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TEXAS MUSIC FESTIVAL

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Ottorino Respighi (1879-1936)

ROMAN TRILOGY:

Roman Festivals

The Fountains of Rome

The Pines of Rome

**OTTORINO RESPIGHI**

**Feste Romane**

**The Fountains of Rome**

**The Pines of Rome**

**Texas Music Festival Orchestra**

**Franz Anton Krager, conductor**

Recorded in public concert 11 June 2016 in the  
Moore Opera House, University of Houston.

Producer and Recording Engineer: John Gladney Proffitt

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## FESTE ROMANE (ROMAN FESTIVALS) OTTORINO RESPIGHI (1879-1936)

In a country where opera reigned supreme throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, Ottorino Respighi emerged as Italy's most famous composer of orchestral music.

Roman Festivals was completed in 1928, becoming the last of Respighi's three Rome-oriented tone poems. In keeping with its two predecessors, it celebrates different festivals—not at different times of day or different locations in the city, but during different eras of the Eternal City's long history. Its occasionally harsh harmonies are more in tune with 20th-century styles, and they reflect Respighi's artistic development during the 13 years after he composed The Fountains of Rome.

The opening festival, "Circuses," harks back to a pagan holiday in the time of the Emperor Nero, when the public gathered in the Circus Maximus to watch Christians being thrown to the lions. This movement was extracted from Respighi's never-completed opera, Nerone, and the music vividly depicts the trumpet fanfares and general excitement, the growling beasts and the stalwart singing of the Christian martyrs, ultimately drowned out in the general tumult.

"Jubilee" brings the action forward to Medieval times, as a plainchant hymn, "Christ ist erstanden" ("Christ is Risen") signals a procession of (presumably German) pilgrims wending their way over the Monte Mario, northwest of the city, for an Easter festival. The movement comes to a climax in a fully harmonized repetition of the hymn as they reach the crest of the hill and view the city below. At the end, the hymn dissolves in the ringing of church bells.

"October Festival" evokes tonal images of the harvest, with its attendant revelry in the streets and wine cellars. The latter part of the movement is enhanced with the tinkling sound of a solo mandolin at "an evening serenade," as the composer indicates in his preface to the score. Revelry continues unabated in the closing "Befana," a festival celebrating the midwinter vigil of the feast of the Epiphany. This string of ethnic dances, including a waltz and an Italian saltarello, brings the tone poem to a vibrant ending.

Roman Festivals and its two companion tone poems all employ a post-Wagnerian instrumentation, built around a large orchestral core of piccolo, pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, 4 horns, 3-4 trumpets and trombones, timpani, large percussion ensemble, 1-2 harps, celesta, piano, organ and strings. Auxiliary instruments—English horn, bass clarinet, contrabassoon, tuba, bells, carillon, xylophone and exotic percussion instruments are sprinkled among the three compositions to add depth, color and special effects to the orchestral sound.

American born and trained, conductor **Franz Anton Krager** has been making his artistic presence felt both at home and abroad. Performance engagements in some of the world's most celebrated concert halls and musical centers are testimony to his emergence as a conductor on the international music scene. In November 2000, Krager served as General & Artistic Director for "Shostakovich 2000," a five-day international music festival marking the 25th anniversary of Shostakovich's death. "Shostakovich 2000" drew people to Houston from across the U.S., Europe, and

Russia, and was recognized by the DSCH Journal as a major world event for ballet, opera, chamber, and orchestral music by Shostakovich. In October 2003, Krager again conducted Shostakovich with the Russian State Symphony Orchestra & Symphonic Cappella and Alexander Kisselev of the Bolshoi Theatre, inside the State Kremlin Palace in Moscow. This command performance, initiated by the Kremlin authorities, was given in honor of the great Russian poet, Yevgeny Yevtushenko, on the occasion of his 70th birthday. Krager conducted to a packed house of 6500 people. In September 2006, Krager was appointed as Artistic Consultant for the World Holocaust Forum Foundation's "Let My People Live," the International Forum in commemoration of the 65th anniversary of the tragedy in Babi Yar, Kiev, Ukraine. In addition, Krager directed a three-day international music festival in Houston celebrating the great Finnish composer, Jean Sibelius. The "Jean Sibelius Festival 2006," like "Shostakovich 2000," drew people to Houston from across the U.S. and abroad. Krager has worked with some of the pre-eminent artists of our time. In conjunction with the Moores School of Music, he has collaborated with Robert Shaw, William Warfield, Maxim Shostakovich, Marilyn Horne, John Corigliano, Horacio Gutiérrez, and Sergei Leiferkus, among others. Krager is Professor of Conducting, Director of Orchestras, and Chair of the Conducting Department at the University of Houston Moores School of Music, where he has brought the orchestra and orchestral conducting program into the realm of national prominence. Krager is also Music Director & Chief Conductor of the Texas Music Festival, Artistic Director of the Virtuosi of Houston, Artist-in-Residence at The Kinkaid School, Evaluator/Clinician for the Orchestra America National Festival, and has been a summer lecturer-in-residence at the Italtart Santa Chiara Study Center, near Florence, Italy, since 1987.



