

PRO MUSICA SANA
A PUBLICATION OF
The Miklós Rózsa Society
—Since 1972—

SERIES 2: Vol. 3, No. 1

Spring 1999

PMS 57

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ISSN 0361-9559

News and Happenings

June 1999

On Line for '99

In January the Miklós Rózsa Society went on line with an electronic newsletter. Here's how it opened:

Bulletin Launched

The MRS must be doing something right to have endured for twenty-seven years. But timeliness has never been our greatest virtue. The *Bulletin* is an attempt to remedy that failing and reach out to a larger readership. Where *Pro Musica Sana* has aspired to elegance, solidity, and permanent value, the *Bulletin* will be quick, casual, and freely available to anybody who wants to receive it. We see it as precursor to a Society Web site. (If anybody doubts how useful such a site can be, just check out *Film Score Monthly* at www.filmscoremonthly.com.) The *Bulletin* will emphasize current and forthcoming events and will try to generate discussions that will be continued in PMS.

The best of the *Bulletin* may be incorporated into PMS, but film music's oldest journal alone will carry the full-scale analyses and commentaries that have been our hallmark. In short, the *Bulletin* will address the broad Rozsaphile community, while PMS will be reserved for dues-paying full members of the Society and for those interested in our recording service.

Web Site Established

Even as the above words were being spread around the world, a Society Web site was already taking shape (<http://www.miklosrozsza.cjb.net>). It took a newcomer to make it happen. Mathew K. Gear of Wamberal, Australia, initiated the site as a personal labor of love. Then he came to the MRS, which has provided additional content and suggestions, while Matthew handles the imaginative and technical development. Already the site has gained us new friends and new members. We hope it will continue to bring the worldwide Rozsaphile community together. And we welcome Matthew, who tells in his own words why he came to create the site:

Over the last year I have indulged my interest in music by building Web sites devoted to some of my favourite composers. Living in Australia isolates me somewhat from the music community, but through the communications marvel of the Internet, I have managed to meet a lot of very fascinating music fans who share my unique interests. My first venture was The Twelve Mile Reef, a Web site for the American composer Bernard Herrmann. In this capacity I have had the pleasure of interviewing record producer John Morgan (twice), Swiss conductor Adriano, and U.S. radio

producer Bruce Crawford (who made the splendid Herrmann and Rózsa programs a couple of years back). I'm a university student in Sydney, studying Psychology and Economics. I privately study composition, guitar, and flute. I recently completed a symphonic concert overture and some other short chamber/jazz pieces. I'm currently working on a song cycle and will get around to writing some large-scale works one of these days. . . . I am happy to be working on the MRS Web site and welcome any comments, suggestions, or criticisms. You can find all of my sites at my home page (<http://www.freepress.org/eclectica>).

The next step? How about a Rózsa "message board" like *Film Score Monthly*'s? Folks could chat freely about MR all day long—free of the inhibiting influence of the Editor in Chief! Matthew can set up the facility at the Web site. What is needed is a moderator: somebody who can audit and post the traffic once a day. Any takers?

Two Communities?

PMS presently has some 200 paying subscribers, down from a peak of 400 in the late 1970s. (To put the number in perspective, *Film Score Monthly* prints over 8,000 copies of each issue.) The *Bulletin* now goes to about 100 individuals, many of whom are not active Society members and do not receive PMS. The *Bulletin* carries the news because people need it; PMS carries the news for the same reason—and also "for the record." So there's bound to be some repetition. *Bulletin* recipients are advised at least to scan the news columns of PMS for the occasional fresh item or interpretation.

Performances

The Violin Concerto was performed twice by Robert McDuffie—on 27 February with the Long Beach (Calif.) Symphony under JoAnn Falletta, and with the Atlanta Symphony under Yoel Levi on 4, 5, and 6 March. "A masterpiece in the hands of a master player" wrote Judith Green in the *Atlanta Constitution*. Then on the 11th, 12th, and 13th, McDuffie teamed with cellist Lynn Harrell in the Theme and Variations for Violin and Cello (Op. 29a; slow movement of *Sinfonia Concertante*). Harrell, coming off an incapacitating illness, performed the Cello Concerto at this same concert. The heavy-duty teaming was in preparation for Telarc's recording sessions. All three works will appear on a Telarc CD next year.

(continued on page 22)

Lust for Life

An Impression

Frank K. DeWald

For a Hollywood biopic of its era, *LUST FOR LIFE* is a model of integrity. Producer John Houseman and director Vincente Minnelli went to great lengths to ensure historical accuracy, from location shooting to a painstaking recreation of the people and places in Vincent van Gogh's life. Every aspect of the production was aimed at fully realizing the drama and beauty of the artist's life and work. Minnelli recounts in his memoirs how he battled with M-G-M to use a brand of film which would better capture the colors in van Gogh's palette, and how he fought against using CinemaScope, since the dimensions of the wider screen bear little relation to the shape of most paintings. (It is ironic that he won the former fight but lost the latter, since the pretty Eastman tones he preferred have not endured as well as Technicolor would have.)

Minnelli's composer was, of course, famous at the time for incorporating historical research into his scores, and so it could be expected that he, too, would bring an informed sense of musical style to his task. He wrote in *Double Life*:

I asked myself what sort of music van Gogh would have known. He was a Postimpressionist, but Postimpressionism in music comes much later than van Gogh's death at the end of the nineteenth century; pictorial trends are always between twenty-five and forty years ahead. The music he himself knew would have been that of the 1880s—Wagner, Liszt, César Franck—but I felt that mid-nineteenth-century romanticism had little in common with his work. Somehow I had to evolve a suitable style in terms of my own music. It had to be somewhat impressionistic, somewhat pointillistic, somewhat post-romantic and brightly, even startlingly colorful, much like the tenor of his paintings.

As Christopher Palmer has pointed out, Rózsa's own style already contained numerous characteristics of musical impressionism, derived from his own folk origins. Therefore it did no violence to the composer's personal idiom to incorporate impressionistic techniques such as quartal harmonies (chords built in fourths rather than the traditional thirds), extended tertian harmonies (building on additional thirds to make 7th, 9th, 11th and 13th chords), triads with added seconds, fourths and sixths, and nonfunctional harmony (chords that are not related to each other in any traditional way). The result, although far from authentic Debussy (*La Mer*) or Ravel (*Daphnis et Chloé*) gives this score a unique harmonic/orchestral color (what Verdi appropriately called "tinta") which is immediately identifiable as authentic Rózsa yet sits apart from his other romantic/historical scores of the fifties.

Minnelli's work on the production was relatively unhampered, with the completed film essentially unchanged by studio editors. Rózsa's score was also left mostly intact, without the butchering that, for example, maimed *EL CID*. The accompanying table of contents for the score shows that only one cue was completely cut and few others were subject to more than minor pruning.

