

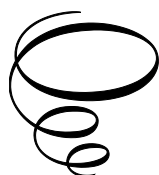
Meyerbeer's Italian Operas

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By

Robert Ignatius Letellier

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Frontispiece: Giacomo Meyerbeer as a young man. Engraving from the Pacini vocal score of *Il Crociato in Egitto* (Paris, 1825)

“At that time all Italy was feasting in sweet ecstasy. The whole country had finally found, it seems, a long hoped-for Paradise. All that was needed to complete their happiness was the music of Rossini. In spite of myself, I—like all the rest—was caught up in this gossamer web of sound. It was as if I were bewitched in a magic garden. I did not want to go into it, but I could not help myself. All my feelings, all my thoughts, were of Italy. After having lived there for a year, I felt as if I were a real Italian. I thought as an Italian, felt and experienced like an Italian. Obviously such a complete transformation of my inner life would have an effect upon my style of music. I did not want, as so many suppose, to imitate Rossini or to write in the Italian manner, but I had to compose in the style which my state of mind compelled me to adopt.” (Meyerbeer, letter to Dr. Jean F. Schucht, 1856)

“Lovely Italy is a second homeland for me, for its beautiful sky and for the dear friends I possess there” (Meyerbeer, 14 November 1824)

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INTRODUCTION

The figure of Giacomo Meyerbeer is one of the most enigmatic in musical history. During his life, and until the First World War, he was counted among the Pantheon of great composers, and his operas dominated the stages of the world with a hegemony that seemed unassailable. The growth of nationalism, an emergent and vociferous school of critical prejudice inspired by Robert Schuman and Richard Wagner, changes in musical taste, a move away from the heroic (except for Wagner) and the decline in the traditions of *bel canto* singing, are a few of the factors influencing this cultural phenomenon. A slow process of revival and re-examination began in the 1950s, but the size of the operas, their insistence on team cooperation (which mitigates against their being chosen as a vehicle for a single great star), the dearth of published scores and absence of definitive performing editions, the enduring negative public perception of his musical worth, ignorance of his life and the overall range of his *oeuvre*, have all contributed to holding back the reviving impetus. Nonetheless, the production of *Gli Ugonotti* at La Scala Milan in 1962 was a landmark in a process of rediscovery¹ that is currently finding an unexplored world of freshness and originality in the Italian operas of the composer's early career. In 2004-05, in addition to revivals of *L'Africaine* in Strasbourg, *Le Prophète* in Münster, and *Les Huguenots* in Metz and Liège, *Margherita d'Anjou* was produced in Leipzig and *Semiramide riconosciuta* given for the first time since 1820 at the Rossini Festival in Bad Wildbad. In 2006, *Semiramide* was also given at Martina Franca. Opera Rara further released a recording of the forgotten *L'Esule di Granata*.

The first major move of the composer's artistic life was his extended sojourn in Italy, where he confronted and reacted to the overwhelming operatic genius of the age, Rossini. Meyerbeer's response was not simply to imitate him, but to digest his example in the context of the late eighteenth century, to absorb the traditions of *bel canto* into his own rapidly developing dramatic instincts. All of these ideas were confronted symbolically in the secular cantata *Gli Amori di Teolinda* (1817), which constitutes a kind of overture to the Italian years. Using a text by Gaetano Rossi, his friend and principal collaborator at this time, and cognizant of a musical inheritance that included the generation before Rossini, he

succeeded in this monodrama (for soprano and *concertante* clarinet) to sum up important musical features of the age—the concern for vocal production, ornamentation and the obbligate traditions of the preceding century.

