

SANTA ROSA SYMPHONY

ABOUT THE MUSIC

VISIONS OF HOPE JUNE 11, 12 & 13

Program notes by Steven Ledbetter

ARTURO MÁRQUEZ



Arturo Márquez was born in Alamos, Sonora, Mexico, on December 20, 1950. He composed his *Danzón No. 2* in 1994. Francisco Savin conducted the first performance in Mexico City's Netzahaucoyotl Hall on March 5, 1994. The score calls for pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets and bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, four percussionists, piano and strings.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Danzón No. 2 for Orchestra

ESTIMATED DURATION: 10 minutes

Arturo Márquez studied the violin, piano and trombone in his teens, then piano and theory at the National Conservatory in Mexico from 1970 to 1975. After that, he studied privately in Paris and completed a master's degree at the California Institute of the Arts in 1990. His major teachers were Federico Ibarra and Morton Subotnick.

The majority of his early works were multi-media creations, uniting music with theater, dance, cinema and photography, for which the music was often electro-acoustic combinations of an avant-garde character.

In the early 1990s, he stepped aside from the modernist track to play with popular dance styles in a series of seven compositions, for different instrumental combinations, under the generic title *Danzón*, which refers to a formal couple dance that grew out of 19th-century Cuban traditions of the contredanse and the habanera. By the 20th century, it began to interact with other Cuban dance types, and its popularity spread to Mexico as well. The couple undertaking the *danzón* performed an elaborate set of footwork on syncopated beats, sometimes stopping completely, in elegant frozen positions, to listen to an instrumental section. Gradually the *danzón* was involved in the mambo and the cha cha cha. The *danzón* continues to be danced in its traditional form by members of the older generation.

Arturo Márquez composed his first Danzón in 1992 for pre-recorded tape with optional saxophone. Soon the dancer Irene Martinez and the painter Andres Fonseca persuaded him to compose a Danzón for full orchestra. In preparation for the work, he traveled to Veracruz, where, in the port city saloons, the dance had first conquered Mexico. Then he continued his research in the dance saloons of Mexico City.

The resulting lively dance composition, combining French, African, Cuban and Mexican elements in a rondo pattern of tremendous vigor and color, is Márquez's best-known work.

ENRICO CHAPELA BARBA



Enrico Chapela Barba was born on January 29, 1974, in Mexico City, where he still lives. The work is a commission from the Santa Rosa Symphony, designed to draw upon his wide range of musical interests. These are the first performances.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Los Braceros [The Laborers], Cantata for Mariachi and Orchestra

ESTIMATED DURATION: 30 minutes

Chapela's music has frequently fused widely diverse traditions, including rock and electronic music as well as popular mariachi traditions from his native Mexico, which will be heard in this new piece with the Santa Rosa Symphony. His studies have ranged as widely as his musical interests. After receiving his Bachelor's degree in composition from the Centro de Investigación y Estudios Musicales, he studied classical guitar in England and received a Master's from the University of Paris Saint-Denis.

His work has been widely performed in the Americas, Europe and Asia. He absorbed the major Mexican composers of the 20th century, Carlos Chavez and Silvestro Revueltas, but also studied electronic music in Paris. At the same time, he admires the philosophical-musical ideas of John Cage. He continues to teach at his alma mater in Mexico City.

Regarding his new mariachi-laced composition, the composer writes:

When America was forced into the Second World War, workers were drafted into battle, leaving farm fields unattended. To prevent crops from rotting, the Mexican Farm Labor Program was signed in 1942. Also known as the "bracero" program, this binational treaty summoned Mexican workers to pick American crops. More than three million Mexicans entered the US to labor in the agricultural fields as guest workers under the agreement. The benefits of the program led to its annual renewal until 1964, when an excess of migrant labor and the introduction of the mechanical cotton harvester, along with the Farm Workers Association's movement, led by Cesar Chavez, and the civil rights movement, rendered the program unviable. The plot takes place in 1964, the last year of the treaty.

Pedro wants to marry Consuelo. Her father Jorge, who needs to know more about how they plan to pay the bills, learns that Pedro will join the bracero program, and save his earnings for the wedding. This does not sit well with Jorge, who, when he was young, was one of the first workers to be hired at Pecos, Texas. He had a bad experience, given the existing segregation culture in Texas, as well as the meager working conditions. He gives voice to those workers that were mistreated by Mexican officials and agricultural bosses, and has little more to say than resentful complaints. In contrast, his wife Dolores points to the positive aspects he is ignoring in his bitter account, and has a kinder approach to parenthood towards their daughter Consuelo.

