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1979 The Miklós Rózsa Society

NEWS [June 1979]:

Performances:

The *Violin Concerto* is the work receiving the most attention these days. Gyorgy Terebesi played it with Eliahu Inbal conducting the Frankfurt and Deutschlandsender radio orchestras recently. Next season Fritz Jefal performs with Andre Previn and the Pittsburgh Symphony.

Films:

TIME AFTER TIME, due in October, seems to have been a pleasant experience for all concerned. Producer Herb Jaffe and director Nicholas Meyer took a full-page ad in the *Daily Variety* of April 6th to thank Dr. Rózsa for his contribution to the project. The composer says no one else has ever done this during his 43 years in films. The film had a notably successful sneak preview in New York this month, and plans are being made to record the score in England this fall.

There are still no confirmed plans for soundtrack albums to either THE PRIVATE FILES OF J. EDGAR HOOVER or LAST EMBRACE. The stumbling block for HOOVER is the current obscurity of the film, and for LAST EMBRACE it is the expense of paying the American musicians' fees.

Current or forthcoming from Elmer Bernstein: MEATBALLS and ZULU DAWN. From Jerry Goldsmith: ALIEN, CAPO BLANCO, PLAYERS, STAR TREK. From John Williams: DRACULA, METEOR, STAR WARS II, THE SHINING.

Recordings:

Varese Sarabande has obtained the rights to FEDORA. The album, which has already been mastered, should be available in August, and it will contain, additional music that was deleted from the film. Varese Sarabande is also reissuing the old *Wide Screen Spectaculars* album (BEN-HUR, KING OF KINGS, EL CID).
Tony Thomas, whose Citadel label retains its identity under the Varese Sarabande banner, has prepared another album of piano performances by Albert Dominguez (CT-7010). One side is devoted to an extended suite from 's LYDIA. Also featured is music by Korngold (BETWEEN TWO WORLDS) and by Steiner (A BILL OF DIVORCEMENT, CITY FOR CONQUEST). Another Citadel release (CT-MS8) will be the sound track of Steiner's BEYOND THE FOREST.

Finally available in the United States is Eric Parkin's Unicorn recital of Rózsa piano music. There seem to be two pressings. The British version (UNI-72029) and the American (UNS-259) look identical, but the latter, distributed here by HNH Records, has been selling at budget prices in some locations. Included, with the exception of the chief Op. 19, is the composer's entire <u>oeuvre</u> for piano solo: *Variations* (Op. 9), *Six Bagatelles* (Op. 12), *Sonata* (Op. 20), and the disc premiere of *The Vintner's Daughter* (Op. 23).

Film Music Collection has issued the other two Tiomkin scores it recorded last year, THE HIGH AND THE MIGHTY and SEARCH FOR PARADISE. As there are no new album in the pipeline, this marks a crucial moment for Elmer Bernstein's valiant and valued enterprise. Need we say that it deserves everyone's support?

A bonanza of recorded scores by Georges Delerue has gone unnoticed in this country. The following three records, though hard to obtain, answer many a music lover's plea:

JULIA and Other Works of Delerue - 20th Century-Fox/Barclay FML-99 (Japan) Side 1: Themes from JULIA. Side 2: Themes from POLICE PYTHON 357;

LES DEUX ANGLAISES ET LE CONTINENT; LA PEAU DOUCE; L'INSOUMIS; LE MEPRIS; UN MONSIEUR DE COMPAGNIE. lies Plus Belles Musiques de Films de Georges Delerue, Vol. 1 - Barclay
900-507 (France). Themes from POLICE PYTHON 357; JAMAIS PLUS TOUJOURS; COMPTE A REBOURS; L'INSOUMIS; LE GRAND ESCOGRIFFE; LA GIFFLE. Les Plus Belles Musiques de Films de Georges Delerue, Vol. 2 - Barclay
900-508 (France). Themes from L'IMPORTANT C'EST D'AIMER; MONA; UN MONSIEUR DE COMPAGNIE; LES DEUX ANGLAISES ET LE CONTINENT; LA PEAU DOUCE; QUELQUE PART, QUELQU'UN; HEUREUX QUI COMME ULYSSE; LE MEPRIS.

Note: Side 2 of the Japanese album consists of highlights chosen from the two French records.

Starlog Records continues its exploration of offbeat repertory with IT'S ALIVE 2, the posthumous Bernard Herrmann score that Laurie Johnson assembled from existing materials (SR-10002).

The famous recording team of Charles Gerhardt and George Korngold may soon be reunited on a dream project—a full-disc KING'S ROW. If it happens, it will, amazingly, be the first full recording of a Korngold score.

Jerry Fielding:

According to *Variety* (21 March), the outspoken composer had a good deal to say about the state of the art during a recent ASCAP songwriter-composer workshop. Some samples:

"Ninety percent of the membership of the Academy isn't certain of the difference between a song and a score.

"I've got to listen to [the producer]. As a professional, one owes him that. But . . . when I disagree with those fellers, I tell them. I say 'No.' Sam Peckinpah, for instance, he makes a game out of it. And Otto Preminger. Some kind of game they play. They just love to destroy you, argue with you. I took a lot from Otto Preminger, but I learned better. With Peckinpah he got a chair flying across the room at him.

"A serious composer does not write songs and, least of all, does not write rock songs. Not only I can't write 'em, I can't listen to 'em . . . [Rock] is very ugly, peripheral, very shallow. We can look at that and get mad or we can say . . . I'm afraid they're right because our times are loud and ugly and shallow. It's what we are ... a cacophonous mess."

No Comment:

"Miklós Rózsa's score, incidentally, seems to be a deliberately low-key reworking of his more dynamic music for SUNSET BOULEVARD."

William K. Everson, reviewing FEDORA
Films in Review, June-July 1979

"Movie scores are different, and certainly those of Bernard Herrmann who performed a lot of Ives' music in the late '30s and '40s, were much influenced, particularly the one for THE RED BADGE OF COURAGE, hwich sounds very much like Ives, I think."

The Writings of Elliot Carter
Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977

"To make the small hairs on the back of your head stand on end, I would point to Michael Small. Michel LePetit: so Alan J. Pakula dubbed

(continued on page 20)

MIKLÓS RÓZSA - INTERVIEWED BY DEREK ELLEY:

Editor's Introduction

This conversation, which took place in London during the fall of 1976, is the longest published interview with Miklós Rózsa. It first appeared in the May and June (1977) issues of Films and Filming, introducing a series which has since included Elmer Bernstein, Maurice Jarre, John Williams, and Jerry Goldsmith. For the present reprinting, courtesy of Mr. Elley, we have made several abridgments. Omitted here are an introductory note on the composer, a filmography, and the discussion of JULIUS CAESAR. Two photographs of the composer and four film stills are also not reproduced here.

The complete interview may of course be consulted in Films and Filming, which is generally accessible in larger libraries or from the publisher, Ransom Books, P. O. Box 294, 2 & 4 Old Rye St., London SW1P 2LR, England. In light of this fact, we continue to wonder whether our readers find it useful to have contemporary material—however valuable—reprinted here when it can be had elsewhere. Should we continue to seek such material? Reader opinions, thus far inconclusive, are welcome on the matter.

Q: What made you accept PROVIDENCE?

