

Amilcare

PONCHIELLI

LA GIOCONDA

AN OPERA IN FOUR ACTS
With English and Italian Text

VOCAL SCORE

K 06360

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6360 KALMUS VOCAL SCORE



Donchelli Amilcare

AMILCARE PONCHIELLI

HIS distinguished composer has taken so high a rank amongst modern musicians, that a few particulars respecting his career can hardly fail to prove acceptable.

Amilcare Ponchielli was born, August 31st, 1834, at Paderno Fasolaro – now called Paderno Cremonese. He was the only son of Giovanni Ponchielli, an organist of considerable ability, who taught him the rudiments of music. His progress was so rapid, and his musical gifts were so remarkable, that he was placed under the instruction of Signor Gorno Francesco, the eminent organist of Casalbuttano. At the age of 11 he was admitted as a student at the Milan Conservatorio, after an examination, brilliantly passed. His first teachers were Signori Angelini, Rossi and Frisi, and he subsequently studied under the celebrated teacher of harmony, Mazzucato. In 1854 he quitted the Milan Conservatorio, with the diploma of « Maestro Compositore, » and in the following year, at the age of 21, produced his first opera, *I Promessi Sposi*. The libretto was the work of several amateur hands, and when the opera was submitted to the managers Pirola and Cattaneo, they declared that with such a libretto no opera could succeed. He found a kind and sympathising friend in Signor Bortolo Piatti, who encouraged him to persevere, and agreed to allow him 1000 francs a year for 3 years; Piatti undertaking all business details, and contenting himself with a commission of 5 per cent on sales. At this time, 1857, Ponchielli was settled at Cremona, where he gave lessons in music, and played the organ at the church of St. Imerio. In 1859 he completed the first and second acts of an opera entitled *La Stella del Monte*, but the librettist, having found a more wealthy purchaser, withdrew his libretto. In the previous year Ponchielli had completed an opera entitled *Bertrando del Bornio*, for the Teatro Carignano, Turin, but withdrew the work, on finding that the singers engaged for it were wholly incompetent. He continued to work hard; earning a scanty subsistence, and in the spring of 1861 was glad to accept the post of Director of the *Banda musicale* at Piacenza.

On the 26 December 1863, his opera, *Roderico, Re dei Goti*, (Roderick, King of the Goths) was produced at the Teatro Comunale, Piacenza. Ill fortune again befell him. The barytone on whom the principal rôle devolved, was so hoarse and indisposed, that Ponchielli protested against the production of the work. His objections were disregarded, and the opera was so coldly received, that it was at once withdrawn.

In 1864 a Mass composed by Ponchielli for the church of St. Imerio was produced with great success. He was appointed Director of the Banda Comunale at Cremona, and the salary was raised from 1200 to 2000 francs *per annum*. In the same year he wrote, for the grand festival in honour of the 6.th Centenary of Dante, an « Episode on the theme of *Francesca di Rimini* » and also an « Invocation to Dante, » Both works were enthusiastically applauded, and public attention was drawn to the merits of the Cremonese composer.

In 1872 his opera *I Promessi Sposi* was produced at the Teatro Dal Verme, Milan, and met with genuine success, although not equal in merit to the opera in the form it has since assumed.

In 1873 he wrote for La Scala, Milan, the ballet *Le Due Gemelle*, which was brilliantly successful. The music, although heard at a disadvantage when divorced from the scenic action it is intended to illustrate, is worthy of admiration for its intrinsic merit, and selections from it have been successfully produced at the Saturday Concerts of the Crystal Palace in England, and in various continental cities.

In 1874 he was married to Teresina Brambilla, who had filled the rôle of Lucia when his remodelled opera, *I Promessi Sposi*, was produced at Milan, and in the same year his fifth opera, *I Lituani*, was produced at La Scala with great success. From *I Promessi Sposi* to *I Lituani* was indeed a great step, for in the latter work Ponchielli revealed powers which had scarcely been suspected, and won the applause of the best musical connoisseurs. Encouraged by his success, he finally settled at Milan, where *I Lituani* was repeated with increased success at La Scala during the Carnival 1874-1875.

In 1875 his Cantata in honour of Donizetti was produced, and met with an enthusiastic reception. Throughout this year he worked hard on the work, *La Gioconda*, which was destined to win for him a high place in the foremost rank of modern operatic composers.

