

Chapel Hill Philharmonia

Sunday, 11 March 2018
3:00 p.m.

Moeser Auditorium
University of North Carolina
at Chapel Hill

Donald L. Oehler, Music Director

Via the Appian Way

Overture to *Coriolan*, Op. 62

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Concerto for Oboe, K 314

Wolfgang Amadé Mozart (1756-1791)

Allegro aperto

Adagio ma non troppo

Rondo: Allegretto

Anna Lampidis, Oboe

—*Intermission*—

Pines of Rome

Ottorino Respighi (1879-1936)

Pines of the Villa Borghese

Pines Near a Catacomb

Pines of the Janiculum

Pines of the Appian Way



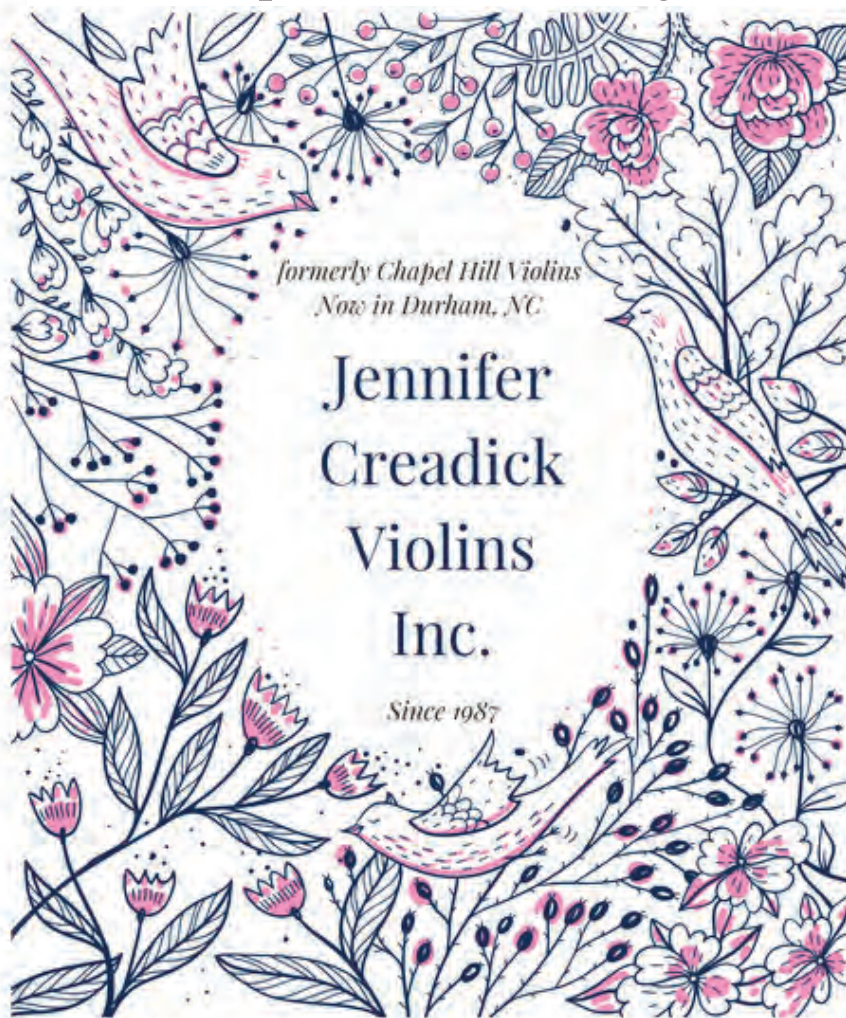
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Via the Appian Way

All roads lead to (or from) Rome

Two works in our program concern Rome, the Eternal City. The first is an overture to a play about a legendary figure from the early days of the Roman Republic. The other work depicts in music four places in modern Rome where the famous umbrella pines frame the picture. Between these two we offer a concerto for oboe by Mozart, composed in his early twenties.

Beethoven: Overture to *Coriolan*, Op. 62

By 1807, when Beethoven was asked to write an overture for a revival of a play by the Austrian poet Heinrich von Collin, he was well into the works of his middle period. Only a year older than Mozart was when he died, Beethoven had written four symphonies, four piano concertos, 23 piano sonatas including the *Appassionata*, nine string quartets including those for Count Rasoumovsky, his opera *Leonore* (later revised as *Fidelio*), the violin concerto, and many other works large and small. He was at work on the fifth and sixth symphonies. His hearing was rapidly deteriorating but he was determined not to let that stop him. Still, he found time to compose the overture.