MR: Well, as you know, for years I have refused to write music for the new Hollywood trinity: sex, violence, and horror. Resnais's PROVIDENCE had none of this. It is a highly original work, as is everything he does because he is a true artist and a truly creative film-maker. He has a style of his own, and as Buffon has said, "Le style est l'homme meme." It was as much pleasure to work with him as it was with Minnelli, Wilder or Wyler; he knew what he wanted, and as he is very music-conscious and knew both my film and symphonic music, this made our collaboration easy and relaxed. His father-in-law, Andre Malraux, called his memoirs *Anti-memoires*, and I would call this score of mine *Anti-BEN-HUR. There is nothing spectacular or flamboyant in it; on the contrary, all* the music is introvert, pensive, gloomy, and often lugubrious. Even the waltz played at the imaginary reception is *crepusculeuse*--a waltz of twilight, almost a *danse macabre*.

Q: You have two homes, one in California and another one at Santa Margherita Ligure in Italy. How long have you been dividing your time between them?

MR: Well, in 1953 I went with my whole family to Italy to write the Violin Concerto. I wanted to make this geographical distinction between my film writing and symphonic music writing, and I fell in love with this bay. It is south of Genoa, and it is so beautiful that it is just unbelievable. I find that when I have nothing more to say I can just go there and look up at the blue mountains in the distance, the Apennines,

the blue sky, the blue sea, the palm trees, and the ideas just come one after the other ... I'm usually there from June to about October. I always work at home. In California I have two rooms in the house which are absolutely controllable— nobody comes in, nobody disturbs me, the only disturbing element is the telephone. In Italy, however, when I compose for myself, so to speak, I have no telephone, and that is one of the most gorgeous things ever invented by mankind—no telephone! It's a very small place, only two rooms: one with a bedand one with a piano and a desk. Plus a kitchen and a bathroom and a terrace. That's all; I don't need more.

Q: Did you write the *Notturno ungherese* there?

MR: No. Actually I wrote that in Rome. That summer [1964] my daughter, who had graduated in Italian at the University of California, had to take a course there, so we had to go to Rome. That wasn't bad either, because it's my favourite city.

Q: That work has a translucency which one also notices in Walton's works since he moved to Italy ... MR: Well, it's the country. I really love Italy; I love Italians, and I am sorry to see that they are in such a bad situation at the moment.

Q: Does your wife stay in California?

MR: In the summer, she does. First of all, I can't work with somebody around me. At home it's different, because I'm in controlled conditions, completely isolated, but actually I want to be really alone. It's my Greta Garbo complex. My purpose in Santa Margherita is to go there to work. It's difficult, because I get colleagues coming from Europe, and first they only stay three days, then a week . . . you can't say no, but I always tell them never to come during the day. It's out of the question; during the day I work. When I'm alone I usually go to bed by ten; and up every day by eight, of course.

Q: Where did you mostly work on preparing the recent recordings?

MR: Those I did in California—the Polydor albums, and now the Decca BEN-HUR.

Q: How did the BEN-HUR come about?

MR: Well, I was approached by Decca who asked if I would do another BEN-HUR album. To tell the truth I suggested QUO VADIS instead — as there is no recording on the market at the moment—but they wanted to play safe and be sure on our first venture together. The contract with Polydor goes from record to record.

Q: In 1974 you returned to Hungary for the first time in 43 years. How did that come about?

MR: Well, they had been asking me to come back for many years. When I was in London doing THE VIPs in 1963, I had an offer then to go back but I didn't want to go. Anyway, finally an offer came again to go there in the summer of 1974; I had an old aunt, a sister of my mother, who was alive at that time, and I thought it would be a good opportunity to see her once more as she couldn't travel herself. Musically speaking, the trip was very nice; the concert [on August 2, with the MAV Orchestra] went very well; and the public was wore than nice. THE THIEF OF BAGDAD was in its fifth

month in Budapest—it is still the most popular film in Hungary since the day it was shown— and they asked me to come to a Saturday afternoon showing and sign autographs. So a room was set up with a table and I sat down expecting to sign two or three autographs. 640 later . . . (they counted, not I!) it was very touching; old ladies brought flowers, and young ladies presents, and some old ladies kissed my hands. That was the nice part of it. The bad part of it was . . . this was not the same world as I had known.

Q: Had any of your concert music been played there over the years?
MR: Oh yes. Practically everything.

Q: Would general audiences have seen many of your Hollywood films?
MR: No. The Korda films they had seen, though. After the war, they got in a few films from Paramount like LOST WEEKEND, but then they stopped, so no one had seen any of the big works, especially the religious ones like QUO VADIS and BEN-HUR. They knew about them, and may have heard some of the music on records, but hadn't seen the pictures in Hungary. The only recent film they'd seen of mine, funnily enough, was THE PRIVATE LIFE OF SHERLOCK HOLMES, because it had not been a big success anywhere and they had been able to buy it cheap! Why, for instance, EL CID never played in Hungary, I don't understand.

Q: Did you just do one concert there?
MR: One concert on St. Margaret's Island and a television interview/recital of six songs, with two very good singers, a contralto and a baritone; I played the piano and in between we talked.

Q: What did you conduct at the main concert?
MR: I started with four pieces from BEN-HUR, then three songs for contralto, then *Theme, Variations and Finale;* then in the second half I did the whole of THE JUNGLE BOOK Suite, with the narration. As an encore I did the little bit from THE THIEF OF BAGDAD which is on the Polydor album, and when I came to Sabu's song the whole audience was whistling ...

Q: Was it personal reasons why you left Hungary when you were young?
MR: No. It is difficult to say exactly why. I was only eighteen and I didn't like Budapest. I loved Hungary—my father had an estate in Upper Hungary and I spent all my time there—but Budapest people and their whole mentality of superiority (which was anything but superiority) I didn't like. I didn't want to study there. That was one reason. The other was that my father hoped I would take over the estate one day and he did not want me to become a musician. "You can do music," he said, "but you also have to study something serious. What do you want to study?" Well, the only thing I liked in school was chemistry, so I told him I had this friend at Leipzig University and asked if I could go there. He said OK, so I went to Leipzig as both a chemistry student and a musicologist—which he knew about and didn't mind at all. Every day at eight o'clock 1 was there in a white robe mixing things together, and in the afternoon I went to the Musicological Institute. I did both for one year. At the beginning it was fine. In chemistry we had to do Analysis, and when it got more complicated my friend would always help me. Then we came to the sixteenth analysis, which 1 found impossible to do. So I went up to my friend on the second floor and said, as usual, "Would you help me?" He said, "No." I said, "What do you

mean, 'No'?" He said,"You have to make up your mind. Do you want to be a musician or a chemist? If I'm going to help you, you'll never become a chemist." So I called him every name in Hungarian, a Hungarian friend—we have a saying that if you have a Hungarian for a friend, you don't need an enemy—but he just laughed it off and said he wouldn't help me. Then one day in the laboratory there was a colleague of mine who was doing some experiment by a window; the whole thing just blew up straight in his face. I can still see the blood on his hands. And I thought, I need my hands for other things, why should I do this? I went straight to the Conservatory next year, and told my father what had happened. After six months he wrote and asked my professor for details and he gave me a glowing report. So I stayed in Germany to finish my studies and then went to Paris for a concert of some chamber music of mine in 1932. And Paris was Paris . . . and I stayed until I came to London in 1935.

Q: What was the musical atmosphere like, working under Korda?

MR: I had plenty of freedom; he did not mix into music at all—Muir Mathieson was in charge of that. At the beginning Mathieson was a help, because then I knew very little about motion picture writing and he gave me some very useful advice; but later I found we did not quite see eye to eye—he found my music too complicated and preferred the *Warsaw Concerto* type. But otherwise he was very nice.

Q: Do you have any reminiscences of THE GREEN COCKATOO?

MR: Yes; it was a problematic film. As far as I remember William Cameron Menzies didn't direct the final version of the film; that was done by an American director who worked here at the time, William K. Howard. We discussed the beginning of the picture, and he wanted some music which would immediately identify it as set in London. Muir Mathieson came up with a brilliant answer—*The Knightsbridge March*—and that's how the film starts.

