

The MIKLÓS RÓZSA Society

“PRO MUSICA SANA”

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

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PROGRESS REPORT

The MRS has been moving in recent months, literally (see below), and figuratively too. Membership has more than doubled in the last quarter (to 93), and we have succeeded in setting up our tape service (see p.10). Our thanks go to all members and especially to Dean Streit and Daniel Robbins for special contributions.

Mr. Streit has also established a Society library by contributing the first volume, a copy of the new Broude Brothers edition of the orchestral score of the *JUNGLE BOOK Suite* for narrator and orchestra. It is a particularly useful score: since the narration is closely keyed to the music. Broude Brothers also publish study scores of *The Vintner's Daughter*, the *Cello Concerto* (orchestral and cello-piano), and Herrmann's *For the Fallen*. Mr. Streit has arranged a 10% discount for MRS members. He can be reached at: Alexander Broude Inc. / 1619 Broadway / New York, N.Y. 10019.

Several readers have asked where they can get the records described in our summer issue. One mail-order dealer who definitely does stock them is: August Rojas - Classical Imports / 936 So. Detroit St. / Los Angeles, CA 90036.

Another frequent request is that we explain the workings of our organization and (!) "executive staff". There is really less of an organization than one might expect. John Fitzpatrick, 24, a doctoral student in English at Indiana University, edits the newsletter and maintains overall supervision of the membership rolls and finances. Mark Koldys, 25, a recent graduate of Wayne State University Law School, and host of WDET-FM's FILMUSIC program, assists with the newsletter and sees to its printing and mailing. He has also developed the tape service that begins with this issue. Ken Doeckel, 26, a recent graduate of San Francisco State College, handles most of the correspondence and coordination with other organizations. We ask for your patience at those times when this three-headed monster gets out of control. Most of the time, however, as this ten-page issue demonstrates, it works.

PHOTO: 10 June 1972 From left: John Keenan, John Fitzpatrick, Dr. Rózsa, Myron Bronfeld, Alex Goldstein.
(Photo by Jeffery Dane.)



FILMUSIC AND FILM MUSIC by Frank DeWald:

I am convinced that we must find new ways of dealing with filmusic if we are to evaluate it sensitively, comprehensively, and without bias. As a beginning, I propose an arbitrary distinction between what I shall call '*filmusic*' (one word) and 'film music' (two words). *Filmusic* shall be defined as the simultaneous experience of sight and sound, i.e. film and music. *Film music*, on the other hand, shall be music associated with film but heard apart from its visual partner. Filmusic is an integral part of a media experience, and to consider it otherwise results in faulty critical evaluation. It is not the film composer's first consideration to write music that will necessarily have a successful life of its own, but to bring his creative powers to bear on the communication of an experience--the film experience which the director and his colleagues have defined as their goal. More often than not, this experience is directed toward the musically unsophisticated.

Filmusic is essentially different from all other kinds of music as we know them. Like opera, it is concerned with telling a story. Like ballet, it is concerned with the coordination of visual and musical elements. But, unlike either of these, filmusic is absolutely inseparable from its visual-dramatic complement. When the elements of film and music are divorced, *filmusic* becomes, instead, *film music*. It is suddenly out of context, out of place, and the composer's original intent has been altered. Thus, filmusic can never be considered quite the same as any other musical form. It is unique in its purpose and in its capabilities.

Like painting and sculpture, filmusic achieves at some point a permanent form. Filmusic is experienced in terms of recorded sound, not in terms of live performance. The filmscore is a product of a particular performance and a particular recording session, laced into the dialogue and sound effects. The film soundtrack is the permanent form of the filmscore (it follows that the complex machinery involved in the recording and playback of filmusic has a direct bearing on the quality of the soundtrack; it is unfortunate, but true, that the composer's efforts are tempered by the components of fidelity, volume, and editing).

Film Music in the Concert Hall

Properly speaking, *filmusic* cannot by our definition exist in the concert hall. *Film music*, on the other hand, occasionally appears there, as for example at the Hollywood Bowl in 1963, where film composers were invited to conduct their own works under the auspices of the Composers and Lyricists Guild of America. Guild president David Raksin keynoted that performance with the following:

This is our night, when, for a moment, our music comes stage center. However, in a spirit of generosity, let me suggest that any writers, directors, actors, or producers in the audience are welcome to imagine as much dialogue or as many sound effects as they may find necessary to drown out the unfamiliar sound of music unobscured.

