

The MIKLÓS RÓZSA Society

“PRO MUSICA SANA”

Honorary President: *MIKLÓS RÓZSA*

Director: *John Fitzpatrick*

Associate Directors: *Ken Doeckel & Mark Koldys*

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MRS 6

NEWS

Sinbad

"A hundred minutes of music in my best Oriental mood." That's how Dr. Rózsa describes his new score for SINBAD'S GOLDEN VOYAGE, and already mouths are watering all over the world. The recording sessions will take place in Rome this fall. A number of members have already expressed concern that a disc (or two) be issued to commemorate this music. For them and for all who have expressed a general desire to work in this area, we list the following key addresses. The man at the record company is: Ray Walter / Screen Gems Columbia Music / St. Margaret's House / 19-23 Walls St. / London W1P 3FP. The producer of the film is Charles Schmeer / American Films Ltd. / Suite 34 Fitzhardinge House / Portman Square / London W.1. Here is our first opportunity to see that some past mistakes are not repeated. Let's not pass it up.

Performances

The *JUNGLE BOOK Suite* by the Durban Symphony (South Africa) on 12 August. The *Sinfonia Concertante* in Budapest in May--a big success even though the broadcast was cancelled at the last minute. Also on the Hanover, Stuttgart, and Basel radios, in Cottbus (East Germany), and in Seattle, Baltimore, and Chicago. This last performance will be given by Frank Miller and Victor Aitay under the direction of Sir Georg Solti. Those interested in attending in a group should contact Mr. Fitzpatrick once a performance date is announced. Erzsebet Tusa's recording of the Piano Concerto will be on the Basel radio and Leonard Pennario's on the Munich. The latter may find its way onto commercial discs. The *23rd Psalm* premieres this summer in Tacoma, Washington. The Choir of the West will be under the direction of Maurice Skones. A performance of a different kind is Dr. Rózsa's lecture at the American Academy in

Verona on 12 August. Title: "The Composer and His Society". Finally, Society members will have double reason to mourn the recent accidental death of Istvan Kertesz. Not only did we lose a fine conductor but also the very one who was to have given the premiere of the *Tripartita*.

Records

The new Orion disc of early Rózsa chamber music should be in stores by the time you read this. We will review it in the next issue. Angel S36063, just released, is a repackaging of Rózsa's 1967 Capitol collection. It's far from the best version of these works but should still be welcome for those who missed it the first time around. The same series includes some of the old Newman Hollywood Bowl performances too (S36066). It now appears that RCA will not release Korngold's *Violanta* suite, although the tape was broadcast once in New York. But the Gerhardt/Newman disc has already been released. Those with further suggestions for the Gerhardt series or who are interested in seeing LSC 2802 reissued on Victrola should write to: RCA Records / 1133 Avenue of the Americas / New York, N.Y. 10036.

Polydor wants to reissue QUO VADIS?, but "dear old M-G-M" has complicated matters by losing the tapes! The JUNGLE BOOK/THIEF OF BAGDAD disc is supposed to be next, but Polydor is hesitating. To urge them on, write to: Gordon Gray / Polydor Records / 17199 Stratford Place / London W1N 0BL.

Business

Our new format (in case you haven't noticed) has resulted in savings of over 50%. Result: we can publish more as long as members keep supplying good material. With this change goes another in our administrative structure. Please follow the table on our back page to get the best service.

Enclosed with this issue is our long-awaited membership roster. Special thanks go to Gene Gressley of the University of Wyoming for reproducing it for us. One of the Society's principal goals has been to foster contact between the many, far-flung admirers of good film music. Such contact is now possible, and we

will help all we can. But the initiative rests where it always has--on the individual member. Look up your "neighbors", get together, and let us know the results.

Credits

The (Michigan) State Journal, 10 Feb. 1973: "Ch.12--QUO VADIS (1951)--Robert Taylor, Deborah Kerr, Peter Ustinov, Miklós Rózsa. Emperor fiddles while Rome burns."

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HORROR FROM HERRMANN by Craig Reardon

Bernard Herrmann's music from SISTERS employs most of his familiar devices--short, telling themes endlessly repeated by different instruments with changing harmonic background, startling emphases via instruments in their extreme high or low registers, musical interludes of pristine calm and elegance, and the kind of creative orchestration unique to Herrmann. These methods are no mere bag of tricks, however, since Herrmann is always able to support them with fertile ideas and handle them so that a cohesive and logical score results, giving the film dramatic support and a feeling of wholeness. In the case of SISTERS, the score also serves a cosmetic function, disguising such blemishes as bad photography, adolescent acting, loose ends, crude jokes, and gratuitous gore. Herrmann supports director Brian Da Palma as tastefully as he has supported men like Hitchcock, Harryhausen, Welles, King, Truffaut, et al in the past, and since these men are not a homogeneous grouping, Herrmann can only be admired for his continuing artistic integrity.