The six Italian operas which followed between 1817 and 1824 established Meyerbeer as a significant composer in Italy, with an international reputation growing more or less incrementally with each new work. The operas divide themselves into three pairs of two: *Romilda e Costanza* (1817) and *Semiramide [riconosciuta]* (1819) are characterized by a pure, serene, naive quality, as the composer, working within the formulae of the contemporary *melodramma*, produced his own response that took account also of pre-Rossinian models, and showed an instant mastery of the language of Italian lyricism. The next pair, *Emma di Resburgo* (1819) and *Margherita d'Anjou* (1820), the composer's first international successes, were alert to wider Romantic impulses of romance and history, and in a growing personal adventurousness of form and sound, they vigorously reinterpreted the operatic language of the day. The impulse was carried even further in *L'Esule di Granata* (1822) and *Il Crociato in Egitto* (1824), where development of the *Introduzione*, a fluent handling and modification of structure, an imaginative expansion of forces, showed awareness of both the French traditions of grandeur and Rossini's experiments in the *opera seria* in Naples. All of these operas are concerned with situations of exile and imposture, search and restitution, confusion and fulfilment, and certainly reflect a subliminal thematic treatment of issues at work in the composer's life: his view of himself as a searching artist, an alien Jew, an outsider living away from his Prussian home and seeking his true *métier*.

Italian Operas: *opera seria*

At the end of 1814, Meyerbeer went to Paris, a sojourn he regarded as “the first and most significant place for my dramatic and musical education”—as he wrote to his father Jakob Herz Beer². The overwhelming impressions of the cultural metropolis of Europe provoked a creative crisis in Meyerbeer, the resolution of which was paradoxically ended only by his move to Italy. On the one hand, the experience of Paris strengthened Meyerbeer in his cosmopolitan cultural convictions, making him aware of the need for some vital experience of Italy. And indeed, contact with the works of Rossini (whose operas were still unknown in Paris), initiated an aesthetical process that fascinated the young composer, so open to all new things.

The Context: Meyerbeer's Years in Italy

1816

After visiting London in 1815, and a brief sojourn in Paris in January 1816 on his return, Meyerbeer travelled to Italy where he would remain until 1826. It is here that Meyer Beer became Giacomo Meyerbeer by Italianizing his adopted patronym (Jakob), and definitively prefixing his own first name to his family name. Early in the year, in Verona, he was reunited with his friends, the clarinetist Heinrich Baermann³ and the soprano Hélène Harlas⁴ who were on tour. He also made the acquaintance of Gaetano Rossi who lived in this city. As a consequence, he produced his dramatic monologue with clarinet obbligato *Gli Amori di Teolinda* (to a text by Rossi), written expressly for a benefit concert for Baermann and Harlas. From the end of March until the end of June, Amalia Beer's letters were directed to Meyerbeer in Rome, then in June and July to Naples. From late July until late September he visited Sicily where he collected thirty-eight folk melodies from Palermo, Syracuse and Messina.⁵ By early October he was in Genoa and later in the month in Venice. By the end of the year, we hear of him in Florence and Rome.

1817

At the beginning of January, Meyerbeer accompanied his mother as far as Munich on her return journey to Berlin. By the end of January, he had returned to Rome. In March he visited Milan, and then left for Venice. By now he had made important contacts with Pietro Lichtenthal⁶ in Milan and Franz Sales Kandler⁷ in Venice. F. Peters in Leipzig published his *Sieben geistliche Gesänge*. The first written communication with Rossi dates from 8 May (a letter from Angelica on behalf of her husband), with an undertaking from Gaetano himself on 14 May to provide "un Melo-drama a piacere del Signore Giacomo Meyerbeer". The contract with the impresario Girolamo Mazzucato⁸ for *Romildae Costanza* followed on 1 June. On 19 July, the premiere of Meyerbeer's first Italian opera *Romilda e Costanza* took place at the Nuovo Teatro in Padua. This *melodrama serimserio in due atti* was successful. The title role was created by Benedetta Rosamunda Pisaroni⁹, Meyerbeer stayed in Venice until the end of August, and then then moved to Milan for the rest of the year.

