

Stories in Music II

Respighi's Fountains of Rome



Respighi: *The Fountains of Rome*

1917

Ottorino Respighi (1879-1936)

- ❖ Born in **Bologna** to a musical family
- ❖ Taught by his father; attends the **Liceo Musicale in Bologna** to study the violin. Also studies with music historian Luigi Torchi, who sparks his interest in old music



Ottorino Respighi (1879-1936)

- ❖ After graduation he works as a violist in the **Russian Imperial Theatre of St. Petersburg** performing Italian Opera



Ottorino Respighi (1879-1936)

- ❖ While in Russia, he studies with Russian composer **Rimsky-Korsakov** for five months



Ottorino Respighi (1879-1936)

- ❖ Returns to Italy and studies **composition** for a second diploma
- ❖ Is hired as composition teacher at the **Conservatory of St. Cecilia in Rome (St. Cecilia is the Christian patron saint of music)**
- ❖ Eventually becomes director of the Conservatory

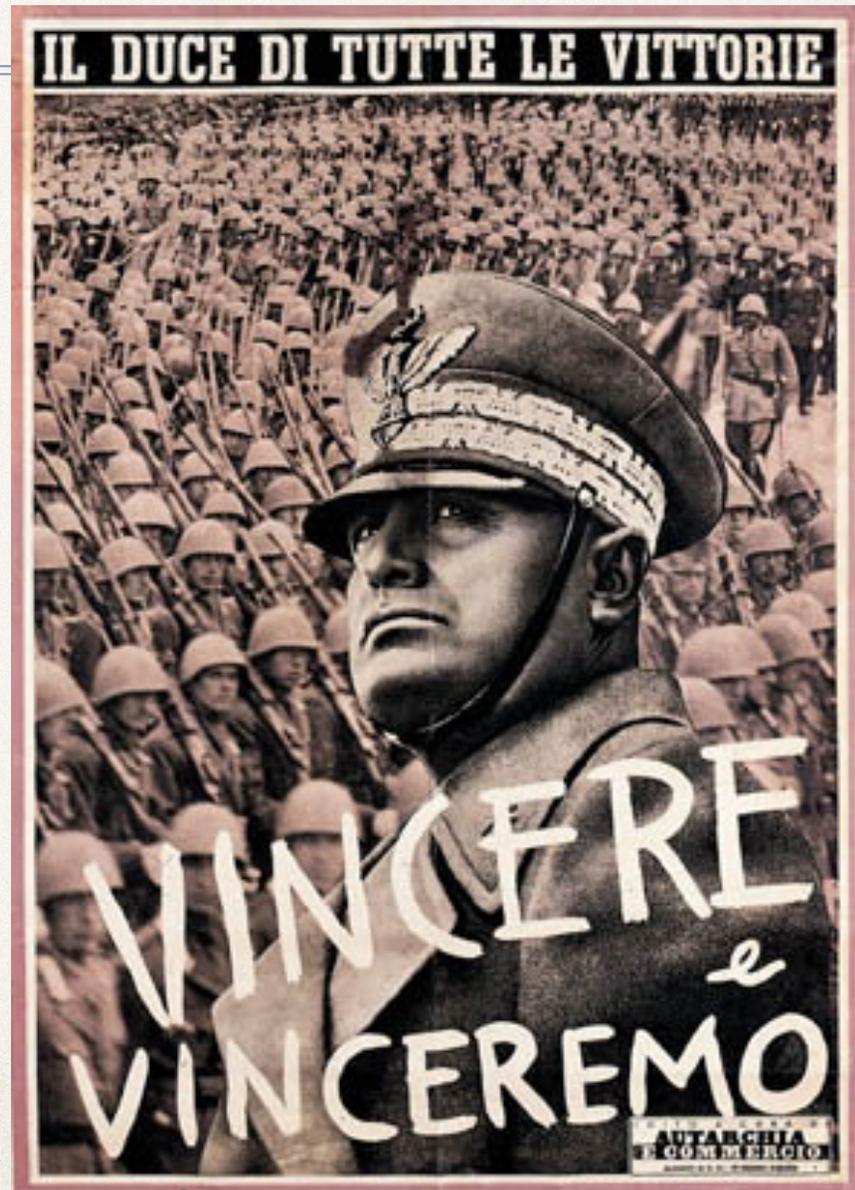
Ottorino Respighi (1879-1936)