The film begins with eerie views of human fetuses, photographed by Lennart Nilson, and Herrmann's music is ferocious. Horns and chimes play a mocking sort of lullaby back-and-forth (Example 1), then enter timpani, then a shrieking counterphrase played by synthesizer (Example 2). This startling music alternates with evil murmurings of bassoon and bass clarinet under plucked strings. The whole builds to a frenzy, then undergoes a chilling denouement in high strings (Example 3), winding down, down to the low basses and a sustained, pitch-dark note. Admittedly, this music lacks the diabolic beauty of Herrmann's HANGOVER SQUARE main title, or the mad perfection of PSYCHO. This is not to demean a riveting piece of music, for the film deserves much less than Herrmann gives it.

We subsequently see a couple meet as a result of a TV game show and head for the lady's apartment for a night of "fun and games". Romantic it isn't, but the music brings to these scenes a sort of purity and dignity, two qualities not inherent in the situation. I tend to be embarrassed by casual scenes of spontaneous and graphic lovemaking, because I believe this denies the intimacy of the act, in addition to cheapening it by making it arbitrary. Whatever Herrmann's reaction, his music creates a distinct emotional climate which is neither lushly romantic, hip and swingy, nor anything so banal as these. This sophisticated music begins as a piquant waltz, with modal shadings, in the woodwinds. Then strings introduce a cold and beautiful line which plays with the percolating harmony to effect a kind of nervous anticipation. The two make love to weird rising string glissandos, and then a disfiguring scar is seen on the girl's thigh. The music is utterly transformed, strings churning and the synthesizer screaming for a truly disturbing effect. The scar later turns out to be the consequence of an operation which drove the girl mad (to drop a piece of plot), so Herrmann's terrifying music is not misapplied.

The film contains a gruesome murder. Herrmann's music is very loud and raw-nerve. What of it that can be discerned beneath the yelling and screaming of attacker and victim is well-written and not mere noise or bombast. The Moog predominates, chortling ghoulishly, and the music draws on the main title material.

A very well-scored scene consists of a clownish private investigator prowling an apartment for clues. The musical atmospherics are translucent and liquid, built from hushed strings, vibraphone, and perhaps other orchestral exotica I am not prepared to guess at. It's a truly beautiful sound. I needn't add that it also helps the film. The effect is not of love music, merely by virtue of the music's sensuousness, but of unease.

Another excellent bit of scoring, if we may juggle the film's chronology, precedes the first murder and depicts the young fellow buying a birthday cake for the peculiar girl he's spent the night with. The music here is played

on what sounds like a glockenspiel, with flute harmonies, and is light and tender (Example 4). Eventually the vibraphone and minor-key shadings add a mysterious sonority to the blend. This theme captures the black humor (such as it is) of the film. The end of the film is also scored with this music, and Herrmann adds strings, vibraphone, harp, soft woodwind chords, and chimes. A final discord tinges this calm (with muted brass coloring), and then the film closes with these floating sonorities. The effect is almost noble and serene. To see how effective it is, you have to experience the whole film ahead of it.

But the feeling that lingers afterward is that Herrmann should be given another film on which he can work with people who are his peers rather than his inferiors. As good as his score for SISTERS is, Bernard Herrmann does not belong with American-International.



WALTON ON SERAPHIM by Frank De Wald

"There was a time, A time forever gone; Ah, woe is me."
 (W. S. Gilbert, *The Gondoliers*)

In the wake of increasing interest in the film music of the past, Seraphim has recently reissued a 1964 Angel release of excerpts from Sir William Walton's film scores. Featured on the disc (S-60205) is music from three Shakespearean films produced and directed by Sir Laurence Olivier: RICHARD III, HAMLET, and HENRY V. The Philharmonia Orchestra is conducted by the composer.