Q: When working in Britain were you busy with any concert works?

MR: Yes, in between, although at that time I didn't write too much. The *Three Hungarian Sketches* dates from that period [1938].

Q: The role of the professional orchestrator is often overlooked when considering a film composer's work. What is your policy here?

MR: Well, this is something we could discuss. When I started out here in England, there was no such thing as orchestrations by someone else. You orchestrated your own music as part of the job: you probably got more time then to do it, but THE THIEF OF BAGDAD, which was a very long score, I orchestrated every note of it. When Korda took THIEF to Hollywood to finish it in 1940, I wanted to conduct the orchestra over there (Muir Mathieson had done it in England), but I was told that I had neither the right to conduct, as I was not a member of the union, nor the right to orchestrate, for the same reason. The composer they couldn't control ... So I discussed this with the studio and said, "Well, in that case, I'll have to join." They told me that I couldn't, because at that time the ruling was that you had to be a member of the local union in Los Angeles for a year before you got a so-called 'studio clearance.' At that time, not only Europeans but also the whole of America was coming to Hollywood, so they were just protecting their members. At that time there were about 14,000 members, of which maybe 500 were in work; the percentage is about

same nowadays. Anyway, the studio made a deal with the union and told them that most of the music had already been orchestrated in England. The union said it would make an exception in this case, that I could use my own orchestrations, but if I also wanted to conduct the score the studio would have to pay a standby fee for one of its members to come along. After this film, however, they said I would no longer have the right to orchestrate. Well, I fought like a tiger for my rights—and their answer was, "Well, maybe someone can do it even better than you." Korda's next picture there was LADY HAMILTON, and I had to give up the fight. So I called in an orches-trator, gave the sketches to him, and he returned with a full score later on. When I looked at it I was so mad that I tore it to smithereens and sat down and started to re-orchestrate the whole thing— which was alright because we'd already paid someone for the job! The union didn't care whose orchestration I used . . . But then came the "Battle of Trafalgar" sequence, which required a tremendous amount of orchestration, and finally we were forced to call in people to help. I got used to it that that is the Hollywood way; there's no way out.

Q: So part of the LADY HAMILTON music is in your own orchestration?

MR: The whole of the main title music was done by me and some other scenes also. Later I found someone who was very good and observed my sketches very religiously and didn't change anything. He was a Hungarian composer named Eugene Zador, who had worked on about 25 per cent of LADY HAMILTON. He orchestrated most of my scores from then on. Of course, Universal and Paramount had their own orchestrators, but at M-G-M I could have who I wanted, and this was always Zador, up to and including BEN-HUR. He also did KING OF KINGS and EL CID and THE VIPs. On THE GOLDEN VOYAGE OF SINBAD I had an Englishman named Larry Ashmore; Christopher Palmer, who helped on the Polydor and Decca albums, and who has a considerable knowledge of my music, did PROVIDENCE.

Q: How in your case does the composer/orchestrator relationship work?

MR: Well, I give a sketch . . . I very much dislike this word 'sketch,' because it signifies something unfinished ... I give a short score laid out on anything from two to six staves which tells you exactly what all the departments of the orchestra do, all the harmonies, everything. My orchestrator just saves me the enormous and time-consuming job of laying out the music in full score, and I must say that, if film music has to be written in such a hurry, this is a better way because it leaves much more time for actual composition— which to my mind is the important thing. I would challenge anyone to hear the difference if my short score for a particular scene was given out to five orchestrators ... It must sound the same, because they cannot add anything; everything is indicated—a flute is a flute, and if I want a flute and an oboe I write so. At the beginning, of course, up to my move to Hollywood, I did my own orchestrations: I stayed up nights and worked through, which is alright when you are young; when you are older, you like to sleep at night! But no, I have always written a complete short score which the orchestra-tor lays out.

Q: And conducting

MR: In England Muir Mathieson conducted all my music; I was not to. After that I conducted everything myself, except at Paramount where the Music Director insisted that Irvin Talbot conduct. But there were also problems here concerning the soundtrack albums made from the films. I conducted most of these as well, except maybe two. BEN-HUR was an American picture

made in Europe; it was done in Rome, every shot. The studios had an understanding with the Musicians' Union that if a picture was done in Europe the music could also be recorded there. But when the time came for the final recording, there was not enough time or money to do it in Europe; M-G-M let me have a large orchestra, a large chorus, and so on, so I said, "OK, let's do it in Hollywood." However, M-G-M Records had already made some arrangements to record the soundtrack album in Rome, but the American Musicians' Union said no, they would have to do it in the US. M-G-M Records said, "No, the understanding is that this is a foreign-made picture and we have the right to record it in a foreign country." The union said, "That's true, but Rózsa won't conduct in that case. He's one of our members." (By that time I was.) So the head of M-G-M in New York went up to see Mr. Petrillo, the union head, and explained to him that he was only hurting one of his own members by insisting on this; the recording would be done in Europe, and I, as the composer, should have the right to conduct my own music. But Petrillo still said no. So M-G-M told me I wasn't going to conduct but still ought to be present when the recording took place. So a friend of mine, Carlo Savina, a very fine musician, conducted for the album; I stood next to him, explained everything, went to the booth to listen, but was not allowed to conduct.

Q: So the music for the actual soundtrack was conducted by you in Hollywood, and the excerpts for the record album by Savina in Rome?
MR: Exactly. Then M-G-M Records wanted a second album, as there was somuch music; this was conducted in Nuremburg, with the Frankenland State Symphony Orchestra, by Erich Kloss. It was the same thing: Mr. Kloss conducted and I listened.

Q: There is a strong rumour that 'Erich Kloss' was, in fact, you . . .
MR: Well, in such situations we in America say, "No comment ..." I later did a record of excerpts from QUO VADIS, BEN-HUR, EL CID and KING OF KINGS on Capitol. By that time this whole hysteria had gone.

Q: Let's turn to your method of composition. Do you compose at the piano?
MR: Not as a rule. I usually make sketches at random, anywhere, whatever comes to mind. But when I have finished something I generally sit down at the piano and play it through, as things don't always sound as you have heard them in your mind. But I prefer to compose at a desk because it doesn't hamper your imagination like an instrument does.

Q: Do you have perfect pitch?
MR: Yes.

Q: How did you work at, say, M-G-M?
MR: Part of my contract was that I did not have to come and work at the studio. I had a beautiful bungalow there—two rooms—but I only used it to put my things there if I went to the studio and to make a few telephone calls. They didn't like this clause in my contract, but I said that it

was either that or nothing: I couldn't do it, it was out of the question. You know, at some studios they have to check-in in the morning and leave in the evening, like at an office; and then they say, "Now, turn on your inspiration." Well, it just doesn't work that way. As I said earlier, I always work at home, in peace.

Q: When do you start your preliminary sketches?
MR: When I get the script, usually; when I know more or less what to write for; when I know what sort of ideas and main themes there have to be. That is a period of just assembling material. Then finally the picture would come in a finished state and I would go to the studio to see it. The music department at M-G-M had their own projection room and I would say, "I'm coming in for lunch and at two o'clock I want to see the picture." I'd see it, make my notes on the cue sheets, and then go home and work. After I'd done a certain amount, I'd come back and check it with the picture again; very often I found out I was completely wrong, that I'd gone overboard (or under-board), so I went home and corrected it and so on.

Q: Do you think in terms of orchestral colour right from the very beginning?
MR: Oh, absolutely. Always.

