

## Background

Amilcare Ponchielli (1834 - 1886) was born in Paderno, Italy and studied at the Milan Conservatory between the ages of nine and eighteen. While there he composed his first opera, *Il Sindaco Babbeo* in collaboration with three other students. Following his studies, he worked for a time as an organist in Cremona and later as bandmaster in Piacenza. From 1856 to 1867 six operas preceded the one for which he became world famous, *La Gioconda* (La Jaconde or Mona Lisa).

*Il Convegno* (the meeting) is a brilliant clarinet duo with band accompaniment. Faint-of-heart would-be soloists need not apply. It demands virtuosity and rigorously rehearsed timing throughout. Though its composition date is uncertain, newspaper reports from as early as 1869 have been found of its performance in Cremona. Raffaella Barbieato at the Biblioteca Statale reports having uncovered as many as forty-three copies of the original score which is assumed to have been lost or stolen. She suspects that one or two additional manuscripts may still lurk uncatalogued.

This arrangement is adapted from the Alessandro Vessella manuscript #287 courtesy of the Biblioteca di Archeologia e Storia dell'Arte Roma - Ministero per i Beni e Le Attività Culturali – Italia and the piano reduction by Elio Peruzzi. The parts for the accompanying instruments have been transcribed faithfully from the Vessella manuscript with the single exception that all repeated 32<sup>nd</sup> notes indicated in the first movement for accompanying clarinets have been changed to 16<sup>ths</sup>.

Alessandro Vessella was conductor of the Banda Municipale di Roma and exerted a lasting influence on the evolution of the instrumentation of the Italian band in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Through his influence, saxophones, the sopranino Ab Clarinet, the contra-alto clarinet in Eb, the bass trombone, the Eb Cornet and the Timpani all made their debut. He promoted the idea of homogeneous families of like instruments: complete families of clarinets, saxophones and flicorni. Such an arrangement allowed auxiliary instruments to execute notes in the extreme registers while the middle instruments continued to operate in their most comfortable ranges. Thanks to Vessella's influence the Italian band grew in size, sophistication and importance. The broader spectrum of musical expression of the Italian band inspired composers to write more serious works for them. The classic symphonic poem for band, *Il Giudizio Universale* (The Last Judgment) by de Nardis is one of these compositions.

This edition is in the public domain and at this writing is stored as a Finale 3.7 file at the World Wide Web site <http://www.csudh.edu/oliver/clarmusi/clarmusi.htm> from where it may be downloaded at no charge. The MIDI file of this work progresses from the first to the second movement without interruption but with a short break between the second and third movements.

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Oliver Seely  
Lakewood, CA  
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