- ❖ Continues to compose as **Benito Mussolini** and the fascists come to power in Italy in 1922



Ottorino Respighi (1879-1936)

- ❖ Not political himself, Respighi is somewhat protected politically by his musical fame



Ottorino Respighi (1879-1936)



- ❖ Respighi tries to protect colleagues, such as **conductor Arturo Toscanini**

Ottorino Respighi (1879-1936)

- ❖ Respighi **dies of cardiac infection** in 1936

Ottorino Respighi (1879-1936)

- ❖ Gains his **first fame** with composition of *The Fountains of Rome* (1917), which is the first of a **trilogy** of Roman-themed tone poems:
 - ❖ *Fountains of Rome* (1917)
 - ❖ *Pines of Rome* (1924)
 - ❖ *Roman Festivals* (1928)

Roman Trilogy

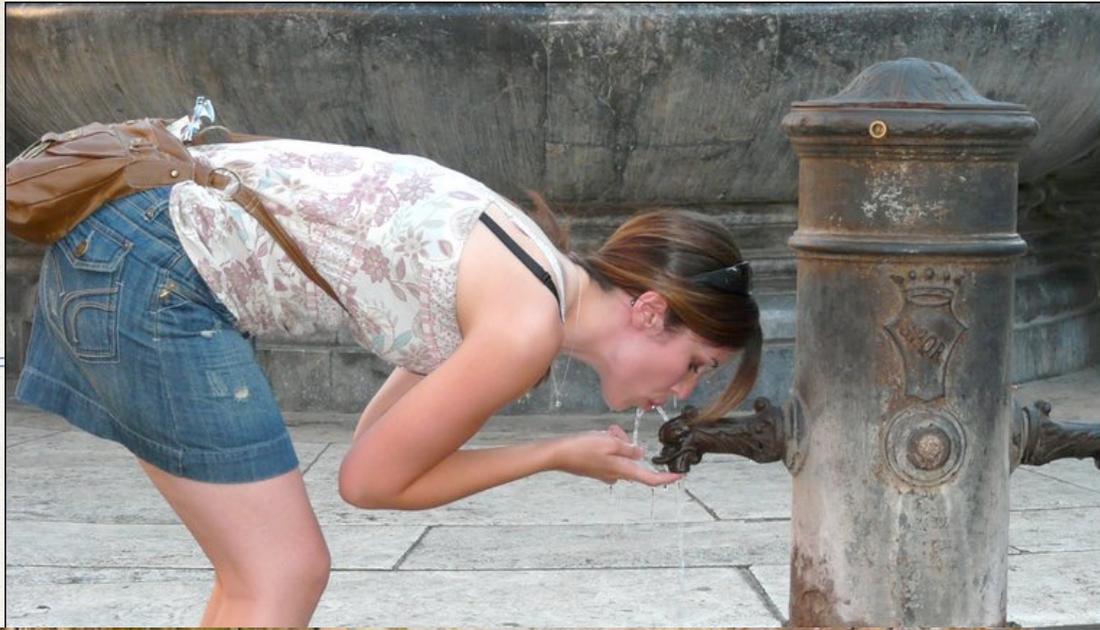
- ❖ Each of the “Roman” works deals with a characteristic element of the city of Roman at 4 different locations and different times of the day.
- ❖ *Pines of Rome*
 - ❖ 1. Pines of the Villa Borghese (morning)
 - ❖ 2. Pines near the Catacombs (day)
 - ❖ 3. Pines of the Janiculum (night with a full moon)
 - ❖ 4. Pines of the Appian Way (dawn)

The Fountains of Rome (1917)

- ❖ His other tone poems include:
 - ❖ *Brazilian Impressions* (1928) and *Church Windows* (1926)
- ❖ Pieces based on his interest in “Early Music” from his studies with Luigi Torchi:
 - ❖ *Ancient Airs and Dances* (1917, 1923, 1932)
 - ❖ *Three Botticelli Pieces* (1927)
 - ❖ *The Birds* (1928)