The music from RICHARD III (1954) which makes up side one of the disc is sometimes heavy-handed and underinspired, but even so, it is always the work of a thoughtful film composer. The excerpts, prepared by Muir Mathieson with the composer's authorization, include a suite prefaced by the film's "Prelude". This "Prelude" is actually in three parts--an amalgam of the film's opening

and closing credits separated by a brief interlude from another part of the film. An opening fanfare (which, since it does not appear on the film soundtrack, would seem totally unnecessary) introduces the main theme--a pseudo-Elgar march comprising a brisk, rhythmic section followed by a broad, lyrical melody (unmistakably written by an Englishman!). One could argue that a different mood was more appropriate here, but out of respect for Walton we will assume that the pomposity of this music was intentional and not the result of any lack of imagination. The interlude which follows might be described as "Richard's theme", which, with its "skewed" harmonies, appears at several points in the film, perhaps most tellingly when the scheming Duke sets out to seduce Lady Anne. The last part of the Prelude begins with the dirge heard immediately after Richard's melodramatic death, and swells (as in the film) to a final statement of the main theme.

Things get a little better with the *Shakespeare Suite*, also fashioned from RICHARD III. "Fanfare" and "Music Plays" form something of a unit, as they both figure in the opening scene--the coronation of Edward IV. The latter is first heard discreetly in the background of Edward's first speech as an organ toccata. "Princes in the Tower" makes an effective musical foil to Richard's foul murder of the young royal heirs, and it is heard here in a more complete form than on the soundtrack, short segments from other parts of the film having been appended to it.

"Drums and colors", which depicts the arrival of young Prince Edward in London (and subsequently the entrance of Richard of York) evokes an unfavorable comparison with a similar march in Rózsa's YOUNG BESS (1953), for it is not so colorful or contrapuntally interesting. "I Would I Knew Thy Heart" is a brief *cantilena* which contrasts string quartet with *tutti* strings, and is the only genuinely moving music on side one. In the film this beautiful music has nothing to do with the scene in which Lady Anne speaks the entitling line, but passes unnoticed as a hushed background (organ solo--flute stops *ppp*) to the reconciliation scene in King Edward's bedchamber.

"Trumpets sound" follows upon Edward's speech in scene one: "Sound, drums and trumpets; Farewell, sour annoy, for here I hope begins our lasting joy." But on this disc it is begun by a fanfare instead of the exciting drum flourish heard on the soundtrack. This concluding piece brings the suite (and side one) to an unsatisfying end, because it is too short, rather perfunctory, and cadences inconclusively on the dominant chord (V) instead of the expected tonic (I).

The composer's performances here are every bit the equal of Mathieson's soundtrack originals, and have the added advantage of more up-to-date sonics.

If side one is disappointing, side two makes an effective antidote. Walton's music for HAMLET (1947) is discussed in the '54 edition of *Groves* under "Film Music". Author Willfred Mellers says that it is "music which cares as much about itself as about the film, thus practically disproving the would-be practicable theory that good music is too good to be good film music." The "Funeral March" recorded here was extracted for concert use by Mathieson and separately published. Used both in the opening and closing of the film, the march is an *adagio lamentoso* in ternary form, with a coda distinguished by an "e" pedal. It is the most moving music on the disc, and is alone worth the price of the album. Walton's performance is effective, but it pales next to the pathos Mathieson draws from the piece on the soundtrack (where it is further enhanced by the periodic thunder of cannons).

The music from HENRY V elicited an unprecedented share of critical acclaim when the film premiered in 1944. The appearance of Walton's name at the end of the credits is reputed to have been greeted by a round of applause at the first London preview. The soundtrack was recorded by the London Symphony under Muir Mathieson's direction. The *Suite* recorded here was first performed at a Promenade Concert in 1945. Two of the numbers, "The Death of Falstaff" and "Touch her soft lips and part", were recorded that same year by Walton and the Philharmonia String Orchestra, and the entire *Suite* was recorded shortly after by the B.B.C. Northern Orchestra.

HENRY V is beautiful music, brilliantly conceived for the film medium. The opening "Overture" sets the mood for what is to follow without being pompous or heavy (as in RICHARD III)--the listener is gently swept into the excitement of the occasion. The opening roulades of a solo flute enhance the visual of a swirling, wind-tossed fragment of paper which emerges as a playbill of the Globe Theatre, and the overture proper is played by on-screen Elizabethan instruments inside the Globe itself. Walton wisely decided not to confine himself to the limitations of the Elizabethan orchestra, however, and this "Overture" demonstrates his solution to the problem of period style--music which neither emulates nor contradicts, but *suggests* Elizabethan England or the days of Henry V.

