

**TORONTO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**

Gustavo Gimeno, Music Director

*R. Strauss's Don Quixote*

**Gustavo Gimeno**, conductor  
**Jörgen van Rijen**, trombone  
**Rémi Pelletier**, viola  
**Joseph Johnson**, cello

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**György Ligeti**  
*Lontano*

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**Richard Wagner**  
Prelude to Act I of *Parsifal*

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**Samy Moussa**  
Concerto for Trombone and Orchestra  
"Yericho"

North American Première/TSO Co-commission

- I. Inesorabile
  - II. Lo stesso tempo
  - III. A tempo
  - IV. Maestoso
  - V. Tempo rubato
  - VI.  $\text{♩} = 54$
  - VII. Tempo primo
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**Intermission**

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**Richard Strauss**  
*Don Quixote*, Op. 35

- I. Introduction
- II. Theme and Variations
- III. Finale

*Program 1*

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Wednesday,  
April 3, 2024

8:00pm

Saturday,  
April 6, 2024

8:00pm

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*Gustavo Gimeno's appearances are generously supported by Susan Brenninkmeyer in memory of Hans Brenninkmeyer*

*Jörgen van Rijen's appearance is generously supported by Kristine Vikmanis & Denton Creighton*

*Joseph Johnson's appearance is generously supported by Ron and Lee Till*

*The North American Première of Samy Moussa's Trombone Concerto is generously supported by Margie and Peter Kelk*

*Gustavo Gimeno and Jörgen van Rijen are dressed by Atelier Munro*

## György Ligeti (1923–2006)

### Lontano

Composed 1967

10 min

**ACCORDING TO HIS BIOGRAPHER ROBERT CUMMING,** Hungarian-Austrian composer György Ligeti is considered “one of the most innovative and influential among progressive figures of his time,” alongside other 20th-century giants such as Boulez, Berio, Stockhausen, and Cage. While his 1967 composition *Lontano* is unmistakably a product of mid-20th-century Modernism, it is nevertheless intrinsically tied to the Classical past and, to an extent, represents the composer’s rejection of some of the more extreme tendencies of his time.

The work’s title means “far away” in Italian, a first clue to its historic ties. Faced with censorship in Hungary’s post-1956 Soviet regime, Ligeti fled to Austria. At first he experimented with electronic music, but by the time of *Lontano*’s composition, he had lighted on a style that produced sounds resembling electronic textures using the forces of a more conventional orchestra, as well as traditional forms taken from music history.

Ligeti himself coined the term “micropolyphony” to describe his style in works like *Lontano*, where an overall harmonious effect results from the complex layering of woven textures. A dense sound cloud is built using the canon form in which

multiple instrumental voices play the same music starting at different times. As described by musicologist Amy Bauer, in Ligeti’s *Lontano*, “a series of highly chromatic canons [are] superimposed at the octave or unison. Four canons appear in textures that vary from two to 54 separate instrumental parts, confined within a narrow melodic compass.” The myriad, overlapping musical lines move in different tempos and rhythms to form tone clusters. The composer remarked that, “The

polyphony in itself is almost imperceptible but its harmonic effect represents the intrinsic musical action: what is on the page is polyphony, but what is heard is harmony.”

As musicologist Pierre Michel has noted, in *Lontano*, Ligeti was influenced by Mahler, Bruckner, and Debussy. The Hungarian was attracted to Bruckner as a pioneer who took the Romantic sensibility to its limits in terms of “sonic abundance.” *Lontano* is full of Brucknerian ambiguity and unresolved tensions,

exemplified in the climax towards the end of the piece, which is only partially achieved.

Sonically, *Lontano* lives up to its title with its hazy, eerie effects, probably best experienced “from afar.” Incidentally, the piece’s spookiness wasn’t lost on filmmakers: Stanley Kubrick famously included passages from *Lontano* in his film based on Stephen King’s *The Shining*, as did Martin Scorsese in the 2010 psychological thriller *Shutter Island*.