The Fountains of Rome (1917)

- ❖ *The Fountains of Rome* is in **4 continuous sections** representing different fountains at a different times of the day:
- ❖ 1. “The Fountain of Valle Giulia at Dawn”
- ❖ 2. “The Triton Fountain in the Morning”
- ❖ 3. “The Trevi Fountain at Noon”
- ❖ 4. “The Fountain of the Villa Medici at Sunset”



- ❖ The city of Rome has over **2000 fountains**, one of the characteristic elements of the city



- ❖ Ancient Rome had **39 large fountains** and **591 water fountains** for public drinking

* These fountains were fed by 9 aqueducts



Reconstruction of Roman aqueducts

The Fountains of Rome (1917)

- ❖ After the fall of Rome, the fountains fell into disrepair
- ❖ Pope Nicholas V (1397-1455) began the repair of the fountains, beginning with the **Acqua Vergine aqueduct**



Acqua Vergine
aqueduct today

The Fountains of Rome (1917)

- ❖ Pope Nicholas V commissioned the architect Leon Battista Alberti to build the **Fountain of Trevi**, and Alberti went on design the fountains in the **Piazza del Popolo** and the **Piazza Navona**



“Fountain of the 4 Rivers” in the Piazza Navona



The god
Neptune

“Fountain of Neptune” in the Piazza del Popolo



The Fountain of Trevi



The god
Neptune

Mythological
sea horse
called a
Hippocampus

Fountain of Trevi

The Fountains of Rome (1917)

- ❖ The Trevi Fountain is located at the intersection of **three streets** (*tre vie*).
- ❖ The **legend of the Trevi Fountain** is that if you stand with your back to the fountain and toss a coin in over your shoulder, your wish will be granted.
- ❖ The wish, however, is always the same: **to return to Rome**



A Tourist tossing a coin into the Fountain of Trevi

The Fountains of Rome (1917)

- ❖ Another famous fountain builder was the architect-sculptor **Gian Lorenzo Bernini**, who designed the famous **Triton Fountain** and the **Fontana della Barcaccia** at the base of the Spanish Steps.



Fountain of the Triton

A nighttime photograph of the Spanish Steps in Rome. The steps are illuminated by warm lights, leading up to the Trinità dei Monti church with its two bell towers. In the foreground, the Fontana della Barcaccia is lit up, showing its detailed stone carvings of a boat. A blue speech bubble with white text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

The Spanish Steps

Fontana della Barcaccia

The Fountains of Rome (1917)

- ❖ In the tone poem's **program**, Respighi writes:

In this symphonic poem the composer has endeavored to give expression to the sentiments and visions suggested to him by **FOUR OF ROME'S FOUNTAINS**, contemplated at the hour when their characters are most in harmony with the surrounding landscape, or at which their beauty is most impressive to the observer.

The Fountains of Rome (1917)

- ❖ 1. The Fountain of Valle Giulia at dawn

The first part of the poem, inspired by the **FOUNTAIN OF VALLE GIULIA**, depicts a pastoral landscape: droves of cattle pass and disappear in the fresh, damp mists of the **Roman dawn**.

- ❖ We're not quite sure what fountain Respighi meant. There are several fountains in this area of the Borghese Gardens.

The Fountains of Rome (1917)

- ❖ It may be this fountain he refers to, which is near the Borghese museum



The Fountains of Rome (1917)

- ❖ 2. The Triton Fountain in the morning

A sudden loud and insistent **blast of horns** above the trills of the whole orchestra introduces the second part, **THE TRITON FOUNTAIN**. It is like a joyous call, summoning troops of naiads and tritons, who come running up, pursuing each other and mingling in a **frenzied dance** between the jets of water.



