



ONDINE

# RESPIGHI

## ROMAN TRILOGY

PINES OF ROME • FOUNTAINS OF ROME  
ROMAN FESTIVALS

ORCHESTRA SINFONICA NAZIONALE DELLA RAI

ROBERT TREVIÑO



Ottorino Respighi with his wife Elsa in his villa 'I Pini', circa 1931

## OTTORINO RESPIGHI (1879–1936)

### **Fountains of Rome (Fontane di Roma) (1916) 17:26**

- |   |  |      |
|---|--|------|
| 1 | The Fountain of Valle Giulia at Dawn (La fontana di Valle Giulia all'alba)   | 5:04 |
| 2 | The Triton Fountain in the Morning (La fontana del Tritone al mattino)       | 2:43 |
| 3 | The Trevi Fountain at Noon (La fontana di Trevi al meriggio)                 | 3:39 |
| 4 | The Villa Medici Fountain at Sunset (La fontana di Villa Medici al tramonto) | 5:58 |

### **Roman Festivals (Feste Romane) (1928) 25:53**

- |   |                                   |      |
|---|-----------------------------------|------|
| 5 | Circus Games (Circenses)          | 4:36 |
| 6 | The Jubilee (Giubileo)            | 7:57 |
| 7 | The October Harvest (L'Ottobrata) | 7:57 |
| 8 | The Epiphany (La Befana)          | 5:22 |

### **Pines of Rome (Pini di Roma) (1924) 23:08**

- |    |  |      |
|----|--|------|
| 9  | The Pines of the Villa Borghese (I pini di Villa Borghese) | 2:41 |
| 10 | Pines Near a Catacomb (Pini presso una catacomba)          | 7:18 |
| 11 | The Pines of Janiculum (I pini del Gianicolo)              | 7:55 |
| 12 | The Pines of the Appian Way (I pini della Via Appia)       | 5:13 |

**ORCHESTRA SINFONICA NAZIONALE DELLA RAI**  
**ROBERT TREVIÑO**, conductor

## Ottorino Respighi: Roman Trilogy

Towards the middle of January 1913, having failed to obtain the directorship of the Liceo Musicale in Bologna, Respighi half-heartedly moved to Rome where he had been offered a teaching post at the Conservatory of Santa Cecilia. Shortly before his departure, he wrote to the mezzo soprano Chiarina Fino Savio, saying: “*You can well imagine how it tears my heart to leave my old habits, my home, the study and my dear books! [ ] However, I don’t believe I will stay very long in Rome, perhaps this year until July...*”. But the charm of the ancient city, with its abundance of monuments, palaces and picturesque open spaces, soon cast its spell. Respighi went on to become director of the conservatory and lived in the Italian capital until his death in 1936.

His fascination with the Eternal City is nowhere better expressed than in the three symphonic poems that make up the so-called *Roman Trilogy*. He had rarely taken on works of such proportions and his most recent large-scale orchestral work, the *Sinfonia Drammatica*, dating from 1914, still reveals the lasting influence of Brahms and Franck. But just one year later, he finally shook off the shackles of late 19th-century Romanticism, and offered a first glimpse of the remarkable use of color that would soon become a hallmark of his orchestral writing.

The origins of the *Fountains of Rome* (*Fontane di Roma*) are uncertain. Respighi’s widow, Elsa, suggests that the idea came from one of the two Latvian sisters he had befriended during his first years in Rome. He may also have been inspired by works like Smetana’s *Vltava*, a piece he had heard at the Teatro Comunale in Bologna before his move to Rome. Whatever the case, a piano draft of the work appears to have been ready as early as the summer of 1915, and by the end of September 1916 the score had reached its definitive version. It was premiered in Rome on March 11, 1917, and was repeated in Milan in February 1918, under the capable baton of Arturo Toscanini.

The four sections that make up the work each describe a fountain at different times of the day, starting with daybreak and ending at sunset. The first part, *"The Fountain of Valle Giulia at Dawn"* opens in typically Respighian fashion with high strings providing a backdrop to a modal-flavored melody on the woodwinds. Brief figures imitate the early morning birdsong and the shepherds' pipes as they lead their sheep to pasture, while shimmering effects on the celesta and harp announce the rising of the sun. The opening theme then returns, bringing the movement to a peaceful close.

The second movement, *"The Triton Fountain in the Morning"*, opens with sudden blasts on the horns and piercing trills on the high strings. A rush of instrumental color leads to the boisterous dance of the naiads and tritons as they chase each other through the splashing water. The frolics finally subside, giving way to a brief moment of respite.