—Program note by Gianmarco Segato



↑  
György Ligeti—by Dane Thibeault

Richard Wagner (1813–1883)

## Prelude to Act I of *Parsifal*

Composed 1877–82

14 min

**THE PREMIÈRE OF RICHARD WAGNER'S *PARSIFAL*** took place in Bayreuth, Germany, on July 26, 1882, conducted by Hermann Levi. Wagner had conducted a private performance of the Prelude for his patron, King Ludwig II of Bavaria, in Munich on November 12, 1880. Having conceived the idea for an opera based on the legend of Parsifal in 1845, after reading the poems of a medieval mystic, Wolfram von Eschenbach, Wagner allowed his project to lie dormant until 1857, when he sketched a full outline of the opera's text. Composition of the music itself had to wait a further 20 years. During that interval, he composed much or all of *Tristan and Isolde*, *The Mastersingers of Nuremberg*, and *The Ring of the Nibelung*.

*Parsifal*, which he called a sacred festival play rather than an opera, is his final work for the stage. The première took place in the theatre that had been constructed specifically and exclusively for the production of his operas. Philosophically, the opera wove together concepts from both Christian and Buddhist faiths. In musical terms, its foundation in the German late Romantic style of Wagner's previous

operas is tinged with foretastes of Debussy's Impressionism. Parsifal is a guileless young knight who seeks to join the order whose members guard the Holy Grail, the chalice from which Jesus drank at the Last Supper. Though Parsifal is dismissed at first as simply a fool, his education in compassion and wisdom eventually makes him the Grail Knights' saviour, and their new leader.

As was Wagner's regular practice, he

constructed the Prelude to *Parsifal* on significant themes from the opera it introduces. He did not give names to these themes or motifs, but titles have become associated with them through the work of musical scholars. The three principal motifs that are heard in the mystical, dream-like Prelude are the Motif of the Sacrament (at the start, rising and falling gently in the clarinet, bassoon, muted violins, and cellos); the Grail Motif (heard softly on trumpets and

trombones); and the resolute Motif of Faith (introduced immediately after the Grail Motif, on full brass). Like the opera, the Prelude concludes with the promise of hope and redemption.

—Program note by Don Anderson



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Richard Wagner—by Kalya Ramu



**James Ehnes**  
violin  
(2023/24 TSO Spotlight Artist)

# James Ehnes + An American in Paris

**May 29, 30 & June 1**

Stéphane Denève, conductor

James Ehnes, violin (2023/24 TSO Spotlight Artist)

Welcome our 2023/24 TSO Spotlight Artist, James Ehnes, back to the Toronto Symphony Orchestra in an enchanting classical-jazz fusion program.

Samy Moussa (b. 1984)

## Concerto for Trombone and Orchestra “Yericho”

North American Première/TSO Co-commission  
*Composed 2023*

25 min

### THE IDEA FOR “YERICHO”, A CO-COMMISSION

of the Orchestre national de Lyon and the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, began to germinate for Samy Moussa during the year and a half he spent, in 2020–21, as the TSO’s first Spotlight Artist. The engagement culminated with the World Première of his first TSO commission—his Symphony No. 2, in May 2022, which toured with the TSO the following February to Carnegie Hall, Ottawa, and Chicago. “The TSO allowed me anything I wanted for the commission, which was wonderful, both for things I wanted to do and wanted *not* to do,” he said at the time. And the things he *didn’t* want to do? “For one thing, no trombones,” he said. “For two reasons: to break the habit of relying on particular instruments for a certain kind of power, and, because I am working on a trombone concerto next, so I wanted to allow myself to crave the trombone for that.”