A Triton is a mythological sea-man

Bernini depicts the Triton blowing a seashell horn

Fountain of the Triton

The Fountains of Rome (1917)

❖ 3. The Trevi Fountain at Mid-Day

Next there appears a solemn theme borne on the undulations of the orchestra. It is the **FOUNTAIN OF TREVI AT MID-DAY**. The **solemn theme, passing from the woodwind to the brass instruments**, assumes a triumphal character. Trumpets peal: Across the radiant surface of the water there passes Neptune's chariot drawn by seahorses and followed by a train of sirens and tritons. The procession **vanishes while faint trumpet blasts resound** in the distance



Fountain of Trevi

The Fountains of Rome (1917)

- ❖ The Trevi Fountain is one of the most **iconic fountains in Rome**, and has appeared in the movies *Roman Holiday* (1953), *Three Coins in the Fountain* (1954), and *La Dolce Vita* (1960).



La Dolce Vita (1960)

The Fountains of Rome (1917)

❖ 4. The Fountain of the Villa Medici

The fourth part, the **FOUNTAIN AT THE VILLA MEDICI**, is announced by a sad theme which rises above the subdued warbling. It is the nostalgic hour of sunset. The air is full of the **sound of tolling bells, the twittering of birds, the rustling of leaves**. Then all dies peacefully into the silence of the night.