It's not clear whether it was ever performed along with the play. What is known is that its first performance was at a private concert in the Viennese palace of Beethoven's patron Prince Lobkowitz. Presumably this took place in the same large room — called the *Eroica Room* in the museum made from the palace — where his third symphony had its premiere. At this concert the fourth symphony and fourth piano concerto also had their first hearings. Beethoven played the concerto, his next to last appearance as a pianist.

The play tells the story, taken from Plutarch and also used by Shakespeare, of a tragic figure known as Coriolanus. (Whether he was a real person is in doubt.) His name was Caius Marcius; the surname was given him after he led Roman forces in the sack of the Volscian city of Corioli. The time is the early days of the Roman Republic, soon after the Tarquin king was deposed. The political background concerns how to give adequate voice to the common people in a society controlled by the patrician class. The solution arrived at was to elect Tribunes to represent the commoners at the Senate, but their powers were not yet fully established.

As a conquering hero, Coriolanus runs for Consul; it does not go well. A haughty and abrupt patrician with a short temper, he resents having to seek approval from the commoners. He hurls insults at them and their Tribunes, rejecting their right to any role in governance; this leads to his banishment for insolence. Out for revenge, he joins the Volscians in mounting an offensive against his native city. Terrified, the Romans try to sue for peace, sending diplomats to Coriolanus's camp; these are summarily dismissed. Then priests are sent, also given the back of his hand.

Finally the Romans send Volunnia, mother of Coriolanus, who raised him as a widow, nurtured his ambitions and chose his wife, and with whom he lived even after he married. Along with her come his wife and son. He steels himself against their pleas that he settle the issue peacefully, but Volunnia's arguments cannot be resisted. At the end he cries out (in Shakespeare's words): "O, my mother! mother! O! You have won a happy victory to Rome; but for your son, believe it, O! believe it, most dangerously you have with him prevail'd, if not most mortal to him."

Volumnia returns to Rome, to be greeted in triumph. Coriolanus leads his troops back home, shortly to die. In Collin's play he commits suicide; in Shakespeare (and Plutarch) he is killed by Volscian conspirators.

In his essay *On the Overture*, Wagner posits that in composing a prelude one cannot depict in music the action of the drama that follows, or even that of one of the characters; one must try to provide an overall impression of the situation, which music can do suitably. The exception, he notes, is Beethoven's *Coriolan* overture, which illustrates vividly the crucial scene of the play, the confrontation between Coriolanus and his mother.

The sonata form overture is in C minor, Beethoven's choice key to depict classical tragedy. It opens with long unison notes of C, ending in explosive chords, suggesting the contemptuous dismissals of the ambassadors and priests. Then we hear the theme that represents Coriolanus himself:



This is elaborated with syncopations and more abrupt chords, leading to the serenely yearning second subject in the relative major, representing Volumnia and her mission:



After some development of this we reach the final subject in G minor, agitated and punctuated by more abrupt chords, perhaps depicting the struggle of Coriolanus with his dilemma:



This theme provides the material for the brief development, which leads to F minor and the recapitulation. The second subject, now in C major, seems more confident. The final subject stops suddenly, yielding to the Volumnia theme again, but it turns to the minor mode and dissolves into agitated syncopations. The opening long Cs ending in chords reappear. But this time the chords break up, get softer, lower and further apart. We hear the Coriolanus theme softly in the cellos. It is repeated in slow triplets, then again slower and softer, finally dying away completely. Three unison Cs, pizzicato and pianissimo in the strings, announce the end.

To paraphrase Wagner again, in less than ten minutes Beethoven's music shows us the arrogant, stubborn and impulsive main character of the drama, but it also arouses our sympathy for him by giving us a chilling foreboding of his final collapse.

Mozart: Oboe Concerto in C major, K 314

In 1777 a new oboist, Giuseppe Ferlendis, joined the orchestral forces of the Salzburg Prince-Archbishop. Mozart, 21 years old and serving as concertmaster of the orchestra, composed a concerto for him, but there is no evidence that he ever performed it in public.