"The Death of Falstaff" is one of the most memorable pieces in all film music literature. It is a passacaglia for strings, founded on this four-bar phrase:



This theme is heard a total of nine times, but eventually "moves out of the basement" and into the texture, emerging finally as the melody in the first violins. The formal structure is rounded off nicely with a coda. (Do MRS members know of any other passacaglias in filmscores?)

The battle music which follows is reminiscent of Prokofiev's "Battle on the Ice" from ALEXANDER NEVSKY (on a smaller scale, of course). It begins with *tremolo* strings and distant fanfares, builds quickly to a persistent eighth-note *ostinato* (like Prokofiev) and concludes with a touching vignette from a different and later scene. From the standpoint of filmusic, this selection is particularly interesting, since Olivier relied on music more than on sound effects to convey the excitement of the battle to his audience. "The gathering momentum of the charge was enhanced by the cunningly mixed soundtrack. A long 'crossfade' brought the music to the foreground, interchanging in prominence with the harness and armor-clanking sound effects as the charge gathered its impetus. The director very wisely suppressed the effects and allowed the music its full head as the climax was approached." (Hubert Clifford).

"Touch her soft lips and part" is lulling *siciliana* (again for strings only), and the final "Agincourt Song" brings the suite to a rousing, satisfying end. Walton based the stirring conclusion on an English folk carol, which he treats as a solemn, chorale-like melody, intoned by the brass to the persistent accompaniment of swirling triplet motion in the strings.

MRS members who are interested in studying this music further should try to find a copy of the complete RICHARD III soundtrack (RCA LM 6126, deleted) and of RCA LM 1924 (still in print), which has soundtrack excerpts from HAMLET (including the play scene and the funeral march) and excerpts from HENRY V (including a more complete version of the battle sequence) rerecorded by Walton c. 1955. They will also want to read the articles by Hubert Clifford and Stanlie McConnell which appear in John Huntley's *British Film Music* (1947, reprinted Arno press 1972) and the highly detailed discussions of portions of HAMLET and HENRY V found in Manvell and Huntley's *The Technique of Film Music* (pub. Hastings).

To conclude, this disc is a lop-sided release, but welcome all the same. The reports of improved sound quality are true—the sonics are clearer, brighter, less bottom-heavy. Rory Guy's liner notes are more detailed than Muir Mathieson's for the earlier Angel release, but not as interesting, since they seem to be more about Sir Laurence Olivier than about Walton's music. Credits and casts for all three films are included.

Note: A British version of this recording (HMV SXLP 30139) is more valuable since it also includes the stirring SPITFIRE *Prelude and Fugue*. And Charles Gerhardt has recorded a slightly different HENRY V suite with chorus, though no release date has been announced.

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VINTAGE HOLLYWOOD: MAX STEINER by Charles W. Rileigh

Among the composers working in Hollywood during the "golden days" (the 1930s and 1940s), Max Steiner and Erich Wolfgang Korngold were the two quite responsible for bringing film music into great respect and into its rightful position as an important part of a motion picture's overall production. RCA ARL1-0136, entitled NOW, VOYAGER: THE CLASSIC FILM SCORES OF MAX STEINER, is a sequel to

RCA's earlier THE SEA HAWK, and as in the previous endeavor, Charles Gerhardt conducts the National Philharmonic Orchestra. The production is quite good, though I prefer the Korngold recording.

Extracts from ten Steiner scores are presented on this new disc. Few recordings in the last ten years have been devoted to this composer, and save for GONE WITH THE WIND, Steiner's music has been sparsely represented in Schwann. Among the better scores, one might cite: NOW, VOYAGER; KING KONG; THE BIG SLEEP; THE INFORMER; JOHNNY BELINDA; and THE FOUNTAINHEAD. All are represented here. Since Steiner was musically a descendant of the late Viennese Post-Romantics (Richard Strauss and Gustav Mahler), the scoring is rich, lush, and in many respects programmatic, e.g. KING KONG. Yet Steiner's finest efforts are seldom cliché-ridden or unsuitable for the films for which he composed. The music produced by Steiner for Warner Bros. was part of a film's impact, as in NOW, VOYAGER, in which a soap opera type melody ("It Can't Be Wrong") fitted the fantasy the director intended. Steiner possessed a fantastic ability to compose quickly and easily, and he did so for all types of films, from adventures to love stories. Many persons today find his music difficult to enjoy; admittedly he can be bloated and pompous, shown well in the *Symphonie Moderne* from FOUR WIVES. But this is not at all embarrassing for Max Steiner typified an era in Hollywood which is only now receiving fair appraisal.