La Gioconda, produced at La Scala, Milan, 8 April 1876, with Signore Mariani (*Gioconda*), Biancolini (Laura), and Barlani-Dini (*La Cieca*), Signori Gayarre (Enzo), and Aldighieri (Barnaba) in the chief rôles, was hailed with enthusiastic applause, and has held its place as one of the most popular operas in the repertory of the modern Italian stage. The libretto, partly founded on Victor Hugo's drama, *Angelo, le Tyran de Syracuse*, is one of the most powerful and poetical works of modern times, and must fascinate the reader, even apart from the music which it has inspired. The name of the librettist is given as « Tobia Gorrio, » but it is no secret that we have here an anagram of the name of ARRIGO BOITO, the brilliant writer and composer of *Mefistofele*. The original cast was very strong. For the rôle of *La Gioconda*, an artist endowed with remarkable personal attractions, grand histrionic powers, and splendid vocal gifts, developed by assiduous cultivation, was found in Signora Mariani, whose impersonation of the ill-fated heroine has never been equalled, and is not likely ever to be surpassed. Signore Biancolini and Barlani-Dini were worthy co-adjutors, and Signori Gayarre and Aldighieri approached perfection. On the first night the opera did not go smoothly, for want of sufficient rehearsals, but its merit was at once apparent, and the leading musical critics hastened to recognise in *La Gioconda* a work of the highest order. The eminent critic Filippi wrote in *La Perseveranza* « With the exception of Verdi, there is not this day to be found in Italy any composer but Ponchielli, capable of writing an opera of the importance and merit of *La Gioconda*... * * * My conscience would be oppressed by grave remorse were I not to acknowledge the great, the very great value of this new work of Ponchielli. »

The leading critics of Rome, Venice, Genoa, etc., etc. re-echoed the praises bestowed at Milan, and *La Gioconda* at once became the most popular opera on the Italian lyric stage. Nevertheless, it was capable of improvement, and during the three years following its production Ponchielli laboured hard to bring it into the shape it has finally assumed. In his first opera, he had closely followed the conventional Italian models; in the revised version of *La Gioconda* he cast these models aside, and — while involuntarily satisfying the universal demand for melody — placed above all other considerations the development of the dramatic element.

The re-written opera was produced at Genoa, December 1879, and at La Scala, Milan, in February 1880. The revised edition was hailed with enthusiasm by the musical public, and by the leaders of musical opinion, and special admiration was expressed for the entirely new finale of the third act. Signor Filippi, who had been guarded in his praise of the original work, bestowed unsparing praise on it, in its remodelled form, and wrote to the following effect respecting the new finale above mentioned:

« The new concerted finale became the culminating passage of the opera; awakened and sustained enthusiasm, and gave to the success of *La Gioconda* the character of a triumph. — Not only the music, at this point, has been changed, but also the dramatic situation. In the first edition of *La Gioconda*, the discovery of Laura's corpse was followed by a « finale concertato » in the conventional form, with the « adagio » followed by a « stretta » etc. We now have the unexpected arrival of Enzo, which leads to the development of a terrible conflict of passions and sentiments. It is not until the end of this scene

that Badoero shows to his terrified guests the corpse of his wife, whom he has poisoned. The situation is powerful, and Ponchielli has treated it with stupendous effect, — producing a piece, new in form, full of dramatic power, and holding the audience breathless for a moment, before they could give way to their outburst of enthusiasm. »

The work, in its new form, was repeated at Milan in the following September (1880) and has again and again been reproduced in the chief musical centres of Italy.