Q: This was a key factor in your score for QUO VADIS, the first of your historical 'epic' assignments. I gather you supervised the construction of the period instruments.
MR: Yes. I gave them exact measurements for all the instruments, which were built in Rome. It was very exciting for me because I had studied musicology as well as composition at Leipzig, and here was an pprtunity for me to use some of my studies. The instruments were copied exactly from tomb stones and sculptures and descriptions. They were all auctioned off a few years ago by M-G-M. I thought I would go down and buy myself some bagpipes or something, but by that time I was not toofriendly with M-G-M, so I didn't go. The research for the film took a long time, as I wanted to gather as much authentic music as possible from the period—not Roman music, as that doesn't exist, but Greek music mostly. The reconstruction of the early Christian music was also quite a problem. I spent maybe four to six months just on research, and we later used some of the instruments for BEN-HUR.

Q: I'd like to turn now to your great 'trilogy' of historical scores—BEN-HUR, KING OF KINGS and EL CID. When did you first begin work on BEN-HUR?
MR: BEN-HUR started in the spring of 1958. The producer, Mr. Zimbalist, was a friend of mine from QUO VADIS days and he said to me, "This time I have trouble with the front office. They don't want you to go to Rome because we have to keep down expenses." You know, so many millions of dollars but my expenses were far too much! Anyway, I said, "All right." Then he said, "But we have some trouble. There is going to be a dance of Africans. We don't have them yet but we are going to find them and probably we will need you for that." "OK," I said, "I will be in Italy anyway." "Oh, you will be in Italy? That's great"—I was in Rapallo at the time, which is near Santa Margherita—"we'll get you over from there." Exactly twenty dollars on the train! Well, this was OK with me, and we went to Rapallo.

I started writing the *Sinfonia concertante*, and suddenly a telegram came asking me to come to Rome. There they told me that they had found a company called the Ballet Africain and wanted me to co-ordinate the music with them—they only had drums. I did this and later had to come back for a march. When Ben-Hur comes back as the adopted son of Arrius, he is presented to the Emperor, and there is a band in front. So I went down again and for the time being we used some music from QUO VADIS. It was a tremendous scene, with thousands of people, and they made such a noise (you know what Italians are like for talking). When, finally, they had the armour clanking as well, no one could hear the music, so we played it through loudspeakers but—typically Italian—they weren't strong enough. They needed to bring special amplifiers from Rome, which would have taken hours, so we all decided that I should be put on top of a ladder and beat time with a handkerchief and the musicians could look at me with one eye. The sun was beating down and I got a tremendous headache. So that was my actual contribution at that time.

Q: Then you went home again?

MR: Yes, and suddenly I heard that Zimbalist had died during production. It was just before Christmas in 1958. And Wyler wanted me to go back to Rome. He had about two or three more weeks to go before winding up shooting, and there was a scene (it's not in the picture now) on Golgotha where they had some women singing a lament. We tried it, and I wrote something, but it never went well. I think he shot it but it was never used. Anyway, I said that while I was there I'd like to write some of the music, and I composed all the marches there. I had time because he was still busy filming. We recorded them on six tracks (in fact, the whole score later was as well) because the equipment was there at the time. I remember writing the marches: on a Sunday I went up to the Palatine Hill above the Roman Forum and it was completely deserted, not a soul. And I thought, well, something might still be in the air, because, after all, that was where it all happened originally, down there. I started to jot down things and march around, and I heard one young woman say to her friend, "Pazzo." Mad! So I quickly marched the other way . . . Then when the picture was finished we all went home and the cutting started, which went on for nearly nine months as there was such a tremendous amount of footage. That was wonderful for me; I started writing the rest of the music right away, and it made a change not having to do it in three weeks. So the score took me about eight or nine months in all.

Q: How did you become connected with Samuel Bronston's two productions after BEN-HUR?

MR: Bronston started KING OF KINGS on his own in Spain. He had done JOHN PAUL JONES, which had established him as a producer. Now, the MPPA in Hollywood has a book in which you can lodge a title, which remains your property for a year. If the story that was told to me is true, Bronston came to Hollywood and saw that KING OF KINGS, the title of DeMille's old film, was free; as BEN-HUR was such a success, he wrote in KING OF KINGS, and started production within a year. He had very little money but developed a fantastic scheme of using American companies' frozen dollars in Spain. He went to them and said, "You give me the money there,

I'll make a picture, and this will produce dollars for you in America." But after a while he ran out of money and offered it to M-G-M, who took it over, thereby gaining control of a potential competitor to BEN-HUR. So one day I was told that I had to go to Madrid to write the music; they wanted something for Salome's Dance. Once again I packed up my whole family—the children were still small—and went to Madrid. When I arrived there I didn't know to whom to talk. I talked to Bronston but I soon found out he knows nothing about films; he is a business-man, a promoter. I talked to the writer but he quickly went to Paris. Finally, I talked to the director, Nicholas Ray, but realised he had absolutely no idea of what he wanted. So I was in great shape . . . I said, "Do you have a dancer?" And they said, "No, but we have a girl who is going to play Salome." "Is she a dancer?" "Oh, no, she's a schoolgirl." "Where is she from?" "An agent brought her to the office of Mr. Bronston in Chicago, and Mr. Bronston said, 'You are Salome.' So she was engaged." "Can she act?" "She hasn't tried it yet." So I said, "Well, this is an asset so far . . . Who's going to be her choreographer?" "Mrs. Ray." "Is she a choreographer?" "No, no, she's a dancer." Well, that was promising. I met Mrs. Ray, a charming lady, and asked her, "You were a dancer. Where did you dance?" "I was in Hermes Pan's group. You know him?" "Yes, he does musicals. Have you done any choregraphy?" "No, no, but I will try." So I had no choregrapher, no dancer, no actress . . . Anyway, I wrote the music in Madrid and made a temporary recording with flute, drum and piano, and turned the whole thing over to them. Then we all left, as there was no need for us anymore, and when the picture was transferred to Hollywood there was Salome's Dance, which just consisted of running from pillar to post. The chief editor of the studio said that it would have to be cut, and with the cutting the music went as well. There's now hardly anything left in the film. The whole picture didn't make much sense, and then they engaged Ray Bradbury, the American writer, who wrote some commentary to give it some sense.

Q: Orson Welles spoke this.

MR: That's right. We all-tried to give some sense of the whole thing. I wrote all the rest of the music in Hollywood, where we recorded it. To work with, Bronston was a most generous man—the most generous I have ever met in a film studio. He was a very kind gentleman, though I soon discovered he knew very little about picture-making. But that was not his job: he got the whole thing together and that was perfectly all right. Adolph Zukor, for instance, wasn't a picture-maker; he promoted the whole thing. Some people were: Goldwyn was a picture-maker, and he would always insist, if someone said to him something like "William Wyler's THE BEST YEARS OF OUR LIVES," "No, it's not William Wyler's. It is my picture. I produced it, he directed it." Which was absolutely true. I have the kindest memories of Bronston personally, but never at any time did I discuss the music with him.

Q: How did events lead on to EL CID?

MR: We had a preview of KING OF KINGS in Scottsdale, Arizona. Why there, I don't know. We all had to go in a private plane and on the way back Bronston said to me, "You know I am producing now EL CID?" I

said, "Yes." "Would you like to write the music?" "But I thought you had a composer?" "Yes, I had to have this composer, but he is so bad. He wrote one piece and I don't want him anymore. I want you." I said, "Well, I am not my own master. I am under contract to M-G-M and you will have to talk to them." Next day he said, "Well, I have just arranged everything. You are coming to Madrid. When is your family coming? You can have any house you want there, first-class fare back and forth, servants, a car ..." We had never lived like this in our whole life. To give you an example of Bronston's generosity: I did a picture with John Wayne a few years ago. My agents had called me and said, "We have a John Wayne picture for you." I said, "Is it a western?" And they said, "Well . . . not exactly." "What is the title?" "THE GREEN BERETS." Well, I had no idea what it was about; I thought it was a sort of western—but when I got over there I found it was an eastern! Anyway, I met Wayne and he said he knew Santa Margherita because he was there in Porto-fino with his yacht. I said, "I didn't know you had a yacht." "Oh, I don't, but I was in Madrid doing CIRCUS WORLD for Mr. Bronston and I had two weeks when I had nothing to do, so Mr. Bronston said, 'Do you want a yacht to go around the Mediterranean?'" That's the kind of man he is.