1818

"My diary was first started in 1811 in Darmstadt, then interrupted, continued in 1812 in Munich and not completed, begun anew in 1813 in

Vienna and neglected after 4 months; attempted again in 1815 in Paris before being given up after 2 months, then tried for the last time in London at the end of the same year and abandoned after 6 weeks: perhaps I should doubt whether I have constancy enough to keep a steady daily record. The closing year always leaves me sunk in despondency when I look back at the disproportion between the generous time given me and poverty of my achievement, and yet I am always filled with courage and lively hopes of improvement at this time. I then think that by redoubled diligence and efforts I will make good the lost time. It is just such an (perhaps delusory) ecstasy which has again taken hold of me, so that in 1818 I will try once more, if I can be steadfast enough, to keep a regular diary.

Before I write down the first days of January, I want to record a few impressions about three lyrical works which have just appeared during the first days of the Carneval in Milan: 1) *I due Valdomiri*, a new *opera seria*, libretto by Felice Romani, music by Winter¹⁰; 2) *Icaro e Daedalo*, a big ballet by [Salvatore] Viganò¹¹, music mostly by Lichenthal (both at La Scala); 3) *Adelaide e Comingio*¹², a sentimental opera by Rossi, with music by the young Giovanni Pacini¹³, son of the well-known *buffo*¹⁴, (at the Teatro Ré).

Winter's opera failed, and rightly so I think. It is feeble, monotonous and without melodies, something the public here will not tolerate. One expects from the author of so many lovely overtures, at least a good example, but even the one in question made not the slightest impression because the principal theme, while well developed, is too small and fragmentary for this colossal theatre [Ex.1]. The same is true of the second theme in A major, whose second half is enjambed with the first (a sin against the clarity of the exposition) being, moreover, woven into the first theme after the fourth bar. If I am not mistaken, this theme goes something like this [Ex. 2].

The Introduction and the tenor's aria are insignificant, and elicited neither approval nor enthusiasm from the public. The duet between Tomino and Mico passed by just as coldly, but I found the beginning of the *stretta* brilliant and fiery [Ex.3].

But instead of letting this song flow on freely, he seeks to modulate it, doing so in stages, and eventually, on the entry of the tonic, has it carried strongly by the chorus; while this is logically thought through, in an Italian opera duet its effect is completely misplaced. The chorus of virgins which precedes the prima donna's aria is beautifully written for the voices, but in

thought and style is modulated like a chorus by Gluck [Ex. 4].

The prima donna's aria which follows comprises a romance-like *andante* (a minor, 2/4) accompanied by only the harp and occasional woodwind harmonies. With a change of metre, the *allegretto* in A major then begins. If the aria had had two themes, this turning point would no doubt have pleased, but it was carried only by the lovely performance of Camporesi¹⁵. The subsequent trio did not make the slightest impression, apart from the middle *tempo* which is obviously modulated after a piece in *Die Zauberflöte* [Ex.5].



Ex. 1 First theme from the overture to Winter's *I due Valdomiri*

This musical score for Ex. 2 is divided into two systems. The first system includes staves for Clar. Fag. (Clarinet and Bassoon), Violine Bass (Violin Bass), and Violino (Violin). The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#) and the time signature is 2/4. The Clar. Fag. part has a melodic line. The Violine Bass part has a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The Violino part has a melodic line. The second system shows I Violino and II Violino parts, both with melodic lines. The score is divided into three measures, with the last measure ending with 'etc'.

