

**SAN DIEGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
A JACOBS MASTERWORKS CONCERT
Jader Bignamini, conductor**

January 20 and 21, 2018

GIOACCHINO ROSSINI **Overture to *William Tell***

GUISEPPE MARTUCCI **Notturmo, Op. 70, No. 1**

NIKOLAI RIMSKY-KORSAKOV *Capriccio espagnol, Op. 34*

Alborada

Variazioni

Alborada

Scena e canto gitano

Fandango asturiano

INTERMISSION

OTTORINO RESPIGHI ***La boutique fantasque (after Rossini)***

Overture

Tarantella

Mazurka

Danse cosaque

Can-can

Valse lente

Nocturne

Galop

OTTORINO RESPIGHI ***Pini di Roma (Pines of Rome)***

The Pines of the Villa Borghese

Pines near a Catacomb

The Pines of the Janiculum

The Pines of the Appian Way

Overture to *William Tell*

GIOACCHINO ROSSINI

Born February 29, 1792, Pesaro

Died November 13, 1868, Paris

William Tell, based on Schiller's play *Wilhelm Tell* (1804) about Swiss resistance to Austrian oppression, was Rossini's final opera. It was premiered on August 3, 1829, in Paris, and so was originally sung in French – its first title was *Guillaume Tell*. The curious thing is that its composer – then only 37 years old – would live for nearly 40 more years and would never return to opera. *William Tell*, however, was a huge success, and just before his death Rossini attended its 500th performance in Paris.

His overture to the opera, which has enjoyed a very successful life in the concert hall, has an unusual structure. Rather than casting it in sonata form, Rossini chose to write it in four separate parts, very much like an instrumental suite; some (but not all) of its themes will reappear in the opera itself. The instrumentation for the opening section is striking: Rossini scores it for five cellos, with some discreet accompaniment by timpani and pizzicato strings, and this quintet sings a noble opening song. The second section, marked simply *Allegro*, is a portrait of a violent storm: murmuring strings suggest distant thunder, and woodwinds suggest the strike of big drops of rain before the storm bursts upon us. In its aftermath, solo English horn and solo flute sing a song of thanksgiving based on the old Swiss shepherd's song *ranz des vaches*; this melody will reappear in many forms in the opera itself.

The concluding section of the overture, marked *Allegro vivace*, has become famous for reasons Rossini could never have foreseen. He had originally written this music seven years earlier as a march for a military band in Venice, and now he incorporated that march to represent the call-to-arms of the Swiss soldiers. Rossini briefly used this march in the final act of the opera but decided to drop it, so it appears only in the overture. But this brilliant music became famous over a century later as the theme music to the radio and television program *The Lone Ranger*, and in the United States a generation of Baby Boomers grew up thinking of this as the “Lone Ranger music,” without any knowledge of its role in an opera. Heard in its original context, it offers some dazzling writing for orchestra, particularly for the first violins, who are given music of perpetual-motion difficulty before the overture hurtles its way to a knock-out conclusion.

Notturmo, Op. 70, No. 1

GIUSEPPE MARTUCCI

Born January 6, 1856, Capua

Died June 1, 1909, Naples

The music of Giuseppe Martucci was once much better known in this country than it is today. Gustav Mahler led Martucci's music during his brief tenure with the New York Philharmonic, and over the years it has been championed in America by such Italian conductors as Arturo Toscanini, Carlo Maria Giulini and Riccardo Muti. But Martucci's music seems to have fallen out of fashion these days, and that makes a performance of his Notturmo all the more welcome.

The son of a bandmaster, Martucci studied piano as a boy and soon became one of the finest young pianists in Italy. He gave performances throughout Europe, and his playing was admired by Franz Liszt and Anton Rubinstein. But Martucci wanted to compose, and so in 1880 – at the age of only 24 – he gave up the life of a touring virtuoso and became a professor of composition at the Naples Conservatory. At a time when musical life in Italy was centered almost exclusively around the opera house, Martucci set out revitalize orchestral and instrumental music: he wrote no operas and instead composed symphonies, concertos, chamber music and a vast amount of piano music. As a conductor, he founded the orchestra of Naples, raised standards throughout Italy and conducted the music of Wagner, Brahms and Debussy at a time when those composers were almost unknown in Italy. A vastly influential figure during his brief lifetime (he died at 53), Martucci was revered by the next generation as much for his integrity and his commitment as for his music.