When filmusic becomes "unobscured" it is out of context, and in the unfriendly context of the concert hall it might understandably appear lackluster next to the great works of the standard symphonic repertoire. The Hollywood Bowl situation was unique, since the au-

dience had assembled for the express purpose of paying homage to Hollywood's finest composers. To other audiences, film music's frequent lack of form, subtlety, and invention could conceivably put it in a bad light. Since film music is, in a sense, an art form once removed, we should not be surprised that it often cannot compete successfully with music intended from its conception to be heard in the concert hall. The process of trying to tune out the dialogue creates a musical experience that the composer never intended.

There are, of course, examples where film music has fared well with concert audiences, but these are exceptions. And although it is the composer's prerogative to employ the music he has written in any way he chooses, we must understand that the general unpopularity and lack of film music in the concert hall should not reflect on the quality of film music as an art. There is no basis for evaluating film music on its ability to stand up, out of context, against the standard symphonic repertoire. That is not, after all, what it should ever be intended to do.

Style

Style is an important consideration because the choice and development of thematic material is a sensitive job, one which gives shape and meaning to the filmscore. But what can we consider the proper "style" of film music? From our definition it follows that the composer must write in the style most sympathetic to the needs of the film in question. We often hear the comment, "It sounds just like 'movie music'" (usually employed in a pejorative sense), implying that there is such a thing as a single style of film music, and although there might be a grain of truth in this, it should not be so. Robert Emmett Dolan, in *Music in Modern Media*, says that the question of style "is one of the composer's most profound decisions. Above all else, the music should genuinely spring from the composer himself; it should be his music *au fond*." Yet musical style depends on factors other than the composer; including the director's point of view (the composer might have a perfectly valid musical idea that is in conflict with the director's intention) and the dramatic values of the screenplay as realized on film. Also, the music must have dramatic meaning for the film's intended audience, and should not be unnecessarily intricate or complex. This does not mean, of course, that the composer has to write for the lowest common denominator of the audience, but that his music should have some immediacy of appeal.

Ultimately, the question of style reverts back to the film itself. When a composer writes to sell record albums, impress musicologists, or for any other such considerations, he isn't writing film music at all.

Film Music on Discs

Considering the commercialism of the recording industry, it is not surprising that film music on discs is generally no more than a means to make a profit, regardless of the quality of the score and often at the expense of the music itself. We all know of fine scores which have never been recorded and many worthless ones which have, and who among us can begin to understand the reasons for this? It seems as if the least important consideration is the music itself. One recent example will perhaps illustrate this point: the soundtrack recording of Nino Rota's music from *Romeo and Juliet* bears the following testimony from the record's producer:

My very intimate association with the "Romeo and Juliet" albums has forever engraved the Nino Rota score on my mind. When the complete soundtrack set was finished, my every waking moment was filled with the melodies, cues, dramatic sequences, and brilliant orchestrating techniques of Maestro Rota. I seemed to hear his melody in one ear and his truly classic countermelody in the other, even without using a record player. Why, then, not an album featuring the *music only* from "Romeo and Juliet", the score itself, composed, orchestrated, and conducted by the Master Himself?

How strange that it never occurred to this producer to make Rota's music available in an "unobscured" form until two previous albums of dialogue and a Henry Mancini arrangement of the love theme had become best sellers!

But if the powers-that-be are not concerned with the preservation and proliferation of fine film music, we should nonetheless be grateful for what *is* made available to us. We must also remember that recordings are only *imitations*, or incomplete re-creations of the filmusic experience, and they are not acceptable substitutes for the study of that experience. To know a filmscore one must know the film as well as the music. Let us not deceive ourselves: recordings can be enjoyed for their own sakes, but true filmusic can only be enjoyed in the theatre, or on television, or wherever a film is seen.

