

BERLINER PHILHARMONIKER

Kirill Petrenko conducts Respighi and Martucci

Thursday, November 26, 2026 · 20:00 · Philharmonie Berlin

Kirill Petrenko, conductor

TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME		MIN
1	RESPIGHI 1879–1936 <i>Fontane di Roma</i>	16'
2	RESPIGHI 1879–1936 <i>Feste romane</i>	25'
3	MARTUCCI 1856–1909 <i>Notturmo in G-flat major, Op. 70 No. 1 (version for orchestra)</i>	7'
4	RESPIGHI 1879–1936 <i>Pini di Roma</i>	22'
TOTAL MUSIC		70'

Ottorino Respighi

1879–1936

Fontane di Roma

16 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

When Ottorino Respighi moved from his native Bologna to Rome in 1913 to teach composition at the Liceo di Santa Cecilia, he was at first overwhelmed by the city. Its monuments and the weight of its history seemed to press in on him from every side. Yet he went on to write the best-known musical portrait of Rome: three tone poems that he himself thought of as a triptych, *Fontane di Roma* (“Fountains of Rome”), *Pini di Roma* (“Pines of Rome”) and *Feste romane* (“Roman Festivals”). At these concerts Kirill Petrenko performs all three.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The four sections run without a break.

The Fountain of Valle Giulia at Dawn. Muted strings and delicate woodwind solos paint “a pastoral landscape” in the soft mist of early morning. The archaic-sounding harmonies seem to reach back to a far older world.

The Triton Fountain in the Morning. A sudden, loud horn call wakes the water spirits: naiads and tritons chase one another in a wild dance beneath the spray, in sparkling, rushing figures across the orchestra.

The Trevi Fountain at Midday. The music gathers into a great triumphal wave as Neptune's chariot, drawn by sea horses, crosses the water. Listen for the full orchestra at its most splendid, then for the long ebb back into near silence.

The Villa Medici Fountain at Sunset. A melancholy close: bells, birdsong and rustling leaves, in Respighi's description, and then the stillness of night.

Ottorino Respighi

1879–1936

Feste romane

25 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Feste romane ("Roman Festivals"), completed in 1928, is the last and most extravagant of Respighi's three Roman tone poems. Where the fountains and the pines are places, this time Respighi depicts celebrations, and he moves through two thousand years of the city's history: from the brutal games of the imperial circus to the pilgrims of the Middle Ages, a harvest festival in the countryside and the noisy crowds of Respighi's own day.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Circenses (Circus Games). Blaring brass fanfares announce the games in the Circus Maximus under Nero. Against the roar of the crowd, the Christian martyrs sing their hymn in the strings and woodwinds, while the beasts snarl around them. The movement ends with crushing chords for the full orchestra and organ.

Il giubileo (The Jubilee). Weary medieval pilgrims trudge towards Rome: the opening is marked “sad and tired”. When they catch sight of the city from Monte Mario, they break into a hymn of praise, and bells ring out across the orchestra.

L'Ottobrata (The October Festival). A celebration of harvest and hunting in the Roman countryside. Listen for horn calls, and for a mandolin that accompanies a love serenade in the evening.

La Befana (Epiphany). The eve of Epiphany in Piazza Navona: a chaotic, cinematic crowd scene of street songs and dances, a barrel organ and a drunken reveller played by a solo trombone. Respighi builds everything to a frantic, exhilarating close.

Giuseppe Martucci

1856–1909

Notturmo in G-flat major, Op. 70 No. 1 (version for orchestra)

7 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Giuseppe Martucci was an unusual figure in nineteenth-century Italy: a composer who wrote no operas. A virtuoso pianist, conductor and teacher, he devoted his career to instrumental music at a time when Italian musical life revolved around the opera house. As a conductor he championed Wagner, leading the first Italian performance of *Tristan und Isolde* in Bologna in 1888. As director of the music school in Bologna he taught composition to the young Ottorino Respighi and became an important influence on him. That link explains the Notturmo's place in this all-Respighi evening: here is the teacher, framed by the pupil's three Roman portraits.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

After the brilliance of the Roman festivals, the Notturmo changes the scale completely. Listen for the long, singing melody, introduced softly and then passed around the orchestra, and for the way Martucci's delicate orchestration lets the strings and woodwind glow rather than blaze. Its

ancestors are less Italian opera than the German Romantic tradition that Martucci admired, from Schumann and Brahms to Wagner.

Ottorino Respighi

1879–1936

Pini di Roma

22 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Respighi said that two features of Rome had spoken to his imagination above all: its “marvellous fountains” and the “umbrella-like pines that appear in every part of the horizon”. The fountains became his first Roman tone poem in 1916; the pines followed in *Pini di Roma*, completed in 1924 after years of starting and restarting. It has become the most frequently performed of the three.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The Pines of the Villa Borghese. Children play under the trees, singing nursery rhymes and pretending to be soldiers: bright, noisy music with shrill, chattering figures that Respighi compared to swallows.

Pines near a Catacomb. Suddenly the children are gone. Low strings, horns and the deep pedal notes of the organ suggest the underground tombs, and a solemn chant rises from below, played by a distant trumpet and then taken up by the whole orchestra.

The Pines of the Janiculum. A moonlit nocturne. A solo clarinet, which Respighi asks to be played “as if in a dream”, leads a hushed night scene with a short piano cadenza. At the end, listen for the recorded nightingale singing alone over the orchestra’s sustained chords.

The Pines of the Appian Way. Out of the dawn mist comes a steady, distant marching tread. Respighi imagined the “unending steps” of a Roman army. The march grows relentlessly louder as trumpets and buccine join in, until the army reaches the Capitoline Hill in a blaze of sound.

CONCERT PROGRAMS

<https://concertprograms.eu/concerts/bp-2026-11-26-petrenko>

Version 2, 30 September 2026