

The MIKLÓS RÓZSA Society

'PRO MUSICA SANA'

Honorary President: *MIKLÓS RÓZSA*

Director: *John Fitzpatrick*

Associate Directors: *Ken Doeckel*

& *Mark Koldys*

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NEWS by John Fitzpatrick

This is a short issue, but we are happy to open it with some of the best news yet: Miklós Rózsa is now at work on a new film score with recording scheduled for the fall and release for Christmastime. *SINBAD'S GOLDEN VOYAGE* is the title of the Charles Schneer-Ray Harryhausen production, and those who enjoyed *THE SEVENTH VOYAGE OF SINBAD* and *JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS* will know what to expect. We will report next time on what can be done about a commercial recording. Membership renewals have been coming in steadily, so the reduced size of this issue is not due to any problems in that area. We thank especially Myron Bronfeld, Robert Eastman, Ken Frazier, and Fred Huster for extra contributions. But our present concern remains finding enough quality material for the newsletter. The next issue will definitely conclude the Rózsa discography; beyond that ...? Certainly there is no shortage of subject matter. Bernard Herrmann has had bad luck with his last two films (*THE BATTLE OF NERETVA* and *THE NIGHT DIGGER* never even went into general release), but his new one, an A.I.P. thriller called *SISTERS*, will be seen widely. Hugo Friedhofer's *PRIVATE PARTS* and Alex North's *THE REBEL JESUS* may prove interesting too. Friedhofer's new suite from his great score for *THE BEST YEARS OF OUR LIVES* will be premiered in several cities this year. On records we can look forward to a new collection of Jerome Moross chamber works (Desto 6469) and an RCA opera excerpts disc that includes a fifteen-minute suite from Korngold's *Violanta*. There are also new filmusic recordings from RCA and some new Rózsa on the Orion label (more on these in the articles that follow). More good news: English Polydor has reissued Vol. II of *BEN-HUR* and Seraphim has done the same for Walton's *Music from Shakespearean Films*. The latter is reported to have better sonics than the original pressing. Its jacket notes, which refer to Ken Satak's article on classic recordings, suggest that record companies are slowly becoming aware of the film music collector. Janos Starker and the Sacramento Symphony Orchestra performed the *Rózsa Cello Concerto* under Harry Newstone in Feb. Critical response was favorable and audience reaction, by all reports, even more so. A few corrections: the *Cello Concerto* is published by Breitkopf and Hartel, the *JUNGLE BOOK Suite* and *The Vintner's Daughter* by Broude Bros. Ltd. All three are available through Alexander Broude Inc. Broude Bros. also publish an *a-cappella* four-part choral version of the Lullaby from *JUNGLE BOOK* which features the male voices humming as in the film itself. And, George Korngold tells us that Lionel Newman did conduct the Warner Korngold disc (except for the march from *ROBIN HOOD* which was Graunke).

RÓZSA IN LONDON, OCTOBER 1972 by Christopher Palmer:

Before his Filmharmonic concert with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra on 7 Oct, Dr. Rózsa had the advantage of two full-length rehearsals, one on the morning of the concert at the Albert Hall, and even at this early stage the Maestro found himself in demand for autographs as he arrived. Both rehearsals augured well; the players soon warmed to what was for most of them unfamiliar music and responded enthusiastically to their conductor's firm and authoritative beat. The Albert Hall was sold out by the time of the concert; among those swelling the happy throng was a deputation from the Miklós Rózsa Foundation in Ghent, the members having travelled from Ghent and from Paris specially for the occasion. Dr. Rózsa was introduced by Michael Parkinson (a popular TV personality, to my mind utterly devoid of personality), and by the EL CID fanfare-which, alas, meant that the EL CID march, first on the programme, was shorn thereof. Rózsa's ready wit stood him in good stead for the little speech he made to his audience: "Ladies and gentlemen, it was in your fair city that I committed my first crime against the art of motion picture scoring. Conducting here tonight, I feel like a criminal

returning to the scene of his first crime."

