

THE PINES OF ROME

By OTTORINO RESPIGHI Born July 9, 1879, in Bologna; died April 18, 1936, in Rome

Although born in Bologna, Ottorino Respighi lived most of his life in Rome; and it was this city, his "adopted" home, which he chose to commemorate in music with his popular trilogy of symphonic poems, *Fontane di Roma* (The Fountains of Rome), *Pini di Roma* (The Pines of Rome), and *Feste Romane* (Roman Festivals). These colorful and brilliantly orchestrated scores were composed in 1916, 1924, and 1928 respectively. Each work consists of four uninterrupted but contrasting sections which vividly depict a specific and characteristically Roman sight.

Completed near the end of 1924, *The Pines of Rome* had its premiere at the Augusteo in Rome on December 14 of that year, with Bernardino Molinari conducting. Arturo Toscanini led the New York Philharmonic in the American premiere at Carnegie Hall on January 14, 1926. The very next day, Respighi, who was then on an American tour, conducted the work in Philadelphia with The Philadelphia Orchestra. On this occasion, the composer noted that, in *The Pines of Rome*, he had used "nature as a point of departure, in order to recall memories and visions. The century-old trees which dominate so characteristically the Roman landscape become witnesses to the principal events of Roman life."

Respighi prefaced the published score of *The pines of Rome* with the following descriptive comments about the four sections which comprise the work:

"The Pines of the Villa Borghese.: Children are at play in the pine groves of the Villa Borghese. They dance round in circles; they play at soldiers, marching and fighting; they

are wrought up by their own cries like swallows at evening; they come and go in swarms.

Suddenly the scene changes to . . .

"The Pines Near a Catacomb. We see the shadows of the pines which overhang the entrance of a catacomb. From the depths rises a chant which re-echoes solemnly, like a hymn, and is then mysteriously silenced.

The Pines of the Janiculum. There is a tremor in the air. The pine trees of the Janiculum stand distinctly outlined in the clear light of a full moon. A nightingale sings.

"The Pines of the Appian Way. Misty dawn on the Appian Way. Solitary pines stand guard over the tragic campagna. The faint, unceasing rhythm of numberless footsteps. A vision of ancient glories appears to the poet's fantasy: trumpets blare, and a consular army bursts forth in the brilliance of the newly-risen sun, toward the Sacred Way, mounting in triumph to the Capitoline Hill."

Respighi's opulent score for *The Pines of Rome* calls for an enormous orchestra: piccolo, 3 flutes, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 4 trombones, 6 buccinae (ancient Roman war trumpets--usually replaced with modern flugelhorns), timpani, cymbals, triangle, tambourine, rattle, bass drum, tam-tam, bells, celesta, organ, harp, and piano, plus the usual strings. Additionally, the section entitled "The Pines of the Janiculum" includes a part for grammofono a phonograph, upon which is to be played a recording ("Concert Gramophone Record R-160S, II according to the Ricordi score) of the actual sound of a nightingale singing.

(This then highly unorthodox touch of realism provoked considerable booing and hissing from the first night audience at the Augusteo.)

-Kenneth C. Viant