Score Cues with Lengths in Final Cut

Prelude	1:54*	Postman Roulin	0:31
The Borinage	0:23	Arlesiana	1:02
The Mine	1:07	The Yellow House	1:03
The Evangelist	1:05	Summer	1:55
Disaster	1:19	Mistral	1:25
Theo	1:17*	Reunion	2:22
Brotherly Love	1:25	Romance	1:44
Home	1:10	Bliss	0:14
Summertime	1:47*	Argument	0:15
Summertime—New Ending	0:23	Conflict	1:54
Refusal	1:07	Loneliness	0:39
Pain	0:23	Madness	1:51
Persistence	0:59	Crisis	0:43
Drinklied		Asylum	0:49
Sien	1:11	Inertia	0:54
Contentment	1:41	The Reaper	1:47
Plein Air	0:24	Seizure	1:27
Outburst	0:29**	False Hopes	0:51
Farewell	2:04*	Blind Leading Blind	1:39
The Artist	2:03	Carrousel (sic)	1:30
Impressionism	0:35	Last Strokes	0:54
Light and Color	1:01	Suicide	0:37
Noble Savage	0:55	Journey's End	1:56
Belief	2:15	Finale	0:46
The Orchards	1:10	Apotheosis	1:27
* partially cut from film			
** cut from film			

There are remarkably few themes in the picture. Rózsa himself delineated the principal examples in an article he wrote for *Film Music Notes* shortly after the film premiered (No. 16 [Fall 1956], pp. 3–7). Where possible, I will refer to the themes using the same titles that Rózsa used there. I have also taken the liberty of transcribing the composer’s own handwritten piano transcriptions from the same article to use as musical examples.

The film opens with what Rózsa described as the “theme of yearning and seeking which characterizes musically Vincent’s eternal search for the infinite and unreachable.” It is built from wide-reaching intervals such as the initial seventh and encompasses a broad, high arch covering two octaves (Figure 1). The upbeat triplet rhythm, repeatedly echoed in the accompaniment, somewhat softens the jagged effect of the melodic line, as do the confident, striding bass line and the warm, modal harmonies. The theme is preceded in the main titles (what the composer typically calls the Prelude) by an *allegro frenetico* introduction which twists the opening 4-note motive into a powerfully intense dominant preparation (B minor) for the E minor theme itself.¹

¹ This soundtrack version is tauter and more precise than the expansive prelude Rózsa developed for his concert suite, as reflected in their respective timings of 1:30 and 3:05. Some of this may have been compositional “second thoughts” and some may have merely been the result of the composer’s freedom from the tyranny of a stopwatch. In either case, it provides more evidence in the ongoing debate on the relative merits of “filmusic” vs. “film music.” There is no question that Rózsa always preferred to reshape his music when it was meant to be heard away from a film.



Figure 1. Theme of Yearning and Seeking

The Prelude should have ended in the film with what Rózsa labeled the “theme of achievement,” clearly derived from the second half of the first theme (Figure 2). In fact, the soundtrack is faded out at 1:27 even though there is still a half minute of music left in the score. The word “foreword” placed in the score at this point causes speculation that perhaps there had been a written or spoken introduction that was cut in favor of proceeding directly to the story. The Theme of Yearning returns briefly after the opening scene, as the camera pans “The Borinage”, the bleak mining community where Vincent will be given a second chance to prove his vocation as a minister.

The music for Vincent’s descent into “The Mine” is based on a short motive which, in typical Rózsa fashion, attempts to rise but always falls back on itself (Figure 3). It is propelled forward by the nervous, edgy sound of *tremolando* strings and an obstinate offbeat rhythm in the celli (later in the violins). Unfortunately, many splashes of subtle orchestral color (such as the use of the vibraphone at 0:46) are lost in the sound mix. An overlap (two bars earlier than it should have happened) leads to “The Evangelist,” in which the same motive loses its heavy bass and moves to the middle and upper ranges of the orchestra as Vincent is seen trying to wash the coal dust from his face. As he resolves to get more involved with helping the miners, his own theme (the Theme of Yearning)



Figure 2. Theme of Achievement



Figure 3. The Mine

returns (*animato*, later *molto appassionato*), confident and optimistic, succeeded by the mine theme again as the camera dissolves to shots of Vincent working with the women and children in the coal pit.

Vincent's theme and the mine motive are the principal musical materials of the underscore when "Disaster" strikes the miners. An *allegro moderato* gives urgency and drama to the scene which builds in intensity until an awkward edit at 1:03 brings an abrupt change of tempo (*adagio*). The mine motive is heard for the last time at the end of this cue.

The theme for Vincent's brother "Theo" (which Rózsa called the "Theme of Brotherly Love") is introduced unobtrusively in the next cue. Actually, the music was intended to begin several seconds earlier, with a harsh orchestral "sting" as Vincent calls out "Hypocrite! Hypocrite" to the departing representatives of the Committee for the Faith, followed by an impassioned fragment of his own theme. These eighteen seconds were left off the soundtrack—perhaps an unwise decision for they would have effectively underscored Vincent's dejection and frustration. In the event, the scene changes to Theo inquiring among the inhabitants of the Borinage for Vincent's whereabouts, and a brief four-bar fragment of his theme segues to several gentle woodwind variations on the Theme of Yearning as he enters his brother's room and takes stock of the preacher's miserable surroundings.

"Brotherly Love" makes its first complete appearance at the end of this same scene. It is a warm and friendly theme, usually played by the cello section (Figure 4). Unlike the impulsive, striving opening sevenths of the Theme of Yearning, Brotherly Love begins with three rising fourths,



Figure 4. Brotherly Love

against a gently undulating harmony also built from fourths. Its effect here is very calming and comforting, a serene, stable musical force in total contrast with Vincent’s more urgent, turbulent theme. When Theo tells Vincent, “We’re still brothers; we’re friends,” the melodic line is heard as a canon, musically apt but also a perfect dramatic symbol of the close relationship between the two brothers.

The same theme returns when Vincent, having gone “Home,” writes to Theo about the peace he has found there. Brotherly Love plays underneath as Theo reads the letter—a framing device which will be used throughout the film, always associated with the same leitmotif. Actor James Donald’s mellifluous voice and warm, dramatic reading of Vincent’s words make a perfect foil for Rózsa’s theme. Theo continues to read but the scene shifts to various landscapes where Vincent has been exploring his talent as an artist, accompanied by appropriately soft variations on the Theme of Yearning, first in wind solos (English horn and clarinet) and then in strings. A final phrase from the clarinet above an unsettled harmony finishes the cue as Vincent is called to dinner by his sister.

The next two cues make a fairly long, unbroken stretch of music. Theo reads Vincent’s letter (to the expected Theme of Brotherly Love) as we watch Vincent drawing inside his room. He looks outside to see his cousin Kay in a beautiful “Summertime” landscape, and we begin a *scherzando* section—one of the more overtly impressionistic passages in the score, superficially (at least) akin to Debussy. It evolves into a truly pastoral version of the Theme of Yearning; in fact, the playful flute solo with which the section begins is derived from that theme (Figure 5). At the end of the 29th bar (forty-eight seconds into the cue), the score indicates a segue to “Summertime—New Ending” even though nearly a minute of music remains.² Perhaps some footage from the scene was cut, for the



Figure 5. Scherzando

² Most of the cut music was restored when Rózsa fashioned the suite for his Polydor album.

new ending is only twenty-three seconds long and segues directly to the next cue, in which Kay’s “Refusal” to accept Vincent’s show of affection causes him great pain. Here, we start with the Theme of Yearning played *molto espressivo* by a solo oboe and other winds. The harmony is relaxed, warm—this could have developed into a beautiful love theme had the story been different. A disturbing change occurs when Vincent presses his suit more aggressively, frightening Kay. Strings take over the theme, which gathers strength and momentum, piling on more volume, greater dissonance and an increasing tempo. The music cuts off abruptly as Kay declaims “No. Never! Never!” A *fortissimo* sting (actually a three-bar phrase in the score reduced here to its first chord) is followed by a drastic drop in dynamic level and a little rhythmic motive for the train on which a brooding Vincent rides in pursuit of Kay (Figure 6). Although the voice-over is Theo reading from Vincent’s letter, the Theme of Brotherly Love is not used in this instance, since it would have introduced quite the wrong mood.



