degli Accademici Filo-Drammatici.

NOTES: CHAPTER I

1. François-Jean Fétis, Biographie Universelle des Musiciens et Bibliographie Générale de la Musique, 2nd edition, 9 vols. (Paris: 1873), VI:463. In the first paragraph of his article on Pasta the author makes several erroneous statements. Pasta was not Jewish, she did not attend the Conservatory of Milan, and she never sang either in Parma or Livorno.
2. L'Aristarque (Paris), 24 January 1826.

CHAPTER II

Giuditta Pasta's initial experiences on the stage took place in Milan, Paris, and London from February 1816 to August 1817. Her voice at this time was still not fully developed and her stage deportment awkward. Pasta sang both primary and secondary roles in operas by Giuseppe Scappa, Pietro Ray, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Niccolò Zingarelli, Domenico Cimarosa, and Giacomo Gotifredo Ferrari. None of these roles remained in her repertoire. They did, however, convince her that she was better suited to the enactment of characters in serious opera rather than comic opera.

Pasta's first role was Baronessa Isabella in Giuseppe Scappa's Lope de Vega. In order to celebrate the presence of Princess Beatrice d'Este in Milan, the wealthy patrons of the Accademico de' Signori Filo-Drammatici decided to stage a new opera in her honor. As no star singers were engaged, Scappa chose his most promising pupils for leading roles. Three performances of Lope de Vega had already taken place at the Teatro degli Accademici Filo-Drammatici in Milan when the only review appeared in the weekly paper Corriere delle Dame on 17 February 1816. Antonio Zanatta's text was found " . . . più che passabile, nella folla de' tanti drammi non drammatici de' nostri giorni."<sup>1</sup> Scappa's music was " . . . ben maritata colla intenzione poetica."<sup>2</sup> As for the principal singers, the critic stated: " . . . il poeta de Vega sig[nor] Giuseppe Pasta, e la prima delle tre Isabelle, signora Giuditta Pasta, vengono meritamente riconosciuti degni del primato nella forza, espressione

e modi di melodica maestria."<sup>3</sup>

The roles taken by the Pastas in Lope de Vega are the most fully developed, a testament to their abilities at this time. Though the music is lost, the libretto reveals something of the nature of this opera semi-seria. Don Ricardo steals a madrigal written by Lope de Vega, in which the poet declares his love for a beautiful woman named Isabella. Fearful that this may be his wife, Ricardo attempts to discover which Isabella of the Duke of Alba's court is involved. This is brought to the attention of Duke Fernando Alvarez, who believes that his beloved Baronessa is guilty, and in a fit of a jealous rage has the poet confined to prison. The remembrance of his old friendship eventually quells the Duke's anger, and Lope de Vega is given leave to travel to Toledo, where he will receive, if not love, at least honor for his writing. In a final confrontation, the poet informs the Duke that he had been enamored of Baronessa Isabella, but that his passion was extinguished when she had made it clear that she could not be unfaithful to her lover.

Giuditta Pasta, cast as Baronessa Isabella, had two important duets--one with Alvarez, in which she indignantly affirms her loyalty, and another with Lope de Vega, in which she must suppress the intense feelings she has for him. The role requires nobility and restrained emotion. Even during the moments of sporting with the buffo characters, the Baronessa maintains her dignity. The dramatic situation was one which required no great outbursts of passion. The emotions involved here were all very immediate to Pasta, as the character she was to be

in love with was played by her new husband. What was more difficult to make convincing was the scene in which she had to negate Lope de Vega's avowals of love in order to remain faithful to Alvarez. Both Giuditta and Giuseppe Pasta were well received for their respective roles, and [in all] this was a very propitious beginning. The soprano had no qualms about the music, which Scappa evidently carefully tailored to her developing vocal talents. Performing in front of a select audience to honor politically important guests apparently contributed to the tension of a first stage appearance, but Giuditta Pasta seems to have acquitted herself admirably. At least she was not criticized for the awkwardness that was to be noted in some of her subsequent performances.

Though Lope de Vega was satisfactory as an initial step, both Giuditta and Giuseppe Pasta set Paris and the Théâtre Italien as their goal for a more ambitious début. Ferdinando Paër had been appointed musical director of that theatre in 1812, and the Pastas made the acquaintance of this important and respected composer in January 1816, when he was in Milan to supervise the first performance of his L'Eroismo in Amore at the Teatro alla Scala. They were also well aware of his influence in Parisian theatrical circles. The possibility of a Parisian engagement had been a topic of discussion among them, and Paër made the necessary arrangements.

Before plans for a voyage abroad could be seriously formulated, both Giuditta and Giuseppe Pasta were scheduled to participate in an additional presentation supported by the Accademico de' Signori Filo-Drammatici. On 6 March 1816, to inaugurate a bust of Carlo

Goldoni, and to further celebrate the presence of Beatrice d'Este in Milan, the society staged an anonymous prose comedy, Stravaganza e Ragionevolezza. The concluding section was an azione scenica, entitled La Contesa, with music by Pietro Ray to a libretto written by Giovanni Gherardini.

As its title implies, La Contesa concerns a debate over the elements necessary for general prosperity and happiness. Each character represents one faction--commerce, the military, arts and science, agriculture, and entertainment. In various solos and ensembles, each blindly argues the value of his respective vocation. The mediator, Petronio, is at a loss to render a judgment on the cacaphony of ideas being expressed. In the second and final scene, a deus ex machina appears in the character of Antonio, who invokes the name of Caesar and the glories of Italy's past, and explains that there are elements of truth in each of the stated positions, but that none can stand alone. The differing characters continue to maintain the importance of their professions, but all concede the necessity of unification in order to achieve the common goal. Whatever the political significance this minor piece may have had, it reached only a limited audience, for it was performed only once before a very select group of spectators.

Giuditta Pasta represented Elisa, who maintains that only by art and science can we measure our humanity. Giuseppe Pasta portrayed Fernando, who argues that an army is necessary to protect the arts, sciences, and agriculture. The critic for the Corriere delle Dame did not bother to comment on individual performances,

but only reported that the majority of the cast was similar to that of Lope de Vega and continued their success. As for the newly composed work itself, the critic stated: ". . . si ammirò l'invenzione, l'intreccio e lo stile in ogni sua parte veramente drammatico; e si compiacque ciascuno della espressiva ed armoniosa musica."<sup>4</sup>

The Pasta family spent the rest of March in preparation for a journey to Paris. On 11 April 1816, accompanied by Rachele Negri, Giuditta and Giuseppe Pasta left Milan. They reached Paris on 25 April, where Paër arranged temporary housing at 15 Rue du Mont Blanc. Two days later Rachele Negri wrote to her friend Antonio Zanatta to describe her family's meeting with Angelica Catalani, the famed soprano and current chief director of the Théâtre Italien. The often imperious Catalani received Giuditta Pasta ". . . con somma cordialità . . . ; quando poi l'intese a cantare essa non sapeva come esprimere la sua soddisfazione, ogni passetto che faceva Giuditta aplaudiva vivamente e con una maniera che noi siamo rimasti incantati; . . . ." <sup>5</sup>

Giuditta and Giuseppe Pasta began fulfilling the terms of their contracts with the Théâtre Italien in May, and for that month both singers earned one thousand francs each, though they did not perform. Giuseppe Pasta developed the first of a series of throat ailments that created many problems. The Journal des Débats had announced several times that the Pastas were to make a joint début in Valentino Fioravanti's Liretta e Giannino but, after 23 May 1816, that plan was abandoned in favor of Paër's Il Principe di Taranto.

Paër's opera was scheduled for performance in early June, but by 7 June it became apparent that Giuseppe Pasta's indisposition was more serious than originally suspected. Gaetano Crivelli was asked to learn the tenor role of Ruggiero, and Giuseppe Pasta's contract was suspended.

The opening performance of Il Principe di Taranto took place on 19 June 1816 despite a respectable cast, met with mixed critical reception that bordered on outright disdain. According to Le Diable Boiteux, Paër's work was:

. . . monotone, entièrement dénuée de vigueur et d'originalité . . . en général cet opéra manque de chant, et si M[onsieur] Paër mettait souvent au jour de semblables ouvrages, il s'exposerait à compromettre sa réputation . . . . Madame Pasta avait à triompher d'un poème détestable, d'une musique faible, et du trouble inséparable d'un début; tous ces obstacles l'ont sans doute empêchée de développer tous ces moyens. Sa voix a toujours été mal assurée; cependant on a pu reconnaître qu'elle est agréable et étendue. Sa méthode paraît bonne, et elle a fait applaudir plusieurs traits d'un très bon goût. Il faut attendre, pour la juger, qu'elle ait chanté avec plus d'assurance, et, s'il est possible, dans un meilleur ouvrage.<sup>6</sup>

Federico Livigni's feeble libretto concerns a case of mistaken identities, as the Prince of Taranto falls in love with Berenice, a princess who was wrongly imprisoned but has escaped, disguised as a peasant. Eventually the situation is sorted out, though not before many instances of buffoonery are played out. Giuditta Pasta portrayed Rosina, a simple peasant girl impersonating a princess, and was clearly not at her best in comic roles.

Though the awkwardness that marked her performance suited the character, it was evident that stage fright and not histrionic ability was responsible. The critic for Annales Politiques, Morales et

Littéraires remarked: "Elle est petite, bien faite et jolie; mais elle a besoin d'étudier, pour donner à sa figure une expression plus agréable: son miroir sera, sur ce point, le meilleur conseiller . . . je pense qu'il n'a pas été maladroit à elle, de débiter par un rôle où la gaucherie était en situation; car elle en est abondamment pourvue; mais puisqu'elle est à Paris, elle est à bonne école, pour prendre facilement de l'aisance dans sa démarche et dans ses gestes."<sup>7</sup>

This review marks the first instance of a criticism that was to recur throughout Pasta's career: "Sa voix était un peu voilée, dans le premier morceau qu'elle a chanté; elle est, en général beaucoup plus agréable dans les tons bas que dans les notes d'en haut . . . ."<sup>8</sup>

Even at the age of nineteen Giuditta Pasta's voice required an extended period to warm up, and a veiled tone usually could be detected at the outset of a performance. As her voice matured, however, the upper range gained in force, clarity, and brilliance. Despite this modest beginning, Pasta was recognized as one of the more promising singers at the Théâtre Italien.

Il Principe di Taranto was neither a critical nor popular success and was dropped from the repertory after three performances. Though the opera semi-seria had been considered an expedient choice for Pasta's début, Paër's reputation was nearly compromised by its resounding failure. This was obviously of more than purely personal concern, because Paër had been occupied during the spring with creating a one-act comic opera to celebrate the politically important union of Carolina Ferdinanda Luigia, Princess of the Two Sicilies, with

Charles-Ferdinand, Duc de Berry. La Primavera Felice was only one of several theatrical presentations seen in Paris in honor of the royal nuptials. Though hastily composed, Paër's music was deemed not unworthy of his more renowned efforts. Luigi Balochi's text was cleverly written and provided moments of genuine comedy. The announcement of that important marriage was the integral part of the plot, and La Primavera Felice well served its function as a pièce d'occasion.

In the libretto, the mind of the appropriately name Don Nuvolone has become clouded with superstitious phobia, and he has suddenly decided to prevent the imminent marriage of his son Roberto with Corilla since astrological charts have forecast the wedding day as one threatening some dire event. The pleading of the rational Count and Countess at first cannot deter the ridiculous old man, but finally he is persuaded to consent to the marriage, provided that nothing catastrophic occurs during the day. Cannon shots announcing the wedding of the Duc de Berry convinces Nuvolone that war has broken out, but when he realizes what the commotion is about, he admits his foolishness and permits the wedding of his son to take place.

La Primavera Felice was first heard on 28 June 1816, at the court theatre in the Tuileries, with an impressive cast including Violante Camporesi, Gaetano Crivelli, Matteo Porto, and Carlo Angrisani and was warmly received. Giuseppe Pasta had recuperated sufficiently to be able to sing Roberto. The work was subsequently performed at the Théâtre Italien beginning 6 July 1816, with Giuditta Pasta replacing

Camporesi in the role of Countess Clarice. Giuditta Pasta sang with increased assurance, but was still uneven. The critic for the Journal des Débats summed up the consensus by remarking: ". . . en un mot tous les acteurs ont fait de leur mieux, même Mme Pasta dont la voix foible et enrouée n'a pas secondé le zèle et les intentions."<sup>9</sup>

Giuditta Pasta's first experience with a Mozart opera occurred during August 1816 when she sang Donna Elvira in an under-rehearsed and poorly received staging of Don Giovanni. Critics complained of bad casting and of roles superficially memorized. It was said the production required at least a week or two of rehearsal before being presented to the public. As Donna Elvira, the vibrant lady seduced and abandoned by Don Giovanni and intent on tracking him down, Pasta had her best role to date. In this instance, however, the singer failed to realize the full potential of her character. Apparently Pasta acted well enough, but her vocal talents did not equal her histrionic ability. The critic for the Journal des Débats commented: ". . . elle met beaucoup d'intelligence dans sa manière de jouer. Mais au Théâtre Italien il faut de la voix et de la méthode, et la voix de Mme Pasta, quoiqu'assez agréable, n'a ni force ni étendue, et sa méthode est nulle."<sup>10</sup> The ill-fated Don Giovanni had its final performance on 28 August; Donna Elvira certainly did not generate the acclamation Pasta and her family anticipated.

In September 1816, Giuditta Pasta was more fortunate in the assignment of roles. She was cast as Giulietta in Niccolò

Zingarelli's popular Giulietta e Romeo. This opera seria was to be the outstanding event in an otherwise mediocre season at the Théâtre Italien.

Pasta's performance as Giulietta was the surprise of the opening on 4 September 1816. For the first time in Paris, Pasta elicited genuine admiration and applause, rather than polite indulgence. It was a revelation to both the public and the critics, for none of her previous efforts suggested that she was capable of anything more than a routine performance. Whether it was the adequate time she had to prepare a compatible role, or her sheer determination to succeed in her last Paris performances, or that she was, as the critic for the Journal de Paris noticed, ". . . électrisée par la chaleur de son amant . . ." <sup>11</sup> in the personage of Marianna Sessi's vibrant Romeo, Pasta's portrayal of Giulietta was a major achievement in her budding career. The critic for the Journal des Débats summarized the general feeling by stating that ". . . Mme Pasta a étonné par quelques inspirations heureuses et des moments de force auxquels elle n'a pas jusqu'ici accoutumé le public." <sup>12</sup>

During October 1816 Pasta signed a contract to appear at the King's Theatre in London. William Aryton, the manager of the King's Theatre, traveled to Paris personally to select the artists for the 1817 season. He auditioned Giuditta Pasta at Paër's residence. On 25 October, Rachele Negri was able to write to Antonio Zanatta that Aryton ". . . scelse Giuditta e jeri a mezza note fu scriturata, essa ha più che trepplicata di paga e poi viene ad avere una compagnia in Mad[am]a Camporesi e l'Ottimo Crivelli che a farli stampare non

si potrebbero avere ne più buoni ne più onesti ed educati."<sup>13</sup>

On 11 November 1816 the Pasta family left Paris for London. That fateful day of the month, whether by design or coincidence was beginning to be Giuditta Pasta's favorite time to travel. She first left Como for Milan on 11 April 1811, left Milan for Paris exactly five years later on 11 April 1816, and subsequently quit Paris for London on 11 November. Travel on the eleventh day of a month was to occur throughout Pasta's career. This suggests a superstitious nature, but no other evidence of superstition has come to light. The Pastas arrived in London on 20 November 1816. The rest of November and December was spent in acquainting themselves with the city and preparing the roles Giuditta Pasta was to assume when the opera season began.

On 11 January 1817, the King's Theatre season opened with Domenico Cimarosa's Penelope, an opera seria typical of the rescue operas popular at the end of the eighteenth century. Cimarosa's opera, apart from a similarity in the characters' names, had little in common with the Homeric tale. Vincenzo Maria Diodati's libretto concerned Ulysses' return to Ithaca, the frustration of ever-faithful Penelope, her steadfastness in rejecting King Evenore of Lesbos, and the efforts of her son Telemachus to counter the machinations of Evenore and the traitor Perimedes. Ulysses is imprisoned upon his return but is later liberated by Telemachus to claim his wife and kingdom.

Diodati's text was thought merely serviceable, and Cimarosa's music not representative of this venerated composer's best efforts.

Leigh Hunt, of The Examiner, described it as ". . . somewhat heavy and monotonous."<sup>14</sup> After four performances in January, and two more later in the season, Penelope was not heard again.

Penelope marked the first time Giuditta Pasta assumed a travesty role. The young Telemaco [Telemachus], ardent, passionate, and rather naive, as portrayed in this opera, was congenial to the soprano's developing powers. The critic of the Morning Post wrote: ". . . to a handsome and intelligent countenance, she joins a most flexible and pleasing voice."<sup>15</sup> The critic furthermore declared: ". . . her execution is brilliant, but not to the exclusion of feeling, and . . . she displayed so much taste, elegance, and expression, as to bring down repeated thunders of applause."<sup>16</sup>

Leigh Hunt, writing in The Examiner, commented: "There is a natural eloquence about her singing which we feel, and therefore understand. Her dress and figure also answered to the classical idea we have of the youthful Telemachus. Her voice is good, her action is good: she has a handsome face, and very handsome legs."<sup>17</sup>

It is, perhaps, an exaggeration to believe that the caliber of Pasta's performances in London had changed radically from her efforts in Paris just a few months earlier. At the beginning of her career, certain roles such as Zingarelli's Giulietta or Cimarosa's Telemaco underscored her natural inclinations. At this embryonic stage a sensitive critic like Leigh Hunt could discern the qualities that Pasta was to develop as her art matured. She had a natural feeling for the antique, the reason for which she could never analyse or explain to others. She was able, however, to communicate her

feeling and translate emotion in a way that greatly touched and moved her listeners.

Pasta was next seen as the subordinate character Lisetta in a revival of Paër's Griselda. It was a role hardly calculated to accentuate her talents. Lisetta was not unlike Rosina in Il Principe di Taranto, and Pasta at this point in her career was ill at ease in comic roles. Lisetta, a perky guitar-playing servant who ridicules the demeanor of the upper-class, is forever mimicking and taunting the ever-patient and ever-constant Griselda.

The critic of the Morning Post offered the most perceptive criticism of Pasta's performance, noting that she ". . . wanted a little lightness and finesse. Her pretty face is better adapted to the Opera Seria than the Opera Buffa; a little more experience on the stage will develop the genius she announces--she sang very pleasingly."<sup>18</sup> Though Lisetta was a very minor role in Pasta's career, comments such as those printed in the Morning Post helped convince her that she was better suited to serious rather than comic roles.

On 1 February 1817, there began the first of eleven performances of Mozart's comic masterpiece Le Nozze di Figaro, the first great opera of the London season. Pasta sang Cherubino and had a rather different conception of the role than what was usually seen. She offered, instead of an ebullient youngster bursting on adolescence, a more lachrymose and melancholy characterization of the page. Pasta's interpretation seemed at odds with the character described by Lorenzo da Ponte's libretto and depicted by Mozart's music. The major criticism

of her performance of Cherubino's first act aria "Non so più" was that she ignored the allegro vivace marking and sang in too calculated a fashion. According to the critic of the Morning Chronicle, it was ". . . too slow: it requires, in order to express the words, quickness and agitation."<sup>19</sup> Transforming the sprightly Cherubino into a figure of Hamlet-like sobriety was a miscalculation which did not add depth but merely deprived the character of his distinctive charm. In addition to her predilection for slow tempi, Pasta had intonation problems. The critic of The Literary Gazette and Journal of the Belles Lettres reported ". . . once or twice she pitched rather sharp."<sup>20</sup> The critic commented furthermore that her stage deportment ". . . was not lively enough; but a vein of infantine innocence, which pervaded her play, made great amends for occasional want of juvenile vivacity."<sup>21</sup> Pasta's ability to portray a pathetic innocence was to be the outstanding feature of her celebrated characterizations of Paisiello's Nina [in Nina, Pazzo per Amore] and later on Bellini's sleepwalking Amina [in La Sonnambula]. This was already evident in her interpretation of Cherubino; whether it suited the character was debatable.

The misappropriation of Cherubino's celebrated canzona, "Voi che sapete," was common during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Either the Countess or Susanna, depending on the importance and influence of the singer, would simply steal this music. In the 1817 performances at the King's Theatre, Joséphine Fodor-Mainvielle sang the Countess and Violante Camporesi sang Susanna. Fodor-Mainvielle determined to include "Voi che sapete" in her role. Her claim to the

canzona went unchallenged since she had been at the King's Theatre longer and was a more important singer than Camporesi. Pasta, being the seconda donna, had no say at all in the matter.

Giuditta Pasta's next new role was not until 8 May 1817, when she sang in a special Thursday benefit for Fodor-Mainvielle.<sup>22</sup> The first part of the evening consisted of a one-act version of Giovanni Simone Mayr's comic opera Il Fanatico per la Musica; the second was a single-act opera, entitled Lo Sbaglio Fortunato, that was composed expressly for the occasion by Giacomo Gotifredo Ferrari. Ferrari's opera did not generate much enthusiasm. Pasta was given the role of the maid Vespina in yet another stock comic situation.

The demure and well-bred Fioretta is engaged to Don Quirino in a match arranged by her father Cromaziano. Fioretta, however, is smitten with the young and handsome Armando, and a scheme is hatched to deceive the older suitor. It is decided that Vespina should impersonate Fioretta, giving her such a vile temper as to dissuade Don Quirino from his pursuit. The plan works, and Fioretta is finally free to marry Armando.

Despite the potential for amusement, the opera was found by the critic of The Literary Gazette and Journal of the Belles Lettres to be ". . . frequently dull in its progress; what wit and jokes it contains are of the common order without point; some attempts at humour, indeed, are offensive, . . . ." <sup>23</sup> Concerning Pasta's performance, the critic declared: "Madame Pasta might have given more effect to the piece by a stronger conception and execution of the assumed character of a shrew assigned to her." <sup>24</sup> Pasta apparently disliked her role, and

not without reason. The scene in which she literally had to horse-whip a servant was tasteless and, the critic reported, ". . . deservedly received some marks of disapprobation from the audience."<sup>25</sup>

Pasta's next appearance at the King's Theatre was 15 May 1817 when, as a benefit for Violante Camporesi, Paër's popular opera Agnese was heard in its first London performance. Agnese proved such an attraction that it was sung five times to overflowing audiences. The opera's commercial success was partly the result of Luigi Buonavoglia's libretto, which provided a series of situations calculated to elicit the most pathetic and heart-wrenching effect.

The young and impressionable Agnese has eloped with Ernesto and borne him a child. Distraught at her lover's wandering affections, Agnese returns home with her seven-year-old daughter only to discover her father driven mad as the consequence of her flight. Many attempts are made to restore the insane Uberto to mental stability. This occurs only after the erring Agnese intones a melody that re-establishes an emotional bond between the two and enables Uberto to recognize and then forgive his repentant offspring.

Pasta did not have a success in the role of the maid Vespina. She apparently sang well enough but, as the critic for The Times reported, she ". . . had very little to do, and that little she entirely spoiled; her performance was without meaning and without effect."<sup>26</sup> It remained for Giuseppe Ambrogetti, normally known for his buffo roles, to capture the hearts of his audience. Even the cast members were affected by his poignant portrayal of Uberto. The review printed in The Examiner described the result:

There cannot be a surer test of his success, than the fact, that, in this region of coldness and apathy, he draws tears from his audience; nay, even from those who are performing with him; for, on the first night of representation, in the scene where he is restored to his reason, the bright eyes of Mad[ame] PASTA were suffused with tears. This lady, we should think, considers the part of Vespina beneath her merits; the character is that of a pert lady's maid, evidently intended to relieve the sombre complexion of the piece; but Mad[ame] PASTA did not condescend to any attempt at personation, and her business on the stage was consequently unintelligible. She is, <sup>27</sup> however, a very pretty woman, a little tinctured with sullenness.

Pasta's failure may have been the result of lack of adequate rehearsal and her effort to learn the part in a short time; nonetheless this secondary role could hardly be expected to inspire her or to further her career.

On 12 June 1817, Pasta participated in yet another benefit, this time for the veteran bass Giuseppe Naldi. In order to take advantage of the popularity of Mozart in London, Così Fan Tutte was announced for one performance only. The revival was so well attended that a rare second performance was scheduled for 24 June. Pasta sang the wise and wiley Despina, and though her music was superior to most of her other roles, Despina's first line of recitative, "Che vita maledetta è il far la cameriera!" no doubt echoed the young singer's sentiments at undertaking one more servant part. Despina tested Pasta's ability at being a versatile mimic and impersonator, and provided an opportunity to show off her trill. Presumably she made little impression; The Times, in the only review of Così Fan Tutte, completely ignored her.

Mozart's opera seria, La Clemenza di Tito, was the last work revived during the 1817 season and began its series of four performances on 12 July. It proved a tedious affair. Pasta sang the secondary role

of Servilia, and evidently thought the part beneath her. The critic of The Times remarked she " . . . did not command much attention, but there was nothing to offend; . . . "28 She was uninvolved in the action, and seemed to be more interested in acknowledging her friends in the audience than paying attention to the drama. The critic for The Examiner noted:

Madame PASTA would do well also to pay a little more attention to her lover, and to look a little more grave at the audience. When she sang Del Prendi [*sic*, "Deh prendi"] with [Pierre] BEGREZ (which, by the bye, . . . pleased us more than anything in the piece), she threw away all her love upon the spectators, and suffered her hand to be pressed to no purpose by her innamorato, who seemed in vain to try and recall her wandering affections. The duet was very well sung, however, some little excrescences excepted, and by BEGREZ, very well and earnestly acted.<sup>29</sup>

At the end of July, with the season at the King's Theatre coming to an end, the Pastas' future plans were not yet set. It was uncertain whether Giuseppe Pasta, who did not perform in any opera during the season, would be engaged for the following year. Giuditta Pasta did not want to remain in London without a contract for her husband. Rachele Negri thought it best that the family stay on in London at least another year. She wrote to Antonio Zanatta, "Giuditta è molto amata, ed assai considerata in tutte le società, e l'anno venturo potrebbe guadagnar molto."<sup>30</sup> A possible return to the Théâtre Italien was contemplated, and there was talk of an engagement at the Teatro alla Scala in Milan. Before any serious arrangements could be formulated, however, Giuditta Pasta discovered she was pregnant, and the family decided to return to Italy.

NOTES: CHAPTER II

1. Corriere delle Dame (Milan), 17 February 1816.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., 9 March 1816.
5. Rachele Negri to Antonio Zanatta, 27 April 1816, Collection of Clelio Moretti, Blevio, Italy.
6. Le Diable Boiteux (Paris), 21 June 1816.
7. Annales Politiques, Morales et Littéraires (Paris), 23 June 1816.
8. Ibid.
9. Journal des Débats (Paris), 8 July 1816.
10. Ibid., 16 August 1816.
11. Journal de Paris, 5 September 1816.
12. Journal des Débats, 5 September 1816.
13. Rachele Negri to Antonio Zanatta, 25 October 1816, Collection of Clelio Moretti, Blevio, Italy.
14. The Examiner (London), 13 January 1817.
15. Morning Post (London), 13 January 1817.
16. Ibid.
17. The Examiner, 19 January 1817.
18. Morning Post, 26 January 1817.
19. Morning Chronicle (London), 3 February 1817.
20. The Literary Gazette, and Journal of the Belles Lettres (London), 8 February 1817.
21. Ibid.
22. Benefit performances at the King's Theatre were scheduled for Thursday evenings. Tuesday and Saturday were regular performance nights.

23. The Literary Gazette, and Journal of the Belles Lettres, 10 May 1817.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid.
26. The Times (London), 14 May 1817.
27. The Examiner, 8 June 1817.
28. The Times, 14 July 1817.
29. The Examiner, 27 July 1817. The duet "Deh prendi" was composed for the characters Sesto and Annio. In the version of La Clemenza di Tito performed at the King's Theatre in 1817, Servilia sang Sesto's vocal line in this piece.
30. Rachele Negri to Antonio Zanatta, 25 July 1817, Collection of Clelio Moretti, Blevio, Italy.

CHAPTER III

The Pasta family arrived in Milan from London on 7 October 1817, and took up residence at 2592 Corso di Porta Vercellina. Nothing is known of Pasta's activities during that fall and winter, but it is highly probable that she worked on her vocal technique and studied some roles with Maestro Davide Banderali of the Milan Conservatory. No doubt she spent much of her time preparing for motherhood. On 27 March 1818, her only daughter was born and the next day baptised Maria Clelia Luigia Teresa Pasta. Once her child was born, Pasta could think of resuming her career. During the coming months Pasta was to sing in Venice, Padua, Rome, and Brescia in operas by Domenico Cimarosa, Pietro Generali, Giovanni Simone Mayr, Sebastiano Nasolini, Giuseppe Nicolini, Giovanni Pacini, Gioacchino Rossini, and Vittorio Trento.

Having endured secondary roles long enough, Pasta, emboldened by her generally favorable notices and public support, became more demanding in her professional career. During the fall of 1818 the administration of the Théâtre Italien had sent Luigi Barilli to Milan in order to enlist new Italian singers for Paris, but evidently nothing came of his negotiations with the Pastas. Giuditta Pasta meanwhile had declined a contract arranged by her uncle Filippo Ferranti to sing in Cremona. Already a veteran of the operatic capitals of London and Paris, she would consider other theatres only if the role was congenial and the fee sufficient. Pasta finally did accept engagements at Venice, Padua, and Rome--as prima donna assoluta.

Clelia being entrusted to Antonio Zanatta's care, Giuditta Pasta and her mother left Milan on 11 August 1818 and, after spending two days in Padua, arrived in Venice on 17 August. Giuseppe Pasta did not accompany them since he was determined to carve out a career of his own. He had already performed with some success in Bergamo, and in Padua had created the role of Rodrigo in Giovanni Pacini's Atala during the Fiera del Santo of 1818. In August 1818, Giuseppe Pasta was in Turin where, during the autumn season at the Teatro Carignano, he was to sing Lindoro in Rossini's Il Barbiere di Siviglia, Giocondo in Rossini's La Pietra del Paragone, and Adolfo in Giuseppe Weigl's Il Rivale di Se Stesso. Giuseppe Pasta failed to make a lasting impression. He was thought by the critics to have a beautiful voice when in full control of his powers, but it was not a voice for the theatre.

Giuditta Pasta's career, on the other hand, was progressing well. She had made an enormous impression in Giovanni Pacini's Adelaide e Comingio, which had its first Venetian performance on 3 September 1818 at the Teatro San Benedetto. The role of Adelaide was not that of a subordinate character as most of her other parts had been and, despite the weaknesses of Pacini's music and Gaetano Rossi's libretto, Adelaide provided scope for characterization. Pasta made the most of it.

Adelaide was forced into an unwanted marriage with Count Benavides, but her first and only love is for the Cavaliere Comingio. She vainly tries to overcome her attachment to Comingio, but her languor only enrages her husband and arouses his jealousy. In one

scene Adelaide experiences a moment of delirium as she declares that she would follow Comingio even to the grave, and when her lover is discovered as the winner of a local tournament, she faints as she awards him the prize of victory in front of the assembled court. Comingio seriously wounds Benavides in a duel that the latter has instigated, and Adelaide is torn between what she perceives as her duty to her husband and her intense love for Comingio. On the verge of death, Benavides is taken back to the castle and, when Adelaide rushes in to examine her husband's wounds, he plunges a knife into her before he expires. With the weight of two deaths on his conscience, Comingio decides to end his days in a monastery.

Pacini's music did not please the audience at the Teatro San Benedetto; rather its enthusiasm for the opera centered upon the singers. The effect Pasta made as Adelaide was on a par with that of her *Giulietta* [in Zingarelli's *Giulietta e Romeo*] and *Telemaco* [in Cimarosa's *Penelope*]. She was recalled to the stage at least twice, and sometimes three times, after each of her numbers. The critic for Il Nuovo Osservatore Veneziano lamented that Pacini's music did not really suit her voice and that the continual anguish of Adelaide proved somewhat monotonous. Using rather flowery imagery, the critic for the Gazzetta Privilegiata di Venezia described Pasta in glowing terms. "Essa è un astro emergente, che di lucidi ma non cocenti raggi crinito, acquistar deve tanto più splendore e vigore, quanto saprà più sollevarsi dall'orizzonte; paragonarla noi anche possiamo ad una fresca venustissima rosa, che non ha per anco intieramente sbucciato il vivo lusso dei suoi rubicondi petali, per tutto diffonderne il

soavissimo olezzo."<sup>1</sup> In a less figurative vein, the critic reported: "Mad[ama] Pasta alla leggiadria della giovine sua persona ci fa conoscere d'accoppiare un'agile omogenea ed estesa voce, una osservabilissima ed animatissima espressione di canto e di azione, ed una non comune perizia nell'arte sua; laonde tutte queste doti, realmente da lei possedute, non mancano per ora che d'un più deciso sviluppo, per classificarla nella prima categoria delle nostre più distinte virtuose, . . . ." <sup>2</sup>

Pasta was also less awkward on stage than she had been previously. Her experience in the theatre and perhaps motherhood contributed to the self-awareness and self-assurance of the twenty-one-year-old singer. What work she had done on her voice in Milan began to be noticed, and in Venice she was befriended by the eminent musician Giovanni Battista Perruchini, who goaded, encouraged, and coached the soprano in her vocal efforts.

The critic for Il Nuovo Osservatore Veneziano flatly stated: ". . . la musica del I atto è insignificante."<sup>3</sup> This was the consensus of critical and public opinion. After the opening performance, the administration of the Teatro San Benedetto decided to stage only the second act of Pacini's Adelaide e Comingio. The basic relationships between the principal characters would not be greatly affected, and the spectators would be spared the tedium of mediocre music. The deleted portion of the evening's entertainment was replaced with Quanti Casi in un Giorno! ossia Gli Assassini, a farsa by the Venetian composer Vittorio Trento. Rehearsals for Trento's work began on 9 September 1818, and the first performance

took place six days later, on 15 September, following the second act of Adelaide e Comingio. Trento's music was hardly an improvement over Pacini's. The meager costumes, slipshod scenery, and the extremely trivial plot all found disfavor. It was regretted that something more substantial was not forthcoming from the same artists who had distinguished themselves in Pacini's opera. Most of the spectators, in fact, left the theatre before the end of the opera.

Pasta was cast as Lisetta, a headstrong girl in love with Astolfo. He is a captain in the army who sets out to capture Roberto and his band of outlaws. Lisetta, along with her buffo servant Fagotto, are captured by Roberto's followers but are later freed by Astolfo, who discovers that Roberto is his long-lost brother. The outlaw renounces his past life, and there is a happy ending. In his very brief review of the opera, the critic for Il Nuovo Osservatore Veneziano did not mention Pasta's performance.

On 5 October 1818, Giuditta Pasta and her mother left for Padua where Gioacchino Rossini's La Cenerentola was scheduled to open the season at the Teatro Nuovo. The title role was well suited to Pasta's talents, and La Cenerentola marked her first appearance in an opera by Rossini. Pasta and Rossini were to be closely identified during the next decade and were to enjoy a warm personal friendship.

The opening performance of La Cenerentola on 19 October 1818 met with poor reception, probably because of inadequate rehearsal. In subsequent performances, however, the opera gained public

approbation, and Pasta scored a triumph in the title role. The correspondent of the Corriere delle Dame described the singer with praise: "Figura assai leggiadra, buon gusto ed eleganza nell'abbigliarsi, azione giusta ed espressiva, e quella vera eloquenza di canto che penetra le vie del cuore, sono i pregi che la distinguono. Essa ebbe prove non dubbie del pubblico favore in ogni pezzo, e dopo il rondeau ["Nacqui all'affanno . . . Non più mesta"] fu richiamata in iscena da generali applausi."<sup>4</sup>

Pasta continued to appear as Cinderella [La Cenerentola] during her brief engagement at the Teatro Nuovo in Padua. The close of the season occurred on 30 November 1818 with Pasta's benefit evening. On that occasion La Cenerentola was repeated. As an added attraction, the one-act comic opera entitled I Virtuosi di Teatro, by the renowned Giovanni Simone Mayr, was performed. Mayr's opera is an amusing parody of the backstage life of the theatre in which the caprices, jealousies, and foibles of an egocentric prima donna and prima ballerina are caricatured. The role of Carolina permitted Pasta to portray comically all the negative connotations of a prima donna. The benefit evening was a success, and the critic for Il Nuovo Osservatore Veneziano reported that Pasta was: ". . . dal pubblico particolarmente applaudita, e nel rondo della Cenerentola, e nella grande scena, ed aria dei Virtuosi [probably Rossini's "Oh patria! . . . Tu che accendi . . . Di tanti palpiti" from Tancredi, which Pasta interpolated in Mayr's opera]. Straordinario fu jer sera il concorso: vennero lanciate all'aere alcune poesie composte a lode di questa

interessante giovine, che ha così felicemente cominciata la carriera teatrale."<sup>5</sup>

Pasta's successful appearances in Venice and Padua gave her increased assurance of her abilities and the confidence to be more selective about roles and engagements. Her Adelaide, in Pacini's Adelaide e Comingio, was to be repeated later on in a slightly different version of the opera called Isabella e Florange. Mayr's I Virtuosi di Teatro and Rossini's La Cenerentola both remained for a time in Pasta's repertoire.

While in Padua, Pasta seems to have sung an unidentified one-act comic opera by Melchiorre Balbi. This may have been a private performance as there is no mention of a Balbi opera either in newspaper reports, letters, or in various histories of the theatres in Padua. Sometime after her retirement from the stage, Pasta had made up a list of her roles and the cities in which she first performed them. This incomplete list does not mention a specific title, but merely a "Farsa di Balbi" for Padua in 1818. It is curious that Pasta did not recall the name of the piece. Until some evidence of its being performed comes to light, it must remain a mystery.<sup>6</sup>

The theatrical agent Valentino Bertoja realized Pasta's potential and, beginning in 1818, Bertoja was occupied with negotiating and offering the singer future contracts. Pasta was already scheduled to sing during the Carnival season in Rome. The winter or Carnival season began 26 December and lasted until Ash Wednesday. For her engagement in Rome, newly commissioned operas

by Mayr and Giuseppe Nicolini were to have roles especially written for Pasta. Bertoja offered her a one-year contract for Palermo, ". . . in qualità di prima Donna Buffa, e Seria; e per fare anche da Uomo nell'Opere Serie."<sup>7</sup> Bertoja did not mention what specific roles Pasta would be required to perform, or if any of the operas were to be composed specifically for her. The offer was sweetened with the promise of a benefit performance from which Pasta could keep the entire receipts. A paid sea voyage from Naples to Palermo was included, but not the expenses of her residence, which Bertoja pointed out was not offered to anyone. Pasta did not want to travel as far as Palermo. Though a "total benefit" was tempting, the thought of a year in Palermo was not an inducement to the singer, and Pasta was not inclined to accept the engagement.

Pasta and her mother left Padua on 1 December 1818, and arrived in Rome on 11 December. The first opera Pasta was to perform in Rome was to be composed by Giovanni Simone Mayr. The text was prepared by Felice Romani, who had already collaborated with Mayr on four other operas, including the composer's best works: La Rosa Bianca e la Rosa Rossa and Medea in Corinto. Romani was then at the outset of his important career as one of the most accomplished Italian librettists.

The new opera, Danao, was based on the story of the antique Danaides, the murderous daughters of the King of Argos. The subject had been suggested to Romani by the noted tenor Niccola Tacchinardi, who was engaged for the Carnival season.

Tacchinardi knew Romani's predeliction for classical antiquity and no doubt envisioned a plum role for himself as the usurper King Danaus. Romani worked with his characteristic tardiness which exasperated many composers. From Bergamo, on 27 October 1818, Mayr had written to Pasta: "Al suo arrivo però in Roma troverà avanzata la mia fatica in modo che avrà con che occuparsi, riserbandomi di compire i suoi pezzi a solo alla di lei presenza."<sup>8</sup> During the early nineteenth century no composer would think of completing solo numbers unless they knew the capabilities of the singers for whom the selections were intended. Mayr's experience in the theatre had taught him to be diplomatic in his relations with sensitive and sometimes tempestuous artists. There was little time for disagreement between Mayr and Pasta. The soprano had arrived in Rome on 11 December, and individual pieces had to be composed, parts copied out and learned, and the opera had to be sufficiently rehearsed to be ready for its first performance on 26 December, only two short weeks later.

Despite the efforts of Mayr, Romani, and a respectable cast, Danao was not a success at its first singing at the Teatro Argentina. The few repetitions of the opera did little to gain public favor. The forty-six-year-old Tacchinardi's performance in the title role did not correspond to the anticipation that his fame had excited.

Romani had constructed several potent and dramatic scenes for Tacchinardi, beginning with the narration of a dream in which he sees the ghost of his brother Egisto and forecasts his own

death at the hands of his nephews. There are highly charged confrontations with his daughter Ipermestra, in which Danao demands that she kill her lover Linceo. Danao's other daughters had already agreed to destroy Egisto's sons, and Linceo's death would insure the security of Danao. Tacchinardi's acting skills were tested in a long mad scene when it is discovered that he had ordered the massacre, and in a death scene, when he refuses clemency and expires unrepentant.

As a young woman on the verge of marriage, torn between duty to her father and her lover, horrified at, but helpless to control, the extraordinary situations in which she finds herself manipulated, the role of Ipermestra afforded much scope and potential, but Carolina Pellegrini's performance did not inspire any comment by the reviewers.

The travesty role of Linceo assigned to Giuditta Pasta was the least well drawn of the three principal parts, yet it was Pasta's performance that elicited the most applause of the evening. Linceo is a rather naive character whose reactions are instinctive, not cerebral. Linceo fails to recognize his uncle's motives or comprehend the reasons for the vacillations of Ipermestra. Initially he accuses her of having a secret lover, but when the mass murders are discovered, he realizes his duty and seeks revenge on Danao. Only towards the end of the opera do his emotions become more believable. Ipermestra's tears move him to spare her father's life, and Mayr provided Pasta with an affecting rondo ["Alma bella in quest'istante"] in which Linceo prays for his lover. The Roman

correspondent of the Corriere delle Dame declared that Pasta:  
" . . . seppe farsi assai vantaggiosamente distinguere nel suo rondo del secondo atto, e dopo di questo fu dal Pubblico richiamata in iscena a ricevere gli applausi generali, onore che venne a lei sola compartito."<sup>9</sup>

Apart from the applause for Pasta's performance, Danao did not please. The Roman spectators may have been disconcerted by the more violent aspects of the opera, and the relative complexity of Mayr's music. Part of the explanation for the opera's lack of appeal is revealed in the comments of a very distinguished member of that Roman audience--Niccolò Paganini--who commented: "Mayr ha scritto da divino maestro, ma il pubblico di Roma non ama la musica scientifica o filosofica, ama soltanto le musiche a uso valtz da eseguirsi con un solo flauto ed una mezza chitarra."<sup>10</sup> Mayr was instrumental in injecting the increased importance of the orchestra into Italian opera. Not content to treat the orchestra as a polite accompanist, the Bavarian-born composer transferred a German aesthetic and compositional technique to Italy.

Mayr's Danao was not heard again after its failure at the Teatro Argentina. The cast hardly had time to regret the opera's lack of success for they were already in rehearsal for the second new opera of the Carnival season, Giulio Cesare nelle Gallie, by Giuseppe Nicolini. Pasta was to sing another travesty role in this work. She and Nicolini also were to develop a cordial relationship that was to last until the composer's death in 1842.

Nicolini was already well-known and well-liked in Rome and so he had every reason to hope that his new opera would be a success. "Tutto il difficile sarà di avere un interessante libretto"<sup>11</sup> Nicolini had written to Pasta on 1 October 1818. Nicolini needed a text suited to the talents of his cast that would also please the Roman audience but be sufficiently different from Mayr's opera. Michelangelo Prunetti, with whom Nicolini had worked previously, devised a tale of Julius Caesar in ancient Gaul.

