

Minnesota Orchestra

Karina Canellakis, conductor

Jean-Guihen Queyras, cello

Friday, February 25, 2022, 8 am | Orchestra Hall
 Saturday, February 26, 2022, 8 pm | Orchestra Hall

*With this concert we gratefully recognize **Dr. Mary and Jim Lawrence/Lawrence Family Foundation** for their generous contribution to the Minnesota Orchestra.*

Julia Perry	<i>Short Piece for Orchestra</i>	ca. 7'
Richard Strauss	<p><i>Don Quixote, Fantastic Variations on a Theme of Knightly Character, Opus 35</i></p> <p>Introduction Theme: Don Quixote and Sancho Panza Variations: Battle with the Windmills Battle with the Sheep Don Quixote and his Squire Converse Battle with the Pilgrims The Knight's Vigil The Meeting with Dulcinea The Ride through the Air The Voyage in the Enchanted Boat The Combat with the Two Magicians The Defeat of Don Quixote Finale: The Death of Don Quixote <i>Jean-Guihen Queyras, cello</i> <i>Rebecca Albers, viola</i></p>	ca. 41'
	I N T E R M I S S I O N	ca. 20'
Sergei Rachmaninoff	<p>Symphonic Dances, Opus 45</p> <p>Non allegro Andante con moto (Tempo di valse) Lento assai – Allegro vivace</p>	ca. 35'

pre-concert

Concert Preview with Valerie Little and Karina Canellakis
 Friday, February 25, 7 pm, Auditorium
 Saturday, February 26, 7 pm, Auditorium

Minnesota Orchestra concerts are broadcast live on Friday evenings on stations of [YourClassical Minnesota Public Radio](#), including KSJN 99.5 FM in the Twin Cities. The February 25 will also be broadcast live on [Twin Cities PBS \(TPT-2\)](#) and available for streaming at minnesotaorchestra.org and on the Orchestra's social media channels.





Karina Canellakis, conductor

Internationally acclaimed for her emotionally charged performances, technical command and interpretive depth, Karina Canellakis regularly appears with the top orchestras of North America, Europe, the U.K. and Australia. She is the chief conductor of the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra, and concurrently holds the title of principal guest conductor with both the London Philharmonic Orchestra and Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin. Her 2021-22 season includes significant debuts with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra and San Francisco Symphony, as well as return engagements with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra. She is also active on the operatic stage and is known to many in the classical music world for her virtuoso violin playing. More: opus3artists.com.



Jean-Guihen Queyras, cello

Cellist Jean-Guihen Queyras makes his Minnesota Orchestra debut in these performances. He has given world premieres of works by, among others, Ivan Fedele, Gilbert Amy, Bruno Mantovani, Michael Jarrell, Johannes-Maria Staud, Thomas Larcher and Tristan Murail. He was a founding member of the Arcanto Quartet and forms a celebrated trio with Isabelle Faust and Alexander Melnikov; and collaborated with zarb specialists Bijan and Keyvan Chemirani on a Mediterranean programme. Queyras often appears with renowned orchestras such as the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, Mahler Chamber Orchestra, the Orchestre de Paris, London Symphony Orchestra, the Gewandhausorchester and the Tonhalle Orchestra Zurich. His recordings of cello

concertos by Edward Elgar, Antonín Dvořák, Philippe Schoeller and Gilbert Amy have been released to critical acclaim. More: jeanguihenqueyras.com.



William Eddins, host and writer

For the concert on Friday, February 25, William Eddins serves as host and writer of the Twin Cities PBS broadcast and online livestream, *This Is Minnesota Orchestra*. Earlier this season Eddins served in this same role for the New Year's Eve and Lunar New Year concerts. A full profile appears on page 22.

one-minute notes

Perry: *Short Piece for Orchestra*

Perry's humbly named *A Short Piece for Orchestra* is symmetrical in form, beginning and ending with vigor. One inner episode is moderately paced and strongly melodic, and another is full of pensive melancholy and falling melodic lines.