Figure 6. Motive for the Train

To Kay’s father, Vincent demonstrates his fortitude by enduring the “Pain” of holding his hand over a flame. The music mirrors his increasing agony (more than actor Douglas, whose face shows very little at this point!) through the Theme of Yearning, quiet, understated at first, but gradually mocking and strident. A xylophone is prominent among the orchestral colors. Unfortunately, Kay refuses to see him, having told her father that Vincent’s “Persistence” disgusts her. His dejection is underscored by a slow version of the same motive that had accompanied his train ride in the preceding scene. Rózsa uses the syncopated rhythm () to which he often resorts for impatience or tension, although as used here it has more of a sad, mournful quality. As the scene changes to Vincent, standing on a bridge and staring at the water (obviously contemplating suicide), the music takes on an interesting and unique color: pizzicato basses and timpani provide the heavy tread of a *basso ostinato* (incorporating an unsettling tritone) below chords on the marimba, all doubled by harp and piano. On-scene chimes enhance the sound picture. Vincent rejects suicide (for the moment) and enters a tavern, where further on-scene music (in the form of an accordion) provides a complete contrast: a traditional “Drinklied” that is soon cut off, only to resume and fade quickly as the player leaves the scene.

In the tavern, Vincent meets Christine, the woman of the streets with whom he will live for two years. Her theme (“Sien”) is described by Rózsa as “nostalgic and tender, as for a while she meant fulfillment and haven for him” (Figure 7). It is most subtly introduced on solo clarinet, soon succeeded by Brotherly Love, in a new key and against a steady harp ostinato, as Theo reads Vincent’s letter about Sien. The scene returns to Vincent and Sien and the music shifts back to her theme, this time on solo oboe. The camera stays on the couple but Theo’s narration returns, as does his theme, this time on a solo cello. In this brief cue, just over a minute long, Rózsa has twice switched back and forth between two themes with complete *dramatic* logic and yet with a fulfilling and natural sense of *musical* form as well. It is just this talent, combined with his instinct for creating an appropriate melody, that made him a master of music in film.



Figure 7. Sien

Sien poses for Vincent, and the music underscores the “Contentment” of their life together. Her theme is heard again, on clarinet, then oboe, then finally in a warm C major on violas and cello. The oboe and celeste play a perky, folk-like tune for Sien’s child (reminiscent of the young prince’s march in *YOUNG BESS*) (Figure 8). The violas and cello resume the melody, but this time it is Theo’s theme as we hear him reading Vincent’s letter describing their domestic bliss. The child’s theme briefly returns before the scene and the orchestra open up to an ecstatic version of Sien’s theme, with throbbing, impressionistic arpeggios and trills against the sound of a pounding surf. The passion of the moment quickly changes, however, for the wind is blowing (“Plein Air”) and Sien has clearly lost patience with Vincent’s passion for painting.



Figure 8. Sien’s Child

This is followed by an argument in Vincent’s cottage. In an angry “Outburst,” Vincent declares that he is unwilling to ask his cousin Mauve for further help. Although there is strong orchestral *tutti* indicated in the score, the music, which is based on a distorted fragment of Vincent’s theme (which we will later call the Theme of Madness), was not used. Here the acting is strong and the situation melodramatic enough that perhaps the underscore was deemed redundant. At least it is a very short cue (0:29) and contains no thematic material we cannot hear elsewhere.

Sien decides to leave Vincent and return to her mother. A heavy, discolored motive, topped



Figure 9. Farewell

they were inappropriate but because the scene was foreshortened and begins immediately with dialogue.

Vincent decides that his best course is to resume painting in the fields and among “his” people, keeping him close to his beloved earth. As he writes with confidence to Theo, we hear the expected theme of Brotherly Love, enhanced by flute arabesques, perhaps inspired by the outdoor setting. In a masterly visual montage we see “The Artist” at work. Minnelli intersperses painstakingly reconstructed live shots with some of van Gogh’s best-known paintings. As the villagers leave their church service, Rózsa resorts to a short woodwind chorale with a folk-flavored melody. Vincent’s churchgoing neighbors do not appreciate him, yet he continues to paint with confidence, bolstered by an animated version of his theme, mostly in strings. The theme of Brotherly Love makes a brief return appearance, and this delightful cue ends with a simple, pastoral tune on oboe and clarinet.

Although he seems happy, Vincent wonders if it isn’t time to move on. In Paris he attends an “Impressionism” exhibit and experiences an exciting rebirth. The music here is the closest thing to a Debussy pastiche in the score. The pentatonic melody (Figure 10), the orchestral colors (harp, woodwinds, *pizzicato* celli, muted tremolos in upper strings), the perky, nervous rhythms all point to a deliberate effort on the composer’s part to emulate the earlier master. Rózsa was well aware, as we have seen, of the time lag between visual and musical impressionism, yet his choice of style for this scene is perfectly apt.



Figure 10. Impressionism

In his search for “Light and Color,” Vincent visits first Pissarro and then other impressionists to hear their ideas and learn their techniques. The music continues in a very impressionistic vein, somewhat reminiscent of Arthur Honegger’s *Pastorale d’été*. After a four-bar introduction using Theo’s theme, a lovely oboe tune based on the preceding cue is heard over a background of shimmering strings. As the camera pans over several of Vincent’s early attempts at impressionism (yet another lovely montage), the music comes to the fore. The melody sings out passionately in divided violins (an octave apart) over a bubbling pentatonic ostinato. It is full of life and optimism and supported here by rich major harmonies.

Gauguin, the “Noble Savage,” is introduced by a theme that is, in the composer’s own words, “self-assertive and determined” (Figure 11). In its first appearance it strides confidently in French horn and string colors against a gentle haze of warm, 13th chords (derived by piling additional thirds onto traditional triads), over a solid bass line alternating between tonic and dominant notes. Rózsa intended it to contrast with Vincent’s theme, since Gauguin, unlike Vincent, “was selfish, ruthless and knew exactly what he wanted.” Here at first, however, there is little hint of the stormy relationship that will develop between the two friends.

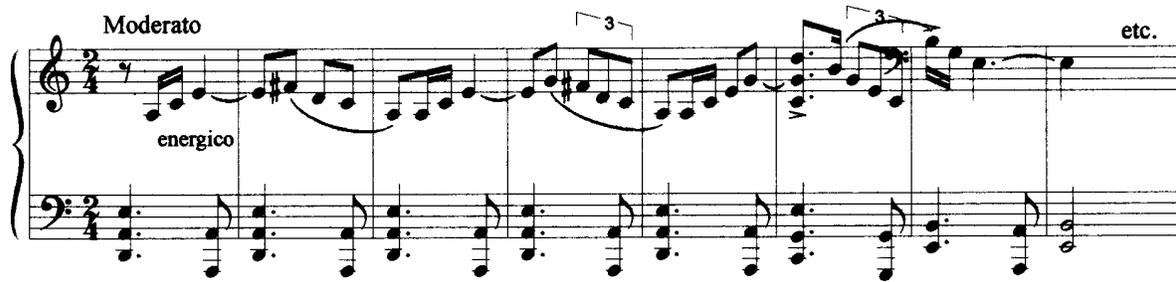


Figure 11. Noble Savage

Vincent decides a change is in order and leaves Theo a note to say that he is moving to Arles. As Theo reads the note, Brotherly Love makes its expected appearance, but this time it takes on some interesting development as Theo argues with his employer, expressing his “Belief” in his brother’s talent. When he reads that Vincent wants to “see nature under a clearer sky,” the melody moves out of the cello and into a prominent flute solo. The melody loses its way for a moment as the discussion heats up, but returns (again in cello) as a passionate Theo defends his brother as a “gifted” and “tender man” who shows great beauty in his work. The scene dissolves to Arles, where Theo fears Vincent may “only find more loneliness.” The Theme of Yearning quietly ends the cue, putting us in utter sympathy with Vincent as we watch him leave the train station and set out on the next step in his search for happiness.