Engaro, the usurper governor of Lutezia (Paris) seeks vengeance on the princess Emirena because she has rejected his son, and he invokes the barbarous rite of the Gauls by which Emirena must be sacrificed to the god Heso in order to end the war with the Romans. The priest Cinonace realizes Engaro's motivations and informs Cesare of the treachery. Acting as a deus ex machina representative of the humanity of Rome, Giulio Cesare prevents Emirena's murder and dismisses his own feelings for Emirena so that she can marry her beloved Clodomiro.

At its first performance on 17 January 1819, Giulio Cesare nelle Gallie met with mediocre success. Subsequent representations, however, drew more enthusiasm from the audiences at the Teatro Argentina. The dramatic situations and emotions involved were hackneyed and lacked any real inspiration though the critic for the Corriere delle Dame found the text ". . . ricca di espressione e di metastasiana semplicità."<sup>12</sup> It was rather Nicolini's music that provided interest in the opera, and confirmed the composer's

reputation as a "maestro del cuore."<sup>13</sup>

According to the critic for the Notizie del Giorno, Pasta was: ". . . applauditissima in varj pezzi, ed in ispecie nell'aria del second'atto [Perchè straziarmi tanto"], la quale le procura l'onore di essere ogni sera richiamata in iscena a ricevere le testimonianze del pubblico gradimento."<sup>14</sup> As Clodomiro, Pasta portrayed a character who though ardent, is powerless to control events. In the aria "Perchè strazarmi tanto," Clodomiro copes with jealousy towards Cesare, then dismisses his insecurities and rejoices in the idea of his love for Emirena. Nicolini provided Pasta with an opportunity for both plaintive expression and bravura, and she liked the aria so well that she sang it for a time after the Rome performances of Giulio Cesare nelle Gallie. The aria "Perchè straziarmi tanto" was the most applauded piece in the opera which, although fairly well received, did not meet the expectations of its composer. Niccolò Paganini offered a terse observation: the aria pleased the public because Pasta ". . . è una bella donna."<sup>15</sup> The remark well sums up Paganini's attitude towards the spectators at the Teatro Argentina.

The third and final opera of the Carnival season in Rome was Gioacchino Rossini's Aureliano in Palmira. The opening performance on 9 February 1819 was a failure. Without being specific, the critic for the Notizie del Giorno put the blame on the singers and orchestra, mentioning ". . . altri ne incolparono pochi pezzi di diversi spartiti che vi furono innestati."<sup>16</sup> Neither a libretto nor a score for the single performance of Aureliano in Palmira has apparently

not survived so a determination cannot be made as to what offending music was interpolated into Rossini's opera.

Pasta sang Arsace, the role of a Persian prince. There are no detailed reviews of her performance; a brief plot summary of Aureliano in Palmira, one of Rossini's lesser known operas, may provide an idea of the type of character she portrayed. The undistinguished libretto by Gian-Francesco Romanelli involves a typical love triangle. The Emperor Aureliano is enamored of Zenobia, whose affections are solely for Arsace. Despite two attempts at battle with the Roman army, Arsace fails to defeat Aureliano. He is, however, the victor in love. Aureliano realizes the futility of seducing Zenobia and is moved by the strength of devotion between the two lovers. He finally decides to leave them in peace provided they swear allegiance to Rome.

The Carnival season ended on 23 February 1819 with a performance of Giulio Cesare nelle Gallie. Pasta remained in Rome until the end of June because impresario Pietro Cartoni had engaged her for the spring season at the Teatro Valle.

On 13 April 1819, in celebration of the arrival of Francis I of Austria in Rome, Pacini's Adelaide e Comingio was performed at the Teatro Valle under the title Isabella e Florange. Pasta sang the role of Isabella. Apart from the obvious differences in character names, there were some important textual and musical changes. Pasta sang a different entrance aria than she had in Venice and Padua; "Alma bella, che spiegate" was replaced with

"Fatale imagine d'un primo affetto." Any reference slightly religious or suggestive of physical love was excised or altered by the Roman censors. There are numerous examples one could cite. Statements such as "Chi è morto nulla ha più da goder, non ha conforto" (I:ix) were omitted as being contrary to established beliefs, while an expression like "affetti dell'amore" (I:v) was the replacement for the more potent "delizie dell'amore."

During the spring of 1819, Pasta also sang, probably at the Teatro Apollo in Rome, at least one performance of Pietro Generali's one-act comic opera Pamela. The effort did not attract much critical attention.<sup>17</sup> It was a simple pastoral comedy about an extremely virtuous chambermaid who has aroused the amorous attentions of her master Bonfil. When it is discovered that Pamela is in fact the daughter of Count Auspigh, Bonfil is at liberty to marry her because Pamela is of noble birth and his social equal. Pamela was a role not unlike the other servant parts Pasta had performed previously, and it added little to her reputation or career.

While in Rome, Pasta continued her correspondence with the agent Valentino Bertoja. She was offered a contract for Munich from 15 October to 15 June 1820, in which she would be required to sing about forty times during that eight-month period and no more than twice a week. She was promised substantial fees for her concerts at court and was to have the title Prima Donna Seria, Buffa e Primo Uomo. There were problems. Pasta disliked the fact

that a benefit evening was not included. She also wanted the title assoluta to make absolutely certain that she would not be assigned any secondary roles. These obstacles could be overcome. The difficulty was that Pasta, emboldened by her good critical notices and belief in her future greatness, demanded paid housing, a large sum for travel expenses and more money for the engagement than Baron Priuli, on behalf of the Munich court, was authorized to pay. There was some flexibility on Priuli's part, none on Pasta's, and Bertoja was not able to negotiate a compromise. After many letters back and forth, the word finally came from Munich that Madame Pasta's services were no longer requested. Bertoja was frustrated that no agreement could be reached and diplomatically laid the blame on Baron Priuli. He did not want to lose a potentially valuable client. In terms of her fees, Pasta was rigid from the beginning of her career. In future years, she was to be publically criticized for what were deemed excessive monetary demands.

Meanwhile, a contract was worked out with the impresario Zuradelli of the Teatro Grande in Brescia, who was planning to stage two serious operas--Sebastiano Nasolini's La Morte di Cleopatra and Domenico Cimarosa's Gli Orazi e i Curiazi--for the Fiera of 1819. Zuradelli wanted a great spectacle and arranged for new decorations and costumes. He spared no expense in engaging the finest singers. Pasta was to sing the travesty roles of Marc'Antonio and Curiazio, appearing with the noted tenor Eliodoro Bianchi and the great contralto Giuseppina Grassini. Pasta and her mother left Rome on

30 June 1819 and, after stopping one day in Florence and one day in Perugia, arrived in Brescia on 11 July. Was the date of arrival on the eleventh of the month scheduled as an omen of good luck?

Rehearsals for La Morte di Cleopatra began immediately, and Pasta found herself unhappy with conditions in Brescia. The exact details of her contract have not survived, so it is not known what Pasta had the right to expect. Probably she was not as pampered as Bianchi or Grassini. She communicated her complaints to Violante Camporesi, who replied sympathetically and counseled her young friend in the ways of the operatic world. Camporesi wrote: "So che hai qualche dispiacere a Brescia, . . . senti il consiglio di un'amica, qualora tu sii disposta a fare dei sacrifici per ottener la quiete (sommò dei beni) fallo pure, ma bada di avere almeno un'aria che ti sia adattata e nella quale possa brillare la tua abilità; se ricusasti anche a questo per te necessario vantaggio, chiamerei schiochezza la tua condiscendenza . . . ."18

La Morte di Cleopatra, which had its first Brescian performance on 31 July 1819, was a stunning success. As Marc'Antonio, Pasta did not have the leading role, but librettist Antonio Sografi provided the character many effective dramatic situations, including an entrance by triumphal chariot. There are numerous opportunities for bellicose utterances such as Marc'Antonio's bold challenge to Augusto to fight for Cleopatra. Marc'Antonio also has moments of tenderness with Cleopatra and their

two children and, to cap it all, a moving death scene with Cleopatra.

The critic for the Giornale della Provincia Bresciana reported that Pasta acquitted herself admirably alongside such established artists as Bianchi and Grassini, and that she: ". . . sostenne il personaggio d'Antonio con perfetta intelligenza, e con una azione sempre nobile e dignitosa; . . . ."19 The critic for the Gazzetta di Milano wrote: "La sua voce è agile, estesa ed esercitata; il suo canto dolce, ed ornato sobriamente; . . . . Questa giovane virtuosa è molto applaudita; e gli applausi non son di favore ma di giustizia."20

La Morte di Cleopatra continued its run at the Teatro Grande until replaced by Cimarosa's Gli Orazi e i Curiazi on 28 August 1819. Again the spectators were highly satisfied with what they saw and heard. Grassini had created the role of Orazia at the opera's first performance at the Teatro La Fenice in Venice on 26 December 1796, and it was one of her most celebrated parts. Pasta was assigned the travesty role of Curiazio.

Librettist Antonio Sografi based his text on Pierre Corneille's tragedy Horace. The antagonism between the Roman Orazi and the Curiazi of Alba disrupts the marriage plans of the lovers Orazia and Curiazio. When Curiazio is killed in battle with her Roman brethren, Orazia is driven to despair. The role of Orazio (sung by Eliodoro Bianchi), is the unyielding zealot whose personal sentiments are subordinated to his sense of honor

and allegiance to Rome. This ultimately results in his murder of his sister Orazia, who has betrayed her patriotic duty.

In Brescia, the opera was performed in an abbreviated version. Several numbers were deleted, including Orazia's duet with Curiazio, "Se torni vincitor," and Curiazio's aria "Resta in pace." Pasta did not, as Camporesi had suggested, interpolate an aria especially suited to her voice. Still, Pasta made a favorable impression as the warrior-lover Curiazio, and the critic for the Corriere delle Dame reported that was: ". . . applauditissima in ogni pezzo."<sup>21</sup>

Pasta's experience in Brescia was a valuable one. Her suitability to serious roles was reaffirmed, and she was to repeat her performance of Curiazio in Padua (in 1820) and Paris (in 1823). Most important, however, was that the season afforded an opportunity to sing with one of the most revered contraltos of opera history. Giuseppina Grassini was probably the most significant female influence on Pasta's artistic development. In the chapter devoted to Pasta in Stendhal's Vie de Rossini, the author wrote: "Elle n'a d'obligation pour le chant qu'à madame Grassini, avec laquelle elle a chanté pendant une saison à Brescia."<sup>22</sup> The two singers developed a warm personal relationship and, though actual lessons may not have taken place, during rehearsal and performance the young Giuditta Pasta must have carefully observed the great Grassini's technique in cantabile and coloratura passages. She could not help but notice Grassini's breathing and articulation, her respect for words and

elegant stage deportment, and their results on stage. In a duet from La Morte di Cleopatra, "Ah! questo amplesso oh cara," Grassini and Pasta sang in thirds and sixths and alternately repeated several florid vocal configurations. It is extremely likely that discussions were held on how certain phrases were to be sung to achieve maximum effect, and Pasta could only learn from Grassini's experience.

After leaving Brescia on 16 September 1819, Pasta remained in Milan during October and November to prepare for the coming Carnival season at Trieste where she was engaged as Prima Donna Buffa. She still wanted to sing in London and Paris, but contracts from the King's Theatre and the Théâtre Italien were not forthcoming. Neither was a hoped-for engagement at the Teatro alla Scala in Milan. For the time being, it was better for Pasta to remain in the smaller Italian theatres where she could practice her craft.

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NOTES: CHAPTER III

1. Gazzetta Privilegiata di Venezia, 7 September 1818.
2. Ibid.
3. Il Nuovo Osservatore Veneziano, 5 September 1818.
4. Corriere delle Dame, 24 October 1818.
5. Il Nuovo Osservatore Veneziano, 3 December 1818.
6. Melchiorre Balbi (1796-1879) studied composition in Padua and from 1819 to 1854 was maestro concertatore at the Teatro Nuovo. He may well have been in Padua in 1818, but the first opera he is credited for is La Notte Perigliosa, written in 1820. Balbi's other operas include L'Abitatore del Bosco (1821) and L'Alloggio Militare (1825).
7. Valentino Bertoja to Giuditta Pasta, 18 October 1818, Collection of Clelio Moretti, Blevio, Italy.
8. Giovanni Simone Mayr to Giuditta Pasta, 27 October 1818, Biblioteca Livia Simoni, Milan, Italy.
9. Corriere delle Dame, 9 January 1819.
10. Niccolò Paganini to unidentified person, quoted by Mario Rinaldi, Due Secoli di Musica al Teatro Argentina, (Florence: Leo Olschki, 1978), p. 550.
11. Giuseppe Nicolini to Giuditta Pasta, 1 October 1818, Pasta Collection of the New York Public Library of the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center.
12. Corriere delle Dame, 20 February 1819.
13. Ibid.
14. Notizie del Giorno (Rome), 28 January 1819.
15. Niccolò Paganini to Annibale Milzetti, 22 January 1819, Biblioteca dell'Instituto Musicale "Niccolò Paganini," Genoa, Italy.
16. Notize del Giorno, 11 February 1819.

17. There is no documentation for a performance of Generali's Pamela in Rome during 1819. The only reference is that Pasta included it in her list of roles for 1819.
18. Violante Camporesi to Giuditta Pasta, 16 July 1819, Pasta Collection of the New York Public Library of the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center.
19. Giornale delle Provincia Bresciana, 9 August 1819.
20. Gazzetta di Milano, 9 August 1819.
21. Corriere delle Dame, 4 September 1819.
22. Stendhal [Henri Beyle], Vie de Rossini, 2 vols. (Paris: Champion, 1922), II:156.

CHAPTER IV

From December 1819 to March 1821 Giuditta Pasta continued her Italian tour and accepted engagements to sing in Trieste, Padua, Turin, and Venice. During this period she became more assured on stage and her voice gained in force and clarity. She added new roles to her repertoire, including five that were composed specifically for her voice: Diana in Giuseppe Farinelli's La Festa Patria, Ippolito in Ferdinando Orlandi's Fedra, Zora in Giovanni Pacini's La Schiava in Bagdad, Gonzalvo in Giuseppe Nicolini's La Conquista di Granata, and the title role in Stefano Pavesi's Arminio.

After a seven-day journey from Milan, Pasta and her mother reached Trieste on 9 December 1819. On 26 December, the season at the Teatro Nuovo opened with Giovanni Pacini's Il Barone di Dolsheim. Pasta sang Amalia, a serious role in an otherwise comic opera, and the critic for the Gazzetta di Milano reported that she was received " . . . con vero entusiasmo."<sup>1</sup> The critic for L'Osservatore Triestino, like his colleagues in other cities, observed: "La Pasta ha una maniera di canto abbastanza espressiva."<sup>2</sup>

The rather thin plot did not afford Pasta the depth of characterization of some of her previous roles; nonetheless there were scenes of pathos in which she proved particularly effective. Carlo, the Baron of Dolsheim, seduced by the pleasures of gambling and women has, by his absence from his regiment, aroused the anger

of King Federico, who is preparing his troops for battle. Carlo vows to change his ways because he has become enamored of Amalia, though the two have never spoken. Federico has the errant soldier incarcerated, and Carlo is driven to despair. He escapes from prison, and the outraged Federico has Carlo sentenced to death. The King is deaf to the pleas of Amalia, who resolves to die should her lover be captured and executed. Meanwhile, the fugitive Carlo inspires the nearly defeated troops to victory, and thus earns Federico's gratitude and clemency, providing the opera with a happy ending. The buffo aspects of the drama appealed most to the audience and, according to the critic for L'Osservatore Triestino, ". . . la vivacità della musica, e la ben disposta istromentazione . . . ." <sup>3</sup> helped the opera to run for sixteen performances.

Rossini's La Cenerentola was the next opera heard during the season, with Pasta in the title role. She had performed the role previously (in Padua during 1818), and it was one of the most polished interpretations of her early career. La Cenerentola began the first of its twenty-six performances on 19 January 1820, and from the opening was a resounding success. The critic for the Corriere delle Dame wrote: "La prima donna . . . signora Pasta, è giunta a renderlo oltremodo gradito mercè la singolare maestria colla quale ha eseguito i diversi suoi pezzi, e più ancora il rondeau del secondo atto, che destò nel pubblico un entusiasmo non comune. Più volte essa venne chiamata sulle scene dagli applausi generali, ora sola, ora coi sullodati soggetti, ed ora

coll'intera compagnia."<sup>4</sup> The experience gained since her initial effort in the role may have increased her assurance in the florid passages, and as a result of the ovation she received, Pasta began to include "Nacqui all'affanno . . . Non più mesta" in her concert repertoire.

Giovanni Simone Mayr's I Virtuosi di Teatro was introduced during the run of La Cenerentola. There were no reviews of I Virtuosi di Teatro, but according to Giuseppe Schirotti, a horn player in the orchestra, Mayr's comic opera "non piacque."<sup>5</sup> This was the second time Pasta had portrayed Carolina, but the version performed in Trieste was different from both the original and the version she had sung in Padua in 1818. In addition to extensively rewritten recitatives, there were two important changes in Pasta's role. For her entrance aria, instead of singing Rossini's "Di piacer mi balza il cor" (from La Gazza Ladra) as indicated in the main text of the 1820 I Virtuosi libretto, an addendum stated that Pasta would substitute Nicolini's "Perchè straziarmi tanto" (from Giulio Cesare nelle Gallie), which had been specifically written for her and not yet heard in Trieste. For her concluding aria Pasta sang Rossini's "Di tanti palpiti" (from Tancredi), which was fast becoming one of her war-horses.

As part of the celebration of the birthday of Austrian Emperor Francis I, Giuseppe Farinelli, the composer employed by the Teatro Nuovo, had been commissioned to compose a cantata with chorus and dances. La Festa Patria was a mixture of history and

mythology about the beginnings of the city of Trieste that was calculated to please its citizens and pay the necessary homage to Francis I. Pasta portrayed the goddess Diana. The review of the single performance of La Festa Patria printed in L'Osservatore Triestino was not at all specific. According to the critic, the singers performed " . . . con precisione e maestria."<sup>6</sup> After its opening on 12 February 1820, La Festa Patria was not heard again.

Before the end of her season in Trieste, Pasta still had two new roles to learn. On 24 February 1820, she sang for the first time the title role of Paër's Agnese. Pasta was not unfamiliar with the opera, having performed the secondary role of Vespina in London in 1817. The love-lorn Agnese, distraught at the betrayal of her lover and deeply repentant that her father's delirium and madness resulted from her elopement, was well suited to the singer's abilities. At this point in her career she excelled in scenes of gentle melancholy. The title role afforded opportunities for such sentiment, especially the scene in which Agnese accompanies herself on the harp, hoping to strike a chord that will restore her father to sanity.

Pasta was prima donna in Trieste, and she learned to take advantage of the power of her position. She followed Camporesi's advice and interpolated an applause-gathering aria that underscored the best qualities of her voice. In the second act, instead of a duet for Agnese and the buffo asylum superintendent Don Pasquale,

Pasta replaced "Il padre, o Ciel, mi rendi" with Portogallo's aria "Frenar vorrei le lagrime." She had noted the effect Grassini made with this music during performances of Cimarosa's Gli Orazi e i Curiazi, and expected similar results. Pasta had the parts copied in Brescia and during the rehearsals of Agnese distributed them to the orchestra, explaining where the substitution was to occur. Giuseppe Schiroli wrote in his memoirs that Agnese "piacque assai."<sup>7</sup>

The last new work offered during the Carnival season in Trieste was Stefano Pavesi's comic opera "Il Trionfo delle Belle o sia Corradino". Pasta sang the role of Elena d'Elville, a tough but charming minx who determines to change the misanthropic Corradino and marry him--and she does just that. The opera had its single performance on 15 March 1820, as a benefit for the renowned bass Luigi Pacini. With only two rehearsals, however, it was obviously hastily put together and did not please. Schiroli summed up the production in two words: "che fiasco!"<sup>8</sup>

Except for the ill-fated Corradino, Pasta's season in Trieste was successful. Though opera semi-seria was performed, Pasta sang only serious roles in these works, which confirmed her affinity for this genre. In a little over three months she had appeared in six different productions, with Rossini's La Cenerentola being the most applauded. It was, according to Schiroli, "alle stelle e sempre bella."<sup>9</sup>

On 22 March 1820 Pasta and her mother left Trieste for Milan, where they were reunited with Giuseppe Pasta and the infant Clelia. The soprano could look forward to six weeks at home with her husband and child before professional duties took her to Padua, where she was engaged during June and July. She was to share the stage with her now close friend Giuseppina Grassini. Throughout April Pasta was in contact with the composer Ferdinando Orlandi and librettist Luigi Romanelli, whose new opera Fedra was scheduled to open Padua's newly redecorated Teatro Nuovo.

In Milan Giuseppe Pasta had come down with one of his frequent illnesses, but was determined to accompany his wife to Padua. On 11 May 1820 they left Milan, arriving in Padua two days later.

The great castrato Gaspare Pacchierotti, then living in retirement in Padua, was one of the outstanding figures in the history of singing. The effect his soprano made on his contemporaries was the result of his masterful delivery of recitative, his excellent trill, the variety, originality and appropriateness of his embellishments, and most of all, what Richard Mount-Edgcumbe called his " . . . touching expression and exquisite pathos."<sup>10</sup> In addition he was considered an accomplished actor. Though there is no documentation, very probably Pasta did visit Pacchierotti during her stay in Padua. It is interesting to speculate if she actually heard him sing. Many of the attributes for which Pasta was to be so highly lauded

during her career were those that were so appreciated by Pacchierotti's listeners. Pasta was often compared to her great predecessors Giuseppina Grassini and Gaspare Pacchierotti; she could have had no better models.

Fedra had its first performance at the Teatro Nuovo on 10 June 1820. The overflowing audience appreciated the improvements to the theatre; there were mixed reactions as to the opera. Based on the tragedies of Euripides (Hippolytus) and Racine (Phèdre), the libretto concerning Fedra's avowal of incestuous love for her step-son Ippolito did not please all the spectators, and opinion was divided on the merits of Orlandi's music.

In the shadow of Grassini's overwhelming presence, the critics felt Pasta acquitted herself admirably enough though the reviewer for Il Nuovo Osservatore Veneziano pointed out " . . . fu mal situata la Pasta nella Fedra. Ippolito in quello così detto dramma, è parte accessoria piuttosto che essenziale."<sup>11</sup> Despite the limitations of the role, Pasta was thought effective in expressing the scope of Ippolito's emotions: his youthful ardor for Aricia, his perplexity at his step-mother's declaration of love, and his frustration at finding himself the unwilling victim of events over which he has no control. The critic of the Giornaletto Ragionato Teatrale was effusive in his praise for Pasta's performance: "Quel suo delizioso canto, quelle grazie del viso e della persona, oh come rendono men colpevole il fuoco,

di che arde per lei la sventurata madrigna! Tutto è bellezza  
ciò, ch'ella canta; ma il rondo poi è bellezza tale, che Ulisse  
medesimo ad orecchie disarmata sarebbe difficile assai che non  
si lasciasse ammaliare dal quel suo canto."<sup>12</sup>

After at least six performances of Fedra, Domenico  
Cimarosa's Gli Orazi e i Curiazi was revived at the Teatro  
Nuovo on 27 June 1820. Grassini and Pasta repeated the roles  
they had sung together in Brescia the year before, and the  
same version of the opera was used. The critic for Il Nuovo  
Osservatore Veneziano praised Pasta's ". . . agile voce, dei  
modi leggiadri, della naturale, e pensata azione,"<sup>13</sup> and her  
singing of Curiazio's aria "Quelle pupille tenere." The critic  
declared: "Si disse unanimamente che dopo Crescentini [for whom  
the role of Curiazio had been composed] la Pasta è una delle  
poche cantanti, che l'abbia eseguita con sovrano magistero."<sup>14</sup>  
This was not the last time Pasta's singing was to be compared to  
that of the great castrato.

On 27 July 1820, the Pasta family left Padua for Milan,  
where on 8 August the soprano was honored by the Società  
Filarmonica gli Orfei for her achievements as an artist in  
representing and preserving "la purezza del vero gusto Musicale  
Italiano."<sup>15</sup> Pasta was able to spend only two weeks at her  
home in Milan. On 11 August she set out for Turin to begin  
an engagement at the Teatro Carignano as Prima Donna Assoluta.  
In Turin Pasta was to sing three operas: Paër's Sargino, a new

opera by Pacini with the title La Schiava in Bagdad, and a revision of Pacini's La Sposa Fedele for which the composer was to rewrite nearly of the music Pasta was to perform.

Giovanni Pacini had composed La Sposa Fedele for the 1819 Carnival season at the Teatro San Benedetto in Venice, and it was repeated at the Teatro La Scala in Milan the following autumn. For the performances in Turin, Pacini set out to infuse new life into his opera. During the primo ottocento it was not uncommon for composers or others to rework or adapt operas for specific casts. La Sposa Fedele underwent major alteration. Pacini and Pasta were fortunately well acquainted and shared respect which made the composer's job that much easier. Pacini completely revised Pasta's role; even the name of the character was changed from Teodora to Matilde. The most significant change was Pasta's entrance aria. The original aria, "Come sembravami," was replaced with "Lungi dal caro ben." Pasta liked this piece so much that she included it in her concert repertoire and, in the future, was to interpolate it into operas of other composers.

The modifications and additions Pacini made to La Sposa Fedele were improvements and the critic for the Corriere delle Dame reported that the revised opera had ". . . un felice esito"<sup>16</sup> at its opening performance on 2 September 1820. The main interest, however, was centered on Pasta's performance. Her singing, according to the critic for the Gazzetta di Milano, ". . . ridestò nell'animo di tutti gli spettatori quel diletto che un canto pieno

di dolcezza e di maestria inspira in chiunque sa valutar questi pregi, che sono oggidì tanto più rari, quanto che i virtuosi mirano più a sorprendere col manierismo che a commuovere coll'espressione."<sup>17</sup> Pacini himself praised his prima donna. In a letter to Pasta the composer wrote: "Per quanto si possa dire sopra il tuo merito, non si puote dire mai abbastanza! Io sono restato sorpreso, estatico! infine edificato!"<sup>18</sup>

Pasta's forte lay in touching expression and Pacini's revised opera exploited this quality and provided opportunity for vocal agility. As the title implies, Matilde is a faithful and loving wife, who instead of becoming betrothed to Prince Arrigo, had fallen hopelessly in love with his confidant Erardo. When the Prince first sees Matilde, even her disguise as a peasant and her implied lower station do not dissuade him from claiming her as his own. Erardo prefers to die rather than relinquish his beloved. In a poignant final scene, Matilde eloquently pleads for mercy, declaring that Erardo acted not out of insubordination but that the power of true love was responsible for his apparent treachery. The depth of feeling moves Arrigo, and eventually the union of Matilde and Erardo is sanctioned to provide the opera with a happy ending.

The second opera of the autumn season at the Teatro Carignano was Ferdinando Paër's popular opera semi-seria entitled Sargino, ossia L'Allievo dell'Amore. The subject matter was not unlike La Sposa Fedele.

Pasta portrayed Sofia, who finds herself about to be forced into a marriage with a man she does not love. Sofia, however, is an independent and strong-willed woman determined to wed the meek and illiterate Sargino junior, her cousin. In a gesture that surprises everyone, King Filippo of Granada requests the young Sargino to protect him in the fight against the Moors, and offers him the royal sword. This gives Sargino a strength of purpose he formerly lacked. During the ensuing battle, Sofia, disguised in armor, helps her lover save the King and other Spanish noblemen, and Sargino's valor earns him his father's respect. As their reward for victory, Sofia and Sargino are permitted to marry.

Sargino had its first performance in Turin on 30 September 1820, and was enthusiastically received. The critic for the Gazzetta Piemontese wrote: "Lo stile del Sargino è largo, e ritrae del fare di Cimarosa, anzi di Paesiello non senza una delicatissima tinta di patetico, che distingue particolarmente la maniera di Paër da quella degli altri compositori . . . ."19

As was customary, the version of Sargino performed in Turin reflected modifications and changes. The most interesting difference from the original 1803 version of the opera was that instead of the aria "Dovunque il suon guerriero," Pasta interpolated the aria "Prima s'avvezzi al lampo" that she had sung as Ippolito in Orlandi's Fedra. By this time in her career Pasta was following Violante Camporesi's advice and substituting

arie di baule in operas not specifically written for her voice.

Sargino was given a sumptuous production and the costumes and settings were deeply appreciated. The critic for the Gazzetta Piemontese wrote: "I cantanti si sono mostrati in quest'opera da quel valenti che e' sono, e soprattutto la signora Pasta, la quale ha voce, metodo, anima, portamento e grazie tutte sue proprie, e tali da meritar la distinta accoglienza che il pubblico non si sazia di farle ogni sera."<sup>20</sup>

Giovanni Pacini's newly composed La Schiava in Bagdad, with libretto by Vittorio Pezzi, had its initial staging at the Teatro Carignano on 28 October 1820. The subject-matter had more than a nodding relationship to dozens of other "serraglio" operas, and closely resembled Felice Romani's libretto for Francesco Basily's Il Califfo e la Schiava of 1819.

The hackneyed plot concerns Nadir, who arrives in Bagdad in search of his missing lover Zora. He meets his former slave Mustafâ, who informs him that Zora has become a slave in the seraglio, and that the Caliph is preparing to wed her since she reminds him of a past lover. At the ceremony, Nadir makes his presence known to the assembly, Zora utters a cry and faints, and there is general consternation. Nadir eventually convinces Zora to flee with him. The escape plan is discovered and Nadir is sentenced to death. Just before the execution, Nadir sends Zora a necklace with a portrait of her mother whom the Caliph recognizes as his lost Adina. The Caliph declares himself

Zora's father. Parent and child are re-united, Nadir's death sentence is revoked, and all is forgiven.

When discussing the singers, the critic for the Gazzetta Piemontese was not at all specific. Though the critic stated " . . . l'esecuzione non potrebbe esser migliore,"<sup>21</sup> only Savino Monelli, who sang Nadir, was mentioned by name. "Gli altri sono uguali a se stessi, e se vogliono pure un ultimo avviso, e farne il loro prò, procurino anch'essi di economizzare le bravure, e vedranno che l'effetto sarà maggiore."<sup>22</sup>

Giuditta Pasta and her family left Turin on 3 December 1820 and, after the briefest of stops in Milan, arrived in Venice on 7 December. Pasta had accepted an engagement, arranged by Valentino Bertoja, to sing travesty roles in two newly composed operas. Less than three weeks remained before Giuseppe Nicolini's La Conquista di Granata was scheduled to open the Carnival season at the Teatro La Fenice. During that time the opera had to be completed, vocal lines adjusted to suit the whims and capabilities of the cast, orchestral parts copied out and learned, and the entire production mounted and rehearsed. Both Nicolini and his librettist Luigi Romanelli were well-known and well-respected, and the celebrity of the principal artists (Pasta, the noted tenor Gaetano Crivelli and the soprano Elisabetta Ferron) aroused enthusiasm and expectation.

What the spectators at the Teatro La Fenice witnessed, on the opening night of 26 December 1820, was an enormous

disappointment and it was met with critical outrage. La Conquista di Granata suffered from the worst of operatic ills: it was boring. "La poesia è cattiva, l'intreccio è orribile"<sup>23</sup> complained the critic for the Gazzetta Privilegiata di Venezia, and the ludicrous text was not made less offensive by ". . . la cattiva impressione causata dal poco effetto della musica."<sup>24</sup> Romanelli had concocted a long, wordy and tortuous story that repeated standard dramatic situations. The unoriginal plot seemed a hodgepodge of various sources, including Othello and Romeo and Juliet. When read, Romanelli's libretto does not seem significantly more insipid than some other texts of primo ottocento opera, but it is dramatically suspect and struck the spectators as theatrically dull.

Almanzor, the supreme commander of the Saracens, has defeated the Spaniards with the aid of the African Prince Alamaro. Almanzor's brother King Boadil of Granata and Alamaro both dislike and are jealous of Almanzor. Alamaro, furthermore, is the rejected suitor of Boadil's sister Zulema, who in turn is in love with the Spanish general Gonzalvo. The relation between Zulema and Gonzalvo is discovered by an enraged Almanzor, who challenges Gonzalvo to combat. As part of his revenge, Alamaro spreads the word that Gonzalvo has killed Almanzor, and the news of her brother's death so distresses Zulema that her love for Gonzalvo immediately turns to hate. The tide of the battle changes in favor of the Spaniards. Gonzalvo, meanwhile, has been arrested and sentenced to death. Just before the execution Almanzor makes

a surprise appearance proving Gonzalvo's innocence. Further combat assures an absolute Spanish victory and, in a magnanimous gesture that pacifies Almanzor and Alamaro, Gonzalvo offers a peaceful settlement and all ends happily.

In Gonzalvo, one of the famous generals in Spanish history,<sup>25</sup> Pasta had the best role and best music of the opera. She was the only singer who continually elicited applause throughout the evening. The critic for the Gazzetta Privilegiata di Venezia shared the common view that Pasta's voice had improved since her last appearance in Venice (in September of 1818). "Ricca dei doni che la natura a larga mano le ha prodigati, ben lontana dall'affidarsi loro ciecamente ella sa mettere a profitto . . . la riveggiamo assai più esperta nel canto, . . ."26

With all its shortcomings and the various efforts to maintain the public's interest by the interpolation of new pieces, La Conquista di Granata continued its run because Stefano Pavesi's Arminio, the second new opera of the season, was still being readied for staging. Between the necessary visits with the aristocracy of Venice, Pasta was busy planning future engagements. During her Italian tour she had made a favorable reputation for herself, and the reviews in the local newspapers as well as the Gazzetta di Milano had not escaped notice of the administrators of the Teatro alla Scala in Milan. The reason that Pasta did not sing at Italy's most important theatre until her first Norma, on 26 December 1831, was not because she had not

been asked, but because the proposed compensation was too low; the administrators of La Scala simply were not prepared to meet her fees. Concerning La Scala, Rachele Negri wrote to Antonio Zanatta: "A te poi in secreto si può dirti che a Giuditta in giornata non ci conviene più di andare alla Scala senza una certa paga; l'alto onore per lei è già cessato, . . . onde a te non converrebbe mai il far sentire . . . che ella dovrebbe accontentarsi di poco per fare anche il Teatro alla Scala; il suo piacere sarebbe grande di essere delle stagioni in Milano, e per i Milanesi canterebbe anche per niente, ma colle Imprese bisogna fare ciò che conviene, e talvolta sacrificare il proprio piacere per non avviliti in faccia loro."<sup>27</sup> Rachele Negri had a perfectly clear notion of her daughter's potential and maintained a rigid standard when negotiating contracts.

Pavesi's Arminio, o sia L'Eroe Germano opened at the Teatro La Fenice on 10 March 1821. It was resounding success for the composer, his librettist Giovanni Kreglianovich Albinoni, and the singers. The carefully mounted production was appreciated by the spectators. The critic for the Gazzetta Privilegiata di Venezia reported: "Il pubblico era disposto favorevolissimamente: i virtuosi, e l'orchestra animati da vivissimo desiderio di piacere. Tutto riuscì a meraviglia, e lo spettacolo destò un vero furore. Gl'applausi non finivano più; ogni virtuoso fu ripetutamente chiamato sulle scene a godere del grato incenso della generale approvazione."<sup>28</sup>

Arminio was based on a famous episode of German history. The German hero (hence the subtitle of the opera) Arminius [Hermann,

17 B.C.?-21 A.D.] in 9 A.D. had led a rebellion of Cherusci against the Roman proconsul Quintilius Varus which resulted in pushing back the northern frontier of the Roman Empire from the Elbe to the Rhine. Intrigue is introduced in the plot with the character Segeste, the ambitious leader of the Catti, who has promised his daughter Tosnelda [Thusnelda] to Varo, if the latter will insure Segeste's dictatorship over the German people. Tosnelda is, however, secretly married to Arminio, and their relationship provides the love interest. Arminio vows to liberate the Germans from their Roman oppressors and, in the end, is victorious.

The first act of Arminio was judged the best of the three. Even after the novelty of the initial performances had waned, this act continued to make an impression--" . . . il primo atto ha fatto e fa il più gran furore, questo è tutto su le spalle di Giuditta; . . . ."29 wrote Rachele Negri. Pasta's entrance aria, "Germani, qual tumulto? . . . Se v'ascolto, o prodi amici," was not unlike that of Nicolini's opera--Arminio inspires and bolsters the morale of the depressed German soldiers. The critic for Il Nuovo Osservatore Veneziano reported that Pasta's " . . . modi graziosi animarono il motivo della cabaletta ["Col fero ardir che v'anima"] con molta precisione."<sup>30</sup> In describing her singing in the third act, the critic wrote: "Furono anche ammirati i begli artifizj della sig[nora] Pasta . . . ; tanta grazia e precisione di canto si può ben sentire, ma non così facilmente

descrivere. E ciò sia detto a lode della valente donna, perciocchè i maestri possono bensì sbagliar sull'effetto d'una cabaletta ["Brillarmi or sento l'anima"], come nel caso, ma il Pubblico giusto ed intelligente sa non per tanto apprezzare il merito di una accurata e zelante esecuzione."<sup>31</sup>

This commentary is the first to reveal what was to be a recurrent difficulty in writing about Pasta's voice. Critics could single out the notes and phrases she sang, but they were increasingly challenged to find adequate vocabulary to describe the effect she created.

Pasta sang her last *Arminio* on 10 March 1821, and two days later left Venice for Milan. Her season at the Teatro La Fenice was a success. Giuseppe Pasta, still smarting over the failure of the Teatro alla Scala to engage his wife wrote to Antonio Zanatta: "O quanto mi sarebbe caro, che i Sig[no]ri Direttori del Teatro della Scala fossero presenti ad una sola delle sue rappresentazioni."<sup>32</sup> Giuditta Pasta's thoughts, however, were centered on Paris. On 10 March 1821 she had signed a contract for a return engagement at the Théâtre Italien. She was, according to a letter Rachele Negri wrote to Antonio Zanatta, ". . . acordato ciò che ha domandato."<sup>33</sup> For a seven-month stay at the Théâtre Italien Pasta was to be paid approximately sixty percent of a yearly salary of 23,500 francs. She was required to be in Paris by 15 April 1821, but the singer planned to arrive on her lucky eleventh of the month. After all, her second Parisian

engagement was a crucial event in her developing career and  
Pasta took every precaution to insure success.

NOTES: CHAPTER IV

1. Gazzetta di Milano, 8 January 1820.
2. L'Osservatore Triestino, 27 January 1820.
3. Ibid.
4. Corriere delle Dame (Milan), 5 February 1820.
5. Giuseppe Schiroli, "Memorie Teatrale di G. Schiroli,"  
Museo Teatrale di Fondazione Carlo Schmidle, Trieste, Italy. [sic]
6. L'Osservatore Triestino, 19 February 1820.
7. Giuseppe Schiroli, "Memorie Teatrale di G. Schiroli,"  
Museo Teatrale di Fondazione Carlo Schmidle, Trieste, Italy. [sic]
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Richard Mount-Edgcumbe, Musical Reminiscences of an Old Amateur,  
(London: W. Clarke, 1823), p. 13.
11. Il Nuovo Osservatore Veneziano, 13 June 1820.
12. Giornaletto Ragionato Teatrale (Venice), 13 June 1820.
13. Il Nuovo Osservatore Veneziano, 1 July 1820.
14. Ibid., 13 July 1820.
15. The original copy of this award is preserved in the Pasta Collection  
of the Teatro Sociale, Como, Italy.
16. Corriere delle Dame, 16 September 1820.
17. Gazzetta di Milano, 9 September 1820.
18. Giovanni Pacini to Giuditta Pasta, n.d. [September 1820],  
Biblioteca Civica di Torino, Turin, Italy.
19. Gazzetta Piemontese (Turin), 3 October 1820.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid., 31 October 1820.
22. Ibid.

23. Gazzetta Privilegiata di Venezia, 4 January 1821.
24. Ibid., 27 December 1820.
25. Hernández Gonzalo de Córdoba negotiated the surrender of Granada in 1492.
26. Gazzetta Privilegiata di Venezia, 4 January 1821.
27. Rachele Negri to Antonio Zanatta, 5 February 1821, Collection of Clelio Moretti, Blevio, Italy.
28. Gazzetta Privilegiata di Venezia, 12 February 1821.
29. Rachele Negri to Antonio Zanatta, n.d. [February 1821], Collection of Clelio Moretti, Blevio, Italy.
30. Il Nuovo Osservatore Veneziano, 13 February 1821.
31. Ibid.
32. Giuseppe Pasta to Antonio Zanatta, n.d. [March 1821], Collection of Clelio Moretti, Blevio, Italy.
33. Rachele Negri to Antonio Zanatta, 12 March 1821, Collection of Clelio Moretti, Blevio, Italy.

CHAPTER V

A turning point in Giuditta Pasta's career was her engagement at the Théâtre Italien in Paris from April to November 1821. She sang, for the first time, two roles that were to remain in her repertoire, and which were considered among her finest interpretations: Desdemona in Rossini's Otello and Romeo in Niccolò Zingarelli's Giulietta e Romeo. The Parisian public and critics recognized Pasta as one of the leading performers of the time; both her singing and histrionic ability elicited continual high praise.

Along with her mother, husband, and daughter, Giuditta Pasta set out from Milan on 1 April 1821 and arrived in the French capital ten days later. The soprano's major concern was to find a vehicle suitable for her return to Paris. Pasta had not performed in Paris since 1816, at the very beginning of her career, and was determined to impress the spectators with the progress she had made. She knew that Rossini was immensely popular; her successes in performing his music prompted her desire to appear in one of his operas. By 21 April, Rachele Negri informed Antonio Zanatta: "La Giuditta per il suo Debutto ha scelto l'Otello."<sup>1</sup>

Gioacchino Rossini's Otello had its initial Paris staging at the Théâtre Italien on 5 June 1821. The feeble libretto was by Marchese Berio di Salsa, who based his text on Shakespeare's

Othello and a version of the Shakespeare play entitled Le Maure de Venise by Jean-François Ducis. He may also have been influenced by the ballet Otello by Salvatore Viganò. Only the third act of Rossini's opera reveals its Shakespearian origins. In the first two acts, a love-letter is substituted for the handkerchief, the role of Iago is trivialized, Rodrigo's love for Desdemona is given prominent display, and Cassio is eliminated altogether. The psychological portrayal of villainy so exquisitely depicted by Shakespeare is lacking; the stock characters would not be out of place in dozens of other early nineteenth century opere serie. Despite the handicap of the uninspired libretto, Rossini lavished some of his best music on these two acts. The magnificent third act, which contains the Gondolier's Song (to verses from the "Paolo e Francesca" section of Dante's Inferno), the sublime "Willow Song" ("Assisa a piè d'un salice"), and the tense duet for Otello and Desdemona that culminates in the lady being stabbed to death, can withstand rigorous critical appraisal.

Unlike many other operas of the primo ottocento, Rossini's Otello does not provide an entrance aria for the prima donna; Desdemona's first appearance on stage is the beautiful and touching duettino with her confident Emilia ("Vorrei, che il tuo pensiero"). Most Desdemonas have simply introduced one of their arie di baule before the duettino. Pasta interpolated Malcolm's recitative and bi-partite aria from Rossini's La Donna del Lago ("Mura infelice . . . Palpita incerta l'anima . . . Oh quante lagrime"). She

made a particular impression in this piece, indeed her entire role, and Giuseppe Pasta boasted to Antonio Zanatta: ". . . tutta la rappresentazione è stata una continuazione d'evviva, che ha stabilito il pieno trionfo di Rossini e l'epoca più gloriosa della carriera, che batte la Giuditta."<sup>2</sup>

The opening performance of Otello received high critical acclaim. The critic for the Journal des Débats reported that: ". . . la débutante [Pasta] n'a pas été moins bien reçue que le compositeur. Mme Pasta joint à tous les dons extérieurs une voix fort belle et d'une expression vraiment dramatique."<sup>3</sup> The spectators were greatly affected. The critic for the Courrier des Spectacles declared: ". . . l'affreux dénouement a glacé les dilettanti d'horreur, et la toile s'est baissée dans un profond silence."<sup>4</sup> In another article, the critic wrote: "Mad[ame] Pasta est une très-jolie femme; mais c'est là son moindre mérite. Bonne comédienne, elle s'est élevée jusqu'au tragique dans le rôle de Desdemone; sa voix de soprano attaque avec la plus grande facilité les notes les plus aiguës, le public craignait d'abord les suites d'une espèce d'enrouement survenue à la cantatrice; mais il a été bien vite rassuré, et j'ai cru que la salle croulerait sous le bruit des applaudissements . . . ."<sup>5</sup>

The numerous rehearsals before the opening had probably robbed Pasta's voice of some of its quality, but the power was there and her phrasing and shaping of the vocal line helped disguise the deficiency. She had been extremely nervous before her début,

and her husband wrote to Antonio Zanatta: ". . . non ho mai ravvisato nella Giuditta tanta paura prima d'esporsi al pubblico, e tanto coraggio dopo, . . . ." <sup>6</sup> Indeed, the soprano was never the same after that fateful performance; her "galley-years" were over.