The programme was a fairly long and taxing one, even allowing for the regrettable omission of the announced "*Quo Vadis Domine?*" (although we did get "Ave Caesar"). Far better to have-omitted the so-called "love theme" from SHERLOCK HOLMES (a truncated version of the slow movement of Op. 24) or the theme from the TV series FAMILY AT WAR (the 2nd subject of Vaughan Williams's Symphony #6, first movement). Perhaps these items wouldn't have worried anyone unfamiliar with their proper contexts, but I found them difficult to adjust to here--Op. 24 with its unique atmosphere so totally alien to that of 19th Century London, the VW theme the peak toward which the whole movement aspires. Oddly, the other TV theme on the programme--THE ONIEDIN LINE--which is drawn from a lovely moment in Khachaturian's *Spartacus*, prompted a particularly resonant and full-bodied reading. "Jennie's theme" from YOUNG WINSTON (one of the best British film scores of recent years) also received a loving and carefully articulated performance, one which evidently pleased the composer, Alfred Ralston, who was in the audience. LYDIA was marred at one point by a false string entry. (Incidentally, the full score could not be traced and had to be reconstructed by Zack Laurence from a piano reduction.) But Semprini's performance of the *SPELLBOUND Concerto* (minus theremin, alas) soon took the nasty taste away. I was surprised to learn that this fine musician had never played the work before, had, in fact, been unaware of its existence. Both his glittering performance and the fact that he would like now to record the piece (possibly with Ron Goodwin) suggest that he has been won over to it.

Predictably, it was the robust and sinewy romanticism of the epics that found the most favour with the audience--"Ave Caesar", the EL CID march with its exhilarating timpani flourish at the end, and the BEN-HUR prelude and "Parade of the Charioteers". Hearing these splendid pieces in the flesh for the first time brought home to me just how unusually devoid of bombast and rhetoric they are--Rózsa writes in the grand manner because he thinks in the grand manner, a decided advantage for any composer of scores for Biblical-military spectacles. The tremendous panache and rock-firmness of ensemble the orchestra brought to these selections indicated that they were as happy as the hugely appreciative audience to be entering into the spirit of the occasion. At the end of it all Dr. Rózsa was presented with an inscribed silver bowl, and when, ages later, he and Mrs. Rózsa emerged through the stage door, they found a reception awaiting them the likes of which would scarcely have disappointed David Cassidy.

The lecture at the National Film Theatre on the 22nd had been well publicised and was well-attended. Celebrities in the audience included Bernard Herrmann, Vincent Korda, and Leo Genn. Dr. Rózsa was in top form with a consistently absorbing blend of entertaining anecdote and informed analytical discussion. (He was too on the TV interview recorded shortly after the concert but not transmitted until January~ but in this case he had to be content with the usual catalog of platitudinous questions which his interlocutor at the NFT, Alan Warner, helpfully contrived to avoid.) Clips shown included THE THIEF OF BAGDAD (the flying horse sequence), JUNGLE BOOK (the burning of the forest), SPELLBOUND (the first kiss and the very Freudian opening of the seven doors), THE LOST WEEKEND (Don Birnam's walk along 2nd Avenue in search of a pawn shop), and QUO VADIS? (the death of Nero and finale). For the last, Dr. Rózsa interestingly recalled how difficult it was to get the BBC chorus to enunciate their spoken "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life" clearly--how innovatory was this use of choral speech in those pre-Penderecki days! There were also short extracts from KING OF KINGS (finale) and EL CID (the Rodrigo-Chimene reconciliation scene). The lecture actually began with the EL CID finale--highly effective as an opening it was, too, with that long silence before the great organ sunburst, that "unthinkable climax" as Harold Lamb called it. The lecture was recorded, and a tape is carried by the NFT archives. The concert, unfortunately, was not recorded--at least no commercial recording will be issued.

(Ed. Note: Full-page ad in the "Filmharmonic" program booklet--
"We've taken good care of Miklós Rózsa. We'll take good care of you.
BOAC.")

ANOTHER DETROIT PREMIERE by Mark Koldys

The Detroit premiere of Miklós Rózsa's *Concert Overture* was significant in two respects--as the second premiere in as many years of a Rózsa work in Detroit, and as the result, however indirect, of the activity of the MRS. It was member Charles Rileigh who suggested the work in a letter to former DSO music-director Sixten Ehrling, and this suggestion must have played some role in the work's appearance on the programs of 4 and 6 January, 1973.

Ehrling has a real affinity for 20th Century music. In the *Overture*, which opened a program that also included Prokofiev's 5th Piano Concerto and Strauss's *Symphonia Domestica*, his command over the orchestra's technical facility was well in evidence. The performance was accurate, incisive, and well-controlled in a way that made the Frankenland State performance sound tired. Despite tempos a trifle slower than those the composer adopts in his recordings, the performance never lacked forward motion. It is instructive to contrast this with the RCA disc where the tempos are faster, but the orchestral playing seems to lack conviction (the *fortissimos* sound notably disinterested, a quality marring too many Rózsa recordings).

Local critical reaction ranged from comments that "it bridged the gap between Hungary and Hollywood" (Jay Carr, *Detroit News*) to the statement that it was reminiscent of the scores Rózsa wrote for film spectacles (Collins George, *Detroit Free Press*). But the program notes were more well-informed, being cribbed by this writer from Ken Doeckel's biography of Rózsa in *Films in Review*. Radio announcer Les Martens relied on these notes too, making his comments more reliable than those of other announcers we have heard.

