

THE  
**CLEVELAND  
ORCHESTRA**  
FRANZ WELSER-MÖST

**INSPIRATIONS**

**2020-21 Season Week 1**

*performance/filming: October 8-9, 2020, at Severance Hall*

**In Focus Episode No. 1**

*broadcast premiere: Thursday, October 15 at 7 p.m. via Adella*

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**THE CLEVELAND ORCHESTRA**  
**Franz Welser-Möst**, conductor

**OTTORINO RESPIGHI** (1879-1936)  
**Ancient Airs & Dances**, Set 3

1. Italiana (Anonymous: Italiana)
2. Arie di corte (Jean-Baptiste Besard)
3. Siciliana (Anonymous: Siciliana)
4. Passacaglia (Ludovico Roncalli)

**GEORGE WALKER** (1922-2018)  
**Antifonys** (for string orchestra)

**PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY** (1840-1893)  
**Souvenir de Florence** (for strings)

1. Allegro con spirito
2. Adagio cantabile e con moto
3. Allegretto moderato
4. Allegro con brio e vivace

*A warm welcome to guests attending these performances in person at Severance Hall. The concert filming is presented without intermission and will run about one hour from start to finish. There will be a pause to re-set the stage between pieces; please remain in your seats.*

*In addition to the concert performance, each episode of our In Focus broadcasts this season includes behind-the-scenes features about the music and musicmaking. Learn more by going to [www.Adella.live](http://www.Adella.live) or by downloading the Adella app. Each In Focus broadcast presentation is available for viewing for three months from its premiere.*



## CONCERT OVERVIEW

This opening performance for our In Focus series brings together inspirations in the form of souvenirs from the past, with three musical works created across history, places, and styles.

Italian composer Respighi took his departure from Renaissance lute music, freely adapting works from three centuries earlier for a larger group of instrumentalists, and often with touches of a more modern sound.

In his work *Antifonys*, African American composer George Walker was, in part, inspired by the collision of musical styles he had experienced as a student in Paris — here letting modernism and romanticism happily rub elbows together.

For his string sextet, completed in 1890, Tchaikovsky looked back on one of his favorite foreign cities, where he'd composed many different works. Franz Welser-Möst leads the strings of The Cleveland Orchestra in a larger version of this Russian composer's soundworld.

## ABOUT THE MUSIC: RESPIGHI

### ANCIENT AIRS & DANCES, SET 3

by **Ottorino Respighi** (1879-1936)

*Composed: 1931*

*Scored for: string orchestra; orchestrated and adapted from works for lute or guitar and voice from the 16th and 17th centuries*

*Duration: about 20 minutes*

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RESPIGHI ENJOYED wide success as the composer of brilliant colorful works for large orchestra, and his influence is often traced to later Hollywood scores for the big screen. He had studied orchestration with Rimsky-Korsakov and was impressed by Richard Strauss's series of tone poems. His well-known *Fountains of Rome*, *Pines of Rome*, and *Feste Romane* all exploit the spectacular scene-painting resources of the large modern orchestra.

But throughout his life, Respighi took a close interest in the music of Italy's past. He was born and brought up in Bologna, where the greatest collections of Renaissance and Baroque Italian music were preserved, and he shared his contemporaries' taste for adapting early music for modern performance. This was not the kind of scholarly exercise that became preferred in the later 20th century, but a desire to introduce the marvels of early music to audiences in terms that would not alarm them with the strangeness of the original sound. (Stokowski's orchestral arrangements of Bach had much the same intention.) Moreover, Respighi dug further back (or further afield) than the brilliant and well-known violin music of Corelli and Vivaldi, or the concertos of Handel and Bach. His territory was the unknown

lute music of the 16th century, which offered a great deal of appealing music, usually in dance forms.

Respighi's first essay in this direction was a suite of *Ancient Airs & Dances*, which appeared in 1917. This included two anonymous pieces and two pieces by named composers. The result was so successful that two more matching suites appeared, in 1923 and 1931, with the third suite again including two anonymous works.