Those spectators who had not heard Pasta since 1816 could hardly believe her growth as an artist; it was summarized by the critic for L'Etoile, ". . . toute la différence qui existe entre une écolière et une virtuose." <sup>7</sup> A false rumor, printed in the Courrier des Spectacles, was circulated to explain how she had developed into a great singer: "On assure que Mad[ame] Pasta, après s'être éloignée du monde, étudia pendant deux ans dans la retraite." <sup>8</sup> This misinformation has been passed along down to the present day, but, as shown here, Giuditta Pasta had a nearly constant succession of performances during the four years she had last sung in Paris, excepting of course the few months before and after the birth of her daughter.

There were many Parisian newspapers that devoted columns to the lyric theatre. Critical evaluation did not end with the opening performance of Otello, but continued throughout its fifteen singings. More detailed analyses were made of Pasta's voice and, as two persons rarely hear a voice in exactly the same way, there began to appear interesting differences in how critics perceived her various strengths and weaknesses. The reviewer for the Courrier des Spectacles, writing after the second performance,

thought Pasta's voice was: ". . . très-belle dans les cordes bas et dans le medium, tend un peu à baisser dans les cordes hautes. Une pareille voix, très difficile par sa nature à maîtriser, se refuse ordinairement aux agrémens du chant; cependant Mme Pasta, sans être prodigue d'agrémens, ce qui n'est pas un mal, nous en fait entendre d'une exécution parfaite et d'un goût irréprochable. Elle a chanté tout son rôle avec âme, . . ."9

In his review of the first performance, the critic for Le Drapeau Blanc wrote: "La voix de Mme Pasta, pleine, égale et bien timbrée, dans le medium et dans les cordes hautes, paraît un peu voilée dans les tons graves; ses sons, dans cette région de la voix, rappellent souvent ceux de Mme Grassini, qui avait le même défaut, bien racheté par l'expression attendrissante qu'il donne quelquefois aux accens de la cantatrice."<sup>10</sup> Did Pasta develop a veiled quality to her lower register as a result of her experiences with Giuseppina Grassini, and was this used for expressive effect?

In commenting on the second singing of Otello, the critic for Le Miroir stated: "Madame Pasta mérite plus d'éloges pour cette représentation que pour la première. Sa voix, qui est étendue, a malheureusement je ne sais quoi de voilé et de roide qui nuit à l'expression; elle joue beaucoup mieux qu'elle ne chante."<sup>11</sup> Apparently this critic, unlike his colleagues, did not find Pasta's veiled tone an expressive effect.

After the third performance of Otello on 16 June 1821, the critic for the Journal des Débats concluded: "Mme Pasta qu'une

extrême timidité avoit d'abord privée d'une grande partie de ses moyens, les a bientôt recouvrés et a chanté son beau rôle d'une manière expressive et brillante. La voix de cette cantatrice est forte et étendue; mais les sons graves en sont voilés et ne répondent point à l'éclat de la quinte haut."<sup>12</sup>

The critic for La Quotidienne wrote that Pasta: ". . . n'est peut être pas encore l'égale des grands sujets dont les amateurs ont conservé le souvenir, mais elle a le goût et les principes de leur école. Il est impossible de mieux dire le récitatif et de donner au chant plus d'âme et d'expression; un organe encore un peu rebelle, qu'elle doit avoir eu beaucoup de peine à former, se refuse quelquefois à ses efforts, mais il faut une oreille exercée pour s'en apercevoir, on n'est généralement frappé que de sa force et de son étendue."<sup>13</sup>

Mozart's Don Giovanni was revived at the Théâtre Italien on 28 June 1821, and for two months alternated with Otello. Pasta's first Donna Anna was eagerly awaited, but it was not a role the singer had wanted to perform. Still, her performance was considered successful. According to the critic for the Courrier des Spectacles, "Mme Pasta sera bien placée partout; elle est comédienne. Son entrée du premier act est magnifique."<sup>14</sup> In his review of the opening performance, the critic for the Journal des Théâtres reported: "Dans quelques passages, elle s'est laissée aller à l'émotion, et sa voix a baissé quelquefois. Cependant, il est juste de dire qu'elle a généralement mérité les applaudissemens qu'elle a

obtenus. Nous remarquerons surtout que le timbre de sa voix a quelque chose de mélancolique qui convient parfaitement au rôle de D[onna] Anna. Though Pasta received good notices for her Donna Anna, she sang the role only five times and it had a minor place in her career.

For her next new character Pasta wanted to sing the title role of Rossini's Tancredi, but since the parts were not yet copied the opera could not be mounted for at least two months. The management of the Théâtre Italien, therefore, decided to revive Niccolò Zingarelli's Giulietta e Romeo with Pasta as Romeo. She was familiar with the opera and the production at the theatre, having sung Giulietta there five years previously. The version to be used was different and, with the various interpolations the singers demanded, the opera became a pasticcio.

Giulietta e Romeo began the first of its eight performances on 28 August 1821; it made an enormous impression. Much of Romeo's music was retained (which Zingarelli had composed for the castrato Gerolamo Crescentini), while an overture by Paër, a first act finale from Portogallo's Omar (beginning "Presto amici, all'armi! all'armi!"), and a scena ed aria from Rossini's Sigismondo ("Vincesti, iniqua sorte . . . Alma invitta non paventa"), were the most important alterations. The conglomeration of styles weakened the musical continuity but was thought necessary to "improve" Zingarelli's opera. The libretto was an insipid piece of hack-work. The critic for the Courrier des Spectacles exclaimed:

"Je ne connais pas de plus malheureuse imitation de deux tragédies, l'une de Shakespear, l'autre de Ducis."<sup>16</sup>

Pasta's portrayal of Romeo elicited high praise from the reviewers. She was, according to the critic for the Journal des Théâtres, ". . . noble, fière, tendre et touchant."<sup>17</sup> Though the critic for Le Miroir wrote: ". . . elle le chante avec âme et le joue en tragédienne,"<sup>18</sup> the critic for the Journal des Théâtres declared: ". . . on pourrait lui reprocher de ne pas mettre quelquefois autant d'âme dans son jeu que dans son chant."<sup>19</sup> In subsequent performances Pasta continued to receive praise, and fortunately the criticism became more detailed. Castil-Blaze, writing in the Journal des Débats, commented: "Cette cantatrice a montré beaucoup de talent dans l'exécution de ses grandes airs, et dans le fameux "Ombra adorata" qu'elle devoit dire avec moins de lenteur pour donner un peu plus d'élan au sentiment qu'il exprime. Les connoisseurs ont saisi au passage quelques traditions de Crescentini et des traits entiers dans la manière de [Giovanni Battista] Velluti, seul et dernier chanteur de l'espèce pour laquelle le rôle de Romeo a été écrit."<sup>20</sup> The aria "Ombra adorata," which Pasta probably did sing too lugubriously, as she had Cherubino's "Non so più," earned public and critical approval only after repeated performances.

Pasta was next seen in the title role of Paër's Camilla, ossia Il Sotteraneo, which was revived on 20 October 1821. After a long and tedious first act, burdened by extensive dialogue and

a dramatic situation which relied too heavily on the comedy of the lover Lorédano and his servant Cola, the gloom of boredom descended on a performance of what was generally considered Paër's best opera. Camilla contained all the popular gothic attributes: a ruined castle, suggestion of the supernatural, underground passages in murky surroundings, and a maiden wrongly incarcerated. This disproportion of comic and serious elements, however, made the audience weary of the former before they had an opportunity to be moved by the latter.

The various newspaper critics were divided in their evaluations of the opera's merits. The critic for Le Miroir stated flatly: ". . . le public s'est ennuyé." The critic for the Journal de Paris reflected the view of those who enjoyed Camilla, and wrote that it was a: ". . . belle partition dans laquelle M. Paër a réuni la science et l'expression, et où il s'est montré grand harmoniste, après avoir fait preuve de mélodie et d'originalité dans ses motifs."<sup>22</sup>

Except for the necessary exposition and the introduction of nearly all the major characters, the opening act of Camilla is largely tangential to the main plot. Camilla has secretly married Duke Alberti but unhappily has spent the last seven years languishing in a cellar because her husband believes she has had a liason with a mysterious stranger. What actually happened was the Alberti's nephew Lorédano, unaware that Camilla had become his aunt, rescued her from thieves and had fallen in

love. Fearing Alberti's envy would cause a rift in the family, Camilla has kept this information from her husband, but nevertheless is suffering from unfortunate consequences. In the course of the opera *Lorédano and Cola* happen upon Alberti's castle. Eventually Lorédano confesses his emotions, Camilla is reunited with her son Adolfo, and all is sorted out and forgiven.

Camilla's motives for her martyrdom approach the limits of improbability, not to mention masochism, but the audience was more concerned with the vocal and histrionic expression of her pathetic condition than the reasons behind it. The appearance of her child in her prison is so overwhelming to Camilla that it nearly elicits revelation of the truth, but the distraught mother cannot find the strength to implicate her nephew. Adolfo prefers to remain by his mother's side and die with her rather than be separated. As the two are locked together in the dungeon, a tableau of extreme pathos is created. For the 1821 Paris performances of Camilla, Paër composed a new aria for Pasta to sing during this scene. "Cara parte di me stessa," is a touching moment as Camilla expresses her love for her child while he lay sleeping in her arms.

Pasta was particularly suited to the portrayal of despair and maternal anguish. So far in her career, the singer's plaintive cries during the tomb scene in Zingarelli's Giulietta e Romeo, and her poignant rendition of Desdemona's "Willow Song," amply demonstrated to the Parisian spectators her expertise in the depiction of melancholy. "Mme Pasta," wrote the critic for

Le Drapeau Blanc, "a joué et chanté avec beaucoup d'âme et de sensibilité, le rôle de Camilla, qui convient parfaitement au genre de son talent et de sa voix. Elle a fait valoir un nouveau air que Paër a composé pour elle."<sup>23</sup> The critic for Le Miroir wrote: "Mme Pasta, qui a dans cet ouvrage un rôle moins favorable que dans Otello, n'y est pas moins digne des applaudissements qui lui sont prodigués."<sup>24</sup> This was high praise indeed from a man who found little to admire in Paër's opera. The critic for La Quotidienne felt that Pasta had surpassed herself as Camilla. "Le désespoir jamais eu d'accents plus déchirants et plus vrais. Son chant a confirmé une observation qu'on avait déjà pu faire dans Roméo, c'est que sans rien perdre de sa force, son organe a beaucoup gagné sous le rapport de la flexibilité et de la douceur."<sup>25</sup>

At the second singing of Camilla on 23 October 1821, the number of spectators had diminished noticeably. Despite its being well performed, the opera failed to match the popularity of either Otello or Zingarelli's Romeo. Still, Pasta scored a personal triumph in the title role.

NOTES: CHAPTER V

1. Rachele Negri to Antonio Zanatta, 21 April 1821, Collection of Clelio Moretti, Blevio, Italy.
2. Giuseppe Pasta to Antonio Zanatta, n.d. [7 June 1821], Collection of Clelio Moretti, Blevio, Italy.
3. Journal des Débats (Paris), 6 June 1821.
4. Courrier des Spectacles (Paris), 6 June 1821.
5. Ibid., 7 June 1821.
6. Giuseppe Pasta to Antonio Zanatta, 7 June 1821, Collection of Clelio Moretti, Blevio, Italy.
7. L'Etoile (Paris), 17 June 1821.
8. Courrier des Spectacles, 7 June 1821.
9. Ibid., 14 June 1821.
10. Le Drapeau Blanc (Paris), 11 June 1821.
11. Le Miroir (Paris), 15 June 1821.
12. Journal des Débats, 18 June 1821.
13. La Quotidienne, 18 June 1821.
14. Courrier des Spectacles, 30 June 1821.
15. Journal des Théâtres (Paris), 7 July 1821.
16. Courrier des Spectacles, 30 August 1821.
17. Journal des Théâtres, 30 August 1821.
18. Le Miroir, 30 August 1821.
19. Journal des Théâtres, 30 August 1821.
20. Journal des Débats, 1 September 1821.
21. Le Miroir, 22 October 1821.
22. Journal de Paris, 22 October 1821.

23. Le Drapeau Blanc, 22 October 1821.
24. Le Miroir, 22 October 1822.
25. La Quotidienne (Paris), 23 October 1822.

CHAPTER VI

From November 1821 to February 1822, Giuditta Pasta was in Turin where she made her first appearance at the Teatro Regio. She sang two travesty roles that were new to her repertoire: Eduardo in Gioacchino Rossini's Eduardo e Cristina, and Clearco in Giuseppe Farinelli's I Riti d'Efeso. Her brief season in Turin was only partly successful and marked her last performances in Italy until 1829.

Giuditta and Giuseppe Pasta arrived in Turin on 26 November 1821. Rehearsals for the first opera of the Carnival season, Rossini's Eduardo e Cristina, began 13 December, with the opening scheduled for 26 December. First performed in 1819 at the Teatro San Benedetto in Venice, Eduardo e Cristina consisted essentially of selections borrowed from three earlier Rossini operas: Adelaide di Borgogna, Ricciardo e Zoraide, and Ermione. Rossini had provided new recitatives and several new pieces for his "new" opera. Despite its complicated genesis, Eduardo e Cristina proved quite popular and successful.

Pasta was scheduled to sing the trouser role of the Norwegian Prince Eduardo, and there was concern whether the music would suit her. Decisions had to be made about transpositions and the selection of interpolated arias. Eduardo e Cristina, comprised of music from three different Rossini operas, was already a pasticcio; the version performed at the Teatro Regio introduced

music from seven other composers: Michele Carafa, Pietro Generali, Giovanni Simone Mayr, Saverio Mercadante, Vincenzo Puccitta, and Niccolò Zingarelli. In addition, there were selections from other Rossini operas. In the first act Pasta sang the entrance aria "Ah! si per voi già sento" from Rossini's Otello and the duet "Fra i teneri amplessi" from Rossini's Ricciardo e Zoraide (with Elisabetta Ferron). In the second act Pasta introduced the prayer "Sommo ciel," that she had sung as Romeo in Zingarelli's opera. This was followed by the trio "Cruda sorte" from Ricciardo e Zoraide (with Ferron and Nicola Tacchinardi). To end the opera Pasta sang the rondo from Rossini's Elisabetta, Regina d'Inghilterra, "Bell'alme avventurose." Such patchworks were common in primo ottocento opera.

The reviewers were totally disarmed by the singing of the three principal artists Pasta, Ferron, and Tacchinardi. The critic for the Gazzetta di Milano echoed the opinion of his colleagues when he reported: "La Pasta . . . si fece ammirare per un canto dolcissimo, per un metodo eccellente e per una voce soave; ai quali pregi s'aggiungono uno sceneggiare maestrevole e l'avvenenza dell'aspetto."<sup>1</sup>

Dependent on stock characters and situations for effect, the hackneyed plot of the opera was a rather thin thread on which hung the diverse musical compositions. The locale was Sweden, where King Carlo and the Scottish Prince Giacomo are welcomed home after their victory in Ireland. In contrast to the jubilation

of the court, the King's daughter Cristina is melancholy, and her state arouses concern and suspicion. The cause of her anxiety is that she is secretly wed to the Norwegian Prince Eduardo and has had a child by him. As reward for his military aid, the King has promised his daughter to Giacomo. Before the arranged marriage takes place, the appearance of the child, Gustavo, elicits the confession that Cristina is already a wife and mother. She refuses to reveal the identity of her consort until Eduardo valiantly declares it is he. Giacomo still chooses to marry Cristina, and King Carlo would spare her life and that of her child if she will forsake Eduardo, but Cristina refuses to be an unfaithful wife. In the end it is learned that Eduardo's bravery has defeated an uprising of Carlo's enemies and all is then forgiven so that the opera can conclude with a happy ending.

The second opera of the Carnival season in Turin was an altered version of Giuseppe Farinelli's I Riti d'Efeso. Farinelli was well-known in Turin. He had lived in the city from 1810 to 1817 and three of his operas, Teresa e Claudio, Lauso e Lidia, and Scipione in Catagine had been performed at the Teatro Regio. Pasta had worked with the composer during her season in Trieste, where in 1820 she sang in the first performance of Farinelli's cantata La Festa Patria. In her list of roles compiled in retirement Pasta did not mention Giuseppe Farinelli by name but referred to him as "cattivdentone;" it is not clear whether she meant this literally or figuratively. Did the composer have

bad teeth?

I Riti d'Efeso was apparently not successful and was ignored by the local press. Very little is known about this production, which seems to have had only one performance. The critic for the Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung stated that, in contrast to the popular Eduardo e Cristina, Farinelli's opera was a "fiasco."<sup>27</sup> The failure of the opera is difficult to explain. Pasta, Ferron, and Tacchinardi, who were in the cast, had not suddenly lost their voices, and the three principal artists did not respect the integrity of Farinelli's work any more than they did Rossini's. An examination of the libretto for this production, for example, reveals that for her entrance aria Pasta interpolated Malcolm's scena ed aria from La Donna del Lago--the very same piece that aroused such enthusiasm when Pasta sang it as Desdemona. The duet, "Ah! vieni, nel tuo sangue," and trio "Fra tante smanie, e tante," were borrowed from Rossini's Otello, with Pasta singing Rodrigo's music, Tacchinardi that of Otello, and Ferron the vocal line of Desdemona. Pasta also introduced her favorite Portogallo aria, "Frenar vorrei le lagrime."

Gaetano Rossi's libretto, or what was left of it, was no more contrived than other melodrammi of the period. The story unfolds as the populace is about to pay homage to the goddess Diana. The Macedonian King Clearco (sung by Pasta), is about to wed Aspasia. She is the daughter of King Glaucia, who is thought to have been killed by Clearco in a previous battle. When it is

revealed that Aspasia's father is still alive, the distraught woman is torn between love and filial duty, a situation made more complicated by Agenore, King of Tessaglia, who is also in love with Aspasia. In the last scene Diana becomes the deus ex machina. She placates Glaucia's anger and desire for revenge, quells Agenore's jealousy and amorous intentions, and allows the wedding of Aspasia and Clearco to occur in an atmosphere of forgiveness and peace.

Giuditta Pasta's season at the Teatro Regio in Turin cannot be considered as successful as her previous engagements elsewhere. This was due, very probably, to the assignment of roles rather than to any defect in her performances. Eduardo and Clearco both were dropped from the singer's repertoire. Pasta never again sang at the Teatro Regio in Turin and over the next several years turned down offers to appear there again.

Pasta and her family left Turin on 20 February 1822 for Milan where, before leaving again on 3 March 1822, there was a brief period to be reunited with Antonio Zanatta and other friends. For the next two years she was to perform exclusively at the Théâtre Italien in Paris. Though Pasta, in 1822, was a respected and established artist, she did want want to tempt fate and so planned her arrival in the

French capital for the eleventh of the month.

NOTES: CHAPTER VI

1. Gazzetta di Milano, 8 January 1822.
2. Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung (Leipzig), April 1822, p. 277.

CHAPTER VII

From March 1822 to April 1824, Giuditta Pasta made Paris her artistic home, and performed at the Théâtre Italien. Apart from Zingarelli's *Romeo and Cimarosa's Curiazio*, her parts were all new to her repertoire: the title roles in Mayr's Medea in Corinto, Paisiello's Nina, Pazzo per Amore, Rossini's Elisabetta, Regina d'Inghilterra and Tancredi, in addition to Enrico in Mayr's La Rossa Bianca e la Rosa Rossa, Elisa in Mercadante's Elisa e Claudio, and Elcia in Rossini's Mosè in Egitto. Of major importance were *Medea, Nina, and Tancredi*, roles that were to be closely associated with Pasta for the remainder of her career on the opera stage.

Giuditta Pasta, along with her husband Giuseppe, daughter Clelia, and mother Rachele, arrived in Paris on 11 March 1822 and settled into the Hôtel des Lillois at 63 Rue de Richelieu. In 1822 Giuseppe Pasta had largely given up his ambition to have a career in opera, and devoted himself to being his wife's manager. Giuseppe Pasta negotiated Giuditta Pasta's contracts; the benefit to the soprano was that she could maintain her angelic reputation with the management of the Théâtre Italien while using her husband as a surrogate to achieve exactly what she wanted.

Pasta made her return to the Théâtre Italien on 19 March 1822 as Zingarelli's *Romeo*. She was received ecstatically by the spectators and the press. The critic for the Courrier des Spectacles

summed up the consensus when he wrote: "Jamais on ne vit réunie, dans un même sujet, une telle puissance de moyens, avec autant de physionomie, avec autant d'âme."<sup>1</sup>

Rossini's Tancredi had its first Paris performance at the Théâtre Italien on 23 April 1822. The title role was to provide Pasta with one of her most celebrated interpretations. Tancredi was the soprano's forty-first role and her tenth travesty part; she was well-prepared to meet its challenge. Gaetano Rossi's text, though no worse than other libretti of the time, became a target for ridicule. The critic for Le Miroir indignantly pointed out that it was a "misérable profanation"<sup>2</sup> of Voltaire's Tanocrède. The French were always more concerned over textual matters than were the Italians, and especially so if a libretto was derived from the work of a French author.

The action of Tancredi takes place in Sicily in 1005. Argirio's daughter Amenaide, who is in love with the exiled Tancredi, has written a letter asking him to return to Syracuse. Orbazzano, who is Tancredi's rival, has formed an alliance with Argirio against the Saracen leader Solamir. A marriage between Amenaide and Orbazzano is included in the pact, but Amenaide attempts to delay the union arranged by her father in order to remain faithful to Tancredi. Tancredi returns to Syracuse, unaware of the unaddressed letter, which had been intercepted by Orbazzano's followers. Before Argirio and the assembled court, Orbazzano reads Amenaide's message, which had urged Tancredi to regain his birthright, defeat his enemies, and

reign over the heart of Amenaide and all the Syracusans. Only the murdered messenger knew for whom the letter was intended; when its contents are made public all, including Tancredi, assume it was destined for Solamir. This apparent treachery results in a death sentence for Amenaide. Tancredi offers to become Amenaide's champion and, though still believing her guilty, battles Orbazzano for her honor. Tancredi kills his rival and Amenaide is freed. The hero remains in despair and refuses the request of the Syracusans to become their leader. The imminent threat by Solamir changes his mind; Tancredi is victorious in the ensuing battle against the Saracens. Solamir is killed, but with his last breath convinces Tancredi of Amenaide's innocence. The lovers are re-united, Argirio acknowledges Tancredi as the liberator of Syracuse, and there is a happy ending.

Pasta's portrayal of the title role of Tancredi elicited high praise from the reviewers. According to the critic for La Quotidienne: "On s'attendait bien que le rôle de Tancrède serait chanté par Mme Pasta d'une manière supérieure; mais personne n'eût pu croire qu'une jeune et jolie femme représentat, avec cette noblesse imposante, avec un intérêt si touchant et si vrai, le chevalier Syracusain; son front, son maintien, ses accents respirent la devise que Voltaire a donnée au héros: l'Amour et l'Honneur! elle chante la pièce italienne, et joue la pièce française."<sup>3</sup>

Though at the first performance Pasta appeared to tire towards the end of the second act, Castil-Blaze, writing in the

Journal des Débats, noted that she had " . . . enlevé victorieusement tous les suffrages. Elle a passé ce qu'on attendoit de son âme et de son talent; elle a été sublime. On l'a applaudie avec fureur . . . sa voix, un peu voilée, est éminemment dramatique, sa manière noble et pure; sa chaleur entraînante; . . . ."4

Despite the very warm spring in Paris, which usually adversely affected attendance at the Théâtre Italien, Tancredi became an increasingly popular attraction. There was a greater sense of ensemble with each repetition (there were nineteen performances in 1822), and the public's enjoyment of the music increased with familiarity. Fascination continued to center on Pasta's interpretation of the title role, and especially her singing of "Di tanti palpiti." The critic for Le Miroir declared: "Elle prête à ce morceau une expression de gravité et de mélancolie qu'il semblait peu susceptible de recevoir, et sans lui rien faire perdre de sa grace dont elle change seulement le caractère, elle assortit à la situation cet air tant soit peu sautillant qu'elle chante avec l'accent de la plus profonde passion. C'est créer."<sup>5</sup>

Throughout the summer of 1822, Pasta continued to perform her well-known interpretations of Zingarelli's Romeo and Rossini's Tancredi and Desdemona. Familiarity bred not contempt but frustration, since the public, hungry for novelty, wanted to see Pasta in a new role. Meanwhile she refined her portrayals and critics responded with increased eulogia. Of a performance of Zingarelli's Romeo on 29 August, the critic for Le Reveil noted:

"Dans le troisième acte, dans cette scène déchirante où Roméo attend la mort qui doit le réunir à Juliette, Mme Pasta trouve des accens d'une douleur si vive et si profonde qu'elle arrive à la véritable illusion théâtrale, en faisant partager au spectateur tous les mouvemens dont elle est agitée. Ce n'est plus un rôle qu'elle chante, on dirait qu'elle s'abandonne à une improvisation subite de son âme."<sup>6</sup> As Pasta's performances made the public increasingly aware of opera as lyric theatre, spectators began to expect more than concerts in costume. The critic for Le Reveil summarized Pasta's main contribution to opera when he stated: "Mme Pasta a introduit les habitudes tragiques dans la scène italienne: c'est une véritable innovation."<sup>7</sup>

A revival of Rossini's Elisabetta, Regina d'Inghilterra, with Pasta as Queen Elizabeth of England, was calculated to satisfy the public's demand to witness the popular artist in a new characterization. The choice was expedient. The opera had been performed the previous winter at the Académie Royale de Musique, several of the principal singers could repeat roles already memorized, orchestral parts were immediately available and no money had to be spent on a new production. In fact, several of the settings were currently in use at the Théâtre Italien for Tancredi.

Elisabetta, Regina d'Inghilterra was staged at the Théâtre Italien on 10 September 1822. There were some complaints about the "stupidité"<sup>8</sup> of Giovanni Schmidt's libretto. The Earl of Leicester is welcomed back to England after his victory over

the Scots. Unknown to Queen Elizabeth and her court, Leicester has married Matilde whom he thought to be the daughter of a sheperd but later discovered to be the daughter of Mary Stuart. Leicester is torn between love for his wife and loyalty to his Queen. He confides his dilemma to the Duke of Norfolk who, under the guise of friendship, is really Leicester's secret rival. Norfolk immediately informs Elizabeth of her favorite's apparent treachery. The Queen is overwhelmed, then outraged, and summons the court to announce Leicester as her consort. Matilde is shaken by the news, her identity is revealed and, along with Leicester, is condemned to prison. The couple refuse Elizabeth's offer of pardon since they will not renounce their vows and prefer death to separation. Norfolk, now banished by Elizabeth, incites the populace to revolt. Leicester, however, will not be disloyal to his Queen and refuses to take the coward's way out when Elizabeth offers him means to escape. Matilde and her brother Enrico disarm Norfolk as he attempts to murder Elizabeth, thereupon earning her gratitude and ultimate pardon. The monarch then sanctions the marriage between Leicester and Matilde and decides to devote her full attention to affairs of state.

Pasta was not up to her expected standard for the opening performance, and the critic for Le Reveil reported that Pasta " . . . semblait indisposée." She had been ineffective in the entrance aria "Quant'è grato all'alma mia." A severe case of nerves was perhaps the fault. The critic for the Courrier des

Spectacles declared: ". . . elle a payé son tribut à la peur."<sup>10</sup>

According to the critic for La Quotidienne, three subsequent performances (12, 17, 28 September) found Pasta in much better form. It was as if the opera were being sung for the first time, ". . . tant Mme Pasta nous y a révélé de beautés que nous n'y avions pas soupçonnées auparavant; . . . ." <sup>11</sup> The long duet between Elisabetta and Norfolk ("Perchè mai, destin crudele"), in which the Queen learns of Leicester's marriage and vows to punish the traitors, was said by the critic of La Quotidienne to have been

. . . exécuté avec beaucoup de talent, . . . il y a encore quelque hésitation de la part de Mme Pasta dans les premières mesures, mais tout le rest a été enlevé avec une hardiesse d'exécution, une vérité, une énergie d'accent auxquelles nous ne connaissons rien de comparable, si ce n'est ce que Mme Pasta nous a fait entendre dans d'autres pièces.

C'est avec le même éclat et la même supériorité qu'elle soutient la belle scène du final: Se mi serbasti il soglio. Comme en offrant à Leycester sa couronne et sa main elle contient avec peine la fureur dont elle est animée! comme ses regards et ses accents préparent la catastrophe et amènent ces mots foudroyans: Ah! che più tolerar non poss'io! Quel moment que celui où elle s'élance vers sa rivale, la saisit et l'entraîne aux yeux et Leycester frappé d'angoisse et de terreur! Et dans tous ses mouvemens, même les plus emportées, quelle grâce et quelle majesté qui ne l'abandonnent jamais.<sup>12</sup>

Pasta was also especially powerful in the recitative at the beginning of the second act in which she demands Matilde sign a document dissolving the union with Leicester. According to the critic for La Quotidienne: "Les seuls mots: Scrivi, rinunzia! prononcés trois fois avec une gradation marquée de hauteur, d'impatience et de colère sont d'un effet prodigieux, . . . ." <sup>13</sup>

Despite Pasta's highly regarded performance in the title role, Rossini's Elisabetta, Regina d'Inghilterra did not please the Parisian spectators as much as his other operas. After four singings it was dropped from the repertory of the Théâtre Italien. Pasta had little time to muse over the work's relative failure; she continued to sing *Tancredi*, *Desdemona* and Zingarelli's *Romeo*, and was in rehearsal with a new role: Elcia in Rossini's Mosè in Egitto.

The first Paris performance of Mosè in Egitto, on 20 October 1822, netted 12,437 francs.<sup>14</sup> It was staged as a benefit for Pasta, and took place at the Académie Royale de Musique. According to the critic for the Journal de Paris it was a gala occasion. "Aucune place n'est restée vacante à l'orchestre, au parterre, à l'amphithéâtre; presque toutes les loges étaient louées et remplies de la plus brillante société. Les premiers talens des autres grands théâtres avaient aussi voulu offrir à Mme Pasta un hommage qui les honore, et tous les regards se tournaient vers une loge où [Jean-François] Talma, Mlle Duchenois [Catherine Rafuïn] et Mlle Mars [Anne Boutet] se trouvaient réunis."<sup>15</sup>

The critic for Le Miroir summarily dismissed Andrea Leone Tottola's text as a "chief-d'oeuvre de stupidité."<sup>16</sup> A brief plot summary may explain why. In the opening scene, the Egyptians are seen floundering during the Plague of Darkness. Faraone (Pharaoh) submits to the anguish of his people and summons

Mosè, promising to release the Jews from their bondage if the scourge of night be ended. Mosè invokes God to restore light, and the populace is stunned at such a miracle. Faraone's son Osiride, however, who is secretly married to the Jewish maiden Elcia, can only see the imminent departure of his beloved. For her part Elcia is prepared to leave Osiride and join her people in exodus, as she puts loyalty to God over earthly desire. Realizing that the only way to restrain Elcia is to keep the Jews in slavery, Osiride and the counselor Mambre foment discontent among the Egyptians, and Faraone is persuaded to revoke his pledge. A new plague of fire and hailstones causes additional misfortune, but does not result in the promised freedom. Faraone in fact names his son his successor and plans Osiride's marriage to the royal princess of Armenia. Osiride despairs at such a future, and is prepared to sacrifice the throne if only Elcia consents to escape with him. Elcia announces to Faraone that she is his son's consort and the sole cause of his unhappiness. As she begs Faraone to free her people and pleads with Osiride to transfer his love to the royal princess, Osiride's anger focuses on Mosè as the ultimate responsibility for his anguish. As he attempts to kill Mosè, Osiride is struck dead by a thunderbolt and Faraone faints over his son's corpse. In the third act the now fugitive Jews find themselves on the banks of the Red Sea with the Egyptian army in pursuit. After a prayer imploring God to save them, the Jews marvel as the Red Sea parts, and they cross to safety. The waves turn against

the Egyptians, and they are drowned.

Pasta won a triumphant personal success as Elcia. The critic for the Courrier des Spectacles wrote: "Pour Mad[ame] Pasta, toujours sublime, elle tire un grand parti d'un rôle médiocre, sous tous les rapports. C'est dans oh desolata Elcia, à la fin du second acte, qu'elle a pu déployer cette sensibilité tragique qui trouve dans la nature de sa voix un si puissant auxiliaire."<sup>17</sup> After the benefit evening, the production of Mosè in Egitto was moved to the Théâtre Italien where Pasta sang seven more performances. She maintained her standard of singing and acting and her costume, which had made a stunning effect at the opening, was still the object of admiration. The critic for the Journal des Théâtres declared: "Ceux qui n'ont pas encore vue Mme Pasta . . . ne peuvent s'imaginer combien elle est jolie sous un turban à la Moabite. On croirait voir une de ces têtes si pures qu'enfanta l'imagination du Poussin. Elle a été sublime au deuxième acte."<sup>18</sup>

Pasta began the year 1823 with performances of Desdemona and Zingarelli's Romeo. She also prepared for the title role in Mayr's Medea in Corinto, which had its first Paris performance at the Théâtre Italien on 14 January 1823. Pasta had agreed to undertake the title role as a favor to her friend and colleague Manuel Garcia, since the opera was being staged for his benefit evening. Neither she nor anyone else at the theatre had envisioned that the role was to prove so congenial. The critic for Le Drapeau Blanc

declared: "Jamais le talent de madame Pasta, qui depuis quelque temps a fait des progrès si merveilleux, ne s'est élevé plus haut que dans le rôle de Médée. Sublime est le seul mot qui puisse exprimer l'effet qu'elle a produit, . . . ."19 Pasta had never considered singing Luigi Cherubini's Médée as she performed only in Italian; she accepted the challenge of Mayr's Medea because in 1823, after more than forty other roles, she was now artistically prepared to meet its vocal and histrionic demands. She had mastered the technique of creating moving portrayals of tormented mothers as well as the despair of rejected lovers. Medea in Corinto offered ample opportunity for this and much more. Felice Romani's libretto included an incantation scene which was the theatrical highlight of the opera and a stunning expression of Medea as a sorceress. The prima donna gets to wear a magic robe, to cast a spell with a magic wand in front of a burning altar, and to call on the Furies for "vendetta orrenda." Certainly not the least of the role's attractions is that Medea makes her aerial exit in a chariot drawn by two dragons.

In Romani's version of the Medea legend, King Creon (Creonte) of Corinth (Corinto) has offered his daughter Creusa to Jason (Giasone), in gratitude for the latter's military support of the realm. The couple are in love, even though Jason is still wed to Medea, and Creusa has been promised to King Aegeus (Egeo) of Athens. Acastus of Colchis has demanded Medea be returned there to be punished for the murder of her brother and theft of

the golden fleece. The Corinthians are willing to comply; Medea's extradition would mean her death. The guilty Jason, however, arranges that only banishment be Medea's fate. Her remonstrations and pleading fail to affect Jason, and Medea vows to revenge her betrayal. Aegeus and Medea plot to abduct Creusa at her wedding ceremony, but the attempt fails, and Aegeus is imprisoned. Medea relies upon her magic powers and invokes the Furies to assist her in preparing the fatal robe that will immolate her rival. Creusa's death overwhelms Jason, but the chorus incites him to seek vengeance. Medea can only think of punishing her unfaithful lover. She murders her children; their presence only reminds her of Jason's treason. Jason and the Corinthians are powerless against Medea, and, in the midst of a storm, the lady escapes through the air in her chariot to find the refuge in Athens Aegeus had promised.

Great attention and interest were focused on Pasta's first Medea. Castil-Blaze, writing in the Journal des Débats, was moved to comment:

Les rôles de Desdemona, de Camilla; de Tancredi, de Romeo surtout, sembloient avoir mis le sceau à la réputation de Mme Pasta; celui de Medea doit la porter à un degré plus élevé. Je ne chercherai point à décrire le sentiment qu'elle a fait éprouver au moment où elle se dérobe aux caresses de ses enfans, et conçoit l'horrible projet de les assassiner. Cette transition sublime, préparée avec beaucoup d'art et exécutée avec une force de sentiment, une vérité effrayante dans les accents et le geste, a frappé de terreur toute l'assemblée et lui a arraché un cri d'admiration. Je parle d'abord de cette scène, attendu qu'elle est la plus remarquable de la pièce. Mme Pasta a joué tout le reste de son rôle avec profondeur, noblesse,

sentiment; elle s'est surpassée: c'est le plus bel éloge qu'on puisse lui adresser. Nous avons vu successivement cette actrice charmante sous le costume brillant de l'épouse d'Otello; l'armure de chevalier lui sied à ravir, le turban moabite la rend séduisante. A tous ces riches ajustemens, je préfère la robe simple, le costume sévère de la magicienne Médée. Mme Pasta nous a donné une juste idée des femmes les plus célèbres de l'antiquité: j'ai retrouvé en elle un portrait imaginaire de Sapho, de Didon, de Cléopâtre.<sup>20</sup>

Medea was sung seven times during 1823, and, with each repetition, Pasta refined her interpretation.

Giuditta Pasta was heard in a new role on 6 May 1823, when she performed the travesty role of Enrico in Mayr's La Rosa Bianca e la Rosa Rossa. Though the English War of the Roses serves as a background, it is hardly what one would call a historical drama. It is, first and last, a love story whose time and place are tangential and ornamental, rather than essential to the plot.

Enrico, Earl of Derby, being a partisan of the defeated Red Rose, cannot endure his banishment and returns secretly to claim as his bride his beloved Clotilde. She, however, belongs to a family who are adherents of the White Rose. Upon his return Enrico learns that his friend Vanoldo has changed his loyalties and is about to marry Clotilde, having taken advantage of Enrico's absence to form an alliance with her father Rodolfo. Enrico arrives at the wedding ceremony as an unknown knight, and, when he reveals his identity, he is promptly seized, thrown in prison, and condemned to death. Vanoldo's guilt and remorse so weigh upon his mind that he decides to visit the incarcerated Enrico and

arrange his escape. Enrico accepts the offer of liberation and flees his prison in Vanoldo's clothing. As the moment of execution approaches, Clotilde rushes in with a pardon from the king and is, naturally, shocked to see Vanoldo. Enrico soon enters with a band of his followers in order to free Vanoldo, and all is forgiven, the reunion of Enrico and Clotilde providing a happy ending. That outline was transformed into three-and-one-half hours of opera seria.

Pasta performed Enrico with her usual attention to the nuances of the music and drama and was again considered stunning in a male costume--" . . . une plume rouge passant sur ses cheveux noirs relevait encore l'éclat naturel . . . ."21 was the comment of the critic for the Courrier des Théâtres. Though sung eleven times during 1823, La Rosa Bianca e la Rosa Rossa failed to become a popular favorite. Attendance at the performances almost consistently declined. In a review of the second singing on 8 May, the critic for the Courrier des Spectacles stated that the opera: " . . . ne vaut pas la peine qu'on l'analyse, sous le rapport dramatique; mais . . . soutenu par la musique de Mayer, et surtout par Mad[ame] Pasta, devient excellent. Nous disons surtout Mad[ame] Pasta, parce que les beautés nombreuses de la partition ne suffiraient pas pour mériter une vogue; . . . ."22

The late spring and summer months of 1823 found Pasta plagued with medical problems. In July she resumed her normal schedule. This was to prove a very serious mistake, for she was

nearing the end of her second pregnancy, and her exertions no doubt contributed to a general state of weakness. She rehearsed the role of Curiazio in Cimarosa's Gli Orazi e i Curiazi for a revival of that opera on 14 August. Pasta was able to sing only two performances as Curiazio being incapacitated for a month-and-a-half by a serious case of measles. That illness very probably led to a catastrophic event in the singer's life-- she had a miscarriage.

After suffering the loss of her child, Pasta resumed her career in October, and sang Enrico, Tancredi, and Zingarelli's Romeo. On 23 November 1823, Pasta had a benefit evening at the Théâtre Italien. Ticket prices were doubled for the occasion, and two novelties were announced. Pasta was to sing, for the first time, the role of Elisa in Saverio Mercadante's Elisa e Claudio, and it was advertised she would appear, for one time only, as the lovelorn and gently deranged heroine in Giovanni Paisiello's Nina, ossia La Pazza per Amore. The opportunity of hearing Paris' reigning prima donna in two new roles in one evening, even at twice the normal price, proved a great attraction and receipts for the benefit reached an impressive 12.000 francs.<sup>23</sup> The critic for Le Diable Boiteux reported the evening a " . . . véritable fête pour les nombreux admirateurs du talent de Mme Pasta."<sup>24</sup>

Elisa e Claudio is an opera semi-seria in the style of Rossini and the young Gaetano Donizetti. The critic for La Pandore thought Mercadante's music: " . . . facile et gracieuse; elle

rappelle souvent celle de Rossini, sans placer cependant Mercadante au niveau de ce brillant compositeur. Mercadante s'y montre plutôt l'imitateur que le rival de Rossini."<sup>25</sup>

Luigi Romanelli's libretto was an easy target for derision. The critic for Le Diable Boiteux declared: "Le poème est un des plus ridicules et des plus absurdes qui se fassent, et l'on sait que ce n'est pas peu dire, en fait de canevas italiens."<sup>26</sup>

Count Arnoldo's son Claudio has secretly wed the young peasant girl Elisa, and is the father of her two children. For the past year, however, Claudio has been separated from his wife and kept in seclusion as his father arranges a marriage between Claudio and Silvia, the daughter of Marquis Tricotazio. Silvia is in love with Claudio's old friend Celso, who is currently disguised as a valet. Claudio reluctantly agrees to wed Silvia as this is his only opportunity for freedom. Elisa, meanwhile, is distraught at the apparent betrayal by her husband. She refuses Arnoldo's bribe and will not renounce her sacred vows. Arnoldo then orders his servant Luca to abduct Elisa's children. In pursuit of her offspring, Elisa mistakes Tricotazio for Arnoldo and pleads desperately for the return of her children. Arnoldo declares Elisa insane and has her taken away for fear she will reveal the truth. In the second act the two pairs of lovers plan to escape from Arnoldo's house, but first must locate the missing children. Their attempt is foiled by Arnoldo and Tricotazio; Elisa remains

a captive in Arnolde's house. Eventually all is sorted out; Silvia and Celso are to be wed and Arnolde finally recognizes the rightful marriage of Elisa and Claudio.

The opera had been chosen for Pasta's benefit evening since Mercadante was an up-and-coming composer whose work was unknown in Paris. His fine reputation in Italy was an inducement to stage Mercadante's then most popular opera. The dramatic situation, though hackneyed, offered Pasta the opportunity to express the pathos of maternal anguish and she was skilled in scenes of this nature. Her despair as her children are abducted and her pleas for their return provided ample scope for heart-wrenching emotion. The critic for Le Diable Boiteux reported: "Mme Pasta a eu dans cette scène, qu'elle a rendue avec une rare vérité, des momens du plus haut pathétique."<sup>27</sup> The courage Elisa must summon as she resigns herself to leave Claudio requires a singing-actress capable of simultaneously delineating both resolve and sorrow, and Pasta proved herself equal to the challenge.

