

Wagner's
**Tristan
und Isolde**

4pm, Saturday 10 August
Auckland Town Hall

Conductor Giordano Bellincampi
with The New Zealand Opera Chorus

Tristan und Isolde is a searing portrait of agonised, unstoppable, uncontrollable desire that can end only in death. From its very first notes, Wagner reshaped music for ever. This is a performance not to be missed.

Duration: Approx. 5½ hours – three acts with one 30min interval and a 60min dinner break.



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Auckland
Philharmonia



CONDUCTOR Giordano Bellincampi
WITH MUSICIANS from the Australian National Academy of Music

RESPIGHI *Fountains of Rome*

RESPIGHI *Pines of Rome*

IBERT *Escales*

RESPIGHI *Roman Festivals*

Programme Notes



For artist biographies,
please visit our website

Ottorino Respighi (1879-1936)

Fountains of Rome (1916)

- I. *The Valle Giulia Fountain at Dawn*
- II. *The Triton Fountain in the Morning*
- III. *The Trevi Fountain at Noon*
- IV. *The Villa Medici Fountain at Sunset*

DURATION: c.18'

Respighi's tone poems are primarily studies in orchestral colour; the composer finds different combinations of instruments to illustrate a wide variety of moods, times, and places. Rome's approximately 2,000 fountains were built to show off the spectacular engineering and water quality in the capital of the Roman Empire. The fountains and the aqueducts that fed them fell into disrepair after the fall of the empire, but when Rome was rebuilt in the 16th and 17th centuries the fountains again became major civic projects to display the power and pomp of the papal regime. Respighi's tone poem illustrates four of the major Roman fountains, each one at a different time of day.

The descriptive strategy in each movement is different. The first and fourth movements of *Fountains of Rome* describe the area around the Valle Giulia and Villa Medici fountains: droves of cattle pass through the Valle Giulia in the early morning

pastoral scene, and Rome starts going to sleep around the Medici fountain. The second and third movements illustrate the Triton and Trevi fountains themselves, as the statues of mythical figures dance around in the water. The Trevi is undoubtedly the most famous Roman fountain today, its huge 18th century stage offering an ideal movie set in the 1950s and 60s (notably in *Roman Holiday*, *Three Coins in the Fountain*, and *La Dolce Vita*) and more recently an ideal Instagram background.

Ottorino Respighi (1879-1936)

Pines of Rome (1924)

- I. *The Pines of the Villa Borghese*
- II. *Pines Near a Catacomb*
- III. *The Pines of the Janiculum*
- IV. *The Pines of the Appian Way*

DURATION: c.20'

Respighi followed the success of *Fountains of Rome* by shifting his attentions from Rome's fountains to its pine trees. Here, Respighi paints four pictures of the trees in different parts of Rome at various times of day. The outer movements depict people among the pines: first, children playing at the Villa Borghese and last, an ancient Roman army marching down the Appian

Way. The middle movements illustrate the pine trees alone, first near a catacomb and then on the Janiculum hill.

The major innovation of this 1924 piece is that Respighi became the first composer to combine a live orchestra with a recording; instead of illustrating the song of the nightingale with the orchestra at the end of the third movement, he asked for a gramophone record of the birdsong to be played. The magical effect of the bird comes at the end of what is probably the most individual movement in the set of tone poems, as Respighi daringly shifts harmonies over long-held pedal notes and solo instruments come in and out of the texture.

INTERVAL

Jacques Ibert (1890-1962)

Escales (1922)

- I. *Rome – Palermo*
- II. *Tunis – Nefta*
- III. *Valencia*

DURATION: c.15'

While Jacques Ibert's music is little known today, lost between the modernist experiments of Poulenc and Messiaen that came after him and Debussy and Ravel before him, his work was highly regarded during his lifetime. Ibert won the very prestigious Prix de Rome, the top prize of the Paris Conservatoire, which allowed him to study in Italy for a few years. *Escales* is one of the pieces he wrote during his time there, a suite somewhat like a series of postcards reporting back from his travels around the Mediterranean. There was an ellipsis in the title, *Escales...*, on the original score, and it gives a sense of invitation, as if to leave space for the listener to fill in their own ports of call after hearing Ibert's.

The first movement is in an arc form, with a slow introduction and conclusion surrounding a fiery Sicilian tarantella. The second movement is an excellent example of French orientalism: a solo oboe accompanied by pizzicato strings and timpani evokes the mysterious (for Parisians, anyway) North Africa. The third movement, a colourful pastiche of Spanish dances, takes up more favourite exotic tropes in the tradition of Bizet's *Carmen* and Chabrier's *España*.

Ottorino Respighi (1879-1936)

Roman Festivals (1928)

- I. *Circenses*
- II. *The Jubilee*
- III. *The October Festival*
- IV. *The Epiphany*

DURATION: c.24'

The final member of Respighi's triptych of tone poems describes four festivals from both ancient and modern Rome. It is the most ambitious in length as well as in its harmonic experimentation, but also the most literal in terms of what it musically represents.

While the title implies lightness and fun, these festivals are not entirely positive occasions. *Circenses* is about gladiatorial combat: gladiators fight to the death accompanied by the cries of Christian martyrs (portrayed by the winds and strings with a plainchant-style melody). The *Jubilee* is a Christian festival held every 25 or 50 years; church bells are heard as Respighi quotes the German hymn 'Christ ist erstanden' in a contemplative rather than celebratory mood. Things become jollier in the last two movements with an October harvest festival complete with a mandolin playing a serenade, then the *Epiphany* festival which includes more folksongs and dances in a kaleidoscopic array.

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