

The MIKLÓS RÓZSA Society

“PRO MUSICA SANA”

Honorary President: *MIKLÓS RÓZSA*
Director: *John Fitzpatrick*
Associate Directors: *Ken Doeckel & Mark Koldys*

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THE ORIGINS

An organization to unite the many, but widely scattered, admirers of the music of Miklós Rózsa has been a common dream for some time. All too often have young people gone for years before they found someone to whom they were soon saying: "You like Rózsa too? And I thought I was the only one!" The present organization is not the first. A 1965 attempt in England came to nothing, and there is a group in Belgium that has not been able to operate in this country because of geographical and linguistic barriers.

Our Society springs from a meeting between Ken Doeckel and myself in June of 1971. Mark Koldys soon expressed interest and it appeared that the time was ripe. Plans were made, people contacted, and Dr. Rózsa's advice and approval were obtained (see below). The result is this newsletter. It is not our only function. We hope to set up a service that will duplicate rare tapes for our members. Local meetings of our members are hoped for, and any activities they suggest will be considered. But the newsletter is central. It is the organ of communication that will bind our members together, the vehicle for their critical articles, and the forum for the debates those articles are sure to arouse. It is now a reality. But this first issue is only a beginning, an act of faith in Dr. Rózsa's public. The rest is up to them. A sufficient membership must be found and enlisted. Only their contributions and reactions will make this newsletter self-sustaining.

Nothing in this issue is meant to be definitive. Our aim is to stimulate discussion, not to stifle it. If we lack the technical vocabulary that music sometimes demands, then let the professionals correct us. It is only to fill the gap they have left that we have stepped into the breach. And if our readers take issue with any points, we hope they will express themselves. A letters column will be prominent in every future issue. We only hope that, before writing a letter, you will ask yourself if you are willing to take the time and effort to produce a better article. It's your Society. J.F.

A LETTER FROM DR. RÓZSA:

I am deeply touched by your idea to organize a Miklós Rózsa Society. I, of course, gladly accept to be your president of honor and to provide you with information. But somehow I think that the aim of the society should not be alone to promote M.R., but to fight for better music in films and to re-establish sanity in concert music. In other words, a fight against the dilettantism, song-plugging, and cheap commercialism in present-day films, and the sheer lunacy of the so-called musical avant-garde. Otherwise, the whole thing might smack of press agency and I would feel like a musical Zsa Zsa Gabor... We have to find a dignified form. Articles, opinions (pro

and contra), essays, analyses of film and concert music, interviews, and thoughts should be on a high level. For years, I thought about establishing a society called *Musica Sana* to counteract... unmentionable musical horrors. Hearing these, no young composer, even of talent, dares to write another melody, another harmony, or use the form of the old masters. Chaos is the keyword which finds its ultimate expression in the electronic music in which the "composer" doesn't have to write a note. In films, an insipid song, plugged to death (to sell records), is enough now and replaces the great scores like Honneger, Walton, Prokofiev, Herrmann, Waxman, and Newman used to write. A newsletter every two months about my activities might sound like this: Jan: Rózsa composes an orchestral work. Mar: Rózsa still composes the same work. Jun: Orchestral work in progress. Sep: Rózsa proceeds with the composition of orchestral work. Nov: Rózsa composes. Jan: Rózsa tore up last year's work. Because this is what happened last year and it doesn't make good reading. Now, I am happy to tell you that the work in question has obtained its final form and will probably be called *Trepartita*. I am orchestrating it now... Thanks again for the idea, dear friends, and I am entirely at your disposal for any help I can give in this matter. Cordially yours, Miklós Rózsa.

THE CONCERT SCENE:

Hungarian Serenade: in 71 by the Lausanne Chamber Orch. and the Munich Radio Orch. under Jan Koetsier.

Theme, Variations, and Finale: in Jan. 71 by the Philadelphia Orch. Under Eugene Ormandy.

Violin Concerto: in 71 by Jacob Krachinalnick and the Hamburg Orch. under Hans Schmidt-Isserstedt. In Feb. 72 by the Philharmonia -Hungarica in Marl, Germany. In 73/74 by Pinchas Zukerman and the Royal Philharmonic orch., under Rózsa.