Filmusic Criticism

Miklós Rózsa has pointed out that "the musically ignorant man watching a movie in a theatre or before his television set receives a musical education subconsciously. The filmusic composer bears a large responsibility for the musical taste of the present generation, and that of its successor." If this is so, then surely there is a need for intelligent filmusic criticism, and once we assume such a need, we must consider by what criteria the music shall be judged. As we have developed a new way of dealing with filmusic, we must also devise new and relevant ways of evaluating it.

If the composer's job is to "bring his creative powers to bear on the communication of an experience," then we can ask ourselves: "How effectively and imaginatively has he accomplished his task?" The primary function of filmusic is to enhance the communicative powers of the film experience. This function is always present and *never changes*. Each film, however, has its own particular needs, and the filmusic critic might consider how the composer has used music in these several ways:

- 1) continuity
- 2) intensification of emotion
- 3) establishment of mood
- 4) commentary
- 5) source music
- 6) characterization
- 7) feeling for period and style
- 8) compatibility with visual action.

In addition, factors such as orchestration, recording quality, synchronization, and thematic unity and development have a bearing on the over-all effectiveness of the score. Note, however, that virtually all of these criteria presuppose the union of film and music,

and do not deal with the music as a separate entity. Filmusic criticism will never be successful until it distinguishes between the music alone and the contribution of the composer to the total film effort. Only this latter is the concern of true filmusic criticism.

As I finish this essay, these recent words of Elmer Bernstein echo in my mind:

The events of the past few years in the field of film scoring seem to indicate that any discussion on this great art may indeed have to be a historical summary at the end of its era of greatness ... I find it inconceivable that this sophisticated art has in such a short time degenerated into a bleakness of various electronic noises and generally futile attempts to "make the pop Top 40 charts" ... It appears that the king is dead and the court jester has been installed in his place.

I imagine that those of us who read this quarterly share Mr. Bernstein's sense of disappointment and disbelief. Yet how well do we know the nature of the beast we love? I believe in filmusic. I believe it has the power to satisfy the artistic and aesthetic needs of the composer and his audience. In this essay I have stated my belief that filmusic is special music. I have tried to insist on the need to appreciate 'filmusic' as such in the film first of all, and have outlined some of the implications of that belief in four specific areas. But this is only a beginning--a first attempt--a basic approach which merely touches the surface. There is much more to be studied, much more to be said. Most important, we must all work to reverse the disastrous trends which have killed the king and installed the court jester in his place.

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RÓZSA ON DISC by Myron Bronfeld

Part I: The Concert Music

The following LPs are listed in the approximate order of their commercial release. All but the last two are presently deleted from the Schwann Record Catalog. Rózsa conducts all orchestral performances except where noted otherwise.

<i>Concerto for String Orchestra</i> Op. 17	Vox
<i>Theme, Variations, and Finale</i> Op. 13	PLP 7690
Royal Philharmonic Orchestra/London String Orchestra	
<i>Duo-Sonata for Cello and Piano</i> Op. 8	Alco
Bach: <i>Concerto for Violin, Oboe, and Orch. in C</i>	1210
Alec Compinsky (cello)/Sara Compinsky (piano)	
<i>Serenade for Orchestra</i> Op. 25	Concert Hall
Lopatnikoff: <i>Divertimento for Orchestra</i>	G4 (limited ed.)
La Jolla Musical Arts Festival Orch./Nikolai Sokoloff cond.	
<i>Piano Sonata</i> Op. 20	Capitol
Bartok, Prokofiev sonatas	8376
Leonard Pennario, piano	

