

BERLINER PHILHARMONIKER

Respighi's Roman Trilogy and Verismo Arias with Jonathan Tetelman

Wednesday, December 2, 2026 · 20:00 · Alte Oper Frankfurt

Kirill Petrenko, conductor · Jonathan Tetelman, tenor

	TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME	MIN
1	RESPIGHI 1879–1936 <i>Fontane di Roma</i>	16'
2	CILEA 1866–1950 <i>'È la solita storia' (Federico's Lament, L'arlesiana, Act II)</i>	4'
3	GIORDANO 1867–1948 <i>'Amor ti vieta' (Fedora, Act II)</i>	2'
4	RESPIGHI 1879–1936 <i>Pini di Roma</i>	22'
5	MASCAGNI 1863–1945 <i>'Mamma, quel vino è generoso' (Turiddu's Farewell, Cavalleria rusticana)</i>	4'
6	LEONCAVALLO 1857–1919 <i>Intermezzo from Pagliacci</i>	4'
7	LEONCAVALLO 1857–1919 <i>'Recitar! ... Vesti la giubba' (Pagliacci, Act I)</i>	4'
8	RESPIGHI 1879–1936 <i>Feste romane</i>	25'
	TOTAL MUSIC	81'

Ottorino Respighi

1879–1936

Fontane di Roma

16 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Fontane di Roma (Fountains of Rome), completed in 1916, is the first of the three tone poems Ottorino Respighi devoted to Rome, and tonight all three are played in a single evening. Respighi had settled in the city only a few years earlier. Before that he had spent time in Russia as an orchestral violist, taking lessons in composition and orchestration from Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, and the Russian master's gift for instrumental colour is everywhere in this score.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The Fountain of Valle Giulia at Dawn. A pastoral scene, in Respighi's words, with sheep passing in the damp mist of a Roman morning. Soft, rocking strings and a gentle woodwind melody set a hazy, still mood.

The Triton Fountain in the Morning. A sudden horn call, like a blast on a conch shell, summons naiads and tritons, who chase each other in a wild dance among the jets of water. Listen for the glittering runs in harps, celesta and woodwinds.

The Trevi Fountain at Midday. A solemn theme gathers strength until the full orchestra blazes out in fanfares: Neptune's chariot, drawn by sea horses, crossing the water. It is the single big climax of the piece, and it fades as quickly as it came.

The Villa Medici Fountain at Sunset. A melancholy close. A bell tolls for the evening prayer, birds twitter, leaves rustle, and the music slips away into the silence of night.

Francesco Cilea

1866–1950

'È la solita storia' (Federico's Lament, L'arlesiana, Act II)

4 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Francesco Cilea's opera *L'arlesiana* (1897) is based on Alphonse Daudet's story of Federico, a young Provençal farmer consumed by love for a woman from Arles who never appears on stage. When he learns that she has been another man's mistress, his family tries to steer him towards the loyal Vivetta, but he cannot let go, and the opera ends with his suicide.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The aria opens almost in a murmur, the voice half-speaking over a gently rocking accompaniment while the orchestra recalls the plain, folk-like tune of the shepherd's tale. Once Federico turns from the story to himself, the melody climbs and the orchestra swells, until the lament breaks into an open cry of pain near the top of the tenor's range. The whole arc, from quiet storytelling to despair, takes about four minutes.

Umberto Giordano

1867–1948

'Amor ti vieta' (Fedora, Act II)

2 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Umberto Giordano's *Fedora* opened at the Teatro Lirico in Milan in November 1898, a year after *L'arlesiana* at the same theatre, and once again Enrico Caruso was in the cast, this time as Count Loris Ipanov. He had to repeat "Amor ti vieta" at the premiere. The opera is based on a play by Victorien Sardou written for Sarah Bernhardt: a thriller among Russian aristocrats in St Petersburg, Paris and Switzerland, with a murdered fiancé, police spies and a heroine who dies by poison.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

There is no build-up: the melody begins at once, broad and warm, with the strings following the voice closely underneath. Because it is so short, the aria grows in what feels like a single breath, climbing steadily to its peak on the words “l’amor ti vieta” and then closing. It rewards a singer who can keep a long, smooth line at full intensity without forcing, which is exactly what makes it a favourite showpiece for lyric tenors.

Ottorino Respighi

1879–1936

Pini di Roma

22 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Eight years after *Fountains of Rome*, Respighi returned to the city in *Pini di Roma* (Pines of Rome), first performed at the Augusteo in Rome in December 1924. This time his subject was the umbrella pines that shape the Roman skyline, and again he chose four sites, each a witness to a different period of the city’s life, moving from children playing in a modern park back to the legions of ancient Rome.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The Pines of the Villa Borghese. Children at play in the gardens: singing nursery rhymes, dancing in rings and marching like soldiers. Respighi compared them to swallows swarming at dusk. The chattering orchestra, trumpets and all, stops dead at the end.

Pines near a Catacomb. Darkness. Low, muted strings, and a trumpet offstage sings a slow chant, as if rising from an early Christian burial place under the trees. The chant swells to a great climax and sinks back into shadow.

The Pines of the Janiculum. Night on the Janiculum hill: a piano cadenza, a long clarinet solo under the full moon, and at the end the recorded nightingale singing over hushed chords.

The Pines of the Appian Way. Dawn on the old military road. A soft, relentless tread in the low instruments, piano and timpani grows into a march as the consul's army approaches. The buccine enter with fanfares and the orchestra, with organ, builds to an overwhelming climax as the legions climb the Capitol in triumph.