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THE BIRTH OF THE SPELLBOUND CONCERTO by Ted Wick:

As a naive young man, angry because so much music I liked could be heard only issuing from the movie screen, I once hired an orchestra and made a 13-minute transcription disc of the music from a film called *SINCE YOU WENT AWAY*. The pressings were given free to over a thousand radio stations. My boss, David O. Selznick, was aghast when he found out that I'd spent about \$12,000 on this project but pleased as hell when, quite suddenly, all one seemed to hear from the radio was the music from his film. This was a new form of movie publicity. Our next film was *SPELLBOUND*, and, when I heard the score by the then relatively unknown Miklós Rózsa, I was determined it should be made available to the public on records. Jim Conkling, then head of Capitol, turned me down flat, adding that "the record-buying public isn't at all interested in movie music." (Two years ago, here at my home, he admitted that this was one of his biggest boo-boos--which he hastened to rectify when he became president of Warner Brothers records by issuing a full recording of the score.) RCA and Columbia turned me down too. In desperation, I applied to an unknown label called ARA Records and made a deal that if our studio (Selznick International, actually called Vanguard Pictures) would pay for the recordings and provide the master ARA would press the records and release the album. Again with no permission I dipped into Selznick's pocket, got Mr. Rózsa to prepare the score for phonograph recording, hired my two friends Edie Griffith and Rack Godwin to play twin pianos, and produced the first recording of *SPELLBOUND*. Rózsa gave in to my whim about the two pianos because he knew I was trying to give my two friends a job and also because he agreed that this last side (known as the *SPELLBOUND Concerto*) wasn't all THAT bad an idea. Again spending Selznick's money, I sent pressings of this album to every radio station in the country, and again they played the hell out of it. I believe the score won the Academy Award that year. In any case, RCA soon rushed out a record of the themes from *SPELLBOUND*, and Rózsa was on his way. So, incidentally, was the idea of releasing movie music on records, for, as I had hoped and predicted, the public really did want to hear movie music. Thus I had not only the pleasure of pioneering this form of music on records but also the utter joy of knowing and working with a wonderfully talented and extremely charming man--Miklós Rózsa. I'm happy you have founded a Miklós Rózsa Society and wish you well with your acknowledgment of his wonderful talent. Guadalajara, Mexico/MAR '72 *

ROME:

(These two paragraphs from Dr. Rózsa's eulogy for pianist-educator John Crown, written for the Los Angeles Times of 23 April 1972, throw a special light on Dr. Rózsa's own creative inspiration.)

When I lived in Rome, I used to evaluate my friends and acquaintances according to their reactions to the Eternal City. I found that Rome reveals herself only to those who are attuned to her beauty. No one received a higher mark than John Crown. I had the privilege of showing him and his family this City of Cities, and his enthusiasm in meeting for the first time the miracles of antique grandeur of Rome was overwhelming. It was greatness meeting with greatness.

And how moved he was to see the small church on Monte Carlo where Liszt used to play the organ and see the houses where Clementi, Goethe, Shelley, Keats, Byron, Sir Walter Scott, Wagner, and Browning used to live. As we sat in the Cafe Greco where Berlioz, Mendelssohn, Bizet, Gounod, and Debussy sat once, tears filled his eyes. It was a sentimental journey of a great soul to the fading memories of the great artists of bygone times.

RENAISSANCE AT RCA by Mark Koldys

Elmer Bernstein's attempt at organizing a new series of film music recordings has all but collapsed due to lack of funding, but at RCA producer George Korngold and conductor Charles Gerhardt have inaugurated a major series of recordings of which one (THE SEA HAWK) has already found a niche for itself in the list of top-ten-selling classical LPs. A second album, "NOW VOYAGER, The Classic Scores of Max Steiner" ARL 1-0136, has just been issued; it includes important suites from KING KONG, THE BIG SLEEP, and THE FOUNTAINHEAD. It will be reviewed in our next issue.

There is more to come. Already recorded and awaiting issue is an Alfred Newman LP to include music from THE ROBE, SONG OF BERNADETTE, and WUTHERING HEIGHTS: Korngold will be represented by his *Symphony, Cello Concerto*, and music from THE SEA WOLF, ELIZABETH AND ESSEX, and ANOTHER DAWN. Steiner will get a second outing with an album devoted entirely to his scores for Bette Davis. Depending upon the success of these releases, plans are under consideration for a complete Korngold *Dead City*, and albums of Herrmann, Waxman (who also has a relative at RCA), and Tiomkin. Miklós Rózsa is most definitely under consideration, with the most likely prospects being SPELLBOUND, QUO VADIS?, and JUNGLE BOOK.

