

**OTTORINO RESPIGHI****Born** July 9, 1879, Bologna, Italy**Died** April 18, 1936, Rome, Italy**Ancient Airs and Dances Suite No. 3, P. 172**

Ottorino Respighi had two sides to his musical personality. The first embraced the modern world: developing his unique voice, finding technicolor sounds. The second was pulled backwards in time: poring over music from bygone eras.

These two sides were not necessarily at odds. When Respighi transcribed and arranged dozens of 16th to 18th century works, he made them speak his own language, repainting intimate textures with vivid modern colors.

In his thirties, Respighi was drawn to collections of 16th and 17th century lute works. The lute, in its heyday, was prized for a quiet, delicate sound. Hearing a lute performance was like eavesdropping on a private conversation.

Respighi made three suites for string orchestra from these lute works, calling them *Ancient Airs and Dances*. The third suite bends towards darkness, melancholy:

1. *Italiana*. A lute *galliard* (a lively dance with complicated steps) is clothed in string mist, slow-dancing in mid-air.
2. *Arie di corte*. Six passionate courtly songs for lute and voice become a varied suite: violas sing to the accompaniment of strummed cello; cellos play bagpipe drones; strings glow with hymning radiance.
3. *Siciliana*. A swaying lute *spagnoletta* (a well-known folksong form) takes the motion of a river, calm at first, full of turbulence later.
4. *Passacaglia*. The strums and plucks of Baroque composer Ludovico Roncalli's guitar work is transformed into extravagant string textures. Respighi seem to tip his hat to J.S. Bach.

**First performance:** Unknown**First SLSO performance:** November 2, 1945, Vladimir Golschmann conducting**Most recent SLSO performance:** March 3, 2002, David Amado conducting**Scoring:** Strings**Approximate performance time:** 19 minutes

*Tim Munro is the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra's Creative Partner. A writer, broadcaster, and Grammy-winning flutist, he lives in Chicago with his wife, son, and badly-behaved orange cat.*

Stephanie Childress, conductor  
Xiaoxiao Qiang, violin  
Shannon Williams, viola

Friday, April 16, 2021 at 11:00am  
Saturday, April 17, 2021 at 7:30pm  
Sunday, April 18, 2021 at 3:00pm

**LUIGI BOCCHERINI**

(1743-1805)

Overture in D major, op. 43, G. 521 (1790)

**W.A. MOZART**

(1756-1791)

Sinfonia concertante in E-flat major, K. 364 (1779)

Allegro maestoso

Andante

Presto

Xiaoxiao Qiang, violin

Shannon Williams, viola

**OTTORINO RESPIGHI**

(1879-1936)

**Ancient Airs and Dances Suite No. 3, P. 172** (1931)

Anon. (late 16th century): Italiana

Giovanni Battista Besardo (17th century):

Arie di Corte

Anon. (late 17th century): Siciliana

Lodovico Roncalli (1692): Passacaglia

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To learn more about Stephanie Childress, Xiaoxiao Qiang, Shannon Williams, and the SLSO, visit [slo.org/musicians](https://slo.org/musicians).

# Program Notes

By Tim Munro

## Stephanie Childress on this program

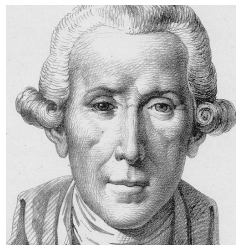
*From an interview with Stephanie Childress, the SLSO's new Assistant Conductor and Music Director of the Youth Orchestra. Stephanie's responses have been edited for length and clarity, and questions have been removed.*

We open with joy and love of life thanks to Luigi Boccherini's life-affirming overture. There is something that distinguishes Boccherini from other Italian composers—writing from Spain in solitude led him to adopt a very distinct compositional voice in the Baroque era.

Mozart's Sinfonia concertante represents the core of this program. It is vast—you don't often see such long, developed concertos from the Classical era, and having two solo instruments makes it resemble an extensive dialogue. The concerto is also in the key of E-flat major, a key Mozart often used to express feelings of youthful passion—there is an association with love of life and love of people.