NOW, VOYAGER handsomely presents Steiner's abilities. Some excerpts, such as THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE, are far too short; for this film, he wrote a memorable ballroom scene, which also deserves recording. KING KONG is entertaining and well-played; as suggested earlier, the score is really a miniature tone poem. NOW, VOYAGER is among Steiner's best-known compositions, and after several auditions, one understands, for it is tuneful and emotionally packed, as was the story. Upon hearing "It Can't Be Wrong", a nostalgic twinge came over the listener, with visions of Bette Davis and Paul Henreid. (Mr. Gerhardt's earlier recording of the score, deficient in sound and orchestral strength, is distinctly inferior to this new version.) FOUR WIVES included a concerto, entitled *Symphonie Moderne*, which Gerhardt here expands by

including a larger piano part. The music is sentimental, with Earl Wild and the conductor dishing out the appropriate servings of syrup. *THE INFORMER* was a thrilling film, and the music was hauntingly beautiful, which quality this recording conveys vividly. *JOHNNY BELINDA* is poignant and moving music, characteristic of Steiner's best work. Finally, the score I enjoyed above all was the suite from *THE FOUNTAINHEAD*, powerful, dramatic, and brilliantly evocative of the story and philosophy of the film. I would like an entire side devoted to this composition. All of these recordings, save the *Symphonie Moderne*, are new performances, the latter originally part of a *Reader's Digest* set.

RCA's sound for *NOW, VOYAGER* is fantastic, matching that for *THE SEA HAWK*. Sonics are never overmodulated nor underbalanced; rather, the sound is spacious and rich in tone. Rudy Behlmer's informative notes are a positive addition. While I much prefer Korngold to Steiner, RCA has an assured success in this set. And we should be grateful to RCA for its recent filmusic efforts. Several more albums are forthcoming, including one for *GONE WITH THE WIND*, music from Bette Davis films, and further Korngold items. One might occasionally quibble with selections or lengths, but one must be thankful for their presenting vintage Hollywood movie scores. There is indeed a public for this music, and record companies must be made aware of our desire for Rózsa, Korngold, Steiner, Newman, and Herrmann, among others. This is more than nostalgia; it is a deep, abiding interest which should be encouraged.

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RÓZSA ON DISC by John Fitzpatrick

Part II: The Film Music

The purpose of this listing is practical--to let the reader know just what material has been issued commercially, and to give him the minimum information necessary to lay his hands on such items as may still be available. The focus is on American issues of long-playing records. 78s and 45s are ignored except in cases of special historical interest, and foreign releases are not mentioned unless these are the only ones available. Furthermore, the

emphasis is on reasonably authentic presentations of Rózsa's film music. All of his own recordings are listed; beyond this, I have taken a conservative line, so those who want to hear Mario Lanza sing "Lygia", Liberace play the *SPELLBOUND Concerto*, or Mantovani, Rose, Chacksfield, or Slatkin vulgarize the "epic" themes will have to look elsewhere. Even some borderline items have been excluded.

The list is in two sections, one dealing with discs devoted exclusively to Rózsa and the other listing items of interest in other collections. The order is that of commercial release. Rózsa conducts except as noted. "AVAILABLE" indicates that the record or one of its reissues can still be found. "T" indicates that the same material was issued on prerecorded tape. "Polydor" always refers to the M-G-M Select Series marketed by *English Polydor* and available in this country only through import dealers like Colony and Discophile in New York and A.J. Rojas in Los Angeles. Finally, I am indebted to Myron Bronfeld and Frank De Wald for a good deal of the information contained here and in the following article.

A. Records devoted to the film music of Miklós Rózsa:

THE JUNGLE BOOK: <i>Suite for Narrator and Orchestra</i> RCA Victor Symphony/Sabu narr. (Three 12" 78rpm discs)	Victor DM 905
SPELLBOUND Samuel Hoffman, theremin/Eudice Shapiro, violin/Rack Goodwin and Edie Griffeths, piano/orchestra (10" lp reissue of 78rpm ARA label set)	Rem LP-1
QUO VADIS? Royal Philharmonic Orchestra/Marina Berti, contralto (10" lp reissue of 78rpm set)	M-G-M E103
IVANHOE, MADAME BOVARY, PLYMOUTH ADVENTURE M-G-M Studio orchestra (Previously issued on 78s, 45s, & 10" lp)	M-G-M E3507