R. Strauss: *Don Quixote*

Strauss captures the humor and humanity of Cervantes' great novel in a magnificent work spotlighting solo cello. With Don Quixote portrayed by the cello and his long-suffering squire, Sancho Panza, primarily by the viola, the music depicts their escapades in a series of colorful variations. Among the most famous: the Don's battles with windmills and an unsuspecting flock of sheep, and an encounter with his imagined, idealized lady love, Dulcinea.

Rachmaninoff: *Symphonic Dances*

Rachmaninoff's final composition is full of rhythmic energy and colorful orchestration. The alto saxophone makes a rare orchestral appearance in this three-movement work, which closes with a breathtaking setting of the *Dies Irae*.



Julia Perry

Born: March 25, 1924,
Lexington, Kentucky
Died: April 24, 1979,
Akron, Ohio

Short Piece for Orchestra Composed: 1952

Kentucky-born composer Julia Perry chose a just-the-facts title when writing her *Short Piece for Orchestra* in 1952 near the midpoint of her too-short life, as she was beginning music studies in Europe that spanned much of the 1950s. Despite its plain and unassuming title, *Short Piece* covers a great deal of musical ground, exploring disparate ideas, moods and textures across seven minutes that seem longer.

to Europe and back

Raised in Ohio in a musical family, Perry found childhood success as a violinist and singer. She won a scholarship to attend Westminster Choir College, where she was the orchestra's concertmaster, and after graduating she pursued further studies in composition and conducting. Like many young composers of the period, she gravitated to Paris for composition instruction with the famous pedagogue Nadia Boulanger. In the 1950s she earned several high honors including two Guggenheim Fellowships, which allowed for an extended stay in Italy studying with Luigi Dallapiccola.

After returning to the U.S. in the late 1950s, she enjoyed several high career triumphs including the New York Philharmonic's 1965 performance and recording of *Short Piece for Orchestra*, at that point revised under the title *Study for Orchestra*. Sadly she suffered from ill health and a stroke that caused partial paralysis and slowed her composing activities—though she taught herself to write left-handed to allow for continued work. When she died at age 55 in 1979 she left a varied catalog of 12 symphonies, three concertos, three operas, a particularly admired *Stabat Mater*, and an assortment of shorter orchestral pieces, chamber music and vocal compositions, among other works.

short but ambitious

Many of Perry's early works were focused on voice and influenced by the spiritual style. Her 1952 *Short Piece for Orchestra* dates from the period when her focus shifted primarily to instrumental writing, often in the modern neoclassical style and incorporating

more frequent dissonance. *Short Piece* was introduced in 1952 by the Turin Symphony. Of historical significance is the New York Philharmonic's note on the piece from its 1965 performance, which marked only the third time the ensemble had performed music by a woman, and the first by a woman of color.

“The score is a strongly symmetrical structure. The introduction, with its garish, angular thematic line etched in octaves by strings and woodwinds with horns, is punctuated by heavy, syncopated brass chords. This vigorous mood and tempo provide the framework of the entire piece, returning twice to alternate with contrasting material and a third time to conclude the score.

“The first contrasting episode, in a more moderato tempo, is strongly melodic. Here a principal melody is given first by solo flute, then by oboe, clarinet and horn. The short central section is dominated by a vigorous dotted rhythm carried by the bassoons and later taken over by the viola section. The third episode is one of pensive melancholy, with flute, solo violin, oboe and other instruments imitating each other's gracefully falling melodic line. The closing page recalls once more the vigorous opening.”

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 2 trombones, tuba, timpani, field drum, bass drum, suspended cymbal, xylophone, harp, piano (doubling celesta) and strings

Program note by *Carl Schroeder*.



Richard Strauss

Born: June 11, 1864,
Munich, Germany
Died: September 8, 1949,
Garmisch-Partenkirchen,
Germany

Don Quixote, Fantastic Variations on a Theme of Knightly Character, Opus 35

Premiered: March 8, 1898

In 1896, just after finishing *Also sprach Zarathustra*, Richard Strauss set to work on a new project, one that would take him in entirely new directions. Strauss at first planned to write a tone poem based on events from Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quixote*. But rather than writing a straightforward tone poem, Strauss made his task more complicated by casting his new work as a set of variations based on a collection of themes associated with Don Quixote, his sidekick Sancho Panza and his idealized love Dulcinea. Then, to bring yet one more dimension to this music, Strauss conceived it as a virtuoso work for cello and orchestra,

with the solo cellist cast in the role of Don Quixote. Strauss completed the score in December 1897, and the premiere took place on March 6, 1898, in Cologne.

