Pines of the Appian Way, from Pines of Rome
By
Ottorino Respighi (1879-1936)

Click here to watch the BSO perform this piece.

Lesson plan by Janna Comeau

About the Composer

Ottorino Respighi was born July 9, 1879, in Bologna, Italy, and died of heart disease on April 18, 1936 in Rome, Italy. He was a violinist, musicologist, and composer, and was best known for his music about Rome.

About the Piece

“Pines of the Appian Way” is the final section of Pines of Rome, a four-movement tone poem for orchestra. Respighi wrote this piece in 1924 to describe musically pine trees and their surroundings in several areas of Rome. The Appian Way, which still exists today, was constructed in 312 B.C.E. as a military highway. “Pines of the Appian Way” is meant to recall a Roman army victoriously arriving home in the early morning along the pine-lined Appian Way.

Respighi’s Descriptive Notes - written by the composer

‘Pine Trees of the Appian Way.’ Misty dawn on the Appian Way; solitary pine trees guarding the magic landscape; the muffled, ceaseless rhythm of unending footsteps. The poet has a fantastic vision of bygone glories. Trumpets sound and, in the brilliance of the newly risen sun, a consular army bursts forth toward the Sacred Way, mounting in triumph to the Capitol.
Teaching Ideas

Discuss parades students have attended, then give a bit of background on the “Pines of the Appian Way.” Have students predict what the music will sound like, then listen to the piece and have students share their reactions.

Younger students may use their hands or bodies to show the dynamics of the piece, which starts very soft but gradually gets very loud. Students can act out the scene, with the sun gradually rising and the victorious army slowly approaching.

Additional Resources

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7EBy1IBXgtE - The Disney Fantasia 2000 clip mentioned above in Teaching Ideas
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TQwGTc_MueM - Great recording of the “Pines of the Appian Way” featuring closeups of many instruments
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Dshxdz7muc - Another wonderful recording that features a brass section around the audience