Though originally announced as a once-only appearance, Nina, in Paisiello's Nina, ossia La Pazza per Amore, was so stunningly portrayed by Pasta that it was repeated and was to become a staple of her repertoire. According to the critic for Le Diable Boiteux: ". . . l'éloge le plus complet qu'on en puisse faire, c'est qu'elle s'est montrée égale à elle-même."<sup>28</sup> The critic for the Courrier des Théâtres stated: "Mme Pasta a joué

non en femme très-passionnée, mais en très-jeune fille, très-tendre, naïve et impressionable. Elle s'était tellement pénétrée de l'esprit de son rôle, avait fait tant d'efforts pour en rendre les nuances, qu'au moment du finale elle fondait en larmes et tombait en défaillance sur l'épaule de [Manuel] Garcia [who sang Lindoro]."<sup>29</sup>

Nina's insanity is not violent, but rather a gentle melancholic derangement, caused by grief over the assumed death of her lover Lindoro. The couple were to be married when Nina's father changed his mind and promised her to another of higher social standing. A duel between the two suitors resulted, and word spread that Lindoro had been killed. Unable to accept the notion of death, Nina totally rejects the idea and believes her lover is only on a long voyage. Lindoro, however, had been only wounded, and when healed comes to claim Nina as his own. Nina's father is now mindful of his error and makes peace with Lindoro. The two must attempt to restore Nina to sanity. At first she recognizes neither her father nor Lindoro but gradually, as her lover reminds her of the ring he gave her and of their affection, Nina regains coherence. A kiss from Lindoro completely restores Nina's sanity and the opera has a happy ending.

On 3 January 1824, Paër's Agnese was staged at the Théâtre Italien with Pasta in the title role. She had been successful as Agnese when she performed the part in Italy; the Parisians, however, though it rather tame. According to the critic

for the Courrier des Théâtres: "Quoique le rôle d'Agnèse ne soit pas, . . . un de ceux où Mme Pasta puisse, comme à l'ordinaire, être maîtresse à volonté de la scène et de l'auditoire, cependant elle a trouvé dans son admirable talent des ressources qui lui ont fait dominer la position toute passive où l'a placée l'auteur du libretto, . . . ."30 The critic for La Pandore reported: "[Pasta] . . . a chanté et joué avec le talent qu'on retrouve toujours en elle, quel que soit le personnage, quel que soit le costume sous lequel elle se montre; elle a été admirable surtout dans la scène où elle tremble entre son père et son enfant."31 Pasta sang only five performances of Agnese, and then dropped the title role from her repertoire.

By April 1824 Pasta's lengthy stay in Paris was coming to an end. Having firmly established her reputation in France, it was now time to convince the English that she had become an outstanding singing-actress. In Paris her exalted position was unchallenged and she was thought unrivalled in her brilliant interpretations of Rossini's Desdemona and Tancredi, Zingarelli's Romeo, and Mayr's Medea. At the end of her final appearance on 10 April 1824, as Nina, a crown was tossed on stage. As bass Carlo Zucchelli reached down to place it on Pasta's head, an enormous roar of applause was heard throughout the very crowded Théâtre Italien. Pasta was to be away from Paris only four months but already a sense of loss was felt at the theatre. The continuing English-French rivalry extended to artistic matters,

and many French critics and spectators wondered whether Pasta would be awarded appropriate recognition. This feeling was summed up by the critic for La Pandore, who wrote: "Puisse-t-elle trouver en Angleterre, où elle va passer quelques mois, un public qui sache l'écouter et l'entendre! Elle trouvera des oreilles à Londres: il y en a, pour juger un pareil talent, il faut autre chose que des oreilles."<sup>32</sup>

NOTES: CHAPTER VII

1. Courrier des Spectacles (Paris), 21 March 1822.
2. Le Miroir (Paris), 25 April 1822.
3. La Quotidienne (Paris), 28 April 1822.
4. Journal des Débats (Paris), 25 April 1822.
5. Le Miroir, 2 May 1822.
6. Le Reveil (Paris), 31 August 1822.
7. Ibid., 14 August 1822.
8. Le Miroir, 12 September 1822.
9. Le Reveil, 12 September 1822.
10. Courrier des Spectacles, 12 September 1822.
11. La Quotidienne, 14 September 1822.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Journal des Débats, 21 October 1822. Pasta divided this sum with the impresarios of the Théâtre Italien. In order to insure substantial receipts, the Académie Royale de Musique was used.
15. Journal de Paris, 22 October 1822.
16. Le Miroir, 22 October 1822.
17. Courrier des Spectacles, 22 October 1822.
18. Journal des Théâtres (Paris), 25 October 1822.
19. Le Drapeau Blanc (Paris), 16 January 1823.
20. Journal des Débats, 16 January 1823.
21. Courrier des Théâtres, 9 May 1823.
22. Courrier des Spectacles, 10 May 1823.

23. Journal des Débats, 24 November 1823.
24. Le Diable Boiteux (Paris), 24 November 1823.
25. La Pandore (Paris), 24 November 1823.
26. Le Diable Boiteux, 24 November 1823.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
29. Courrier des Théâtres, 24 November 1824.
30. Ibid.
31. La Pandore, 5 January 1824.
32. Ibid.

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CHAPTER VIII

The period from April 1824 to June 1825 was another turning point in Giuditta Pasta's career. She was in the years of her vocal prime and her voice had taken on an uncommon power of expression. She was considered an actress of outstanding merit and critics often could not decide whether her acting or her singing was the most impressive part of her performance on stage. In 1824 Pasta returned to the King's Theatre to begin the first of two engagements (24 April 1824-7 August 1824 and 10 May 1825 to 7 June 1825) in London. She had not been to the King's Theatre since 1817, when she was a neophyte. The English public and press were astonished by the progress Pasta had made over the years. While in London, Pasta added the title role of Rossini's Semiramide to her repertoire; it was to prove one of her greatest characterizations. Semiramide was Pasta's only new role during this period. She continued to polish her interpretations of Rossini's Desdemona and Tancredi, Paisiello's Nina and Zingarelli's Romeo. Pasta's experiences in London seemed to improve her acting; when she returned to Paris (4 November 1824-5 April 1825), the French critics remarked on the improvement of her histrionic ability.

Giuditta and Giuseppe Pasta, along with Rachele Negri, arrived in London on 14 April 1824. Ten days later, on 24 April, the soprano was to make her return to the King's Theatre as

Desdemona in Rossini's Otello. Pasta's second appearance in London was as important, or perhaps even more so, than her return to Paris in 1821. That she had been so celebrated by the French was a handicap in London; Pasta had to work doubly hard to overcome the English bias and prove her merit on her own terms. News of her great Parisian triumphs had crossed the Channel, and there was much curiosity to see how much Pasta really had changed. The English public had not seen her for six years when, the critic for The Examiner recalled, she was ". . . nothing more than an interesting girl with expressive black eyes."<sup>1</sup>

The first performance of Otello took place on 24 April 1824, and a sampling of the critical reviews reflects the divergence of opinion regarding Pasta's performance as Desdemona. The critic for The Times wrote:

She is, undoubtedly, much improved, since we last saw her; but we don't think that her improvement warrants the excessive praises which have been showered on her by our Gallic neighbors. Her powers of voice are very considerable; but her tones are deficient in that full and rich melody, which, in the absence of all art, comes home to the bosom, and captivates the feelings [note the contrast of this opinion to Pasta's reviews from France and Italy]. Some of her notes are, indeed, sharp, almost to harshness. Her style of singing is chaste and expressive.<sup>2</sup>

The critic for The Examiner reported:

At her first entrée she was greeted with great applause, that showed a pre-disposition to admire her, and when she commenced we began to fear that she might have been over-rated. Her first notes were rather harsh and hard, and it was not until the ear became familiarized to them that we felt confident of her success [no reference to a "veiled tone" here]. She, however, soon showed a mastery in her art,

. . . and an originality in ornament and expression, that fixed her at once, in our estimation, as a singer of a very high order. Her acting admirably kept pace with her singing, and displayed to great advantage a very expressive countenance and a figure of great symmetry. The Desdemona of the Italian stage is a very different sort of person from the exquisite picture Shakespeare has drawn, and consequently gives little field for the actress, but of that little Madame PASTA made the most; and in the scene of distress in her chamber, when she hears the distant song of the Gondolieri, and recalls her former pleasures, she really gave an interest and intellectuality to it, that threw a mournfulness over the scene, and a feeling of pity rarely excited on the Opera stage.--At times her voice is rather crude, but it still possesses a fulness and body that are very peculiar and very delightful. Execution she possesses little of, but she substitutes graces of a very elegant character, and fully compensates, by her pathos, for the deficiency.<sup>3</sup>

The critic for the Morning Chronicle stated:

Madame PASTA'S voice is, in technical language, termed a mezzo-soprano, by which is meant a low female voice: its compass is extensive, and though not strong, has power enough . . . Her tones are rich and sweet, and though devoid of that clearness and vibration which the real soprano--Madame [Giuseppina] RONZI [DE BEGNIS], for instance--possesses, yet they are well suited to her style of singing, and to the characters which she will probably undertake. Her intonation is unimpeachable; we did not discover that one false note escaped from her during the whole evening; her style is pure, it is totally divested of all the spurious finery, the gew-gaw, that has been too prevalent lately. She adds little to what "is set down" for her, and that little is not only in good taste, but in a taste that has a great deal of originality to it. Some modest ornaments which she introduced in a most unpretending manner, went to the heart of every true lover of song. As an actress, Madame PASTA is not less worthy of distinction; her expression and gesture are in excellent keeping with her singing; all three are the offspring of a deep feeling and a correct judgment. In figure she is rather below the middle size, but is exceedingly well proportioned. It may be recollected that her first appearance in this country was in male attire, and her form greatly admired. Her features are regular and expressive, and her whole countenance indicates a genius for the serious rather than the comic drama.<sup>4</sup>

After five successful performances of Otello, Rossini's Tancredi began the first of its ten singings on 18 May 1824. The title role was considered by the French one of Pasta's best portrayals, and the English public and critics seemed to agree. Her unique interpretation of "Di tanti palpiti" was understood and accepted in London, and the critic for The Harmonicon summed up the consensus when he declared: "Her style of singing this rather differs from those who have preceded her; she takes it much slower, but adds a few such chaste, graceful, and original ornaments to it, and gives it with so much genuine feeling, that it pleases all tastes."<sup>5</sup> In a word, the critic thought Pasta's performance "incomparable."<sup>6</sup>

Pasta's benefit performance, as Zingarelli's Romeo, took place on 21 June 1824. The poor libretto was summarily dismissed; Pasta's singing and acting were the centers of interest. According to the critic for the Morning Chronicle:

Romeo . . . sings all that has the slightest chance of pleasing; the part is so feelingly acted, and the airs allotted to it are so pathetically delivered by Madame PASTA, that we submit without a murmur to the unparalleled stupidity of the drama, and endure the general tameness of the music with scarcely a single sigh, all for the sake of such a Romeo. This Opera is in three acts; the first and second pass for nothing, except a pretty duet, "Dunque mio bene," in the former, and a beautiful preghiera, "Sommo Ciel," in the latter. The third act--Romeo at the tomb of Juliet--is everything; it is here that we feel the potent influence of strong passion well imitated, of action graceful and natural, and of singing that is addressed to the heart. The whole scene excited a profound attention, . . . the drama itself, taken from one of DUCIS' prophanations of, SHAKESPEARE; is not worth one drop of critical ink: . . . .

The benefit evening was not as lucrative as Pasta and her family anticipated. The critic for the Morning Chronicle

reported that the King's Theatre was only moderately crowded, as many balls and other social engagements kept a quantity of spectators otherwise engaged. Other reasons for the only tolerable showing might have been that the English were weary of a travesty of one of Shakespeare's best plays; the opera had not been announced as a one-time-only affair, and that the mediocre and unpopular Biagioli was replacing an indisposed Giuseppina Ronzi de Begnis as Giulietta. The second singing of the opera, on 29 June, attracted what the critic for the Morning Herald described as ". . . a remarkably crowded and brilliant assemblage,"<sup>8</sup> and Romeo was declared ". . . the triumph of Madame Pasta."<sup>9</sup>

The only new role Pasta sang during her London engagement was Rossini's Semiramide. The opera had its first London staging on 15 July 1824, and Rossini himself conducted the first three performances. As this was Pasta's first essay of the vocally difficult title role, it is likely that Rossini coached her, though there is no documentation for this.

The particularly complex plot of Rossini's Semiramide, according to the critic for The Times,

. . . possesses more interest than is usually found in the subjects dramatized by the modern Italian poets, who seem to think that if they produce a given number of verses, no matter how trite and trifling, their work is done: the rest is left to the ingenuity of the composer, whose pleasant duty it becomes to clothe these poetical abortions in the rich robes of tasteful harmony. The fable, in the present instance, embraces some strikingly interesting situations--situations which have given the composer an opportunity for describing the more violent as well as the gentle passions of our nature.<sup>10</sup>

In ancient Babylon, the ambitious Assur convinces Queen Semiramide that her husband is about to banish her. Assur has Semiramide prepare a poison which he then administers to the King. Assur expects to become the reigning monarch. At the moment Semiramide is about to declare her choice--and it is not Assur, but the Scythian commander Arsace--rumblings are heard from King Ninus' tomb, and the sacred fire of the temple is extinguished. The ominous omen forestalls the long-awaited announcement. Meanwhile, Arsace returns to Babylon at the summons of Semiramide. A message from the oracle at Memphis informs Semiramide that her loneliness and suffering will be over as the result of a new marriage, which she mistakenly believes will be between herself and Arsace. Semiramide names Arsace as her husband and new King. More rumblings emanate from Ninus' tomb, and the spectre of the murdered King appears, proclaiming that Arsace will take his rightful place as King, but that first there are crimes to be expiated. Arsace eventually learns from the priest Oroe that he is actually the dead King's son, Ninias. He is horrified to discover that Semiramide is his mother, and that she and Assur are guilty of his father's murder. Semiramide, unable to understand Arsace's strange behavior, is finally told the truth by her long-lost son. She is unnerved at this revelation, and begs Arsace to kill her. The two are reconciled, however, as filial and maternal love overcome thoughts of revenge and death. The final scene occurs in Ninus' tomb. Assur is there with the

intention of doing away with Arsace, Semiramide with the plan to murder Assur, and Arsace awaiting word from Oroë as to whom he should kill. Ninus' vengeance demands the death of Semiramide and, obeying Oroë's command to strike, Arsace is aghast to discover that he has killed his mother. Assur is taken away by the guards, and Arsace is declared monarch.

The critic for The Times stated: ". . . the music of this opera is of an elevated and heroic character . . . We think, however, that the opera never will be popular. It is from beginning to end too abstrusely and elaborately scientific to please the million."<sup>11</sup> This was an erroneous prediction; Semiramide was to prove among the most popular operas of the early nineteenth century.

Pasta was very successful in her first performance as Semiramide. The critic of The Times declared: "Madame Pasta represented Semiramide with admirable effect. She wore her royal robes with dignity, and looked 'every inch a queen.'"<sup>12</sup> The critic for the Morning Herald commented that Pasta sang Semiramide's difficult aria "Bel raggio" in ". . . her most charming manner, and it was encored literally with enthusiasm."<sup>12</sup>

Pasta's London engagement came to an end on 7 August 1824, with a performance of Zingarelli's Giulietta e Romeo. In all, Pasta was favorably received by the London audiences at the King's Theatre. Her voice was much admired, but it was her unique

ability to combine voice and gesture to create believable characters on stage that most impressed her audience. In his Seven Years of the King's Theatre, John Ebers captured the essence of Pasta's art. "Nothing, indeed, can be more free from trick or affectation than Pasta's performance. There is no perceptible effort to resemble the character she plays; on the contrary, she enters the stage the character itself; transposed into the situation, excited by the hopes and the fears, breathing the life and the spirit of the being she represents."

Pasta and her family left London on 11 August 1824, and arrived in Paris three days later. Pasta's first appearance at the Théâtre Italien, however, did not take place until 25 September, when she repeated her celebrated portrayal of Zingarelli's Romeo.

The return of Giuditta Pasta was an event long anticipated by the Parisian opera-goers. The critic for Le Diable Boiteux reported:

Dès cinq heures le théâtre [Italien in the Rue] Louvois avait été mis en état de siège. Le public, comme une infanterie docile, se rangeait sur trois colonnes serrées, tandis que des gros de troupes légères se formaient çà et là pour épier la victoire en vilant la discipline. Bientôt les équipages sont venus encombrer le rempart. Le choc a été vif. Enfin les barrières ont cédé, et les assaillans se sont précipités dans le fort, en répétant à l'avance: Oh cari accenti! . . . Che mia tu sei! Ah che dolce istante! L'exactitude historique veut qu'on dénombre les victimes: deux cents personnes environ, qui avaient concouru au siège, n'ont pu entrer dans la ville.<sup>14</sup>

The critic described the warm reception given Pasta at her entrance: ". . . une explosion d'applaudissemens salue Mme Pasta, qui répond à cet accueil, selon l'usage italien, par une inclination profonde."<sup>15</sup> It had been more than five months since Pasta appeared at the Théâtre Italien, and she broke out of character to acknowledge her welcome. Stendhal, writing in the Journal de Paris, exclaimed the third act seemed ". . . entièrement neuf, non pas pour le chant, il y a long-temps que Mme Pasta est arrivée à la perfection, mais pour le jeu; . . ." <sup>16</sup> Stendhal made specific mention of Romeo's despair as he drinks the poison, and his utter anguish when he discovers Juliet not dead but recovered from the sleeping potion.

Samedi soir [25 September] ces mouvemens de passion si vifs, si rapides, si déchirans ont été rendus par une pantomime entièrement nouvelle, plus simple encore, plus naturelle, plus entraînante que par le passé. Peut-être Mme Pasta, qui arrive de Londres, a-t-elle été électrisée par la manière dont on y joue le cinquième acte de Roméo et Juliette de Shakespeare, arrangé par Garrick. [The important actor Charles Young played Romeo in David Garrick's adaptation of Shakespeare's play at Covent Garden during Pasta's stay in London. Did she see a performance?] Il y a eu un cri dans la salle au moment où Roméo, qui se sent défaillir, réunit ses forces pour donner un dernier baiser à Juliette, et tombe mort. J'en suis fâché pour les gens qui mettent de l'honneur national à n'admirer que des talens nés en France; mais il est difficile, en l'absence de Talma, d'admirer la tragédie aux [Comédie] Français où à l'Odéon, quand on vient de voir le Roméo du théâtre Louvois.<sup>17</sup>

On 5 October 1824 Rossini's Tancredi was revived at the Théâtre Italien. Pasta's portrayal of the title role elicited the usual praise. The critic for the Courrier des Théâtres, however, stated: "Le Tancredi féminin a chanté de

manière à faire craindre toute comparaison aux cantatrices qui auraient déjà abordé ou désireraient aborder le même rôle."<sup>18</sup>

From September 1824 to May 1825, no new role was added to Pasta's repertoire. She continued to appear as Desdemona, Nina, Tancredi, and Zingarelli's Romeo. The reviews were highly favorable, but as they contain no new perceptions on Pasta's art, detailed quotation is not necessary.

During her stay in Paris, Pasta kept up her social activities. One of her intimate friends at this time was the Chevalier Alexandre Micheroux, a very knowledgeable and respected dilettante composer. Giuseppe Pasta welcomed Micheroux as part of his wife's inner circle, and Micheroux became the closest of Giuditta Pasta's male friends. He was her confidant, advisor, coach, and companion. In Souvenirs d'Egotisme, Stendhal comments on the relationship between Giuditta Pasta and Alexandre Micheroux. "Rien de plus froid, rien de plus raisonnable que ces deux êtres l'un vis-à-vis de l'autre. Je les ai vus tous les jours pendant quatre ou cinq ans, je n'aurais pas été étonné, après tout ce temps, qu'un magicien, me donnant la faculté d'être invisible, me mit à même de voir qu'ils ne faisaient pas l'amour ensemble, mais simplement parlaient musique. Je suis sûr que Mme Pasta, qui pendant huit ou dix ans non seulement a habité Paris, mais y a été à la mode les trois quarts de ce temps, n'a jamais eu d'amant français."<sup>19</sup>

On 4 May 1825, Pasta left Paris for London where she was scheduled to appear for a month at the King's Theatre. On

10 May she was heard in her much-admired interpretation of Desdemona. The consensus of the critics was that Pasta's vocalism was improved. Her voice seemed more powerful, and her lower notes less husky than previously. The critic for the Morning Herald wrote:

Madame Pasta is little altered in appearance since last we saw here; but in power of voice, execution, and expression, she is, if possible, greater. She sung last night with the most thrilling melody. Her first fine song, "Palpita incerta l'alma," was enchantingly given. Nothing could exceed its exquisite pathos but the delicacy of its execution. Her cadences are unrivalled: in feeling and expression she has no competitor on the stage. The close of this charming song was received with the most enthusiastic plaudits--shouts of "bravissimo!" rung through the house. Her whole recitative last night was given with unusual power. Her voice appears to have gained greater depth and strength; there was a mellow richness in her tones we never heard before: Some of her lower notes were unequalled . . . Her voice is the very soul of music.<sup>20</sup>

The critic for The Examiner had a perceptive observation of Pasta's singing.

In person she is improved, but in voice infinitely more so,--the lower tones have no longer that thick husky accompaniment, which went far to destroy them, and the upper ones have more volume, without that harshness that was too often evident when she exerted her powers. In graceful ornament she is quite matchless; no common-place flourishes are introduced, but originality seems to be her study, and her genius leads her to the invention of graces of the most extraordinary beauty, not depending on rapidity of utterance, but upon a quiet placid sentiment and an exquisite sweetness that has no parallel.<sup>21</sup>

The critic for the Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review commented: ". . . it seems that the Italians have adopted a novel manner of forming the low notes of a contralto--at least I do not recollect to have heard such as are produced by Mad[ame] Pasta before."<sup>22</sup> In a footnote the critic explained: "Madame Pasta's

lower notes were what the French call sons voilées, that is they were not clear, but come forth husky. This is the consequence of the application of too much force, and is overcome by industrious practice. Madame Pasta's low tones were this season much less husky than before."<sup>23</sup>

Rossini's Semiramide was revived at the King's Theatre on 20 May 1825. Pasta had sung the title role in her previous London engagement (in 1824) and her performances in 1825 were even more successful, and demonstrated her growth as an artist. Semiramide is a role that requires delineation of diverse emotions-- a veritable kaleidoscope of feeling. Love, anger, joy, remorse, fear, and horror all have to be depicted with dignity and authority befitting the Queen of Babylon. Pasta proved herself equal to the challenge.

According to the critic for the Morning Herald, Semiramide is a character

. . . in which we have been used to expect the united powers of the singer and the actress, and that in the most eminent degree. In neither of these expectations were we disappointed. With the remembrance of [Angelica] Catalani, in the full career of her first popularity, fully in our minds, in this her most favourite character [Catalani sang Portogallo's Semiramide, not Rossini's], we may still say that we were never more delighted with an operatical performance than on this occasion [20 May 1825]. The style of Madame Pasta is different, indeed, both in song and action, from that of her predecessor, but, though different, not inferior, and, from its originality, assumes at least an apparent preference. Her voice combines in a very eminent, we might almost say unparalleled degree, power and sweetness, volume, clearness, and modulation--the last especially to an extent, and with a judicious adaptation to the pathos and sentiment of the scene, of which we remember no parallel. Her sotto voce in the passage, "Ah! che avviene! Dei che intendo," [Semiramide has

just announced Arsace as King and consort, rumblings are heard from the tomb of murdered King Ninus] gave mysterious awfulness to the music that found its way to the very heart; and her modulation was not a wit less effective in the most tender and the most indignant passages; while the expressive and appropriate action with which she accompanied every transition of emotion, with which the language and situation of the part abounds, commanded a unison of feeling which made even Opera appear a kind of nature. If, where everything was commendable, we must select some particular to justify our admiration, we would point to the delicious manner in which she sang "Ebbene-a-te ferisci" . . . and the entire duet with Madame [Elizabeth Lucia] Vestris, "Giorno d'orrore," which long and arduous as it is, was so enthusiastically and perseveringly encored, that its repetition was unavoidable, notwithstanding the unmercifulness of the execution. It is unnecessary, after what we have said, to dwell upon the ardent applause with which she was throughout received. The Opera was altogether uncommonly well sustained.<sup>24</sup>

In his review of the second singing of Semiramide, on 24 May 1825, the critic for the Morning Herald summarized Giuditta Pasta's importance in the history of opera. "There is so much of passion, power, and dramatic art in her performance, that serious opera in her hands is raised to its proper level--that of lyric tragedy."<sup>25</sup>

On 26 May 1825, Pasta had her benefit evening. On that occasion the first act of Rossini's Tancredi was followed by the first London staging of Paisiello's Nina. Pasta's interpretation of Tancredi was already familiar to London audiences; "Di tanti palpiti" had its usual encore. Pasta's enactment of the deranged Nina, so warmly appreciated by the Parisian public, elicited similar response by the English. The opera on the whole, however, did not generate much excitement. The critic for The Harmonicon stated: "Nina is full of beauties of the gentle kind; its melodies are original, pure, and delightful,

and every note is appropriate to the words. But it is not adapted to a theatre of large dimension; . . . ."26 The Théâtre Italien was less than half the size of the King's Theatre, and much of the opera's intimacy was lost in the larger space. On 4 June 1825, an even more difficult vocal and histrionic challenge awaited Pasta as Nina was paired with the second act of Semiramide. Two more diverse roles could hardly be imagined; each was performed with the singer's customary skill, and the critic for the Morning Chronicle reported that " . . . she was almost overwhelmed with applause."27

Though the great majority of the London critics eulogized Pasta in their reviews, her performances did not please everyone. The critic for the Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review is a case in point.

It seems to have the universal opinion that her singing is improved, and her own coincides with this the general conviction. Still however we must think Madame Pasta is greatly over-rated, both as an actress and as a singer. Her execution (by this term we mean her entire power of delivery) is unquestionably of the highest order, but we differ toto coelo from those who consider the application of it to display a conception equal to her technical excellence. On the contrary . . . we think her expression often totally wrong and seldom quite right. Her entrance in Tancredi affords one strong instance. The recitative Oh Patria she certainly gives well, but not supremely well; the air ["Di tanti palpiti"] is sacrificed to an endeavour at novelty of effect. Her Nina appears to us the most 28 perfect of her performances, though not of her singing.

The opinions expressed here are quite different from what one reads in the other reviews already quoted. It was not the technical

execution of the notes in the music that most impressed Pasta's listeners, but the expression she gave them. Her choice of tempi may have altered the complexion of a particular piece, "Di tanti palpiti" being the obvious example, but her original conception often shed new light and imparted new meaning to over familiar and standard interpretations.

The critic for the Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review continued:

Pasta is, by comparison, a great artist, but she has not that delicate apprehension of the nicer shades of the working of the passions that enables her to portray them justly and strikingly. We do not mean to say that her singing is without the expression of passion--by no means--nor that she is not gifted with feeling and delicacy--but she seems to us strangely to misapply her powers. Her delightful facility will often enrapture, but a little attention will prove that it is the instrumentation which delights--it is even passion, but not the passion--just as she transmutes one species of expression for another in Di tanti palpiti. Every real judge of the art forms to himself a beau ideal, drawn from his own imagination, and compounded with the possible execution, the knowledge of which he draws from experience, from having heard the various powers of various singers. Thus he not only determines the quantum merit of any particular artist, but he has a standard by which he can estimate very nearly what is actually practicable. Measured by such a standard, we venture to say Madame Pasta is found to be short, and indeed to fail in comparison with many of her predecessors and some of her contemporaries. Yet perhaps it is hardly possible to carry the technical polish of her voice and the finish of her tone much further. But nevertheless the direct faculty, the philosophical power which best adapts a mean to its end, is often wanting.<sup>29</sup>

While in London, Pasta had performed, with the exception of Mayr's Medea, her most celebrated characterizations--Desdemona, Semiramide, Tancredi, Nina, and Zingarelli's Romeo. Vocally and dramatically she was in the years of her prime. Before she left

London for Paris on 7 June 1825, Pasta received the following poetic tribute, which reflected what many who had experienced her art felt.

ACROSTIC

M-ost sweet, most rare, most beautiful, most divine,  
A-h! where shall Science find a voice like thine!--  
D-ulcet and soft as zephyr's parting sigh  
A-round it breathes; and then like "torrents near,"  
M-ounts forth in all the soul of melody,  
E-nchanting every heart, and on the ear  
  
P-ouring such tides of such blest minstrelsy  
A-s Envy's self must love.--Sing on anew  
S-weet Syren, for to Thee alone 'tis given  
T-o prove that Woman can be Angel too,  
A-nd make of Earth a Paradise--a Heaven.

W. C. J. <sup>30</sup>

NOTES: CHAPTER VIII

1. The Examiner (London), 2 May 1824.
2. The Times (London), 26 April 1824.
3. The Examiner, 2 May 1824.
4. Morning Chronicle (London), 26 April 1824.
5. The Harmonicon (London), 1824, p. 124.
6. Ibid.
7. Morning Chronicle, 23 June 1824.
8. Morning Herald (London), 30 June 1824.
9. Ibid.
10. The Times, 19 July 1824.
11. Ibid.
12. Morning Herald, 19 July 1824.
13. John Ebers, Seven Years of the King's Theatre, (London: William Harrison Ainsworth, 1828), pp. 219-220.
14. Le Diable Boiteux (Paris), 27 September 1824.
15. Ibid.
16. Journal de Paris, 29 September 1824.
17. Ibid.
18. Courrier des Théâtres (Paris), 7 October 1824.
19. Stendhal [Henri Beyle], Souvenirs d'Egotisme, (Paris: Le Divan, 1941), p. 92.
20. Morning Herald, 11 May 1825.
21. The Examiner, 15 May 1825.
22. Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review (London), 1825, p. 278.
23. Ibid.

24. Morning Herald, 21 May 1825.
25. Ibid., 25 May 1825.
26. The Harmonicon, 1825, p. 118.
27. Morning Chronicle, 6 June 1825.
28. Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review, 1825, p. 193.
29. Ibid.
30. The original manuscript of this sonnet is preserved in the Collection of Clelio Moretti, Blevio, Italy.

CHAPTER IX

Giuseppe Pasta remained in London in the spring of 1825 while Giuditta Pasta, accompanied by her mother and daughter, journeyed to Paris. During the next months Giuditta Pasta added three new roles to her repertoire: Corinna, in Rossini's Il Viaggio a Reims; Armando, in Giacomo Meyerbeer's Il Crociato in Egitto; and the title role of Rossini's Zelmira. Along with Desdemona, Tancredi, Nina, and Zingarelli's Romeo, two roles that Pasta had not sung for some time were prepared for staging: Elcia, in Rossini's Mosè in Egitto; and Enrico, in Mayr's La Rosa Bianca e la Rosa Rossa. The question over who had the right to sing the title role in the first Paris performance of Semiramide was to result in a battle between two rival divas: Giuditta Pasta and Joséphine Fodor-Mainvielle. The confrontation with Fodor-Mainvielle was to prove so emotionally draining and unpleasant that Pasta's loyalty to the Théâtre Italien became increasingly tenuous.

In his memoirs, John Ebers recalled that a ". . . languor truly alarming"<sup>1</sup> was felt at the King's Theatre immediately after Pasta's leaving. The vibrancy and excitement of her performances made the efforts of many other singers seem pale by comparison. A distinct feeling of inertia often followed a Pasta engagement at a given theatre. During her recent absence from the Théâtre Italien, attendance fell off sharply. Contralto Adelaide Schiasetti, a newcomer to the roster in 1825, had been

received only politely. Alexandre Micheroux had written to Pasta: ". . . la Schias[etti] ha avuta la compiacenza di ricordare alcuni passetti, ed alcune cadenze della Pasta, . . . il Pubblico ha applaudita la buona intenzione." <sup>2</sup>

When she returned from London, Pasta occupied herself with learning her music and attending rehearsals for Rossini's new Il Viaggio a Reims. This work was to be mounted at the Théâtre Italien to celebrate the coronation of Charles X [29 May 1825, at Reims]. Louis XVIII had died in September 1824, and Charles X was the new King of France. Various Parisian theatres had staged works to celebrate the succession, and Rossini's effort was looked forward to with great expectation. It was the first time Rossini was composing especially for Paris.

Il Viaggio a Reims, ossia L'Albergo del Giglio d'Oro, had its première at the Théâtre Italien on 19 June 1825. King Charles X was present and the receipts taken in at the door amounted to an incredible 5,912.73 francs. <sup>3</sup> Excitement was intense; a new Rossini opera composed for the distinguished company at the Théâtre Italien to be staged in the royal presence had all the makings of a gala event. The results, however, were disappointing. To an indifferent libretto by Luigi Balocchi, Rossini had composed what critics considered good, but not outstanding music. In his review in the Journal des Débats, Castil-Blaze remarked: ". . . on ne doit pas juger Rossini sur ce premier ouvrage: c'est une pièce de circonstance, écrite en

quelques jours; le poème est sans actions et sans intérêt."<sup>4</sup>

Castil-Blaze reported that Rossini's one-act opera was one  
" . . . qui dure trois heures, et que le défaut d'action fait  
paraître encore plus long qu'il n'est réellement."<sup>5</sup> Stendhal,  
writing in the Journal de Paris, echoed these sentiments.

"Il y a autant de musique dans le Viaggio a Reims que dans  
la Gazza Ladra, et toutefois le libretto ne présente qu'une  
exposition."<sup>6</sup> Stendhal pointed out in the Journal de Paris  
that " . . . le libretto nous fait faire connaissance avec tous  
les personnages . . . mais ces personnages n'agissent point.  
Ils entrent, ils chantent un air ou un duo et puis s'en vont."<sup>7</sup>

This static quality robbed the opera of its vitality. Stendhal  
continued: " . . . sans doute ce libretto est fait avec esprit,  
mais la musique de Rossini aurait produit un bien autre effet,  
si elle avait eu à rendre des situations tour à tour pathétiques  
ou plaisantes amenées par une intrigue vive."<sup>8</sup>

A detailed analysis of the plot proved difficult; many  
critics simply listed the cast and their various characteristics.  
Castil-Blaze stated that this was " . . . plus de la moitié de  
l'analyse de la pièce."<sup>9</sup> The major characters, as listed in the  
first printed libretto, are as follows:

CORINNA, celebre improvisatrice romana . . . . La Sig. PASTA.  
LA MARCHESA MELIBEA; dama Polacca, vedova d'un  
generale Italiano morto, il giorno medesimo  
delle nozze, in una sorpresa dell'inimico . .La Sig. SCHIASETTI  
LA CONTESSA DI FOLLEVILLE; giovine vedova, piena di  
grazia e di brio, pazza per le mode . . . . La Sig. CINTI

MADAME CORTESE, donna spiritosa ed amabile, nata nel Tirolo, moglie d'un negoziante Francese, che viaggia, e padrona della casa de' bagni . . . . . La Sig. MOMBELLI

IL CAVALIERE BELFIORE, giovine ufficiale Francese, gajo ed elegante, che fa la corte a tutte le Signore e particolarmente alla Contessa di Folleville, e si diletta di pittura . . . . . Il Sig. DONZELLI

LORD SIDNEY, colonello Inglese, innamorato segretamente di Corinna . . . . . Il Sig. ZUCHELLI

DON PROFONDO; letterato, amico di Corinna, membro di varie accademie, e fanatico per le antichità . Il Sig. PELLEGRINI

IL CONTE DI LIBENSKOF, generale Russo, d'un carattere impetuoso, innamorato della marchesa Melibea, ed estremamente geloso . . . . . Il Sig. BORDOGNI

DON ALVARO, grande de Spagna, uffizial generale di marina, innamorato di Melibea . . . . . Il Sig. LEVASSEUR

All of the above characters find themselves at Plombières, at the inn of Madama Cortese, where they are taking the waters. It is learned that the coronation of Charles X is taking place at Reims, and all decide forthwith to attend the ceremony. There are no horses available, however, so this assortment of types must remain at Plombières. Eventually they will travel to Paris to partake of the festivities there, but first indulge in an extravagant banquet.

As the 5th century B.C. Greek poetess Corinna, Giuditta Pasta represented a character of elevated stature that reflected her own dignity and reputation as a lyric muse. Her entrance aria, "Arpa gentil," is a case in point. The characters who have been absorbed in the jealousies of Don Alvaro and Conte Libenskof over Marchesa Melibea are now mesmerized by the sound of Corinna's voice. The critic for L'Aristarque described Pasta's

effect. "Le silence le plus profond règne sur la scène et dans l'orchestre. Les accens de Mad[ame] Pasta sont si vrais et si beaux, l'expression en est si touchante, que l'accompagnement le plus simple est celui qui leur convient le mieux. Ce repos musical est loin de produire un mauvais effet; . . . ."10

The critics admired the duet "Nel suo divin sembiante," sung by Giuditta Pasta and the tenor Domenico Donzelli. Stendhal thought it "magnifique."<sup>11</sup> The critic for the Gazette de France considered that the duet was worthy of the best efforts of Rossini. "Il est difficile aussi d'imaginer une exécution plus parfaite que celle des deux célèbres artistes chargés de faire entendre ce morceau; Mme Pasta surtout se montre au dessus de tous les éloges. Parler d'elle ne signifie rien; il faut la voir et l'entendre."<sup>12</sup>

Il Viaggio a Reims included an arrangement of the national anthems and songs of various countries, a ballet and a concluding chorus. As Corinna, Pasta was called upon at the end of the opera to sing five strophes in honor of Charles X. "Come trovar un'occasione più bella/ Di far sentir i vostri dolci accenti?" asks Lord Sidney in the libretto. Critical opinion was divided on the merits of this music. Castil-Blaze, writing in the Journal des Débats, dismissed these strophes as "sans couleur"<sup>13</sup> and stated " . . . le compositeur n'a pas été heureusement inspiré."<sup>14</sup> According to the critic for L'Aristarque: "Rossini a retrouvé toute sa verve. Belle dans

son débit, simple comme la nature, Mad[ame] Pasta puise ses nobles inspirations dans son âme, qui se prête aux impressions les plus vives et sans le moindre effort, elle fait éprouver à nos sens les émotions dont elle est elle-même pénétrée."<sup>15</sup> In the Journal de Paris, Stendhal wrote that Pasta's performance equalled that of her great tragic roles. "Jamais Mme Pasta n'avait paru plus belle comme cantatrice, comme actrice et comme femme. La nécessité de ne pas applaudir [in the presence of the King] semblait augmenter encore les transports du public."<sup>16</sup> Several critics likened Pasta to a living representation of Corinne, by the French painter François Gérard.

Il Viaggio a Reims was only a mediocre public success and after three singings was withdrawn from the repertory of the Théâtre Italien. A single performance was heard on 12 September 1825, at the Académie Royale de Musique. Rossini salvaged several of the better numbers for his first French opera, Le Comte Ory, which had its première at the Opéra on 20 August 1828. Among the selections adapted to French text was the Pasta-Donzelli duet which became "Ah quel respect, madame."

During the short run of Il Viaggio a Reims a very important individual entered Giuditta Pasta's life: the impresario Domenico Barbaja. Barbaja's enterprise and empire were extraordinary. In Milan he had begun his career as a

waiter, then ran gambling tables at La Scala and later in the theatres of Naples. At various points in their careers, Rossini, Donizetti, Bellini, and Weber worked for him, as did leading singers and dancers. Barbaja's impresarial acumen led him to preside over several Neapolitan theatres, including the Teatro San Carlo and Teatro del Fondo, Vienna's Kärntnertortheater and Theater an der Wien (during 1821-1828), and Milan's La Scala and Teatro della Canobbiana (during 1826-1832). Isabella Colbran was said to have been his mistress before she met and married Rossini. In the summer of 1825, Barbaja was in Paris scouting new talent for his theatres, and Giuditta Pasta was a prime target.

Word had reached Giuseppe Pasta, who was still in London, that Barbaja had not found Giuditta Pasta's talent equal to her great fame. In a letter dated 24 June 1825, Giuseppe Pasta wrote his wife " . . . ciò potrebbe essere se si può giudicarti da un'Opera di Circostanza; io però ritengo, che ciò sia una delle cattiverie d'uso teatrale: non trascurare però di tenere viva in lui la speranza di averti a Napoli."<sup>17</sup> Giuseppe Pasta and the tenor Manuel Garcia had formulated a plan to take over the management of the King's Theatre, but the proposed venture never materialized, and in 1825 Giuseppe Pasta still had no formal occupation. His wife continued to delegate the responsibility for the negotiation of her contracts, and that was Giuseppe Pasta's

main connection with the opera world. Signor Pasta, knowing full well that Barbaja was a shrewd businessman, warned his wife to be cautious in her dealings with the impresario. He reminded Giuditta that they had wanted to spend some time in Milan after her Paris engagement was over, and that any new schedule should be planned accordingly. It was of utmost importance to keep the negotiations secret. If the management of the Théâtre Italien discovered the prize singer was negotiating an extended contract elsewhere, serious problems might arise. There was no immediate need to enter an agreement with Barbaja. Pasta had offers to return to the King's Theatre and there were possibilities of engagements in Turin and New York. With Barbaja aware of her options, Pasta could bargain from a position of strength. By early July 1825, Barbaja offered a multi-year contract with several leaves of absence. Giuseppe Pasta warned against accepting such a lengthy commitment. It was better, he thought, to negotiate a brief engagement only for Naples. It was not until 28 June 1826 that a contract was signed; from November 1826 to April 1827, Giuditta Pasta was scheduled to sing in Naples at the Teatro San Carlo and the Teatro del Fondo.

During the summer of 1825, Giuditta Pasta remained in Paris, performing several of her famous roles (Desdemona, Tancredi, Nina, and Zingarelli's Romeo) at the Théâtre Italien. The King's Theatre had attempted to secure her services for the rest

of the 1825 season, but the administration of the Théâtre Italien would not grant Pasta a leave of absence to accept the engagement.

Giuditta Pasta kept her husband aware of all she did. Her successful and enviable professional position, active social life, and enjoyable leisure moments contrasted to Giuseppe Pasta's anguish about his inability to make a substantial career for himself. In a letter of 21 July 1825, Giuseppe Pasta told his wife: ". . . sono contentissimo, che tu possa un poco divertirti; in quanto a me però nella presente circostanza, neppure il palazzo d'Armida avrebbe la minima attrattiva."<sup>18</sup> The failure of the plan to manage the King's Theatre had been a bitter disappointment, but by the late summer of 1825, Giuseppe Pasta reached a major decision in his life: he was going to New York. Such a drastic step was not a spur-of-the-moment idea, but the result of weeks of thought and evaluation. Early in 1825, the Pastas had made the acquaintance of Dominick Lynch, an enterprising merchant who was in Paris to conduct his wine importing business. Lynch was also a musical amateur, and one of the administrators of the Park Theatre in New York. Lynch attended performances at the Théâtre Italien and became enchanted by the talents of Giuditta Pasta, whom he addressed as "la reine des beaux arts."<sup>19</sup> Her interpretation of Nina particularly affected him, and in a letter to Pasta on 14 April 1825, Lynch quotes the character's text: "Si vous desirez a revoir le portrait de Byron, j'ose vous supplier

de m'indiquer le jour et l'heure qu'il vous sera convenable d'y aller, et j'aurai l'honneur de me rendre chez vous-- "ogni mattina," "ogni istante, ciascun'ora, poi doman, poi doman l'altro, poi quell'altro, e l'altro," "ancora,"--ed escriverò a somma fortuna il piacere ch'ella mi ha procurato di renderle cosa grata."<sup>19</sup>

It was the indelible impression of Giuditta Pasta's performance that engendered Lynch's idea of bringing Italian opera to America. "C'est vous qui m'a [sic] enchanté avec la musique et qui m'a fait pensé à ce projet"<sup>20</sup> he wrote the diva. With the support of Stephen Price, the co-manager, and the rest of the administration of the Park Theatre, Lynch set about engaging a troupe of singers to bring to New York.

Giuditta Pasta was the prime object, and motivating force, of Lynch's undertaking, but no amount of persuasion would persuade her to leave Europe. There was little inducement for Pasta to go to New York. She was the reigning diva of both Paris and London and in the prime of her career. Why, at the height of her powers, should she risk the perils and discomfort of a five-week sea voyage to perform in uncertain conditions before an unsophisticated audience when she was making large sums of money in Europe? Most of all, Giuditta Pasta did not want to leave her daughter Clelia and apparently did not want to subject the child to the hardships of the journey. To Giuseppe Pasta, however, the idea of performing in America seemed a golden

opportunity. In vain he attempted to induce his wife to join him. Though Giuseppe Pasta did go to New York, he did not sing. He came down with a serious throat ailment and had to return to London six months after his arrival.