<i>To Everything There Is a Season</i> Op. 21 Columbia U. Teachers' College Choir/Harry Wilson cond. #7071	Music Library
<i>Concert Overture</i> Op. 26 <i>Theme, Variations, and Finale</i> Op. 13 <i>Three Hungarian Sketches</i> Op. 14 Frankenland State Sym. Orch. of Nuremberg	Decca DL 9966
<i>Concerto for String Orchestra</i> Op. 17 Rieti: <i>Dance Variations</i> M-G-M String Orchestra/Carlos Surinach cond.	M-G-M E 3565
<i>Hungarian Serenade for Small Orchestra</i> Op. 25 Kodaly: <i>Summer Evening</i> M-G-M Orchestra/Arthur Winograd cond.	M-G-M E 3631
<i>Hungarian Serenade for Small Orchestra</i> , Op. 25 <i>North Hungarian Peasant Songs and Dances</i> Op. 4 <i>The Vintner's Daughter</i> Op. 23a Frankenland State Sym. Orch. of Nuremberg/Erich Kloss cond.	M-G-M E/SE 3645
<i>Concerto for String Orchestra</i> , Op. 17 <i>Kaleidoscope</i> Op. 19a <i>Variations on a Hungarian Peasant Song</i> Op. 5 Vienna State Opera Orchestra	Westminster XWN 18805/ WST 14035
<i>To Everything There Is a Season</i> , Op. 21 Wright: <i>The Psalms of David</i> Hollywood Methodist Church Choir/Norman Spring Wright cond.	Dot DLP3304/25304
<i>Concerto for Violin and Orchestra</i> Op. 24 Benjamin: <i>Romantic Fantasy</i> Jascha Heifetz, violin/Dallas Sym. Orch./Walter Hendl cond. (Previously issued with alternate coupling on LM 2027).	RCA LM/LSC 2767
<i>Tema con Variazioni</i> Op. 29a Beethoven: <i>Piano Trio #1 in Eb</i> Haydn: <i>Divertimento for Cello and Orchestra</i> Jascha Heifetz, violin/Gregor Piatigorsky, cello	RCA LM/LSC 2767
<i>Concert Overture</i> Op. 26a <i>Notturmo Ungherese</i> Op. 28 <i>Theme, Variations, and Finale</i> Op. 13 <i>Three Hungarian Sketches</i> Op. 14 RCA Italiana Orchestra	RCA LM/LSC 2802

The purpose of this article is to acquaint the newcomer who does not have access to discographic information with what is and what has been available in the way of commercial recordings of the music of Miklós Rózsa. A look at the current Schwann Catalog of Long-Playing Records shows three discs in the composer section and two in the soundtrack section. These five records may give the impression that Rózsa has been slighted by the recording industry. This is not necessarily the case. Five recordings are more than many fine composers all over the world ever get. And Rózsa has had more than

five. My own collection includes thirty separate discs and it is not complete. With more than thirty discs, Miklós Rózsa is actually one of a select few composers to be so well represented. The trouble is that only five discs remain in print. (One of these, I believe, is not really available, and the other won't be for long.) Rózsa has suffered heavily from the omnivorous black diamond (the Schwann symbol for impending deletion). This process must be reversed by true music lovers who buy music that comes from the heart, not from the electrical system. If Rózsa's music comes back, it will be because music has come back.

Now for what has been and what I hope will be again. To date, Rózsa has written thirty-three Opused concert works. Fifteen of these have had commercial recordings. Since two of the thirty-three have been withdrawn and one revised, this total represents half of the composer's output--not bad by any standard. Here is what has been available, and there is not a bad performance in the lot.

Opus 4 is a pastoral set of variations with the violin less dominant than in a concerto. Denes Zsigmondy has a crystal clear tone here, and Rózsa is appropriately subtle with an orchestral accompaniment that is actually a transcription of the original piano part.

Opus 5 is a short suite of ethnic but original dances alternating with contrasting slow material. The violin is more prominent here, and Oliver Colbentson plays well if not quite as sharply as Zsigmondy. The late Erich Kloss is adequate with the (again transcribed) orchestral part.

Opus 8, a duo-sonata for cello and piano, falls into two movements. The first is a flowing *allegro* and the second a set of variations on a theme of really tender beauty. Alec Compinsky manages the solo part well, but imagine what a Starker could do with it! His sister Sara is adequate in the piano accompaniment.

Opus 13 is one of the pinnacles of Rózsa's output to date, and has been on three different LPs. From the oboe's quiet introduction of the life-inspiring theme through the marvelous pulsations of the famed seventh variation, this is a work whose popularity has not been limited to lovers of Rózsa. Munch, Walter, Bernstein, Ormandy, and many others have all performed it to great success. I strongly prefer Rózsa's conducting on the old Vox disc, perhaps just because the Royal Philharmonic of the time was so superior to the German and Italian orchestras on the competing recordings. But all three are well played, with RCA's sonics by far the most persuasive.

