

TORONTO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Gustavo Gimeno, Music Director

Pines of Rome

Gustavo Gimeno, conductor

Giuseppe Verdi

Ballet Music from Act III of *Macbeth*

I. Allegro vivacissimo

II. Allegro

III. (Valzer): Allegro vivacissimo

Ottorino Respighi

Feste Romane (Roman Festivals), P. 157

I. Circenses (Circus Maximus)

II. Il Giubileo (The Jubilee)

III. L'Ottobrata (The October Festival)

IV. La Befana (The Epiphany)

Intermission

Luciano Berio

4 dédicaces

I. Fanfara

II. Entrata

III. Festum

IV. Encore

Nino Rota

**Selections from "Ballabili" from *Il Gattopardo*
(*The Leopard*)**

I. Valzer brillante

II. Mazurka

V. Quadriglia

VI. Galopp

Ottorino Respighi

Pini di Roma (Pines of Rome), P. 141

I. I pini di Villa Borghese (The Pines of the Villa Borghese)

II. Pini presso una catacomba (Pines near a Catacomb)

III. I pini del Gianicolo (The Pines of the Janiculum)

IV. I pini della Via Appia (The Pines of the Appian Way)

Program 4

Thursday,
February 1, 2024

8:00pm

Saturday,
February 3, 2024

8:00pm

Sunday,
February 4, 2024

3:00pm

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appearances are generously
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Giuseppe Verdi (1813–1901)

Ballet Music from Act III of *Macbeth*

Composed 1847

10 min

GIUSEPPE VERDI'S OPERA *MACBETH* premiered in Florence, Italy, on March 14, 1847. It is scored for piccolo, flute, two oboes, two clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, and orchestral strings. Ballet was an obligatory ingredient in 19th-century French grand opera. The preferred location was Act III, by which time high-society latecomers, such as the members of the Jockey Club, could arrive in time to applaud the performances of their mistresses in the corps de ballet. Verdi initially paid virtually no attention to ballet. When he set his eyes on Paris, the mid-19th century's acknowledged operatic capital, he knew that he too would have to abide by the strict requirement for at least one dance interlude per opera.

He grumbled about it, but eventually complied no fewer than six times. Four of those divertissements were created for revised, French-language versions of Italian-language originals. He included ballets in the two operas that were commissioned

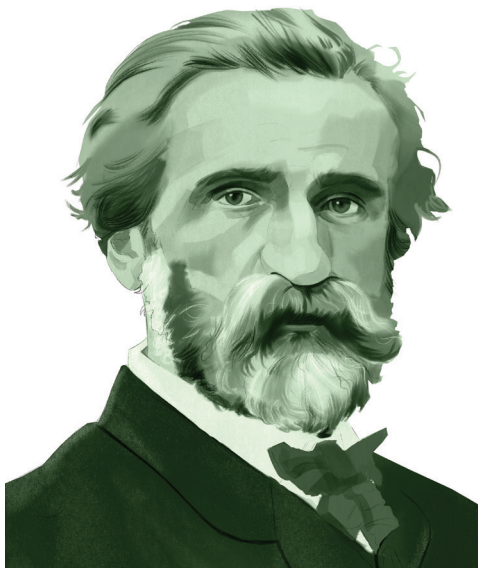
and premièred by the Paris Opera: *Les Vêpres siciliennes* (*Sicilian Vespers*) and *Don Carlos*. *Macbeth* was the first of his three operas adapted from the plays of William Shakespeare. For many years he considered another, based on *King Lear*, but finally abandoned it. He concluded his relationship with Shakespeare through his final two operas, *Otello* and *Falstaff*.

The ballet music he added in 1865 for the first Parisian production of *Macbeth*

appears at the beginning of Act III. It involves the three witches who predict the events of the scenario, a bloody tale of war and imperial treachery set in 11th-century Scotland. Surrounded by spirits and devils, they dance to a macabre, ferocious *Allegro*. In a sombre, darkly-coloured pantomime, Hecate, goddess of witchcraft, appears as the result of a spell cast by the witches. She warns them that Macbeth will appear shortly

to question them about his final destiny, but that they must not reveal too much of what lies in store for him. After she vanishes amid thunder and lightning, the ballet concludes with a grotesque waltz.