The Notturmo has become one of Martucci's best-known orchestral works, but it began life as a piece for solo piano. Martucci originally composed it for keyboard in 1891, then came back to it ten years later and orchestrated it. A *nocturne* should be music of the night, and Martucci creates that atmosphere in many ways: by muting the strings, by creating a softly-pulsing syncopated accompaniment and by writing themes of a subdued character. The violins' singing opening melody, marked *espressivo*, establishes the mood of restraint, a mood that is not violated by the more lively second subject. The music rises to an animated (though not violent) climax, then falls away on a return of the opening material and fades into silence on the sound of the softly-syncopated chords that have continued throughout.

Capriccio espagnol, Op. 34
NIKOLAI RIMSKY-KORSAKOV
Born March 16, 1844, Tikhvin
Died June 21, 1908, Lyubensk

In 1886 Rimsky-Korsakov set to work on two companion-pieces, planned as fantasies for violin and orchestra on themes of two different nations. He got the first of them, a Fantasia on Two Russian Themes, done by the end of the year, and he went on to the next, a projected violin fantasy on Spanish themes. But as he worked, the music gradually changed form: Rimsky gave up the idea of a showpiece for violin and instead wrote a brilliant work for orchestra based on Spanish themes. The *Capriccio espagnol*, as it was called, was completed in August 1887, and the composer led the premiere in St. Petersburg on October 31 of that year.

From that instant, this music has been a huge success, but Rimsky was uncomfortable with praise of his orchestration. For him, there *was* no distinction between the music and the orchestration, and he said: “The opinion formed by both critics and the public, that the *Capriccio* is a *magnificently orchestrated piece*, is wrong. The *Capriccio* is a brilliant *composition for the orchestra*. The change of timbres, the felicitous choice of melodic designs and figuration patterns, exactly suiting each kind of instrument, brief virtuoso cadenzas for solo instruments, the rhythm of the percussion instruments, etc., constitute here the very *essence* of the composition and not its garb or orchestration.”

The *Capriccio espagnol* shows traces of Rimsky’s original plan in its many passages for solo violin, but these are augmented in the completed version by a number of solos for other instruments: this music is a display piece for an orchestra of virtuoso instrumentalists. It falls into five brief sections of different character, all based on Spanish themes. The *Capriccio* opens with an *Alborada* marked *Vivo e strepitoso* (“lively and noisy”). An *alborada* (or *aubade*) is an old Spanish morning song, and Rimsky’s is a real wake-up call, exploding to life in a great blaze of color; this section offers spirited solos for violin and clarinet. Next comes a variation-movement, based on the horn’s noble opening melody; there follow five variations scored for various combinations of instruments. Rimsky then briefly revisits his opening *Alborada*, though now in a different key and with the violin and clarinet trading their solo parts from that first movement. The *Scena e canto gitano* (“Scene and Gypsy Song”) is the longest of the five movements. The *Scene* opens with a rolling snare drum, followed by a fanfare shared by trumpet and horn, and Rimsky offers solo passages to a variety of instruments, including violin, clarinet and oboe, before the music proceeds into the fierce beginning of the Gypsy Song. That fiery song is (appropriately) assigned to the violins, who speed directly into the concluding

Fandango. This dances at first with dignity and then with wild abandon before Rimsky brings back a touch of the opening *Alborada* to conclude.

Early listeners were amazed by this music. The Russian Symphony of St. Petersburg, which gave the premiere, was so enthusiastic that Rimsky dedicated it to them and wrote the names of all 67 players into the score. Tchaikovsky, then composing his Fifth Symphony, described the *Capriccio* as “a colossal masterpiece of instrumentation” and called Rimsky “the greatest master of the present day.” In 1889, two years after the premiere, Rimsky led *Capriccio espagnol* at concerts at the International Exhibition in Paris, where it dazzled Western audiences. Among the most astonished were two young Frenchmen – the 27-year-old Debussy and the 14-year-old Ravel – who both suddenly realized just how brilliant an orchestra might sound.

***La boutique fantasque* (after Rossini)**

OTTORINO RESPIGHI

Born July 9, 1879, Bologna

Died April 18, 1936, Rome

La boutique fantasque should properly be attributed to two composers. Respighi is often credited as the composer, but the music was actually written by Rossini, and the later ballet was the product of a distinguished collaboration. It was apparently Respighi who in 1919 approached Léonide Massine, then choreographer of Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes, with a proposal to create a ballet based on piano pieces by Rossini. Diaghilev liked the idea, a libretto was prepared by the painter André Derain, Respighi chose and orchestrated a number of Rossini’s short piano pieces, and the Ballets Russes gave the first performance of *La boutique fantasque* (“The Fantastic Toyshop”) in London on June 5, 1919. It has remained an audience favorite ever since and has been frequently revived.