Sinfonia Concertante: In 70 in Shreveport, LA. In Feb. 72 by Louis Kaufman, Gabor Rejto, and the American Youth Symphony under Mehli Mehta in Los Angeles. In 72 by Josef Sak and Janos Starker at the Prague, Paris, and Budapest festivals,

Piano Concerto: in 71 by (Miss) Erasebet Tura under Thomas Ungar in Freiburg and under Taromir Noheji in Bremerhaven. Also in Basel and Hamburg in 72. In Feb. 72 by Leonard Pennario in Muenster. Later, in Stuttgart, Munich, and Vienna.

Cello Concerto: in Nov. 71 by Janos Starker and the Chicago Symphony under Georg Solti.

"Nostalgia" (a recent song): in 72 on the Budapest Radio.

SPELLBOUND, BEN-HUR, KING OF KINGS, EL CID (excerpts): in Oct. 72 by the Royal Philharmonic Orch. under Rózsa at the annual "Filmharmonic" concert in London.

MIKLÓS RÓZSA: by Christopher Palmer

(Although our emphasis is on original material, we plan to reproduce items of interest that might be unfamiliar to our readers, like this article, from the English *Performing Right* of May, 1971. It is reproduced here by kind permission of the author. We have omitted a biographical section familiar to our readers from other sources, and a section on film music which we hope to be able to fit into a future issue. J.F.)

Of the many naturalized American composers who have derived a substantial portion of both-income and reputation from writing music for films, Miklós Rózsa is undoubtedly one of the most distinguished. He belongs to the category of composers who find the main creative outlet in the film but who nevertheless sally forth at regular intervals into the concert field. These dual aspects of his personality are by no means mutually exclusive, however; unlike the common run of film music, efficient but faceless, every bar of Rózsa's bears the unmistakable impress of his individuality and there is no radical disparity of style between his motion picture scores and his concert music. Like so many of the older generation of film composers--men such as Dimitri Tiomkin, Max Steiner, Hugo Friedhofer, or the late Alfred Newman--Rózsa is primarily a serious musician of the first rank, and had in fact achieved a considerable reputation in European musical circles before entering the film world.

Although Rózsa's style, like that of Bartok or Kodaly, is firmly rooted in Magyar peasant music, he has achieved a remarkably satisfactory synthesis between the self-sufficiency of folk-song, and the exigencies of symphonic form: much of his best work is to be found within the confines of the sonata dialectic and the variation complex, and in this the importance of his Germanic training can hardly be overrated. If he thus remains more tightly fettered to classical tradition than either of his distinguished compatriots, the influence of this tradition has been almost wholly beneficial: it has given his music a directness and lucidity, an essential simplicity, and a polyphonic orientation which has helped to discipline its most distinctive feature --a vibrant, singing lyricism which, growing more and more pronounced as the years pass by, seems to express the nostalgia of the exile for his homeland. This lyric melody is either pentatonic or modal and compounded of the characteristic intervals of Magyar folk music, especially the fourth and fifth; harmony is generally derived from verticalisation of such intervals. But Rózsa's thought is essentially linear in orientation; a rich translucent texture is woven of flowing modal lines which blend and intermingle freely. The peculiar poignancy of this music may well be seen from Ex. 1, from the orchestral *Notturmo Ungherese*, which also indicates Rózsa's fondness for imitative writing. More radical bitonality is a consequence of the collision of streams of parallel triads in disjunct or conjunct motion (for instance the frenetic orchestral *tutti* immediately preceding the cadenza in the first movement of the *Sinfonia Concertante*) whereas the strict polyphonic style of the motets to words from *Ecclesiastes* (*To Everything There Is a Season* and *The Vanities of Life*) are relatively conservative in idiom although no less reminiscent of folk-monody in their melodic impulse. Rózsa never uses authentic folk material, but gives his own themes the rhythmic and melodic inflections of Hungarian folk-music; a good example is the first subject of the *Concert Overture* (Ex. 2) which features pentatonicism, rising and falling fourths (the seventh leaps, of course, imply two superimposed falling fourths), Scotch Snap-like syncopation and metric variety—the constantly changing time signatures, displaced accents, and rhythmic flexibility are as much a derivation from Hungarian peasant dance as from the prevailing tendency to metric and rhythmic complexity in the work of Bartok and Stravinsky.