The first dance of the third suite (or set) would have been called, in a later period, a minuet, stately and restrained. The second is attributed to G.B. Besardo, an Italianization of Jean-Baptiste Besard, a Burgundian lutenist and composer who spent ten or more years in Rome. Besard left behind an enormous body of lute music, from which Respighi picked one piece for his second suite, and another for this one.

Out of his slender source, Respighi has built a dramatic piece, full of surprises and adventure. Beginning as a mournful tune on the violas and a slow section in which modern orchestration does not disguise the Renaissance harmony and rhythm, the piece suddenly springs to life with a light-footed Allegretto section. This is swiftly followed by some even faster music, and the alternation continues, reaching Vivacissimo, and closing only after the mournful tune finally returns.

The third movement is a Siciliana by an unknown composer, in the lilting rhythm that preserved the Sicilian label throughout the 18th century. The treatment this time is as a brief set of variations.

The source of the last movement is a volume of music for Spanish guitar published in 1692 by Count Ludovico Roncalli. The Passacaglia form dictates a series of four-bar phrases loosely based on the same harmonic series, and far from suggesting the guitar, this piece is a showpiece for modern string players with modern bows.

—program note by Hugh Macdonald © 2020

## ABOUT THE MUSIC: WALKER

**ANTIFONYS** (for string orchestra)  
by **George Walker** (1922-2018)

*Composed: 1968*

*Scored for: string orchestra*

*Duration: just over 5 minutes*

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BORN IN Washington D.C., George Walker studied at Oberlin Conservatory and at the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia, and he also worked and studied for a time with Nadia Boulanger in Paris. He pursued a career divided between performing on the

piano, teaching, and composition. Soon after graduation he played Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 3 with the Philadelphia Orchestra under Eugene Ormandy's baton, but careers for African American classical soloists were often discouraging in mid-20th century America

In a long career, Walker taught at many schools, including the Eastman School, Smith College, Rutgers University, Peabody Institute, and the University of Delaware. He won an extraordinary number of honors and awards, including honorary doctorates from at least seven colleges. In 1996, he was the first Black composer to win the prestigious Pulitzer Prize in music, for his work *Lilacs* (for voice and orchestra), premiered by the Boston Symphony Orchestra with Seiji Ozawa.

His many compositions, which include five symphonies and five piano sonatas, fall mainly into the categories of orchestral, chamber, and piano music; no operas, and only a handful of songs. *Antifonys* was composed in 1968 for a chamber orchestra with plenty of percussion. He later adapted it for string orchestra alone.

What's happening in this short piece is always clear and orchestrated with precision. Its main travel is in vigorous, rhythmic phrases, well designed for counterpoint, and supporting each other rather than competing with each other. Perhaps these are the antiphonies, the back-and-forth, implied in the title. These alternate with moments of repose with dense, rich harmony, and the sense of weariness at the end is marvelously expressive.

—program note by Hugh Macdonald © 2020

## ABOUT THE MUSIC: TCHAIKOVSKY

### SOUVINER DE FLORENCE

(arranged for string orchestra), Opus 70  
by **Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky** (1840-1893)

*Composed: 1890*

*Scored for: string sextet; performed with the score extended to string orchestra*

*Duration: about 35 minutes*

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TCHAIKOVSKY, an indefatigable traveler, loved Italy. His restless nature drove him every year to find peace of mind and quiet surroundings, either in the remote Russian countryside or in one of the cities of western Europe. Trains and hotels were his alternate homes. Some years he would make the long journey to Rome or Paris and back to Moscow more than once. He also went to Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and England. And in 1891, he crossed the Atlantic for concerts in New York, Baltimore, and Philadelphia.

Yet he was always drawn back to Moscow and St. Petersburg to oversee performances of his works and to remain in touch with publishers, colleagues, and friends.