Music inspired by toys has fascinated a wide range of composers, from Leopold Mozart’s *Toy Symphony* to Shostakovich’s Fifteenth Symphony. Shostakovich suggested that the first movement of his symphony was inspired by the idea of toys coming alive in a toyshop at night, and that is also the subject of *La boutique fantasque*. In Derain’s libretto, set in France in 1860, a master toymaker has created a collection of splendid dancing dolls, which are displayed in his shop window. The most striking of these dolls is a pair of can-can dancers, a man and a woman who dance together in the window during the day and who are in love with each other when the shop is closed at night. People passing on the street admire the dolls, and eventually an American family decides to buy the male dancer, a Russian family the female dancer – they will return the next day to pick up the dolls and thus unknowingly separate the lovers. That night the horrified

dolls decide to resist, and when the families return the next day to pick up their dolls, they are met with a full-scale revolt led by Cossack dolls armed with bayonets. Eventually, the buyers retreat and give up their purchases, and *La boutique fantasque* concludes as the toymaker and his dolls dance happily behind the shop windows.

We of course think of Rossini as the composer of operas, but he wrote his final opera, *William Tell*, in 1829 when he was 37, and then retired. Rossini lived in Paris for nearly 40 more years, and during that time he was famous for his Sunday soirées during which he would entertain guests with food (Rossini was a gourmet cook – he invented Tournedos Rossini), witty conversation and music. Rossini may have stopped writing operas, but he did not stop composing, and over those final 40 years he wrote a vast number of songs and short piano pieces that he collected under the title *Sins of Old Age*. Rossini would not allow any of these 13 volumes of music to be published during his lifetime, and they did not really begin to appear until the 1950s, though the music circulated among Rossini's friends and other music-lovers. It is a measure of Respighi's awareness that he knew and loved these pieces long before they were published.

For *La boutique fantasque* Respighi orchestrated eight of these movements, pressing them into service to accompany the ballet's action, and he deserves much of the credit here, for his orchestrations are witty, colorful and light – perfectly suited to the fairy-tale atmosphere of the ballet. Respighi drew some of these movements from one of the collections of pieces that Rossini had given the (utterly characteristic) title *Hors d'oeuvre: radishes, sardines, gherkins, almonds, vinegar and oil*. From the full ballet score Respighi assembled the suite of eight movements which is heard at these concerts. The *Overture* (cast as a march) leads to the *Tarantella* (which depicts a pair of Italian dancers), a *Mazurka* (danced by playing cards in the ballet) and a *Danse cosaque* that introduces the dolls that will come to rescue. The *Can-can* is the dance of the two elegant dolls that will be threatened with separation, the *Valse lente* accompanies the sale of the two can-can dancers, the *Nocturne* is the music of the plot and concluding *Galop* celebrates the final triumph of the dolls.

Pini di Roma (Pines of Rome)

OTTORINO RESPIGHI

Born July 9, 1879, Bologna

Died April 18, 1936, Rome

Completed in 1924, *Pini di Roma* (Pines of Rome) is the second part of Respighi's orchestral triptych inspired by scenes from Rome, past and present. The first had painted

tone-portraits of the city's opulent fountains, but now Respighi turned to a different feature and composed a four-movement orchestral suite inspired by its pine trees. The major influence on all of Respighi's Roman music was the tone-poems of Richard Strauss. Strauss had used the orchestra to depict specific actions and to tell a story, but Respighi was not so much interested in narrative – in telling a story – as he was in creating atmosphere. It is as if the four movements of *Pines of Rome* are depictions of paintings: they are full of color and detail, but they do not tell a story by themselves. There is, however, a retrospective quality to this music: Rome's pine trees become a symbol of the city's past, which is evoked at several points. When Respighi conducted the Philadelphia Orchestra in a performance of *Pines of Rome* in 1926, he included a note in the program that spoke directly to this: "While in his preceding work, *Fountains of Rome*, the composer sought to reproduce by means of tone an impression of nature, in *Pines of Rome* he uses 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 testimony for the principal events in Roman life."

Respighi recalls these "memories and visions" with a large orchestra, which he uses with skill and imagination, perhaps the result of his study of orchestration with Rimsky-Korsakov in Russia in 1900-03. To this orchestra Respighi adds a number of unusual instruments, including a huge percussion battery (timpani, triangle, cymbals, tambourine, ratchet, bass drum and tam-tam), plus harp, bells, celesta, piano and organ. In addition, Respighi calls for six *buccine*, an obsolete brass instrument used here to suggest the horn calls of the ancient Roman legions (the part is usually undertaken by the modern trumpet), and – at the end of the third movement – a phonograph record of a nightingale. *Pines of Rome* may not be profound music (and it does not pretend to be), but it *sounds* tremendous; the fun of this music lies not just in Respighi's evocation of Rome's past but in his opulent orchestral sonorities.

