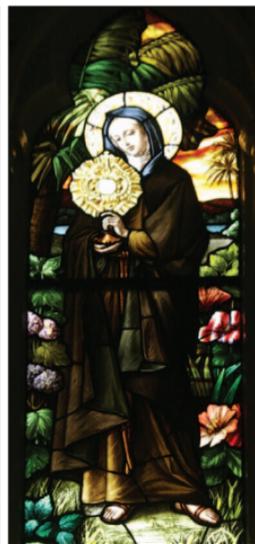
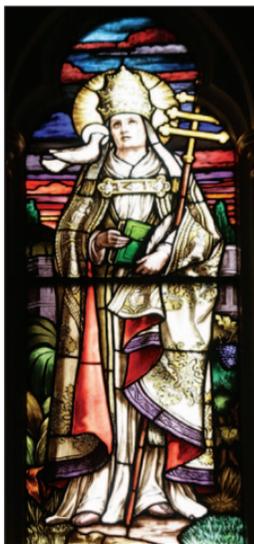


NAXOS

# RESPIGHI

## Church Windows Brazilian Impressions Rossiniana

Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra  
JoAnn Falletta



**Ottorino Respighi (1879–1936)**  
**Vetrata di chiesa (Church Windows)**  
**Impressioni brasiliane (Brazilian Impressions)**  
**Rossiniana: Suite for Orchestra**

Ottorino Respighi was born in Bologna in 1879 where he trained as a violinist and viola player, becoming a student at the city's Liceo Musicale in 1891 and studying under the composer Giuseppe Martucci. In 1900 he applied to play in the orchestra of the St Petersburg Imperial Opera, where he worked for two seasons as principal viola and whilst there studied privately with Rimsky-Korsakov. Returning to Italy in 1903 he embarked on a career as a solo violinist but as his interests in baroque and classical instrumental music developed he turned increasingly towards composition. Following a period of study in Berlin he was appointed a teacher of composition at the Liceo Musicale di Santa Cecilia in Rome in 1913.

Respighi had already attracted favourable attention with a number of works that included a piano concerto, an impressive *Prelude, Chorale and Fugue* for orchestra and two operas, but it was his symphonic poem *The Fountains of Rome* of 1916 that brought him international recognition. In 1919 he married one of his pupils, Elsa Oliveri Sangiacomo, whose biography of her husband written in 1954 is still the only book dedicated to Respighi, and five years later became Director of the Conservatorio (formerly Liceo) di Santa Cecilia, resigning after two years to devote himself to composition full-time.

Although his reputation rests on the justly celebrated trilogy of Roman tone poems (Naxos 8.550539), Respighi also left a number of distinguished works in other forms, notably the ballet music *La boutique fantasque* and his extended song for mezzo-soprano and string quartet, *Il Tramonto* (Marco Polo 8.223347). His interest in early music prompted some fine arrangements of music by Bach, Frescobaldi, Tartini and Vivaldi, while his edition of Monteverdi's madrigals is still widely used today. It was his wife who introduced him to Gregorian chant, their melodic modes a source of inspiration to Respighi in several works, notably his *Concerto in modo Misolidio*

(Naxos 8.553366), the *Concerto Gregoriano* and *Vetrata di chiesa* (Church Windows). This work began life as *Tre preludi sopra melodie gregoriane* (Three Preludes on Gregorian Melodies) (Naxos 8.553704), written originally for piano and while the couple were staying on the island of Capri in the summer of 1919. In her biography Elsa wrote, 'the composition reflects Respighi's state of mind at the time: the joyous wonder of a revelation and at the same time the mystic exaltation of profound religious feeling'. *Vetrata di chiesa*, subtitled *Four Symphonic Impressions*, is a reworking of these piano pieces, scored for large orchestra, with the addition of a fourth movement to make a symphonic suite. It was completed in 1925 and had its première in the United States at Boston Symphony Hall in February 1927 conducted by Koussevitzky.

A close friend of Respighi, Claudio Guastalla, who was also his librettist and a professor of literature, helped the composer find a suitable title for the work, with Respighi eventually deciding on Guastalla's suggestion *Vetrata di chiesa*. They then selected appropriate subtitles for each of the four movements, providing them with scriptural or religious texts associated with scenes from stained-glass windows. It should be noted, however, that these descriptive titles were added *after* the finished composition and that the music was not actually inspired by religious events as depicted in Italian church windows.

The title for the opening movement, *La fuga in Egitto* (The Flight into Egypt), was prompted by its gentle pulsing accompaniment and sense of nostalgia, and a poetic line of Guastalla's own devising, 'the little caravan proceeded through the desert, in the starry night, bearing the Treasure of the World'. Step-wise melodic movement in the style of plainsong characterizes much of the thematic material, with its quasi-oriental inflections, its meandering journey carried by a 5/4 metre throughout. A sense of languor and its fragrant scoring make this one of

Respighi's more romantic conceptions.