Q: Did you write all the music for EL CID in Madrid?
MR: Most of it in Madrid, and the latter part in London.

Q: At what stage did you enter during production?
MR: When I. arrived in Madrid, shooting was finished and it was in the cutting stage. I got there in March or April and my family followed when school finished in June, which was when we got the house. I spent the whole summer there: as you know, there was a lot of music --difficult music, and research into Eleventh-century Spanish music of which I knew absolutely nothing. The picture was in two parts; the first part had most of the music and was already cut, and they asked me to record it in Rome so that they could start dubbing in London. So I wrote the music and went to Rome: we used a large studio there, as it was a very large orchestra, and we did it in ten days—an hour-and-a-half of music, and not easy to play. Then the tapes were shipped to London and I went back to Madrid to finish scoring part two. Suddenly I received a telegram from London saying, Please come immediately (which sounded ominous). I did, and said, "What's the matter? I'm still working on part two." "Oh, we want you to hear the music." "For what purpose?" "You'll hear why." It got more ominous by the second ... So they played me the main title music, and I said, "Now play it at full volume." "That is full volume." I sounded like a string quartet—a string quartet playing behind curtains! Anyway, apparently they had investigated in Rome and found the azimuth was wrong (whatever that is): the tapes were OK played back through the equipment there but anywhere else—nothing. We even tried again at the Metropole cinema one morning, but the same thing happened. Of the music under dialogue, we found we could keep maybe ten to fifteen minutes, but it didn't matter--the whole thing had to be re-done. I sent a telegram immediately to Bronston telling him not to pay the studio in Rome, but it was too late. After that the studio did one more film, the same thing happened, and then it went out of business. Anyway, I had to record everything again in London, and meanwhile finish composing part two.

Q: How did you approach the music for EL CID?

MR: Through research first of all. EL CID was a great national subject in Spain, and as Technical Advisor Bronston engaged Dr. Ramon Menendez Pidal, who was ninety-two-years-old at that time. He was a university professor and knew the period best, so I went to see him (lots of photographers came along as well). I don't speak Spanish, but we talked in French, and although he said he was not a musician I must say that he gave a musicological lecture which was absolutely fantastic. He knew the *cantigas*, which is a Twelfth-century collection of songs, and he knew the musical structure of these perfectly. He had this huge library, and he said, "By the way, there is a very interesting book written by a Hungarian about this." And he said to his son, who was about seventy himself, "Would you go down to the second bay, and up the ladder, no a little bit to the left, now you see the yellowbook, that's the one, bring it down." Among five thousand books he knew where each one was! I spent a good two months just on research into Spanish music of the period; there is not too much but I found enough for inspiration, to give the picture an authentic atmosphere. I don't know if I succeeded but I tried. First I sketched the love theme which runs through the picture between Chimene and Don Rodrigo, and then others. Then my family arrived and we moved into the house and I started work.

Q: Do you have any memories of SODOM AND GOMORRAH?

MR: Unpleasant ones, yes—many. I was called in Hollywood in 1962 by a friend of mine who had been the production manager on QUO VADIS and BEN-HUR: Maurizio Lodi-fè, a very fine Italian gentleman; his mother was Irish and his father the Italian ambassador to Ireland, so he speaks both languages (he was educated in England). I'm very fond of him and would do anything for him. He said, "I'm co-producing a picture called SODOM AND GOMORRAH, and, to tell you the truth right away, Dimitri Tiomkin was supposed to write the music because the director, Robert Aldrich, asked for him, but he is sick. Would you take it over?" I was still with M-G-M but they let me go to Rome where, to my consternation, I saw this picture. But the deal was already made and I wanted to help Maurizio. The picture was terrible—worse than terrible, it was a crime! Then I heard what it cost: you could make three pictures for that. The music has vanished along with the picture; an album came out at the time on RCA, and I hope they will reissue it, because there is a lot of quite exciting music in it. Anyway, I just settled down and said to myself that I had to do my best musically. What did I care how bad the picture was? I had to enjoy myself while writing it. And in a way I did. I don't think it's my greatest score but for a very bad picture I think it's quite good.

Q: What are your personal preferences amongst your work?

MR: It's difficult to say. THE LOST WEEKEND I think is a strong score. I liked QUO VADIS very much at the time, maybe because it was my first historical picture, and now, listening to BENHUR again, I don't think it's too bad . . . Those three, I think.

Q: And EL CID perhaps?

MR: Yes, yes. I must say that EL CID has some good moments. . , ,

Q: Dimitri Tiomkin finally did THE FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE. Was there ever any talk of you doing it?

MR: what happened is the following. When I finished all the music for EL CID in London, we started dubbing at Shepperton. The director was there too, and he was always in ecstasy at every sequence I had written, which was all right with me. And there was a lady from Hollywood who was in charge of all the sound effects. We dubbed one sequence and I saw her go up to the director and whisper something in his ear. Then the director came back and said, "Now could we hear it once more without the music?" I immediately understood that the music was in her way and the pings and pongs and clinks were not quite as clear with the music behind. So they played it through and the director said (I was present, so he probably didn't want to insult me), "Well, let's make two takes." And the dubbing man said, "But Mr. Director, you haven't got enough without that music." "No, no. For safety, let's make two takes." He didn't say let's not have the music . . . Then I had to go to Munich to record the soundtrack album, and from there I went to Hollywood. When I saw a print there, every scene over which there had been discussion had been dubbed without music. It really upset me because I knew the scenes became better through the music, but the sound effects, well . . . As one of my colleagues in' Hollywood said, "I would like to see a picture where the public goes out whistling the sound effects!" So I sent a telegram to Mr. Bronston, who was in New York, protesting against it and saying that I wantedhim to hear the whole picture as it was done my way and that I would then accept, his judgement. I couldn't be fairer than that. He was, after all, the producer. But he never heard it, as he'd been in Madrid when we were recording in London. He wired back and said that unfortunately this was impossible because the picture was going to be shown in a week and there was no time for any kind of changes. I was supposed to go on a publicity tour promoting the album (which has music that's no longer in the picture), but I sent back a telegram saying that in that case I would have to cancel my tour because I could not talk about something that is not in the film anymore. He said. Please reconsider. And I said. No reconsideration whatsoever. So that was the end of our relationship. At that time he was talking about a picture on the French revolution, probably about 55 DAYS AT PEKING, and even ROMAN EMPIRE was mentioned.

Q: How much music was involved in these deletions?

MR: About twenty minutes, I would say.

Q: Can you remember any of the scenes involved?

MR: I couldn't tell you. I prefer to forget the incident.

Q: When did you finally leave M-G-M?

MR: I still had a contract going when Maurizio had called me about SODOM AND GOMORRAH. I had another six months to go, I think, but the studio was doing practically nothing anymore. I was supposed to do MUTINY ON THE BOUNTY and in fact I worked with Sir Carol Reed on it at the beginning—he was supposed to direct it at the start. I read the script and I couldn't believe it, because I still remembered the original version with Laughton very well. This new one was all written around Brando, and the Captain Bligh part was practically nothing.