The next morning, Vincent awakes in his newly rented room and goes to open the shuttered window. Precisely at the moment we see “The Orchards” outside, the music bursts forth with a full, impressionistic flowering of the Theme of Achievement. As the camera pans out, the music expresses an exhilaration which is quite thrilling. Here, for once, Vincent realizes what the composer said he meant to convey in this theme—”the beauty and contentment of creation.” We see other views of the orchards and eventually close-ups of Vincent’s actual paintings, with the camera always moving and the throbbing pulse of the music propelling us forward. The synergy of music and image here is something quite special—one of the highlights of the score. The cue ends with the Theme of Brotherly Love, perhaps to remind us that it has been Theo’s support that has made all this possible. Two little flute arabesques add a nice, final touch of outdoor color. This glorious cue can be heard, in a revised form, in the suite *Rózsa* fashioned for his Polydor album. (See “A Note About the Score.”)

The next music is a series of five continuous cues lasting almost seven minutes—the longest



ment of the JUST FOR LIFE Suite. A few bars of Theo’s theme underscore Vincent’s description of his new lodgings (“The Yellow House”) until Roulin’s theme returns, first on bassoon and then on a cheeky clarinet, as the postman and friends help Vincent move in. The music gives the scene a rather bohemian, carefree air which turns to contentment as the Theme of Achievement takes over. We see

Vincent happily settled in his new lodgings and expressing the hope that perhaps Gauguin will join him there. The absence of Theo's theme under this narration perhaps reflects a new independence for Vincent, as though he has finally found himself. The mention of Gauguin brings forth a few bars of his theme, bringing us to the next cue, as Vincent describes the beauty of "Summer." A pastoral oboe plays a gentle reminder of the Theme of Achievement. As the scene dissolves to the countryside, an animated and splendidly warm rendition of the Theme of Achievement underscores a happy period in Vincent's life. The harmonies are rich and in the major rather than minor mode. Rózsa even uses some of the harmony built in fourths that is more associated with Theo than Vincent. The music starts to darken, however, just as Vincent declares he is without doubts or limitations. He is driving himself too hard, and the music hints at the madness to come. There is a temporary respite as Vincent returns home. We hear his theme in a canon between clarinet and bass clarinet (later flute and horn), colored by the tinkling of bells from an passing religious procession.

An abrupt change in both scene and score reflects the passing of summer and the arrival of "The Mistral" winds. With cunning orchestral colors—*sul ponticello* and *tremolando* strings, cymbal roll and flutter-tongue flutes—Rózsa paints an edgy, nervous picture of Vincent's mood. Vincent seeks escape from "the storm inside" him by going to a cafe for drink and companionship. Here there is a brief miscalculation in the score. A solo piano, instructed to play "con sentimento," gives us a tune that seems to have wandered in from a forties bar set in a film noir (Figure 13). Mercifully, it is a short passage. The orchestra takes over again on a close-up of Vincent's palette, and again we marvel at the composer's sense of orchestral color—*tremolando* strings, brass and woodwind chords, harp glissandi punctuated by glockenspiel—impressive enough until the camera hits and pans down Vincent's famous "Starry Night" painting when an even more striking orchestral brush stroke made up of flourishes from flute, piccolo, harp and piano hits us with great force. There is a final crescendo (an unusual way to end a cue), cut off by the sound of the cafe owner setting down one more bottle in front of a brooding, miserable Vincent as the next scene begins.

Theo hopes that a visit from Gauguin may help, so he plans a "Reunion" for the two artists. As Gauguin arrives in Arles, we hear a calming, sweet version of his theme.³ The music becomes more animated as we see Vincent rushing to greet his fellow artist; eventually it becomes a straightforward development of the Theme of Achievement (first on solo French horn, then violins) as Gauguin surveys the results of Vincent's most recent work. Gauguin's own theme returns to round off the cue to make a musically complete (and typical) *ABA* structure.

³ The composer recounts in *Double Life* how he had originally wanted to evoke "an extrovert, south-of-France atmosphere," but was persuaded by Houseman to "reinforce emotion" rather than "illustrate scenery." By his own admission, the final result "gave the drama more positive support." The mood reflects the soothing effect which Theo hopes Gauguin's visit will have on Vincent.



Figure 13. Con Sentimento

It is not long before Gauguin and van Gogh start to argue vehemently, and they go for a drink to cool their tempers. Gauguin is restless, and urges Vincent to go with him in search of some women. As they encounter a street brawl, the sound of a piano comes drifting from a nearby cafe. The music is a fragment of the “Romance” which Rózsa provided for the next scene. It is a piece of source music, although the instrument never actually appears on screen. We have already heard a bit of this tune in the preceding cafe scene. Although the score is marked “Andante,” the pianist takes it rather fast (more a feeling of cut time than the 4/4 in which the piece is notated), resulting in the need to go back to the beginning and play it through again almost to the end to fill the necessary time frame. The second time through the player fills out the texture a bit by playing the melody an octave higher. The tune itself hasn’t changed since its earlier appearance, however, and still seems a little anachronistic in style. If it is less bothersome here, it may be because there is no orchestral part and because there is a certain “low life” feel to the scene and the situation that lends itself to the cheap sentimentality of the music.

A very brief reference to Theo’s theme underscores Vincent’s description of the “Bliss” he feels at Gauguin’s visit. The tension between the two continues, however, and as Vincent describes their next “Argument” the Theme of Madness is introduced. It is a variation of Vincent’s Theme of Yearning and Seeking, distorted both rhythmically and melodically (Figure 14). It is a fleeting reference—only fifteen seconds, but Vincent’s coming madness is thus prefigured both musically and dramatically. This cue is followed by a repeat of “Mistral” which is not shown in the score. Several parts of the cue are repeated in order to make it long enough to cover the next scene. It may or may not have been the composer’s idea to use this music here, but it is effective in any case, strengthening the feeling of tension, unrest and impending tragedy.

The “Conflict” between the two men reaches the boiling point. The music takes over just as the sound of the strong Mistral winds is shut off by Vincent closing the door—an effective aural transition. A new motive is used—as though neither man has the upper hand. It is a chromatic, dissonant motive, beginning in the mid-lower range of the orchestra, descending to the bass, then



Figure 14. Theme of Madness

As Roulin helps Vincent onto the train, a lovely but sad version of the postman’s theme is heard on English horn (rather than the usual comic bassoon). This dissolves to Rózsa’s typical nervous syncopation figure on a pedal E, against which we hear the Theme of Yearning developed by a solo bass clarinet. Note how the fourth note of the theme, which normally would be an octave higher than the first note (here, E to E), is lowered to a seventh (here, a D-sharp). It is as though the theme were destabilized, knocked off-center, helping us to share in Vincent’s fear of the future.