<i>QUO VADIS Suite, THE RED HOUSE Suite, SPELLBOUND Concerto</i> Frankenland State Symphony Orchestra of Nuremberg/Erich Kloss cond. (QUO VADIS and SPELLBOUND) (Previously issued on 78s and 45s)	Capitol T456
<i>JULIUS CAESAR: Dramatic Highlights</i> M-G-M Studio Orchestra (Previously issued on 45\$)	M-G-M E3033
<i>QUO VADIS?: Dramatic Highlights</i> Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (Previously issued on 78s)	M-G-M E3525
<i>THE JUNGLE BOOK Suite, THE THIEF OF BAGDAD Suite</i> Frankenland State Symphony Orchestra/ Leo Genn narr.	RCA LM 2118
A TIME TO LOVE ANQ A TIME TO DIE	Decca DL 8778
SPELLBOUND Samuel Hoffman, theremin/Ray Heindorf cond.	Warner Bros. W/WS 1213
<i>LUST FOR LIFE Suite, Background to Violence</i> (Mark Hellinger Suite) AVAILABLE--Though recently deleted, this record can still be found in stores	Decca DL 10015 DL 710015
BEN-HUR Symphony Orchestra of Rome/Carlo Savina cond. AVAILABLE (Subsequently issued: Polydor 2353030)T	M-G-M 1E1 S1E1
BEN-HUR Frankenland State Symphony Orchestra/ Erich Kloss cond.	M-G-M/Lion L/SL 70123
<i>More Music from BEN-HUR</i> Frankenland State Symphony Orchestra/ Erich Kloss (Subsequently issued in part: Metro M/MS 503; in whole: Polydor) AVAILABLE	M-G-M E/SE 3900

KING OF KINGS Symphony Orchestra of Rome (Subsequently issued: Polydor 2353035) AVAILABLE T	M-G-M 1E2 S1E2
EL CID Symphony Orchestra of Munich (Subsequently issued with additional music: Polydor 2353046) AVAILABLE T	M-G-M E/SE 3997
<i>Music from Wide Screen Spectaculars</i> Excerpts from BEN-HUR, KING OF KINGS, EL CID. T	Somerset/ Stereo-Fidelity MI/SF 16400
SODOM AND GOMORRAH T	RCA LOC/LSO 1076
<i>Great Movie Themes</i> Themes from LYDIA, SPELLBOUND, MADAME BOVARY, QUO VADIS?, DIANE, BEN-HUR, KING OF KINGS, EL CID, SODOM AND GOMORRAH. Symphony Orchestra of Rome/Symphony Orchestra of Munich (EL CID)/Frankenland State Symphony Orchestra/Erich Kloss cond. (BEN-HUR only) (Subsequently issued: EHI MFP 5232) AVAILABLE	M-G-M E/SE 4112
THE VIPs Symphony Orchestra of Rome	M-G-M E/SE 4152
<i>Miklós Rózsa Conducts his Great Themes from</i> BEN-HUR, EL CID, QUO VADIS?, and KING OF KINGS (Subsequently issued: Angel S36063) AVAILABLE	Capitol T/ST 2837
B. Collections with material of interest:	
<i>Music from Hollywood</i> Includes brief suites from QUO VADIS?, IVANHOE. Al Goodman cond.	RCA LPM 1007
<i>Backgrounds for Brando</i> Includes "Brutus's Soliloquy" (JULIUS CAESAR) Elmer Bernstein cond. (Originally issued on Omega LP) T	Dot DLP 3107

Music from Hollywood

Includes BEN-BUR Prelude conducted by Rózsa
at a Hollywood Bowl concert

Columbia
CM/CS 8913

Big War Movie Themes

Includes the main theme from THE GREEN
BERETS
Geoff Love cond.

EMI
MFP 5171

Film Spectacular Volume IV: The. Epic

Includes a 12-minute BEN-HUR Suite
London Festival Orchestra/Stanley Black

London
Phase-4
SP 44173

Finally, the following Capitol discs (among others) all contain the complete concert version of the *SPELLBOUND Concerto*, conducted by Rózsa with Leonard Pennario, piano: P/SP 8494, 8598, 8689.

The art of composing for films is, to a great extent, the art of blending music with words, sounds, and images. The more perfect the blend, the more intimately the music is bound up with its source. Hence (in theory, at least) the better the film score, the less likely it is that the music can stand on its own apart from the film. Yet it is precisely these better scores that we most want to hear separately on records. Due to this curious paradox, another art has sprung up--that of tailoring film music to records. The approaches range from simple cut-and-paste jobs performed on the actual soundtracks to symphonic works loosely based on the themes of the film. Miklós Rózsa's recordings have ranged from one extreme to the other and therefore offer a good illustration of the problems and solutions involved.