*"The Trevi Fountain at Noon"* depicts a lively scene in the early hours of the afternoon. The somber veil of color cast by the opening notes of the woodwinds is soon lifted by the arrival of Neptune in his resplendent chariot, pulled by seahorses and followed by a parade of sirens and tritons. The music reaches a stunning climax and then slowly winds down, moving almost imperceptibly into the fourth and final movement.

*"The Fountain of Villa Medici at Sunset"* opens with a soft, chromatic theme on the flutes and cor anglais, accompanied by a hypnotically repeated broken chord on the celesta and harp, evoking the gentle trickling of the water as evening approaches. A wistful melody appears first on a solo violin and is then taken up by the flute and lower strings. A series of bird calls imitated by the woodwinds brings the music to a virtual standstill until the chiming of distant bells leads into the closing episode. The sun finally sinks below the skyline against the soft sustained notes of the upper strings.

A curious story surrounds the birth of *Roman Festivals (Feste Romane)*. One evening, in spring 1926, Respighi's close friend and librettist, Claudio Guastalla, suggested he should write a symphonic poem based on the story of the Roman Emperor Nero. Respighi toyed with the idea for some weeks and even planned the scheme of the four sections. Finally, after drafting several pages of the score Respighi made a sudden decision. He phoned his friend and exclaimed: "*Guess what? I have murdered Nero!*"

The few sketches that remained of the project eventually found their way into the first part of *Roman Festivals*, which he completed towards the end of 1928. The work calls for a very large orchestra, with an impressive range of percussion instruments, including sleigh bells, tam-tam and ratchet, as well as an organ, a piano duo and a mandolin. The work is again divided into four overlapping but distinct movements, each with a short description of the events depicted in the music.

The opening movement, "*Circus Games*", is set in the Circus Maximus, a popular venue for chariot racing but also the site of numerous Christian martyrdoms. The dramatic opening chords are immediately followed by a fanfare-like theme, announcing the entrance of the Roman emperor Nero. Dark rhythmic pulses portray the opening of the metal gates, and amid the solemn chanting of the Christian martyrs we hear the roaring of the wild beasts. The music grows increasingly more frenetic until the opening fanfare returns. The movement ends with a short four-note afterthought, whose final sustained E flat leads cautiously into the following section.

The second movement, "*The Jubilee*" opens with a slowly rising motif evoking the labored steps of the pilgrims as they climb to the top of Monte Mario. After a momentary climax, the music comes to an abrupt close, leaving behind it the solitary voice of the cor anglais. As the pilgrims near the top of the hill the music regains momentum and the Holy City finally comes into view. A brief pentatonic passage on the piano acts as a prelude to the solemn chiming of the church bells. Finally,

the horns break in with a self-assured statement that takes us straight into the *Allegro giocoso* of the next movement.

The third movement, "*The October Harvest*", depicts a festive scene in the countryside near Rome. Families are celebrating the successful harvesting of the grapes, riding in carts drawn by horses decked out with bells. The high spirits of the opening measures are soon interrupted by an extraordinary display of orchestral color. The piano duo and sleigh bells imitate the trotting of the horses, while the rest of the orchestra provides an increasingly insistent rhythmic accompaniment. The violins then come to the fore with a sweeping melody, a typical Roman love song capturing the carefree mood of the day. The melody is softly echoed by a clarinet, which soon gives way to a brief cadenza on a solo horn. The mandolin then offers a 'romantic serenade', accompanied and imitated by the strings, in a more subdued atmosphere, hinting that the party is now coming to an end. The sleigh bells have the last word, as the horses wearily make their way back home.

The fourth and final movement, "*The Epiphany*", describes the scene of a traditional winter fair in the heart of Rome. The Befana is a kindly old witch who flies through the night on the eve of the Epiphany, bringing children gifts of toys and candy. A soprano clarinet vividly evokes her aerobatics as she soars above the crowds gathered in Piazza Navona. The horns then introduce a dance-like theme repeated against the swirling mass of the full orchestra. The dance soon becomes a saltarello, now played by the clarinets, and finally turns into a playful waltz, interrupted by the raucous cries of street vendors. Trombone glissandos mimic the staggering of a drunken reveler. The saltarello returns, now faster than ever, and brings the work to a frenzied conclusion, during which we hear a passionate rendition of a popular Roman song.