Nevertheless, Jorge is reluctant to let his little girl get married to a bracero worker, or even worse, to an illegal wetback, if the program gets canceled and the plan deteriorates into a life-threatening-desert-crossing undertaking. So, he recounts his own misfortunes as a young bracero, 20 years earlier. But Jorge's story fails to discourage Pedro, who after learning from his own words that Jorge was a cotton-picking champion, and that he ran into significant troubles because of his addictive betting habits, Pedro challenges Jorge to a bet: if he comes back from the fields to beat the old man in a sun-to-sun-cotton-picking match, the reluctant father will have to consent to the wedding. Consuelo, who is not thrilled about watching her boyfriend bet their future with her seasoned father, finds his resolve very romantic and reads with passion the adventurous letters describing his progress at the agricultural farms of California...

The term "bracero" comes from the Spanish word brazo (arm), and describes someone who works with his arms.

OTTORINO RESPIGHI



Ottorino Respighi was born in Bologna, Italy, on July 9, 1879, and died in Rome on April 18, 1936. He composed his *Fontane di Roma* (Fountains of Rome) in 1916. The first performance took place in March 1917 at the Augusteo (Mausoleum of Augustus) in Rome, conducted by Antonio Guarnieri. The score calls for two flutes and piccolo, two oboes and English horn, two clarinets and bass clarinet, two bassoons, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, triangle, cymbals, chimes, glockenspiel, two harps, celesta, piano, organ and strings.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

The Fountains of Rome

ESTIMATED DURATION: 15 minutes

Respighi wrote music of extraordinary color and orchestral brilliance, partly, no doubt, a consequence of his having studied orchestration with Rimsky-Korsakov during the years he served as principal violist in the orchestra of the St. Petersburg opera. After returning, he made composition his principal activity. Respighi wrote eight operas, as well as other stage works. He was interested in early music, and this led to a number of "archaizing" works like the Piano Concerto in the mixolydian mode and a *Concerto gregoriano* for violin, not to mention his better-known arrangements of *Ancient Airs and Dances* and *The Birds*, both derived from older lute and keyboard compositions.

But the works that remain far and away the best known of Respighi's entire output are the three orchestral suites depicting aspects of his adopted city, Rome. He composed *The Fountains of Rome* in 1916, *The Pines of Rome* (the most popular of them all) in 1924 and the *Festivals* in 1928-1929. In the course of the dozen images presented musically in these three scores, Respighi draws inspiration from the Rome of classical antiquity, of the Middle Ages and Renaissance, and the modern day. Some movements depict natural beauties, others paint the customs and life of the Roman streets and plazas.

From the days of the ancient Romans, the provision of water into a city the size of Rome has been one of the civil engineering wonders of the world. Different regions of the city received their water via aqueducts coming from mountains in various directions from the city, often dozens of miles away, and to this day Romans argue cheerfully among themselves about the advantages of their various "waters," which surge forth from a series of exquisite fountains. Respighi's musical tribute to this aspect of Roman life is also a character piece tracing the Roman day from dawn to sunset, the composer having chosen to present each linked with "the hour in which their character is most in harmony with the surrounding landscape, or in which their beauty appears most impressive to the observer."

The four "scenes" run directly from one to another. *The Fountain of the Valle Giulia at Dawn*, or Julia Valley, is a pastoral scene. The breezes cause the leaves in the trees to rustle as a herd of cattle passes slowly by. A sudden summons on the horns immediately conjures up *The Fountain of Triton in the Morning*. The triton, in Bernini's great 17th-century stature, is seated on an open scallop shell, his head far back as he drinks from a conch shell. The sheer virility of the figure is celebrated in the horn calls, while the fantasy that envelops it figures in the lively main theme in the woodwinds. *The Trevi Fountain in the Afternoon* evokes the most famous of all the Roman fountains, the one into which visitors throw coins with the wish to return to Rome. Respighi's music takes us to a site that, even when Nathaniel Hawthorne visited more than a century ago, was one of the liveliest daytime scenes in Rome:

for the piazza is then filled with stalls of vegetable and fruit dealers, chestnut-roasters, cigar vendors, and other people whose patter and wandering traffic is transacted in the open air. It is likewise thronged with idlers, lounging over the iron railing, and with forestieri [foreigners], who come hither to see the famous fountain.

The music grows quieter as evening falls, and we end the day strolling to the *Fountain of the Villa Medici at Sunset*. The fountain in front of the Villa Medici is a modest broad basin, spurting a single jet of water upwards, but it rests high above the city (not far from the Spanish Steps and the Piazza del Popolo with a spectacular view to the west). At sunset, the water in the fountain will mirror Michelangelo's great cupola on St. Peter's, across the Tiber in the Vatican. Oboe and English horn recall the pastoral mood of the opening, a tranquility that seems unlikely in one of the world's great capitals, yet one attainable here, where the sunset view has changed surprisingly little in four centuries. Birdsong dies away, and the stillness of the dark closes the day.

