

**Pacini's *L'ultimo giorno di Pompei* in Martina Franca 1996.
An interview with Maestro Giuliano Carella.**

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The *prima esecuzione moderna* of Pacini's *L'ultimo giorno di Pompei* took place in Martina Franca on August 2nd, 1996. On this occasion, I had the honour of holding the following interview with Maestro GIULIANO CARELLA, who conducted the orchestra of the *Teatro Massimo Bellini di Catania* with his usual dynamic terseness and stylistic authenticity.

Th. L. *Maestro Carella, would you please first outline your musical career.*

G. C. I have studied composition and conducting with Franco Ferrara at the *Accademia Chigiana di Siena* and have been conducting operas regularly since 1986, mainly concentrating on the Italian repertory, which I love most, from Rossini to the opera of the 20th century. At the moment we are in Martina Franca, and the most important subject here is the so-called Bel Canto; I say so-called Bel Canto, because that's such a nice phrase which means everything and nothing. Of course, it primarily refers to a certain voicing technique, but it became an aesthetic, even a philosophic notion so that I could also count a score like *Turandot* among this category.

Th. L. *Apart from repertory, you have always devoted yourself to opera rarities, especially recently. I think of Donizetti's Les Martyrs in Nancy, Mercadante's Giuramento in Nantes, Donna Caritea in Martina Franca last year, Demetrio e Polibio in Dordrecht, the autograph version of Bellini's Sonnambula, etc. What do you find tempting when you tackle these scores?*

G. C. I am always surprised to realize that these operas have disappeared from the repertory. Let us take, for example, *L'ultimo giorno di Pompei*. How is it possible that such a beautiful and important score has not been performed during the last 150 years? We have to admit that these operas are very difficult also from a technical point of view, with intricate structures, which have to be interpreted in an accurate way; otherwise we would destroy them. When interpreting these operas, we do not have a model to hold on to; all that we can do is to draw a parallel to repertory operas from

the same stylistic period. That can be rather dangerous, but it is, on the other hand, an interesting and challenging endeavour.

Th. L. *I can imagine that it is very difficult to get and revise the music of these operas.*

G. C. That's always a very complicated task. Emanuele Pasqualin has made the difficult revision of *L'ultimo giorno di Pompei*, which is still a work in progress, since it takes at least three years to produce a critical edition. Pacini—like all of his colleagues—wrote his operas very fast, his handwriting is hard to decipher, especially when we consider the notation of textual indications, such as doubling, ligatures, crescendos, etc. We have also to take into account theatre pragmatics, particularly the wishes of the singers, so that we frequently must restore the original keys from the autograph.

Th. L. *In conclusion, let us deal with the stylistic development from Rossini's Semiramide (1823) to Bellini's Pirata (1827). I have always the impression that, since we do not know the operas in between, there is a stylistic "gap," which now can be filled when considering Pacini's L'ultimo giorno di Pompei (1825) and Mercadante's Caritea regina di Spagna (1826).*

G. C. Especially in *Caritea* you can recognize the stylistic model of Rossini very clearly, but also in Pacini, as he says in his *Memorie artistiche*. There is an obvious line of development from Rossini to Verdi. *L'ultimo giorno di Pompei*, though, proves rather autonomous. In his contribution to the programme, Giovanni Carli Ballola speaks of a reaction against Rossini during the mid-1820s; maybe it was an unconscious reaction. For example, the two great duets in the 1st and 2nd acts of *L'ultimo giorno di Pompei* show, at first sight, some similarities with *Semiramide*, but in Appio's part I can find certain romantic features which point to Gualtiero in *Pirata*. And particularly the concertatos are very progressive and evidently antedate features of Bellinian protoromanticism. I would also consider some cabalettas this way, e.g. Ottavia's aria finale «Del figlio mio dolente», which is a very expressive piece of music.

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