In the published score, Respighi provided brief synopses of the four movements of *Pines of Rome*, which are played without pause. His notes are quoted in full here, followed by more detailed musical descriptions of each movement:

1. *The Pines of the Villa Borghese. Children are at play in the pine groves of Villa Borghese: they they dance round in circles, they play at soldier, marching and fighting, they are wrought up by their own cries like swallows at evening, they come and go in swarms.* The music opens in a great swirling flurry. Children's songs and dances ring through the shining orchestral textures, which are made particularly brilliant by Respighi's use of high brass, triangle and bells. The music is in constant motion throughout, and it rushes without pause directly into...

2. *The Pines near a Catacomb.* We see the shades of the pine trees ringing the entrance to a catacomb. From the depth rises the sound of mournful psalm-singing, floating through the air like a solemn hymn, and gradually and mysteriously dispersing. Respighi's portrait of the pine-shrouded tomb gets off to a dark start as muted deep strings and muted horns intone the movement's main idea. A trumpet sounds from the distance, and gradually the music grows to a tremendous climax built on chanted rhythms, then subsides to a quiet close.

3. *The Pines of the Janiculum.* A quiver runs through the air: the pine trees of the Janiculum stand distinctly outlined in the clear light of a full moon. A nightingale is singing. A deep tam-tam stroke leads us to this nocturne-like interlude. The Janiculum, once Rome's highest point, is a ridge running north and south opposite the Palatine. Rippling piano arpeggios introduce this movement, whose gentle main theme is sung by a lone clarinet. (Respighi marks this passage "like a dream.") Wistful solos for oboe and cello lead to a climax that swells up opulently before the movement fades away on the sound of a nightingale's song.

4. *The Pines of the Appian Way.* *Misty Dawn on the Appian Way: solitary pine trees guarding the magic landscape; the muffled, ceaseless rhythm of unending footsteps. The poet has a fantastic vision of bygone glories: trumpets sound and, in the brilliance of the newly-risen sun, a consular army bursts forth toward the Sacred Way, mounting in triumph to the Capitol.* The Appian Way, built in 312 B.C. and still in place today, was Rome's main highway to the south. Quiet march rhythms open this evocation of Rome's past military glories, and soon legions of triumphant warriors swagger past as the music rises to smashing climax.

-Program notes by Eric Bromberger

Program History – by Dr. Melvin G. Goldzband, Symphony Archivist

Nino Marcelli conducted the overture to Rossini's *William Tell* numerous times in the 1920's and 30's, most notably during the California-Pacific Exposition summer season in San Diego in 1936, when it was broadcast nationwide by the newly-formed Columbia Broadcasting System as part of that afternoon's concert. In 1993 the finale of the Overture was used as a gimmick to publicize the orchestra's fund-raising drive; Yoav Talmi used the piece as illustrative of how high the fund-raising "thermometer" was rising as part of the campaign. Talmi would play it up to a point arbitrarily determined to match the increasing funds raised, until, finally, he could conduct the whole piece through. The audience loved it, week after week. But Jahja Ling showed off the whole deserving overture most recently during the 2010-11 season, marking the seventh programming of the entire piece at these concerts.

In the 2013-14 season, Gilbert Varga introduced the Martucci Notturmo to San Diego Symphony audiences. The current concerts give the piece its second hearing here. The famous *Capriccio espagnole* by Rimsky-Korsakov was introduced to San Diego Symphony audiences by Nicolai Sokoloff, who conducted it during the 1941 summer season, the Symphony's last until the end of the War, when Balboa Park re-opened in 1947. Jahja Ling gave the most recent Masterworks performance of the work during the 2010-11 season, and Sameer Patel also led it with the orchestra during the recent 2017 Bayside Summer Nights season at the Embarcadero.

The suite *La boutique fantasque*, assembled and orchestrated by Respighi from piano music by Rossini, has been played only once before by the San Diego Symphony Orchestra, when Earl Bernard Murray led it during the 1965-66 season.

Respighi's evocative tone poem *Pines of Rome* was first played by the San Diego Symphony under Fabien Seitzky's baton in 1947; since then, it has been repeated eight times, most recently by Jahja Ling. He conducted it twice during his tenure, in the 2005-06 and 2010-11 seasons, both times using our refurbished "Fox Theatre" Robert Morton organ to great effect in the martial finale of the piece.