This is brutally swept aside in *San Michele Arcangelo* (St Michael the Archangel), its title arising from its war-like sounds which Respighi's friend imagined to be, 'a clash of weapons - a battle in the skies' conjuring up St Michael and his Angels fighting the dragon in heaven. For this dramatic portrait Respighi unleashes the full orchestra with two principal ideas; the first a strident trombone theme, marked *allegro impetuoso*, against horn fanfares and a swirling string accompaniment. A second idea, but related to the first by its triplet figuration, is introduced by the horns and soon taken up by the strings. After the reappearance of the main theme and its gradual collapse, there follows a reflective passage (*Lento*), in which an offstage trumpet plays the principal melody at half speed. Following a further brief return to the second theme Respighi brings this aerial battle scene to a dramatic finish with a triple forte clash on the tam-tam.

The restraint of the third movement with its convent-like calm evoked for Respighi and Guastalla a pure, saintly figure. From reading *The Little Flowers of St Francis* they arrived at St Clare, founder of the Franciscan Order of Nuns, who was 'miraculously borne by the angels from her sick-bed to the church of St Francis, in order to be present at the ... service of Matins', an image they considered apposite for the third church window. Along its untroubled progress, and like the first movement in 5/4 time, Respighi creates many fine orchestral touches which, with delicate sonorities from harp and celeste, the use of bells and a beautiful key shift from minor to major, all contribute to the movement's rapt atmosphere.

For the final movement, *San Gregorio Magno* (St Gregory the Great), Respighi constructs a grand *fantasia* on the *Gloria* from the *Missa de Angelis*. Out of a quietly mysterious background of bell-like figures and subtle, exotic orchestral colours there emerges the Gregorian chorale on muted horns. This builds to a dramatic climax; its energy releasing into a striking organ solo, reminiscent of Saint-Saëns, where the main theme reappears. Following a brief reference to the music of the introduction, the *Gloria* motif is taken up by the brass and the work is brought to a magnificent conclusion – prompting the writer Edward

Johnson to describe the movement as a kind of 'Papal Coronation in sound'. Clearly a Pope should be conveyed in music of great splendour and brilliance, and the score bears the additional text: 'Ecce Pontifex Maximus! ... Bless the Lord ... Sing the Hymn to God. Alleluia!'

A year after the completion of *Vetrate di chiesa* Respighi had been invited to Brazil and set sail on the Conte Verde on 12th May 1927 bound for Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. In between conducting engagements and recitals with his wife he found time to explore native folk-music and before leaving promised the Rio Philharmonic to write a Brazilian suite. By the end of the year three movements were finished and in January 1928 their orchestration completed. Plans for two other movements never materialised as work on *Feste romane*, the last of the Roman trilogy, and a hectic touring schedule prevented its completion in time for the première of what came to be named *Impressioni brasiliane* (Brazilian Impressions) in June 1928 in Rio de Janeiro. The three movements are a musical snapshot of Respighi's stay from the previous year, their indigenous melodic and rhythmic shapes fully absorbed into a work written for 'fun and relaxation'.

The opening *nocturne* is an atmospheric musical souvenir with fragments of dance rhythm and folk-song, languorous and sometimes sensuous, and warmed by Respighi's characteristically colourful scoring. The shorter second movement provides a graphic recollection of his visit to a reptile institute at Butantan where its poisonous snakes (raised for the production of serum) made for a deeply memorable experience. From the rising bassoon figure near the beginning Respighi creates an alarmingly sinister portrait complete with chromatic sliding, a rattlesnake (tambourine) and, as if to leave one in no doubt as to how haunting the encounter was for him, there is the chilling presence of the medieval plainsong theme, the *Dies irae* from the Mass for the Dead. By contrast, the concluding *Song and Dance* finds Respighi in unbuttoned mood, its carnival atmosphere created by an assortment of percussive effects, swaying rhythms and, announced by horns, an exuberant samba. Once again it is the composer's unerring gift for orchestral colour that makes an indelible impression.

Some years earlier Respighi had been inspired by a handful of piano pieces by Rossini from which he produced his brilliantly scored ballet music *La boutique fantasque*, which was first performed in London in 1919. Respighi turned again to Rossini in 1925, the year of his *Vedrate di chiesa*, this time to a volume of piano music called *Les Riens* (Trifles), from which he transcribed a suite entitled *Rossimiana*. Each of the four movements pays tribute to Rossini through the musical landscape of Italian song and dance. In the first movement Respighi embraces a colourful and waltz-like *siciliana* with a traditional Venetian gondolier's song, the *barcarola*. The mood darkens for the

*Lamento*, where a brooding theme is given malevolent weight by the brass. A solo clarinet then heralds the return of the main theme, now transformed in a warm lyrical glow. The charming *Intermezzo*, with its sparkling orchestration, serves almost as a curtain raiser for the high spirits of the *Tarantella*. Here, extrovert outer sections incorporate a solemn procession, complete with an ominous tolling bell, but it is the vitality of the southern Italian dance with its driving rhythms and colourful orchestration that dominates the mood of this wonderfully infectious finale.

