MASTERPIECE CONCERT SHOW NOTES: "PASSPORT TO ROME"

The Cape Symphony Orchestra presents "Passport to Rome" on Saturday, January 25, 2025 at 7:30 PM and Sunday, January 26, 2025 at 3:00 PM at the Barnstable Performing Arts Center.

This season's Masterpiece Series concerts are a vital component of the search for Cape Symphony's next Music Director. Each will be conducted by a candidate for the position. Ticketholders will have the opportunity to share their thoughts in a survey to be emailed the week after the performance. We hope you'll weigh in!

Cape Symphony

Darko Butorac, Guest Conductor
Jillian Honn, Oboe
Meryl Summers, Bassoon
Jacques Lee Wood, Cello
Velléda Miragias, Cello

Cape Symphony Orchestra Musicians

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About Today's Program

GIOACHINO ROSSINI (1792-1868)
La gazza ladra (The Thieving Magpie): Overture

Gioachino Rossini was born into a musical family, began his composing career as a child, and was formally educated in Bologna. He is especially well-known for his operas, having set new standards for both comic and serious works. Musicologist and historian Philip Gossett describes him as "from the outset, a consummate composer of overtures" characterized by "clear melodies, exuberant rhythms [and] simple harmonic structure."

La gazza ladra is an opera semiseria ("semi-serious opera," containing elements of both comedy and pathos) in two acts, perhaps best known today for this overture. The music perfectly evokes the fiendish, clever magpie. It's hard to hear it without smiling, though in the opera, the magpie nearly causes a tragedy when another is blamed for its thieving.

This is one of Rossini's more famous overtures, says Cape Symphony Orchestra Concertmaster Jae Cosmos Lee, in particular "for its noble and militaristic opening with the use of snare drum, which was very unconventional for its day."

Anyone who's ever worked to deadline can appreciate the story behind the overture's completion. Jae relates: "The day before *La gazza ladra* was set to premiere in the spring of 1817 at the La Scala theater in Milan, Rossini still hadn't finished the overture. The conductor locked Rossini in a room at the very top of the theater to finish it, with four stage hands guarding the door. As he completed each page of the score, Rossini would toss it out the window to the copyist waiting at the bottom of the theater to hurriedly write out the parts… yikes."

The overture to *La gazza ladra* may be familiar to movie buffs. "As a huge cinephile," says Jae, "Stanley Kubrick's use of the elegant middle section of the overture in the early scenes of *A Clockwork Orange* has always made it an earworm for me." Harry Potter fans may recognize its influence on John Williams's "Aunt Marge's Waltz" from *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*. In both films, the music is delightful while the scenes are – in vastly different ways! – unsettling.

ANTONIO VIVALDI (1678-1741)

Antonio Lucio Vivaldi's work is considered to represent the height of the Baroque period, and is popular again today. He is especially appreciated for his many – over 500! – instrumental concertos (pieces for soloists accompanied by an ensemble).

Young Antonio learned to play the violin from his father, and they toured Venice as musicians together. He began studying for the priesthood at 15. Though ordained, Vivaldi did not pursue priestly duties due to ill health, suffering from a debilitating chest ailment (probably bronchial asthma) throughout his life. Instead, he dedicated himself to music, initially as composer, conductor, and teacher at the Ospedale della Pietà, a home for unwanted children.

Vivaldi achieved great success with sacred vocal music and opera, and by the 1720s was highly in demand as a freelance composer, providing instrumental music to customers and patrons all across Europe. With the changing of fashion and taste, however, Vivaldi's music eventually fell from favor. His career went into decline in the 1730s, and he died in poverty.

Concerto, Oboe & Bassoon, op.42, no.3, RV 545, G major

I. *Andante molto*
II. *Largo*
III. *Allegro molto*

Vivaldi is said to have perfected the classical three-movement (fast-slow-fast) concerto, creating hundreds of showcases for virtuosic solo performances. With 39 concertos written for bassoon and over 50 works for oboe, he contributed much to the repertoire for these instruments.

Your Cape Symphony Orchestra's Principal Oboist Jillian Honn and Principal Bassoonist Meryl Summers are featured soloists in this performance. "What I love most about Vivaldi's music is his unique flavor of joyousness," says Jillian. "There is a buoyancy to it that works so incredibly well on a double reed instrument. Put two double reed players together? You can't help but smile (neither can

we!). The responsibility that comes with playing a solo piece by a composer like Vivaldi is to take his musical blueprint and find ways to sing in your own voice through articulation, ornaments, and dynamic decisions. It was such a joy to collaborate on these decisions with Meryl, and we hope that you enjoy this sweet little double concerto as much as we do!"