### FONTANE DI ROMA (THE FOUNTAINS OF ROME)

Respighi completed this work in 1915, but its premiere was delayed two years because of some unrelated disturbance in the audience the evening of its first performance, causing conductor Arturo Toscanini to walk off the stage of Rome's Augusteo concert hall. Antonio Guarnieri finally gave the premiere there 11 March 1917, but general acclaim and an offer of publication did not come until Toscanini conducted it at a Red Cross benefit concert in Milan 11 February 1918, when its success brought Respighi sudden fame and financial rewards.

Like Monet, who repeatedly painted the Rouen Cathedral and London's smog-bound Thames River at different hours of the day, Respighi sought a musical depiction of four fountains seen at different times of the day. His preface to the score describes a drove of cattle disappearing into the mist as they pass "The Fountain of Valle Giulia at Dawn." A wan, oriental-sounding oboe melody wafts over murmuring string figuration, and then is joined by the cellos to produce a haunting tone color in the center of the piece.

The melody returns in the flute, then abruptly gives way to horn fanfares and piquant orchestral dissonances depicting naiads and tritons dancing amid the jets of water in "The Triton Fountain in Early Morning."

Seahorses pull Neptune's chariot as he leads a brassy, opulent, full-orchestra procession of naiads and tritons across the expanse of the Trevi Fountain under the bright midday sun. And as the sun sets, Respighi moves on to the Fountain at the Villa Medici, where high woodwinds, celesta, harps and clusters of trilling strings imitate the sounds of birds gently singing themselves to sleep.

### PINI DI ROMA (THE PINES OF ROME)

The Pines of Rome was the second tone poem to be composed, and it has become the most famous of the three. Its four movements offer tableaux from different points in Rome's history, witnessed by ancient pine trees that have stood sentinel for centuries, perhaps millennia, over different vantage points in the city.

In "The Pines of the Villa Borghese," chattering woodwinds portray a covey of children playing a game in the villa's sunlit courtyard. "Pines near a Catacomb" takes the listener to an ancient, deserted chapel, where monks seem to rise from the catacombs to chant a processional at evening vespers.

"The Pines of the Janiculum" is a nocturnal idyll, where the clarinet whispers through the branches like the soft breeze in a long, diaphanous solo, interrupted by the chirping of an electronic "nightingale" as dawn breaks. Lastly, in "The Pines along the Appian Way," ghosts of Roman soldiers arise from the paving stones in a brassy recollection of their heroic marches into the heart of the city. As is the case in Respighi's Roman Festivals, the score calls for the use of buccine, the ancient Roman trumpets, but allows for the substitution of modern flugelhorns in this section of the piece.



The **Immanuel and Helen Olshan Texas Music Festival (TMF)** was founded in 1990 to provide young orchestral musicians on the cusp of their professional careers with an intensive summer training program to develop their skills in orchestral, chamber music, and solo performance. Based at the University of Houston's Moores School of Music for four intensive weeks each June, the **Festival Orchestra** is TMF's showcase ensemble, presenting four programs under the direction of distinguished guest conductors and soloists. Each of the 90 Orchestral Fellows receives a full scholarship and receives instruction from a faculty composed of Houston's finest artist teachers from the Moores School and Shepherd School of Music, members of the Houston Symphony, Houston Grand Opera and Houston Ballet orchestras, and internationally-recognized artist teachers.