Opus 14 is so loving in its evocation of the composer's homeland that one wonders how he ever brought himself to leave Hungary. Both recordings are good, but the newer one in stereo brings out more of the nuances of the score. I wish I knew how the "RCA Italiana Orchestra" was put together to sound so good.

Opus 17 is in the tradition of the *concerti grossi* of Handel and other Baroque composers. But it is a totally modern work in that form, and can thus be performed in very different ways even by the composer himself. Note the contrast between the harsh modernisms of the Vox and the clearer, more classical approach in the Westminster. One can accept either version according to one's mood, and both performances are exceptionally fine. But both pall

when compared to the world premiere performance by Rózsa and the strings of the Los Angeles Philharmonic. Anyone lucky enough to have a tape of the old transcription discs of that performance knows what it means to have an orchestra totally committed to a musical composition. This performance also includes some music cut out of later recordings. (Rózsa frequently revises and cuts after the premiere.) Carlos Surinach's M-G-M recording is played well enough, but is outclassed by the others. In this work, Rózsa reaches an emotional depth not heard before in his concert music. Is it not possible that a war-torn Europe was weighing heavily on the mind of a European composer in America in 1943-44? (Ed. note: the world-premiere performance of which Mr. Bronfeld speaks so highly will be made available to MRS members as an upcoming release of the MRSSS.)

Opus 19a is a six-movement suite intended especially for children. They should still enjoy its marches, lullabies, and dances when they reach ninety. This orchestral version of the original piano score is lovingly played by the composer and his fine Viennese orchestra, and Westminster's stereo sound is exceptionally detailed.

Opus 20 realizes the full percussive potential of the piano. It is a difficult work in sound and style, and taxes the virtuosic abilities of the pianist to the utmost. In many ways it foreshadows the great piano concerto of almost twenty years later. Leonard Pennario's steel fingers and technical command make him the right man for the job.

Opus 21 has a strangely American sound to it for this very Hungarian composer. It does not give of itself readily at first hearing, but will reward repeated listening. The Hollywood chorus is better than the Columbia one, but could use more emotional commitment. Neither is particularly well-recorded.

Opus 23a is another orchestra version of a piano score. This is one of my personal favorites because of its combination of a light, airy quality with a vigorous forward drive. The ninth variation has some really magnificent violin parts, and the eleventh is one of Rózsa's supreme achievements, rising to angelic heights. It is reminiscent of the NAKED CITY epilogue but on a much higher level. Kloss does a magnificent job in a recording that was made just as M-G-M started to close out its classical catalogue. The unfortunate result of this timing was that only a few hundred copies ever made it into record stores. Anyone who found one is very, very lucky. Eugene Ormandy's world premiere performance may exist on tape somewhere, but it could hardly surpass Kloss's.

Opus 24 is, of course, Rózsa's most popular work. (It is actually the second violin concerto; an earlier, unpublished one still exists). Virtuosity is the keynote, and Rózsa gives the greatest of fiddlers every opportunity to display his talents. But the work is no empty exercise in gymnastics, and it has been accepted all over the world no matter who performs it. This performance is perfect, and nicely recorded by RCA.

Opus 25 is actually a revision of Opus 10 (now withdrawn) for a 1952 performance by Nikolai Sokoloff. That performance (still, for some reason, using the title of Opus 10) far outshines its competitors, both of which also follow the revised version (I am certain the M-G-M label is wrong).

Opus 26(a) makes a fitting beginning for an evening of good music. Both performances are good, the main differences being that the later one omits part of the work's coda (about 2:12), and is available in stereo.

Opus 28 is really only one in a long line of Hungarian nocturnes that Rózsa has written for concert hall and movie screen. It was about time he called a spade a spade. This is one of the loveliest, though, and it bespeaks a really deep feeling for nature. The RCA recording could hardly be bettered.

Opus 29a is, of course, only a part of the larger *Sinfonia Concertante*. I would like to think that Heifetz and Piatigorsky were so anxious to perform the work that they couldn't wait for its completion. Although some of Rózsa's best work is in the variation form, I find this particular exercise somewhat labored, although I grant it does come off somewhat better when heard as part of the *Sinfonia*. Performances are impeccable.

