

Fritz Reiner was one of the most acclaimed conductors of the 20th century -- noted for the vast range of his repertoire, which included both symphonic and operatic pieces spanning from the traditional canon to contemporary material, he was also an influential educator who counted among his pupils Leonard Bernstein. Reiner was born in Budapest, Hungary, on December 19, 1888; despite earning a law degree from the University of Bucharest, he pursued a career in music, and at age 21 was named chormaster of the Budapest Opera. A stint as conductor with the Budapest Volksoper followed before Reiner was chosen in 1914 to serve as principal conductor of the Royal Opera in Dresden, where he collaborated with Richard Strauss on productions of several of the composer's early operas.



In 1922 Reiner left Europe to relocate to America, settling in Cincinnati, OH, and signing on as conductor with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra; a decade later he was tapped to head the orchestral and opera departments at Philadelphia's Curtis Institute of Music, where his students included Bernstein. After next serving as the music director of the Pittsburgh Symphony between 1938 and 1948, he served five years with the Metropolitan Opera. While Reiner's frequent migration might have been attributed largely to a restless creativity, he was also a notoriously difficult personality who frequently alienated those around him -- many of the musicians under his command openly loathed him, although he inevitably inspired the best work of their careers.

Reiner's own best work was undoubtedly his tenure with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, which he elevated into one of the most celebrated ensembles in the world. Moving over to the CSO in 1953, he not only established the orchestra as a top-flight live attraction but also as a popular recording entity -- the countless albums they made for RCA's Living Stereo series during Reiner's decade-long tenure were much acclaimed by collectors for both the power of the performances and the unusually high fidelity of the recordings themselves. Releases like Fritz Reiner Conducts Richard Strauss and Fritz Reiner Conducts Bartók in particular remain definitive interpretations of the composers in question. Health problems forced Reiner to resign his position in 1962, and he died in New York City on November 15 of the following year.

# Richard Strauss

## Don Quixote

Fritz Reiner  
Chicago Symphony Orchestra  
Cello Antonio Janigro

## Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks

Fritz Reiner  
Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra



Strauss wrote these "Fantastic Variations on a Theme of Knightly Character" in 1897. Franz Wüllner conducted the first performance on March 8, 1898, with the Gürzenich Orchestra of Cologne. In addition to solo cello and viola, the work is scored for triple winds and contrabassoon; six horns, three trumpets, three trombones, two tubas; timpani, two percussionists, wind machine, harp, and full strings. Strauss was an omnivorous reader attracted firsthand to what Walter Starkie called "the first modern novel...a spiritual autobiography." Strauss rearranged the novel's sequence of misadventures for purposes of structure, but otherwise put his powers of depiction at the mad Man of La Mancha's service. A myriad of marvelous touches are detailed in the first volume of Richard Strauss: A Critical Commentary by the late conductor Norman del Mar, who concluded that, "on the side of humor and incredible fertility of invention...Strauss at no time surpassed what [he] accomplished throughout Don Quixote." Amen. Let me try to condense his analysis for home-listening consultation.

A long introduction heralds ten variations and an epilogue, based on a cornucopia of themes. Three of these pertain to the Don, who is immersed in literature about chivalry until fantasy unhinges his reason. A series of dissonant chords sends him "on his adventures with the cold, quiet logic of insanity," disguised as a solo cello which iterates the Don's themes. We hear two more for his fat squire, Sancho Panza, the first one played in unison by bass clarinet and tenor tuba, the babbling second one played by the viola, which thereafter impersonates him. The deluded Don's "Ideal Lady," Dulcinea, also has a theme, introduced by the principal oboe. In Variation One, "the Knight and his squire start their journey" by mistaking windmills for giants. When the Don attacks, he is painfully unhorsed. Variation Two, "the victorious battle against the host of the emperor Alifanfaron," turns out to be against sheep. Their orchestral bleating still astonishes a century later. Variation Three, "colloquies of the Knight and his Squire," is the first of two eloquent rhapsodies addressing honor, glory, and the "Ideal Lady." Sancho keeps interrupting. Variation Four brings "the adventure with the penitents," mistaken by the Knight of the Sorrowful Countenance for robbers; it ends when they trounce him. Variation Five, "the Knight's vigil," nobly tender music, meditates on a vision of the Ideal Woman, conjured up by a horn. Variation Six, "the meeting with