Ex. 2 Second theme (a & b) from the overture to Winter's *I due Valdomiri*

Sopran

Tenor

bis

etc

Ex. 3 The strettina in the soprano-tenor duet in Winter's *I due Valdomiri*

Poco Andante

Ex. 4 Chorus of Virgins from Winter's *I due Valdomiri*



Ex. 5 Theme from the trio in Winter's *I due Valdomiri*

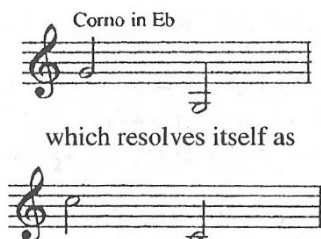
The whole finale is monotonous and cold (and during 15 to 20 minutes, the ear is never enlivened by a single striking theme). The *stretta* (if I am not mistaken, in E flat major) with *ostinato* triplets on the violins is very fiery and powerful, but again without any definite theme. No stronger or better impression remains with me about Act 2. The accompaniment of the singer Metzger's aria has a local colour expressed in the strings, as mysterious and nocturnally eerie as the text itself: A flat major, clarinets playing the principal line (at least in the *ritornello*), violoncelli in sixths, the bass in quavers, and the whole largely in 3 parts, this 'emptiness' creating a marvelous effect [Ex. 6].

The *terzettino* for the three soprano voices is one of the few pieces which made a definite appeal: it is without accompaniment (a sort of *preghiera*), and only on the reprise of the theme do the horns provide a bassline. The narrow range of the harmony which necessarily results from using three soprano voices exercises a wonderful effect. In the quintet which follows, nothing particularly struck me other than the moment where the bells toll. In order to achieve an *ostinato* imitating the bells, the horns constantly play the following figure (the piece moves from E flat major to resolve itself in C [Ex.7] and the 5 vocal parts weave around this note in different harmonies). The following harmonies make an especially beautiful effect around this kind of pedal note [Ex. 8].

Camporesi's big aria (which has considerable impact because of her performance) is in itself not important apart from the lovely style, and this, in any case, is partly modelled on a scene from Nasolini's *Merope*, and partly on one from Carafa's *Adele de Lusignano*¹⁶ (especially the fact that the cabaletta begins in A flat major but is sung in C major). The closing chorus is insignificant. Neither the composer nor the singers (Madame Camporesi, Schönberger, Metzger and Bonoldi¹⁷) were called out after the first performance, although the friends of the management redressed this affront on the second and third performances by calling out the composer.



Ex. 6 Theme from the Act-3 soprano aria in Winter's *I due Valdomiri*



Ex. 7 Horn part (a & b) from the act 2 terzettino on Winter's *I due Valdomiri*



Ex. 8 Andante from the quintet in Winter's *I due Valdomiri*

The ballet *Icaro e Daedalo* is by the first among all Italian ballet masters, Salvatore Viganò¹⁸, and also did not live up to expectations generated for the public by the 7-month long rehearsals. One found many ingenious details which is to be expected from such a great man, but in the end, one missed his passion and rational guidance which so distinguish say *Mirra*,

especially in the variety of the groupings and general performance¹⁹. The whole seemed more like a sketch. The music is largely by my friend Lichtenthal from Milan. I arranged the last of the additional pieces used. The trombones and trumpets, which depict the pushing of the nereids, are placed on the stage, and come in suddenly on every fourth measure of the *andante* with a fanfare, so that however much the harmonies may roam, on every fourth bar they are obliged to return to the octave, fifth or third of the keynote. This gives the melody an air of originality, as also the constantly recurring refrain [Ex. 9]. The theme of the *allegro* is also not bad [Ex.10].