Unable to paint, Vincent experiences a period of “Inertia” during his first days at the asylum. Over an insistent, rocking ostinato in cello and harp, a solo clarinet introduces a short, repetitive new motive that is taken over by violins but seems to go nowhere (Figure 17). The violins, in fact, give up and pass the motive back to the clarinet, which finally runs out of steam as the cue fades out.

Once Vincent is given his painting tools, he is able to undergo a slight recovery through his work. The ostinato continues from the previous cue, but moves up into the violin section. Violas and celli repeat the “Inertia” motive, but it is soon left behind by the Theme of Yearning, first on oboe and then flute and clarinet. The ostinato continues yet, but now on harp. Violins take over the theme, which is extended and reaches a climax as we see views of Vincent’s newest paintings. At this point, a subtle but important changes occurs in the ostinato, which switches into a more gentle triplet rhythm. As Vincent explains the meaning of “The Reaper” to the attending sister, the Theme of Achievement is heard in strings and French horn. Notice the brilliant touch of harp and celeste color just as Vincent mentions the “sun flooding everything in the light of pure gold.” The theme moves down into violas and takes on a slightly darker cast as we overlap into the next cue. The ostinato returns to its original rhythm, and the “Inertia” motive reappears on an alto flute. As the camera shows us more examples of Vincent’s current work, the violins take over the motive and start to develop it—finally making it appear to go somewhere. Impressionistic techniques become prominent—orchestral colors such as solo flute (echoed by piccolo), triangle and harp, triplet rhythms, open-fifth harmonies. There is a striking effect under a close-up of “Starry Night”—heavily accented brass chords and a little motive which harks back to the earlier piccolo echoes. The music builds and could be heading toward catharsis and resolution, but Vincent is pushing himself again, and the Theme of Madness takes over as the artist is overcome by a “Seizure.”



Figure 17. Inertia

After recovery, Vincent is spurred by “False Hopes” to leave the asylum and join Theo and his wife. A rising clarinet line leads to a gentle version of the Theme of Achievement. Placing it in the lower register of the violin section, Rózsa has imparted to it a warm, almost autumnal color. The accompaniment remains simple. Flute and then clarinet take up the melody, leading to Theo’s theme in the cellos. Curiously, the first four measures of the Theme of Achievement were inserted by the music editor just before Theo’s theme—perhaps as a necessary extension for timing purposes. Fortunately, it works musically. The cue ends with the first five notes of Brotherly Love on solo oboe and a stinging, inconclusive chord from muted horns.

Realizing that he still needs help, Vincent goes to a clinic run by Dr. Gachet, a well-meaning art lover. Gachet treats Vincent well but even the artist himself realizes it will not cure him. He writes his brother that it is a case of the “Blind Leading the Blind.” The music starts with Brotherly Love, of course, minus its warm quartal harmonies and against a quirky four-note clarinet motive

instead. As Vincent goes out to paint, the Theme of Yearning starts dark and low on a solo bass clarinet, soon opening up into the violin section, doubled by flute for an even brighter color. As we see examples of Vincent's latest work, this theme is developed a bit until, as the camera pans over a picture of a church, the score breaks into the melody of "Quo Vadis, Domine"! Appropriate enough music, certainly, but liable to bring a snicker from anyone who knows the earlier score. The moment is brief, however; Rózsa was rarely a self-borrower. As the camera reveals a painting of the village mayor's house, we hear a new arrangement of "Les Transfourmatiens," one of the Arlesienne folk tunes earlier associated with Roulin. A village fete is underway. At the appearance of a "Carrousel" [*sic*], Rózsa begins another mini-suite of two folk tunes, "Garri Malhuroux" and "La Novi Vergounouso," scored for a circuslike ensemble of high woodwinds, low brass, and percussion. The music fades quickly (much sooner than the second piece ends in the score) and is succeeded by an on-screen band playing a phrase from "La Marseillaise." More band music (not in the score) follows, with certain instruments highlighted on their close ups. Vincent, in a nearby tavern, hears the noise and seems greatly disturbed by it, thus developing a counterpoint between the artist's inner turmoil and the bustling, cheerful celebration without.⁴ Slowly, he leaves.

The scene dissolves to a field. The orchestra takes over on the soundtrack, and a bit of musical onomatopoeia occurs as crows, symbols of death, take flight and even seem to attack Vincent at work. Muted trumpets, squawking woodwinds and xylophone create a musical "cawing" sound. The motive isn't new, actually. It is the little filigree ostinato first heard in the original "Madness" cue. Its use here is quite propitious. The motive continues as Vincent adds crows to his painting ("Last Strokes"), and as the camera follows his movements, the Theme of Madness joins in, more angular and distorted than ever. The music builds up to Vincent's outcry of "It's impossible!" The camera abruptly changes its point of view to a peasant driving a cart through the field. The music changes abruptly too, losing the ostinato, thus considerably lowering the tension. The melodic line also changes significantly. The distorted contours of the Theme of Madness are smoothed out and the melody is transformed back into the Themes of Yearning and Achievement as Vincent writes a "Suicide" note. That these two themes should have the last word shows great empathy on the part of the composer and elicits similar feelings from the audience. The music stops briefly and the camera again changes to the peasant and cart. We hear the gunshot, there is an orchestral "sting," and Brotherly Love, scored initially for strings, accompanies the bedside scene where Theo mourns his dying brother ("Journey's End"). There is an awkward edit (removing seven and a half beats from the score) just as solo oboe and clarinet play the theme in canon. This reminds us of a similar moment when the theme was first introduced which musically symbolized the close relationship of the two brothers. Its use here has even greater poignancy.

Vincent's last moments are underscored by a gentle, pastoral (how much Vincent loved the countryside!) oboe solo. The motive is the Theme of Achievement, and the accompaniment, unusually, is nothing but simple major chords! The first of two curious features in the score for this cue is an alternate bar for the precise moment when Vincent dies. Instead of the warm, major seventh harmony of the version used, this alternate bar uses a different, unsettled harmony. This shows how acutely aware the composer was of the dramatic power of a single harmony to alter the mood of a scene. After a brief pause, Theo lays his head next to Vincent and a short coda on the Theme of Achievement brings Vincent's life to a close in a peaceful A major. The other curiosity here is an alternative ending that would have used Theo's theme for this coda. This would have been dramatically inept, taking the focus away from the movie's main character and denying us that final sense of

⁴ A similar psychological crisis set against a background of swirling light and movement occurs in the waltz scene in *MADAME BOVARY*, another Minnelli-Rózsa collaboration.

release. The choice to use the Theme of Achievement was a very wise one.

That theme, of course, is the subject of the “Finale.” It builds and develops as the camera pulls back to reveal an assembly of some of van Gogh’s most famous paintings, ending with a fanfare-like pronouncement of its first seven notes.⁵ As the end credits roll, Rózsa’s final “Apotheosis” develops the Theme of Yearning in a free and rhapsodic manner. At one point, the theme is heard in the bass register on cellos and horns, against moving triplets in *tremolando* violins and sustained woodwind trills. When the theme moves back up to the treble register, a new (and typical) counter-melody appears on horns and cello. It all culminates in the Theme of Achievement proudly proclaimed by brass in a triumphant C major, although the first four notes of the Theme of Yearning, tossed between bass and treble, are the final notes we hear.