Concerto, 2 Violoncellos, RV 531, G minor

I. *Allegro*
II. *Largo*
III. *Allegro*

Cape Symphony's Principal Cellist Jacques Lee Wood and Assistant Principal Cellist and Velléda Miragias are soloists for this performance. Here, Jacques discusses the piece's significance and shares what it's like to perform it:

> Antonio Vivaldi's Concerto for Two Cellos in G minor is a remarkable work in the concerto repertoire, showcasing both the virtuosity and expressive potential of the cello. Unlike many of Vivaldi's other concertos, this piece is scored for two equal soloists, creating a dialogue that is both conversational and dramatic.
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> From the performers' perspective, this concerto is a thrilling and demanding work. The interplay between the two solo parts requires precise coordination and deep musical understanding. The opening Allegro plunges us immediately into a world of urgency and intensity. The rapid sequences, rhythmic drive, and tight interplay between the soloists challenge us to maintain clarity while expressing the music's fiery character. As performers, we feel the exhilaration of trading rapid, cascading passages while striving to blend seamlessly in shared phrases.
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> The second movement, marked Largo, is a stark contrast to the dynamic energy of the outer movements. It offers a moment of lyrical intimacy, where the two cellos sing together in a beautifully melancholic and expressive cantilena. This movement feels deeply personal, allowing us to explore the cello's warm, vocal qualities, and improvise over Vivaldi's beautiful melodic lines. For us as performers, this section demands a delicate balance of control and emotion, requiring us to breathe together and shape each phrase as if speaking with one voice.
>
> The concerto concludes with a spirited Allegro that brims with vitality and excitement. The interplay of fast, syncopated passages creates a lively dialogue between the soloists and the orchestra. This movement reminds us why this work remains a favorite among cellists—it's virtuosic yet playful, demanding yet rewarding. The joy of performing this finale comes from the sheer energy it evokes, both for us as players and for the audience.
> Performing Vivaldi's Double Cello Concerto is not just about technical mastery; it's about sharing a vibrant, dynamic musical conversation. The piece is a celebration of the cello's versatility, and it's an such a joy to bring it to life with my esteemed Cape Symphony colleague, Velléda Miragias, as we engage in a dance of harmony, contrast, and shared expression.

~ Intermission ~

OTTORINO RESPIGHI (1879-1936)

Ottorino Respighi was born in Bologna to a family of musicians and artists who encouraged him to pursue music as a child. He had formal instruction in the violin, but taught himself piano, harp, and other instruments. Reading and practicing in his studio, he also became well-versed in geography and science, and fluent in eleven languages.

Concertmaster Jae Cosmos Lee notes that Respighi "studied composition with the illustrious Russian composer, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov (whose symphonic tone poem "Scheherazade" was the closing piece of Cape Symphony's season finale two years ago) in St. Petersburg, learning the master's language of symphonic writing and incorporating his own Italian flavor and stories in *Fountains of Rome* and *Pines of Rome*, which along with his *Roman Festivals*, comprise his trilogy of tone poems about Rome."

"This music is fantastically cinematic," he continues, "evoking different sceneries and images of Rome, and for me, Disney's use of *Pines of Rome* at the end of *Fantasia 2000*, where the filmmakers reimagined a pod of flying humpback whales to match the pomp and grandeur of the music's final fanfare! But of course, the music itself stands as a masterpiece of any era, written by a master of his craft."

Darko Butorac is especially excited to conduct these pieces. "Rome just happens to be my favorite place in the world!" he says. "Having the opportunity to musically evoke the beauty and history of the Eternal City is something I am absolutely thrilled about!"

Fontane di Roma, P.106 (Fountains of Rome)

I. *La fontana di Valle Giulia all'alba (The Fountain of Valle Giulia at Dawn)*
II. *La fontana del Tritone al mattino (The Triton Fountain in the Morning)*
III. *La fontana de Trevi al meriggio (The Trevi Fountain at Noon)*
IV. *La fontana di Villa Medici al tramonto (The Villa Medici Fountain at Sunset)*

Fountains of Rome is a tone poem in four movements. Completed in 1916, it is the first of Respighi's three tone poems about Rome. Each movement depicts one of Rome's fountains at a different time of day. Respighi was disappointed in its reception on its March 1917 premiere at the Teatro Augusteo, but when performed to high acclaim a year later, *Fontane di Roma* brought him international fame.

The movements are pastoral, joyous, triumphal, and melancholic in character. What feelings and images do they evoke for you?

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

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)

Pines of Rome, the second in Respighi's trilogy, was completed in 1924. Inspired by the "umbrella-like pines that appear in every part of the horizon," Respighi depicted one such setting in each of four movements.

The first portrays children playing, dancing, and singing in the Villa Borghese gardens. Respighi's wife Elsa recalled his asking her to sing melodies of her childhood while composing the piece.

The second movement conjures the solemnity of the entrance to a Roman catacomb, with an offstage trumpet playing a hymn.

The third movement was inspired by a full moon shining on a treed hillside. It contains a remarkable innovation: the recorded song of a nightingale, considered the first such instance in music. The original performance used the first ever commercial recording of a live bird.

In the fourth movement, pine trees along the Via Appia recall the glories of the Roman Empire, with a legion marching in triumph to the Capitoline Hill under brilliant sunshine.

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Tickets for "Passport to Rome"

Passport to Rome will be performed at the Barnstable Performing Arts Center, 744 West Main Street, Hyannis on Saturday, January 25, 2025 at 7:30 PM and Sunday, January 26, 2025 at 3:00 PM.

For more information and to purchase tickets, visit capesymphony.org, call the Box Office at 508.362.1111, email tickets@capesymphony.org, or visit 2235 Iyannough Road in West Barnstable, MA. The Box Office is open Monday – Friday from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM. During concert weekend, we can only be reached by email.

Only tickets purchased on Cape Symphony's secure website or through the Cape Symphony Box Office are legitimate and guaranteed, and eligible for exchanges or credits in accordance with our ticket policies.

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Behind the Scenes

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Thanks to Encyclopedia Brittanica, classicfm.com, and Wikipedia.

Cape Symphony Show Notes