I said, "I don't want to do this." Then EL CID came along and I was glad to get away, but the studio still considered I would do it when I came back. I was writing the first part of EL CID in Madrid when one day I had a call from Culver City. The head of the studio said, "When are you cominghome?" I said, "When I've finished the picture." "When will that be?" "Well, I start recording the first part next week." "Oh, there's been a misunderstanding then. The week after, you're coming home?" I said, "The first part. I still have to write the second part." He said, "You must come home: we have MUTINY ON THE BOUNTY ready for you." So I went to Bronston and said, "You have to do something. I don't want to leave this half and I don't want to do MUTINY ON THE BOUNTY." He dealt with it. [Bronislau Kaper scored the film.] Anyway, after loaning me out for SODOM AND GOMORRAH they didn't renew my option. They weren't making any morebig productions, so . . . When the assignment came from Rome M-G-M said they wanted to make me an offer; I had so many more months of my contract to run and they thought I ought to get a certain amount of money myself and then we would part. This was fine all round, and I left for Rome. I expected the head of the studio would at least write me a thank you note after fourteen years—I'd never had a Sunday off and had scored their Academy Award Best Picture, but this was not forthcoming . . . However, a letter came from their legal department saying that in the last year, when I was entitled to two weeks' vacation (which I took), I had not worked the whole twelve months and so was not entitled to the two weeks' vacation, and would I please pay back the money I had received for this. After fourteen years! So my agent wrote to measking what to do, and I told him to please pay it back and never mention the name of M-G-M to me again . . . Then later certain people left and THE VIPs came along, which was a separate thing entirely.

Q: Do you see a strong stylistic split between concert and film composition?

MR: Yes, I do. I would say that in films you have to be more direct. You can write your own music; there's no question of that. But it has to be absolutely direct and be understood on the first hearing by millions. This is not the case with concert music, where an elite go to listen, musically-inclined people. People who go to the cinema are not musically-inclined—one per cent perhaps. Walton wrote great music for films but it is not the same as his symphonic music; Honegger and Shostakovich also. If you have a certain style, it will be recognised as your own music in both cases. A certain amount of counterpoint, for instance, is possible in films, but not too much because otherwise you're defeating your own purpose. I remember a scene in a film called SAHARA, starring Bogart: there was an attack and at certain intervals they jumped out from the trenches. I thought this was a wonderful idea for a fugue and wrote one. But of course when I saw the picture there were no sound effects, and when you see the scene, beneath all the shooting and shouting, you can hear absolutely nothing of the contrapuntal section. If I had written straightforward, homophonic, brassy music—that would have cut through. You have to think of this. When Walton wrote his *Spitfire Fugue*, that was something else.

Q: The chariot race, in QUO VADIS, when the city isburning—you can hear hardly anything of your music.

MR: That's right. The wheels and the shouting . . . well, what can you do? Of course, QUO VADIS was very badly dubbed.

Q: You did three pictures in Hollywood in which you adapted and re-scored other composers' music.

MR: Yes. The first was the Chopin film, A SONG TO REMEMBER, which to my mind was a horribly bad picture but which was a tremendous success at the time. I don't know why. It was a complete misrepresentation of the figure of Chopin, of George Sand . . . the bad taste of the blood on the piano keys. He was touring everywhere: in London, Paris, Budapest—Budapest didn't even exist at that time, it was Pest! it was only fifty years later that the two cities united. An unforgettable picture ... I must say I was delighted with SONG OF SCHEHERAZADE; nothing to do with Rimsky-Korsakov—it didn't pretend to be—but just a fantasy based on his music and the fact that he was once a naval cadet. I was in Paris last June and a gentleman came to me—a lawyer and a great enthusiast of my music—and said he had met the niece (or grand-daughter, I can't remember) of Rimsky-Korsakov (she was a librarian in Moscow) many years ago who said that this was the only film biography she had enjoyed, because musically it was faithful to Rimsky-Korsakov. In Russia they had made a number of film biographies, she said, but one was more boring than the other. I was so happy that I wrote to Walter Reisch, who had directed it.

Q: The music in SONG OF SCHEHERAZADE was served up fairly straight. MR: Yes. A few songs I had to adapt. I wrote a song based on a theme of the *Antar* symphony; there were several songs, and an album was issued. But I didn't change much.

Q: Were the Chopin and the Rakhmaninov film [THE STORY OF THREE LOVES] at all rewarding musically to work on?

MR: Not very. It would have been so much easier in a scene where I had to use music to write my own. But in a Chopin film it should be Chopin. The trouble was that a piece of music was good for a scene up to a certain point but then thefilm changed and the musicdidn't. So I had to continue it in the same manner to fit the film. It was more difficult than writing my own. You shouldn't know when Chopin finishes and Rózsa starts!

Q: But in THE PRIVATE LIFE OF SHERLOCK HOLMES you had the problem of adapting your own Violin Concerto . . .

MR: Well, that film is a long story, and it is still an enigma to me exactly what happened. Billy Wilder and I see each other every Christmas; we have a mutual friend, the Austrian writer/director Walter Reisch. One year he said to me, "I listen to your Violin Concerto the whole time and I've worn out the record. Could you send me another one?" I thought. What's happened to him that he's listening to my Violin Concerto? Anyway, a year later, he said, "You know I told you I was listening to your concerto? Well, come down to the studio; I want to talk to you." So I went down to the Goldwyn studio and he told me the work had inspired a film about Sherlock Holmes— there were four unrelated episodes, all very good. I had to come to London and find a violinist who could not only play the work but also wrap his arms round the actor Robert Stephens, who was about six foot, and play for him in front of the camera—in such a way that you saw

Mr. Stephens' face, but the hands doing the work were the professional violinist's. Well, Erich Gruenberg, who used to lead the Royal Philharmonic, was able to do this. Then I had to find a balalaika orchestra. One day in a record shop I found a record by the London Balalaika Ensemble—all English names—and it took a Sherlock Holmes to track them down, all second-generation Russians. This was before shooting started. Then we recorded the music. Anyway, the original script contained these four episodes—maybe they were too long, but when they started they wanted a long picture, with an intermission and everything. When they finished they decided that nobody wanted long pictures (the film was three and a half hours long), so one and a half hours had to come out. All the motivation and the psychological explanations went.

Q: Can you remember the cut episodes?

MR: Yes. The first scene was absolutely brilliant. Holmes and Watson were coming home on a train and suddenly a man comes in the compartment, sits down, and falls asleep. Watson says, "What do you make of him?" And Holmes looks at him and says, "He's an Italian singing teacher from Naples. He had an affair with the duchess of so-and-so, the duke came home too early, shot at him, he jumped out of the window, ran for the train, and here he is." Watson says, "You're out of your mind! How do you know this?" Holmes says, "It's very simple: look at what he has in his pocket—a tuning fork. Would a lawyer or doctor have a tuning-fork? And he uses swear-words you only hear in Naples. Look at his slippers: they have the crown of the duke of so-and-so on them. Look at his hat—bullet-proof. The duke came home, found him there in his slippers, and shot at him." Watson says, "I don't believe you." "Well, I'll prove it to you." The train goes into a tunnel and Holmes starts verbally attacking the man. "Why, you . . . You come here under false pretences, giving singing lessons . . . I'll get you . . . etc." They came out of the tunnel, and Watson says, "Where is he?" And Holmes says, "Oh, he jumped out of the window ..." It was a brilliant scene, and set up the characterisations right away.

Q: This was at the very beginning of the film?