Dulcinea" becomes briefly droll, one of Strauss' very best jokes (in 2+3/4 time), when Sancho's search finds only a country tart and two companions. Variation Seven is "the ride through the air," blindfolded astride a wooden horse, features a wind machine. Timpani and basses play an earthbound tremolo underneath. Variation Eight depicts "the unfortunate journey in an enchanted boat"; it floats downstream without oars until a water mill capsizes it and the intrepid duo. (Listen for the cello to shake off droplets, pizzicato.) Variation Nine brings "The combat with two magicians" -- monks, actually -- routed from their prayers. Variation 10, "The duel with the Knight of the White Moon," in reality depicts a disguised townsman who has challenged Quixote. If the Don loses -- and he does, ignominiously -- he must renounce all further quests and return home quietly. The finale, "The Death of Don Quixote," shows the Don restored to sanity but physically depleted, meditating on his follies until "the great Creator draws/his spirit, as the sun the morning dew." When the cello slides terminally from B to B below, the orchestra offers a brief, compassionate eulogy.

The historical Till Eulenspiegel is said to have been born at Kneitlingen, Brunswick, and to have died in 1350 at Mölln, Schleswig-Holstein, where his gravestone has been known since the 16th century. Anecdotes associated with his name were printed about 1500 in one or more Low German language versions. The earliest extant text is *Ein kurzweilig Lesen von Dyl Vlenspiegel* (Antwerp, 1515; "An Amusing Book About Till Eulenspiegel"); the sole surviving copy is in the British Library, London. The jests and practical jokes, which generally depend on a pun, are broadly farcical, often brutal, sometimes obscene; but they have a serious theme. In the figure of Eulenspiegel, the individual gets back at society; the stupid yet cunning peasant demonstrates his superiority to the narrow, dishonest, condescending townsman, as well as to the clergy and nobility.

The Low German text, or parts of it, was translated into Dutch and English (c. 1520), French (1532), and Latin (1558). A later English version, *Here beginneth a merye Jest of a man that was called Howleglas*, appeared c. 1560. Eulenspiegel has been the subject of musical and literary works, notably Charles de Coster's *The Glorious Adventures of Tyl Eulenspiegl* (in French; 1867), Richard Strauss's symphonic poem *Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche* (1894-95; *Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks*), and Gerhart Hauptmann's epic poem *Till Eulenspiegel* (1928).

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1 Introduction 6:05

2 Don Quixote, Op. 35: Theme - Don Quixote, the Knight of the Sorrowful Countenance 1:05

3 Sancho Panza 1:15

4 Don Quixote, Op. 35: The Adventure of the Windmills - Variation I 2:42

5 Don Quixote, Op. 35: The Battle with the Sheep - Variation II 1:55

6 Don Quixote, Op. 35: Dialogue of the Knight and Squire - Variation III 8:38

7 Don Quixote, Op. 35: The Adventure with the Procession of Penitents - Variation IV 2:03

8 Don Quixote, Op. 35: The Knight's Vigil - Variation V 4:21

9 Don Quixote, Op. 35: The False Dulcinea - Variation VI 1:18

10 Don Quixote, Op. 35: The Ride Through the Air - Variation VII 1:02

11 The Adventure Of The Enchanted Boat - Variation VIII 1:36

12 Don Quixote, Op. 35: The Combat with the Two Magicians - Variation IX 1:06

13 The Defeat of Don Quixote by the Knight of the White Moon - Variation X 4:02

14 Don Quixote, Op. 35: The Death of Don Quixote - Finale 5:55

15 Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks 14:56

Total Time: 57:59

Transferred from a 15ips 2-track tape (Don Quixote)

Transferred from a 2-track tape (Till Eulenspiegel)

Recorded by RCA

Recorded 11 April 1959 in Orchestra Hall, Chicago (Don Quixote) Recorded 1963 (Till Eulenspiegel)

Producer: Richard Mohr - Engineer: Lewis Layton



For more info e-mail us:  
[admin@highdeftapetransfers.com](mailto:admin@highdeftapetransfers.com)  
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