The Pines of Rome

ESTIMATED DURATION: 23 minutes

Respighi composed *The Pines of Rome* in 1923-24. It was premiered on December 14, 1924, in the Augusteo concert hall in Rome under the direction of Bernardino Molinari. The score calls for a large orchestra consisting of three flutes (third doubling piccolo), two oboes and English horn, two clarinets and bass clarinet, two bassoons and contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, four trombones, timpani, triangle, two small cymbals, tambourine, ratchet, cymbals, bass drum, tam-tam, harp, bells, celesta, harp, piano, organ, offstage trumpet, six flugelhorn or tenor tubas and strings. In addition, Respighi specified a phonograph with a recording of a nightingale's song.

Rome, the "eternal city," has been described as a palimpsest, a term used for old manuscripts in which the writing has been rubbed away so that the parchment could be reused. Even a casual stroll around Rome will reveal to the alert eye architectural palimpsests, fragments of buildings from many different periods, going back to classical antiquity, the Middle Ages or the Renaissance, embedded within modern structures. It is possible to eat a fine dinner in a modern restaurant in the basement of the Theater of Marcellus, or to climb the Campidoglio and observe, within the space of a hundred feet, objects that evoke Romulus and Remus, the legendary founders of the city, Julius Caesar, Marcus Aurelius, the philosopher-emperor, Rienzi, "last of the tribunes," the poet Petrarch, the artist Michelangelo and the dictator Mussolini.

This wealth of historic connection makes Rome still one of the most impressive places in the world to a visitor alert to her history. Ottorino Respighi was evidently open to the varied impressions that Rome had to offer, for his three most famous scores all suggest the modern life and the history of the city. Though he also wrote eight operas, two ballets, nearly a dozen other orchestral works and a substantial amount of vocal music, including some exquisite songs, he is remembered by the average concertgoer solely for his three Roman suites.

After studies in Russia and in Berlin, Respighi settled permanently in Rome in 1913, where he became professor of composition (later director) of the Conservatorio di S. Cecilia. He was far and away the most successful Italian composer of his generation. His music is at its best when he can evoke an air of childlike wonder, of delight in visual impressions translated into music, as he does in *The Pines of Rome*.

Actually, the four movements of the suite are designed not so much to evoke the trees themselves, as the kind of activity that goes on (or went on) in their vicinity. The first and third movements are inspired by some aspect of modern Roman life, the second and fourth by its history.

I. The Pines of the Villa Borghese.

The Villa Borghese is today an enormous park open to the public, though formerly belonging to the powerful Borghese family, which dominated aspects of Roman life up to and including the Papacy. Respighi is interested in the energy of swarming children playing in the modern park, dancing in circles, playing soldier, shouting excitedly. The children's vivacity is projected in the orchestra through constant activity and noise, almost nonstop trills or tremolos, and fragments that might be bits of children's songs. The composer's wife Elsa, a singer and a native of Rome, recalled that he asked her to sing some of the songs of her childhood so he could work them into this aural picture.

II. Pine-trees Near a Catacomb.

The mood suddenly changes to utter stillness. The catacombs were used by early Christians as safe places to meet for worship during the period that their sect was outlawed. Respighi builds up the picture out of little fragments intended to suggest liturgical chanting. The overlapping sounds and parallel chords evoke the clandestine ceremonies over an extended period, as if gathered up by some sound-catching time-machine.

III. The Pines of the Janiculum.

The Janiculum (Gianicolo in modern Italian) is a large hill in the Trastevere section of Rome, near the Vatican. It offers a magnificent view of the city's historic center across the Tiber, and it was the site of numerous historic events. The 16th-century poet Tasso died in the shadow of these trees in 1595; two-and-a-half centuries later, the same ground saw the fiercest fighting in Rome between Garibaldi and the Papal forces during the lengthy and bitter struggle to unify the country. Respighi, however, chooses to offer pure nature-painting, for the Janiculum is also a park, elevated above the heat and bustle of the city, perfectly placed to catch the moon's rays on a clear night. Soft shimmering sounds against long phrases in the solo woodwinds captures the summer night. At the end of the movement, Respighi introduces the most unusual instrument in his orchestra: the phonograph. His score specifies a particular recording of the nightingale's song (No. R 6105, Concert Record Gramophone). The present performance will use the song of a more modern nightingale, and a more up-to-date technology.

IV. The Pines of the Via Appia.

The Appian Way was the great Roman road, the finest achievement of road-building in classical antiquity still, in part, used today. Completed in 312 B.C., it eventually connected Rome with Brindisi, a port on the Adriatic coast and thus became the principal road to Greece. Respighi's music is a vision of a misty dawn with the muffled march of tramping feet. It builds inexorably to a great outburst of sound, as extra brass instruments representing the Roman *buccine* sound their fanfare, the composer's image of an ancient army marching toward the Capitol in triumph.

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