From the years of Rózsa's apprenticeship with Alexander Korda's organization, only three scores are represented on disc. But the earliest of these recordings, the *JUNGLE BOOK Suite*, is a model of successful adaptation. Rózsa's solution here is the use of a narrator to supply the shaping line of the story to which his music is itself an admirably shaped frame. The interaction of the two allows each to make its points in a logical way. Thus the narration tells us why Mowgli's theme is here given to a gentle flute and there distorted in a rushing fugal passage. The music in turn supplies the precise quality of *this mother's lullaby* and *this jungle stream*.

The 30-minute suite encompasses most of the material in the score and even repeats the animal imitations. The older performance is marginally better than the Frankenland's in terms of liveliness, but the later disc is obviously preferable for the suave perfection of its narrator, Leo Genn. Sabu (who tells the story in the first person) could be a charming performer on screen; on records he is simply incompetent and badly in need of a dialogue coach. Thirty minutes is long for a single LP side, and the RCA disc is marred by some severe inner-groove distortion at the big finale. Perhaps Polydor's modern technology can overcome this problem.

The other two Korda films come off less well. From LYDIA we have only the waltz, performed by Rózsa in a rather subdued manner (*Great Movie Themes*). And the *THIEF OF BAGDAD Suite* is a far cry from its older brother. Hugh Gray's text bears little relation to the plot of the film (it never even mentions the thief!) and is none too convincing as connective tissue between the six musical numbers. These last are largely unrelated to each other and therefore devoid of the development and variations that make THE JUNGLE BOOK so interesting. They are only six beautiful slices of the music--though by no means the best in the film. We are still waiting for suites 2 and 3 from THIEF.

The remainder of Rózsa's film career up to 1944 is not documented at all on records, which means that we are missing at least one genuine classic--DOUBLE INDEMNITY. In the second half of the decade things improve somewhat, and we have SPELLBOUND and THE RED HOUSE to represent the psychological films and the *Mark Hellinger Suite* for the gangster pictures. The first of these boasts two distinct LP recordings which are complementary in that each contains music absent from the other. Rózsa's textures are more authentic, but Heindorf is more inclusive and generally does a fine job in spite of his tendency to weaken the bass line and his occasional vulgarity (as in the ending of the prelude). His extended version of the scherzo is especially well played. The Rem disc, however, contains the original version of the *Concerto* which has haunted Rózsa ever since. Needless to say, it is not a concerto at all; the piano part can easily be discarded and frequently is. But in spite of this and in spite of

its origins in a clever bit of press agentry, the *Concerto* has an enduring audience appeal. The big Hollywood Bowl version is at least better played than Kloss's.

THE RED HOUSE gets a rather free treatment in the 4-movement suite Rózsa made for Capitol. The emphasis is on the pastoral elements of the music, a contrast to the garish film. The picture was Rózsa's farewell to the theremin, but he fools us here by using a female voice instead. Violence gets full play in the *Mark Hellinger Suite* (renamed by Decca *Background to Violence*). It took some clever rearranging to draw a single coherent suite from three different films, and some good music was lost in the process. What remains is a good index of Rózsa's contribution to the genre of the postwar gangster film. (THE KILLERS nocturne, by the way, is misattributed to BRUTE FORCE).

Other important 40s material remains unrecorded (A DOUBLE LIFE, THE RED DANUBE, A WOMAN'S VENGEANCE). The real scandal, however, is the continuing neglect of THE LOST WEEKEND. All we have is Al Goodman's ghastly version (RCA LPT 1008) which not only ignored the main theme but even injected some foolish "drunk" music that Rózsa did not write. (Goodman's other suites are rather better.)

With Rózsa's 1949 contract with M-G-M came a new era, showing a more romantic side of the composer. And, happily, M-G-M's record department was active and adventurous. MADAME BOVARY is the turning point and a crowning glory of Rózsa's career. The disc, however, does little more than scratch the surface by stating a few of the main themes (though the passepied is expanded into a lovely concert version).

The even greater simplicity of harmony and texture in QUO VADIS? is a quite deliberate part of Rózsa's suggestion of antiquity. But here, as in BEN-HUR, the composer felt it necessary to embroider the music on records. In the dialogue highlights from the soundtrack, little music is audible, but the simple purity of the "Lygia" theme, for example, is not matched by any later version. The rearranged musical highlights have a more elaborate harmonization that is less attractive. Then comes the QUO VADIS Suite with a symphonic structure based on key relationships, full-scale polyphony, and frequent chromaticism. It is magnificent, symphonic, but it is not QUO VADIS?. Kloss's

reading is the only complete one, and is deeply sensitive despite glaring orchestral weaknesses. All later QUO VADIS? recordings derive from the suite, and none can equal Kloss's.