Although the *Rhapsody* for cello and orchestra Op. 3 reveals characteristic Hungarian elements struggling to break through a thick late--romantic impasto, very few traces of these overtly recognizable influences remain in the chamber works which appeared very little later--for instance the *North Hungarian Peasant Songs and Dances* Op. 5, or the *Bagatelles* Op. 12. Rózsa's mature style crystallised in the *Theme, Variations, and Finale* Op. 13, and since that time has undergone no radical revision or development. In the *Variations* a simple folk-song-like theme first stated by the unaccompanied oboe is subject to a compelling variety of character development, notably a broad passionate development of great expressive intensity for the full string body (Var. 6) and a rough-hewn, tersely syncopated version for brass and wind above the swirling string figuration (Var. 7). Economy of gesture is a feature of the *Three Hungarian Sketches* Op. 14, planned and executed with an ear not only for local colour and atmosphere (the *Pastorale* is a languid evocation of the *pustza*) but also for sheer physical excitement (the cumulative development of the three themes in the *Dansa*). Similarly, the *Piano Sonata* Op. 20 and the *Violin Concerto* Op. 24 prove that inner compulsion and emotional commitment are not incompatible, with virtuosic displays of technique. The latter is arguably Rózsa's best work. Written for Heifetz in 1954, its technical demands are formidable but the freshness and vitality of its invention are unmistakable. The first movement is scrupulously worked in accordance with time-honored sonata principles, yet the impression is of a continuous self-generating stream of song for the violin, overshadowed only temporarily by the tempestuous rhythmic upheavals in the development section. The slow movement is crepuscular and broodingly atmospheric, reminiscent of the empire of nocturnal sound which Bartok made peculiarly his own, and the finale is a far-from-perfunctory rondo which links the motoric rhythms of a wild Hungarian folk dance to a basically lyrical melodic impulse with the happiest results. None of Rózsa's later concertos quite scale these heights, though the *Sinfonia Concertante* for violin, cello, and orchestra Op. 29 is expertly written for this taxing medium and contains an engaging Theme and Variations which may be performed separately by the solo instruments with chamber ensemble accompaniment. The *Piano Concerto* Op. 31 was written for Pennario and, doubtless appropriate from MI point of view, is a large-scale work in the late romantic tradition; the finale cunningly intersperses a theme and variations within the orthodox rondo framework. The *Cello Concerto* Op. 32 was first performed by Janos Starker at the 1969 Berlin Festival, but no score has yet been made available. Orchestras seeking a useful addition to the library of curtain raiser would do well to investigate the *Concert Overture* Op. 26, one of the best of the composer's shorter works--thematically characterful (of. Ex. 2), tautly argued, and vividly scored. This and the beautiful *Notturmo Ungherese* Op. 28 together represent the quintessential Rózsa.

The passage of thirty years has inevitably wrought profound changes in style and esthetic, both in cinema and concert hall, and Rózsa's art is at present suffering something of an eclipse. The Hollywood of the Golden Years is dead, of course, but his work remains as a living monument of dedication and sincerity, the more to be cherished in that it reflects, in the essence of its being, an intense love of the country in which it was nurtured. In Rózsa's case all musical creativity, whether provoked by the visual impact of the film or by some intuitive spiritual compulsion, is conceived as a full-

blooded response to the outer world of circumstances and the inner world of emotion. The present age has rejected such qualities as reactionary and irrelevant; all the more reason, therefore, that we should value those who possess them.

FIRST NOTES ON YOUNG BESS: by John Fitzpatrick

YOUNG BESS has a typical Rózsa score of the early fifties. It is one of

The image shows handwritten musical notation for three examples. Ex. 1 is a complex score with multiple staves, including a bass line and several treble staves, with a tempo marking of $\text{♩} = c. 58$. Ex. 2 is a single staff with a tempo marking of $\text{♩} = c. 120$. Ex. 3 is another single staff with a tempo marking of $\text{♩} = c. 100$. The word "musical examples" is written in the upper right corner.

his most skillfully crafted, and, with nearly an hour of music, one of his most substantial efforts. It is also one of his most neglected. Even such useful sources as *Film Music Notes* and *Films In Review* have nothing to say about it. What better point to open discussion of Rózsa's music?