During August and September of 1825, Giuditta Pasta was occupied with rehearsals for Giacomo Meyerbeer's Il Crociato in Egitto, which had its long-awaited and long-delayed first Paris staging on 22 September 1825. Il Crociato in Egitto was the last of Meyerbeer's six Italian operas and, in 1825, his most successful work to date. Originally composed for the Teatro la Fenice in Venice, Il Crociato in Egitto had its first performance on 7 March 1824. Subsequent stagings during 1824 and 1825 took place in Florence, Munich, Padua, and Trieste. Meyerbeer revised his score for various productions and composed new pieces to suit specific singers. The composer supervised the staging at the Théâtre Italien in 1825, and the version of the opera prepared for Paris was essentially a composite of its predecessors. One important addition was that for Giuditta Pasta's first singing of the trouser role of Armando, Meyerbeer provided a new cabaletta. This was "L'aspetto adorabile," and Pasta sang it as part of her entrance aria. Though only the cabaletta was composed specifically for her voice, Pasta found the bi-partite aria so congenial that she used it for one of her arie di baule and often interpolated it in Rossini's Otello. The recitative "Eccomi giunto ormai," (written

for the castrato Giovanni Battista Velluti) was from the original 1824 version of the opera, though it was not used as Armando's entrance. The cavatina, "Oh, come rapida," was a reworking of the rondo (same title) from Meyerbeer's earlier opera L'Esule di Granata. Originally composed for Benedetta Pisaroni, Meyerbeer adapted the cavatina for Carolina Bassi, who sang Armando in Trieste in 1824. Pasta sang the version Meyerbeer reworked for Bassi.

The first Meyerbeer opera performance in Paris was a momentous occasion. Critics approached the work with some trepidation; it was more complex than many works in their experience and more than one hearing was required for an accurate appraisal. Gaetano Rossi's libretto was severely criticized. Improbable and unconvincing as a whole, the text did afford a series of strong situations ripe for musical setting.

The drama has a late point of attack. The essential background information is that during the Sixth Crusade (1227-1244) to Egypt, the Knights of Rhodes were defeated in battle. Armando d'Orville was among this group. Assumed dead by his compatriots, Armando had only fainted from loss of blood. To escape slavery, Armando disguised himself as an Egyptian and took the name Elmireno. Eventually he had the opportunity to save the life of Aladino, the Sultan of Damietta. Armando also fell in love with the Sultan's daughter Palmide, whom he has

instructed in the Christian faith. Armando and Palmide have a child, whose existence remains secret. They are to be officially married as soon as "Elmireno" returns from a military campaign.

The curtain rises on a group of European slaves bemoaning their situation. Palmide can only think of her joy at being reunited with her lover and is unaware of the jealous Osmino, who would like to wed her and ascend the throne. Adriano, Armando's uncle, arrives in Damietta. He is shocked to discover Armando not dead, but dressed as an infidel. Adriano chastizes his nephew for betraying his faith, but the transgression would be forgiven, however, if Armando revealed his true identity to the Sultan and returned to France to marry his fiancée Felicia. When Armando confesses the truth, Aladino is at first angry, but offers him pardon if he would marry Palmide. Armando refuses. Aladino then orders the Knights of Rhodes imprisoned and cries of vengeance erupt from the various factions.

In the second act, Palmide laments her condition. Aladino, who intended to murder her child, has succumbed to Palmide's pleas for mercy and eventually forgives Armando. Aladino tries to convince Adriano also to forgive Armando, but when the existence of the child is revealed, Adriano becomes enraged. When it is learned that Palmide has become a Christian and is willing to leave Egypt, Adriano's anger is quelled, but this news now inflames

Aladino, who condemns everyone to death. Before the execution, a band led by Osmino attempts to arm the Knights of Rhodes against Aladino. As Osmino attempts to assassinate Aladino, Armando defends the Sultan and once again saves his life. This magnanimous gesture results in clemency for the Knights and the Sultan's blessing for the marriage of Armando and Palmide.

As Armando, Giuditta Pasta won both popular and critical acclaim. Castil-Blaze of the Journal des Débats reported: "Mme Pasta a ravi les spectateurs par la manière noble et expressive dont elle a chanté et joué . . ." <sup>21</sup> Stendhal, writing in the Journal de Paris, confirmed that " . . . le jeu de cette grande actrice a sauvé ce que son rôle du chevalier d'Orville a de ridicule et d'invraisemblable." <sup>22</sup> The comments on "Oh, come rapida" printed in L'Aristarque are representative of many critics. "On reconnaît toujours la manière large et hardie de cette grande cantatrice dans la récitatif obligé. Elle a rendu celui-ci avec un élan et une chaleur d'expression qui la met hors de toute comparaison. Elle a fait preuve du même talent dans la cavatine; mais malheureusement on n'a pas trouvé que le motif en fût bien arrêté. L'idée en a paru vague, les phrases décousues; et, en définitive, c'est je crois plutôt à la cantatrice qu'au compositeur que s'adressaient les applaudissemens." <sup>23</sup>

After five performances at the Théâtre Italien, the production moved to the larger Académie Royale de Musique for the last performance on 8 October 1825, which was the occasion of

Pasta's benefit evening. Economic, rather than artistic, concerns were reasons for the move; the larger theatre accommodated more spectators. Pasta's contract stipulated that she was to have a "guaranteed" benefit of 15,000 francs, though the actual receipt of the house was 14,111 francs.<sup>24</sup> Vocally, the soprano was not at her best. The critic for La Pandore declared: "Mme Pasta, si belle sous le casque et la cuirasse, si noble dans ses poses, si tragiques dans ses accents, n'était pas en voix. Cependant elle a trouvé de temps en temps des inspirations charmantes."<sup>24</sup> Though she enjoyed a personal success as Armando, Pasta removed the role from her active repertoire. She was to sing only three more performances of Armando, at the King's Theatre in March 1828.

In November 1825, Giuditta Pasta sang for the first time with a man who became a frequent colleague and a devoted friend--the great tenor Giovanni Battista Rubini. The thirty-one-year-old Rubini made his Paris début as Don Ramiro in Rossini's La Cenerentola. He was hailed as an extremely valuable acquisition to the Théâtre Italien and soon earned the sobriquet "Roi des Ténors." Rubini was always an indifferent actor; his talents, and interests, were purely vocal. He was a master of florid singing, and reveled in the ease with which he could negotiate difficult passages in high tessitura. Rubini's phrasing and beauty of tone were much admired; he was affecting in cantabile singing, which he executed with great expression. Rubini was an accomplished Rossini singer, but his greatest triumphs were in the operas of

Bellini and Donizetti. Likewise, Giuditta Pasta's voice found its fullest expression in the operas of Bellini and Donizetti; vocally Pasta and Rubini were kindred spirits.

The first opera in which Pasta and Rubini sang together was a revival of Mayr's La Rosa Bianca e la Rosa Rossa. There were only two performances (22 and 24 November 1825). The work had had a cool reception when first heard in Paris in 1823; the revival did little to increase the public's interest. Pasta was her usual self, and the critic for La Pandore reported that she was " . . . bien secondée par Rubini, qui a conquis d'abord toute la faveur du public, . . . ." <sup>26</sup> There was one important change in Pasta's performance as Enrico. In 1823, for her entrance aria, Pasta introduced Rossini's "Dolci d'amor parole." This piece was originally intended for Tancredi, but never became part of that opera. For the 1825 performances, she replaced Rossini's aria with one by Giuseppe Nicolini--"Il braccio mio conquise." This was music composed for Giovanni Battista Velluti as part of the title role in Nicolini's 1820 opera Il Conte di Lenosse. Rossini probably composed Pasta's embellishments for "Il braccio mio conquise;" some critics believed the aria to be by Rossini. The critic for the Courrier des Théâtres thought the music " . . . assez jolie, mais le morceau est faible." <sup>27</sup> Pasta, apparently, held Nicolini's aria in high regard. "Il braccio mio conquise" soon became a permanent part of her repertoire as the

final aria in Tancredi.

Rubini's first essay of the title role of Rossini's Otello took place on 15 December 1825, with Pasta as Desdemona. Rubini's interpretation differed from those who had previously sung Otello to Pasta's Desdemona (Manuel Garcia, Claudio Bonoldi, Alberico Curioni, and Domenico Donzelli). His was not a tigerish Otello hell-bent on revenge and murder. Rubini, according to the critic for La Quotidienne, " . . . avec un tact et un talent qu'on ne saurait trop louer, a fait disparaître tout ce qu'il y avait de choquant dans ce spectacle, en ramenant sur Otello une partie de cet intérêt de tristesse et d'amour qui s'attache à Desdémone; cette nouveauté, qui loin d'affaiblir le rôle, ajoute au contraire à son effet musical et dramatique, . . . ."28

For her 74th singing of Desdemona, Pasta adapted her portrayal to harmonize with her new partner. The critic for La Quotidienne stated: "C'est n'est pas seulement le chant et le jeu de la même actrice, embellis, perfectionnés, portés à un plus haut degré d'expression; c'est une autre actrice et une autre cantatrice supérieure à la première; c'est en un mot une nouvelle création du rôle de Desdémone."29 A very distinguished spectator was in the audience on 15 December 1825; Stendhal, after commenting in the Journal de Paris that "Mme Pasta a joué et chanté d'une manière miraculeuse,"30 reported "M[onsieur Jean-François] Talma, qui était à l'orchestre, n'a cessé d'applaudir cette grande tragédienne."31

During the latter half of 1825, Giuditta Pasta was involved in a prolonged and complicated imbroglio with her rival Joséphine Fodor-Mainvielle, Rossini, and the administrators of the Théâtre Italien. The center of the controversy was whether Pasta or Fodor-Mainvielle had the right to sing the title role in the first Paris performance of Semiramide. Both singers laid claim to the role and both had convincing arguments to support their claims.

The essential background of the dispute was the following. The Vicomte de la Rochefoucauld, on behalf of the Théâtre Italien, agreed that a new production of Semiramide be mounted for one of Pasta's benefit evenings in 1824. All of Pasta's three benefit performances for 1824, however, were not scheduled that year. Giuseppe Pasta was convinced that Rossini was the cause of the continual delay of Semiramide. Rossini, the new musical director of the Théâtre Italien, knew Pasta was negotiating contracts to sing in London, Vienna, and Naples, and that she was the only singer of the company whose appearances brought in decent receipts. Giuseppe Pasta believed that Rossini kept postponing Giuditta Pasta's benefit in order to keep her in Paris, and thereby keep the Théâtre Italien solvent. Another reason for the delay of Semiramide was that Joséphine Fodor-Mainvielle was scheduled to return to Paris after a lengthy absence. The administrators of the Théâtre Italien apparently thought that presenting the two popular divas in an unfamiliar opera by Rossini

was the novelty to rejuvenate the monotonous repertory at the theatre. Since Pasta had triumphed in travesty roles such as Tancredi and Zingarelli's Romeo, it was thought she could be a splendid Arsace. Both Pasta and Fodor-Mainvielle had already sung Semiramide outside Paris. Both were eminently successful in the role, and neither would give it up.

Since Semiramide was to be staged for her benefit, Pasta thought it proper that she had the choice of roles. The administration of the Théâtre Italien tried to explain that though it was stated in Pasta's contract that Semiramide was to be mounted for her benefit evening, it was not specifically written that the benefit had to be the first performance of the opera. Pasta countered by maintaining it was historical tradition to allow the beneficiare choice of roles. She made it clear that under no circumstances would she sing Arsace. On 6 October 1825 Pasta wrote to Rossini: ". . . non v'incomodate a stropiare la vostra musica per me giachè non canterò mai quella parte."<sup>32</sup>

On 12 October 1825, the Semiramide affair was settled. Fodor-Mainvielle won her right to sing the title role, since it was written in her contract that she was to have the choice of roles for her return to the Théâtre Italien. Pasta, who did not have to sing Arsace, was promised a major role in the next new opera by Rossini, the first performance of which was to be her benefit. Rossini was said to be composing a new Italian opera

with roles for Pasta and Fodor-Mainvielle. This never came about, and Pasta later sued for the 6,000 francs she was promised in case Rossini failed to compose the opera. Semiramide was Rossini's last Italian opera; his subsequent compositions, with the exception of Il Viaggio a Reims, were French operas. Pasta did not sing in French.

Pasta apparently was the loser in the conflict with Fodor-Mainvielle. Both singers were justified in their separate points of view; the real culprit was the administration of the Théâtre Italien. Had Pasta sung Arsace, it would have been a wise move. The role is as good as, or perhaps even better than Semiramide. A great Arsace can elicit more applause and be more impressive than even an excellent Semiramide. If Pasta permitted Rossini to adapt Arsace's music for her, she very probably could have triumphed over her rival in a side-by-side competition.

The first Parisian performance of Semiramide took place on 8 December 1825, with Fodor-Mainvielle in the title role and Adelaide Schiasetti as Arsace. The first and, as it turned out, only performance of Fodor-Mainvielle's Semiramide was a fiasco. Her recent throat ailments added to a severe case of nerves, and Fodor-Mainvielle was observed to be uncomfortable indeed. Her control over her voice was tenuous; she rallied herself for the brilliant showpiece "Bel raggio," but even the pro-Fodor-Mainvielle critic for La Nouveauté admitted the rest of the performance was

"généralement froid."<sup>33</sup> That 8 December singing of *Semiramide* was a turning-point in Fodor-Mainvielle's otherwise impressive career. Her indisposition was not temporary; she literally lost her voice. She later withdrew from the stage and, apart from a few vain comeback attempts, the soprano was forced into an early retirement. Pasta's feelings about her rival's misfortune have not been preserved.

The second performance of *Semiramide* was delayed until 3 January 1826, with Pasta replacing Fodor-Mainvielle in the title role. Excitement filled the air as the feud of the divas and Fodor-Mainvielle's retirement intensified the spectator's curiosity to see and hear what Pasta could do; she did not disappoint her public. According to the critic for *La Pandore*: "Pour le jeu et l'action dramatique, Mad[ame] Pasta a une supériorité incontestable; elle représente avec une dignité plus majestueuse, elle nuance plus habilement et fait mieux ressortir les traits saillans du rôle."<sup>34</sup> The critic for the *Courrier des Théâtres* wrote of Pasta: "Jamais peut-être elle n'avait été aussi belle que dans la scène où, du haut de son trône, elle désigne celui avec lequel elle consent à partager la couronne de Babylone, et dans celle où l'ombre de Ninus, sortant de son tombeau, apparaît aux yeux de la criminelle Sémiramis et de sa cour. Aussi a-t-elle électrisé tous les spectateurs, et nous avons vu avec plaisir les applaudissemens de Mlle Mars se mêler à ceux de toute l'assemblée au comble de l'émotion."<sup>35</sup>

The only part of the role which had given Pasta some difficulty on 3 January was "Bel raggio." The critic for the Courrier des Théâtres, after stating "Mme Pasta l'a chanté avec son talent ordinaire,"<sup>36</sup> went on to remark: "Elle aura besoin de la chanter plusieurs fois pour bien nuancer toutes les modulations de ce morceaux gracieux."<sup>37</sup> In subsequent performances Pasta's singing of "Bel raggio" was thought much improved.

In terms of voice qua voice, Pasta was probably inferior to Fodor-Mainvielle. The latter apparently commanded a greater range and had the more agile instrument, though she was limited in her ability to trill and sing pianissimi. Her soprano lacked the color and expression Pasta was able to summon. Fodor-Mainvielle was not a singing-actress, and Pasta's ability to think in terms of words as well as notes eluded Fodor-Mainvielle.

During the winter of 1826, Pasta, in addition to Semiramide, sang Desdemona, Tancredi, Nina, Zingarelli's Romeo, and three performances of Elcia (in Mosè in Egitto). Pasta's next new character was the title role in Rossini's Zelmira, which had its first Paris performance on 14 March 1826, in a production supervised by the composer.

Andrea Leone Tottola's libretto is a confusing and unconvincing piece of hackwork. In order to comprehend the intricacies of the plot, and thus have an increased understanding of the role Pasta played, some essential background information is

needed. Polidoro, King of Lesbos, has ruled peacefully over the island, and is admired by the populace and beloved by his daughter Zelmira and her husband Ilo. During a period of Ilo's absence, when the island was left virtually unprotected, Azor, King of Mitylene, took advantage of the situation and invaded Lesbos. Zelmira managed to hide Polidoro in the tombs of the ancient kings of the island, and he is presumed dead. Meanwhile Antenore, with the support of his fellow adventurer Leucippo, kills Azor and proclaims himself King. The opera begins with the revelation of Azor's death.

In order to safeguard his usurped position, Antenore plots to implicate Zelmira in Azor's murder. Upon Ilo's return to Lesbos, Antenore successfully convinces him of Zelmira's guilt in the deaths of both Polidoro and Azor. Ilo, incredibly, is all too willing to believe the lies. At one point, just as Leucippo is about to kill the sleeping Ilo, Zelmira rushes in and disarms the villain. Manipulating the situation to his advantage, Leucippo places the dagger in Zelmira's hand, and accuses her of the attempted murder. Ilo is duped once again, and Zelmira is led off to prison.

In the second act, Leucippo intercepts a letter from Zelmira to Ilo in which she reveals that Polidoro is not dead. Leucippo suggests that Antenore free Zelmira in order that she may be followed to the hiding-place of Polidoro. Subsequently Polidoro meets Ilo and convinces him of Zelmira's innocence. As Leucippo anticipated, Zelmira unwittingly reveals Polidoro's whereabouts, and father and daughter are arrested and imprisoned. Zelmira laments

her fate and wonders why Ilo has not come to the rescue. Eventually Ilo and his followers enter the prison, disarm Antenore and Leucippo, and place them in chains. Zelmira rejoices at her change of fortune, and the opera ends happily.

Rossini's music aroused only lukewarm approval. Castil-Blaze, writing in the Journal des Débats, declared: "Les chants de l'opéra sont plus bizarres que mélodieux; des traits qui conviendroient mieux à la clarinette qu'à la voix, des formes gauches et tourmentées, présentoient des difficultés continuelles aux chanteurs, . . . ."38

The version of Zelmira performed in Paris differed from the original in several important ways. For Pasta, Rossini provided new music for Zelmira's prison scene with Polidoro: the prayer "Da te spero, o Ciel clemente," materia di mezza for Zelmira, Polidoro and Leucippo, and cabaletta "Dell'innocenza, o Dei." The latter two sections were derived from Rossini's Ermione; the prayer was newly composed. Having given Pasta a bi-partite aria to sing just before the dénouement, Rossini altered the concluding aria "Riedi al soglio." Instead of a solo for Zelmira, "Riedi al soglio" became an ensemble for Zelmira, Ilo and Polidoro.

Pasta's Zelmira was universally admired, and she was considered especially successful in the second act. According to Castil-Blaze:

Mme Pasta sembloit s'être réservée pour le dernier air, composé d'une prière et d'un agitato plein de vigueur et de véhémence. L'explosion en a été prodigieuse; one ne peut pas mieux chanter l'opéra dans une situation aussi

forte; il est impossible de mieux jouer la tragédie. Le costume grec lui sied à ravir, et les charmes de sa figure forment une harmonie parfaite avec les charmes de la musique et les sentimens qu'elle exprime. On voudra voir cette scène qui se termine par un joli trio; c'est la seule chose que l'on ait applaudi avec enthousiasme; elle étoit bien placée pour le salut de la pièce; elle en a décidé le succès.<sup>39</sup>

The fourth performance of *Zelmira* (29 March 1826) was staged for Rubini's benefit. The critic for La Pandore reported: "Mme Pasta était plus en voix que jamais; ses sons purs et brillans retentissaient sans effort dans la vaste enceinte de L'Académie Royale de Musique. Elle produit toujours beaucoup d'effet dans sa dernière scène."<sup>40</sup>

Pasta's own benefit took place on 15 April 1826, when Semiramide was repeated. The Théâtre Italien was not as crowded as she had hoped. The novelty of the opera had begun to wane and ticket prices, which were doubled for the event, did not promote full attendance. Evidently the spectators were reluctant to pay inflated prices for an opera with which they were already familiar. Artistically, however, the evening proved a success. The critic for L'Opinion declared: "La Semiramide a été mieux exécuté que jamais."<sup>41</sup>

Giuditta Pasta's entire Paris season had, in fact, been a success, with many "firsts" in her career. She had created Corinna in Rossini's Il Viaggio a Reims, and sang her first *Zelmira* and first Armando. Rossini and Meyerbeer composed music specifically for her. Pasta weathered the battle with Fodor-Mainvielle over Semiramide and emerged, if not the

immediate, then the ultimate victor. Her acting and singing were never better and indeed seemed to reach new levels of excellence. To the majority of critics and spectators in Paris, Giuditta Pasta seemed to do no wrong; she was in the years of her prime.

NOTES: CHAPTER IX

1. John Ebers, Seven Years of the King's Theatre, (London: William Harrison Ainsworth, 1828), p. 260.
2. Alexandre Micheroux to Giuditta Pasta, 9 May 1825, Collection of Clelio Moretti, Blevio, Italy.
3. This amount is taken from documents concerning the Théâtre Italien preserved in the Archives Nationales, Paris, France.
4. Journal des Débats (Paris), 21 June 1825.
5. Ibid.
6. Journal de Paris, 21 June 1825.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Journal des Débats, 21 June 1825.
10. L'Aristarque (Paris), 28 June 1825.
11. Journal de Paris, 24 June 1825.
12. Gazette de France (Paris), 21 June 1825.
13. Journal des Débats, 21 June 1825.
14. Ibid.
15. L'Aristarque, 28 June 1825.
16. Journal de Paris, 24 June 1825.
17. Giuseppe Pasta to Giuditta Pasta, 24 June 1825, Collection of Clelio Moretti, Blevio, Italy.
18. Giuseppe Pasta to Giuditta Pasta, 21 July 1825, Collection of Clelio Moretti, Blevio, Italy.
19. Dominick Lynch to Giuditta Pasta, 14 June 1825, Biblioteca Livia Simoni, Milan, Italy.

20. Dominick Lynch to Giuditta Pasta, 13 April 1825, Biblioteca Livia Simoni, Milan, Italy.
21. Journal des Débats, 24 September 1825.
22. Journal de Paris, 24 September 1825.
23. L'Aristarque, 25 September 1825.
24. This amount is taken from documents concerning the Théâtre Italien preserved in the Archives Nationales, Paris, France.
25. La Pandore (Paris), 12 October 1825.
26. Ibid., 1 December 1825.
27. Courrier des Théâtres (Paris), 25 November 1825.
28. La Quotidienne (Paris), 18 December 1825.
29. Ibid.
30. Journal de Paris, 17 December 1825.
31. Ibid.
32. Giuditta Pasta to Gioacchino Rossini, 6 October 1825, Pasta Collection of the New York Public Library of the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center.
33. La Nouveauté (Paris), 10 December 1825.
34. La Pandore, 4 January 1826.
35. Courrier des Théâtres, 5 January 1826.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid.
38. Journal des Débats, 17 March 1826.
39. Ibid.
40. La Pandore, 30 March 1826.
41. L'Opinion (Paris), 17 April 1826.

CHAPTER X

From mid-April to mid-October 1826, Pasta divided her time between the King's Theatre in London and the Théâtre Italien in Paris. During this time she added no new roles to her repertoire; she continued to polish her familiar interpretations and both her voice and acting gained in nuance. In London Pasta introduced three roles already known in Paris: Zingarelli's *Romeo*, Mayr's *Medea*, and Rossini's *Zelmira*.

On 10 April 1826, Pasta signed a contract with John Ebers, confirming her engagement at the King's Theatre from mid-April until the end of July. The titles Prima Donna Assoluta and Musico Assoluto restricted her to leading roles (respectively female and male) in opera seria. Pasta's hefty fee of £2300 was to be paid in advance. She demanded a clause stating that she had absolute choice of roles, and that she was required to sing not more than six times in a thirty-day period. Her repertoire consisted of her choice of any or all of the following operas: Medea, Nina, Otello, La Rosa Bianca e la Rosa Rossa, Giulietta e Romeo, Semiramide, and Tancredi. She would sing a newly composed opera only if the designated role for her completely satisfied her. Pasta was to approve the casting of the operas in which she sang and supervise the staging. She was not required to participate in any concert or benefit performance given at the

King's Theatre, except her own. For this she could keep the full receipts of the house, except for the few seats reserved for Ebers. Pasta was also at liberty to sing in any public or private concert, providing it did not conflict with her duties at the King's Theatre, and she was allotted one eight-day leave of absence.

Pasta left Paris for London on 16 April 1826, accompanied by her mother and devoted companion Alexandre Micheroux. Only a week separated her last Paris performance from her first London performance; there was little time for social activity. Pasta had no new music to learn as the roles she was to sing were all in her active repertoire.

Otello was staged on 22 April 1826, with Pasta as Desdemona. The critic for The Times summarized the critical opinion: "Madame Pasta's entire performance was crowned with the happiest success. She was in excellent voice, and looked extremely well. She brought to the accomplishment of her arduous task advantages natural and acquired, which prove how justly she is entitled to wear the wreath of Prima Donna Seria."<sup>1</sup>

Pasta introduced her Romeo to the King's Theatre on 29 April 1826. Zingarelli's opera was politely dismissed by the critic for The Times as bearing " . . . little resemblance to our tragedy."<sup>2</sup> The critic reported that Pasta " . . . was in the finest possible voice"<sup>3</sup> and was the main interest of the performance.

She seemed, perhaps, a little languid in the beginning, but that passed away with the first scene; and during the rest of the opera, she expressed all the fervour and passion which belong to the part. In the duet with Giulietta [sung by Rosalbina Caradori-Allan], "Dunque mio bene, tu mia sarai," she breathed the very soul of tenderness, but it was in the last scene that she achieved her greatest triumph. The rich deep melody of her voice, as she poured out the lament of the desperate Romeo . . . had the most touching effect, and she sang that exquisite composition "Ombra adorata" at once in the first style of her art, and with a power and expression which it is impossible to praise too highly. It was applauded in the most rapturous manner, and the call for its repetition was universal. Her acting was hardly inferior to her singing, and short as the part is, and inferior to that in Shakespeare's tragedy, we could not help wishing that some of the frosty, stilted Romeos whom we are occasionally condemned to see, would take a lesson from her, and imbibe, if they can, a portion of the spirit which ought to be in the character.<sup>4</sup>

A revival of Paisiello's Nina began the first of four performances on 18 May 1826. Pasta's interpretation of the title role was already familiar to London audiences, and she repeated her success. The critic for The Times reported:  
" . . . it was true to nature. She appeared to be totally abstracted from the audience, and depicted the fitful transitions of Nina's temper (now full of melancholy, and anon cheered by the irradiations of hope) in the most touching manner."<sup>5</sup>

The highlight of Pasta's 1826 London season was the first performance in England of Mayr's Medea in Corinto. This was the awaited novelty, and the opening on 1 June 1826, for Pasta's benefit, aroused substantial curiosity and excitement. The crowded audience at the King's Theatre was not disappointed, and critics used superlatives to describe Pasta's portrayal.

The numerous reviews were more detailed than usual in an effort to overcome the handicap of cold print when relating the effect of what was apparently an electric performance. The critic for the Morning Post stated that Pasta's Medea " . . . was in every respect truly great."<sup>6</sup> The critic for the Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review wrote: " . . . the Medea of this great actress as well as singer was one of the most classical illustrations of classic antiquity the stage has ever boasted."<sup>7</sup> In his long commentary, the critic continued: "It is the peculiar praise of Madame Pasta, that she united to a great degree the several excellences of the drama, the opera and the ballet. Mind, voice, and action, all combined to render this performance complete, and it would be difficult to say which was most predominantly striking."<sup>8</sup> The critic of The Harmonicon declared: "This fine performer, to the action of Siddons, unites the vocal powers of Madame Catalani, with more than her expression."<sup>9</sup>

Many critics concurred on the most effective moments of Pasta's performance. The critic for the Morning Post wrote " . . . in the duet on her first meeting with Jason after he has consented to her banishment, the pride, passion, and occasional gleams of tenderness which agitate her breast were finely portrayed. But, in reply to his question 'Che mi resta?' her exclamation 'Io!' was grand beyond the reach of anything less than genius."<sup>10</sup> The critic for the Morning Herald reported " . . . she gave the word 'Io' with an accompaniment of gesture and expression that absolutely

electrified the audience."<sup>11</sup> The critic for The Atlas called Pasta's Medea " . . . a performance full of genius, and a study for the poet, the sculptor, and the musician. It would require a genius equal to her own to describe the sublime expression of voice and gesture with which she gave the one word 'Io' . . . . A shout of admiration followed this magnificent outburst, which spoke a soul in a single sound."<sup>12</sup> Mayr set Medea's retort "Io" on two C naturals. The critic for the Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review stated: "It is impossible to convey the dignity with which Madame Pasta invested these two notes. She gave them with the whole power of her voice, at the same instant flung wide her arms above her head, and her whole figure seemed to dilate with a passionate majesty that can only be understood when seen, and when seen too as the climax of the preceding expostulation."<sup>13</sup>

The scene in which Medea contemplates the murder of her children was well suited to Pasta's histrionic ability. According to the critic for the Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review: "The acting of Madame Pasta in this scene was beyond all praise. Her self-abandonment, her horror at the contemplation of the deed she is about to do, her bursts of affection were pictured with astonishing strength, yet with such simplicity as demonstrated her profound study of the passions. Her folding her arms across her bosom, and contracting her whole form as it were in order to shrink from the approach of her children, was touching beyond description--

nor was her pursuit of them and her manner of striking the blow less powerfully conceived and executed."<sup>14</sup> The critic for The Times declared that ". . . the expression which she infused into the whole of this scene was beautifully natural,"<sup>15</sup> and stated ". . . we have rarely, if ever, seen a piece of acting on any stage more perfect than this."<sup>16</sup> The critic for the Morning Herald observed that when Pasta ". . . ran at the children with the dagger, an involuntary shriek from several of the audience proved to what a high pitch of illusion she had wrought up the feelings of those who heard her."<sup>17</sup> The critic for The Atlas noticed that as Medea, Pasta's ". . . caresses of her children are unspeakably lovely; she does not smother them with kisses . . . but the mother's passion speaks in her eloquent face, and she bestows one kiss on her babes, single and sweet as the feeling which fills her heart. But these are beauties to be seen, not to be told; and our readers, to appreciate must behold them in the inimitable acting of the SIDDONS of the Lyric Drama."<sup>18</sup>

Pasta appeared so totally absorbed by Medea that the audience was mesmerized. Her unification of voice and gesture proved so complete and natural that it defied rational analysis in the minds of her contemporaries. The critic for the Morning Herald summarized the general feeling when he wrote: "We never heard her voice so powerful, and so perfectly at her command for the expression of all the fluctuations of passion, from the most imploring love to the most terrible revenge."<sup>19</sup> Mayr's music,

which the critic for The Atlas called "studiously dramatic"<sup>20</sup> helped to further the illusion on stage. The critic for the Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review remarked: ". . . we left the King's Theatre almost without the recollection of having heard a note, so completely was imagination rapt by the sublime personification of the actress [Pasta]. Yet the pieces do not want melody. It is not however modern catching melody--and we are afraid we must admit that our ears have been too much accustomed of late to the tinkling and glittering passages of Rossini and his school, to be satisfied as we ought to be with a style of writing so much more pure and natural as that of Simon Mayer [sic] in his Medea."<sup>21</sup>

The new costumes and scenery were highly regarded, and contributed to the general success of Medea. The opera was performed nine times, significantly more than any other opera during Pasta's season in London.

Pasta's performance in the title role of Rossini's Zelmira, on 13 July, was also highly praised. It seemed the singer could do no wrong: The critic for the Morning Herald wrote: "Independently of her great science, her delightful taste, and her natural power, there is a passion, an enthisiasm in everything she does, which shows how much the soul is concerned. She makes one feel the truth of Milton's celebrated lines [from Comus]--

'I was all ear,  
And took in sounds that might create a soul  
Under the ribs of death.'"<sup>22</sup>

Zelmira was known to London, Rossini having prepared and conducted the opera in 1824. The critic for the Morning Post wrote: "His wife, Madame COLBRAN, came out in it; but the Lady had been voted unfashionable before she sang, and the Opera narrowly escaped failure. We ventured to say at the time that Zelmira was a truly fine Opera, and that COLBRAN was a good singer. Her part is now sustained by PASTA, who is unquestionably a better singer, and fashionable; yet we doubt whether the general effect is much changed by the individual improvement."<sup>23</sup>

In commenting on the prayer "Da te spero, o Ciel clemente," which Rossini had specifically composed for Pasta in Paris, the critic for the Morning Chronicle considered it " . . . the weakest part of the whole; it is made up of passages from his other works, and, though encored out of compliment to the singer, will soon be consigned to oblivion."<sup>24</sup> In his remarks on this piece, the critic for The Atlas had perceptive observations of Pasta's singing in general.

It is the peculiarity of this incomparable performer, that she executes the most difficult passages with an ease which leaves general hearers in utter ignorance that anything extraordinary has been accomplished. Most of our singers take half-a-dozen ways to prepare us for their exploits--before they take their grand bound, they draw their breaths hard, distort their faces to engage attention, and take a good run to the goal; then, generally, after all this fuss, tumble down in the middle of the difficulty. PASTA clears it like a greyhound. In the scena to which we have alluded, she goes over the chromatic scale with an exactness that is wonderful, and an ease that makes it seem the most simple, feasible thing imaginable.<sup>25</sup>

After a season that included twenty-eight performances of six different roles, Pasta prepared to leave London on the first of August. Her last appearance at the King's Theatre on 29 July 1826, as Medea, was a fitting close to what had been a triumphant season. There had been an enormous ovation at the end of the opera, and Pasta was led back on stage by her colleagues Rosalbina Caradori-Allan, Alberico Curioni, and Matteo Porto. The critic for the Morning Herald described the moment: "Madame Pasta was so affected by it, that though she seemed disposed to speak, yet she was unable to give utterance to her feelings. Her eyes filled with tears, and, after bowing most gracefully, and with every appearance of consciousness of the kindness intended her, she slowly retired, accompanied by very general applause."<sup>26</sup>

Giuditta Pasta returned to Paris at the beginning of August 1826, and was to remain there until mid-October. During that brief time she sang seven of her celebrated roles. She had agreed to perform Desdemona, with Domenico Donzelli as her Otello. The performance on 8 August evidently met with her approval, and she noted her occasion in her diary with a rare "bene." The critic for Le Courrier Français observed: "La patrie de Shakespeare semble même lui avoir inspiré de nouvelles combinaisons dramatiques, . . . ." <sup>27</sup> Pasta repeated Semiramide, Tancredi, Zelmira, Nina, and Zingarelli's Romeo. Her benefit evening took

place on 18 October when Medea was performed. Paris had not seen Medea since 1823, and Pasta sang her role in a way that only increased the regret at her imminent departure. The critic for the Courrier des Théâtres reported that " . . . la salle de l'Opéra était pleine. Les regrets se lisaient sur tous les visages."<sup>28</sup>

The public had good reason to lament. The critic for the Courrier des Théâtres reminded its readers that Pasta " . . . a fait, pendant trois ans la prospérité de l'Opéra italien,"<sup>29</sup> and, without her drawing power, the theatre might experience financial losses. Pasta had had some of her greatest successes to date at the Théâtre Italien but apparently felt it was time to sing in other theatres. She also looked forward to the time when she could retire, or at least have a rest. In a letter dated 26 August 1826, to her uncle Filippo Ferranti, the nearly twenty-nine-year-old singer expressed a desire to end her performing career. This is Pasta's first written mention of retirement, which she hoped would happen within three years. Pasta wrote to Ferranti: " . . . sarò finalmente tranquilla, e dalle parti da Regina passerò a fare quelle di paesana."<sup>30</sup> Pasta left Paris on 19 October 1826, with her mother and husband in tow. The family returned to Italy, where they had not been since 1822.

NOTES: CHAPTER X

1. The Times (London), 24 April 1826.
2. Ibid., 1 May 1826.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., 19 May 1826.
6. Morning Post (London), 2 June 1826.
7. Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review (London), 1826, p. 362.
8. Ibid.
9. The Harmonicon (London), 1826, p. 134.
10. Morning Post, 2 June 1826.
11. Morning Herald (London), 2 June 1826.
12. The Atlas (London), 4 June 1826.
13. Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review, 1826, p. 366.
14. Ibid., p. 371
15. The Times, 2 June 1826.
16. Ibid.
17. Morning Herald, 2 June 1826.
18. The Atlas, 4 June 1826.
19. Morning Herald, 2 June 1826.
20. The Atlas, 4 June 1826.
21. Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review, 1826, p. 371.
22. Morning Herald, 14 July 1826.
23. Morning Post, 14 July 1826.

24. Morning Chronicle (London), 15 July 1826.
25. The Atlas, 23 July 1826.
26. Morning Herald, 31 July 1826.
27. Le Courrier Français (Paris), 12 August 1826.
28. Courrier des Théâtres (Paris), 19 October 1826.
29. Ibid.
30. Giuditta Pasta to Filippo Ferranti, 26 August 1826, Collection of Clelio Moretti, Blevio, Italy.

CHAPTER XI

From November 1826 to April 1827, Giuditta Pasta sang in Naples, and made her first appearances at the Teatro San Carlo and the Teatro del Fondo. During her engagement, Pasta created the title roles of two new operas: Giovanni Pacini's Niobe and Pietro Raimondi's Giuditta. She added a third new part to her repertoire--the title role of Michele Carafa's Gabriella di Vergi. Pasta's reputation as a great singing-actress was based substantially on the reactions of the English and French. The spectators at the Teatro San Carlo, who considered their theatre the world's most important opera center, were reluctant to believe, or admit, that a great career could be made outside of Naples. Despite mixed reaction by both the critics and the public at the outset of the season, Pasta's reception in Naples was, on the whole, successful.

Pasta made her début at the Teatro San Carlo, as Medea, on 8 November 1826. Her reputation was such that the pressure to succeed, indeed to surpass herself, was enormous. The critic for the Giornale del Regno delle Due Sicilie was sensitive to the problem, and prefaced his review by commenting:

E tuttavia un problema se l'esser preceduto da un gran nome giovi o nocchia agli artisti che spiegano la prima volta la loro abilità in paesi ove il loro merito non si è ancor davvicino conosciuto. In generale può dirsi che presso i popoli i cui l'immaginazione è ardente queste prevenzioni troppo favorevoli più spesso nuocciono che non giovano: se

lor promette un'artista buono, lo attenderanno ottimo; e se gliel prometterete ottimo, pretenderanno di trovarlo un miracolo. Questa medesima gigantesca opinione intanto, che di se trova stabilita un'artista, impegnandolo vivamente a sostenerla, lo mette in una tensione e in uno sforzo che il fa uscire dal suo natural livello; . . . .<sup>1</sup>

The critic ignored Mayr's music and the rest of the cast; he concentrated only on Pasta.

Non deve quindi recar meraviglia se presso il Pubblico napoletano il primo incontro della sig[nora] Pasta non sia stato proporzionato all'alta rinomanza che avevala preceduta . . . . Noi non abbiamo la temerità di decidere se il pubblico abbia ragione o torto nel non aversi formato della Signora Pasta un'idea non appieno corrispondente alle qualità che come cantante in lei sono state altrove sì decantate, e se il suo giudizio sia precipitato non avendola ascoltata che una sola volta, e in un'opera sola; ma certo si è ch'esso non le nega nè una voce accostantesi al contralto e che sarebbe bellissima se non fosse osiam dire alquanto velata specialmente ne'bassi, nè un'arte severa nel servir la parola senza estranei ornamenti. Tutti intanto si accordano nel riconoscere in lei un'attrice meravigliosa, e d'una tragica dignità superiore a qualunque elogio. Ella giunge perfino al sublime negli slanci delle grandi passioni.<sup>2</sup>

One moment in the opera was cited to describe Pasta's ability to represent Medea's passion for vengeance.

E superfluo il dire che in lei gli abbigliamenti, il gesto il portamento, il guardo, tutto annunziava Medea; ma ella ci mostrò Medea tutta quanta era nel punto in cui viene a conoscere l'effetto della magica avvelenata veste sull'abborrita rivale: nel pronunziar le parole: io non son sazia ancora; ella si atteggiò in quella terribile tranquillità del furore che sempre precede le più atroci deliberazioni dell'anime disperate, ed ebbe l'arte di far leggere in un rapido istante sul suo volto tutta la estensione della più fiera delle umane vendette . . . .<sup>3</sup>

Though she was extremely nervous at the opening, and the anxiety showed on her face, Pasta did manage to convince many,

but not all, of the validity of her style of singing and acting. The two subsequent performances of Medea (11 and 15 November) found Pasta more in control of her powers. Hers was not the pure and agile voice of a Fodor-Mainvielle, and did not meet favor with that part of the audience for whom bel canto meant merely beautiful singing. The opinion of the Neapolitan public was divided, and to some Pasta was still over-rated by the foreign press.

Giovanni Pacini's newly composed Niobe had its first performance at the Teatro San Carlo on 19 November 1826. Both Pasta and the opera were well received by the critics. After the opening, the critic for the Giornale del Regno delle Due Sicilie declared: ". . . la signora Pasta, che a saputo portar nel canto tutta la precisione della declamazion più sensata e vigorosa, sostenne iersera in modo veramente mirabile il personaggio di Niobe; e sî nel duetto del primo atto con Astrea ["Soave immagini"] come nell'aria del finale ["Tuoni a sinistra il cielo"] si controdistinse tanto che meritò i più vivi e i più lusinghieri applausi . . . ."4

The plot of Niobe, which librettist Andrea Leone Tottola derived from mythological sources, was calculated to exploit Pasta's reputed ability to portray dignity, resolve, and maternal affection. Niobe, because of her fertility, becomes arrogant and

declares that she is more deserving of public veneration than the goddess Latona, who has only two offspring. Niobe refuses to render homage to Latona and, as punishment, is turned to stone.

Subsequent performances of Niobe attracted little attention and sparse audiences. Niobe was sung eight times; the first act only was performed on three other occasions. Pasta never sang the role again, though she was to include the aria "Tuono a sinistra il cielo" in several future concerts. She was especially fond of "Il soave e bel contento," written for Rubini; Pasta later used this for her entrance aria as Desdemona.

On 12 December 1826, Pasta introduced her Desdemona at the small Teatro del Fondo.<sup>5</sup> Though less grandiose and imposing than the San Carlo, the Teatro del Fondo had better acoustics. On 26 December, Otello was repeated for an audience that included the Queen of Naples and other royalty. The critic for the Giornale del Regno delle Due Sicilie took notice of the event and commented that Pasta had ". . . superato se medesima; e i ripetuti applausi delle Persone Reali e del pubblico, e l'essere stata chiamata più volte fuori le scene son pruova che dimostrano abbastanza quanto si sa in Napoli apprezzare il suo merito."<sup>6</sup>

During January 1827, Pasta alternated between the Teatro San Carlo and the Teatro del Fondo. Her repertoire now included

Tancredi and Zelmira; there was also a benefit performance of Don Giovanni in which Pasta sang Zeilina. In February Nina was added, performed only at the Teatro del Fondo. No daily reviews were printed about these operas. According to Pasta's diary, however, the first performance of Zelmira on 1 January 1827 (only the second act was performed), was a "fiasco."<sup>7</sup> When the entire Zelmira was finally staged on 7 January, Pasta noted: "andò bene."<sup>8</sup> On 23 January, Pasta wrote to Alexandre Micheroux: "Domenica [21 January] per non fare relache [sic] causa le malattie ho fatto il Tancred a St. Carlo. La cavattina [sic] dei palpiti ["Di tanti palpiti"] non è mai stata tanto applaudita tanto neppure a Parigi, alla fine poi dell'atto 2<sup>o</sup> mi hanno richiamata due volte su le scene, ma la seconda volta fu a dispetto di varj che non volevano, hanno dovuto tacere."<sup>9</sup>

Pasta's benefit evening, at the San Carlo, on 10 February 1827, was Carafa's Gabriella di Vergi. No reviews were printed. Of the second singing on 11 February, Pasta noted in her diary: "Gabriella andò meno male."<sup>10</sup> Was her benefit evening only a mediocre success? There were four performances of Gabriella di Vergi. The final two performances (13 and 19 February) apparently were well received, though Gabriella did not prove one of the more popular attractions of the season.