Ex. 9 Fanfare from Lichtenthal's ballet *Icaro e Daedalo*

Ex. 10 Allegro from Lichtenthal's ballet *Icaro e Daedalo*

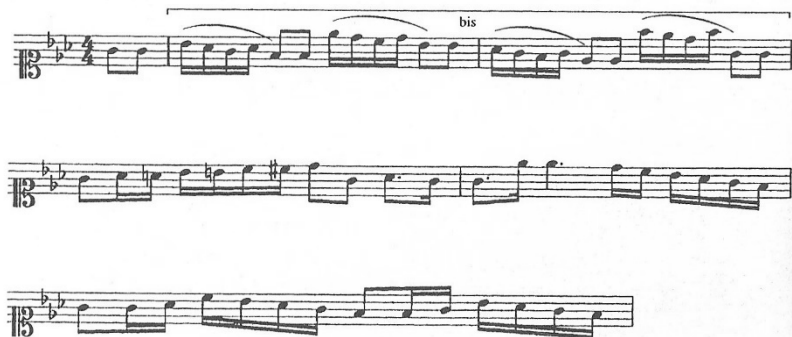
In the Teatro Ré, the last autumn opera (*Il Re Teodoro* by Paisiello²⁰) was performed until 30 December, and on the same day a new opera by the

young Pacini (*Adelaide e Comingio*, a *semiseria*) was produced. It is popular, and was bound to please because of the number and charm of motifs, except that if everything the author stole or borrowed was to be removed, hardly anything original would be left. The public applauded at the very beginning for the principal theme of the Overture [Ex.11].

I do not like this melody because it is made up of constant modulations and so offers no adequate material to work with. The modulations in the development no longer hold attention when they have already been so misused in the exposition. Of pleasanter effect, and really original, is the passage in the Act 2 aria of the prima donna [Ex.12].



Ex. 11 First theme from the overture to Pacini's *Adelaide e Comingio*



Ex. 12 Theme from the Act-2 soprano aria in Pacini's *Adelaide e Comingio*

This opera concludes the series of new things to be seen in Milan. I still want to hear [Rosa] Morandi²¹ in Cremona—given that I will write for her this coming autumn in Trieste; the same applies to Velluti²² (who is in Parma): I do not want to write to him, but to hear and study him, something which is always useful and interesting for a composer of vocal music. Finally I want to accompany my brother Michael (who is returning to Germany) to Trieste. We set out on 31 December (1817), in the company of my Veronese friend Failoni, for Cremona where we arrived the same evening in time to hear *Elisabetta Regina in Inghilterra*, an *opera seria* by Pavesi²³. Since, however, we had the misfortune of finding that [Rosa] Morandi had become dangerously ill two days before, the opera was sung by a replacement, and so we decided to go to Parma right away on the morrow and to return only when Morandi has recovered. I will therefore keep my review of the opera and the ballet *Cesare in Egitto*²⁴ until then.

January 1818

Thursday 1 January. We left Cremona by the post in order to reach Parma by the same evening. The shocking road, however, dashed our hopes. We had reached Casa Maggiore by sunset and the bargeman no longer wanted to cross the Po at that stage. We therefore had to pass the first night of the year in this wretched town.

Friday 2 January. The tavern near the post where we lodged was bad and extremely expensive. Even though they forced another 4 horses on us, we still arrived in Parma only towards evening. The road, which is appalling in winter, furthermore offered no lovely views while the heavy snow gave the landscape a monotonous appearance. (We lodged in Parma at Il Pavone [The Peacock]; supper at 4 fr., room for 2 at 4 fr., firewood very expensive.)

Saturday 3 January. We called on Velutti who received us with extraordinary friendliness and affection, even though I have only ever spoken to him once before in my life (at Perucchini's²⁵ in Venice). He warned us that he was very unwell and hardly able to sing. In the inn they had already told us that Mme Bellock had actually appeared in the opera, and that this, as well as the music, had not pleased Velutti at all. He sang us his variations on the theme *Nel cor non più mi sento*, which he had written for the Academy in Venice when Catalani²⁶ had sang her own version there. His are by far more original and artistic, but would have little effect in concert. The big weakness in his voice is mostly in the intonation of reduced intervals

which comes through a great deal. We spent the rest of the day indoors because the weather is so bad.

