



## Ottorino RESPIGHI

### *Ancient Airs and Dances Suite No. 3*

**Ottorino Respighi** (9 July 1879 – 18 April 1936) was an Italian composer, violinist, teacher, and musicologist and one of the leading Italian composers of the early 20th century. His compositions range over operas, ballets, orchestral suites, choral songs, chamber music, and transcriptions of Italian compositions of the 16th–18th centuries, but his best known and most performed works are his three orchestral tone poems which brought him international fame: *Fountains of Rome* (1916), *Pines of Rome* (1924), and *Roman Festivals* (1928).

Respighi was born in Bologna to a musical and artistic family. He was encouraged by his father to pursue music at a young age, and took formal tuition in the violin and piano. In 1891, he enrolled at the Liceo Musicale di Bologna, where he studied the violin, viola, and composition, was principal violinist at the Russian Imperial Theatre, and studied briefly with Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov. He relocated to Rome in 1913 to become professor of composition at the Liceo Musicale di Santa Cecilia. During this period, he married his pupil, singer Elsa Olivieri-Sangiaco. In 1923, Respighi quit his professorship to dedicate time to tour and compose, but continued to teach until 1935. He performed and conducted in various capacities across the United States and South America from 1925 until his death.

In late 1935, while composing his opera *Lucrezia*, Respighi became ill and was diagnosed with bacterial endocarditis. He died four months later, aged 56. His wife Elsa outlived him for almost 60 years, championing her late husband's works and legacy until her death in 1996. Conductor and composer Salvatore Di Vittorio completed several of Respighi's incomplete and previously unpublished works, including the finished *Violin Concerto in A major* (1903) which premiered in 2010.

**Ancient Airs and Dances** (Italian: *Antiche arie e danze*) is a set of three orchestral suites, freely transcribed from original pieces for lute. In addition to being a renowned composer and conductor, Respighi was also a notable musicologist. His interest in Italian music of the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries led him to compose works inspired by the music of these periods.

Suite No. 3, P 172 was composed in 1931. It differs from the previous two suites in that it is arranged for strings only and somewhat melancholy in overall mood. (A note by the composer in the printed score states that the work may also be performed by a string quartet, completely omitting the double-bass part.) It is based on lute songs by Besard, a piece for Baroque guitar by Ludovico Roncalli, and lute pieces by Santino Garsi da Parma and additional anonymous composers.