In contrast to Mozart's passionate love, Respighi's *Ancient Airs and Dances* deals with love from afar. The movements were written in the style of Baroque dances but from the perspective of the 20th century. The suite is close to my heart as it is one of the first pieces I ever conducted.

In my opinion, the string section is the most complete organism in the orchestra due to the instruments being so closely related. However, a delicate piece like Respighi still poses a challenge: to capture the lightness of the Baroque style within Respighi's more Modernist language.



### LUIGI BOCCHERINI

**Born** February 19, 1743, Lucca, Italy

**Died** May 28, 1805, Madrid, Spain

## Overture in D major, op. 43, G. 521

We burst to hurly burly life. Horns bray, violins bustle, violas gossip. The hum of city life surrounds us. Joyful surprises lie around every corner—musicians jump from loud to soft, then back again.

Almost without warning, the Overture's bustle comes to a halt. Out of the silence, a quartet of violas and oboes slow our pulses, transporting us to the calm of a small town. Groups of musicians dance with gentle good spirits.

Luigi Boccherini lived an ambitious youth. He tore through Vienna and Paris, impressing audiences with his cello playing, delighting rich households with hummable chamber music. His name was on the tips of tongues, his busy life filled with success.

Freelance life wore on Boccherini. In his twenties, he moved to Spain, eventually taking a stable job with the King's brother, who lived in exile in a remote mountain town. Isolated, it seems that he could live a true artistic life, producing reams of music in every conceivable genre.

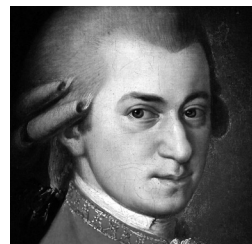
Boccherini the person remains unknown, except for one single letter. "All those who know me and who have dealings with me," he wrote, "judge me a man of probity—honest, sensitive, sweet-natured, and affectionate, as my works of music show me to be."

**First performance:** Unknown, probably at court for the King of Prussia

**First SLSO performance:** These concerts

**Scoring:** 2 oboes, bassoon, 2 horns, strings

**Approximate performance time:** 5 minutes



### WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

**Born** January 27, 1756, Salzburg, Austria

**Died** December 5, 1791, Vienna, Austria

## Sinfonia concertante in E-flat major, K. 364

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's Salzburg was a lovely place to visit: charming, picturesque. But it was a frustrating place to live: old-fashioned and stuffy, stifling free speech. "I was never happy," Mozart later wrote.

The 22-year-old held the unsatisfying position of court organist. His boss was tiresome, looking down at locals, restricting music-making. Mozart was a difficult employee, a self-important upstart refusing to hold his tongue.

And his music was not to local tastes. "When any of my compositions are performed," he wrote, "it is as if the audience were all tables and chairs." Rejected at home, Mozart looked further afield.

Some three hundred miles away in Mannheim, the "sinfonia concertante" genre was all the rage. Blending symphony and concerto, it fused multiple soloists with a rich orchestral texture.

This genre-blend prodded Mozart's musical ambition. The resulting Sinfonia concertante is bold: full of expressive intensity, harmonic complexity, and instrumental virtuosity. The music would surely have baffled conservative Salzburg.

The maturity of the Sinfonia concertante was an indicator that Mozart had outgrown his native town. Just two years later, he would move to the cultural capital of Vienna.

**First performance:** Unknown

**First SLSO performance:** October 22, 1957, Harry Farbman conducting, with Melvin Ritter as violin soloist, and Herbert Van den Burg as viola soloist

**Most recent SLSO performance:** April 11, 2015, Hannu Lintu conducting, with Jonathan Chu as violin soloist, and Beth Guterman Chu as viola soloist

**Scoring:** Solo violin, solo viola, 2 oboes, 2 horns, strings

**Approximate performance time:** 30 minutes

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