The prelude opens with a familiar fanfare, derived from the final tournament in *IVANHOE*. The sound is lighter here, thanks to the use of modern trumpets. (This version eventually found its way into *BENHUR*, thus becoming the only Rózsa fanfare to serve for ancient, medieval, and renaissance times) This is followed by a single statement of the majestic processional theme of Elizabeth as the future queen (1). It is a noble melody with some of the flavor of an Elgar coronation march, but the chordal accompaniment is pure Rózsa, and gives it more vigor. It is heard only three times and only once during the actual story. But its prominence at the beginning and the end succeeds in making Elizabeth's future greatness strongly felt during this story of her youth. A repetition of the fanfare then slides into the love theme of Bess and Thomas Seymour (2). Oddly, this affecting romance did not provoke one of Rózsa's most beautiful melodies. I have never met anyone who considered this his favorite theme. But the initial figure of a long note, followed by and held under five rapid ones, is capable of an extraordinary degree of regeneration and development. Rózsa accomplishes more with this simple motive than he does with such well-loved melodies as those for "Lygia" and "Diane". The love theme is taken twice, thus giving the prelude the unusual form of A-B-B, unique in Rózsa. His usual practice during the period was either A-B-A on a single theme (*IVANHOE*, *DIANE*), or else A-A-B-A with the heroic theme as A and the lyrical or love theme as B (*THE RED DANUBE*, *JULIUS CAESAR*). (*MADAME BOVARY* is an interesting blend of the two forms.)

The credits lead into a visual prologue and another theme, "Hatfield (3). This is a simple tune, later sung to the children's jingle:

*Here we go up, up, up, Up to the
sky so high Here we go down,
down, down, Bumpity-bump,
good-bye.*

Its use on screen and its sound suggest an English folk tune, but listen carefully--it is true Rózsa material, an expansion of Nero's fanfare from the banquet in QUO VADIS? The scenes of Bess's childhood are scored entirely with variations on (3), which is really the central motive of the score. Even at the beginning, its associations are allusive and multiple: the place Hatfield, the period, the high spirits of "young Bess", the loneliness of her childhood, and her feelings for her governess and for her father. Joy and sadness are both compassed in these early variations, and the treatment is free, ranging from a spirited staccato march for strings and flute to amusing dialogues among the woodwinds. Bess's final banishment to Hatfield is accompanied by a horn playing (3) sadly against a moving development of the same motive in the strings. But the very last touch is a charmingly whimsical pause before the two closing notes ("good-bye").

Rózsa sticks with a variant of (3) for the first encounter of Bess and Tom Seymour, but her awakening feelings are indicated by the glowing sound of a flute backed by violins. The latter soar to a climax with (3) proper in the brass as counterpoint when Bess goes to Whitehall. Still more development of (3) follows before Tom introduces Katharine Parr with the words, "She's the sweetest woman in all God's world". Rózsa then steals in with a theme to match: (4). It is usually intoned by an oboe with gentle backing in the violins. Katharine's tranquil nature is aptly captured in a theme that is always heard in full, ternary song form--a contrast to the fragmented statements of the other themes.

For the death of Henry VIII Rózsa uses the same device he later employed in DIANE. The Dies Irae is taken as ground bass to which the violins are later added in a moving and amazingly free passacaglia. The treatment here is more elaborate, but better dubbing makes the one in DIANE the more effective of the two. Comparison between these two sister scores is inevitable since the films share the same period and plot line (a romantic triangle, complicated by the fact that one of the characters is royalty). DIANE has more striking highlights, particularly the magnificent Bartokian arch of its incomparable finale. But it has a lot of dead wood, too. YOUNG BESS is more carefully constructed, and the more durable of the two scores.

Bess rushes through the palace corridors in search of Tom Seymour to a spiralling string agitato that stops cold for a sinister woodwind chorale at the appearance of danger. The effect is artificial at first but gains a certain formal balance through repetition. (The agitato is also repeated later for the surging emotions of the scene in which Tom admits his love for Bess.) (3) occurs briefly for the loneliness of the king before the love theme finally steals in on a clarinet. It comes only at the end of the scene between Bess and Tom but, from this point on it starts to dominate the score. Horn and strings play a dreamy variation on it as Bess tells her governess of her love, but the music stops, pointedly yet subtly, when "another woman" is mentioned. It returns, mournfully, a few moments later, yet rises to great passion as Bess realizes who the woman is. The passion soon subsides into a new motive of "resignation"(5). This inexpressibly sad theme, derived from (2), is introduced by a cello, and ends here with an exquisite trill, a rarity in Rózsa.