LUST FOR LIFE was obviously a labor of love. Minnelli called it his favorite film and Rózsa an “artistic apotheosis.” With its faithful and literate script, outstanding cast, brilliant decor and sensitive direction, it was both a critical and commercial success. In the *New York Times*, Bosley Crowther wrote: “Color dominates the dramatization—the color of indoor sets and outdoor scenes, the color of beautifully reproduced van Gogh paintings, even the colors of a man’s tempestuous moods.” He might well have mentioned the orchestral colors summoned by the composer, sumptuously recorded in stereo and for the most part effectively mixed into the soundtrack. The subject was close to the composer’s heart, and it inspired him to write one of his finest scores.

A NOTE ABOUT THE SCORE: The score on which this analysis is based (a photocopy of the score from the composer’s own library) differs significantly from previous Rózsa scores with which I have worked. My copies of EL CID and THE PRIVATE LIFE OF SHERLOCK HOLMES are in the composer’s own hand, whereas this score for LUST FOR LIFE is a short-score conductor’s copy made by an M-G-M music staff copyist. Originally I was disappointed with it, since it seemed a step removed from the composer, yet it surely is for the most part a “neater” copy of the composer’s own short score submitted to the orchestrator. At first, it was difficult to follow in certain places because, although the pages are numbered consecutively, some cues are clearly out of their proper order and Rózsa’s own handwriting can be seen at the bottom of page 9 indicating “I don’t know where these two pages [8 and 9] go.” A little detective work, however, solved the mystery. Rózsa himself shuffled the pages around when he created the suite heard on his Polydor album (1976). He took 4 cues (“Summertime,” “Refusal,” “Reunion,” and “The Orchards”), pulled them out of their regular order, arranging them together in a new one. He made several changes, clearly in his own handwriting, that involve cross-outs, additions, and paste-overs. The pages were then left as is, never restored to their original places. Who actually numbered the (now partially out-of-order) pages and when that was done remain unclear. The pages Rózsa could not identify (8 and 9 in the present order) are actually the continuation of “Refusal,” only the first two pages of which Rózsa had moved into his suite.

⁵ When Rózsa combined these last two cues for the last movement of his concert suite, he reinstated a two-bar cut made right at the beginning (bars 3 and 4 of “Finale”), dropped the “fanfare-like pronouncement,” and composed a new segue to join the two cues as a single unit.

Lukewarm?

Responses to the Simmons Challenge

Our last issue reproduced Walter Simmons's controversial Fanfare review of the James Sedares anthology of forties Rózsa (Koch 3-7375-2-HI). We are pleased to reproduce some of responses in the following symposium. The respondents are Paul Packer, Lothar Heinle, John Fitzpatrick, Frank DeWald, and Mark Koldys. Actually only the last three pursued an e-mail "conversation." The other comments are extracted from ordinary letters. Any out-of-context distortion is solely the fault of the editor—who also gets the blame for the three (!) misspelled names (of Kierkegaard, Hovhaness, and Nicolas Flagello) in the earlier headnote.

PACKER: I'm pleased to see Walter Simmons agreeing with me that Rózsa's concert output seems sterile, even uninspired compared to his film efforts. Our Editor seems confident that most readers will violently disagree, but I wonder. Haven't many of us felt this for some time but said nothing for fear of being branded lowbrow? (C'mon now, there's nothing to be ashamed of.) Mr. Simmons also makes the valid point that much soundtrack music seems meandering and unsatisfying by concert hall standards. Personally I'd never buy soundtracks (except for masterpieces like *B-H*) if the music were available in some better form, say as suites and overtures. There's simply too much padding in most soundtracks, too many held notes (suspense) and note-spinning (fight scenes) which in the film are obscured by dialogue and sound effects but on an album stand naked and shameless.

FITZPATRICK: I don't know about "lowbrow." But I certainly would have edited such remarks while MR was reading our journal!

HEINLE: For me, as a part-time music critic, the style of Simmons is brilliant. I wish I could express myself in that way! He seems to be a man who knows his classical repertoire thoroughly, although as far as MR is concerned some of his comparisons are definitely out of place. There is absolutely nothing Mahlerian in MR's music—nothing German-Austrian at all. On the other hand, there can be no doubt that MR knew some works by Scriabin. Just listen to the characteristic trumpet solo in Scriabin's *Poeme d'extase*, which appears almost unchanged in *THE THIEF OF BAGDAD* as Abu is about to reach the All-Seeing Eye.

KOLDYS: If I had that much space to work with in the *American Record Guide*, I know I wouldn't have used 95 percent of it on a stream-of-consciousness series of (mostly unsupported) conclusions, only to toss off the small issue of the quality of the performances and recording in a throwaway sentence at the end. The performances on this collection are *not* non-controversial. And the sound is open to criticism too. A "critic" writes a "review" of a record that never even confronts the two most salient issues that are his charge! Well, I understand there is almost no editing as such in *Fanfare*.

DEWALD: Now, if you ask what really annoys me about *Fanfare*, let's talk about Royal S. Brown pontificating about movies when what I want to read about is music. (He's supposed to be reviewing film music on disc, mind you.)

FITZPATRICK: Remember the context—the classical pages of a general-interest record magazine. One may reasonably expect that readers are not especially attuned to film music and not necessarily familiar with this composer. Also, you have a critic who is approaching this "beat" for the first time.

(Simmons usually deals with the traditional American symphonists.) Don't you think it's reasonable to begin with some scene setting: What is the repertory and where is the critic coming from?

Do you dispute the specific likenings? So did I, in my note. But I still find them stimulating. They make me want to go out and explore more of Scriabin and Hanson. They make me want to think of other likenesses. Moreover, the comparisons should stimulate inexperienced and classic-shy Rózsaphiles to do the same. That is one of the chief reasons I reprinted the piece. You wouldn't believe how narrow are the horizons some of the young (and not so young) film music buffs. Opening eyes by encouraging debate strikes me as a useful role of criticism. You are here arguing for a longer, not a shorter, review!

More important, why are the two oeuvres so different? It's not just a matter of "simplicity," as Rózsa used to say. There are Rozsaphiles like Paul Packer, who feel more or less the same way as Simmons. So while one may object to Simmons's hit-and-run attack, one can at least hope that it will stimulate discussion.

KOLDYS: I do give Simmons points for inverting the usual preconceptions that film music is inherently inferior to classical music. That's an attention getter . . . and it got yours, and I suspect many others'. But the specific claim vis-à-vis MR's music is just as specious as the generalized put-downs that film music has received over the years.