Ponchielli's name is associated with other operatic works. *Lina*, a remodelled version of an early work, *La Savojarada*, was produced at the Teatro Dal Verme in 1877-8 with great success, and the triumph of his *Figliuol Prodigio* at La Scala in 1881, is fresh in the recollection of musicians. He has also in his portfolio two other operas; *Olga*, and *I Mori di Valenza*, for which we have still to wait. At present *La Gioconda* must be regarded as his *chef d'œuvre*. It has made him famous throughout the musical world, and it is gratifying to know that in his case the proverb, « A prophet has no honour in his own country, » has been contradicted. The Municipality of Cremona, in the September following the production of the new version of *La Gioconda*, gave him a grand reception, at which he was presented with a crown of silver, set with rubies and diamonds, and other honours and distinctions have been liberally bestowed upon him by his fellow-countrymen. — This is not the place for an essay on the merits of *La Gioconda*, but it may be well to take this opportunity to point out that in writing it, Ponchielli — both as regards construction and orchestration — has been greatly influenced by the teaching and example of Wagner, whose developments of dramatic effect he has successfully sought to imitate, while disregarding the theory that vocal melody of a symmetrical kind is of secondary importance, and that the singers should be subordinate to the orchestra. In the accompanying English version of *La Gioconda*, the adapter has not endeavoured to produce verses entitled to be considered « poetry » but has sought to convey as literally as possible the meaning of the original libretto, and to give due expression to the musical sentiment, while consulting the interests of vocalists. —

Dramatis Personæ.



LA GIOCONDA (a Ballad Singer)	<i>Soprano.</i>
LA CIECA (her blind mother)	<i>Contralto.</i>
ALVISE BADOERO (one of the heads of the State Inquisition) ...	<i>Bass.</i>
LAURA (his wife)	<i>Mezzo-Sopr.</i>
ENZO GRIMALDO (a Genoese noble)	<i>Tenor.</i>
BARNABA (a Spy of the Inquisition)	<i>Barytone.</i>
ZUANE (a boatman)	<i>Bass.</i>
ISEPO (public letter-writer)	<i>Tenor.</i>
A PILOT	<i>Bass.</i>

Monks, Senators, Sailors, Shipwrights, Ladies,
Gentlemen, Populace, Masquers, etc., etc.



The action takes place in Venice, in the 17.th Century.

I N D E X

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ACT I.

THE LION'S MOUTH.

Opening Chorus - *Sporting, Feasting* 6
Scene & Trio - *Above their grave they're dancing!* - Gioconda, la Cieca & Barnaba.
... .. S. C. & Bar. 19
Recit. Regatta Chorus, Tumult - *Ere long the Vesper Chimes* 29
Romanza - *Thanks unto thee, angelic voice* - la Cieca Con. 84
Scene & Duett - *Enzo Grimaldo!* - Enzo & Barnaba T. & Bar. 92
Scene, Recit. & Soliloquy - *Accursed? we'll see!* - Barnaba Bar. 105
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ACT II.

THE ROSARY.

Marinesca, Recit. & Barcarolle - *Ho! Ho! look to the rudder!* - Barnaba ... Bar. 126
Recit. & Reprise of the Marinesca - *Long live the songs of the sons of the ocean!* ... 144
Romance - *Heaven, and Ocean!* - Enzo T. 152
Scene & Duett - *But, who comes?* - Laura & Enzo MS. & T. 158
Scene & Romance - *My heart is full* - Laura MS. 173
Duett - *Who art thou?* - Gioconda & Laura S. & MS. 178
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ACT III.

THE HOUSE OF GOLD.

Scene & Air - *Yes, to die is her doom!* - Alvisè B. 207
Scene & Duett - *You have summoned me* - Laura & Alvisè MS. & B. 216
Scene & Serenade - *And now, that for fresh nuptials* - Gioconda, Laura, Alvisè
& Chorus S. MS. & B. 227
Scene, Entry of Cavaliers & Chorus - *Worthy friends, you are welcome* - Alvisè. B. 243
Recit. & Dance of the Hours - *Thanks let me offer* - Alvisè B. 254
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ACT IV.

THE ORFANO CANAL.

Prelude, Scene & Air - *No one has seen you?* - Gioconda. S. 313
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Finale 4. Scene & Duett - *Now I can die!* - Gioconda & Barnaba ... S. Bar. 355

LA GIOCONDA

OPERA BY

A. PONCHIELLI

PRELUDE

PIANO

ANDANTE

pp legato

un poco rall.

in tempo

p

pp

staccate

dim. molto

p

The musical score is written for piano and consists of four systems of music. The first system is marked 'ANDANTE' and 'pp legato'. The second system is marked 'un poco rall.'. The third system is marked 'in tempo' and 'p'. The fourth system is marked 'staccate' and 'dim. molto'. The score includes various musical notations such as treble and bass clefs, time signatures, notes, rests, and dynamic markings.