

ADRIANO TALKS ABOUT HIS LOVE OF RESPIGHI

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Respighi gold medal given by Elsa Respighi and the Respighi Foundation to Adriano in 1979 as recognition for his work (after a bronze relief by Francesco Messina, whose original is also a property of Adriano)

I think it was around 1962, when I first became interested in the music of Respighi. I listened in to a radio quiz – the type where you are invited to listen to a piece of music then ring in and guess the composer's name. I was fascinated by what turned out to be Respighi's *Pini di Roma* although the composer's name was announced as being "Respini" (with "n"). I was quite surprised since I knew a fellow student of the same name. Of course the composer's name was soon corrected and I have continued to like his music ever since. I felt rather unique in my preference until I met Ernest Ansermet who advised me about some of Respighi's works and another conductor, Alberto Erede, whose rehearsals of the *Roman Trilogy* I followed, and then I studied the scores of them with him. During these years I never stopped studying Respighi's music and, as a baritone, I sang some of his songs. Then I was encouraged by Elsa, Respighi's widow, in my aspiration to orchestrate some of his song cycles and, of course, I expanded my interest in the composer by studying as much of his music as I could – in all its forms.

I find it fascinating that I have always been attracted to the music of composers born under the sign of Cancer, like Respighi, Mahler, Orff, Bernard Herrmann, Petrassi, Menotti, Henze, Janáček, Lajtha, Eisler and Harry Partch etc. who all gave very special (and often congenial) impulses to music without becoming really monumental figures like the great classical masters. My birthday is actually one day after Respighi's.

I visited Rome, Bologna and Venice etc. and took pictures of all the places associated with Respighi, whilst preparing a huge Respighi Exhibition that opened at the International Lucerne Music Festival in 1979, on the occasion of the Respighi Centennial. During the 1970s and '80s I used to go to Rome every year to stay with my friend Elsa Respighi and to work with her on many diverse projects to promote Respighi's music. Whilst I was there, I had the opportunity to read practically all of the composer's correspondence and to look through all of his manuscripts that were not with his publishers or in museums. I also visited Respighi's former villa which Elsa had transformed, after the war, into a welfare clinic for children. In Bologna, there is Respighi's grave and the house where his family lived and, of course, the Conservatory, in the library of which some early Respighi manuscripts are preserved.



Elsa Respighi with Adriano in the Respighi library at the Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Venice (Setember 1978, Photo by Bruno Arnold)

In 1977, Elsa Respighi invited me to meet her after she heard about my activities and through the kind interest and intervention of a friend of mine at that time, the pianist Dino Ciani. I have thousands of memories of her (including some interesting taped conversations and photos) which would fill a book. She really was the most important and interesting woman in my life.

As far as my recordings of Respighi for Marco Polo are concerned, I have great admiration for the Bratislava Orchestra which I thought the most appropriate to use. The orchestra, as you know, is one of those under contract to Marco Polo. It is a very flexible orchestra and if the players like the conductor who is working with them, he can reach the almost impossible. Over the last three years I have also been invited to record with the Moscow Symphony Orchestra, another great ensemble with which I can achieve excellent results.

Of all the Marco Polo recordings of Respighi that I made, I think the work which presented the greatest challenge and opportunity was *La Primavera*. It is a very difficult work requiring quite huge forces and much attention. Many conductors have refused to consider it and many others do not like it at all – an opinion I will never understand! The problematic organization of the tempi, stipulated in the original score, is probably a major reason for this unfortunate attitude. Respighi's metronome indications are practically impossible and wrong (for some mysterious reason this problem seems to apply to a few of his other works) and the score, which has never been edited or printed, had hundreds of mistakes which could be corrected only by a Respighi connoisseur. The chorus parts of *La Primavera* are also highly difficult and the instrumentalists need extra coaching so that the intended effects can be achieved.

It was also quite hard to record *Lucrezia* and *La bella dormente nel bosco* because we had so little time at our disposal (for financial reasons) and we had to perform miracles.

I am planning more Respighi recordings but they will only be scheduled after the year 2000. My producer and I will decide on priorities which will include other important projects of mine. With the restricted quantity of recordings I am allowed to make for Marco Polo and the need to also promote film music (which apparently and unfortunately) sells better than Respighi, we have to postpone further titles. I am afraid I cannot give details of these at present.

Thankfully there is no need to make another recording of Respighi's operatic masterpiece, *La Fiamma* since there is an excellent CD of it on Hungaroton although my own personal opinion of this recording is that Maestro Gardelli's tempi seem a bit sleepy.

I was approached to write a book on Respighi but I do not consider myself a writer – I am a practical musician. I find it a chore writing CD booklet notes for my own recordings but I do so in order to avoid misunderstandings – there is so much rubbish written on Respighi...

Turning to other contemporary Italian composers, I would be interested in recording music by Martucci, Pizzetti and Malipiero. The Malipiero Symphonies have been recorded on Marco Polo by the late Antonio de Almeida, but many years before he did so, I had hoped to be able to record them myself. Since Marco Polo are cutting back on many projects I do not see any chance for me to record more Italian music at present but I really do hope to be able to continue the Respighi series after 2000! I have had to reject offers from other companies to record music by Respighi because Marco Polo will not allow me to conduct elsewhere.

As I mentioned earlier, I have an active interest in film music dating as far back as my interest in Respighi. At present I am also promoting some unknown composers from Switzerland (or composers who lived in this country). For instance, I will be recording a 4CD edition of the complete works of Templeton Strong on Marco Polo starting with his Symphony *Sintram* and his symphonic poem *The Night* both of which will be recorded in Moscow, in March this year. Strong was an American who lived in Switzerland He was promoted by Ansermet and Toscanini. I received a lot of Strong's scores and orchestral parts from the collections of Ansermet and Frank Martin. Symphonic poems à la Wagner/Liszt of the purely Swiss composer Albert Fäsy, which I am editing in the form of printed scores at the moment, will be recorded next year, thanks to generous sponsorship (which has also been made available for the Strong recordings). Sponsorship is vital in these difficult times for the recording industry.

If I was on a desert island and I could only have one Respighi work, assuming I would have a CD player etc. and electricity to play it, I would choose *Metamorfoseon* but if I were allowed three then I would have to add *La Primavera* and *Lucrezia*. Just to show I am not completely enticed by Respighi, I would prefer, after *Metamorfoseon*, to take along Schreker's opera *Der ferne Klang*. Schreker's work has had a similarly great influence on my musical life as, for, example Bernard Herrmann's *Wuthering Heights* or Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique*.