Shortly thereafter Mozart took a leave and started a journey, accompanied by his mother, to search for a position appropriate for a person of his talents. Their main target was the German city of

Mannheim, where the Prince-Elector of the Palatinate resided, and where there was an active musical community with a famous orchestra. Unfortunately the Elector made no offer.

Nevertheless, the Mozarts stayed in Mannheim for over four months, during which Mozart made friends with local musicians, notably oboist Friedrich Ramm and flutist J.B. Wendling, among the best of what was called “an army of generals” by admirers of the orchestra. Ramm took the concerto Mozart wrote for Ferlendis and made it his chief concert piece for a time. Meanwhile, Wendling arranged with a wealthy Dutch amateur flutist named De Jean to commission several works from Mozart, including three flute concertos.

Mozart wrote one concerto, in G major, and then bogged down. He gave an excuse in a letter to his father: “I become quite powerless when I am obliged to write for an instrument I cannot bear.” What he really couldn’t bear, however, seems to have been having to work when he would much rather be spending his time with 17 year old Aloysia Weber, whom he had recently met and with whom he was in love. So he morphed the oboe concerto into a flute concerto, moving the key from C to D for technical reasons. De Jean may have heard Ramm play the oboe version and knew he was not getting a brand new piece; in any case, he refused to pay the full amount of the commission.

Why does all this about the flute concerto matter? Because the oboe concerto disappeared somehow. For more than a century there was no trace of it, score or parts. Scholars of Mozart knew, from the letters between Mozart and his father, that there had been such a work, but it was counted as lost. In 1920 Bernhard Paumgartner, working at the Salzburg Mozarteum, found in material thought to be from the estate of Mozart’s son a set of parts for an oboe concerto in C. He saw immediately that it was much like the D major flute concerto and concluded that one must be a transcription of the other. The orchestra parts are almost the same except for the difference in key, The solo parts are more different, but scholars came more or less to agreement that this was the Ferlendis concerto, and that Mozart had reworked it for flute. In 1948 it was finally published.

The tempo of the first movement is *Allegro aperto*. (Literally, “lively and open”, a marking used by almost no one but Mozart, which gave Paumgartner additional confidence that he was indeed looking at a work by Mozart.) As usual in concertos of that time, the orchestra states the themes first, followed by a restatement with the soloist as the leading voice. After a short development and recapitulation, the soloist plays an improvisational *cadenza*, after which the orchestra quickly brings the movement to a close. The quoted sprightly little flourish punctuates the sections throughout. There is not a dark cloud in the whole movement.



The *Adagio ma non troppo* second movement is an extended aria for the soloist, singing like an operatic soprano. The final *Rondo* is based on a twelve bar theme introduced by the soloist at the start. In all the twists and turns this movement takes, notably it never enters the minor mode. Everyone, especially the soloist, is having too much fun.

Mozart makes effective use of the special strengths of the oboe. The rapid passage work shows its great flexibility, and, especially in the slow movement, we are treated to examples of its ability to sustain long phrases, like a singer with almost unlimited breath. Music lovers, and oboe players in particular, can be grateful that this happy and lovely work was rediscovered.

Respighi: Pines of Rome

Ottorino Respighi was born in Bologna in 1879 into a musical family; his father was a piano teacher. Naturally the boy was given lessons at an early age, studying piano and violin, and excelling at the latter. He studied at the local conservatory, specializing in violin and viola. At age 21 he went to St.

Petersburg as principal violist in the opera orchestra during a season of Italian operas. There he met and studied orchestration with Rimsky-Korsakov, one of the great masters of orchestral color.

In 1913 he was appointed as professor at the St. Cecilia Conservatory in Rome, and remained there for the rest of his life. His early compositions, especially his operas, achieved modest success, but it was the first tone poem of his Roman trilogy, *Fountains of Rome*, written in 1916, that brought him international recognition. Turning away from the modern 20th century styles of his contemporaries Stravinsky and Schoenberg, Respighi spent much time in research of music of the pre-classical periods. Suites of adaptations of early works, called *Ancient Airs and Dances* and *The Birds* are among his most frequently performed compositions. He remained in Italy during the Fascist dictatorship, keeping a low profile but helping other musicians such as Toscanini who were openly critical of the regime. He died in Rome in 1936.