The title role of Gabriella di Vergi provided scope both for Pasta's singing and acting talents. Rage and remorse are

prominent in Gabriella's emotional makeup, and she is the focal point of Tottola's libretto. Gabriella's father has forced her into an unwanted marriage with Fayel, Count of Vergi. She, however, is in love with Raoul de Coucy, whom she thinks died in battle and whom she continues to mourn. When Raoul is discovered alive, Fayel challenges him to a duel. Raoul is killed and Fayel berates Gabriella for her faithlessness. Upon learning of her lover's death, Gabriella unleashes her pent-up feelings and declares that she hates Fayel and always has. In response to this outburst Fayel has his servants present Gabriella with an urn containing Raoul's heart. Gabriella can hardly fathom such a despicable act; she becomes delirious and dies, leaving Fayel in a state of anguish.

Pietro Raimondi's Giuditta met with poor reception when it opened at the Teatro San Carlo on 4 March 1827. There were no reviews of the opera, nor is there any information about what Pasta thought of the title role written especially for her voice. In 1824 Raimondi had been made music director of the royal theatres in Naples and was respected for his skill in counterpoint. He was a prolific, if not accomplished composer for the theatre, and few of his operas were revived after their initial performances. Giuditta was no exception. It was sung only three times during Pasta's stay in Naples, and was not heard again.

The source for Tottola's libretto of Giuditta was the

Biblical story of Judith and Holofernes. In Tottola's account the city of Betulia is in imminent danger of capture by Oloferno and his Assyrian followers. The Jews of the city lament their fate and pray for deliverance. When Giuditta learns of her peoples' will to combat the invaders she believes her countrymen are rash to contemplate such an action. When alone in her rooms, she hears a Celestial Voice and discovers she has been designated as the saviour of the Jews. Clad in rich garments and fine jewelry, Giuditta finds her way to Oloferno's camp and he is immediately taken by her beauty. At a banquet, Oloferno becomes drunk and is left alone by his soldiers. A signal from God precipitates Giuditta seizing Oloferno's sword and decapitating him. She is given a triumphant welcome when she returns to Betulia with Oloferno's head. She explains to her people that God deserves their thanks for their change of fortune, and the Jews acknowledge their redemption.

The new roles Pasta sang in Naples--Niobe, Gabriella, and Giuditta--did not become parts of her permanent repertoire. She completed her season in Naples with further performances of Tancredi, Medea, Nina and Desdemona. In these roles Pasta was considered extremely successful. It had taken time, however, for the Neapolitan audience to accept her style of singing and acting, and a faction remained staunchly anti-Pasta. There were many admirers of Fodor-Mainvielle in Naples, and there was a rivalry

between the "Fodoristi" and the "Pastisti." While she was in Naples, the Fodor-Pasta rivalry flared up again. The review of the opening performance of Medea in the Giornale del Regno delle Due Sicilie mentioned Pasta's qualified success and the Fodoristi exploited the negative connotations. The pro-Pasta critic for L'Aristarque came to her defence against the pro-Fodor-Mainvielle critics of L'Etoile and Le Constitutionnel, stating that rumors of Pasta's "prétendu non-succès"<sup>11</sup> in Naples were lies and accusing the other critics of attempting ". . . rabaisser un talent qui dépassait votre intelligence."<sup>12</sup>

Giuditta Pasta's final performance in Naples, as Tancredi, took place on 3 April 1827. She left the city soon afterwards, and by the 15th was in Torino on her way to Paris and London. Pasta was under contract to appear at the King's Theatre in early May. She was to remain in Britain over a year: until August 1828.

NOTES: CHAPTER XI

1. Giornale del Regno delle Due Sicilie (Naples), 10 November 1826.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., 20 November 1826.
5. There were no reviews printed of this performance.
6. Giornale del Regno delle Due Sicilie, 28 December 1826.
7. Giuditta Pasta's diary is preserved in the Collection of Clelio Moretti, Blevio, Italy.
8. Ibid.
9. Giuditta Pasta to Alexandre Micheroux, 23 January 1827, Collection of Clelio Moretti, Blevio, Italy.
10. Giuditta Pasta's diary is preserved in the Collection of Clelio Moretti, Blevio, Italy.
11. L'Aristarque (Paris), 10 December 1826.
12. Ibid.

CHAPTER XII

After her trip from Naples, Giuditta Pasta arrived in London on 1 May 1827 to begin the first of her two engagements at the King's Theatre: 5 May to 15 August 1827 and 26 January to 2 August 1828. During her 1827 season Pasta included two new parts to her repertoire: the title roles of Carlo Coccia's Maria Stuarda (written specifically for Pasta) and Saverio Mercadante's Didone. She continued to perform her celebrated roles of Semiramide, Medea, Tancredi, and Zingarelli's Romeo, and continued to receive high praise from the critics. Pasta added one new part to her repertoire during her 1828 season at the King's Theatre: the title role of Rossini's Otello. She received mixed notices for her effort and sang Otello only four times. Also during 1828 Pasta was heard as Zelmira, Enrico, and Armando, for which she elicited the usual positive reaction in the press.

Pasta's return to the King's Theatre was scheduled to begin with Semiramide, but the indisposition of Alberico Curioni (Idreno) and Filippo Galli (Assur) postponed that production. As there was no other full-length opera Pasta could appear in without those colleagues, she made her return (on 5 May 1827) in a curious mixed bill: the first act of Tancredi coupled with the third act of Zingarelli's Giulietta e Romeo. Pasta was greeted with thunderous applause and "Di tanti palpiti," though

by now over-familiar to the spectators, was encored. There were some complaints of pitch problems and the bawling of the prompter, but these blemishes did not greatly detract from the impact of Pasta's performance. The critic of The Examiner voiced the, by now, widespread view of Pasta's position in the operatic world:

When we think of all our own singers with fine voices or pretty faces, how completely do they sink in the presence of the mind of PASTA! They seem silly, weak, and inefficient, and prove how little all the charms bestowed by nature can compete with the overwhelming efforts of superior intelligence. We would advise every one who can be enchanted with sweet sounds, or delighted with sublime acting, to repair at once to the Opera, and if they are not delighted and affected they will have only themselves to blame. For our own parts, we will say that we never enjoyed more gratification than from the high intellectuality exhibited by this greatly gifted and accomplished lady.<sup>1</sup>

When Semiramide was finally heard on 10 May, the critic for the New Times declared: ". . . to particularize all the beauties of Madame Pasta's performance, both vocal and histrionic, would be to enumerate every piece, and every scene, in which she bore a part."<sup>2</sup>

At the second performance of Semiramide (12 May 1827), the critic for the Morning Post thought Pasta ". . . was not, perhaps, in her best voice,"<sup>3</sup> though other critics commented otherwise. The reviewer for the Morning Herald remarked that "Bel raggio" was ". . . executed in her best manner"<sup>4</sup> and drew attention to one telling detail of Pasta's embellishments. "The word brillo was given with an emphatic lengthened shake, that

glided with a thrilling delight through every heart."<sup>5</sup> For the rest of May, Pasta sang Semiramide, Tancredi, Zingarelli's Romeo, and Medea. The reviews were highly positive, but offered no new perceptions on Pasta's art. During this period Pasta was occupied with learning a new part for her benefit evening: the title role of Carlo Coccia's newly composed Maria Stuarda (based on Schiller's great drama of 1800, Maria Stuart).

Pietro Giannone's text for Maria Stuarda closely follows the outline of Schiller's play. Queen Mary is in love with Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, who she hopes will liberate her from prison. Queen Elizabeth is made aware of her favorite's attachment to her rival by the loyal William Cecil, who continually reminds her of the threat Mary poses to her position. The dramatic climax of the work is the meeting of Queens Elizabeth and Mary at Fotheringay Castle. Mary vainly attempts to move Elizabeth by her humility, but Elizabeth, embittered by her jealousy, treats the suppliant with contempt and sarcasm. The two monarchs exchange insults. Ultimately Elizabeth signs Mary's death warrant and orders Leicester to oversee its execution. After a poignant farewell to her maidens, Mary prepares for death and faces the scaffold with the dignity befitting her station.

The première of Maria Stuarda took place on 7 June 1827. Critical opinion of the opera and of Pasta's performance was mixed. The critic for the Morning Chronicle declared: "Signor

COCCIA'S music is of a very common place description. There is little novelty in it, but much that is strange, because, much that has no conceivable connection with the business of the scene. We have allegros perpetually occurring in the most serious parts of the drama, and there is moreover a fearful proportion of passages which are neither grave nor gay, but simply soporific."<sup>6</sup> The critic of The Times disagreed: ". . . the music is chiefly of that grave and solemn character which befits the tragic drama; but in no instance, where the passion of the scene demands it, is there any deficiency of spirit and animation."<sup>7</sup>

The text, by Pietro Giannone, was politely ignored by most critics, though the reviewer for the Morning Chronicle commented: ". . . the plot and general structure of this opera are as little entitled to praise as the music of the composer."<sup>8</sup>

Pasta won a personal success in the title role. The critic for the Morning Chronicle captured the general feeling when he wrote: "Madame Pasta succeeded in delighting the audience by her impersonation of Mary; she has contrived to extract ore from the dross, both of the composer and of the poet. Her conception of the character was admirable; and it is, perhaps, one of the strongest proofs of the genius and the talents of this performer, that out of such materials she could find, or rather, make so many opportunities of giving effect to her conception."<sup>9</sup>

According to the critic for The Examiner, "PASTA looke well as the imprisoned Mary, and gave all the effect the part was capable of, but it was beyond the compass of her powers, great as they are, to enliven the inherent dulness."<sup>10</sup> There was some disagreement on the state of Pasta's voice at the première. The critic for the Morning Post reported that Pasta " . . . was not in voice during the first act, but she became more excited as the interest of the scene deepened, until all sense of minute imperfections became lost in the resistless spell which she throws around the feelings of her audience."<sup>11</sup> The critic for the Morning Herald, was of another opinion, and thought Pasta " . . . was in excellent voice, and, in short, perhaps was never heard to greater advantage."<sup>12</sup> After the performance, the critic for the Morning Post reported: "Madame Pasta presented herself at the general call of the audience, and was greeted with loud applause from every part of the house. A desire being then manifested that Signor Coccia should come forward, he appeared at the side of the stage amidst great cheering."<sup>13</sup>

Maria Stuarda was performed a total of four times, and then dropped. It was not performed elsewhere. Pasta sang her last Maria Stuarda on 16 June 1827 and continued with repetitions of Semiramide, Medea, and Tancredi until 5 July, when Saverio Mercadante's Didone was staged with Pasta in the title rôle.

This version of the Dido-Anaeus legend begins as Enea is about to leave Carthage. He loves Didone but claims that

destiny and the voice of his father's ghost command him hither. Didone cannot comprehend Enea's reasons for leaving her, and she accuses him of ingratitude. The Moorish King Jarba arrives in Carthage, and Didone is given an ultimatum--either marry him or be responsible for the destruction of her city. Didone orders Jarba's execution, but Enea tries to convince her that this would only precipitate Carthage's destruction. Didone consents to Enea's wishes. When Jarba is brought to Didone's rooms, however, his presence elicits from her a torrent of insults. In the final scenes, Didone is told that Enea has finally left Carthage and the city is in flames. She is deaf to any suggestion that she give herself to Jarba and end the city's carnage, and curses her fate. She sees only death and horror about her and realizes the inevitability of her doom.

Didone was performed at the King's Theatre only three times. John Ebers wrote: "This opera had no success; it was a production of the school of Rossini, and of that school only the first-rate pieces can establish themselves."<sup>14</sup> Several of the newspaper critics reported on the separate numbers that met with approval, but the few performances attest to the public's dissatisfaction with the work in general. For her entrance aria, Pasta interpolated Pacini's "Il soave e bel contento," the piece written for Rubini in Niobe. Pasta obviously thought the aria well suited to her abilities and it became one of her war-horses. According to the critic for the New Times, ". . . the aria . . . is one of the best in the opera, and was warbled by Pasta in a

manner that those who heard can never cease to remember. It was the ebullieny of a heart almost bursting with delight."<sup>15</sup> Few reviewers realized that "Il soave e bel contento" was composed by Pacini, and not by Mercadante. Didone's final scene, as performed by Pasta, also elicited enthusiastic praise. The critic for the New Times stated: "The concluding address to the Furies, "Furie terribili," was given as though she already felt possessed by the avenging deities--the words were heaved from her breast hot and burning, as if emitted from a human volcano."<sup>16</sup>

Pasta's final performance for her 1827 season at the King's Theatre was on 4 August, as Didone. From mid-August 1827 to the beginning of December Pasta did not appear in opera. She gave a concert tour, and sang in Dublin (12 August-30 August), Leicester (4 September-6 September), Worcester (11 September-13 September), Norwich (18 September-20 September), Liverpool (1 October-11 October), Manchester (12 October-13 October), Leeds (15 October), Glasgow (20 October-25 October), Edinburgh (29 October-8 November; 15 November-17 November), Newcastle (22 November), Bath (27 November-3 December), and Bristol (4 December).

Pasta's 1828 engagement with the King's Theatre began on 26 January with Tancredi, followed by Zelmira, Otello, La Rosa Bianca e la Rosa Rossa, Il Crociato in Egitto, and

Semiramide. The critical notices confirmed Pasta's continued success, but offered no new perceptions and do not need to be cited in detail. The most significant aspect of Pasta's 1828 season was the presence of the celebrated German soprano Henriette Sontag in the company of the King's Theatre. Pasta and Sontag became fast friends; a rivalry, however, developed between the admirers of the respective divas.

Pasta and Sontag differed in their approach to opera; each was eminently successful in her respective sphere. As the critic for the Morning Chronicle observed, ". . . the talents of these performers lie in distinct departments of the art, which scarcely admit of comparison. Their powers may be contrasted, but cannot be fairly compared."<sup>17</sup> There has been throughout opera history rivalry among singers, notwithstanding the validity of comparisons. Pasta was certainly aware of the younger soprano's uncommon abilities in florid singing and her increasing popularity. The astounding ease with which Sontag could toss off difficult roulades had never been part of Pasta's vocal make-up.

A situation soon presented itself that enabled Pasta to take advantage of Sontag's popularity. For her benefit evening, Pasta was to have sung the title role in a revised version of Carafa's Gabriella di Vergi, but unidentified circumstances had prevented her from doing so. Pasta knew that only a novelty could bring in decent receipts to make her benefit lucrative,

and that meant a new role. Since Gabriella was not possible, Pasta was restricted to the current repertoire at the King's Theatre, but her interpretations of these roles were already so well known to the spectators that the public could not be expected to pay inflated prices to witness a performance often seen before. A revival of Tancredi, with Pasta in the title role and Sontag as Amenaide, would have been a suitable choice and would have had the lure of Sontag in a new role, singing for the first time with Pasta. A more novel choice was Otello, with Sontag as Desdemona and Pasta as Otello. It was a clever idea, whoever first thought of it. Pasta had often demonstrated her ability in travesty roles and she already knew most of Otello's music. In 1822, she even had interpolated Otello's entrance aria, "Ah sî, per voi giû sento," in performances of Rossini's Eduardo e Cristina. There was a tradition of women taking male roles in Shakespeare's plays--Sarah Siddons had often done so--and role switching and transposition were common practice in early nineteenth century Italian opera.

After obtaining Sontag's consent to sing Desdemona to her Otello, Pasta published a letter publically thanking her. The letter also contained background information on why Pasta chose Otello as her benefit, probably to disarm those ready to dismiss the venture as a publicity stunt.

It was originally my intention to give, on the evening of my benefit, a new Opera of Carafa, entitled La Gabriella di Vergi; but I encountered difficulties which have occasioned delay, and time renders the representation of that opera impossible for the present. I found I should have had obstacles equally to contend against in the attempt of getting up any other new opera; and I felt besides, unwilling that the public should be deprived of the benefit of Mademoiselle Sontag's talents, by any new production brought out on my account alone. Having, then, to choose in the actual repertoire of the King's Theatre, it appeared to me possible to prepare a representation which might not be unworthy of public approbation. To this effect, however, it was necessary to have recourse to Mademoiselle Sontag, in whom I have met with the most complaisant readiness to accede to my wishes. That lady has been induced to overcome scruples which her extreme modesty alone could have suggested, and has obligingly consented to undertake, on the occasion of my benefit only, the part of Desdemona, a character in which she is not, by the terms of her engagement, bound to appear in at this theatre. The obliging acquiescence of Mademoiselle Sontag has enabled me to fix on Otello for the night of my benefit (which will take place on the 15th of May), and has determined me to personate the Moor. The proceeding of Mademoiselle Sontag in my behalf, has been of so obliging and delicate a kind, that I feel great pleasure in publicly expressing to her my acknowledgements; . . . . 18

Otello was staged for Pasta's benefit on 15 May 1828.

The King's Theatre was excessively crowded and a great sense of excitement was in the air. The critic for the Morning Post reported that " . . . the pit was filled in less than five minutes after the doors were opened, and the gallery in nearly as short a time."<sup>19</sup> Reviews were mixed as to the artistic validity of a female Otello, but the majority of critics succumbed to the impressive acting and singing of the principals, and deemed the effort a success. The reviewer for the Morning Post approved of Pasta's Otello:

Taken altogether her performance of Otello may be considered not only one of her best efforts, but the highest perfection at once of singing and acting. Mademoiselle SONTAG sustained the character of Desdemona, and her style of acting was altogether very fine. She does not play with that degree of powerful effect on the feelings of the audience for which her predecessor [Pasta] in the character was so remarkable; but her singing in many of the passages requiring a beautiful execution were given with the most perfect accuracy, and a wonderful sweetness of tone . . . but what most delighted everyone was the last scene in which that lady and Madame PASTA both appeared. This was exceedingly effective, both in respect to acting and singing, and passed off with even great eclat than anything that preceded it. In this the two ladies were heard together, and from their voices and manner of singing and acting being so different, they performed parts suited to each without either interfering with the style of the other.<sup>20</sup>

The critic of The Times compared Pasta's Otello to the great English actor Edmund Kean:

Every one will acknowledge that Kean's personation of Othello has long proved a powerful drawback on the pretensions of many a qualified candidate for histrionic fame, who might otherwise have attempted it with success. Who, indeed, could have imagined that his Othello could meet with its equal? What London audience would not have been ready to characterize as temerity, the boldness of the man who would undertake the character, whilst the perfection of Kean's conception of it is so fresh in the recollection of every theatrical frequenter? That he has now met with a rival, we cannot strictly say, because the part undertaken by the highly-gifted woman who displayed such great ability in it on Thursday [15 May], is constructed in a manner sufficiently different to preclude the legitimate admission of the word. Nevertheless, a degree of affinity exists between the English and Italian Othello, which justifies comparison; and, considering the relative merits of the two parts, we may venture to pronounce, that never were Kean's happier efforts productive of more complete success than was obtained by Madame Pasta in her Othello. Were we called upon to particulate instances in support of this opinion, we should at once refer to the whole performance from the commencement of the second act to the death-scene in the last. Every word, every look, every gesture of Otello during the whole of this period, were so many specimens of the most perfect dramatic action. The music belonging to the character was not

adapted to Madame Pasta's voice; but she triumphed over that difficulty with her usual power, and elicited bursts of applause in the air of the second act, "L'ira d'avversa sorte," as well as in the duet . . . "Qual gioja, all'armi." Madame Pasta's Medea and Desdemona had raised her reputation as a tragedian of her own sex to a height which could not be surpassed. Her genius had combined a versatility of musical and dramatic power in so equal a manner, that it was hardly possible to say to which her title to pre-eminence was more particularly applicable. The most extraordinary feature in the history of her theatrical life is now her complete success in the principal male character of one of the best tragic subjects that ever were brought upon the stage. Accustomed, however, as to we had been to seeing the part of Otello in the hands of a man, we were, in the early stage of Thursday's performance, rather struck by its transition into those of a woman. The difference of voice was unnatural to our ears; but the impression was momentary, and wore off by the end of the first act. The truth with which Madame Pasta identified herself with the character, worked upon her feelings in a manner too energetic and passionate not to affect her voice, which, towards the close of her efforts, became hoarse and uncontrollable. The cause was too equally visible with the effect not to be appreciated accordingly by the whole audience. The light-brown colour she chose for the characteristic complexion of the Moor, if not strictly conformable to that which we are taught to consider the original one, was productive of this great advantage,--that the variety of expression assumed by her countenance was lost to none of her attentive observers.<sup>21</sup>

The critic for The Times did have some reservation about Sontag's fioriture. "The only part in which her singing appeared defective was in the Romanza, of the third act, "Assisa a piè d'un salice," into which she introduced much unnecessary ornament. This pathetic and plaintive air ought to be sung with that simplicity of style intended by the composer, and which has always been so judiciously adhered to by Madame Pasta."<sup>22</sup>

A second performance of Otello took place on 29 May 1828 for Sontag's benefit. Again the King's Theatre was crowded to

capacity, and the critic for the Morning Post remarked " . . . another opportunity has been afforded of enjoying one of the greatest treats, whether dramatic or musical, which the Stage can boast; . . . ." <sup>23</sup> The critic for the Morning Herald stated: "As to Madame Pasta, we never heard her in better voice." <sup>24</sup> Two additional performances of Otello were heard before the end of the season on 2 August. Pasta ended her stay in London with more traditional fare: Semiramide, Médea, Nina, and Tancredi. She also dropped Otello and returned to Desdemona.

After closing the season at the King's Theatre with Medea in Corinto on 2 August 1828, at which crowns of flowers were thrown on stage as demonstrations of affection, Pasta left London for Milan on 11 August. She was looking forward to a period of relaxation. The past years had seen her performing almost constantly. While en route to Milan, Pasta wrote to her uncle Filippo Ferranti on 28 August: " . . . non potrò dirvi quanto desidero di trovarmi con Voi, e di cominciare il mio riposo." <sup>25</sup> Giuditta Pasta had not been to Italy since 1822, and was looking forward to returning to her native land and friends and relatives. She was planning a lengthy stay.

NOTES: CHAPTER XII

1. The Examiner (London), 13 May 1827.
2. New Times (London), 11 May 1827.
3. Morning Post (London), 14 May 1827.
4. Morning Herald (London), 14 May 1827.
5. Ibid.
6. Morning Chronicle (London), 11 June 1827.
7. The Times (London), 11 June 1827.
8. Morning Chronicle, 11 June 1827.
9. Ibid.
10. The Examiner, 17 June 1827.
11. Morning Post, 8 June 1827.
12. Morning Herald, 8 June 1827.
13. Morning Post, 8 June 1827.
14. John Ebers, Seven Years of the King's Theatre, (London: William Harrison Ainsworth, 1828), p. 344.
15. New Times, 6 July 1827.
16. Ibid.
17. Morning Chronicle, 21 April 1828.
18. Giuditta Pasta to the editor of The Times, printed 28 April 1828.
19. Morning Post, 16 May 1828.
20. Ibid.
21. The Times, 19 May 1828.
22. Ibid.

23. Morning Post, 30 May 1828.
24. Morning Herald, 30 May 1828.
25. Giuditta Pasta to Filippo Ferranti, 25 August 1828, Collection of Clelio Moretti, Blevio, Italy.

CHAPTER XIII

The period from September 1828 to October 1831 included many notable events in Giuditta Pasta's career. Vocally and dramatically she was at the height of her powers. She created principal roles in two extremely important operas of the early nineteenth century--Bellini's La Sonnambula and Donizetti's Anna Bolena. Other new roles she added to her repertoire included Imogene in Bellini's Il Pirata, Corilla in Gnecco's La Prova d'un'Opera Seria, and the title role in Nicolini's newly composed Malek Adel. This was indeed a period of new experiences for Pasta. She made her first appearances at Vienna's Kärntnertor-Theater, Milan's Teatro Carcano, Verona's Teatro Filarmonico, Bologna's Teatro Communale, and Mantua's Teatro Sociale. She introduced many of her celebrated portrayals to these theatres and brought her new roles to London and Paris. When she was not performing, Pasta spent her time in her newly purchased Villa Roda, on the banks on Lake Como.

Giuditta and Giuseppe Pasta, accompanied by Rachele Negri, returned to Italy in September 1828. The soprano scheduled no opera performances for that autumn and planned only to enjoy a few months of repose. In 1827, on the advice of her uncle Filippo Ferranti, Pasta had purchased a villa on Lake Como situated between the villages of Blevio and Torno, a short distance from Como. She

saw Villa Roda for the first time on 11 September 1828. As has been demonstrated, Pasta considered the eleventh of the month to be her lucky day, and she always tried to travel and/or have important events of her life happen on that date.

After four months of rest at Villa Roda, Pasta traveled to Vienna where she made her local début at the Kärntnertor-Theater. The single most important even of her one-month engagement (23 February-23 March 1829) in Vienna, was that she was nominated Prima Cantatrice di S.M.I.R. Apostolica. Otherwise, Pasta's performance in Vienna, as compared to her seasons in London, Paris, or Milan, was relatively unimportant. The warmth of her reception in Vienna equalled her experience in those cities, but she added no new roles to her repertoire. In Vienna she introduced her famous characterizations of Desdemona, Tancredi, Semiramide, and Zingarelli's Romeo. Of "Di tanti palpiti," the critic for the Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung wrote: "Einen schönen Triller, mit solch fein schattirten Abstufungen, und einer an's Unglaubliche gränzenden Ausdauer, wie jener bey dem Wiedereintritte des Motivs, diesen, gleich dem Vogel Phönix in unseren Tagen selten gewordenen Probirstein einer ächten Schule, hat Wien lange nicht gehört."<sup>1</sup> Of Romeo, the critic commented: "Den höchsten Triumph feyerte jedoch die Meister-Künstlerin als Romeo, in dem, den Schluss bildenden zweyten und dritten Akte der Oper gleichen Namens von Zingarelli. Hier erschien sie als vollendete dramatische rein undenkbar, und hinsichtlich der mimischen Leistung kann nur mit

der Heroine, Sophie Schröder, eine würdige Parallele gezogen werden."<sup>2</sup>

After her short stay in Vienna, Pasta returned to Milan where she made her first appearance at the Teatro Carcano on 21 April 1829. During her season there (21 April-31 July 1829), Pasta sang fifty-two performances of six different roles: Semiramide, Tancredi, Desdemona, Medea, Nina, and Zingarelli's Romeo. Detailed quotation from the reviews would be redundant; selective comments, however, will suggest the extent of audience and critical approval.

The critic for the Gazzetta di Milano wrote of her Semiramide: ". . . come attrice ella è un modella d'arte a niuna seconda--come donna che senta ha ispirazioni sue proprie . . . come cantante la Pasta può esser vinta nella purezza dei suoni e nella forza della voce--nell'espressione difficilmente avrà chi la pareggi non che la vinca."<sup>3</sup>

In reviewing her Tancredi, the critic for I Teatri reported: "Se pur è vero che un consenso istantaneo e continuato di generali strepitosissimi applausi sia l'espression del pubblico sentimento, certo la Pasta fu ravvisata allora la somma maestra del canto drammatico."<sup>4</sup> According to the critic for L'Eco: ". . . il modo col quale ella ha detta, cantata, rappresentata la Desdemona . . . sembra la vera maniera tragico-lirica. Sempre vera, sempre naturale, sempre in passione e sempre crescendo.

Egli è il vero, che ella ha prodotto su tutti noi un effetto del tutto nuovo, e che fa dimenticare quanto abbiamo veduto e sentito in questo genere."<sup>5</sup>

Pasta was next heard as Medea on 21 June 1829. It was a special occasion as the composer Mayr was in the audience. In London and Paris Pasta had been considered an ideal Medea; in Naples there had been some reservations. Also in Milan opinion was divided, both on the opera and on Pasta's portrayal. The critic for Il Censore Universale dei Teatri wrote:

Se guardo la sua azione, il debole mio accorgimento mi fa credere ch'essa non possa giudicarsi da nessuno per mediocre, e si deve o stimarla molto, o molto disapprovarla. Io per me vedo la Pasta trasformata in Medea, non la Medea trasformata nella Pasta. I suoi gesti, tolti dal teatro francese, che nella tragedia non sempre sono tutti i migliori e più naturali, convengono di più nella massima parte al nostro più che al suo sesso. V'è poi anche una gran differenza nell'accompagnare con quei gesti la parola declamata e la parola cantata, la prima li vuole più rapidi, e se anche non sono belli, se sono esagerati, si confondono con gli altri, e non lasciano una certa impressione, la seconda li trattiene di più nel loro movimento, e danno il tempo di esaminarli e di criticarli; d'altronde chi li crea, è presumibile che sempre meglio e più a tempo li faccia, di chi li copia o li imita. In ogni modo accordando a tutti il pieno godimento del proprio gusto, ed a mad[ame] Pasta la sua abilità, qualunque essa sia, io mi accorgo che il mio censurare per rimediare diventa inutile, e se questa virtuosa è arrivata con questo suo cantare ed agire a farsi tanto applaudire, imprudente e forse anche maligno sarebbe il consigliarla a cangiar metodo di canto e d'azione.<sup>6</sup>

Though performances of Medea attracted full audiences, a prevalent feeling about Mayr's music was that of the critic for L'Eco, who summarized the opinions of the spectators and the

other reviewers when he wrote: "La musica di Mayer [sic] scritta sempre magistralmente, era buonissima pel suo tempo, ma ora è comparsa scolorata, e fredda . . . ."7

After Medea, Pasta's next role at the Teatro Carcano was the lovelorn Nina. Paisiello's Nina opened on 3 July 1829. Pasta liked to alternate Medea with Nina; the two opposite characters revealed the versatility of her vocal and histrionic talents. The one-act Nina was paired with Mayr's one-act Che Originali, and the critic for the Corriere delle Dame reported that the public: " . . . si mostrò poco paziente nell'assistere agli Originali per desiderio di vedere la grande attrice cantante nella Nina . . . ."8 The critic found that Pasta: " . . . mostratasi mirabile in tutti in personaggi finora sostenuti, vince in questo della Nina pazza ogni più grande aspettazione."9

Pasta's last role of the 1829 season at the Teatro Carcano was Zingarelli's Romeo. As usual, the soprano scored a triumph in the third act. It is significant that the critic for Il Censore Universale dei Teatri, who previously had been unimpressed by Pasta, succumbed to the spell of her Romeo. The critic declared: " . . . tutto il terz'atto segretamente era per me, come per tutti i Pubblici che vi assistettero, un indicibile incanto, che risvegliava le più tenere compassionevoli sensazioni, che spremeva a viva forza le lagrime, e faceva desiderare di versarle."10

Of Pasta's singing, the critic stated: "Mi parve anzi di riconoscere nella sera di lunedì scorso [20 July 1829] il canto della signora Pasta, se non del solito più pregevole, lo che già s'intende che sia, a me certamente più grato. Tutte le frasi, tutti i modi del suo cantare mi sembrarono immaginati felicemente, e felicemente eseguiti, restandomi il solo desiderio di sentire talvolta i suoi tempi alquanto più mossi, lo che non dovrebbe esserle faticoso, se accelerare lo sento nell'Ombra adorata, ove secondo l'esecuzione originale mi veniva all'orecchio un po' meno sollecito."<sup>11</sup> The critic found Pasta's acting to be less studied than in her other roles, yet lacking animation. "Nel personaggio di Romeo la signora Pasta mi apparisce meno ricercata del solito, e quindi più naturale, vorrei però quella naturalezza molto e molto più animata."<sup>12</sup>

Pasta ended her season at the Teatro Carcano on 31 July 1829, as Zingarelli's Romeo. In her diary she wrote: "L'entusias[m]o fu al colmo, non avevo visto entusiasmo simile."<sup>13</sup>

Immediately after the end of her engagement in Milan, Pasta traveled to Como where, on 2 August 1829, she sang the title role in a single performance of Tancredi. She was received by the spectators at the Teatro Sociale with great enthusiasm. The next day Pasta retired to Villa Roda, where she remained until October. Though she anticipated a lengthy period of rest, she was ultimately persuaded by her husband to appear, during November, at the Teatro Communale in Bologna.

Pasta made her Bologna début on 5 November 1829, as Desdemona.

There had been an announcement in the journal Teatri, Arti e Letteratura that Rossini was to stage and conduct the opera but there is no evidence that Rossini ever visited the Teatro Comunale while he was at Castenaso, his wife's villa near the city. The opening performance of Otello was received by the Bolognese public and press with acclaim. The critic for Teatri, Arti e Letteratura remarked: "Il riprodur quindi gli elogi di Madama Pasta è un portar acqua al mare, da che la colta Europa non ha dubitato di riconoscerla, e proclamarla con unanime consenso la prima, l'incomparabile fra li viventi artisti."<sup>14</sup>

On 14 November, Pasta sang Semiramide, and again was acclaimed. According to the critic for Teatri, Arti, e Letteratura: ". . . la Donna Babilonia comparve con tutto lo splendore della regale maestà: vera regina e negli atti e nella espressione Madama Pasta tale palesossi ben anco dalla parte del canto, e veramente niuna a lei superiore, . . . ." <sup>15</sup> Tancredi was the next opera performed, and Pasta repeated her universally admired portrayal of the title role on 24 November. The critic for Teatri, Arti e Letteratura wrote: "In tutti gli pezzi da lei cantati produsse eguale piacevolissimo effetto, senonchè con l'ultimo finale Rondò giunse per sino a far credere di averne superato se stessa; . . . ." <sup>16</sup> The rondo was Nicolini's "Il braccio mio conquise."

Pasta left Bologna on 29 November; a few days later in

Milan, she participated in the first and only performance of an untitled scena lirica by Carlo Conti. This was, as printed on the first page of the original libretto, Per l'Inaugurazione del Busto di Vincenzo Monti.<sup>17</sup> The poet Monti had died in 1828 and Pompeo Marchesi had been commissioned by the Accademia dei Filo-Drammatici to sculpt a bust. To celebrate its unveiling, Conti and the poet Andrea Maffei collaborated on a scena lirica performed, on 5 December 1829, at the Teatro dell'Accademia dei Filo-Drammatici. This was the theatre in which Pasta had made her very first stage appearance, in Scappa's Le tre Eleonore, in 1816.

Pasta was cast as Il Genio dell'Eternità. The critic for the Gazzetta di Milano described the elaborate stage production, which followed a performance of Monti's play Aristodemo.

A finire della recita dell'Aristodemo, calarono nubi che s'addensarono sulla scena; ma dissipate al tocco di armonici concerti, scoprirono un tempio nel quale spiccava in mezzo a quelli d'Omero, di Dante, di Petrarca, di Ariosto, di Tasso, di Alfieri, di Metastasio, il busto di Monti. Un coro di Geni, nei quali erano simboleggiati l'Estro, l'Imaginazione l'Armonia, la Poesia tragica, la Lirica e l'Epica piangono afflitti la perdita del Poeta; quindi scendono personificati, il Secolo decimottavo ed il Secolo decimonono a contendersi chi debba posare la corona d'alloro sul capo di lui; ma mentre dura la gara in più alta ed elevata sfera, appare l'Eternità, che tolto ad essi di mano l'alloro, lo ripone riverente su quell'omerica fronte.

La Pasta, che sostenava la parte dell'Eternità, in quell'atto solenne pareva che traesse dall'alto un'ispirazione novella, tanta era la nobiltà del suo atteggiamento, sì grande l'espressione del suo sguardo, sì caratteristica la mossa del suo volto.<sup>18</sup>

Pasta spent little time in Milan because she was scheduled to participate in the 1829-30 Carnival season in Verona. She was at the height of her international celebrity, and her fees were commensurate with her fame. The local Veronese critic, Francesco Cavazzocca, reported " . . . costa molto caro l'averla, giacchè per 30 sere riceve 32.000 svanziche, cosa . . . di sommo scandolo in mezzo alla grande miserie che corre."<sup>19</sup> The Teatro Filarmonico was renovated for the season and efforts were made by the administration to improve the standard of physical production.

Pasta chose to sing Desdemona, Nina, and Zingarelli's Romeo, roles that demonstrated her multi-faceted talents but required relatively little effort for her to perform. A newly commissioned opera, Malek Adel, by Giuseppe Nicolini was the novelty of the season, with Pasta in the title role. Nicolini had not been Pasta's first choice for the composer of the new opera. She had suggested Vincenzo Bellini, Giacomo Meyerbeer, or Stefano Pavesi. The librettist Gaetano Rossi also favored Meyerbeer, and thought Pasta would be an ideal Ines for Meyerbeer's partly composed Ines de Castro. Nicolini, however, was the only composer free to accept an engagement during this period.

Giuditta and Giuseppe Pasta arrived in Verona in mid-December 1829. The soprano made her début at the Teatro Filarmonico on 26 December, as Desdemona. Her success was predictable. The critic for the Foglio di Verona praised the

singer as others had done, but was more specific than some about her voice: "Come cantante la Pasta ha la risorsa d'una voce amabile, estesa ed esclusivamente limpida e forte nelle bellissime sue corde alte. La sua agilità nei gorgheggi, nei trilli, nelle scalate, è sorprendente; il suo canto è d'un genere tutto nuovo nel condurre e degradare la voce, ed i fiori che vi sparge sono sempre variati, graziosi, e giudiziosamente innestati."<sup>20</sup>

Romeo, in Zingarelli's Giulietta e Romeo, was one of Pasta's most admired characterizations, and in Verona she received her usual acclaim. The critic for the Foglio di Verona was moved to write: "Oh Donna impareggiabile, . . . perchè non havvi un'arte che tramandar possa ai posteri, . . . perchè spariranno colla tua preziosa esistenza quelle bellezze artistiche che il tuo genio ha create!"<sup>21</sup>

Giuseppe Nicolini's Malek Adel had its first performance on 9 February 1830. It was a qualified success. According to the critic for the Foglio di Verona, Nicolini's music was of a " . . . stile facilissimo, piano, il quale alcuna volta si eleva con della nobiltà e del calore; . . . ." <sup>22</sup> In the travesty role of Malek Adel, Pasta was " . . . sempre eguale a sè stessa."<sup>23</sup> The consensus of critical and public opinion was that she sang the title role " . . . con quella maestria colla quale sa abbellire ed animare le note di altri compositori. Il

modo con cui eseguisce tutti i pezzi dell'Opera . . . ne è la prova più convincente."<sup>24</sup>

Gaetano Rossi's libretto, set during the Crusades, permitted an exotic mise en scène. The critic for the Foglio di Verona declared: "Il vestito invece è magnifico, variato, copioso e generalmente de que tempi e di que costumi."<sup>25</sup>

The Saracen Malek Adel falls in love with Metilde, sister of King Richard the Lion-Hearted. King Richard, however, has promised Metilde's hand in marriage to King Lusignano of Syria. Malek offers the Crusaders a solution to end their hostilities. A wedding between himself and Metilde would be the price for and symbolize the peace between the two warring peoples. Both Richard and Lusignano reject the proposal. When Richard and Malek Adel meet in a duel the Saracen is at the point of killing his adversary, when in a magnanimous gesture he puts down his sword and declares Richard free. Thankful that Malek has spared his life, Richard awards his sister to her beloved Malek and the opera ends happily. Malek Adel was performed five times in Verona. Pasta later sang the role in Milan and London, though it never became an important part of her repertoire.

After her season in Verona, Pasta had a brief engagement at the Teatro Sociale in Mantua where she sang Desdemona, Nina, and Zingarelli's Romeo. The critic for the Gazzetta di Milano reported on her warm reception and repeated the by now hackneyed

praises of the singer. In mid-April, Pasta returned to Vienna for a short stay. Her roles at the Kärntnertor-Theater included Desdemona, Nina, Semiramide, Tancredi, Zingarelli's Romeo, and Imogene in Il Pirata, her first role in a Bellini opera.

Il Pirata, with text by Felice Romani, is one of Bellini's lesser known operas. It takes place in the thirteenth century, as Gualtiero, leader of a band of pirates, returns to Sicily to seek his beloved Imogene. There he learns that in order to save her father's life, Imogene had been forced to wed Duke Ernesto. Ernesto, who had embarked on an unsuccessful pursuit of Gualtiero, returns to the island. He upbraids Imogene for her continual state of melancholy and accuses her of still harboring a love for Gualtiero. Informed of Gualtiero's presence in Sicily, Ernesto promptly challenges him to a duel. Ernesto is killed and Imogene, unable to cope with these events, loses her mind. Gualtiero is condemned to death. In her delirium, Imogene rails against the sentence, but is powerless to alter the outcome.

The version of Il Pirata performed in Vienna, with Giovanni Battista Rubini as Gualtiero and Luigi Zuccoli as Ernesto, differed from the original version in that, for her entrance, Pasta substituted Pacini's "Lungi dal caro ben" for Bellini's bi-partite aria "Lo sognai ferito . . . Sventurata, anch'io deliro." Pacini's aria was from La Sposa Fedele, and composed specifically

Instead of the cabaletta "Oh sole! ti vela" that concludes Imogene's mad scene in the second act, Pasta substituted Alaide's rondo "Or sei pago, o ciel tremendo" from Bellini's La Straniera. The critic for the Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung stated: "Als diese schöne dramatische Composition vor einigen Jahren neu in die Scene ging, machte sie schon entschiedenes Glück, wenn gleich Madama [Adelaide] Comelli [-Rubini] als Prima Donna fühlbare Blößen gab. So erschein uns denn die Pasta als ein zweyter Prometheus, welcher diesem tragischen Tongebilde wahres Leben, Wärme, Geist und Seele einhauchte, sonderlich in der grossen Schlußscene, die aus der Straniera desselben Meisters hierher transferirt wurde, da es zum Einstudiren dieser Opera an Zeit gebrach."<sup>25</sup>

Pasta returned to Milan, in June of 1830, after her successful engagement at the Kärntnertor-Theater. She spent the summer and autumn at Villa Roda. During November, she was hostess to Gaetano Donizetti, who composed most of his Anna Bolena at Villa Roda. The libretto, by Felice Romani, proved a particularly strong and dramatically coherent one.

King Henry VIII (Enrico) has neglected his Queen Anne because his attention is focused on Jane (Giovanna) Seymour. Anna realizes she has a rival for Enrico's affection, but does not suspect it is Giovanna. Percy, Anna's first love, returns to court at Enrico's request. The King hopes to trap Anna in a compromising

situation that will ultimately remove her from the throne. The opportunity presents itself almost immediately. Smeton, the page in love with the Queen, overhears a meeting between Anna and Percy and the latter's declaration of love. The Queen urges Percy to leave England, but Percy would rather die than abandon his beloved. When he draws his sword in an attempt to commit suicide, Smeton, believing that Anna is in danger, rushes in. During the commotion, Enrico enters to discover Percy in the Queen's bedroom. Smeton attempts to convince Enrico of Anna's innocence but in vain. Enrico discovers a miniature of Anna in a locket around Smeton's neck and orders all three arrested. Giovanna urges Anna to confess her guilt, which the Queen refuses. Giovanna finally admits that she is Anna's rival. Smeton is tortured into confessing a romantic liaison with Anna, and the Queen is sentenced to death. As she awaits execution, her mind wanders back to her childhood days and her love for Percy. She is wakened from her reverie by the sounds of the wedding of Enrico and Giovanna, and calls upon heaven to have mercy on the "iniquitous couple."