That is what has been. Who knows what is to come? My own personal hopes are ambitious: I would like to see people singing and dancing on stage to Rózsa melodies. There is universal meaning in Flaubert's classic story of *Madame Bovary* and in the music Rózsa wrote for its filming. It could be the basis for a magnificent opera. Miklós Rózsa is not a 'film composer', even though he has composed for almost ninety films. I submit that his heart has always been and always will be on stage, performing directly to his audience without another medium intervening. When you listen to the music described above you will know this to be true. Rózsa is a composer for today and for tomorrow.

(Ed. Note: we have just learned that RCA is considering LSC 2802 for release on its Victrola label. The time to write RCA and urge them in this direction is now.)

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classifieds (rate: members \$1 per line/non-members \$2 per line):

FOR SALE OR TRADE: Rózsa's *To Everything There Is a Season*, Dot DLP 25304, Norman Soring Wright Cond. Hollywood First Methodist Church Choir, sealed \$30.
Norman Steward (address deleted)

Buy and trade soundtrack records. Want: SONG OF BERNADETTE, SPELLBOUND (Rem LP-1), 7TH VOYAGE OF SINBAD, NIGHT OF THE HUNTER etc. Over 100 RARE records to trade including: SALOME, RAINTREE COUNTY, SPIRIT OF ST. LOUIS, SAYONARA, FRIENDLY PERSUASION, TARAS BULBA, JUNGLE BOOK etc. Peter Kennedy (address deleted)

Rare Out-Of-Print Motion Picture Soundtrack and Show Albums. Mint Cond. Rózsa, Steiner, Newman, Waxman, Herrmann, Friedhofer, North, Bernstein, Styne, etc.
"ONLY THE BEST" Send 25¢ for Quality Catalog to ReCollections (address deleted)

CAPTAIN FROM CASTILLE. Limited quantity of mint, factory-sealed copies of Alfred Newman score, Merc. MG20005, Newman cond. \$25 per LP. Will also trade. Send money order or trade info to Ken Sutak (address deleted)

Announcing THE MIKLÓS RÓZSA SOCIETY SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE:

The MRSSS is ready to swing into action, offering rare tapes of recordings of Dr. Rózsa's music (and eventually that of other composers) to *members only*. Each release is approximately 45 minutes in length (two or three to be announced with each newsletter). Members are asked to supply their own blank tape (preferred: Sony PR150 or SLH180, but any high quality name-brand tape is welcome), or they may enclose \$4 (for PR150) or \$6 (for SLH180) and we will supply a fresh reel of tape (Sony 1800' polyester-base). All tapes are quarter-track, 7 ½ or 3 3/4 ips, maximum reel size 7". Each release will cost \$2, or \$3 if a Dolby copy is desired (the charge to cover handling, time, equipment maintenance, mailing, operating costs). Tapes will be returned by mail via the cheapest method (7-12 days), by special handling (2-4 days/35¢ extra), or air mail (\$1 extra). WS releases are stereo, WM mono. Herewith our first releases:

WS-1 Rózsa: *Cello Concerto*/Janos Starker, cello/Eliehu Inbal cond. the Berlin Radio Orchestra (broadcast) (sound rating: C-)

Rózsa: *Theme, Variations, and Finale*/Eugene Ormandy cond. the Philadelphia Orchestra (broadcast) (C)

WM-1 Rózsa: YOUNG BESS (film telecast, inc. dialogue excerpts) (B)

WM-2 Rózsa: BEN HUR Suites I & II/Rózsa cond. Glendale Symphony Orchestra (broadcast) (A-)

Rózsa: *Serenade for Orchestra (Hungarian Serenade)*/N. Sokoloff cond. La Jolla Festival Orchestra (deleted disc) (B)

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LETTERS:

We are somewhat embarrassed over the fact that once again we have run out of space in which to print a sampling of your letters and comments. Please keep them coming: our next issue will feature a full page of reader reactions (and that's a promise!).

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IN FUTURO: Myron Bronfeld's Rózsa discography continues with Part II: Filmusic/Ken Doeckel presents his impressions of Rózsa's four concerti/Mark Koldys analyzes THE POWER/the debut of a new MRS feature: a unique "filmusiquiz"/letters and new releases from the MRSSS.

ORDER BLANK (*deleted*)