The association of the trombone with the sacred is long-standing in Western classical music: Beethoven famously referred to it as the “voice of God,” and Mendelssohn, observed that it was “too sacred for frequent use.” The Biblical story of Yericho (a transliteration from Hebrew), or Jericho in English, is a solemn testament to the unique power of the symbolic performance of a ritual. In the Book of Joshua, the walls of Jericho fell after the Israelites marched around it for seven days—once a day for six days, and seven times on the seventh day. On the last day, with seven priests blowing the *shofar*—פֶּרַח שׁוֹפָר in Hebrew, or rams’ horn in English—and throngs of Israelites encircling the city each time, the walls fell under force of this ritualistic practice. Reflections of the symbolic power of these seven horns can be

found in the instrumentation for “Yericho”, wherein they are embodied collectively by solo trombone, a pair of trumpets, and four French horns. Likewise, the concerto unfolds across seven movements, with these “seven horns” encircled by two percussionists, an organ, timpani, and a string section. —**Program note compiled and edited by Michael Zarathus-Cook**



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The seven walls of  
Jericho, from the  
Farhi Bible

**COMPOSER BIO:** Born in Montréal, Canadian conductor and composer Samy Moussa has been based in Germany for the past 17 years, but maintains close ties with his North American roots, notably with the Montréal Symphony Orchestra, the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, and the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. As a composer, he has been commissioned and performed by, among others, the Vienna Philharmonic, London Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Concertgebouw Orchestra, and championed by conductors such as Christian Thielemann, Christoph Eschenbach, and Kent Nagano. His compositional agenda includes a flute concerto for Emmanuel Pahud. In Europe he has conducted orchestras such as the Bavarian State Orchestra, the Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra, the MDR Symphony Orchestra (Leipzig), and the Zurich Chamber Orchestra, in repertoire ranging from the Classical period to the 21st century. In the 2023/24 season, Moussa conducts Orchestra della Svizzera italiana, as well as Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, and Bilbao Orkestra Sinfonikoa.



Richard Strauss (1864–1949)

## Don Quixote, Op. 35

Composed 1897

40 min

**STRAUSS COMPOSED DON QUIXOTE**, the sixth of his nine tone poems, during his tenure as Principal Conductor at the Court Opera in Munich. He had his first ideas for the piece in October 1896, while on holiday in Florence, and completed it in the last days of 1897; it was first performed on March 8, 1898, in Cologne. (That fall, Strauss had succeeded Felix Weingartner as conductor of the Royal Opera in Berlin.) He suggested that *Don Quixote* be performed alongside his next tone poem, *Ein Heldenleben* (*A Hero's Life*), completed in 1898, and the two pieces do form a complementary pair, *Don Quixote* being a sort of *anti-hero's* life. Strauss, incidentally, conducted two commercial recordings of the piece, in 1933 with the Berlin State Opera Orchestra, and in 1941 with the Bavarian State Opera Orchestra; a 1936 performance with the Staatskapelle Dresden, broadcast from London, also survives.

*Don Quixote* at first received mixed reviews. Some critics heard a contradiction between Strauss's lofty aspirations and "vulgar" tone-painting, and believed he had finally gone too far in the cause of musical pictorialism (he faced that charge with just

about every new tone poem, actually). To champions of "absolute" instrumental music, Strauss's vivid, virtuosic brand of program music offended against good taste. But then, there was always much more to his tone poems than mere tone-painting—the depiction of things, actions, sounds, events, and narrative. Strauss was a master not just at conjuring up waterfalls and farm animals, but at depicting human personalities, emotional

and psychological states, even abstract thoughts, as well as the relationships *between* people—everything from conversation to sex—with unparalleled imagination and subtlety. Moreover, he had a knack for finding ingenious and appropriate musical forms through which to convey particular programs. By these standards, some informed Straussians consider *Don Quixote* the greatest of his tone poems, perhaps the greatest of all his works.