—Program note by Don Anderson



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Giuseppe Verdi—by Dane Thibeault

Ottorino Respighi (1879–1936) ***Feste Romane (Roman Festivals), P. 157***

Composed 1928–1929

24 min

IN 1913, OTTORINO RESPIGHI MOVED to Rome, which remained his centre of activity for the rest of his life. His music's international renown eventually allowed him to devote his time exclusively to composing and touring. He celebrated the past and present beauties of his beloved adopted city in three sumptuous tone poems, or suites. He completed *Fountains of Rome*, which established his reputation as a composer for orchestra, in 1916; *Pines of Rome* followed eight years later. He conceived the idea for the last of them, *Roman Festivals*, during the summer of 1927, although he had been collecting materials to use in it for some time—the opening segment includes themes from *Nerone (Nero)*, an unfinished orchestral composition dating from the previous year.

His friend and champion, conductor Arturo Toscanini, had given the North American première of *Pines of Rome*. This time, he was eager to give the very first performance of Respighi's latest Roman creation. He did so, with the New York Philharmonic, on February 21, 1929. Respighi attached a preface to the score, setting out the scenes he intended *Roman Festivals* to evoke:

“Circenses’ (‘The Circus Maximus’): A threatening sky hangs over the Circus Maximus, but it is the people’s holiday: Ave Nero! The iron doors are unlocked, the strains of a religious song and the howling of wild beasts float on the air. The crowd rises in agitation: unperturbed, the song of the martyrs develops, conquers, then is lost in the tumult.”

Harsh, brazen fanfares echo throughout this section, mirroring the frenzy and brutality of the scene. The strongly contrasted theme for the Christian martyrs has a quiet, devout stoicism. The martyrs’ theme grows in fervour, only to be

swamped by the ever-more frantic animal noises and a return of the opening fanfares.

“Il Giubileo’ (‘The Jubilee’): The pilgrims trail along the highway, praying. Finally appears the summit of Monte Mario, to ardent eyes and gasping souls, the holy city: Rome! Rome! A hymn of praise bursts forth, the churches ring out their reply.”

The strings present the heavy, weary steps of the pilgrims, above which first the winds, then the brass intone a doleful melody based on a 12th-century hymn. After a dramatic pause, a new, increasingly animated and more hopeful theme appears, again suggesting plainchant.

“L’Ottobrata’ (‘The October Festival’): The October Festival in the Roman Castelli covered with vines: hunting echoes, tinkling of bells, songs of love. Then in the tender evening, a romantic serenade.”

A commanding horn call heralds the festival, the brass lead the hunt in a merrily galloping rhythm. As the sounds of the hunt fade with the approach of dusk, solo mandolin takes centre stage, assisted by other brief solo passages.

“La Befana’ (‘The Epiphany’): The night before Epiphany in the Piazza Navona, a characteristic rhythm of trumpets dominates the frantic clamour: above the swelling noise float, from time to time, rustic motives, saltarello cadenzas, the strains of a barrel organ and the appeal of a barker, the harsh song of the drunkard, and the lively stornello in which is expressed the popular feeling, ‘Let us pass, we are Romans!’”

Respighi achieves a level of virtually cinematic realism in this riotous concluding section. Amidst the kaleidoscope of fleeting, overlapping impressions is what sounds like a patriotic song, belted out at top volume and with lusty sincerity by the entire crowd of revellers.

—Program note by Don Anderson

Luciano Berio (1925–2003)

4 *dédicaces*

Composed 1978–1989

13 min

BORN INTO A FAMILY OF MUSICIANS in northwestern Italy, Luciano Berio was among the most prominent voices of the 20th-century musical avant garde. Although his musical growth was initially interrupted by the Second World War, Berio's career began in earnest in 1945 at the Milan Conservatory. After making waves in the United States during a series of high-profile residencies in the early 1950s, Berio's career garnered countless prizes and collaborations, an important role in the development of the emerging field of electronic music, and teaching positions at Juilliard and in Europe.