Don Quixote is a great showpiece for the solo cello—but we should not overlook the other players Strauss assigns important solo roles in this music. The part of Sancho Panza is first announced by bass clarinet and tenor tuba and thereafter undertaken mostly by the solo viola, which plays the role of the longsuffering squire; at key moments the solo violin contributes to the portrait of Don Quixote.

a story in variations

Don Quixote consists of an introduction, a statement of the principal themes, ten variations and a finale. Strauss depicted only a few of the many incidents in Cervantes' novel and felt free to alter their order in his own presentation.

Introduction. Here are most of the important themes that will evolve across the span of *Don Quixote*, initially presented not by the soloists but by the orchestra. At the very beginning comes the little flute tune that will reappear in many forms, followed by a lilting idea for second violins that Strauss marks *grazioso* and a clarinet swirl followed by a three-chord cadence; all of these will be associated with Don Quixote himself.

Soon the solo oboe sings a gentle melody depicting the Don's idealized lady-love and patroness, the fair Dulcinea. Trumpets mark his resolve to defend her, but quickly this noble beginning turns complex and dissonant as Quixote loses himself in dreams of knight-errantry. In Cervantes' words: "through his little sleep and much reading, he dried up his brains in such sort, as he wholly lost his judgment." The music reaches a point of shrieking dissonance—Don Quixote's mind has snapped—and heroic fanfares break off in silence.

Don Quixote and Sancho Panza. Out of that silence, the solo cello is heard for the first time, presenting the Don's themes, now in a minor key. Quickly we meet Sancho Panza, and it is no accident that we move to a major key for the genial sidekick: bass clarinet and tenor tuba sing a rustic duet that introduces the squire, and the viola quickly takes this up, going on and on like Sancho himself.

Battle with the Windmills. The main characters having been introduced, the music proceeds directly into Variation I. Don Quixote and Sancho's themes are sounded simultaneously as they head out for their first adventure. It comes immediately: Don Quixote mistakes windmills for giants and rides to the attack. A sharp thump knocks the aged knight from his horse, and he recovers slowly on thoughts of Dulcinea.

Battle with the Sheep. In the famous second variation, Quixote mistakes a flock of sheep for the armies of the evil Emperor Alifanfaron. Their bleating is memorably suggested by flutter-tongued minor seconds from the winds, while viola tremolos depict the cloud of dust they raise. Don Quixote charges into the flock, dispersing the terrified sheep and riding off in triumph as the shepherds howl.

Don Quixote and His Squire Converse. In the third and longest of the variations, Don Quixote speaks grandly of heroic deeds while Sancho chatters incessantly. Finally the knight cuts him off with a violent gesture, and the two head off in search of new adventures.

Battle with the Pilgrims. In variation four, the pair come upon a religious procession (solemn bassoon and brass chords) and ride to the attack; they are knocked flat and left lying in the dust as the procession fades into the distance.

The Knight's Vigil. Don Quixote ruminates on his ideals in the moonlight as soft winds blow in the background.

The Meeting with Dulcinea. Variation six opens with a jaunty oboe duet: the Don and Sancho have come upon three peasant girls, and Sancho convinces the knight that they are his beloved Dulcinea del Toboso and her retinue, but that they have been transformed by an enchanter. Don Quixote tries to pay homage to this coarse country maid, but the cackling girls flee in confusion.

The Ride Through the Air. In the seventh variation, the Don and Sancho are convinced to mount a hobby horse, believing that it will carry them through the air; the wind howls around them, but the two remain firmly rooted to the earth.

The Voyage in the Enchanted Boat. Variation eight brings the pair to an abandoned rowboat. They ride out into the stream but head toward a weir, tip over and fall in; once on shore, they wring out their clothes (pizzicato notes echo the water dripping from their sopping clothes).