Pietro Mascagni

1863–1945

'Mamma, quel vino è generoso' (*Turiddu's Farewell, Cavalleria rusticana*)

4 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Pietro Mascagni was an unknown music teacher in the small town of Cerignola when he entered the one-act opera competition run by the Milan publisher Edoardo Sonzogno. His *Cavalleria rusticana* (Rustic Chivalry), based on a Sicilian story by Giovanni Verga, won, and its premiere at the Teatro Costanzi in Rome on 17 May 1890 was a sensation. The opera is usually named as the first great work of verismo, the “realist” style of Italian opera about ordinary people and violent passions, and it is still often paired with Leoncavallo’s *Pagliacci*, heard later tonight.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The scene begins with an almost casual excuse (“Mother, that wine is strong”), but the pretence cracks quickly. Listen for the agitated orchestra beneath the voice, and for the growing urgency as Turiddu’s thoughts turn to Santuzza. The climax comes with his repeated pleas for a kiss (“Un bacio, mamma! Un altro bacio!”) and a final cry of “Addio!”, sung at full force, before he rushes out.

Ruggero Leoncavallo

1857–1919

Intermezzo from Pagliacci

4 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Ruggero Leoncavallo wrote both words and music of *Pagliacci* (Clowns), first performed at the Teatro Dal Verme in Milan in May 1892 under the young Arturo Toscanini. It made him famous overnight. Like *Cavalleria rusticana*, it tells a story of jealousy and sudden violence among ordinary people: Canio, head of a troupe of travelling players in a southern Italian village, discovers that his wife Nedda has a lover, and that evening, during a comedy in which he plays a betrayed clown, he kills them both in front of the audience.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

A weighty, solemn opening, then themes of grief from the opera taken up broadly by the strings. The music swells to a passionate climax and then subsides into a quiet, dark close: a few minutes of the warm, emotional Italian orchestral sound of the 1890s.

Ruggero Leoncavallo

1857–1919

'Recitar! ... Vesti la giubba' (*Pagliacci*, Act I)

4 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

"Recitar! ... Vesti la giubba" ("To perform! ... Put on the costume") closes Act I of *Pagliacci*, and it is perhaps the most famous tenor aria of the verismo repertoire. Canio has just caught his wife Nedda with a lover, though the man escaped unrecognised. Yet the evening's performance is about to begin, and Canio must go on stage as Pagliaccio, the clown whose role is to be mocked as a deceived husband.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

First the recitative: broken, halting phrases, each answered by an outburst in the orchestra, as Canio struggles to think straight. Then the aria, built on a sobbing phrase first heard in the opera's prelude. The line rises to the great climax on "Ridi, Pagliaccio, sul tuo amore infranto!", the most exposed moment in the piece. Many tenors then break into a real sob, and the orchestra takes the melody over in a final surge of grief.

Ottorino Respighi

1879–1936

Feste romane

25 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Feste romane (Roman Festivals), completed in 1928, is the last and largest of Respighi's three Roman tone poems. Where *Fountains* painted times of day and *Pines* the landscape, *Festivals* turns to the crowd: four celebrations, from ancient Rome to Respighi's own time. Arturo Toscanini, who had made *Fountains of Rome* famous, gave the first performance with the New York Philharmonic at Carnegie Hall in February 1929.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Circenses (Circus Games). A threatening sky hangs over the Circus Maximus, wrote Respighi, but it is the people's holiday. Brass fanfares greet the emperor, and in the arena the hymn of the Christian martyrs rises against the snarling of wild beasts. The martyrs' chant holds out, then is drowned in violent chords over the organ.

Il Giubileo (The Jubilee). Medieval pilgrims trudge towards Rome, praying. Then, from the summit of Monte Mario, the holy city comes into view; a hymn bursts out and the church bells ring in reply. Respighi weaves in the old Easter hymn "Christ ist erstanden".

L'Ottobrata (The October Festival). The grape harvest in the hills outside Rome: hunting horns, tinkling bells and love songs. At twilight a mandolin plays a romantic serenade.

La Befana (Epiphany). The night before Epiphany in the Piazza Navona. Trumpets set a frantic rhythm, and out of the din come snatches of folk dances, a barrel organ, a street vendor's cry, and a drunken reveller portrayed by a slurring solo trombone. The finale gathers everything into a deafening, joyous climax.

Tonight's artists

Jonathan Tetelman *tenor*

Jonathan Tetelman sings four scenes from Italian opera around 1900, each a tenor at a breaking point. Two of the roles are closely his own: he sang Loris in *Fedora* at Oper Frankfurt in 2022, a performance the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* praised for its warmth and elegance, and he made his Vienna State Opera debut as Turiddu in *Cavalleria rusticana*. The arias are set between Respighi's three Roman tone poems, so that the evening moves between the orchestra at full stretch and the voice alone. The programme is repeated at the Festspielhaus Baden-Baden on 3 December.

Jonathan Tetelman was born in Castro, Chile, in 1988 and was adopted as a baby by American parents who raised him in New Jersey. He began as a baritone, studying at the Manhattan School of Music, and made the transition to tenor during graduate studies at the Mannes School of Music. He has since become one of the most sought-after tenors in Italian and French opera, in roles such as Rodolfo, Cavaradossi, Pinkerton, Alfredo, Werther and Loris Ipanov in *Giordano's Fedora*, at houses including the Royal Opera House, the Metropolitan Opera, the Vienna State Opera and the Deutsche Oper Berlin. He records exclusively for Deutsche Grammophon: his debut album *Arias* (2022) won him an OPUS KLASSIK Young Artist award, and *The Great Puccini* (2023) received a Gramophone Award.

CONCERT PROGRAMS

<https://concertprograms.eu/concerts/bp-2026-12-02-petrenko>

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