In spite of its sad story, YOUNG BESS is one of the most lighthearted of Rózsa scores. It is interesting that, while his music for out-and-out

comedies is usually labored and artificial, Rózsa's scoring of the humorous portions of more serious films is often delightful. BRUTE FORCE and LUST FOR LIFE immediately come to mind. The music for the young Edward VI is perhaps Rózsa's most delightful piece of whimsy, and should be mandatory listening for anyone who accuses him of pomposity in his historical scores. The basic idea is a burlesque march for strings, trumpets, and snare drums, but the scoring is full of surprises. An errant bassoon pipes an odd obbligato, woodwinds make rude interjections at strange intervals, and the delicious blend of pizzicato strings and drums is the punctuation. In addition, there is the usual complement of fanfares, songs, and dances in the background. The brief tune for Henry VIII'S fleet comes from one of his songs. Presumably some of the other incidental music also derives from period sources. The "Dance Cadence", a sort of galliard, is the perfect centerpiece for the banquet scene. It is utterly 16th Century in feeling, yet, by some strange chemistry, utterly Rózsa too. More in the line of dramatic scoring is the shanty-like tune heard when Bess and Tom go sailing. Listen for the thrilling change of accents under her words, "I love the sea and everything to do with it".

But, once Bess and Tom declare their love, tragedy starts to dominate the music. (2), (4), and (5) occur often, as might be expected, but (3) acquires new associations in connection with the mingled love, friendship, and suspicion of the three characters. It even makes a wistful appearance in Katharine's death scene, otherwise dominated by her own theme. The climax comes shortly afterwards, when Tom comes to Hatfield to spend the night with Bess. She is in bed, the music tells us that her thoughts are of him. A noise is heard outside and the love music starts to quiver with anxiety. Trumpets interject and distort the melody. Is this an assassin? A messenger with news of Tom's death? The violins hold a tremolo as the door opens. "My lady Elizabeth," says Tom, and a flute announces their last meeting just as it welcomed their first. It dallies with a single phrase of their theme, and then gives way as the orchestra carries the music to its long-awaited climax, with the motive (2) climbing over itself incessantly in true Rózsa fashion. After a brief pause, a relaxed version appears for the final parting. But a new motive (6), full of menace, reminds us of the impending danger, and answers the poignant farewell song of the solo violin (2) with the sound of blackest despair. (6) then leads into the next grim scene and pauses only when another voice says, "My lady Elizabeth," the voice of her prosecutor.

Bess hears the news of Tom's death with resignation, and the music (5, then 2) is nicely understated. The real apotheosis comes with the news of her accession to the throne. Her governess and tutor are reminiscing together. They sing, "Here we go up, up, up...", and pause. The new queen enters and, as they kneel before her, (3) rings out in overwhelming orchestral splendour. (1) follows as a great coronation processional, building from the strings to a tremendous climax of brass and drums. It seems to cadence with a scale passage, but a miraculous and thrilling modulation leads to the opening fanfare, and a final statement of (1) with chimes and gong.

YOUNG BESS is unquestionably a masterpiece, and I would rank it second only to BEN-HUR. The need at present is for a recording. A modern stereo

version is desirable but not likely. While a concert suite is always preferable to the original tracks, YOUNG BESS is meticulously crafted and could well stand on its own as recorded for the film. Now that MGM has sold everything but its soul, perhaps they might be persuaded to release this noble music to some enterprising record company. Then some better-equipped critic can pursue its mastery in greater detail.

(1) *Maestoso*

(2) *CON AMORE*
dolce

(3) *Allegretto*
mf leggero

(4) *Andante*
dolce e legato

(5) *CON PASSIONE*
f

(6) *GRAVE*

musical examples for
YOUNG BESS taken down
& written out by ear,
from the film's soundtrack

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IN FUTURE ISSUES

Mark Koldys on Rózsa's Cello Concerto and its U.S. premiere...Ken Doeckel on Rózsa's four Concertos...An Updated, corrected Rózsa discography/filmography ...Page Cook on a film score...An interview with Dr. Rózsa...Letters from our readers...Your article on...???

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ONE FINAL NOTE:

The focus of the Miklós Rózsa Society is not on Miklós Rózsa alone. We are also eager for material on other composers, in and out of films. The present issue reflects the interests of the directors. Future issues will reflect the interests of our readers, provided readers make their interests known, by writing letters, and contributing articles for future issues of the newsletter.