**David Truslove**

## **JoAnn Falletta**

Buffalo Philharmonic Music Director JoAnn Falletta has been hailed by the *Los Angeles Times* as “one of the brightest stars of symphonic music in America,” and by *The New York Times* as “one of the finest conductors of her generation.” Recipient of the Seaver/National Endowment for the Arts Conductors Award, winner of the Stokowski Competition, and Toscanini, Ditson and Bruno Walter conducting awards, she has also received eight consecutive awards from the American Society of Composers and Publishers (ASCAP). A champion of American music, she has presented nearly three hundred works by American composers including over seventy world premières. In addition to her post as Music Director of the Buffalo Philharmonic, JoAnn Falletta is Music Director of the Virginia Symphony and Artistic Advisor to the Honolulu Symphony. In great demand as a guest conductor, she has been invited to conduct many of the world’s great symphony orchestras, including the Philadelphia Orchestra, the London Symphony Orchestra, the Montreal Symphony Orchestra, the Houston Symphony, the National Symphony, the St Paul Chamber Orchestra and the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, as well as orchestras throughout Europe, in South America, South Africa and the Far East. Her growing discography, which includes some forty titles, consists of recordings with the London Symphony, the Buffalo Philharmonic, the Virginia Symphony, the English Chamber Orchestra, the New Zealand Symphony, the Long Beach Symphony, the Czech National Symphony and the Women’s Philharmonic. For Naxos she has recorded works by Aaron Copland, Kenneth Fuchs, Charles Griffes and Frederick Converse, part of a continuing programme of recordings of American music.

## **Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra**

The world-renowned Buffalo Philharmonic was founded in 1935 and makes its home in Kleinhans Music Hall, a National Historic Site with an international reputation as one of the greatest concert halls in the United States. Through the decades the orchestra has grown in stature under a number of distinguished conductors, including William Steinberg, Joseph Krips, Lukas Foss, Michael Tilson Thomas, Maximiano Valdés, Semyon Bychkov and Julius Rudel. As Buffalo’s cultural ambassador, the Philharmonic has performed across the United States, Canada, and Europe, including concerts at Lincoln Center, Kennedy Center, Boston’s Symphony Hall, San Francisco’s Davies Hall, Montreal’s Place des Arts, with 22 appearances in Carnegie Hall. The orchestra has also appeared in Milan, Geneva, Zurich and Vienna, in the course of concert tours in Europe.



**The Flight Into Egypt** Detail from stained glass windows of St Joseph Cathedral, Buffalo, NY (Courtesy of the Diocese of Buffalo)



ITALIAN CLASSICS

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Playing Time  
65:26

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Ottorino  
**RESPIGHI**  
(1879–1936)

- |   |   |              |
|---|---|--------------|
|   | <b>Vetrate di chiesa (Church Windows)</b>                         | <b>24:59</b> |
| ① | I. La fuga in Egitto (The Flight into Egypt)                      | 5:56         |
| ② | II. San Michele Arcangelo (St Michael the Archangel)              | 5:21         |
| ③ | III. Il mattutino di Santa Chiara (The Matins of St Clare)        | 5:04         |
| ④ | IV. San Gregorio Magno (St Gregory the Great)                     | 8:36         |
|   | <b>Impressioni brasiliane (Brazilian Impressions)</b>             | <b>19:06</b> |
| ⑤ | I. Notte tropicale (Tropical Night)                               | 10:26        |
| ⑥ | II. Butantan  | 4:27         |
| ⑦ | III. Canzona e danza (Song and Dance)                             | 4:11         |
|   | <b>Rossiniana: Suite for Orchestra</b>                            | <b>21:06</b> |
| ⑧ | I. Allegretto – Andantino – Allegretto                            | 5:07         |
| ⑨ | II. Lamento: Andantino maestoso                                   | 6:25         |
| ⑩ | III. Intermezzo: Allegretto moderato – Poco più mosso – Tempo I   | 2:16         |
| ⑪ | IV. Tarantella: Allegro Vivacissimo – Andante religioso – Tempo I | 7:14         |

**Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra**  
**JoAnn Falletta, conductor**

Recorded at Kleinhans Music Hall, Buffalo, New York, USA, 20–21 March 2006 • Producer: Tom Shepard  
Engineer: John Newton • Mastering Engineer: Mark Donahue • Booklet notes: David Truslove  
Cover: Stained glass windows of St Joseph Cathedral, Buffalo, NY (Courtesy of the Diocese of Buffalo)