Berio's most notorious body of work is his career-spanning *Sequenza* series, composed of exceptionally challenging solo works that strive to push individual instruments to physical and artistic extremes. Berio was, however, also dedicated to the orchestral medium, taking particular cues from the orchestration experiments of Mahler, Debussy, and Stravinsky. Drawing on this depth of orchestration knowledge, Berio often wove discrete groups of instruments into "choirs" of unified timbres, forming layers to be superposed and rearranged throughout his orchestral works; in this respect, his approach to orchestration recalls his interest

in electronically synthesizing sounds by layering individual tones.

The 4 *dédicaces* were originally written as four brief standalone works. Shortly before Berio's death, his publisher encouraged their publication as a set to make them more practical for concert programming, but Berio passed away before this task was completed. The première of the combined set took place under the baton of Pierre Boulez, another doyen of 20th-century classical music.

Fanfara (1982) was originally premiered as part of Berio's opera *Un re in ascolto*, in which a king's perception of reality collides feverishly with Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.

Unsurprisingly, this fanfare is unsettled rather than triumphant. Flutes and bassoons begin a persistent muttering in unison, to which the trumpets can only add their own intermittent and fragmented commentary, surrounded by clouds of contrasting timbres from across the orchestra. *Entrata* was premiered by the San Francisco Symphony in 1980, and described by the composer as a dazzling display of orchestral timbres, leading to a striking conclusion in which the orchestral

forces become increasingly unified. *Festum* (1989), Latin for "feast" or "festival", captures a raucous, if brief, celebration highlighting the orchestra's high brass and woodwinds. Berio framed *Encore* (1978) in similarly festive terms, as a *jeu d'esprit* intended to showcase orchestral virtuosity.

—Program note by Arlan Vriens



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Luciano Berio—by Dane Thibeault

Nino Rota (1911–1979)

Selections from “Ballabili” from *Il Gattopardo* (*The Leopard*)

Composed 1962

7 min

A CHILD PRODIGY who began composing at only 8 years old, Nino Rota was among the most astonishingly prolific composers of the 20th century. During his studies at the Curtis Institute of Music in the 1930s, he developed an eclectic and adaptable style that fused American popular music with the stylings of George Gershwin and Rota’s own interest in Italian songs and operetta. Among his considerable output are no less than ten operas, five ballets, and a full complement of orchestral and chamber works.

Nevertheless, Rota’s most noteworthy contributions were for the silver screen rather than the concert stage. Many of Rota’s contemporaries viewed film music as a lesser art form, but Rota found the genre to be an artistic challenge and fertile ground for his ability to deftly knit together musical moods and styles. Filmmakers like Federico Fellini and Luchino Visconti called on Rota frequently, and North American moviegoers might best recognize his soundtrack to Francis Ford Coppola’s *The Godfather*. Rota went on to receive an Academy Award for Best Score for *The Godfather: Part II*. By the time of his death

he was credited with more than 150 distinct film scores.

Il Gattopardo (*The Leopard*), a 1963 film by Visconti, adapts a 1958 novel by the Italian prince Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa. Set against a backdrop of war and political intrigue in 1860s Sicily, the apex of the film is a grand ball in a sumptuous palace. The “Ballabili”—a term for dances by a corps de ballet or an opera chorus—accompany this scene. The opening “Valzer brillante” is a particularly clever nod to the film’s historical

setting, incorporating an unpublished 19th-century waltz by Giuseppe Verdi that had only just been rediscovered while Rota was composing. The “Mazurka” is a suave derivative of the titular Polish triple-metre folk dance, with cheeky *appoggiaturas* (ornamental notes) providing a musical wink and a nod. The “Quadriglia” references the *quadrille*, an intricate 18th- and 19th-century dance closely related to

American square dancing; here, the simple bass line and disarming melody belie an emotionally charged exchange between the film’s characters. The “Galopp”, which Rota borrowed from his own score to the 1954 film *Appassionatamente*, concludes the grand ball at a breakneck pace.