Anna Bolena had its world première on 26 December 1830 at the Teatro Carcano, the first opera of the 1830-1831 Carnival Season. It ran for twenty performances. Its initial reception, according to the local reviews, was tepid. The critic for L'Eco wrote: "La musica del Maestro Donizzetti [sic], sia lode alla verità, non è delle migliori ch'egli abbia fatte. V'è però della

maestria, specialmente nel primo finale, ed in alcuni altri pezzi, v'è della facilità, della spontaneità, molte cose bene espresse, ben rivestite e stromentate, ma vi si desidera un poco più di novità, d'ispirazione, di slancio. Tale almeno è stato l'effetto della prima sera."<sup>26</sup> According to the critic for Il Censore Universale dei Teatri: "Il poeta Romani scrisse un libro da suo pari, che ha la solita prerogativa di farsi leggere con piacere; ed il maestro Donizetti compose una musica degn di qualunque più esperto e più dotto professore dell'arte."<sup>27</sup>

Although Pasta's Anna Bolena was to become one of her most famous impersonations, its initial reception in Milan was mixed. According to the critic for L'Eco: "Madama Pasta ha avuto nel canto momenti sublimi e nuovi, anche per chi conosce ed apprezza il suo bel modo di cantare, nè occorre il rammentare la verità, la giusta misura, la severità del suo modo di recitare, ed agire, che ne forma quell'attrice cantante ch'ella è."<sup>28</sup> The critic for Il Censore Universale dei Teatri was essentially negative:

[Pasta] come cantante e come attrice, lasciò a desiderare alcune cose . . . . Il suo canto, che con molta facilità e spesso con molto gusto ci ripete i modi velutiani, quando sormonta le righe, non vi riesce egualmente nelle corde medie, e meno ancora nelle basse; la sua messa di voce è bellissima, franca e spontanea la sua agilità; varj de'suoi modi assai delicati, benchè non molto variati: ma tutto ciò appartiene alle sole fioriture, che abbelliscono le sue cabalette, ed il canto di appassionata declamazione non è da lei espresso con quel colorito che proviene da un'anima fortemente commossa, quale non è certamente la sua. Vi supplisce essa con certe ricercatezze d'azione, che per tali si distinguono sempre, e che non sono sempre bene annicchiate.<sup>29</sup>

With successive performances, Donizetti's music gained public approbation. Anna Bolena became a staple of Pasta's repertoire, and she was to perform it shortly in London and Paris.

The first Milanese performance of Nicolini's Malek Adel, on 30 December 1830 at the Teatro Carcano, was poorly received. The critic for Il Censore Universale dei Teatri described it as "debolissima musica"<sup>30</sup> and declared further: "La signora Pasta non ci diede di nuovo che un ricco abbigliamento orientale, ed un certo portamento di scimitarra, che se non è turco, è per lo meno bizzaro: la sua cabaletta ["Non più sospir"] . . . fu eseguita dal facile suo gorgheggio per eccellenza, e ne riscosse applausi clamorosissimi."<sup>31</sup> The critic for L'Eco reported that Pasta " . . . ha cantato e recitato come recita e come canta sempre, è stata applaudita come merita . . . ." <sup>32</sup>

Pasta's next role at the Teatro Carcano was Amina in Bellini's newly composed La Sonnambula. The opera proved to be one of Bellini's best and most often performed works. La Sonnambula was the first opera Bellini composed for Pasta. She sang relatively few performances of Amina, but maintained an affection for the role.

On 6 March 1831, La Sonnambula had its première and was an immediate success. Originally Bellini and his librettist Felice Romani had planned an Ernani, with Pasta in the title role, but the idea had to be abandoned because of censorship difficulties.

The innocuous plot of La Sonnambula posed no such problems. The gentle, rustic Amina was the opposite of the dashing bandit Ernani, but was well within the range of Pasta's abilities as an actress. Amina was not unlike Paisiello's Nina, one of Pasta's favorite and most often performed roles, and the similarity may well have contributed to the choice of subject.

Amina, the mysterious sleepwalking "phantom" of a Swiss village, is betrothed to Elvino. One night shortly before their marriage Amina, during a sleepwalking period, wanders in the room of Count Rodolfo, who is staying overnight at the local inn. The Count leaves to avoid an embarrassing situation, and to meet with the villagers. Lisa, a girl jealous of Amina because she too is in love with Elvino, finds the young man and brings him to the Count's room, where Amina is sleeping on a couch. Elvino immediately assumes the worst, and chastises Amina for her apparent faithlessness. Elvino breaks their engagement and Amina is left in a state of anguish, unable to understand how she was in the Count's room in the first place. Elvino is about to marry Lisa, when the villagers see Amina in another of her sleepwalking periods. She searches for the ring Elvino took from her finger. The villagers realize Amina is a sonnambulist, and that she is innocent of any wrong-doing. Count Rodolfo tells Elvino to put the ring back on Amina's finger as soon as she comes down from roof of the mill. When he does, Amina awakes, all is forgiven, and there is a happy ending.

The newspapers L'Eco and Gazzetta di Milano provided the fullest coverage of the opera's initial performances. The critic for L'Eco described the triumph of the opening:

Se avessimo anche il tempo che non abbiamo per fare un articolo che renda conto di questo spettacolo, non imprenderessimo a scriverlo all'uscir dal teatro, mentre siamo ancora storditi dalla piena degli applausi, dalle grida, dai rumori, dalle acclamazioni.

Noi pure, che facciamo professione di non lasciarci facilmente sedurre, non abbiamo potuto a meno di prender parte all'entusiasmo generale. Ma la poesia di Romani, la musica di Bellini e l'esecuzione di Madama Pasta e Rubini [Elvino] vogliono essere descritte con più cura, e con una calma che renda sensibili e faccia valutare gli elogi, e questo è quello che ci proponiamo di fare nel prossimo nostro foglio.

Vi sono pochi esempj d'un applauso simile. Il maestro e i cantanti furono chiamati non sappiam bene se dodici, quindici o venti volte sulla scena.

Bellini ha sostenuta la sua riputazione, Rubini ha cantato come un angelo, e il trasformare la maestà della Semiramide, e la sensibilità profonda dell'Anna Bolena nelle semplici ed ingenue grazie d'una giovane contadinella, in modo sì ammirabile, era impresa riserbata a Madama Pasta. Dopo il duetto con Rubini si può dire con verità "così si canta."<sup>33</sup>

In a later article the same critic wrote:

Noi vecchi, dai tempi di [Luigi] Marchesi in qua, non abbiamo sentito nulla chi più ne vada a sangue. Il duetto fra [Rubini and Pasta, "Son geloso"] . . . pare una sfida di trilli, di volate, e di gorgheggi, ma è cosa grande nel suo genere, e che probabilmente non sarà ripetuta da altri. Come poi Madama Pasta joue son rôle, con che verità, con che espressione, e con qual giusta misura e perfetto giudizio, chi li vede il dica, o dica chi può il contrario; ella fa illusione, benchè, lo diremo francamente, la sua figura è ormai troppo formata per il personaggio che ella rappresenta.<sup>34</sup>

According to the critic for the Gazzetta di Milano:

"La Pasta [as Amina] . . . non è più regina superba, non fidanzata d'elevato liguaggio, essa è una pastorella e come tale

si è compresa di tutti i doveri che le imponevano il suo personaggio, ed essa sola poteva adempirli con tanto scrupolo."<sup>35</sup>

As with Anna Bolena, Pasta was to sing La Sonnambula both in London and Paris.

Pasta completed her engagement at the Teatro Carcano on 24 March 1831, and went to Blevio for a month's rest at Villa Roda. Two foreign engagements were in her immediate future--at the King's Theatre and the Théâtre Italien.

Pasta's season at the King's Theatre lasted from 12 May to 6 August 1831. The most significant events of her engagement were that she introduced her Anna Bolena and Amina to London audiences, and was heard in a new role: Corilla, in Gnecco's comic La Prova d'un Opera Seria.

Giuditta Pasta returned to the King's Theatre on 12 May, as Medea. Her reception is best summarized by the review printed in The Court Journal.

An overflowing house, crowded, even to suffocation, in every part, greeted her with the most enthusiastic welcome. Her salutation, in return was graceful, cordial, and sincere. She was touched. In appearance, Pasta is unaltered--the same round antique outline: her voice, splendid as it was, is improved, and has become more soft, more adoucie, more free from a sort of hoarse coating with which it was occasionally covered heretofore. In other respects we observe no change. She has the same energy, the same marvellous physical power, that rendered her then, what she still is, the greatest actress singer's voice is a moaning sound, which colours it throughout, deepening and intensifying its effect and beauty. Her Medea is a matchless performance. We can scarcely imagine Mrs. Siddons could have been finer. Fanny Kemble we observed in a high box, intensely studying her great prototype.<sup>36</sup>

After repeating her admired portrayals of Semiramide and Tancredi. Pasta added a new role to her repertoire: Corilla in Tortoroni in Francesco Gnecco's La Prova d'un'Opera Seria.

As the title implies, the plot concerns the rehearsal of a serious opera, the non-existent Ettore in Trabisonda, and parodies the foibles of a vain prima donna and primo tenore and their dealings with the composer, Maestro Companone, and librettist, Don Grilletto Pasticci. The prima donna, Corilla, is a capricious soprano in love with the tenor, Federico Mordente. The two insist on being together throughout the opera even though the tenor is supposed to be in prison and the soprano trying to gain his release. There are a number of other problems; the orchestra is very imperfect, the chorus continually makes errors, and the prima donna usually mispronounces the text. Matters are complicated further when Corilla rejects the advances of the composer and ridicules him. The composer and librettist attempt to console each other in their respective unhappy conditions, and the opera ends with the rehearsal of the overture.

Though serious roles were Pasta's specialty, her performance as Corilla Tortoroni was deemed successful and funny; to some it was a welcome change. The critic for The Times declared: "Madame Pasta sustained her part with a degree of humour that made us wish she would more frequently depart from the austere line of tragedy to which she has thought proper almost wholly to confine herself."<sup>37</sup> The critic for The Examiner remarked: "We dislike burlesque and

parody, and above all, we dislike to see people burlesquing their own art . . . we ought not to be amused with seeing Pasta burlesquing lyrical tragedy. We were amused, nevertheless, and that highly; and if there be any of our readers devoured with black melancholy, we recommend them, as a sovereign antidote, to take the first opportunity of being present at La Prova d'un'Opera Seria."<sup>38</sup>

Pasta's benefit evening took place on 8 July 1831, when Anna Bolena had its first performance at the King's Theatre. According to the critic for the Morning Herald: "Madame Pasta represented the unhappy Anna Boleyn [sic] with that energy and grandeur which dignify a Queen, and that softness and sensibility which adorn innocence."<sup>39</sup> The critic for The Court Journal called her performance " . . . the sublime of musical and histrionic art."<sup>40</sup> Donizetti's opera was enthusiastically received. The critic for The Examiner wrote: "He has produced a series of music, diversified, animated, impassioned, and, throughout, essentially dramatic. The drama, and the music, together develop the powers of Madame Pasta more effectively, in our opinion, than any opera in which she was appeared in this country--not even excepting Medea."<sup>41</sup>

Bellini's La Sonnambula was also new to London, and was well received. The opera had its first local performance at the King's Theatre on 28 July, with Pasta and Rubini in their original roles of Amina and Elvino. The critic for The Court Journal

reflected the enthusiasm of his colleagues and the spectators when he wrote: "The music is beautiful, and varied in the character of its beauty; while Rubini and Pasta lavish on their parts, an amount of talent sufficient to elevate the most common-place music into importance. We are not sure, indeed, that we ever beheld a greater triumph than Pasta's in the part of the heroine."<sup>42</sup>

After a final performance of Anna Bolena on 6 August, Pasta left London to begin a brief engagement in Paris at the Théâtre Italien (from 1 September to 30 October 1831). The chief importance of her Paris season was that Pasta introduced her admired portrayals of Anna Bolena and Amina to the scene of so many former triumphs. Pasta also heard as Corilla, and her familiar interpretations of Desdemona and Tancredi.

The first Paris performance of Anna Bolena took place on 1 September 1831 with Pasta and Rubini in their original roles as Anna and Percy, and with the great bass Luigi Lablache as Enrico. The opera on the whole found favor. Pasta herself was considered improved since her last season in Paris, in 1826. The critic for the Journal des Débats found her voice " . . . bien plus flexible; elle exécute maintenant la gamme chromatique descendante et le trille avec beaucoup d'agilité."<sup>43</sup> The critic for La France Nouvelle declared: "Mme Pasta a été aussi belle, et comme cantatrice, et comme tragédienne, que nous l'avions connue autrefois; sa voix, toujours légèrement voilée, se prête mieux que jamais à l'expression

dramatique des situations fortes; c'est une voix de tragédienne: elle a surtout été admirable dans la dernière scène: cette transition de l'ivresse de la folie à la raison, à la terreur, ces cris d'une pauvre femme qui voit la mort devant elle, elle a rendu tout cela avec une pathétique et une vérité inimitables."<sup>44</sup>

Pasta concluded her Paris engagement with four performances of La Sonnambula coupled with La Prova d'un Opera Seria. This extended double bill was first heard on 24 October 1831. According to the critic for La France Nouvelle, Amina provided proof of Pasta's " . . . merveilleuse flexibilité de talent; la reine avait tout à fait disparu sous les manières de la paysanne; . . . . Elle a déployé une hardiess de vocalisation des plus remarquables, . . . ." <sup>45</sup> The critic for the Journal des Débats had some reservations about Bellini's opera: "La musique de la Sonnambula renferme beaucoup de jolies choses, elle est gracieuse, expressive, mais elle manque d'originalité, de caractère et de vigueur dramatique."<sup>46</sup> The critic praised Pasta's performance and declared: "La vigoureux éclat de sa voix, son charme délicieux et touchant ont séduit, entraîné l'auditoire a été porté au comble; . . . ." <sup>47</sup> The Gnecco opera was well received; according to the critic for the Journal des Débats, Pasta acquitted herself " . . . d'une manière charmante."<sup>48</sup>

Pasta left Paris for Milan in early November 1831. The next few months were to prove of great importance in the singer's career. She finally was to make her début at La Scala in what was to be considered one of her greatest roles: Bellini's Norma.

NOTES: CHAPTER XIII

1. Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung (Leipzig), 1829, p. 233.
2. Ibid.
3. Gazzetta di Milano, 28 April 1829.
4. I Teatri (Milan), 1828, pp. 44-45.
5. L'Eco (Milan), 25 May 1829.
6. Il Censore Universale dei Teatri (Milan), 24 June 1829.
7. L'Eco, 6 July 1829.
8. Corriere delle Dame (Milan), 11 July 1829.
9. Ibid.
10. Il Censore Universale dei Teatri, 22 July 1829.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Pasta's diary is preserved in the Collection of Clelio Moretti, Blevio, Italy.
14. Teatri, Arti e Letteratura (Bologna), 12 November 1829.
15. Ibid., 17 November 1829.
16. Ibid., 29 November 1829.
17. The libretto is preserved in the Milan Conservatory.
18. Gazzetta di Milano, 7 December 1829.
19. Francesco Cavazzocca, quoted by Tullio Lenotti, I Teatri di Verona, (Verona: n.p., 1949), p. 41.
20. Foglio di Verona, 28 December 1829.
21. Ibid., 18 January 1830.
22. Ibid., 12 February 1830.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.

25. Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung, 1830, p. 588.
26. L'Eco, 27 December 1830.
27. Il Censore Universale dei Teatri, 5 January 1831.
28. L'Eco, 27 December 1830.
29. Il Censore Universale dei Teatri, 5 January 1831.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.
32. L'Eco, 31 December 1830.
33. Ibid., 7 March 1831.
34. Ibid., 9 March 1831.
35. Gazzetta di Milano, 8 March 1831.
36. The Court Journal (London), 14 May 1831.
37. The Times (London), 27 June 1831.
38. The Examiner (London), 26 June 1831.
39. Morning Herald (London), 9 June 1831.
40. The Court Journal, 16 July 1831.
41. The Examiner, 17 July 1831.
42. The Court Journal, 30 July 1831.
43. Journal des Débats (Paris), 5 September 1831.
44. La France Nouvelle (Paris), 8 September 1831.
45. Ibid., 1 November 1831.
46. Journal des Débats, 28 October 1831.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.

CHAPTER XIV

The period from the end of 1831 until the early part of 1835 was among the artistically most important in the career of Giuditta Pasta. She was to create the title roles in Bellini's Norma and Beatrice di Tenda, Saverio Mercadante's Emma d'Antiochia, and the role of Bianca in Donizetti's Ugo, Conte di Parigi. Special importances attaches to Norma, not only because it was the vehicle for Pasta's début at the Teatro alla Scala, but also because it proved to be the greatest opera of Bellini's career, indeed one of the greatest Italian operas of the 19th century.

Bellini and his librettist Felice Romani based their masterpiece on Alexandre Soumet's play Norma, which had had its première in Paris on 25 April 1831 at the Théâtre de l'Odéon. On 1 September, Bellini wrote from Milan to Pasta who was in Paris to inform her of the subject.

Spero che questo soggetto si trovi di v[ost]ro gusto. Romani lo crede di grande effetto e proprio pel v[ost]ro carattere enciclopedico, perchè tale è quello di Norma. Egli imposterà in modo le situazioni che non avranno alcuna reminiscenza con altri soggetti, e toccherà e sino cambierà dei caratteri, se la necessità lo richiederà per cavarne più effetto. Voi di già l'avete letto, se qualche pensiero vi s'affacciasse in mente, scrivetemelo; frattanto procurate di portare i figurini dei personaggi simili al come si sono eseguiti in Parigi, e se lo credete potete ancora farli migliorare, se il v[ost]ro talento non li trovasse di fino gusto. Questi sono necessari all'Impresa, quindi liberamente potrete farli eseguire. Prendo questa occasione per congratularmi con voi dei trionfi nuovi che avete aggiuntati agli altri innumerevoli vostri. Mio bravo angelo, il v[ost]ro talento ed il sentimento delicato che alligna in tutto il v[ost]ro essere è impossibile che non accreschi dei gradi all'onore che vi tributa l'epoca nostra seppur ve ne restano nella Scala della Gloria, che già pareva esaurita da voi, ma da

Milano e Londra hanno deciso che ancora nuove emozioni destate in quest'anno, inaspettate e grandi e quindi per voi il tempio di questa Gloria ancora si è di più inalzato. Scusate questo sfogo del mio cuore che preso da tenero sentimento d'ammirazione avea bisogno di trasfondere tutto ciò che per voi sentiva, non dimenticando ancora quello della gratitudine, per quell'impegno che avete preso nel far bene concertare la mia Sonnambula in Londra.<sup>1</sup>

Pasta may have seen Soumet's Norma. She was in Paris during its initial run and could have been present at any of the first seven performances, though there is no documentation to confirm her attendance. Romani closely followed the outline of Soumet's play--the Druid priestess Norma disobeys her sacred vows of chastity and has two children by the Roman Proconsul Pollione.

In order to permit Bellini to concentrate on the heightened emotions of the three principal characters--Norma, Pollione, and Adalgisa--the librettist either telescoped or omitted some scenes entirely. Some of the most significant differences between Bellini's opera and the Soumet play occur in the second (and final) act. In Soumet's tragedy, the revelation of Pollion's love for Adalgise drives Norma insane. Soumet's character exhibits the typical early nineteenth century depiction of madness--a fixed eye, dishevelled hair, incoherence, and a bizarre laugh. She sees invisible objects and speaks to them. She has blotted out almost all memory of Pollion. At one point she envisions herself immolated, and shrieks. Norma has killed one of her children and, at the end of the play, the desperate Druidess clutches her other son and leaps off a cliff. The character of Norma, as devised by Bellini and

Romani, is quite different and ultimately more dramatic.

There is no parallel in the play for Norma's great entrance aria, "Casta Diva." Bellini had to supply Pasta with an exceptional scene for her entrance, or she simply would have inserted one of her own. Bellini knew that an opera with no distinct entrance aria for the leading lady, such as Rossini's Otello, was subject to interpolations. "Casta Diva" is, probably, the consummate example of Pasta's art. It begins with a long and very dramatic recitative in which Norma convinces the bellicose Gauls to restrain themselves. She warns her countrymen that the time has not yet come for their revenge against the hated Roman oppressors, and prophesies that Rome will perish because of its own vices. With her very first words of unaccompanied recitative, "Sediziose voci, voci di guerra avvi chi alzar si attenda, presso all'ara del Dio," Norma establishes herself as a figure of authority. Norma's declamation of these words must relay the force of her determination; she must forestall the Gaul's rebellion in order to save her lover Pollione. Norma must convey a sense of mystery and otherworldliness when she foretells the future, and create an aura of tranquillity when she bids her kinsmen be at peace. The fact that Bellini required his singer to create such varied and contrasting moods within the space of a few lines of recitative is testament to Pasta's ability to color and shade the voice, and invest the notes with such intense feeling as to make them moments

of emotional revelation. Throughout her career, critics remarked on the care which Pasta had lavished on the text of the operas she performed. For Pasta, recitatives were not merely the necessary means to an end (the aria), but were crucial moments of the drama.

Pasta had great breath control and could sustain tones for a considerable time. The long, sustained vocal lines of the "Casta Diva" primo tempo, in which Norma prays to the moon goddess, exploited Pasta's famous breath control and skill in spinning out long legato passages. Pasta found descending scales particularly congenial and, in "Casta Diva," Bellini made ample and stunning use of her ability to articulate such passages, both chromatic and diatonic.

In Bellini's autograph score of Norma, preserved in the Biblioteca Santa Cecilia in Rome, the first part (the primo tempo) of "Casta Diva" is in the key of G. When performed in this original key, the effect is ethereal, indeed almost narcotic, and extremely appropriate in its dramatic context. Many sopranos have elected to transpose "Casta Diva" down a whole tone to F, which is easier to sing. When transposed down, "Casta Diva" still makes a great impression, but the effect is more pedestrian. The source of the oft-repeated story that Pasta did not like to sing the aria in its original key and therefore transposed it to F involves the complex issue of keys in autograph scores as compared to keys in first printed editions. Often, to make a

piece of vocal music more saleable in a wide market, a publisher would print an aria or a duet in a key that was comfortable to a majority of singers. Giovanni Ricordi, the important music publisher in Milan during the early nineteenth century, was guilty of this. Indeed, the first printed edition of Norma, published by Ricordi, has "Casta Diva" in F. Because of this transposition, the assumption was made (I have not been able to trace its origins) that Pasta was the first to sing "Casta Diva" a whole tone lower. But we can test this questionable logic by examining printed editions of arias composed for the great tenor Giovanni Battista Rubini. From contemporary reviews and eyewitness reports we know that Rubini reveled in vocal music of high tessitura. Gualtiero, in Bellini's Il Pirata, was a role composed specifically for Rubini; the character's arias in the autograph score are in a higher key than what is printed in the first Ricordi edition. No writer has suggested that Rubini transposed his music down because of problems with the tessitura. No newspaper reports mention in what key Pasta actually sang "Casta Diva." If she sang it in F, she could have decided, for whatever reason, that she knew her voice better than Bellini did, and that she would feel more comfortable in the lower key. She may have, at a later point in her career, transposed the aria, but is no documentary evidence for this assumption.

Another often-repeated story about "Casta Diva" seems to

have been first published by Michele Scherillo, who wrote in 1882 (fifty-one years after the première), that Pasta found the music ill-suited to her voice and did not want to sing it. Scherillo wrote that Pasta found "Casta Diva" ". . . inadatto ai suoi mezzi [vocali]. Il maestro usò tutte le arti per persuaderla [to sing it], ma vi riuscì poco. Si venne ad un patto: [Pasta] l'avrebbe tenuta per una settimana ripassandola ogni mattina, e se in capo ai sette giorni fosse ancora ripugnante ad eseguirla, Bellini prometteva di cambiargliela."<sup>2</sup> In Vincenzo Bellini: Note Aneddotiche e Critiche Scherillo, who is generally reliable, produces no documentary evidence to support this anecdote. He may have based the story on the only known piece of correspondence from Pasta to Bellini that has survived from this period. On 26 December 1831, the day of the first performance of Norma, Pasta sent the composer two small gifts with a note that expressed her natural modesty. "Permettete ch'io vi offra ciò che mi fu di qualche sollievo nell'immenso timore che tutt'ora mi perseguita, trovandomi poco atta a rendere i vostri divini concerti: questa lampada nella notte, e questi fiori nel giorno furono testimonj de' miei studi per Norma, non che del desiderio ch'io nutro d'esser sempre più degna della vostra stima."<sup>3</sup> From this letter one cannot deduce that Pasta had any difficulty with "Casta Diva." Since the role of Norma is all-encompassing and one of the longest and most difficult in opera, the singer may have been expressing her natural fears about facing this immense challenge.

There is no mention of trouble with "Casta Diva" in any of Pasta's known correspondence, and no newspaper reports mention this story, if indeed it was in circulation at the time of the opening.

Norma's cabaletta, "Ah! bello, a me ritorna," in which the errant Druidess yearns for the return of her lover Pollione, is adapted from the cabaletta "Contena appien quest'alma," in Bellini's earlier opera Bianca e Fernando. Norma's cabaletta is a more difficult piece to sing; the vocal writing is more complex. It is not merely a bravura display piece to demonstrate the technique of the singer, but a highly relevant depiction of the character's inner desires. The fioriture convey Norma's agitation and never detract the listener's attention from the drama. In Giuditta Pasta, Bellini had a singer who could make coloratura a means of dramatic expression, and "Ah! bello a me ritorno" attests to her abilities.

Throughout the first act of Bellini's opera, Norma must convey a myriad of emotions. In her long duet with the virgin Adalgisa, the current object of Pollione's affections, Norma maintains her dignified mien while listening to Adalgisa's confession of love for the Roman proconsul. At the same time Norma wrestles with her own feelings of rejection; she is in turmoil yet can never disclose her inner thoughts. In the great trio that ends the first act, Norma's discovery of Pollione's treachery results, at the words "O non tremare, o perfido," in a torrent of vigorous coloratura with two upward leaps of an octave and a half, from F

to top C. Pasta was noted for the dramatic effect she made in alternating low notes with upward leaps of more than an octave. In this section Bellini availed himself of his singer's talents to create one of the most exciting denunciation scenes in all opera.

The second act opens with a long Medea-like scene in which Norma contemplates killing her children. Portrayals of maternal anguish were one of Pasta's specialties. Feelings of love outweigh Norma's desire for revenge and she cannot bring herself to murder her children. One of Pasta's most celebrated roles was Medea in Mayr's Medea in Corinto, with a text by Romani. Apparently Bellini and Romani wanted to provide the prima donna with a scene that would be almost a guarantee of success.

Another example of Pasta's influence in the composition of Norma is the crux of the final scene. Pasta often made stunning effects with simple phrases and vocal lines. Her rejoinder to Giasone in Mayr's Medea ("Io!") when he asks what is left for him was famous. The great emotion which Pasta was able to saturate Norma's sublimely simple confession, "Son io!" made this a supremely touching moment. Bellini's Norma does not escape into insanity but, with unequalled strength and dignity, proclaims her guilt to the assembled Gauls, asks forgiveness of her father, and mounts the funeral pyre with Pollione. Pollione is moved by Norma's confession and sacrifice, and appropriately refers to her as a "sublime donna."

The character of Bellini's and Romani's Norma is elevated into something universal, and the entire finale is of extraordinary poignancy. Only a performer of Pasta's dignity could match the sublimity of Bellini's inspiration at the end of Norma.

Despite a cast that included Domenico Donzelli, Giulia Grisi and Vincenzo Negrini, the opening performance of Norma at La Scala was a relative failure. After the performance, Bellini wrote to his friend Francesco Florimo.

Ti scrivo sotto l'impressione del dolore, di un dolore che non posso esprimerti, ma che tu solo puoi comprendere. Vengo dalla Scala; prima rappresentazione della Norma. Lo crederesti? . . . Fiasco!!! fiasco!!! solenne fiasco!!! A dirti il vero il pubblico fu severo, sembrava propriamente venuto per giudicarmi; e con precipitazione (credo) volle alla mia povera Norma far subire la stessa sorte della Druide. Io non ho più riconosciuto quei cari Milanesi, che accolsero con entusiasmo, colla gioja sul viso e l'esultanza nel cuore, Il Pirata, La Straniera e La Sonnambula; e pure io credeva di presentar loro una degna sorella nella Norma! Ma disgraziatamente non fu così: mi sonno ingannato; ho sbagliato; i miei prognostici andarono falliti e le mie speranze deluse. Ad onta di tutto ciò, a te solo lo dico col cuore sulle labbra (se la passione non m'inganna), che l'introduzione, la sortita e cavatina di Norma, il duetto fra le due donne col terzetto che segue finale del primo atto, poi l'altro duetto delle due donne, ed il finale intero del secondo atto, che comincia dall'Inno di guerra in poi, sono tali pezzi di musica, ed a me piacciono tanto (modestia), che, te lo confesso, sarei felice poterne fare di simili in tutta la mia vita artistica! Basta!!! Nelle opere teatrali il pubblico è il supremo giudice. Alla sentenza contro me pronunciata spero portare appello, e se arriverà a ricredersi, io avrò guadagnato la causa, e proclamerò allora la Norma la migliore delle mie opere.<sup>4</sup>

The critic for L'Eco wrote of the opening performance:

Romani anche in questo lavoro ebbe quelle ispirazioni di cui mostrossi sempre sì ricco, ed i suoi versi sono di gran lunga superiori a quelli anche dei migliori di libretti. Da

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un Compositore come Bellini, da artisti come Madama Pasta e Donzelli, si poteva con ragione aspetarsi qualcosa di straordinario; eppure . . . ci vediamo costretti d'informare a loro non piccola sorpresa, i nostri lettori esteri, che alla fine del primo atto, non si scorse il minimo segno di applauso, sebbene durante l'atto si rendesse giustizia alla sinfonia, all'introduzione (forse un po' troppo lunga), ed al distinto canto di Madama Pasta e Donzelli. Il Pubblico, il quale certamente si aspettava di sentir chiudere il primo atto con un finale del gran genere, si trovò deluso, e fu mal contento di veder cadere il sipario dopo un terzetto di non grande effetto.

Il second'atto contiene alcuni bei pezzi di musica, come tali indichiamo un Duetto fra Norma ed Adalgisa, un altro fra Norma e Pollione, ed il finale, che però tanto per la situazione, quanto per la musica, richiama alla mente il finale del primo atto della Vestale di Spontini.

Madama Pasta, il sig. Donzelli, e Madamigelli Grisi, ebbero in quest'atto, dal pari che il Maestro le meno equivoche prove di soddisfazione per parte del Pubblico, e furono alla fine chiamati ripetutamente sulla scena; e noi siamo intimamente persuasi, che, generalmente parlando, l'Opera tutta, udita più volte, . . . finirà per piacere . . . .

Madama Pasta mostrossi, come al suo solito, quella distinta attrice tragica e cantante che è. Quasi tutta l'opera è appoggiata a lei sola, e sebbene ella sappia ben reggere un sì gran peso, egli è certo che a lungo andare dovrà derivarne stanchezza.<sup>5</sup>

The reviewer for the Gazzetta di Milano observed:

Ad onore del vero, l'aria di Donzelli del prim'atto fu applauditissima, perchè cantata egregiamente da un artista che ad un metodo di canto tutto espressione, unisce una voce robusta, simpatica, estesa, gradevolissima; ma di un tale cantante non si è cavato quel partito che si poteva. La Pasta cantò egregiamente, quale meraviglia! gli applausi si udirono sovente nel second'atto e furono compartiti sì a lei che al tenore, come anche meritatissimi alla Grisi, che tanto onorevolmente stette a fianco dell'astro maggiore. I cori sono di effetto, ma ben poco offrono di peregrino.<sup>6</sup>

After six performances, the critic for the Gazzetta di Milano reported the public's increased enthusiasm for Norma.

"La Pasta . . . si mantiene eguale a sè stessa, e desta sempre crescente l'entusiasmo pel suo bel canto ispirato, e per la sua azione ragionatissima."<sup>7</sup>

Though the première of Norma was greeted with little enthusiasm, subsequent performances amply demonstrated the opera's merit. Norma was sung twenty-four times at La Scala during the 1831-32 season, from 26 December 1831, to 8 April 1832. The second act of Norma, coupled with the first act of Rossini's Otello, was performed six times in that period.

Norma was to prove the most durable and most universally admired of Bellini's operas. It was one of the most often performed operas during the nineteenth century, its title role being one of the ultimate tests for the dramatic (spinto) soprano. The opera was revered by Verdi and Wagner; its influence may be seen in the Amneris-Radames duet in the fourth act of Verdi's Aida, the love duet and "Liebestod" in Wagner's Tristan und Isolde, and Brünnhilde's "Immolation Scene" at the end of Götterdämmerung. Although Norma had only sporadic performances outside Italy during the first quarter of the twentieth century, the 1927 Metropolitan Opera revival with Rosa Ponselle in the title role proved a modern revelation. Since 1950, Norma has regained its popularity. This was due mainly to Maria Callas, one of the few 20th-century singers equal to the vocal and histrionic demands of the title role.

Pasta created another, less epoch-making role in her début season at La Scala: Bianca in Donizetti's Ugo, Conte di Parigi. Romani's libretto is full of strong situations, calculated to exploit the soprano's histrionic talents. Bianca, the fiancée of King Luigi of France (Louis V), is secretly in love with Ugo; her sister is also. Luigi gives his approval to the union of Ugo and Adelia, which infuriates the jealous Bianca. She openly declares her love for Ugo, whereupon Ugo is arrested by Luigi. Bianca visits Ugo in prison and urges him to call his troops against Luigi, but he refuses. Ugo convinces Luigi that he has no ambition for his throne or love for Bianca, and Luigi leads Adelia and Ugo to the altar, Bianca prepares a poison for Luigi as part of her revenge, but the sounds of the wedding ceremony drive her into a frenzy, and Bianca drinks the poison herself.

At its opening performance, on 13 March 1832, Ugo, Conte di Parigi achieved only a qualified success. The critic for the Gazzetta di Milano commented that the singers appeared fatigued and that their roles were not sufficiently memorized. The principal singers (Pasta, Grisi, Donzelli, and Negrini) were identical to the original Norma cast. The same critic commented: "La Pasta . . . è sempre la stessa; il dire com'ell'abbia cantato è inutile cura; i suoi pochi difetti, scompajono a fronte di quell'insieme che la costituisce la prima fra le attrici-cantanti della nostr'epoca. Parlare più a lungo di lei, è cosa vana."<sup>8</sup>

To the critic for Il Censore Universale dei Teatri, Bianca afforded Pasta nothing new: "Sia Norma, sia Anna Bolena, sia Bianca, essa è sempre un'amante disprezzata, e perciò costretta a sdegnarsi ed a disperarsi."<sup>9</sup>

Ugo, Conte di Parigi was performed only three times during the season at La Scala and has had few stagings elsewhere; it remains one of Donizetti's lesser known operas. Pasta ended her engagement at La Scala on 8 April 1832, in the double bill of the first act of Rossini's Otello coupled with the second act of Bellini's Norma.

From mid-April to early August 1832, Pasta alternated between her residence in Milan and Villa Roda. On 21 August 1832, she made her Bergamo début, as Norma, at the Teatro Ricciardi. In Bergamo, Pasta sang eleven performances of Norma; both the opera and the singer were successful. Bellini conducted the first three performances. On 24 August, he wrote to Romani:

La nostra Norma fece deciso furore. Se tu la sentissi qui come è eseguita, la crederesti quasi cambiata. A me fa un effetto mirabile. Ha sbalordito tutti i Bergamaschi, e quanti forestieri erano in teatro: Bresciani, Veronesi, e anche Milanesi; un vero trionfo! Tutto è più vivo, i cantanti si sono impadroniti della parte e vi mettono molta anima. La Giuditta è di buon umore, è in voce, e canta e declama in modo da strappare le lagrime . . . fa piangere anche me! . . . e piansi infatti per tante emozioni che provai dentro nell'anima . . . ti desideravo a me vicino per dividere con te, mio buon consigliere e collaboratore, perchè tu solo mi comprendi, e la mia gloria non va disgiunta dalla tua.<sup>10</sup>

Pasta sang her last performance at the Teatro Ricciardi on 6 September, and then spent the autumn of 1832 at Villa Roda.

Pasta's next professional engagement was the Carnival season at the Teatro La Fenice in Venice, from 26 December 1832 to 26 March 1833. The most important aspect of her engagement at that theatre, where she not had performed since 1821, was that she created the title role in Bellini's Beatrice di Tenda. She also introduced her Norma, Desdemona and Tancredi to the Venetian spectators.

Pasta and Bellini arrived in Venice on 8 December 1832. Rehearsals for Norma began two days later, and Pasta opened the Carnival season in the title role on 26 December. The critic for La Moda reported that she was especially well received in "Casta Diva." He reported: "La Pasta viene salutata, al primo suo apparire e sempre quando ritorna sulla scena, con vivissimo applauso; nella sua aria di sortita si attrae dal pubblico unanimi e fervidissime approvazioni, . . . ."11 The same critic noted that the spectators admired Pasta's " . . . scale discendenti, il bel trillo prolungato e magico; il vero accento del dolore, certe messe particolari di voce e certe tenute; insomma tutte quelle prerogative che la distinguono qual somma attrice-cantante, e vera norma di chi si studia in quest'arte divina."12

Pasta sang twenty-three performances of Norma in Venice; she alternated the title role with Tancredi and Desdemona, with her usual success and the usual praise by the critics.

In February and March 1833, Pasta prepared to create a new role: Bellini's Beatrice di Tenda. Pasta and Bellini had seen

Antonio Monticini's ballet Beatrice Tenda at La Scala during September or October 1832, and the singer believed an operatic version would suit her talents. On 3 November 1832, Bellini had written to her:

Vi farà meraviglia, mi darete del matto, ma il fatto è fatto, e spero che ne avremo delle felici conseguenze. Si è cambiato l'argomento [originally Cristina di Svezia] e scriveremo Beatrice Tenda. A stento ho persuaso Romani, ma l'ho persuaso, e con ragioni basate. Il sapere il soggetto a voi gradito come mi esprimevate quella sera che ne vedevate il ballo: il trovare l'ultima scena di tale argomento similissima alla fine di Maria Stuarda, ove Romani può perfettamente copiare la scena di Schiller a voi tanto simpatica pel campo che presenta ad un'artista del vostro calibro; ed il conoscere l'intiero soggetto quant'è interessante, mi tiene ora assai contento. Romani farà in modo che alcuna situazione non ricordi l'Anna Bolena: egli è di volontà buona, e desidero che questa l'abbia anche nel voler presto almeno farmi il primo atto.<sup>13</sup>

Beatrice di Tenda is based on Italian history and takes place in the castle of Binasco, near Milan. Filippo Visconti, because of his marriage to Beatrice de'Lascari, contessa di Tenda, has gained control over his wife's lands but has not won the respect of the people. Furthermore, his affections have drifted from Beatrice and now center on Agnese del Maino. Agnese, however, loves Orombello of Ventimiglia, who in turn loves Beatrice. Agnese discovers Orombello's true feelings and takes revenge by informing Filippo. In a secluded part of the castle, Orombello declares his love for Beatrice, which she rejects. When Filippo discovers Beatrice and Orombello together, he has them arrested on the suspicion of his wife's adultery. Under torture, Orombello

implicates Beatrice but later recants and attempts to affirm her innocence. This does not have any affect on Filippo, who, despite Agnese's pleas for clemency, orders the execution of both Beatrice and Orombello.

There had been considerable delay on Romani's part in delivering the libretto to Bellini. After the time required to compose and prepare the work for the stage, the opening had to be scheduled for 16 March 1833, which allowed only three performances to take place before the end of the season. The delay of Beatrice di Tenda frustrated not only Bellini but also the spectators at the Teatro La Fenice. The hostile audience at the opening thought they detected self-plagiarism in the music and voiced their disapproval by shouting "Norma! Norma!"<sup>14</sup> Though several numbers in the opera were praised by the critics of being of high quality, the opera as a whole was not well received. Pasta, however, managed to score a personal success as the hapless Beatrice. The critic for L'Eco reported that Pasta was applauded throughout the opera, though her final aria did not generate the enthusiasm of other numbers. "Ah, se un'urna . . . Ah la morte a cui m'appresso" was thought " . . . triviale, e questa volta non le furono accordati tutti quegli applausi che elia è avvezza a riscuoter sempre nei suoi pezzi a solo."<sup>15</sup> At the end of his review this critic declared: "La Pasta è sempre quella grande Attrice-Cantante che col suo valore sa resitere agli urti della sorte; in mezzo al generale mal contento, ad essa non possono mai

mancare gli applausi."<sup>16</sup> Pasta ended her season in Venice on 26 March 1833.

Pasta's next engagement was at the King's Theatre in London from 1 May to 3 August 1833. She added a new role to her repertoire: Romeo, in Bellini's I Capuleti e i Montecchi. Pasta also introduced her Norma and Imogene (in Il Pirata) to London, and repeated her admired portrayals of Anna Bolena, Medea, Tancredi, and Semiramide.

The London revival of Anna Bolena proved a triumph for both the opera and the singer. The critic for the Morning Post commented: ". . . the thrilling energy of her manner carries the sympathies of the auditory as irresistably as though she were delivering the language of SHAKESPEARE; . . ." <sup>17</sup> This was extravagant praise indeed. In the opinion of the critic of the Morning Herald, Pasta ". . . is the Queen of classic tragedy."<sup>18</sup> It is significant that both of these reviews allude to the theatre; Pasta's performances, unlike those of so many of her contemporaries, were not concerts in costume, but approached the idea of opera in the unification of voice and gesture, creating a coherent and believable impersonation.

Bellini's Il Pirata was not new to London; the French sorpano Henriette Méric-Lalande had sung Imogene there in 1830. Pasta made her appearance in the role on 30 May 1833, with Rubini (Gualtiero) and Antonio Tamburini (Ernesto). The critic

for the Morning Chronicle declared:

The character of Imogene, however, can never be a great part for Pasta, and it is in some sort a condensation in her to take it. Ernesto is killed at the close of the first act, and Gualtiero has the second nearly all to himself, so that the opera may be said to have been composed expressly for Rubini. He is a most accomplished singer of his class, but his style does not, like that of Pasta, and some few other original geniuses, improve upon us; it is everlasting the same; he has the same roulades and the same cadences for every air, and if encored, as he was twice last night in "Vieni, vieni," and "Tu vedrai," he could not make use of a single variation. Hear him once, and you have heard him always.<sup>19</sup>

The first London performance of Norma took place on 20 June 1833, for Pasta's benefit evening. Bellini was the conductor. Though, as usual, Pasta was applauded, the opera had a mixed reaction. The critic for The Examiner stated: "The character suits Pasta admirably, but does not present her in any new light. Anna Bolena and Medea together have already presented the prototypes of every striking situation in Norma. The libretto is well written. The subject is not well adapted to the light and airy style of Bellini. His genius is out of its element, and, in endeavouring to be sublime, he is too apt to become merely noisy. The music has less, and less varied, melody than any of his other operas . . . ; but he cannot write without melody, and there are many pleasing passages."<sup>20</sup> The review in The Times was not printed until after the fifth performance (29 June). After summarizing the plot, the critic wrote: "The music of the opera . . . presents very little that is original, and still less that is striking or beautiful. The extraordinary powers of Madame Pasta,

however, . . . carried it through successfully; but we are decidedly of the opinion that no other artiste now in existence could have produced a similar result. She was in grand voice, and sang with a purity of intonation, with a truth of expression, with an intensity of feeling, perfectly unrivalled. There are some very effective scenes and situations in the opera, and they were greatly heightened by the exquisite acting of Madame Pasta."<sup>21</sup>

In a letter to her mother, Pasta refers to the review printed in The Times. "Ieri è sortito un articolo magnifico nel Times pel tuo Git Git, se posso averlo te lo manderò, e allora vedrai quanti elogi a dismisura prodigono sempre al Git pover Git, ma anche questo foglio è ingiusto con Bellini, convien dire che non lo comprende, per il che mi scema il piacere delle lodi che mi da."<sup>22</sup>

Giuseppe Pasta also wrote to Rachele Negri to describe the success.