I would never take a review of an important issue like this one and just blithely ignore issues of performance and sound. I do not agree that just because he didn't notice, or care about, the performance problems then no one else will. Performance, interpretation, and sound do make a difference. Even for the first-time listener (though not apparently in Mr. Simmons's case). Do you really think that a wayward, lackadaisical run-through of something like DOUBLE INDEMNITY and a vibrant, dynamic performance would each make the same impression on a newcomer to the music? In the former case, the listener may think what he is hearing is exciting and dramatic, or he may find it somehow lacking . . . but he will never know what he is missing—that part of the music that could have been there, but isn't. Watch a pan-and-scan movie on video for the first time and you don't know what you're missing off the sides. You may enjoy the movie, but how much more of an impression would it have made if you had seen the entire picture frame? On top of this, reviews, especially in prominent publications, have a purpose beyond just informing the reader. They are also documents of record that should point producers, A&R men, etc., in the correct direction. When Andrew Penny suffocated GHOST OF FRANKENSTEIN in half-speed tempos, the proper function of the critic is to point out: these performances do not reflect the music in anything like its best light. That is not just a warning to the buyer, but also a shot across the bow to Marco Polo—don't give us this kind of recording. We're smart enough to know the difference. Second-rate musicianship isn't acceptable because it's "only film music."

Koch should not be rewarded with a rave review of a recording that is fundamentally flawed. They should be praised for its concept, but the failures in the execution should be exposed and criticized.

FITZPATRICK: Simmons's glancing blow at the concert music is incomprehensible to me. I find it interesting because it comes from an intelligent listener of broad sympathies—and one who is obviously not contemptuous of film music. To someone who has never heard R. Strauss you describe him as kind of like Wagner, *but* . . . To someone who has never heard Korngold you describe him as kind of like Strauss, *but* . . . The more such comparisons you bring to bear, the better chance you have of striking a resonant note. And yet everybody understands that no one metaphor really captures the thing itself. There is no substitute for the actual taste of the apple.

Of course in picking up this piece for PMS, my purpose was the reverse: our readers know Rózsa but are often sadly limited in their listening range. I was hoping the comparisons might work the other way and send people to Mahler, Scriabin, etc.

KOLDYS: As for the comparisons, it's grating to me to repeatedly see film composers held up to the mirrors of classical composers, as if they were aping the styles of the Great Masters in their scores. Now I've done this myself; and it's a valuable way to help describe the music to people who wonder "what does it sound like?" But I just didn't care for the way he did it. Anyhow, I see (or hear) absolutely nothing in the New Age droning of Scriabin that strikes me as in any way relevant to Rózsa's work.

FITZPATRICK: Why "condescending"? Here's where I think you lose it. Simmons says, "Rich amalgam . . . so suggestive of primal passions and seething emotions, so redolent of dark and disturbing moods, that the films themselves often fail to match the power and intensity Overwhelmingly powerful statement of ominous gloom and dark foreboding Great score for a great movie." Clearly this guy *admires* the film music.

KOLDYS: He can identify as many of the scores as he likes as being "rich" and "seething" and so forth, in an effort to differentiate them from the concert works, but that doesn't prove any point he is trying to make about the concert music. The proposition is so demonstrably and obviously false--any argument made on its behalf will be instantly suspect as intellectually dishonest. It would be like trying to "prove" that Beethoven's concertos are inherently inferior to his symphonies; on its face that's an indefensible, silly point to make.

Yes, you have made my point for me. He admires the film music, not the concert music. That's why it seems to me he is saying that MR did not have the finely-honed abilities to make it in a concert hall--that he was adept at drama but not at form, development, and structure. And that is the classic rap on the "Hollywood composer," and precisely what MR loathed being considered.

FITZPATRICK: How about the notion of "compositional stagefright"? John Corigliano spoke of something similar in his ALTERED STATES interview (PMS 34). Recall how slow and self-critical Rózsa was in his concert work. Is it not plausible that the cinema liberated something in Rózsa's psyche that might never have found expression otherwise? I find this a fascinating question. Simmons's mention of "anonymity," however, does not really address the point. Still, that's a lot of ideas that he's packed into this crucial paragraph.

HEINLE: As for "compositional stagefright," yes, there is some validity in it. Simmons's rather harsh impressions ("lukewarm"?) will cause some serious misunderstandings among Rozsaphiles. But the fact is: you cannot compare MR's compositional approach to a stark picture like THE LOST WEEKEND with the boundless perspectives of writing, say, a symphony or set of variations, which have to make and follow their own rules. MR did not write a single piece of program music. I think his only real dramatic music outside of films dates back to his Leipzig days, when he was required to score an operatic scene in order to fulfill his exams.

Of course his concert music has its own special values of personality and emotions. It is neither "lukewarm" nor "Hungarian busywork." Want to hear *real* Hungarian busywork? Check out Goldmark, Hubay, Jemnitz!

FITZPATRICK: You know, Rózsa once claimed that he had trouble responding to a literary text in

musical terms. That's a very odd thing for a dramatic composer to say.

DEWALD: The idea of “compositional stage fright” when faced with a blank sheet of manuscript paper is intriguing, but I don't think MR lacked for ideas or inspiration—he was just a careful composer and liked to take his time—a luxury he could not afford in his “day job”! Some composers, like Hovhaness or Villa-Lobos or Martinů, let everything pour out of them onto paper and start the next project before the ink is dry. MR was quite the opposite, as witnessed by his frequent second thoughts. I don't think that reflects doubt or insecurity (as perhaps with Bruckner); I think he just enjoyed being his own best critic. I doubt if anyone had higher standards for himself than he did!



(continued from page 2)

The Variations on a Hungarian Peasant Song, Op. 4, was featured at the Austin Chamber Ensemble film music concert on 14 March with film music by Newman, Waxman, and Davis, plus the Violin Sonata of John Corigliano.

Recordings

THE GOLDEN VOYAGE OF SINBAD has been reissued on *Soundtrack's* Belgian label Prometheus (PCD 148). As the original tapes are lost, the source is an LP. Extensive new notes include Rózsa's firsthand account of the scoring experience, reprinted from PMS 9. Lost or accidentally destroyed tapes continue to plague the industry. Silva producer David Wishart reported (on Filmus-L) his prolonged search for EL CID tracks. He actually found the Overture, Intermezzo, and Exit Music (which subsequently appeared on his Cloud Nine album *Great Epic Film Scores*). What happened to the rest? It appears that the owners decided to erase some duplicate copies of the completely mixed soundtracks. Unfortunately one of those mislabeled boxes was actually the discrete music tracks.

Rhino has released "The Lion's Roar: Classic MGM Film Scores 1935–1965" (R2 75701). Two generous discs include nearly 160 minutes of music stretching from MUTINY ON THE BOUNTY (Herbert Stothart) to DOCTOR ZHIVAGO (Maurice Jarre). John Mauceri's introductory note describes MR as "towering above all" in the MGM music department, and naturally there are many Rózsa tracks:

MADAME BOVARY: Waltz. (Notes state that existing prerecordings are "incomplete" so this track is from album master.)

IVANHOE: Prelude and Foreword. (From mono mixdown since 3-channel magnetic stereo master was destroyed!)

LUST FOR LIFE: Reunion/Madness. (In stereo, each cue complete from original sessions.)

BEN-HUR: Main Title.

KING OF KINGS: The Last Temptation. (Mixed down from 6-track magnetic master; at 6:50, considerably longer than the 4:40 version on Sony.)

In October (postponed from July), Rhino will follow with an all-Rózsa set including: MADAME BOVARY; IVANHOE; KNIGHTS OF THE ROUND TABLE; BEAU BRUMMEL; VALLEY OF THE KINGS; MOONFLEET; GREEN FIRE; THE KING'S THIEF; TRIBUTE TO A BAD MAN; DIANE; LUST FOR LIFE; THE WORLD, THE FLESH, AND THE DEVIL; and KING OF KINGS.