The Combat with the Two Magicians. Here the adventurers encounter a pair of Benedictine monks chatting happily as they come down the road (two bassoons in busy counterpoint). Don Quixote rides to the attack and sends the terrified monks fleeing.

The Defeat of Don Quixote. In variation ten, a well-intentioned neighbor dresses as a knight, jousts with Quixote and defeats him. The vanquished knight is sent home under orders to give up knight-errantry for a year, and the pounding timpani pedal suggests his homeward journey in disgrace.

Finale: The Death of Don Quixote. In the Finale, the Don's fevered imagination gradually clears—the dissonances heard during the

first presentation of his themes are here resolved—but he is now an old and frail man. He recalls some of the themes associated with his adventures, and, in the cello's beautiful final statement, Don Quixote dies quietly as a long glissando glides downward.

Strauss once claimed that he could set a glass of beer to music, and *Don Quixote* very nearly proves him right; his biographer Norman Del Mar has shown how virtually every note in this score pictures a particular feature of Don Quixote and his quest. *Don Quixote* is suffused throughout with a level of understanding that is both humorous and humane. Strauss may have set out to write a tone poem that would re-tell the story of one of the greatest characters in literature, but he achieved much more: in its difficulty and brilliance, *Don Quixote* ranks high among the greatest classical works ever written for cello and orchestra.

Instrumentation: solo cello and solo viola with orchestra comprising 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets (1 doubling E-flat clarinet), bass clarinet, 3 bassoons, contrabassoon, 6 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, tenor tuba, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, bells, snare drum, tambourine, triangle, wind machine, harp and strings

Program note by **Eric Bromberger**.



Sergei Rachmaninoff

Born: April 1, 1873,
Semyonovo, Russia
Died: March 28, 1943,
Beverly Hills, California

Symphonic Dances

Premiered: January 3, 1941

In the summer of 1940 Sergei Rachmaninoff set to work on what would be his final complete work, a set of dances for orchestra that would ultimately be known as his *Symphonic Dances*, premiered by Eugene Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra on January 3, 1941.

Opulent, sumptuous—and subtle

This score is remarkable for the opulence of its color, and Rachmaninoff seems intent on finding and exploiting new orchestral sonorities. More remarkable still is Rachmaninoff's subtle compositional method. He evolves this music from rhythmic fragments, bits of theme, simple patterns—which are then built

up into powerful movements that almost overflow with rhythmic energy.

non allegro. The music opens with some of these fragments, just bits of sound from the first violins, and over them the English horn sounds the three-note pattern that will permeate this work, reappearing across its span in endless forms. Rachmaninoff plays it up into a great climax, which subsides as the opening fragments lead to the central episode, sung at first entirely by woodwinds.

This slow interlude—the reedy sound of the alto saxophone is exactly right for this wistful music—makes its way back to the big gestures of the beginning section, now energized by explosive timpani salvos. In the closing moments, Rachmaninoff rounds matters off with a grand chorale for strings, beautifully accompanied by the glistening sound of bells, piano, harp, piccolo and flutes, and the movement winks into silence on the fragments with which it began.

andante con moto (tempo di valse). The opening of the second movement takes us into a completely different sound-world with the icy tones of trumpets and horns, played *forte* but stopped. Rachmaninoff calls for a waltz tempo, but he sets the music in the untraditional meters of 6/8 and 9/8 and has the waltz introduced by the unlikely sound of solo English horn. This music evolves through several episodes, some soaring, some powerful, before subsiding in a sudden, almost breathless close.

lento assai-allegro vivace. The slow introduction to the final movement is enlivened by the strings' interjections of the three-note pattern. Gradually these anneal into the *Allegro vivace*, and off the movement goes, full of rhythmic energy and the sound of ringing bells. A central episode in the tempo of the introduction sings darkly; after wonderful sounds including eerie string glissandos, the *Allegro vivace* returns to rush the *Symphonic Dances* to a close guaranteed to rip the top off a concert hall.

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, alto saxophone, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, suspended cymbal, tambourine, tamtam, triangle, glockenspiel, chimes, xylophone, harp, piano and strings

Program note by **Eric Bromberger**.