Perhaps the best-known part of the trilogy is dedicated to the Stone Pine, an iconic tree that was – and still is – an unmistakable feature of the Roman landscape. Not by chance, when Respighi finally moved into his dream home on the Monte Mario hill in 1930, he chose to call it “Villa i Pini”. According to Elsa, the tall pines shading the villa’s garden helped him find the peace of mind he had been searching for all his life.

As in the previous work, each of the four parts of the *Pines of Rome* (*Pini di Roma*) is given a title, and is introduced by a brief descriptive text. The opening movement, “*The Pines of Villa Borghese*”, depicts children playing amid the pine groves near the villa. To capture the spirit, the composer introduces a melody based on a traditional Italian nursery rhyme, which is soon taken up by the whole orchestra. The innocent games eventually turn into imitations of marching soldiers and battles, and the music finally reaches an intense climax with an insistent B flat on the trumpets, clashing harshly with the underlying tonality of the rest of the orchestra.

A sudden change of scene brings us to the dark entrance of a catacomb. The gloomy atmosphere of the “*Pines near a Catacomb*” is effectively evoked by the muted and divided lower strings, soon joined by the horns and clarinets, which trace the outline of an ancient plainsong chant. A change of key leads to a brighter passage, featuring a solo trumpet. A new rhythmic motif rises from the depths of the orchestra, building up to a powerful climax, sustained by the deep pedal notes of the organ. The music gradually fades away, and the bassoons offer us a final reminder of the opening chant.

The third part, “*The Pines of the Janiculum*”, opens with delicate arpeggios on the piano, setting the scene for the dreamlike, almost impressionistic evocation of the peaceful surroundings of the Janiculum hill. The closing measures introduce a novelty, a recording of the melancholy song of a nightingale.



The concluding movement, "*The Pines of the Appian Way*", is a graphic portrayal of the Roman army approaching from the distance and marching triumphantly into the Italian capital. Fragments of melody gradually emerge from the murk of the opening bars, accompanied by a constant march beat played *ppp*. A fanfare-like motif on the woodwind and brass announces the imminent arrival of the victorious army, underpinned by the murmur of deep notes on the organ. At this point the brass section is progressively augmented by three pairs of flugelhorns, recalling the sound of the ancient Roman trumpet, the *buccina*. These unusual instruments are set apart from the rest of the orchestra to give the effect of distance. A crash on the gong and a final rush of strings and woodwind bring the work to a breathtaking conclusion.

*The Pines of Rome* was successfully premiered in Rome on December 14, 1924, conducted by Bernadino Molinari, but its international fame is mostly due to Toscanini, who gave its US premiere at Carnegie Hall on January 14, 1926, and continued to include the work in his concert programs throughout his career. Three years later, on February 21, 1929, he gave the world premiere of the third part of the trilogy, again at Carnegie Hall.

The three works that make up the *Roman Trilogy* have deservedly stood the test of time. Not only do they illustrate Respighi's remarkable skill as an orchestrator, dazzling the listener with his refined and often extravagant palate of color, but they also reveal a composer who has readily absorbed certain tendencies of early twentieth century music, while maintaining a personal idiom that is well accessible to his audiences.

**Michael Webb**

Author of *Ottorino Respighi: His Life and Times*

The **Orchestra Sinfonica Nazionale della Rai** made its official debut in 1994 with Georges Prêtre and Giuseppe Sinopoli.

Andrés Orozco-Estrada is OSN Rai's Principal Conductor (as of October 2023), Fabio Luisi is Emeritus Conductor, and Robert Treviño is the orchestra's Principal Guest Conductor.

Jeffrey Tate was Principal Guest Conductor from 1998 to 2002 and Honorary Conductor from 2002 to 2011. Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos was its Principal Conductor from 2001 to 2007. Gianandrea Noseda was Principal Guest Conductor from 2003 to 2006. From 1996 to 2001, Eliahu Inbal was Honorary Conductor of the Orchestra. From 2009 to 2016 Juraj Valčuha has been the Orchestra's Principal Conductor. James Conlon was the last Principal Conductor from 2016 to 2020.

Other important guest conductors include Carlo Maria Giulini, Wolfgang Sawallisch, Mstislav Rostropovich, Myung-Whun Chung, Lorin Maazel, Zubin Mehta, Yuri Ahronovitch, Valery Gergiev, Marek Janowski, Semyon Bychkov, Kirill Petrenko, Vladimir Jurowski, Riccardo Chailly, Gerd Albrecht, Hartmut Hänchen, Mikko Franck, Christoph Eschenbach, Daniel Harding and Daniele Gatti.