In the evening we went to the theatre. They performed *Balduino*, an *opera seria* in 2 acts by Perucchini with music by Niccolini²⁷. Niccolini wrote this opera 2 years ago (in the spring of 1816), with Velutti, Framezzani and Mme Zahré, for the Theatre in Lucca²⁸. The opera did not succeed then and has not proved popular. The beautiful choral work of *Desirò and his 10 Apostles*, which he wrote at the time, and the great success which Coccia²⁹ had enjoyed shortly before with his *Clotilda*³⁰, tempted him to follow the same path and write 9 individual choruses for the opera of which only one can really be called 'good'. I felt this because of its brevity and originality. It is for warriors who, in the stillness of the night, plan to attack the enemy camp. The chorus is entirely without orchestra, accompanied only by muffled drums behind the scene" [Ex.13].³¹



Ex. 13 Chorus for Niccolini's *Balduino*

Meyerbeer returned to Venice where he remained for most of the year. By mid-December Amalia Beer was addressing her letters to Turin where Meyerbeer had gone to direct the rehearsals of his next opera, *Semiramide*.

1819

The première of *Semiramide* (*dramma per musica in due atti*) took place on 3 February at the Teatro Regio in Turin³², with the contralto Carolina Bassi³³ in the title role and Bonoldi singing the first tenor. The text was Gaetano Rossi's adaptation of Metastasio's libretto (1729)³⁴. This was followed by the première of *Emma di Resburgo* (*melodrama eroico in due atti*) on 26 June at the Teatro San Benedetto in Venice³⁵ with Rosa Morandi, Carolina Cortesi and Luciano Bianchi. The libretto was again by Gaetano Rossi³⁶. During the winter of 1819-20 Meyerbeer remained largely in Milan and Venice.

1820

On 11 February *Emma di Resburgo* was produced in Berlin in a German version as *Emma von Leicester*, and directed by Weber. In June, the composer was in Bologna for a revival of *Semiramide*. All track of his movements is lost until the première of *Margherita d'Anjou* (*melodrama semiserio in due atti*) which took place on 14 November at the Teatro alla Scala in Milan³⁷. The libretto by Felice Romani³⁸ was based on Guilbert de Pixérécourt's *mélodrame-historique*³⁹. The principal roles were created by Carolina Pellegrini, Rosa Mariani, Nicolas-Prosper Levasseur⁴⁰ and Nicola Bassi⁴¹. On 15 December, Meyerbeer signed a contract with Giovanni Paterni, the impresario of the Teatro Argentina in Rome, to write a new opera to be entitled *Almanzore* to a libretto by Rossi on a play by Jean-Pierre Claris de Florian to be performed in February 1821.⁴²

1821

Meyerbeer spent the first months of the year in Rome, but *Almanzore* could not be produced: he became ill and there were problems in the theatre (Carolina Bassi was also unwell).⁴³ By July he was in Venice, and by August settled in Milan and working with Romani on a new libretto, perhaps the redrafting of Rossi's *Almanzore*.⁴⁴

1822

The première of *L'Esule di Granata* (*melodramma serio in due atti*) took place on 12 March at the Teatro alla Scala in Milan.⁴⁵ The libretto was by Felice Romani and the principal roles created by Luigi Lablache⁴⁶, Benedetta Rosamunda Pisaroni⁴⁷ and Adelaide Tosi. In August, Meyerbeer was in Recoaro.⁴⁸ He then travelled to Berlin to see his family.⁴⁹ On his return to Italy, he was established in Venice for the rest of the year.

1823

Until May, Meyerbeer remained in Venice. From May until August he lived in Milan, visited Recoaro from August to September, and Milan in October, before returning to Venice. The year was devoted to correspondence with Rossi on the libretto of a new opera and its composition.⁵⁰ In December, he signed a contract with the English impresario of the San Carlo in Naples for an opera scheduled for autumn 1824, again with a text by Rossi.⁵¹

1824

The première of *Il Crociato in Egitto* (*opera seria in due atti*) took place on 7 March at the Teatro del Fenice in Venice.⁵² The libretto, by Gaetano Rossi, was based on a French *melodrama* *Les Chevaliers de Malte* (1813)⁵³, and the title role created by the castrato, Giovanni Battista Velluti⁵⁴. On 7 May the opera was staged at the Teatro della Pergola in Florence. Meyerbeer was invited to supervise the rehearsals of this work in Paris by Sothènes de la Rochefoucauld, Sub-Intendant to Rossini who had assumed the directorship of the Théâtre-Italien on 30 July together with Paer.⁵⁵ By November Meyerbeer was in Trieste to direct the autumn production of his new opera.