A simplistic psychoanalysis might suggest that he was fleeing from himself, from the reality of his own nature that caused him unrelenting guilt and disgust. In distant cities, he was almost anonymous in surroundings where he could work in peace, free from the stare of accusing eyes, yet enjoy the benefits of city life: concerts, theater, and fine architecture.

Foreign cultures left their mark on Tchaikovsky's music, particularly German harmony (Schumann rather than Wagner), French ballet music, and Italian popular song. But none of these displaced the essential Russianness of his music. While he composed the occasional Chanson napolitaine, there is much more of the Russian in the sextet *Souvenir de Florence* than of the Italian.

His first visit to Florence was a single day in 1874, but in 1877 and 1878, in flight from a disastrous marriage, he spent longer there. At first he was not happy: *"Every passing carriage drives me mad, every cry, every sound tears at my nerves. The crowds of people in the narrow streets irritate me so much that every stranger looks like a violent enemy."* After a couple of months, he was back in Florence, and this time (February 1878), he found the city delightful. *"What a change in my spirit since my last visit, what a pitifully sick man I was then, and how well I am now!"* He and his brother Modest explored the city's galleries and went many times to the theater. They listened intently to street singers too.

Tchaikovsky was back in Florence in November of the same year, where he worked on his opera *The Maid of Orleans*. His patroness, Nadezhda von Meck, who bizarrely insisted that they never meet, was in Florence too, so they corresponded daily and he even visited her villa, but only when she was not there.

His next visits to Florence were interruptions of two separate visits to Rome, both in the same year 1881. After which it was not until 1890 that he was in Florence again, when the opera he was working on was *The Queen of Spades*. The music came quickly, and he spent his evenings in the theater, seeing Verdi's *Aida*, Bellini's *I Puritani*, and Buffalo Bill's touring Wild West Show. Evenso, he was not particularly happy. *"There was a time when I loved Italy and Florence,"* he wrote to Glazunov. *"Now I have to make a great effort to emerge from my shell. When I do go out, I feel no pleasure whatever either in the blue sky, in the sun that shines from it, in the architectural beauties I see around me, or in the teeming life of the streets."* The thought of his approaching fiftieth birthday oppressed him too.

After two productive, if unhappy, months, he returned to Moscow to finish *The Queen of Spades*, after which he plunged into the composition of a string sextet, having promised to write something for the St. Petersburg Chamber Music Society. In fact, he had begun it tentatively three years earlier, but now brought it forth it in an exuberant mood, reflected in the vibrant sound of six string players at full gallop. There are no musical allusions to Italy, only a homage paid to the city of the Medicis in the work's title, as if he had always been immeasurably happy there.

## THE MUSIC

Tchaikovsky is content with the outlines of classical form in the four movements and their internal organization. As Schubert had shown in his C-major Quintet and Brahms in his two early sextets, the presence of two cellos (a divided

cello section in the enlarged version) allows for the possibility of one cello singing in its glorious tenor range while the other can provide the bass line. Tchaikovsky in fact shares the melodic treats among all the players while giving none of them more than a few seconds break at any time. When not building a thick sound with the full group (often with plenty of double-stopping — playing the bow across two strings at once), he is never at a loss for intricate counterpoints that make up a filigree web in the texture. The density of the writing makes the transfer to a full string section a most satisfactory option.

The **first movement** is the most substantial. The full-blooded impact of the first bar guarantees a movement of restless energy, leavened by streams of heart-warming melody to which Tchaikovsky had the key. The second subject is a model of how to divide the action among all players, the first violins naturally having the lion's share. The development section is very contrapuntal, and the ending speeds up with the abandon of a runaway train.

It is no surprise that Tchaikovsky gives us a gorgeous melody for his slow **second movement**, nor that it generates a rich interchange with the other players, particularly the first violas and first cellos. A solid hymnlike section offers contrast. Then an actual surprise is delivered in the central section with a strange passage of shuddering triplets, very unsettled and unsettling, and quite devoid of melody. After the return of the main section, no more is heard of that sinister passage except for a brief hint in the lower instruments just as the movement is gearing up for the close.