What about the Polydor Collection? Some sources report an imminent CD release, but that news was based on Michael Fine's intentions at Polygram. Fine was previously head of Koch International, where he produced the Rózsa and Herrmann series. He left Poly-

gram in May, and the label's release plans remain uncertain.

Radio Spirits has released a cassette of the Lux Radio Theatre broadcast adaptation of SPELLBOUND with Ingrid Bergman and Joseph Cotten. Naturally MR's music is used throughout. What makes this release unique is that it includes Rózsa's ski run music. The corresponding scene in the film is scored with some Franz Waxman music from SUSPICION—an early instance of the producer falling in love with the temp track.

Bootlegs

What appear to be pirate editions of several Rózsa soundtracks have appeared in Germany. We usually avoid mentioning bootlegs because they (1) may involve criminal activity; (2) deprive copyright owners and other participants, including the Rózsa family, of income; (3) may deter legitimate labels from preserving or releasing the material; and (4) are frequently of dubious quality. The counterarguments are that: (1) bootlegs preserve material that the owners have been known to destroy or neglect; (2) their success may spur legitimate labels to action; (3) the monetary losses to owners and participants are negligible; and (4) some listeners claim a moral right to have the material out in the public domain.

We're keeping out of this one. Members must make up their own minds. (See the FILMUS-L archives for extensive discussions of the pros and cons.) Keep in mind, however, that reliable sources expect to see more complete and more accurate (and less expensive) versions of these scores becoming available from other quarters by the year 2000.

Margaret Rózsa

Margaret Finlason Rózsa, widow of the composer, died in Los Angeles on 29 December. She was 89 years old and had been incapacitated for several years. The Society extends its sympathies to the Rózsa family. Many of us remember Mrs. Rózsa's lively presence at several events in the 1970s.

Munich Festival

A Rózsa retrospective took place at the Munich Film-museum in November–December. There were screenings of some forty films, coupled with a number of concerts. Juliet Rozsa was in attendance. The program booklet included essays by John Mauceri, David Raksin, and Martin Scorsese. From the last:

"Miklos Rozsa was one of the greatest composers who ever worked in the movies, and perhaps their finest romantic composer—he might have been the last of the 19th-century romantics in the spirit of Berlioz or Liszt. His music has the tragic sweep of romanticism, and in this he was unique. Rozsa was often accused of excess,

but for me his music was scaled perfectly to the action of the pictures he worked on—not the case with many of his peers. He added dimension but he didn't embellish or decorate with his music. . . . The incredible grace of his score for Alain Resnais' PROVIDENCE, one of the last great romantic scores Hollywood ever produced, is central to the experience, the meaning of that film. . . . EL CID might be his crowning achievement. . . . one of the greatest moments in a long distinguished career, a forceful, vibrant body of work in a field that has never really gotten its due. Rozsa was a true artist."

Stamps

The U.S. Postal Service will honor "Hollywood Composers" in November with a series of six stamps depicting Bernard Herrmann, Erich Wolfgang Korngold, Alfred Newman, Max Steiner, Dimitri Tiomkin, and Franz Waxman. Some of us can remember when Albert Bender of the original Max Steiner Music Society sketched a Steiner stamp and was widely considered to be out of his mind. The times have changed. MR is not included

because USPS regulations demand that subjects be deceased for ten years before appearing on a stamp. One reader points out that MR always bridled at the label "Hollywood composer."

Korean Society

We have learned of a new Rózsa Society in Korea. Contact:

Yong-sung Choi
607 Seocho Plaza Bldg.
1573-1 Seochodong SeochoKu
Seoul, 137-070
South Korea

The KMRS is a group of young people who have regular monthly meetings and also publish a journal three or four times per year. A visiting member now in the U.S. is the violinist Suni Hyun, currently residing in Amherst, Massachusetts.

Reviews in Brief

Concerto for String Orchestra, Op. 17 (with Bartók, *Divertimento* and *Romanian Folk Dances*). Ondine ODE 919-2. Here is an outstanding performance by the Virtuosi di Kuhmo conducted by Peter Csaba. Ondine is a Finnish label and may be reached at www.ondine.net. Maestro Csaba has paid close attention to the articulations, dynamics, and tempo gradations marked in the score, resulting in a performance that comes closer to Rózsa's own than any other. The first movement may be just a bit on the cool side (and at 9:15 considerably slower than the 6:23 suggested in the score), but there is plenty of warmth in the central "Lento con gran espressione" (also a bit expansive at 9:00 instead of 6:40). The last movement is paced to perfection (and right on target at 7:32 against a suggested time of 7:25). How appropriate that this recording of a work dedicated to Margaret Rózsa should be released so soon after her death. The composer must have sensed that it was one of his finest works in choosing to dedicate it to her, and this superb disc is a fitting tribute to her memory. **FKD**

The Complete Works for Solo Piano. Performed by Sara Davis Buechner. Koch 3-7435-2-H1.

Valse crépusculaire (from PROVIDENCE, 1977)

Variations for Piano, Op. 9 (1931)

Bagatelles, Op. 12 (1932)

Kaleidoscope, Op. 19 (1947)

The Vintner's Daughter, Op. 23 (1952)

Piano Sonata, Op. 20 (1948)

This one is special from the start. The waltz brings out unsuspected drama and variety in its four-minute space. *The Vintner's Daughter* is wonderfully poetic. The Sonata is a mystery and a challenge to my ear. Two years ago, in recital, Buechner seemed to capture the explosive violence of this

work while yet playing with superhuman speed. By comparison I recalled the Eric Parkin performance (Unicorn LP/Cambria CD) as grand but somewhat slow and aloof. Now, on closer examination, the timings turn out to be almost identical, with Parkin actually faster in the outer movements. What strikes me here is Buechner's variety within the basic tempo and her lyric, flowing touch in even the fastest music. I expect we'll be studying—and enjoying—this one for a long time. Somebody will have to compare the ancient Pennario LP version, which Frank DeWald once called the greatest recorded performance in the entire Rózsa canon. It may have a challenger.

Of course this recording isn't really "complete." What about the LYDIA impressions? The *Spellbound Concerto*? The *New England Concerto*? How about it, Koch? And how about proofreading the extensive notes, which recapitulate valuable material from Christopher Palmer's 1975 *Miklós Rózsa* (long out of print), but with frequent inaccuracies.

Attentive readers may recall our recording session report about *David* Buechner last year. Yes, the transgendered pianist has embarked on a personal as well as a musical journey of considerable human interest. A story for another time. See the *New York Times Magazine* for 13 September 1998. **JF**

Letters

RE MIKE REAMY'S "Moment" from JULIUS CÆSAR (PMS 56), I can add (as reconstructionist and orchestrator for the Intrada recording) that the few measures of the Overture heard in the picture provided the only clue to accurate tempo delineation. Owing to the unavailability of the studio music tracks, MGM's deletion of the Overture from the film, and the absence of an unrevised commercial recording of the piece, an accurate rendition of the original Overture would have been unlikely. Calculating the Overture's varying tempos, which were not marked with metronome indications, relative to the speed at which the ending chords were played, we tried to convey a stylistically appropriate interpretation of the overture as Dr. Rózsa originally conceived of it. **Daniel Robbins**, Lakewood, Calif.

NEXT TIME: Poll Results . . . Rhino Releases . . . THE THIEF OF BAGDAD,
SONG OF SCHEHERAZADE . . . and a new MRS Recording Series

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