—Program note by Arlan Vriens



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Nino Rota—by Dane Thibeault

Ottorino Respighi (1879–1936)

Pini di Roma (*Pines of Rome*), P. 141

Composed 1923–1924

23 min

IN THE 1920s, THE SYMPHONIC POEM, wildly popular in the late 19th century, was in rapid decline; the “pure music” of neoclassicism and dodecaphony was in, and program music was out. There have been symphonic poems since—Shostakovich wrote one as late as 1967—but Respighi’s *Pines of Rome* (1924), Sibelius’s *Tapiola* (1926), and Gershwin’s *An American in Paris* (1928) were the last such works to find a place in the standard symphonic repertory.

Pines of Rome does not, like the tone poems of Richard Strauss, explore depths of character and psychology; instead, it depicts sounds and images and events with breathtaking intensity. What has been called the “hedonistic pictorialism” of this music has its source in Respighi’s glittering orchestration.

To an already large orchestra he added a huge percussion battery, a harp, bells, *three* keyboards (celeste, piano, organ), and a few oddments—in the second movement, an offstage trumpet; in the third, a gramophone recording of a nightingale; in the fourth, six brass instruments that imitate *buccine*, curved brass instruments of ancient Rome. Yet, according to his wife, Elsa, “nothing irked him more than to

hear someone praise his orchestration,” for he said that specific musical ideas always suggested—no, *demand*—a certain specific instrumentation.

Pines of Rome comprises four distinct movements, but there is nothing Classical about the form or style of the work: from the astonishing opening bars, Respighi’s only concern is to evoke images of ancient, Renaissance, and modern Rome as directly and brilliantly as possible. In the first movement, he creates a dense, swirling kaleidoscope of orchestral colours. The “shininess” of this movement comes in part from its high tessitura: *not a single bar* is notated in bass clef, not even in the cello or bassoon parts. In the second movement, we are plunged suddenly from the sun-dappled surface into the subterranean depths. Now the music is slow, dark, gloomy, vague; an offstage trumpet evokes “heartfelt psalm-singing,” which swells and then dissipates. The

“moonlit” third movement opens with an expressive clarinet solo and closes, hushed, with the song of a nightingale, its mellifluous textures enriched by sensuous figuration in harp, celeste, and piano. And in the concise, simple closing march, Respighi conjures up an advancing ancient Roman army, bringing the work to a blaring, triumphant close.



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Ottorino Respighi—by Dane Thibeault

Program 4—About the Music

What follows is Respighi's own program note—written only *after* the piece had been composed—inserted at the beginning of the published score:

I. "The Pines of the Villa Borghese": Children play among the pines of Villa Borghese: they dance in circles, they play as soldiers, marching and fighting, they become intoxicated by their own cries, like swallows in the evening, and swarm around. Suddenly, the scene changes...

II. "Pines near a Catacomb": We see the shadows of the pines that crown the entrance to a catacomb; from the depths comes heartfelt psalm-singing, floating

solemnly through the air like a hymn and mysteriously dispersing.

III. "The Pines of the Janiculum": A quiver runs through the air: the pines of the Janiculum are outlined in the clear light of a full moon. A nightingale sings.

IV. "The Pines of the Appian Way": Misty dawn on the Appian Way. The tragic countryside is guarded by solitary pines. Muffled, ceaseless, the rhythm of innumerable footsteps. The poet has a fantastical vision of ancient glories: trumpets sound and, in the brilliance of the newly risen sun, a consular army bursts onto the Sacred Way, mounting in triumph to the Capitol.

—Program note by Kevin Bazzana

For a biography of Gustavo Gimeno, please turn to page 8.

Celebrating 50 Years of the TSYO

TSYO Camp Weekend



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Camp Weekend 2023 Family Photo

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