

**Ottorino RESPIGHI** (1879-1936)

**'Pini di Roma' – 'The Pines of Rome'**

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| 1 I. I pini di Villa Borghese – The Pines of the Villa Borghese | 2:33 |
| 2 II. Pini presso una catacomba – The Pines near a Catacomb     | 6:31 |
| 3 III. I pini del Gianicolo – The Pines of the Janiculum        | 6:41 |
| 4 IV. I pini della Via Appia – The Pines of the Appian Way      | 4:52 |

Recorded 17 March 1953

**'Fontane di Roma' – 'The Fountains of Rome'**

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| 5 I. La fontana di Valle Giulia all'alba – The Fountain of Valle Giulia at Dawn    | 3:47 |
| 6 II. La fontana di Tritone al mattino – The Triton Fountain at Morning            | 2:44 |
| 7 III. La fontana di Trevi al meriggio – The Trevi Fountain at Midday              | 3:28 |
| 8 IV. La fontana di Villa Medici al tramonto – The Villa Medici Fountain at Sunset | 4:55 |

Recorded 17 December 1951

**'Feste Romane' – 'Roman Festivals'**

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| 9 I. Circenses – The Circus Maximus        | 4:59 |
| 10 II. Giubileo – The Jubilee              | 6:54 |
| 11 III. L'Ottobrata – The October Festival | 7:21 |
| 12 IV. La Befana – The Epiphany            | 4:57 |

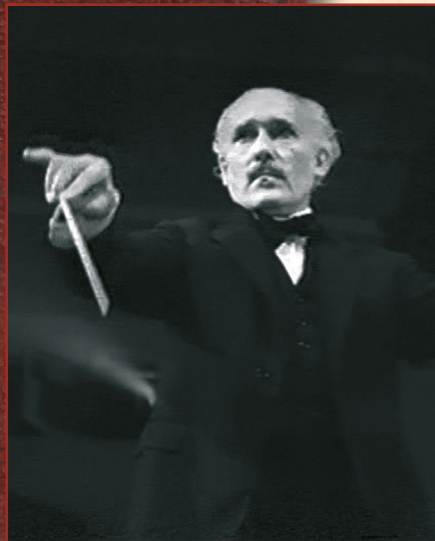
Recorded 12 December 1949

**Alfredo CATALANI** (1854-1893)

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| 13 <b>'La Wally'</b> – Prelude to Act 4 – Recorded 5 August 1952         | 6:31 |
| 14 <b>'Loreley'</b> – Dance of the Water Nymphs – Recorded 5 August 1952 | 6:22 |

**Giuseppe VERDI** (1813-1901)

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| 15 <b>'The Force of Destiny'</b> – Overture – Recorded 10 November 1952 | 7:03 |
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**ARTURO  
TOSCANINI**  
THE ROMAN TRILOGY  
**RESPIGHI**  
The Pines of Rome  
The Fountains of Rome  
Roman Festivals

**CATALANI**  
La Wally Prelude to Act 4  
Dance of the Water Nymphs

**VERDI**  
The Force of Destiny  
Overture

**NBC SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**

Recorded 1949-1953



#### **A GUILD HISTORICAL RELEASE**

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birthplace, Lucca. The town was also Puccini's birthplace, and rivalry (in the event, somewhat unnecessary) between these near-contemporary operatic composers induced in the hardly self-confident Cataloni much nervous uncertainty.

He need not have worried, for Toscanini's conducting, by all accounts – including, of course, the composer's – was wholly exceptional, raising the stature of the work considerably. Some indication of the success Toscanini brought to the opera may be gauged from the fact that La Wally was given under his baton no fewer than fourteen times. Cataloni was ecstatic. We may also speculate that it may have been Toscanini's love of the score that he named one of his daughters Wally. It remains regrettable that we do not have complete recordings of either opera from the Maestro, but we may console ourselves with these two exceptionally well-performed orchestral excerpts.

The great master of nineteenth-century Italian opera, of course, was Giuseppe Verdi, and our selection ends with the Overture to *La forza del destino*. The first occasion Toscanini conducted the opera was in 1888, in Milan's Teatro Dal Verme (that is to say, 64 years (!) before this recording was made). A fulsome newspaper report in *La Gazzetta di Venezia*, of a later production of the opera under the Maestro, in 1895 in Venice, says it all:

'Several [encores] were requested and obtained by the less-demanding spectators; but – and above all – there was a repetition demanded by all without exception: the overture, which was played with fire, with fusion, with colour, under the valiant direction of Arturo Toscanini. The orchestra was truly the absolutely superior part, consistently admirable.'

By then, that is to say the mid-1890s, Toscanini had met and had been considerably encouraged by Verdi himself, who was to die in 1901 at the age of 87. Of course, no personal connection of Toscanini may be found with those many other composers, particularly of the great Austro-Germanic school – though Toscanini was 30 years old when Brahms died in 1897, and always regarded the great composer as an older contemporary – but perhaps, in these varied orchestral pieces by his various compatriots, we may sense a coming-together of innate temperament, combining Italian fire, drama and lyrical beauty which so characterise the work of the country's finest composers.

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The late Hans Keller once wrote that: 'All great artists, by virtue of what they do, are also great teachers.' It is through the present-day revelations of the qualities of Toscanini's performances – in this collection, of music by his compatriots – that we, as interested listeners, become students of great art, and indeed of great interpretative art, and thereby learn from such examples of the conductor's genius.