MR: No, actually there was another scene beforehand. We come to Regent Street, Barclay's Bank, and a young man who is Watson, the American grandson of Dr. Watson, goes in and asks the manager for his grandfather's papers, which were deposited fifty years ago. And he opens them up and we read, "These are the stories written down . . . etc." Then the film proper begins. All this was cut out.

Q: The version available now contains only two complete episodes. What were the other two?

MR: One cost a fortune, as they had to build a whole ship deck in the studio, on rockers. This was the third episode; the second was the ballerina one, which they had also wanted to take out at one stage, I remember going to New York and sending a telegram to Billy Wilder saying, I implore you not to let them take it out, otherwise you'll have nothing left. Anyway, to go back to the ship episode, it was a, complete case but not very long, only about ten minutes. They are on a cruise relaxing after the previous case, and Watson says, "You know, Holmes, I wouldn't mind trying a case myself. I think I could handle one." And Holmes says, "OK, the next one is yours." Then later the captain comes in and says, "There's been a murder

on board." So Holmes says, "Watson, this is your case." Watson gets very excited and they go to the cabin concerned and there is this young couple dead in bed. Watson smells the champagne bottle, and detects arsenic and says, "It must have been the cook, who was jealous of the young man's wife . . . etc." Typical Sherlock Holmes reasoning. And Watson is going on about *rigor mortis* not yet having set in when suddenly the young couple jump up and the man says, "Get out of here! We're on our honeymoon." Watson is terribly embarrassed. Holmes just smiles, and they leave. And Holmes looks up and just says, "Wrong deck ..." It was lovely.

Q: The other deleted episode was The Upside-Down Room?

MR: Yes. Holmes was taking cocaine—you know, his seven per cent solution—and Watson was very much against it. He gets so mad that he goes to his room, starts to pack, and tells Mrs. Hudson that he is going to leave. She starts to cry and Watson leaves the room. Suddenly we hear a gunshot and, thinking Holmes has shot himself, she runs to the room—and there is Watson, who has shot all the cocaine bottles! Watson knows that Holmes only does this when he is bored, so he thinks up a case for him and Inspector Lestrade from Scotland Yard comes along and tells him they would appreciate it if he came along and helped them on this very unusual case they have. So they go to this room where everything is upside down: the bed, chairs, all on the ceiling, and so on. "What do you make of this?" says Lestrade. And Holmes searches around and finds a baby's rattle, a Chinese newspaper, and a few other things; and then he examines the sole of the body, and next they all go home. Holmes says to Watson later on, "Where have you been this morning?" "The British Museum, as usual." "You were in the reading room?" "Yes." "Have you seen this Chinese newspaper before? Because it comes from the British Museum's reading room." Dr. Watson says, "How terrible! You mean the murderer was sitting next to me?" "How did you come home?" "Oh, you know, I turned into Baker Street . . . etc." "Ah, so you passed a shop which sells baby's rattles ..." And Holmes exposes the whole thing. It was a charming episode. The curious thing was that the last episode, with the Loch Ness Monster (the weakest of the four), they left in.

Q: Had you written any music before they cut the film? MR: Not too much. The ship episode had no music at all.

Q: What is your policy now about accepting film commissions?

MR: Well, I am on my own now and either I refuse—which I do quite a lot —or I accept. Nowadays it's all blood, murder, violence, sex, horror. No . . . I've been spoilt in motion pictures. After having written for nearly 100 films—many of them mediocre or bad, but at that time I had to do it—I want now to do the things I like to do. After all that I think I'm entitled to a little bit of pick-and-choose, . . .

<u>No Comment</u>: (continued
from page 3)

him when they worked together on KLUTE. . . . Since then Mr. Small has been conspicuously underused. His score for Michael Crichton's COMA is stunning. The main love theme is a charmer—even then there is a whiff of formaldehyde amid the sugar—but the music that accompanies the sinister goings-on in a Boston hospital is eerie and exciting."

Mark Whitman
<u>Films Illustrated</u>, December 1979

<u>Other</u>:

Roberto Pugliese, who writes on film music for *Discoteca Rita Fedelta'*, reports that there were two significant conferences in Italy recently. Last December in Turin a number of organizations combined to sponsor discussions of silent film music, Italian film music, and the scores of Hanns Eisler. Participants included Paul Glass, Piero Piccioni, and Roman Vlad. Then in March the Film Music Art Studio held its first national meeting in Prato near Florence. Present were Pino Donaggio, Francesco DeMasi, Fabio Fabor, Franco Godi, A. F. Lavagnino, Franco Micalizzi, Walter Rizzati, and Carlo Savina. The "Orchestra Cinefonica of Rome" was on hand to play excerpts from some of the spaghetti-western scores under discussion.

In Germany Ralph Erkelenz reports the founding of a new periodical, *Filmmusik Info*, edited by Paul Gortz and Gerd Haven, Severinstr. 158, D5000, Koln 1, West Germany.

Another film music radio program has gone on the air. It was organized by Jerry LaRocca and Fred Paltridge of the MRS, and it will be heard every other month on station KBOO of Portland, Oregon.

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We thank Michael Yacura of Gary, Indiana, for a very substantial donation to the Society.

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<u>DEADLINES</u>

PMS 28 (Fall) - 31 August
PMS 29 (Winter) - 30 November

THE COMPOSER AS STAR:

The famous Hollywood custom of honoring film personalities with a star in the pavement of Hollywood Boulevard's Walk of Fame has not generally been extended to dramatic composers. Max Steiner, honored in 1975 through the efforts of the Max Steiner Music Society, is the principal exception. Some of the other Rózsa societies have sought this tribute for Dr. Rózsa, but the MRS has thus far held back on account of the commercialism of the venture. The "tribute" came at a cost of $2Q0Q, which would have been improper for the subject to provide and impossible for the Society to raise. (The Steiner fee was paid out of MSMS record album receipts, which have no parallel in the MRS.)

Now that the embarrassing and inappropriate fee system has been eliminated, we feel that the MRS can join the campaign for a composer star. We suggest that all members write to urge this purpose on the appropriate authority:

Mr. Bill Welch
Hollywood Chamber of Commerce
6520 Sunset Boulevard
Hollywood, CA 90028

OFF THE BEATEN TRACK:

LE FATICHE DI ERCOLE by James Marshall:

Suddenly, Hercules leaps into his chariot and dashes off to the valley of the lions in a vain bid to rescue the impetuous Iphitus. And underneath some appallingly dubbed dialogue, one can hardly fail to notice the explosion of music surging and galloping to a thunderous climax of expectancy. Horns blare with excitement, the percussion whips on the stampeding hooves—just one of many colorful musical sequences supplied by Enzo Masetti with his customary fine sense of the dramatic. In a film such as HERCULES (to give the American title) where sluggish direction and wooden acting tend to reduce the intended pace, the musical score can be an invaluable saving factor, an enlivening "lift" to an otherwise sagging effort. The veteran Masetti pulls out all the stops in this one to provide the film with some much-needed sparkle and panache.