In 1924 Respighi wrote the second of the Roman trilogy, *Pines of Rome*. (The third, *Roman Festivals*, written in nine days in 1928, has never achieved the popularity of the other two.) The four descriptive sections follow one another without pause.

(In italics are notes by the composer, giving what was in his mind as he wrote the sections.)

Pines of the Villa Borghese.

Children are at play in the pine groves of Villa Borghese; they dance round in circles, they play at soldiers, marching and fighting, they are wrought up by their own cries like swallows at evening, they come and go in swarms.



The grounds of the Villa, with pines as shown here, have for a long time been a favorite playground for children.

In choosing the tunes for this section Respighi enlisted the help of his wife Elsa. She was a former pupil of his, a singer 15 years his junior. He asked her to sing game songs she remembered from her own childhood. One of them, *Giro giro tondo*, involves a falling down game, like the song *Ring Around the Rosie* in English speaking countries.

Pines Near a Catacomb

We see the shades of the pine trees fringing the entrance to a catacomb. From the depth rises the sound of mournful psalm-singing, floating through the air like a solemn hymn, gradually and mysteriously dispersing.

The mood changes abruptly as the music now emanates softly from lower strings and bassoons. The melodies are from Gregorian chant, one of the early musical forms Respighi studied deeply. An off-stage trumpet delivers one of the chants before the strings undertake a long crescendo-decrescendo on another.

Pines of the Janiculum

A quiver runs through the air: the pine trees of the Janiculum stand distinctly outlined in the clear light of a full moon. A nightingale is singing.

The Janiculum, one of the ancient seven hills, overlooks the remains of imperial Rome. On its ridge is a public park which is a favorite spot for people to enjoy the evening as sunset merges into twilight and then darkness. This music features a lovely melody for the clarinet and another more passionate

one for the oboe, subsequently picked up by the strings. At the end, from a recording — the score specifies the one to be used — we hear the song of a real nightingale.

Pines 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.



The *Via Appia* was built on the initiative of Appius Claudis, beginning in 312 BCE, at the time when Rome was beginning to dominate the rest of Italy. The purpose was to provide quick access to (and from) the southern region around Naples for Roman armies and to expedite supplies into the city.

Apart from its many military and commercial uses, the road took on a new role when the revolt of the slaves under Spartacus was crushed in 71 BCE. A long stretch of the *Via Appia* was lined with the crucified bodies of some 6000 of the rebellious slaves.

The music of this movement is in effect a long crescendo with a persistent drum beat representing the marching army. Respighi asks

for a vast array of instruments, including six *buccine*, ancestors of the modern trumpet and trombone (now played by modern instruments). The percussion instruments include piano, celesta, various drums and cymbals, glockenspiel and ratchet. (Low pedal notes from a 32' organ pipe are also specified, to give the impression of the ground shaking under the marching feet; unfortunately this auditorium has no organ.)

Elsa Respighi (who lived to almost age 102) wrote in a biography of her husband about the 1924 premiere: after the cacophony of the children's songs in the Villa Borghese section there were boos and catcalls, but the audience was quietly moved by the next two sections, and at the end of the rousing march of the last section the ovation was tremendous. She also noted that her husband had become very emotionally involved "in immersing us in the beauty of his beloved city..."

Lawrence Evans

About our soloist. Anna Lampidis joined the UNC music faculty in 2015. Originally from Detroit, she holds a MM degree from Yale and a DMA degree from UNC-Greensboro. She is principal oboe in the Salisbury Symphony, and plays oboe and English horn in the Greensboro Symphony and the Chamber Orchestra of the Triangle. Among her other engagements are the Carolina Ballet, Opera Carolina, the Winston-Salem Symphony, the New Haven Symphony, the New World Symphony, and the Miami City Ballet. Dr. Lampidis also serves on the faculty of Wake Forest University. She has performed as soloist with the North Carolina Symphony and the Chamber Orchestra of the Triangle, among many musical organizations. Currently she resides in Greensboro.





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Concerto No.5, Op.37, Mvmt. 1 — Vieuxtemps
Caroline Jesalva, Youth Concerto Competition winner
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