Subtitled "Fantastic Variations on a Theme of Knightly Character", *Don Quixote* unfolds in a very loose (and very sophisticated) theme-and-variations form (Strauss once quipped that he "took variation form *ad absurdum* and showered tragicomic persiflage upon it"). There is no one "theme"; rather, complexes of motifs depict Don Quixote, his faithful



↑ Richard Strauss—by Kalya Ramu

sidekick, Sancho Panza, and his imagined lady, Dulcinea. The variations each have a distinctive individual identity, but they follow one another seamlessly to form a single overarching narrative that shows us Quixote's strange, picaresque career as well as his evolving personality and relationships. Throughout, Strauss eagerly mines his motifs for combinatorial and developmental possibilities, creating a tightly unified structure. It is an eventful structure, too: narratively as well as emotionally, Strauss covers a lot of ground relatively concisely, condensing to its essence Cervantes's long, complicated novel. Running about 40 minutes, *Don Quixote* comprises an introduction, a presentation of motifs for Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, ten variations, and a finale.

Though the published orchestral score includes only a few titles, Strauss's piano score bears many specific references to the novel, as do his sketchbooks. In the précis of the tone poem that follows, each heading is followed first, in italics, by Strauss's own synopsis:

**Introduction:** *From much reading of romances of chivalry, Don Quixote loses his wits and decides to become a knight errant himself.* In the opening pages, Quixote is portrayed by three motifs (the third in the violas), all of them harmonically unstable, and his passionate (but chaste) love for Dulcinea is evoked by a dreamy tune for an oboe. The introduction ends with cacophonous discords: Quixote's mind snaps.

**Theme:** *Don Quixote, the knight of the sorrowful countenance (solo cello), Sancho Panza (bass clarinet, tenor tuba, and solo viola).* Quixote's motifs reveal his gallantry and nobility, but also his profound melancholy. Sancho is deftly portrayed

as a good-humoured and good-hearted bumpkin. A lumbering motif reveals his cheerful simplicity, a bustling motif his tendency to babble, other motifs his sentimentality and propensity for uttering banal proverbs.

**Variation I:** *The strange pair ride out wearing the favours of the fair Dulcinea of Toboso; adventure with the windmills.* Quixote, with his spear and astride his pitiable steed, charges a windmill, mistaking it for a giant, and is knocked to the ground (slowly arpeggiated chords represent the inexorable turning of the windmill, and an upward surge in the solo cello symbolizes Quixote's charge).

**Variation II:** *Victory over the army of the great emperor Alifanfaron (battle against the herd of sheep).* High trills in the divided violas and quiet dissonant clusters in flutter-tonguing woodwinds and brass evoke the gently murmuring herd, and a "piping" motif in the woodwinds represents the shepherds. Quixote charges (cellos), and the sheep scatter in terror. Quixote's subsequent feeling of triumph is depicted with fine irony.

**Variation III:** *Conversation between the knight and squire: Sancho's demands, questions, and adages, the knight's precepts, pacifications, and promises.* At first, the play of motifs depicts a conversation between the protagonists, then Sancho becomes increasingly loquacious, and Quixote, unable to get a word in, finally turns on him furiously. Strauss's gorgeous, soaring music here is a high point of the piece, but there is a farcical epilogue: Sancho interjects a dopey remark (bass clarinet), Quixote turns on him again (strings), and that is that.

**Variation IV:** *Unfortunate adventure with a procession of penitents.* Riding off in a rage, Quixote spots some approaching penitents (liturgical-style chants in muted brass and bassoons). Pleading for rain after drought, the penitents carry an image of the Virgin

Mary, which Quixote mistakes for a captured maiden. He charges, but is once again knocked to the ground, and the procession moves on.

**Variation V:** *Don Quixote's vigil over his weapons. Pours out his heart to the distant Dulcinea.* Quixote, observing a ceremony that traditionally must take place *before* one can formally be knighted, spends a night keeping watch over his armour. All the while, he thinks of Dulcinea, whose motif is dreamily evoked. The music here is heartfelt, and Strauss chose to disregard the crude farce with which this episode is spiced in the novel.