Ieri sera si rappresentò la Norma pel beneficio della Giuditta. La miglior società di Londra v'accorse in folla . . . . Nè la Medea, nè l'Anna Bolena, possono vantare miglior successo di questa prima rappresentazione di Norma; mercè la mia insistenza con [Pierre] Laporte, e dietro la direzione di Bellini per l'orchestra ed i cori, quest'opera è montata di maniera che non v'ha esempio al Teatro Italiano di Londra, il trionfo quindi della stessa superò il desiderio di Giuditta, e la speranza di Bellini; vi furono continuamente applausi straordinari, e lagrime non poche nel secondo atto. La Giuditta pareva invasa del suo personaggio, e spiegò una forza di cui è solamente capace la sua fibra quand'è scossa da un motivo non ordinario. Ella accompagnò Bellini sul palcoscenico, ed ambedue furono salutati coll'espressione dell'entusiasmo . . . .  
. . . il pubblico inglese dimostrò in quest'occasione tale intelligenza e tanto gusto, che la prima rappresentazione al King's Theatre pareva la ventesima di Norma al Gran Teatro della Scala. Donzelli spiegò tutta la possanza della sua

bella voce nella cavatina ["Meco all'altar di Venere"] che fu cantata meglio e con assai maggiore effetto che a Milano. La cavatina ["Casta Diva"] del *Git* fu in una parola riputata il pezzo più incantevole del primo atto. "Costui, costui dicesti," "trema per i figli tuoi," "Il mio sdegno ruggirà d'intorno a te" fecere enorme impressione, incominciando poi il coro "guerra, guerra" fino il gettarsi del velo nero sul capo di Norma, ogni atto, ogni parola di Giuditta fu rimarcata con segni or di sorpresa, or di tenerezza, ora di entusiasmo.<sup>23</sup>

To a postscript to this letter, Bellini added: ". . . finisco con dirvi che la v[ost]ra Divinissima Giuditta jersera ha entusiasmo sino alle lagrime quanti si trovarono in teatro e che mai io la vidi sì Grande, sì Immensa, e sì Ispirata."<sup>24</sup>

The first performance at the King's Theatre of I Capuletti e i Montecchi took place on 20 July 1833, for Bellini's benefit. The composer's reworking of the Romeo and Juliet story did not find favor in London. The critic for the Morning Post stated: "The music of this Opera is of a mediocre character even in its class, which is not the first. It is like all Bellini's music in its graceful and easy melody, but evincing, we think, even less than his accustomed attention in the score or in the variety of its effects."<sup>25</sup> According to the critic for the Morning Herald, the opera was ". . . unquestionably one of the least interesting that has ever been performed at this theatre."<sup>26</sup> As for Pasta's Romeo, the same critic declared: "We have never seen that great artiste to less advantage . . ."<sup>27</sup> According to Pasta, however, ". . . l'opera in complesso piacque, il solo terz'atto ebbe pochi e freddi applausi, Bellini ha poi avuta la meritata soddisfazione di vedere al termine del primo atto, rialzarsi la tela, e sentir

ripetere il finale immezzo ai più clamorosi applausi."<sup>28</sup>

Pasta dismissed the criticism of Bellini's operas in the newspapers as "molte scioccherie."<sup>29</sup> The soprano sang only two performances as Romeo in I Capuleti e i Montecchi; the role never became part of her permanent repertoire. Giuditta and Giuseppe Pasta left London in early August and spent the autumn at Villa Roda.

In December, the Pastas set out for Venice, where Giuditta Pasta was scheduled to open the Carnival season (26 December 1833- to 13 April 1834). She was to create the title role of Saverio Mercadante's Emma d'Antiochia, and add a new role to her repertoire--the title role of Donizetti's Fausta.

Fausta opened the season at the Teatro La Fenice on 26 December 1833. Domenico Gilardoni's text afforded scope for Pasta's histrionic ability. Fausta, wife of the Roman Emperor Costantino, loves her stepson Crispo. When Costantino discovers them together, Fausta accuses Crispo of attempted seduction, and he is exiled. Massimiano, Fausta's father, heads a conspiracy against Costantino. Massimiano convinces Costantino that Crispo plans to kill him, and Crispo is sentenced to death. Fausta is unable to prevent the execution and takes poison. When Costantino learns that his son was accused falsely, it is too late to save him, and he is furthermore horrified at Fausta's confession of her love for Crispo.

For the production at the Teatro la Fenice, Donizetti added a new duet for Fausta and Crispo (Domenico Donzelli), "Per te vi

nunzia al soglio," and adapted the score to suit the capabilities of his two star singers. The review printed in the Gazzetta Privilegiata di Venezia was not specific in describing Pasta's performance, but reported that she was received with enthusiasm and applause throughout. The critic for Il Gondoliere, after remarking that the plot " . . . risponde perfettamente al gusto che signoreggia i moderni teatri,"<sup>30</sup> wrote: "Giuditta Pasta, usa a far suo quel carattere che deve rappresentare, dovette inviscerarsi la sciagurata passione di Fausta, e, data la terribilità del soggetto, vi operò quelle ammirabili bellezze d'imitazione nelle quali è sovrana."<sup>31</sup>

On 8 March 1834, Pasta created the title role of Mercadante's Emma d'Antiochia. This was the last new role of her career. Romani's libretto is based on stock situations. In order to maintain the peace between twelfth-century Tyre and Antioch, Corrado, Count of Tyre, married Emma, Princess of Antioch. Emma is shocked to discover Ruggiero, Corrado's nephew, is about to wed her step-daughter Adelia. Emma and Ruggiero had been lovers, and are still enamoured of each other. Ruggiero meets with Emma and both lament their situation. They are discovered together by Adelia and Corrado. Ruggiero is exiled and Emma poisons herself. This plot contains elements that Romani used in Anna Bolena and Fausta; it was not well received by the spectators at the Teatro la Fenice.

Despite a cast that included Pasta and Donzelli, Emma d'Antiochia did not have a successful première. The critic

for Il Gondoliere called the music " . . . in generale molto studiata, e quanto all'accompagnatura degli strumenti non dubitiamo chiamarla eccellente, ma non è musica da far piacere, . . . ."32 Pasta was indisposed on the opening night, and was forced to omit her final bi-partite aria, "In quest'ora fatale . . . Parta, parta." The critic for the Gazzetta Privilegiata di Venezia stated:

E quantunque la sola Pasta fosse l'indisposta, pure il suo male parve disanimare tutti gli altri, ben conoscendo che da essa principalmente dovea dipendere il felice esito di quest'opera; e ciò lo si può conoscere, se nella terza recita [13 March 1834] ristabilitasi pienamente, gli applausi al maestro e ai cantanti furono universali e continui, chiamati essendo replicatamente a riscuoterli e l'uno e gli altri sul palco scenico. La cavatina d'introduzione della Pasta ["A quell'aspetto"] fu eseguita con molta e singolare maestria; però se il pubblico ne restò pienamente soddisfatto, siam lecito il dire che ciò si deve più al grande impegno con cui fu da quella esimia cantante, di quello che al merito intrinseco della musica. In tutta l'opera la Pasta uguale a sè stessa, mostrò di poter sostenere il nome ancora di prima attrice cantante d'Europa; ma laddove entusiasmo e colpi anche quei sventurati, che fino ad ora voleano contrastarle quel merito universalmente attribuito, fu nella romanza dell'ultimo atto ["A quest'ora"] dove essa unendo tutti que'prestigli di voce e d'azione che sublimano la frase musicale, che intanto e rapiscono il cuore degli astanti fa nella sua maggior luce apparire la musica di Mercadante.33

Pasta ended her season in Venice on 13 April 1834.

After spending much of the spring and summer at Villa Roda, she traveled to Bologna for a five-week engagement (30 September-5 November 1834) at the Teatro Communale as Norma, Fausta, and Anna Bolena. She had been enthusiastically received when she last sang in Bologna in 1829, and her success in 1834 was predictable. The critic for Teatri, Arti e Letteratura declared: "Sì, Donna eccelsa, se io con vera compiacenza ti sentii proclamare vera

Norma, quale già fin dai tuoi primi accenti ti aveva l'imparzialità giudicata, niun vi può essere, ove la passione non lo acciechi, che non ti dichiarar unica, inimitabile Fausta. Il tuo agire, che è di te sola, il tuo canto, che è quello dell'anima, del sentimento, ti assicurano questo vanto che la sola follia ti potrebbe contrastare."<sup>34</sup>

Pasta returned to La Scala in January 1835 for Carnival performances of Emma and Norma. She was in perfect health, and after the opening performance of Emma d'Antiochia on 6 January, the critic for the Gazzetta di Milano reported: "Questa esimia donna è veramente sempre la stessa, ed anzi pure, a comune meraviglia, che sempre si faccia maggiore di sè. Niuno può mettere in dubbio che madama Pasta jeri sera non abbia spiegato una maggior energia, una maggior forza, quasi direi un maggior volume di voce, in modo da ricondurre il pensier nostro ai suoi più bei momenti nell'onorata carriera."<sup>35</sup> According to the critic for Il Censore Universali dei Teatri: "La signora Pasta si riprodusse ora fornita di tutti i già conosciuti suoi mezzi, la stessa voce provveduta di tutta la sua forza, gli stessi modi di canto, lo stesso sceneggiamento. Ebbe essa quindi un clamoroso saluto alla prima apparizione, ebbe in seguito e plausi e chiamate, non egualmente fervidi e generali quanto in altre occasioni, ma quanto lo comportarono il valore della sua parte e l'effetto della musica."<sup>35</sup> Norma was greeted with public and critical approval; no new perceptions on Pasta's singing appeared in the reviews. Pasta concluded her season at La Scala on 4 March 1835, as Norma.

NOTES: CHAPTER XIV

1. Vincenzo Bellini to Giuditta Pasta, 1 September 1831, Pasta Collection of the New York Public Library of the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center.
2. Michele Scnerillo, Vincenzo Bellini: Note Aneddotiche e Critiche, (Ancona: n.p., 1882), p. 84.
3. Giuditta Pasta to Vincenzo Bellini, 26 December 1831, Collection of Vincenzo Martinez-Bazan, Catania, Italy.
4. Vincenzo Bellini to Francesco Florimo, quoted in Francesco Florimo, La Scuola Musicale di Napoli, 4 vols. (Naples: Vincenzo Morano, 1882), III:194.
5. L'Eco (Milan), 28 December 1831.
6. Gazzetta di Milano, 28 December 1831.
7. Ibid., 5 January 1832.
8. Ibid., 15 March 1832.
9. Il Censore Universale dei Teatri (Milan), 17 March 1832.
10. Vincenzo Bellini to Felice Romani, 24 August 1832, quoted in Maria Ferranti, Giuditta Pasta e i Suoi Tempi, (Milan: n.p., 1935), p. 149.
11. La Moda (Venice), 29 December 1832.
12. Ibid.
13. Vincenzo Bellini to Giuditta Pasta, 3 November 1832, Biblioteca Livia Simoni, Milan, Italy.
14. Gazzetta Privilegiata di Venezia, 18 March 1833.
15. L'Eco, 20 March 1833.
16. Ibid.
17. Morning Post (London), 3 May 1833.
18. Morning Herald (London), 3 May 1833.
19. Morning Chronicle (London), 3 June 1833.

20. The Examiner (London), 23 June 1833.
21. The Times (London), 1 July 1833.
22. Giuditta Pasta to Rachele Negri, 1 July 1833, Pasta Collection of the New York Public Library of the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center.
23. Giuseppe Pasta to Rachele Negri, 21 June 1833, Biblioteca Livia Simoni, Milan, Italy.
24. Vincenzo Bellini to Rachele Negri, 21 June 1833, Biblioteca Livia Simoni, Milan, Italy. This is a postscript to letter cited in note 23.
25. Morning Post, 22 July 1833.
26. Morning Herald, 22 July 1833.
27. Ibid.
28. Giuditta Pasta to Rachele Negri, 21 July 1833, Pasta Collection of the New York Public Library of the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center.
29. Ibid.
30. Il Gondoliere (Venice), 28 December 1833.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid., 9 March 1834.
33. Gazzetta Privilegiata di Venezia, 20 March 1834.
34. Teatri, Arti e Letteratura (Bologna), 25 October 1834.
35. Gazzetta di Milano, 7 January 1835.
36. Il Censore Universale dei Teatri, 10 January 1835.

CHAPTER XV

From mid-1835 to 1850 Giuditta Pasta appeared on the opera stage only intermittently. She maintained her powers of interpretation and expression, but had problems with intonation, and her voice lost some of its power. Pasta's most important engagement during this period was her first appearances in Moscow and St. Petersburg in 1840-41, where she was received with acclaim. After 1841, when Pasta "officially" retired, she devoted herself to her family and her pupil, the soprano Teresa Parodi. It was with Parodi that Pasta sang for the last time on a public stage, in London in 1850, when she was urged by the administration of Her Majesty's Theatre to sing several arias and duets from some of her celebrated roles.

From mid-March 1835 until mid-April 1837 Pasta did not sing in public; she spent her time between Villa Roda and her home in Milan. In 1837, however, she returned to the King's Theatre, and appeared as Medea, Tancredi, and Zingarelli's Romeo. She also sang in public and private concerts. The reason Pasta chose to sing in London was probably financial. Private concerts were lucrative; in addition to an agreed-upon fee, Pasta often received gifts from the aristocrats at whose homes she performed. Frequently, these were expensive jewels. Not having performed for two years, Pasta may well have wanted to renew her source of income.

Pasta's concerts consisted essentially of selections from her operatic repertoire. As she performed no more than five selections at any given concert, the effort required was less than a complete opera performance. Pasta was well received by the London public and press in 1837, but, as always in her concerts, there was the perception that something was lacking. In reviewing her opening concert at the Drury Lane Theatre on 17 May 1837, the critic for the Morning Post wrote:

Pasta was still herself--can we say more? Cordial congratulations were showered upon her from all sides in tumultuous plaudits, and she completed the scena, "I tuoi frequenti palpiti" [from Pacini's Niobe] in her most finished style. Her succeeding efforts were a series of triumphs. No one that ever heard her "Oh Patria, ingrata patria," [from Tancredi], and the "Ombra adorata" [from Zingarelli's Giulietta e Romeo], can require any comment from us to refresh their memories; but again, those only who have heard her sing them in their proper places, namely, in the operas to which they belong, can feel how much is lost by her singing them isolated in a miscellaneous concert. Pasta is essentially a dramatic singer, and, though at all times her thrilling and mellifluous tones enchant every ear, while her pathos and energy leave their impression indelible on every heart, yet her soaring genius is as much depressed in a concert-room as her attitude is constrained by the formality of holding a sheet of music in her hands.<sup>1</sup>

The critic for the Morning Herald, with a highly appropriate comment, wrote: "Imagine Siddons, in the height of her powers, being in London, and unengaged, except to give occasional readings!"<sup>2</sup> Pasta was a singer who needed to be heard on the stage, hers was an unruly and often uneven voice; vocal faults that were exposed in concert made no difference in the passion of a stage performance.

Indeed, they sometimes contributed to the dramatic effect.

The perceptive critic for the Morning Herald commented:

. . . no artiste ever coped with the difficulty of concert singing so successfully as Pasta, because acting with her is not an art, but her very nature; and if there was any very perceptible result from the absence of progressive excitement, it was, perhaps, an occasional little imperfection in those abrupt transitions from low to high of which Madame Pasta is fond, and which, in the torrent of her passion on the stage, she dashes off with the boldest and finest effect. Her voice is still what it was, delicious in the sweetness of its soprano, most touching the slight huskiness of its contr'alto, in both having a separate and peculiar quality of which seems essentially the grand--the epic. We never heard her sing more delightfully than she did occasionally last night, or execute with a more delicate trill some of the prolonged shakes which always formed so special a feature in her style.<sup>3</sup>

Pasta returned to the King's Theatre, on 22 June 1837, in her celebrated portrayal of Zingarelli's Romeo. She was received with enthusiasm, and the critic for the Morning Chronicle reported that " . . . she sang with the utmost beauty of voice, finish, and expression. As a piece of acting her Romeo is one of the most exquisite things than can be conceived. Every movement is grace, every look and gesture full of meaning; every tone of her voice goes to the heart."<sup>4</sup> On 30 June, Pasta sang Tancredi for the benefit of the impresario Pierre Laporte. The singer had some pitch problems; Henry Chorley, when remembering the occasion in 1861, wrote: " . . . her voice was steadily out of tune, with some exceptional moments."<sup>5</sup> The critic for The Court Journal declared that Pasta was " . . . inimitable with all her faults of intonation."<sup>6</sup> Pasta's benefit took place on 6 July 1837, as Medea. This was a successful performance, with no intonation

problems reported in the press. Pasta's last performance of the season was on 27 July 1837, as Tancredi.

After a brief concert tour of England during August and September, when she sang in Southhampton, Tunbridge Wells, Portsmouth, Taunton, Plymouth, Cheltenham, Bristol, Bath, Chantenam, and Worcester, to public acclaim, Pasta returned to Italy in October 1837, where she remained in Milan and Villa Roda until September 1840.

In 1840, Pasta accepted engagements that were to take her, for the first time, to eastern Europe. Giuditta and Giuseppe Pasta left Milan on 3 September 1840 and, after stopping in Verona, Vienna, and Cracow, arrived in Warsaw on 5 October. On 19 October, Pasta appeared at the Wielki Theatre and sang "Casta Diva" and the third act of Otello. The following day she wrote to her daughter Clelia: ". . . il teatro era stipato, varie belle corone di fiori sono volate ai piedi della sventurata Desdemone [sic], la quale stordita dagli applausi s'accorse troppo tardi che le avean involati tutti i fiori, e le corone; il Sig[no]r dottorino [unidentified] mi farà dei rimproveri ripetendomi che un buon attore deve sempre esser padrone di sè, ne convengo, ero troppo commossa, ma come non esserlo dopo tanti anni che non sentiva quella divina musica, e in mezzo a tanto entusiasmo."<sup>7</sup>

On 22 October, Pasta left Warsaw and arrived in St. Petersburg a week later. She did not sing in any theatre but instead gave a series of private concerts. On 7 November, for example, Pasta sang

for the Prince and Princess Oldenbourg. In a letter to her daughter, Pasta wrote: "Il piccolo concerto fu gradito dalle loro Altezze, e dalle altre venti persone che le facean corona io non potrei ripeterti tutte le cose obbliganti che quelle dame, e soprattutto la Principessa ed il Principe, mi dissero, particolarmente dopo la "Casta Diva," . . . "Ah Signora noi non possiamo più frenare le nostre lagrime," e questa lode sai ch'io la pref[erisc]o alle altre. N[ota] B[ene] che la piccola sala era tanto favorevole alla musica ch'io non mi sono annojato ascoltandomi perchè mi parve d'avere un'altra voce."<sup>8</sup>

On 8 January 1841, Pasta arrived in Moscow to give several private and public concerts, the results of which generated much interest and enthusiasm. After a concert at the Bolshoi Theatre, on 30 January 1841, Pasta wrote to her mother: ". . . gli applausi furono immensi e clamorosi particolarmente dopo la "Casta Diva" ed in rondeau ["In quest'ora"] dell'Emma [d'Antiochia]."<sup>9</sup>

Pasta returned to St. Petersburg on 23 February 1841, where she continued to give private concerts. Her first St. Petersburg appearance in a complete opera was a benefit performance as Anna Bolena on 14 May 1841 at the Bolshoi Kannerny Theatre. Two days later Pasta wrote to her mother to inform her of the reception. "Oh se la mia Mamma mia avesse assistito a questa rappre[sentazion]e in alcuni momenti non sarebbe stata mal contenta del suo Git Git."<sup>10</sup> Despite its being, as Pasta declared, "immensamente applaudita,"<sup>11</sup> the receipts taken in at

the box office were poor: " . . . purtroppo bisogna ch'io ripeta la solita istoria "molto onor, poco contante," l'introito fu poca cosa, . . . ."12 Pasta explained the reason for the poor attendance: "La povera Anna [Bolena] arrivò troppo tardi, la corte partita, i signori fatorati e stanchi, per non dir altro, da spendere per le continue feste, ma ora ho più tempo da pensare a queste miserie, s'avvicina il tanto sospirato giorno del mio incarozzamento, che se Dio mel concede, non sarà più tardi del 29 andante per cui te prego di scrivermi a Dresda, e dopo a Monaco ove ci riposeremo io credo una settimana senza sgnagnire in alcuni concerto . . . ."13

On 19 April 1841, Pasta sang Norma in St. Petersburg. There is no mention of her performances of either Norma or Semiramide in her known correspondence. Maria Ferranti, however, quotes an unidentified article about the Norma performance.

Ieri è stata la grande giornata della signora Pasta, che ha dato la Norma. La sua entrata in scena è stata accolta con grande entusiasmo: ella ne era impressionata, da aver la febbre; ciò che però non le ha impedito di essere stupenda. Al secondo atto, è stata anche più che stupenda. La sua interpretazione così vera e così patetica è stata compresa alla perfezione, ed il pubblico è stato trascinato a così grande entusiasmo, che ella ha dovuto concedere nove bis nell'ultimo atto.<sup>14</sup>

Pasta ended her stay in Russia on 30 May 1841, when she left St. Petersburg. She had given few opera performances; most of her appearances were in private concerts. Apparently she was well received by those who heard her.

Giuditta and Giuseppe Pasta returned to Milan in October 1841. In Giuditta Pasta e i Suoi Tempi, Maria Ferranti quotes a letter from Pasta's English friend Charlotte Hundlocke, who wrote on 29 October 1841 that she was coming to Milan. "Spero di giungere in tempo per la Norma e di assistere al termine della sublime e benefica carriera."<sup>15</sup> Did Pasta plan to sing Norma in Milan? There is no mention of any opera performances in Milan in Pasta's diary, nor is there documentary evidence that she performed in Milan during 1841 or afterwards. After her return from Russia, Pasta no longer sang in opera. She divided her time between Milan and Villa Roda, and devoted herself to her family. Her daughter Clelia had married her cousin Eugenio Ferranti and had three children; Clelia and her family lived in Villa Roda.

In 1844 Pasta accepted the Genoese soprano Teresa Parodi as her pupil, and for several months Parodi was a guest at Villa Roda. In August and September 1845, Parodi, accompanied by Pasta, went to Bergamo to make her début in the title role of Donizetti's Gemma di Vergy and sing Lucrezia in Verdi's I Due Foscari. On 24 August, Pasta sent a letter to the editor of the Giornale della Provincia di Bergamo to explain exactly how she contributed to Parodi's career.

Finchè i giornali si limitano ad asserire che la Signora Teresa Parodi è mia allieva nel perfezionamento dell'arte melodrammatica io non potrei negarlo, poichè con quella indicazione non si esclude il diritto che ha verso la stessa il Signor Maestro Degola che ha formato la di Lei voce, e

l'ha istruita nella musica, nè quello che può avere il Signor Maestro Ronconi che non mio consentimento gli ha dato lezioni di canto per alcuni mesi; ma se tutto il merito dell'istruzione musicale della Parodi si volesse ascrivermelo, io non potrei mai convenirne, giacchè io non do lezioni di musica, ma consiglj d'arte a chi me ne chiede, e la Parodi è la sola che possa dire di essere stata da me consigliata durante tutto un anno con quella affettuosa premura, che sa ispirare la di lei indole angelica, ed il corredo delle naturali di Lei facoltà. Quando ebbi il piacere di conoscerla trovai ch'Ella non era stata per anco applicata al canto, e durante quattro mesi che passò meco in compagnia, . . . cercai di educarla facendole ripetere tutto quel poco ch'io sapeva per ispirarle il mio gusto e disporla all'azione drammatica che meglio degli altri sanno mostrare quelli che per lungo tempo praticaron le scene. Rimasi molto soddisfatta dei progressi della mia amica, e del suo grande amore per lo studio dell'arte, ed offertasi l'occasione di farla decorosamente esordire, m'imposi l'obbligo di assisterla fino al momento in cui emerse nel modo a tutti noto, e cred'io, singolare. Ciò premesso, come fatto autentico, io le dichiaro che, indifferente come fui sempre a ciò di me hanno potuto dire i giornali quando percorrevo la carriera teatrale, non poteva, in niun modo essere consapevole di quello che mi fu attribuito nell'attuale circostanza. L'interesse mio per la Parodi nacque e crebbe in me per la conoscenza della sua situazione, per il suo carattere oltre modo simpatico, e per le doti che sembrano prometterle un brillantissimo avvenire.<sup>16</sup>

Pasta's prediction was overly optimistic; Parodi had a fairly successful career but is not remembered as one of the great singers.

On 6 September 1845, at the Teatro Riccardi in Bergamo, Pasta sang with Parodi. It was the first time Pasta had appeared in public since 1841. The two singers performed the Anna-Giovanna duet beginning "Dio che me vedi in core" from Anna Bolena, which prompted the critic of the Giornale della Provincia di Bergamo to write:

Applausi rumorosi, universali, incessanti tosto la salutarono per mostrarle quant'era la ricordanza, che serbavasi del suo valore, e quanto apprezzavasi il dono gentile, di che ella era larga alla popolazione di Bergamo. Poi cominciò il prestigio della sua azione drammatica, e delle sue musicali modulazioni, da cui traspariva non solo sovrana perizia artistica, ma una freschezza, una nitidezza di corde vocali, una agilità a percorrerne francamente tutto l'esteso registro sia planamente, sia gorgheggiando maestrevolmente il trillo, da sorprendere tutti principalmente se consideravasi al lungo intervallo che divideva il presente da'suoi precedenti trionfi sulle scene italiane e straniere. Accordavansi quindi le tenere, le flebili note della Seymour alle severe e prepotenti della Bolena, e ne usciva un duetto di stupenda armonia ed espressione, che fu ricolmo di applausi e ancora di fiori e di carmi, e all'ultimo due giganteschi vasi magnificamente intrecciati d'erbe odorose e di fiori erano presentati alle due cantanti stupefatte a presso che piangenti di gioia e di gratitudine.<sup>17</sup>

According to the review Pasta had lost none of her powers, but the remarks made by Chorley and other English critics in 1837 about her performances in London reveal that Pasta's voice already had declined. In 1845 it is unlikely that Pasta's voice was in better condition than in 1837.

Pasta attempted the lengthy mad scene that ends Anna Bolena, and this same critic continued:

Ma quì mi è forza rinunciare al descrivere con mie parole quant'era potente l'arte drammatica della somma Pasta a rappresentare la scaduta e delirante regina, quant'era incantevole sulle sue labbra il Rondò: "Al dolce guidami Castel natio" e tutto in somma ciò ch'ella cantò. Io non potrei dir altro se non che non ho più udito nulla di più commovente, di più perfetto, di più affascinante di quelle poetiche note oscillante sulle labbra della Pasta, e che non pareva dissimile dal mio il sentire di tutti gli astanti a giudicarne dalla piena, dall'entusiasmo degli applausi e dal nembo di fiori e di versi, di che anche una volta fu cosperso il palco scenico.<sup>18</sup>

During the following years Pasta suffered the loss of both her husband, in 1846, and her mother, in 1847. Giuseppe Pasta had never made a career as a tenor; he remained throughout his life in the shadow of his celebrate wife. After these deaths, Pasta rarely stayed in Villa Roda, but moved nearby to the smaller Villa Trempo. She gave her support, both moral and financial, to the movement to liberate Italy from Austrian rule. During the "Cinque Giornate" of 1848, she opened her Milan residence to the leaders of the Italian cause. Also in that year Pasta, in a patriotic gesture, planted the Italian tri-color flag on top of Brunate, the mountain overlooking Como. To escape persecution for her patriotism, Pasta began several months of self-exile in Lugano, Switzerland. There, on request of Giuseppe Mazzini, she sang a concert to benefit Italian exiles. The Comitato di Mutuo Soccorso sent Pasta a note of thanks which stated: "La di lei opera, nel mentre fa più segnalato l'alto patriottismo di cui è animata, offrì al pubblico una nuova occasione d'apprezzare l'esimio merito che la distingue."<sup>19</sup>

In the summer of 1850, Pasta accompanied Teresa Parodi to London, where Parodi made her début at Her Majesty's Theatre, formerly the King's Theatre. The management persuaded Pasta to sing once more for the English public, and she consented to give three concerts. The first, on 8 July 1850, was held in the Concert Room of Her Majesty's Theatre. The program was "Di tanti palpiti," "Che farò senza Euridice," and "I tuoi frequenti palpiti."

Her voice was in poor condition, but the reviews show an obvious desire to pass as kindly and lightly as possible over her decline and to recall her former powers. The critic for The Times reported:

The announcements had been so sparing, and so chary of particulars, that the public knew very little about the event in advance, and the result was a select audience, composed of some who recollected Madame Pasta when she was the greatest ornament of the lyric drama, and others of our own time, eager to catch the last echoes of a voice which had once filled all Europe with its praises. The first were sure to be pleased, since memory brought back to them the pleasures of days gone by, while the last, in deference to the opinions of their immediate predecessors, listened with respect, applauded the remains of past greatness, and imagined the rest. Such was literally the effect of last night's performance. An audience more enthusiastic and more determined to be amused was never congregated within the walls of a concert-room. The applause that greeted Madame Pasta's appearance on the platform was deafening; it continued at intervals during the whole of the famous recitative and air from Tancredi, "Oh Patria," which those who frequented the Italian Opera more than 20 years ago will remember as one of her grandest efforts, and was redoubled with energy at the conclusion. Similar demonstrations attended Madame Pasta's subsequent performances--the duet, "Mille sospiri e lagrime" [from Rossini's Aureliano in Palmira] with her gifted and favourite pupil, Mademoiselle Parodi, the aria of Gluck, . . . and the brilliant air of Pacini . . . the only difference to be noted being their continually increasing vehemence. After every effort Madame Pasta was recalled upon the platform, amidst cheers and acclamations, and a repetition of the cabaletta of Pacini's aria was insisted upon, and, after some little hesitation, accorded.<sup>20</sup>

Gluck's "Che farò" was considered by the critic of The Times to be Pasta's best effort.

In this fine specimen of one of the greatest of dramatic composers, half of the audience were enabled to welcome with a new delight what the other half were made acquainted with for the first time--a manner of phrasing and a grandeur of expression which belong to a style of singing now, unhappily, almost extinct. A method of respiration which allowed of the longest sentences being uttered without any perceptible break was also remarked with admiration, while a classical severity

of taste in the choice and use of ornaments offered a not less striking example for the consideration of the present school of singers. These high qualities, which, being purely mental, defy the enroachments of time, are still observable in Madame Pasta's singing. Upon the rest it would be ungraceful to dilate. What Madame Pasta was is known to all the world; her name belongs to the history of music, and her career will constitute one of its brightest pages. What she is--a relic of one of the most admirable monuments of executive art--must be contemplated with the veneration due to a fame well earned.<sup>21</sup>

On 11 July 1850, Pasta repeated what she had sung with Parodi five years previously in Bergamo: the duet from Anna Bolena and the final mad scene. According to the critic for the Morning Chronicle:

Gradually Madame Pasta's dignified and impressive delivery of the recitative made the audience conscious of a style to which they had not been accustomed; and it was very soon apparent that much more vocal power was retained than could possibly have been expected. It is in the upper notes, of course, that the voice has suffered most, but in the middle notes there is still much tone and sweetness, while the sfogato lower notes are yet full of thrilling power. The style, which of course is what all reasonable people went to study, is grand beyond conception--a simplicity and force of vocalization conveying direct the impulses of the soul, and without any conventional exaggeration. It was, however, in the finale, from which we had expected least, that the most pleasure was derived--a pleasure scarcely at all mingled with any feeling of doubt lest physical power should prove inadequate. Of course, the tremendous vocal power that once electrified audiences was gone, but the grand and majestic style remained; and some of the feats of vocalization were really surprising, all things considered. It is to the style we must look; and, confining our remark to that alone, without reference to the amount of vocal force, we do not hesitate to say that there is no artist on the stage who could mark out a more lofty and tragic conception. The emotion is conveyed by the countenance, not by merely physical demonstration of excitement, and the attitudes are grand and statuesque.<sup>22</sup>

Henry Chorley was in the audience when Pasta sang excerpts from Anna Bolena. Eleven years later, in 1861, he wrote of the occasion in his Thirty Years' Musical Recollections:

Her voice, which at its best had required ceaseless watching and practice, had been long ago given up by her. Its state of utter ruin on the night in question passes description. She had been neglected by those who, at least should have presented her person to the best advantage admitted by time. Her queenly robes . . . in nowise suited or disguised her figure. Her hairdresser had done some tremendous thing or other with her head--or rather, had left everything undone. A more painful and disastrous spectacle could hardly be looked on. There were artists present who had then, for the first time, to derive some impression of a renowned artist--perhaps, with the natural feeling that her reputation had been exaggerated. Among these was Rachel, whose bitter ridicule of the entire sad show made itself heard throughout the whole theatre, and drew attention to the place where she sat--one might even say sarcastically enjoying the scene. Among the audience, however, was another gifted woman . . . Madame Viardot. Then and not till then, she was hearing Madame Pasta. But truth will always answer to the appeal of truth. Dismal as was the spectacle, broken, hoarse, and destroyed as was the voice, the great style of the singer spoke to the great singer. The first scene was Ann Boleyn's duet with Jane Seymour. The old spirit was heard and seen in Madame Pasta's "Sorgi!" and the gesture with which she signed to her penitent rival to rise. Later she attempted the final mad scene of the opera--that most complicated and brilliant among the mad scenes of the modern musical stage, with its two cantabile movements, its snatches of recitative, and its bravura of despair, which may be appealed to as an example of vocal display, till then unparagoned, when turned to the account of frenzy, not frivolity--perhaps as such commissioned by the superb creative artist. By that time, tired, unprepared, in ruin as she was, she had rallied a little. When, on Ann Boleyn's hearing the coronation music for her rival, the heroine searches for her own crown on her brow, Madame Pasta wildly turned in the direction of the festive sounds, the old irresistible charm broke out; nay, even in the final song, with its roulades, and its scales of shakes ascending by a semitone, the consummate vocalist and tragedian, able to combine form with meaning--the moment of the situation which such personal and musical display as form an integral part of operatic art--was indicated: at least to the apprehension of a younger artists. "You are right!" was Madame Viardot's quick and heartfelt response (her eyes full of tears) to a friend beside her; "You are right! It is like the Cenacolo of da Vinci at Milan--a wreck of a picture, but the picture is the greatest picture in the world!"<sup>23</sup>

Chorley's remarks are particularly well-taken.

The very last concert of Pasta's career took place on 12 July 1850, as a benefit for Italian refugees living in London. Pasta sang "I tuoi frequenti palpiti" and the duet (with Parodi) "Questo cor ti giuro amore" from Rossini's Demetrio e Polibio. According to the critic for the Morning Herald, the concert was " . . . miserably attended, notwithstanding the excellence of the programme."<sup>24</sup> After having reported that Pasta " . . . was received with an almost affectionate burst of welcome, which lasted several minutes,"<sup>25</sup> the critic for the Morning Chronicle declared: .

Upon the whole the voice . . . is wonderfully well preserved. It has, of course, lost much of its resonance, its full volume, and its mellowness of body, and seems occasionally, in spite of all the resources of art, to escape from the vocalist's control; still the lower notes, though husky, preserve something of their wonted power; and the higher tones, although uncertain and not always true, have an occasional clearness and sostenuto power which excited general remark. It is in the upper part of the middle register that the organ is most defective--no power of art being able, in this respect, to disguise, far less supply, the ravages of time. Madame Pasta's style, however, is still marked by that simple and massive breath of delivery, that dignified grandeur of vocal expression, which in days of yore constituted the leading features of the performance of the former queen of lyric song.<sup>26</sup>

These three performances in July 1850 at Her Majesty's Theatre were the last the soprano gave on a public stage.

Pasta spent the remaining years of her life in Italy. She divided her time between Milan and Villa Trempe; several times she visited her daughter Clelia, who had moved to Genoa. Pasta had many visitors at her villa, among whom was Prosper Merimée. In his Lettres à Une Inconnue, Merimée wrote briefly

of his visit to Villa Trempo. "J'ai retrouvé, dans une assez jolie villa des bords du lac [Como], madame Pasta, que je n'avais pas vue depuis qu'elle faisait les beaux jours de l'Opéra italien. Elle a augmenté singulièrement en largeur. Elle cultive ses choux, et dit qu'elle est aussi heureuse que lorsqu'on lui jetait des couronnes et des sonnets."<sup>27</sup>

On 1 April 1865, at Como, Giuditta Pasta died of a viral infection. She had been healthy during the final years of her life; her illness was sudden and unexpected. Funeral services were held at the Duomo in Como. The local newspaper, Il Lario, reported on the occasion and concluded its article by stating: "Noi non sappiamo come meglio compiere questi cenni intorno agli onori funebri resi alla somma artista, se non riportando la bella iscrizione che leggemo a sua onoranza sulla porta maggiore del Duomo."<sup>28</sup>

GIUDITTA PASTA  
GENIO DEL CANTO  
ONORE DEL SECOLO E DELL'ITALIA  
MIRACOLO DI VIRTÙ  
NELLA PIÙ INVIDIATA FORTUNA  
E NELLE AVVERSITÀ  
TE  
ACCOLGANO I CIELI  
DELLE CUI MELODI DOLCISSIME  
BEAVI LA TERRA

NOTES: CHAPTER XV

1. Morning Post (London), 18 May 1837.
2. Morning Herald (London), 18 May 1837.
3. Ibid.
4. Morning Chronicle (London), 23 June 1837.
5. Henry Chorley, Thirty Years' Musical Recollections, (London: Alfred A. Knopf, 1926), pp. 92-93.
6. The Court Journal, 1 July 1837.
7. Giuditta Pasta to Clelia Pasta, 20 October 1840, Pasta Collection of the New York Public Library of the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center.
8. Giuditta Pasta to Clelia Pasta, 8 November 1840, Pasta Collection of the New York Public Library of the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center.
9. Giuditta Pasta to Rachele Negri, 31 January 1841, Pasta Collection of the New York Public Library of the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center.
10. Giuditta Pasta to Rachele Negri, 16 May 1841, Pasta Collection of the New York Public Library of the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Quoted in Maria Ferranti, Giuditta Pasta e i Suoi Tempi, (Milan: n.p., 1935), p. 190.
15. Charlotte Hundlocke to Giuditta Pasta, quoted in Maria Ferranti, Giuditta Pasta i e Suoi Tempi, (Milan: n.p., 1935), p. 191.
16. Giuditta Pasta to [editor of the Giornale della Provincia di Bergamo], 24 August 1845. This is a copy of the letter in Giuseppe Pasta's handwriting, preserved in the Pasta Collection, Teatro Sociale, Como, Italy.

17. Giornale della Provincia di Bergamo, 9 September 1845.
18. Ibid.
19. G. Bossi to Giuditta Pasta, 23 September 1848, Pasta Collection of the New York Public Library of the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center.
20. The Times (London), 9 July 1850.
21. Ibid.
22. Morning Chronicle, 12 July 1850.
23. Henry Chorley, Thirty Years' Musical Recollections, (London: Alfred A. Knopf, 1926), pp. 92-93.
24. Morning Herald, 13 July 1850.
25. Morning Chronicle, 13 July 1850.
26. Ibid.
27. Prosper Mérimée, Lettres à Une Inconnue, (Paris: Michel Lévy frères, 1874), 2 vols., II:20.
28. Il Lario (Como), 8 April 1865.

CONCLUSION

Giuditta Pasta had gone further than any of her contemporaries in demonstrating the potential of opera on the stage. The elusive idea of opera performance--that thrilling moment when voice and gesture combine to create a credible and vividly theatrical character--has been an all too rare occurrence. There have been no great periods of acting in opera; rather one must refer to the handful of performers whose dramatic capabilities earned them the distinction of being so-called "singing-actors." Pasta's ability to think in terms of words as well as notes, and wed music to gesture, made her portrayals touchingly vibrant and strikingly real. Her contemporaries, as best they could, had to follow Pasta's example. Her performances elevated opera from concerts in costume to lyric drama. Gone was the mechanical gesticulation that often mars opera performance; there was art, not artifice, in Pasta's interpretations.

In an age where singers strove to dazzle their audiences with the brilliance of their embellishments, Pasta was chaste in her ornamentation. Though she was capable of intricate passagework, her variations were restricted to those she deemed most appropriate to the dramatic situation and emotional make-up of her role. Her ornaments were considered highly original, and yet always in the style of the composer whose opera she performed. These were determined

after hours of experimentation, and were seldom changed. Pasta realized that acrobatic displays of technical virtuosity were an anachronism in the age of early romanticism. She sought to fuse classic dignity with romantic passion and intensity. Her bravura was always channeled by her dramatic instincts. For Pasta, scales, trills, and roulades were never means in themselves, but rather the appropriate devices to depict a character's emotions. Critical reviews of Pasta's performances often referred to her ornamentation as a means of expression.

From the very beginning of her career, Pasta's attention to the text in the operas she performed was remarked on by the critics. Instead of treating recitative, as many other singers did, as a bothersome approach to the aria, Pasta could transform the sometimes fustian verse, seemingly ludicrous when read, into moments of emotional revelation. Her acute sense of timing, phrasing, and her ability to color the voice to depict with great nuance exactly what emotion she chose, were outstanding features of her art. With a few notes Pasta was able to make a profound impression.

It is not possible to re-create the actual sound of Pasta's voice. Her range, from low A to high E-flat, can be established by examining the scores written for her voice. There was, throughout her career, a husky or veiled quality to her lower tones, and occasional harshness in her highest notes.

To some of her listeners, the veiled tone was expressive, to others it was a technical deficiency. Perfect intonation was never one of Pasta's strong points. She often had pitch problems, and they became especially severe towards the end of her career. To the majority of those who heard Pasta in her prime, however, the occasional lapses of intonation seemed insignificant. There were singers whose voices were more pure, more in tune, more flexible, and more powerful than Pasta's, but failed to equal her powers of expression.

Giuditta Pasta gained recognition as an attrice-cantante because of her rare ability to translate in physical gesture the wide spectrum of emotion in her voice. Her gestures and attitudes seemed a natural extension of the music and text, rather than uncomfortable, obvious appendages. There was a dramatic reason, a thought behind every emotion, and critics marvelled at Pasta's great intellectual conceptions of her roles. Dispensing with the extravagant, affected conventions of pseudo-classicism, Pasta substituted subtle, yet intense gestures that captured the ideal of an emotion. By modern definition, the results may not have been "naturalism" or "realism," but the interpretations were such as could be accepted by Pasta and her audiences as being remarkably true to nature. Many of Pasta's important roles--Mayr's Medea, Bellini's Norma, Rossini's Semiramide--to cite three prominent examples, required depiction of dignity

and nobility. To establish an idea of the stature of the great figures of history and mythology that Pasta often represented, the singer assumed attitudes that were likened to antique sculpture. Their enactment did not appear artificial or stilted. Pasta could remain completely still and yet be so immersed in the drama that the effect was hypnotic. Her dramatic energy was not reckless, and she did not indulge in fits of emotion that might be considered vulgar. Offstage Pasta was unassuming and bourgeois; onstage she could transform herself almost magically into a majestic figure sublimely suited to the character she impersonated. She could not only understand and faithfully portray the deportment of royalty, such as Ann Boleyn, but could be touchingly pathetic as the lovelorn peasant girl Nina, dashing as the chivalrous Tancredi, or greatly sympathetic as Romeo (in Zingarelli's Giulietta e Romeo). Pasta was better suited to serious, rather than comic opera. In the early part of her career she had been assigned several comic parts, but these were essentially secondary roles that she soon dropped from her repertoire. Towards the end of her career, Pasta had only one comic role--Corilla in Gnecco's La Prova d'un'Opera Seria. She was thought amusing in her portrayal because of the self-parody.

Though critics and spectators were taxed to find adequate vocabulary to describe the effect Pasta created on stage, the

soprano herself had little inclination for self-analysis and remained modest and self-effacing. She relied on her great feeling and instinct to discover the core of a given role, and never considered herself an intellectual.

It is difficult, one hundred and fifty years after the fact, to fully comprehend the impact of Pasta's performances. The only modern singer who could be compared to Pasta is Maria Callas. Callas sang and acted several of the great roles written for Pasta--Anna Bolena, Amina, and Norma, and during the 1950s reawakened the public to the dramatic possibilities of a repertory once thought to be hopelessly out-of-date. Callas' sensitivity to and understanding of the vocal and histrionic demands of the operas of Bellini and Donizetti revealed the tremendous theatricality of these works. Like Pasta's, Callas' voice was an imperfect instrument capable of extraordinary expression. The Callas career was a reminder that only in the presence of a great singing-actor can the operas of the primo ottocento be successfully mounted in a tradition true to their original conception.

History has Callas' recordings as permanent, if partial documents of her art. With Pasta, however, one must rely on eyewitness reports and newspaper reviews. The lavish praise showered on Pasta may appear somewhat exaggerated to the modern

reader. The scores written especially for her voice provide an idea of her vocal capabilities, but the actual impact of a Pasta performance cannot be re-created. Several critics, when reviewing Pasta's performances, lamented the fact that future generations would not be able to experience the depth of the impression she made. Pasta's contemporaries considered her an outstanding singing-actress. Her great fame, to put it simply, was due to her uncommon ability to touch the hearts and souls of her listeners--to move her audience. To the Romantics, this was the core of their aesthetic sensibility; Giuditta Pasta helped to symbolize an age.

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