The **third movement** is the most Russian of the four, in the manner of an intermezzo rather than a scherzo. The theme's rough treatment suggests a peasant's heavy boots, which may be why Tchaikovsky soon introduces a skipping figure that lightens the texture as if he were already thinking about the Nutcracker's dancers.

There is Russian folk feeling in the **finale fourth movement** also, and the contrast is this time provided by several fugal passages in which Tchaikovsky shows off his skill: he was particularly proud of these sections. Twice he collapses the whole group on to a piercing unison, all on the same note, and the ending, completely in keeping with the energetic spirit of the whole work, is inescapably fast and furious.

—program note by Hugh Macdonald © 2020



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## CONDUCTOR: FRANZ WELSER-MÖST

*Music Director, Kelvin Smith Family Endowed Chair, The Cleveland Orchestra*

Franz Welser-Möst is among today's most distinguished conductors. The 2020-21 season marks his nineteenth year as music director of The Cleveland Orchestra, with the future of their acclaimed partnership extended to 2027, making him the longest-serving musical leader in the ensemble's history. The *New York Times* has declared Cleveland under Welser-Möst's direction to be "America's most brilliant orchestra," praising its virtuosity, elegance of sound, variety of color, and chamber-like musical cohesion.

With Welser-Möst, The Cleveland Orchestra has been praised for its inventive programming, its ongoing support for new musical works, and for its innovative work in presenting semi-staged and staged operas. An imaginative approach to juxtaposing newer and older works has opened new dialogue and fresh insights for musicians and audiences alike. The Orchestra has also been hugely successful in building up a new and, notably, a young audience. To date, the Orchestra and Welser-Möst have been showcased around the world in nineteen international tours together. In 2020, they launched the ensemble's own recording label and a brand-new digital streaming platform to continue and extend sharing their artistry globally; the 2020-21 season is also inaugurating an original digital concert series titled *In Focus*, for viewing worldwide.

As a guest conductor, Mr. Welser-Möst enjoys a particularly close and productive relationship with the Vienna Philharmonic. He has twice appeared on the podium for their celebrated New Year's Concert, and regularly conducts the orchestra in subscription concerts in Vienna, as well as on tours in Japan, China, Australia, and the United States. Highlights of recent and upcoming guest conducting appearances include performances of Strauss's *Die Aegyptische Helena* at Teatro alla Scala and *Elektra* at the Vienna State Opera, and concerts with the New York Philharmonic, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, Amsterdam's Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, and the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic. He is a regular guest at the Salzburg Festival, where his work leading a series of opera performances has been widely acclaimed. These have included *Rusalka*, *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Fidelio*, *Die Liebe der Danae*, Aribert Reimann's *Lear*, and Strauss's *Salome* and *Elektra*. The success of both *Salome* and *Rosenkavalier* led the Festival to schedule encore performances in subsequent years.

From 2010 to 2014, Franz Welser-Möst served as general music director of the Vienna State Opera. His partnership with the company included a wide-ranging repertoire, including a series of critically-praised new productions. Mr. Welser-Möst had earlier led the Zurich Opera across a decade-long tenure, conducting more than forty new productions.

During the 2020 Salzburg Festival, Mr. Welser-Möst was awarded the festival ruby pin and the Salzburg Badge of Honor. In 2019, he was awarded the Gold Medal in the Arts by the Kennedy Center International Committee on the Arts in recognition of his long-lasting impact on the international arts community. Other honors include the Vienna Philharmonic's "Ring of Honor" for his longstanding personal and artistic relationship with the ensemble, recognition from the Western Law Center for Disability Rights, honorary membership in the Vienna Singverein, and the Kilenyi Medal from the Bruckner Society of America.