**Variation VI:** *Meeting with a peasant girl, who Sancho tells his master is Dulcinea under an enchanter's spell.* An irregular metre (alternating bars in duple and triple time—effectively, 5/4) and cheerful woodwind scoring (note, too, the tambourine—one of few allusions in this piece to the Spanish setting) charmingly depict the peasant girl on her donkey. Various motifs in counterpoint reveal Quixote's confusion at the sight of his "lady," Sancho's pleas, and the girl's utter lack of interest. She rides off, leaving Quixote bewildered and downcast.

**Variation VII:** *Ride through the air.* A duke and duchess have played an elaborate prank on Quixote and Sancho, placing them, blindfolded, on a toy horse and, by means of bellows, persuading them that they have taken to the air on a flying horse, in order to save a damsel in distress. Strauss's orchestration—surging scales and arpeggios in woodwinds, horns, harp, and strings—suffices to conjure up howling winds even without the wind machine he calls for. The persistent pedal tone in the bass seems to say that, despite the illusion of flight, this horse remains solidly fixed on the ground.

**Variation VIII:** *Ill-starred voyage on the enchanted boat (barcarolle).* Coming across a boat, Quixote assumes that it is intended to carry him on another quest.

Running figuration throughout the orchestra conveys an increasingly turbulent journey downstream; eventually, the boat is split apart by water mills, and Quixote and Sancho are compelled to escape overboard. Strauss uses some abrasive *pizzicati* to depict the pair emerging soaking wet, and a short hymn for winds to depict Sancho praying to be spared from his master's crazy schemes.

**Variation IX:** *Battle against the supposed enchanters, two little priests on their mules.* Quixote encounters a procession of travellers that includes a Basque woman and two Benedictine monks, whose solemn conversation Strauss entrusts to a pair of unaccompanied bassoons. Quixote, thinking these are enchanters who have abducted a princess, stealthily approaches them and then attacks, putting them to flight.

**Variation X:** *Single combat with the Knight of the Shining Moon. Don Quixote, struck to the ground, bids farewell to his arms, and returns home, with the intention of becoming a shepherd.* A dark, impassioned march supported by pounding timpani depicts Quixote's desolate but dignified retreat home (with Sancho still at his side). The "piping" motif from Variation II returns—Quixote as shepherd. The march briefly (and dissonantly) returns, but it dissolves into quiet, strange, ethereal chords over a solo-cello "recitative."

**Finale:** *Having recovered his senses, he decides to spend his remaining days in meditation. Don Quixote's death.* The piece comes very tenderly and poignantly to a close as Strauss depicts a newly contemplative Quixote, now exhausted and feeble, on his deathbed (the death pangs are audible). Strauss alludes to the very opening bars of the piece, taking us back to a time before Quixote's mind was muddled, though now the solo cello adds melancholy counterpoint to this sunny music. At peace, restored to sanity, Quixote dies.

—Program note by Kevin Bazzana



For a biography of Gustavo Gimeno, please turn to page 8.



### **Jörgen van Rijen, trombone**

These performances mark Jörgen van Rijen's TSO début.

Principal Trombonist of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra Jörgen van Rijen is also much in demand as a soloist, with a special commitment to promoting his instrument, developing new repertoire for the trombone, and bringing the existing repertoire to a broader audience. He is a specialist on both the modern and baroque trombone. He has performed as a soloist in most European countries, as well as the United States, Canada, Japan, and China, and has performed concertos with orchestras including the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, the Czech Philharmonic, the Rotterdam Philharmonic, and more.

Van Rijen was awarded the Netherlands Music Prize in 2004, the highest distinction in the field of music by the Dutch Ministry of Culture. In 2006 he received the prestigious Borletti-Buitoni Trust Award, which is presented yearly to a selection of the most promising and talented young international soloists and ensembles. He has won other major prizes, including first prizes at the international trombone competitions of Toulon and Guebwiller.

Many new pieces have been written for Van Rijen, including a trombone concerto by Theo Verbey, commissioned by the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra.