Fountain in front of the Villa Medici



Fountain in front of the Villa Medici

Tiber River

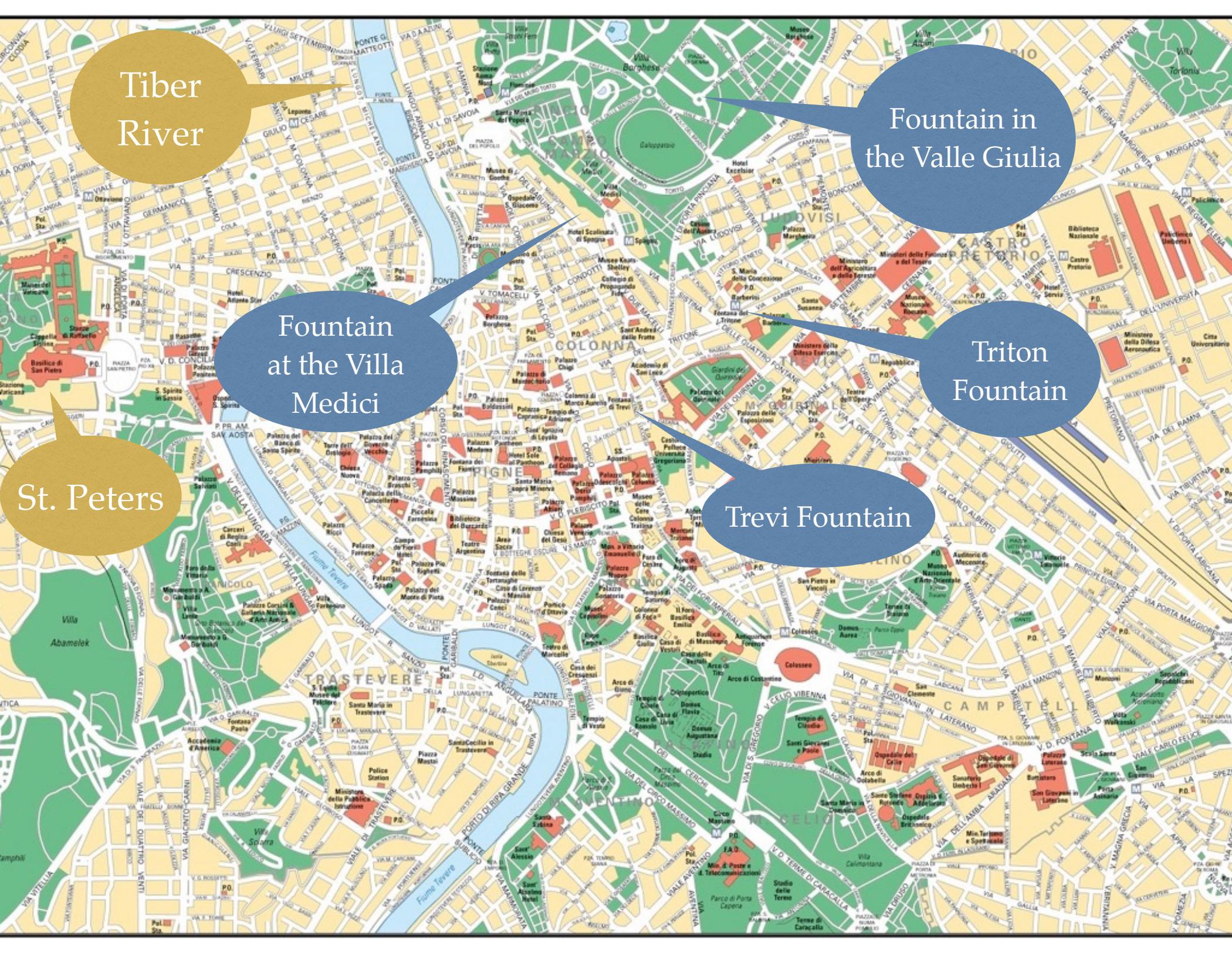
Fountain in the Valle Giulia

Fountain at the Villa Medici

Triton Fountain

Trevi Fountain

St. Peter's



The Fountains of Rome (1917)

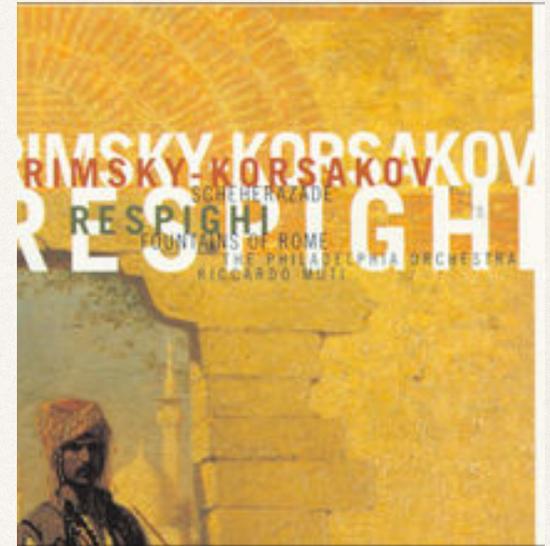
- ❖ Written for a VERY LARGE ORCHESTRA:
- ❖ STRINGS: Violins, Violas, Cellos, Doublebasses
- ❖ WOODWINDS: Piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, English Horn, 2 bassoons, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet,
- ❖ BRASS: 3 Trumpets, 3 Trombones, 4 French Horns, Tuba
- ❖ PERCUSSION: Timpani, Triangle, Cymbals, Bells, glockenspiel
- ❖ KEYBOARDS: Organ, Piano, Celesta

The Fountains of Rome (1917)

- ❖ The initial performance in 1917 in Rome was **not successful**, but famous conductor **Arturo Toscanini** conducted it in Milan in 1918 where it was very successful, and has become a regular work on concert programs

Pieces to Know

- ❖ *Fontane di Roma* [Fountains of Rome], Riccardo Muti and the Philadelphia Orchestra
- ❖ Track 5: The Fountain of Valle Giulia at Dawn
- ❖ Track 6: The Triton Fountain in the Morning
- ❖ Track 7: The Trevi Fountain at Midday
- ❖ Track 8: The Fountain of the Villa Medici at Sunset



Pieces to Know

- ❖ *Fontane di Roma* [Fountains of Rome] Youtube Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3rTFWr_CUKs
- ❖ 00:00: The Fountain of Valle Giulia at Dawn
- ❖ 4:42: The Triton Fountain in the Morning
- ❖ 7:05: The Trevi Fountain at Midday
- ❖ 10:32: The Fountain of the Villa Medici at Sunset

Terms to Know

- ❖ Tone Poem
- ❖ Program
- ❖ Neptune
- ❖ Triton, Hippocampus
- ❖ Aqueduct
- ❖ St. Cecilia
- ❖ Benito Mussolini, Fascists
- ❖ Arturo Toscanini
- ❖ Respighi's "Roman Trilogy":
Fountains, Pines, Festivals
- ❖ Fountain of Trevi