1825

In January *Il Crociato in Egitto* was again triumphantly produced in Trieste.⁵⁶ On 23 February Meyerbeer went to Paris, but he was back in Italy to oversee a production of *Il Crociato* in Padua in early July. The English première of the opera took place at the King's Theatre in London on 29 June.⁵⁷ Meyerbeer arrived in Paris in late July to supervise rehearsals⁵⁸ for the French première which followed on 22 September at the Théâtre-Italien.⁵⁹ The composer afterwards returned to Italy. On 27 October his father, Jakob Herz Beer, died in Berlin. Meyerbeer did not attend the funeral, but returned to Berlin by 28 November to conclude a formal marriage contract with his cousin, Minna Mosson.⁶⁰

1826

In February Meyerbeer was in Milan to direct the last rehearsals of *Il Crociato*, which was produced on 2 March. On 4 March he travelled back to Berlin via Augsburg (9 March). *Marguerite d'Anjou* was produced at Théâtre de l'Odéon in Paris on 11 March. This was an adaptation by Thomas Sauvage⁶¹ of the original Italian version, with the music arranged by Pierre Crémont⁶². It seems unlikely that the composer was in attendance. On 28 May, *Margherita d'Anjou* was revived at La Scala. On 25 May, Meyerbeer married his first cousin, Minna Mosson in Berlin, and set out for Paris on the same day with his bride in order to begin work on a new operatic scenario, *Le Nympe du Danube*.⁶³ On 9 June, he received the news of Carl Maria von Weber's death in London (5 June); Weber's heirs committed the sketches of his projected opera *Die drei Pintos* to Meyerbeer, with the commission to complete it.⁶⁴ On 30 September, *Il Crociato* was performed at the San Carlo in Naples and on 14 November simultaneously in Munich (in German) and in Dresden (at the Italian Opera).⁶⁵

MEYERBEER'S ITALIAN OPERAS

1. *ROMILDA E COSTANZA* [*ROMILDA AND CONSTANCE*]

Melodramma semiserio in due atti [semi-serious melodrama in two acts]

WORLD PREMIÈRE

19 July 1817

Padua, Teatro Nuovo

Romilda	Benedetta Rosamunda Pisaroni
Costanza	Caterina Lipparini
Teobaldo	Luigi Campitelli
Retello	Luciano Bianchi
Pierotto	Nicola Bassi
Albertonecchè	Giovanni Lipparini
Lotario	Agostino Trentanove
Annina	Annetta Lipparini
Ugo	Francesco Desirò

I

Meyerbeer was in Italy by 1816, the year of Rossini's triumph with his comic masterpiece, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*. In Venice, Pietro Generali (1783-1832) was also enjoying a measure of success with his *I baccanti di Roma*. Meyerbeer placed himself under his guidance to study the characteristics of the Italian mode of writing. He then travelled the length of the land to assimilate the stages, singers and manners of the people. He was lucky to meet and begin an important working relationship with the famous librettist Gaetano Rossi of Verona.

The consequence was his first Italian opera that received its première on 19 July 1817 at the Teatro Nuovo in Padua during the season in honour of St Anthony, the patron saint of the city. Initially the opera had been intended for the Teatro San Benedetto in Venice; Meyerbeer had agreed to write the work for nothing, and to pay the librettist himself. When the impresario demanded a down payment of 100 Louis d'or towards