

OTTORINO RESPIGHI

***Fontane di Roma* (“The Fountains of Rome”)**

BORN: July 9, 1879, in Bologna

DIED: April 18, 1936, in Rome,

WORK COMPOSED: 1916

WORLD PREMIERE: March 11, 1917, in Rome, Antonio Guarnieri conducting.

This tone poem entails a rich array of musical allusions. The music for the Triton Fountain reveals a debt to Debussy’s *La mer*, while Neptune’s procession in the Trevi Fountain section sonic grandeur. The outer panels bring nature pieces, complete with birdsongs and other evocations.

Ottorino Respighi is best known today for three tone poems conveying impressions of Italy’s capital city, where he lived for much of his life: *The Fountains of Rome*, *The Pines of Rome* and *Roman Festivals*. Completed in 1916, the initial portion of this triptych was his first important composition.

The Fountains of Rome unfolds in four sections, played without pause. The first and last frame the work with placid musical landscapes. Respighi mentioned “the fresh, damp mists of a Roman dawn” and “passing droves of cattle” in describing the opening part of the work. The concluding section takes us to the other end of the day, “the nostalgic hour of sunset,” the composer explains. “The air is filled with ringing bells, chirping birds, rustling leaves. Then all fades gently into the silence of the night.”

Between these softly atmospheric panels comes music that is more animated and imbued with an element of fantasy. Respighi imagines the Triton Fountain alive with mermaids and tritons (a mythological race of sea deities), who chase one another playfully amid jetting waters. The ensuing section imagines Neptune, whose marble figure stands majestically above the famous Trevi Fountain, passing with a large retinue in majestic procession.

Scored for 2 flutes and piccolo; 2 oboes and English horn; 2 clarinets and bass clarinet; 2 bassoons; 4 horns; 3 trumpets; 3 trombones; tuba; timpani and percussion; 2 harps; piano, celeste and organ; strings.

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