The main title introduces both main themes, one for Hercules, the other for the lovely Iole. Steve Reeves as Hercules turns in a surprisingly adequate performance for a weight-lifter, but his lines are spoken badly by Richard McNamara (supervisor of the dubbed version) who sounds far too old. Nevertheless, Masetti endows the demigod with a vigorous, muscle-flexing theme which particularly enhances the exhibitions of prodigious strength. For contrast, Iole (Sylva Koscina) is accorded one of the most beautiful love themes ever written, an idyllic and dreamily haunting melody of great serenity and grace, almost without parallel for simple beauty. Scarcely has the main title ended when Masetti plunges into the first of the many set pieces and, in view of how quickly Italian pictures are scored, it's quite disconcerting how he pulls off one scoring *tour de force* after another. Hercules rescues Iole from her runaway chariot by the simple process of uprooting a tree and blocking the path of the horses. Here, as in later scenes, the muscle-flexing leitmotif, with just a hint of the tongue-in-cheek, lends humorsome credulity to a scene in danger of being flatly ridiculous. Soon we are involved in the Games, and Masetti's stately commentary is immediately comparable with Herbert Windt's 1936 Olympic classic, though rather less Wagnerian in tone. The lively "Song of the Argonauts," performed as Hercules and Jason embark on a seafaring adventure, makes one very eager to hear some of Masetti's operatic works. The spirited singing combines splendidly with the hammering of the hortator and at one stage is used to drown the seductive tonalities of the Sirens. Landing briefly at the Amazon islandof Queen Antea, we are treated (predictably) to an exotic dance interlude, and here Masetti chooses a modernistic rather than

"authentic" approach, very much in the style of *Aida*. There are many other musical highlights in Masetti's feast of a score—for instance, Iole's springtime ride through the forest against a jaunty, trotting little tune, and Jason's encounter with a dragon that looks so synthetic the music has to sound convincing. There is even a rare Masetti dabble at unconventional techniques: a notable few seconds of electronics as Hercules hurls the discus apparently into orbit!

In 1961, just four years after scoring HERCULES, Masetti died in Rome at the age of 67. A considerable loss not only to film music but to film composers, since Masetti was something of a Miklos Rozsa in Italy in that he gave film music classes at the Santa Cecilia Conservatory in Rome. Many of the younger Italian film composers, such as Nascimbene, learned their craft from Masetti, who himself provided a wealth of classic scores over a period of 20 years. His other historical pictures are ATTILA (suitably barbaric, but with a superb choral finale), FABIOLA, SICILIAN VESPERS, THE SWORD AND THE CROSS, and HERCULES UNCHAINED.

LETTERS:

F. UNDERBILL, Breeshire, England:

While I pretty much agree with John Fitzpatrick's comments on THE LORD OF THE RINGS (PMS 26), I do have some minor quibbles based on repeated viewings and background reading. For one thing, Rosenman does not "reprise" his prelude at the end for the simple reason that there is no prelude to repeat. Only on the record does the end title music do double duty as the "Theme from THE LORD OF THE RINGS." There is an additional oddity about the film's ending—or endings, for there are two of them. When the anticlimactic close that Fitzpatrick refers to was roundly criticized, the filmmakers experimented with another one, in which the story pauses immediately following the victory at Helm's Deep. I don't know which version is now in general circulation.

By the way, the oft-repeated claim that Walt Disney "failed" to bring the project to the screen may be somewhat misleading. According to a recent *Cinefantastique*, the Disney studio never actually owned the rights, but only considered buying them before rejecting the project as too serious and violent for its accustomed audience.

I like the way PMS sometimes takes on a current score in some detail (e.g., LOGAN'S RUN, ISLANDS IN THE STREAM), and I hope to see more such articles in the future.

ROBERT HYLAND, Los Angeles, California:

I would like to heartily endorse the opinions of Mr, William Gray (PMS 25) concerning Miklos Rozsa's score for *SUNDOWN* (1941). This score is a great favorite of mine, and I consider it to be one of Dr. Rozsa's best cinematic efforts. The interesting credit titles are accompanied by impressive drumming and chanting; the "habari" sequence is, as Mr, Gray justly states, brilliant; Gene Tierney's theme is both haunting and nostalgic; the accompaniment to the askari's burial is very moving; the "shifta" theme is splendidly ominous. Fortunately, I was able to see this film when it was first released and several times thereafter during the 1940s.

(Needless to say, the version shown on TV is usually badly cut in keeping with the great tradition of TV film butchery.) The photography was excellent, the exteriors having been filmed (if I rightly recall) in New Mexico, which served admirably as a substitute for the Kenya-Ethiopia frontier region. To me, the only bad thing about the film was an overly melodramatic finale, which included a rather hammy death scene by George Sanders and some excessive pontificating by Sir Cedric Hardwicke. (Both of whom, I hasten to say, are among my favorite actors.) It is my hope that someone will eventually include the highlights of this interesting and neglected bit of vintage Rozsa in a record. They could be woven into an exciting little suite.

The reprint of Frederick Sternfeld's article on THE BEST YEARS OF OUR LIVES (PMS 25) is greatly appreciated, and I certainly approve of your intention to institute a series of reprints of such early critical articles.

My thanks to you for your always interesting publication.

WOLFRAM and VOLKER HANNEMANN, Kornwestheim, West Germany:

It may be of interest that the two EL CID scenes described by George and Mary Ellen Komar in PMS 25 <u>were</u> in the German dubbed 70mm prints. And the dream sequence with Alfonso and Urraca is accompanied by music. However, the 35mm optical prints, which are only 150 minutes long, leave out these and many other scenes.

<u>Ed. note</u>: Another reader remembers seeing these two scenes in Syracuse, New York, at the time of the film's initial release. Both of them, by the way, are included in Robert Krepps's "novelization" of the screenplay.

WILLIAM KRASNOBORSKI, New Windsor, New York:

A 16-inch broadcast transcription LP from the mid-fifties ("Here's to Veterans" series, The Veterans Administration) contains one side of Rózsa music, introduced by Rózsa. It contains two tracks from QUO VADIS ("Lygia" and "Triumphal March") and one from PLYMOUTH ADVENTURE ("The Mayflower"). Another cut is unidentified and is used also as the intro and concluding music for the broadcast. The number of the disc is 387. The second side has Billy May music.

I've been working with Herb Stothart on his father's music, and the family has some recorded material which we're trying to arrange for some sort of release. The sad thing is that the cache was much larger, but when unearthed from storage many items were water stained and such, and the family, thinking they were no good, threw them out. All the 1940s stuff: DORIAN GRAY, NATIONAL VELVET, MINIVER, YEARLING, et al. This was before we met, and I was sick when I heard about it. They were sicker still when I told them of the possible saving of the material. So sometimes people other than the thoughtless companies goof too.

Alfred Hitchcock, it appears, owns most of the music for his films, and gave Entracte trouble when that company wanted to reissue VERTIGO. Hitch wanted his name the biggest. And he had all the music, more than the disc. He also held up a disc of Williams's FAMILY PLOT score. He wanted so much for it that even MCA retreated.

MICHAEL QUIGLEY, Vancouver, Canada:

Sadly, ALIEN is not the masterpiece I had hoped it would be, even though when heard in its first-run six-channel Dolby stereo presentation, there is a frightening sense of realism and depth in the orchestral sound, which alone is extremely impressive. The film has been accused of being grossly manipulative, and the same complaint to a lesser degree could be made of the music, with Goldsmith showing that he knows his business well. Somewhat distracting to the composer's most devoted fans will be the quotation of (at least) two passages from his 1962 score to FREUD, which fit well into the sci-fi atonal atmosphere.

The pirate album, BITE THE BULLET, yet another made-in-U.S.A. "Japanese" release, complete with liner notes about a group of people being attacked by a giant cockroach (I'm not kidding!), finally brings one of Alex North's allegedly most requested scores to light. The music—an amazing amount of it, and amazingly free from repetition such as mars many of today's pop-oriented albums (cf. Conti, et al.)—is North's usual blend of pungent harmonies (which owe a lot to his teacher and Mexican composer Silvestre Revueltas) and bittersweet lyricism, plus a bit of self-quotation from his own *Holiday Set* ballet, once available on SPA records. The sound is mostly in stereo, and while side one is acceptable, even at premium "import" prices, things deteriorate on the second side, so that by the end the result is like the orchestra playing behind a waterfall.

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