Meanwhile, Mr. Korngold is having a tough time with a record that has just been issued on the new Phorion label; it includes his father's *Serenade for Strings* conducted by William Steinberg, and the *Cello Concerto* and *Much Ado About Nothing* conducted by "Anton Bauer" (LP-9002). The label's name appears to be well-chosen: a lawsuit is being contemplated, as these recordings literally are stolen goods!

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classifieds (rate: \$1 per line):

Advertise for material on your favourites free in the news quarterly magazine for collectors of items relating to the cinema, INTERNATIONAL FILM COLLECTOR. Available from the publisher, J.W. Skinner, 31b Chapel Road, Worthing BN11 1EG, Sussex, England. 35p per copy or 1.40p per year. (In U.S. and Canada \$7.50 per year air or \$4.30 sea .)

FROM DR. RÓZSA:

Many thanks for the new newsletter (Winter) which is the best so far. I was delighted to see a review of the new RCA Korngold album and I hope that all of his music will soon be available on records. He was a great composer and his film scores are milestones in the history of film-music. What a pity that the Heifetz recording of the Violin Concerto is out-of-print; RCA should be forced by public demand to reissue it.

Stanley Black's BEN-HUR medley is news for me; I never knew about its existence. Accidentally I came across in London an EMI (MFP 5261) album of Geoff Love and his orchestra in which Robert Ducker plays his (or Love's) version of my *SPELLBOUND Concerto*. Although I prefer my own version, it is quite brilliant and, as I hear from Chappell (the publisher), it is selling like hot cakes in England. Now Semprini will record it with Ron Goodwin's orchestra for HMV.

In February Alice and Elanore Schoenfeld will record my *Sinfonia Concertante* for the Hanover, Stuttgart, and Basel radios, and on May 28, Josef Suk and Janos Starker, under the conducting of Gyorgy Lehel, will perform it in Budapest. On March 29 and 30 there will be performances of the same work in Cottbus (East

Germany) with violinist Erben and cellist Hanoll, and, as I hear, Milton Katims plans to open his next season in Seattle with this work, and Baltimore will do it too. Endre Granat, a brilliant pupil of Heifetz, will record this month (Feb.) my *Variations on a Hungarian Peasant song* Op. 4, *North Hungarian Peasant Songs and Dances* Op. 5, and *Duo for Violin and Piano* Op. 7 with Leonard Pennario for the Orion label. Albert Dominguez will record my *Piano Sonata* for the same label. The Hungarian pianist Erzsébet Tusa (who has already played my *Piano Concerto* in Budapest, Freiburg, and Bremerhaven) will record it under Thomas Ungar on June 12 for the Basel radio.

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LETTERS:

The dismissal of Hageman's *STAGECOACH* was uncalled for. Almost everyone who ever scored a Ford western was either required to write from a folk basis or, knowing Ford's feelings, did so voluntarily. And *STAGECOACH* is considered the model of this kind of scoring, adhered to by Newman (*YOUNG MR. LINCOLN*, *GRAPES OF WRATH*), Steiner (*THE SEARCHERS*), Young (*RIO GRANDE*), Mockridge (*MY DARLING CLEMENTINE*, *LIBERTY VALANCE*), Buttolph (*THE HORSE SOLDIERS*), and of course Hageman elsewhere (*SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON*). This kind of score suited Ford's films perfectly, and his composers knew it. The only substantially original score for a Ford western was North's for *CHEYENNE AUTUMN*, and Ford hated it. And *STAGECOACH* did not win an Oscar over *WUTHERING HEIGHTS*--they were nominated in different categories. *WUTHERING HEIGHTS* lost to *THE WIZARD OF OZ*, which is just as ridiculous, but was not deserving in any case. After all, 1939 was the year of *GONE WITH THE WIND*. *KEN SUTAK*, New York City Both articles (Fall) were good in their way, but I can't help wishing that Bronfeld had observed DeWald's criteria. Then perhaps he would not have slighted *MADADAME BOVARY*'s very real and permanent status as a film score by implying that it would fare better in some other medium. Does he really want the action of the story to be thrust into the background while some overweight soprano does a lot of fancy vocalizing? Thanks to Rózsa's music, *MADAME BOVARY* is an opera, a true music drama, and a far more vital one than any stage could ever contain.

ED SEYMOUR, Portsmouth, MASS

FILMUSIQUIZ #1 by Adam Hart:

The object: identify the film sources of these 3 Rozsa themes:

[1] *mysterioso*
 [2] *moderato*
 [3] *impetuoso*

The answers next issue; good luck!

Back issues: \$1 each.

The Miklos Rozsa Society
 c/o John Fitzpatrick
 1389 Eigenmann
 Indiana University
 Bloomington, IN 47401