The life and career of Arturo Toscanini demonstrates, as clearly as may be, the absurdity of the claims of those who suggest that to interpret a piece of music fully, the performing musician should be of the same nationality or ethnicity as the composer. For example, it is sometimes suggested that only British-born conductors can fully interpret British music – but when one considers, for example, Toscanini's recordings of Elgar's *Enigma Variations*, or those international violinists – from Kreisler, Menuhin and Heifetz to modern virtuosos – who have added Elgar's 'quintessentially English' *Violin Concerto* to their repertoire, the proposition is rendered absurd.

When contemplating the recorded legacy of Arturo Toscanini, the consistency of the performances he conducted of the great works of Beethoven, Brahms and Wagner were – and in many ways, still are – widely considered to be benchmarks of interpretative understanding, constituting living proof, at so many years' distance, of the proposition that music is indeed an international language, transcending ethnic and temporal boundaries. Indeed, the refutation has been succinctly expressed by Harvey Sachs, *à propos* Toscanini's grasp of the music of Brahms, disabusing those who maintain: 'The reaction...that a Catholic from the sunny south could so thoroughly understand a Protestant from the cloudy north.'

Despite the manifestly absurd claims of one view of musical nationalism versus another, no-one, certainly not the greatest artists, can entirely escape from, or wholly rid themselves of, the earliest and therefore often deepest influences from their youthful years – years which, in terms of musicianship, were often those wherein the individual's tendencies began to manifest themselves. More often than not, those earliest years would have been spent in the child's native land, making their earliest musical experiences more attuned to the country of their birth and upbringing.

In this selection of performances from the Maestro's legendary concert and recording career, we have music by three very varied Italian composers – each of whom Toscanini knew personally.

There can be no doubt that the conductor's innate Italian nature brings to the major trilogy of orchestral suites inspired by Rome, the nation's capital, and composed over a twelve-year period (1916-28) by Ottorino Respighi – a true master of orchestration – an inherent, almost intuitive understanding that, notwithstanding our earlier claims, is almost tangible.

This may be because Toscanini was 'in', so speak, at the creation of all three works: he was to have given the world premiere of the first suite in the trilogy – The Fountains of Rome (Fontani di Roma) – in 1916. But as his programme also included music by Wagner, at a time when Italy had joined the Allied powers against Germany, the suite was withdrawn; Toscanini conducted his first performance of the work two years later. The second work in the trilogy, The Pines of Rome (I Pini di Roma, 1924) was given its American premiere by Toscanini and the Philharmonic-Symphony of New York in the concert marking his debut with the orchestra in 1926. Roman Festivals (Feste Romane) was given its world premiere by Toscanini and the New York Philharmonic-Symphony in 1928, in Respighi's presence.

There can be very little doubt that Toscanini's association with the composer and especially these three works in particular was closer than that of any other conductor of the time, and the recordings he made of them, within little over a three year period (from December 1949 to March 1953), whilst not constituting the first recordings made of these works, none the less have an authenticity that places his performances on an altogether higher level of interest and, indeed, accomplishment.

In that regard, we might consider what the late Toscanini authority and record company executive Ray Burford wrote about these performances. On Roman Festivals, Burford said: 'Toscanini's flair for his compatriot's music is understandable. Indeed, it can be argued that he makes Respighi's trilogy sound better than it actually is. The NBC give a breathtaking performance – full of poetry and excitement.' Regarding The Fountains of Rome, Burford explained: 'Contrary to some reports, Toscanini did not present the world premiere of this work which was, in fact, a disaster. He did, however, 'rescue' it, and if his earlier performances were to the standard of his 1951 version Respighi was fortunate indeed to have such a champion. Great delicacy of writing and powerful climaxes reveal it as probably the most convincing of the three works.' And of The Pines

of Rome, Burford pointed out: 'Toscanini included this work in his first concert with the New York Philharmonic-Symphony in 1926: characteristically, he repeated the whole programme on his very last appearance with the orchestra 19 years later.'

A feature of these performances of Respighi's trilogy is that as we mark the 80th anniversary of the composer's death in 1936 (at the relatively early age of 56), the consistent depth of interpretative penetration which singles out each one of Toscanini's accounts remains as powerful and moving today as it was when the recordings first appeared during the eight years after World War II.

The qualities of Toscanini's interpretation, of course, have not changed, but today's reproduction of the original sound-carrying tapings is now considerably in advance of the relatively primitive monaural discs through which they were originally experienced. Indeed, since Toscanini's retirement in 1954, succeeding generations of engineers have returned to the performances, driven by a desire to reveal more of the essential aural qualities of the original masters in attempts to replicate more faithfully that which was experienced by audiences of the time. Not every attempt has been successful, but the ability of today's engineers, combined with their aesthetic judgement, to present those original recordings in the best possible sound is testament to the never-ending appeal of Toscanini's performances.

We have noted that Respighi was only 56 when he died, but an Italian composer of an earlier generation whom Toscanini also knew, Alfredo Catalani, was merely 39 when he succumbed to tuberculosis in 1893, after having seen the notable success of the last two of his six operas, Loreley in 1890 and La Wally in 1892.

Although Toscanini maintained a life-long admiration for Catalani's music, he did not conduct the premieres of any of the composer's operas, yet almost sixty years after Catalani's death, Toscanini was still performing and recording his music. Toscanini's devotion to his friend's music was complete: in 1892, his performance of Loreley in Genoa in February 1892 drew from Catalani the comment (in a letter to his publisher): 'Toscanini is a great and true artist; that is all there is to be said.'

As a consequence, several months later Catalani strongly urged Toscanini to direct a new production in September of his latest opera La Wally, in what was the work's premiere in Catalani's