Plans for the future include new commissions by Florian Maier and James MacMillan. Van Rijen teaches at the Amsterdam Conservatory and has been appointed International Visiting Professor at the Royal Academy of Music, London. He is also an active chamber musician. Additionally, he was one of the founders of the New Trombone Collective and the RCO Brass. Van Rijen plays exclusively on instruments built by Antoine Courtois and has released three CDs on the Channel Classics label.



### **Rémi Pelletier, viola**

These performances mark Rémi Pelletier's TSO solo début.

Rémi Pelletier joined the Toronto Symphony Orchestra as Associate Principal Viola in September 2019, having served in the New York Philharmonic's viola section from July 2013 and in the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal beginning in 2007. Previously, he was a regular substitute with The Philadelphia Orchestra and has also performed with The Haddonfield Symphony and the Orchestre Métropolitain. He served as Guest Principal Viola of the International Orchestra of Italy in the summers of 2011 and 2012, Principal Viola of Japan's Pacific Music Festival, and Assistant Principal of the New York String Orchestra Seminar.

An active chamber musician, Pelletier was a regular guest at the Société de musique de chambre de Québec and performed with Rendez-vous musical de Laterrière and Musica

Camerata, as well as with the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal's chamber music series. His honours include the CBC/McGill Music Award (2003), as well as first prize at the Concours du Québec and Canada's National Music Festival Competition.

A native of Quebec, Pelletier was a scholarship recipient at Encore School for Strings and the Orford Arts Centre. In addition to attending master classes with Kim Kashkashian, Roberto Diaz, and others, Pelletier also studied with Michael Tree and Joseph De Pasquale at the Curtis Institute of Music and with André J. Roy at McGill University. Pelletier graduated from McGill with the distinction of Outstanding Achievement in Viola Performance and was Principal Viola of the McGill Symphony Orchestra.



### **Joseph Johnson, cello**

Joseph Johnson made his TSO solo début in November 2010.

Principal Cello of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra since the 2009/10 season, Joseph Johnson previously held the same position with the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra. He also serves as Principal Cellist of the Santa Fe Opera, and during the 2008/09 season was acting Principal Cellist of the Honolulu Symphony Orchestra. Johnson has performed as Guest Principal Cellist with the Detroit Symphony, St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, Trondheim Symphony, and this year will serve as Guest Principal Cellist with the San

Francisco Symphony for their Carnegie Hall/Europe Tour in the spring. Prior to his Milwaukee appointment, Joseph Johnson was a member of the Minnesota Orchestra cello section for 11 years, during which time he performed numerous chamber music works in the orchestra's Sommerfest, as both cellist and pianist. He was a founding member of the Prospect Park Players and the Minneapolis Quartet, the latter of which was honoured with The McKnight Foundation Award in 2005.

A champion of new music, Johnson has played the Canadian Première of the Unsk Chin Cello Concerto with the Esprit Orchestra, the Canadian Première of the Miguel del Aguila Cello Concerto with the Toronto Symphony and Edmonton Symphony Orchestras, the North American Première of the Peter Eötvös Cello Concerto with the Toronto Symphony, and the Marc-André Dalbavie Cello Concerto with the Esprit Orchestra.

A gifted and inspiring teacher, Johnson is Assistant Professor of Cello at the University of Toronto, the cello coach for the Toronto Youth Symphony, and a regular coach and teacher at the New World Symphony in Miami. He has conducted numerous master classes for a wide range of institutions and ensembles, including the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University, the Eastman School of Music, Manhattan School of Music, Northwestern University, the youth orchestras of the Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Chicago, Madison, and Toronto Symphonies, as well as The Glenn Gould School of The Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto.

A graduate of the Eastman School of Music, Johnson earned his master's degree from Northwestern University. Awards and honours include a performer's certificate from the Eastman School of Music and first prize from the American String Teachers Association's National Solo Competition. Johnson performs on a magnificent Paolo Castello cello crafted in Genoa in 1780.