The Orchestra had numerous prestigious engagements worldwide: besides its international tours (Japan, England, Ireland, France, Spain, Canary, South America, Greece), and an invitation in 2006 to the Salzburg Festival and to Berlin's Philharmonie, more recent years have seen the Orchestra performing at the Abu Dhabi Classics Festival in the United Arab Emirates in 2011, and in tours in Germany, Austria and Slovakia, including the debut at the Musikverein in Vienna. The Rai Orchestra also made its debuts at the RadiRO Festival in 2012 and at the Enescu Festival in Bucharest in 2013. It held concert tours in Germany and Switzerland in the Autumn of 2014, in Russia in October 2015 and in the south of Italy in April 2016. In December 2016 the Orchestra made its debut in Oman (Muscat) at the Royal Opera House with

Beethoven 9th Symphony and in October 2017 at the Vienna Konzerthaus and in October 2021 held a prestigious concert tour in Germany with debuts at the Kölner Philharmonie, Elbphilharmonie Hamburg and Alte Oper Frankfurt. In June 2022 the Orchestra returned to tour Southern Italy (Catania, Catanzaro, Salerno, Matera and Brindisi).

The Rai Orchestra has been in residence at the Rossini Opera Festival in Pesaro since the 2017 edition.

[www.raicultura.it/orchestrarai](http://www.raicultura.it/orchestrarai)

**Robert Treviño** has rapidly emerged as one of the most exciting American conductors performing today, as well as one of the most in-demand talents of the younger generation. He serves as the Music Director of the Basque National Orchestra, and Principal Guest Conductor of the Orchestra Sinfonica Nazionale della RAI.

His multi-year recording contract with Ondine has already resulted in a widely-praised complete Beethoven symphonies cycle with the Malmö Symphony Orchestra (where he was Chief Conductor), two much-acclaimed Ravel albums and a survey of little-known American masterpieces, 'Americascapes' all with the Basque National Orchestra. 'Americascapes' was named Editor's Choice by Gramophone magazine, and a 'Best Recording of 2021' by Presto Music, while 'Ravel' was named Recording of the Month by Limelight, Recording of the Week by France Musique and Critic's Choice by Record Geijutsu. 'Ravel 2' was named Editor's Choice by Limelight. Treviño's album of works by Rautavaara was nominated as 'Best Recording of 2022' by Presto Music. His cycle of Bruch symphonies with the Bamberg Symphony Orchestra was released by CPO in August 2020, to universally positive reviews.

Having won the James Conlon Conducting Prize at the Aspen Music Festival & School, and subsequently serving as Associate Conductor for the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra and New York City Opera, Treviño burst into the international spotlight at the Bolshoi Theater in December 2013, leading a new production of Verdi's Don Carlo at short notice. The Russian press wrote, "There has not been an American success of this magnitude in Moscow since Van Cliburn." He was subsequently nominated for a Golden Mask award for "Best Conductor in a New Production".

In recent seasons Treviño's European engagements have included the London Symphony Orchestra, Munich Philharmonic Orchestra, London Philharmonic, Orchestre de Paris, Tonhalle Zurich, Leipzig Gewandhaus, Vienna Symphony, La Scala Philharmonic, Helsinki Philharmonic, Radio Symphony Orchestra Berlin, SWR

Symphony Stuttgart, MDR Symphony Leipzig and the Bamberg Symphony among many others. In North America he has conducted the Cleveland Orchestra, and the symphony orchestras of Baltimore, San Francisco, Utah, Toronto and Detroit. Elsewhere he has conducted orchestras such as the São Paulo Symphony and the Osaka Philharmonic.

He has commissioned and worked closely with many leading composers, among them John Adams, Philip Glass, Sofia Gubaidulina, Jennifer Higdon, Andre Previn, George Walker, Augusta Read Thomas, Shulamit Ran and John Zorn. His many education projects have included a residency at the Royal Academy of Music.

[www.robert-trevino.com](http://www.robert-trevino.com)

Publisher: Ricordi

Recordings: 24–26 November 2022, Auditorium RAI di Torino, Italy

Executive Producer: Reijo Kiilunen

Recording Producer: Ingo Petry (Take5 Music Production)

Recording Engineer: Fabian Frank (Arcantus Musikproduktion)

Editing & Mixing: Ingo Petry

© & © 2023 Ondine Oy, Helsinki

Booklet Editor: Joel Valkila

Photos of Robert Trevino: Tommy Ga-Ken Wan

Composer photo: Fondo Valori Plastici





ROBERT TREVIÑO