The next two scores, IVANHOE and PLYMOUTH ADVENTURE, were easily molded into short but effective suites, although the first is marred by some sloppy transitions and the second by a finale that appears mysteriously in the middle of the record. Then, tragically, M-G-M changed its corporate mind, and for the next six years some of Rózsa's finest work went unrecorded. It was left to Decca to partially redeem the situation. For A TIME TO LOVE AND A TIME TO DIE, they merely edited the film's music tracks into the format of an LP. It's a dubious procedure, and it robs the music of the film's motivation without giving it any compensating form of its own. But this example works better than most, despite having not one but *three* finales (which dilutes the impact of the original considerably).

Decca released a *LUST FOR LIFE Suite* too, which is another of the composer's free symphonic treatments. Considerable liberty is taken with the music--the oboe and strings passage for Pissaro's discourse on light goes into the "Pastorale"; Gauguin's horn theme opens and closes the "Sunflowers" which is really concerned with the music for the apple blossom paintings; a march having nothing to do with Roulin is featured in his movement. Yet it all works in musical terms. The musical juxtaposition of "Madness" with the epilogue is particularly effective in suggesting Van Gogh's tragedy (the two were separated by an hour in the film). All in all, one of Rózsa's finest discs, with even the Franklanders responding well.

BEN-HUR was too big for M-G-M records to ignore, but the company still caused a lot of trouble. Rózsa insisted on recording the score with the studio's fine Hollywood Orchestra, and that performance has never been bettered. But the record company decided it could make the records cheaper overseas. The musician's union was furious. They couldn't stop Rózsa from conducting in Italy, but they did threaten to keep him from ever leading an American orchestra again if he did. So Rózsa had to sit in the studio in Rome and listen to Carlo Savina mangle

his score. Erich Kloss performed the same music on a budget disc and then recorded a second volume 2 years later.

Savina does best in the big, dramatic scenes like "The Burning Desert" and the finale, where he works up a good deal of tension, yet always makes the melody sing. But he is unsubtle in the quieter moments and even makes the marches sound like so much empty bombast. Kloss is far more idiomatic. His prelude is the only one on records to take the *ostinato* leading into the BEN-HUR theme as it was in the film, i.e., full of onrushing excitement, not slow and stately. The colors he draws from the woodwinds in quiet sections like "Memories" are very beautiful. But Kloss is sabotaged by an understrength and unresponsive orchestra, the lack of a chorus, and a hideous electronic organ. His Vol. II comes off better because it concentrates on the more reflective music. It also includes some portions that wound up on the cutting room floor, giving the listener an opportunity to second-guess the filmmakers. The crucifixion scene might have been more expressive with the "Golgotha" music, but the chase through the fortress ("Messala's Revenge") probably does work better in its eerie silence. Stranger still is the Overture: Rózsa threw out the original and provided an entirely new one here! It's a dubious substitution, and I miss the hushed close of the original with the "Friendship" theme growing fainter and higher until it is answered as though from a distance of centuries by the "Anno Domini". But we are richer for having two overtures; Beethoven, after all, wrote four for *Fidelio*.

It is sad that Rózsa's greatest work has fared so poorly on records. The fault, however, is not entirely with the conductors; the very concept of the discs is wrong. The first twenty minutes of the film, for example, make up a single musical entity. To scatter this material over two discs (omitting some of the best portions) is suicidal. Likewise, the first scenes of Ben-Hur and Esther show how interestingly Rózsa can elaborate on a single theme for over six minutes. Splitting the music into two distinct sections on different discs destroys the effect. And even where Rózsa makes changes specifically for records, they do not always come off. The quiet statement of "Anno Domini" on the lepers' entry into Jerusalem is

eerie and frightening; on the record it is merely loud. Ken Doeckel suggests that a unified, 90-minute suite would be the right solution. Until one appears, M-G-M ought to make the actual sound tracks available.

Rózsa's next assignment was his most difficult, and I am not sure that he solved all the cinematic problems of KING OF KINGS. The music works much better on records, without the banal and sometimes absurd images of that unfortunate film. The episodic structure that tore the film into two different stories--one about Christ, the other about Romans and revolutionaries--is perfect for a rich and varied concert program. The orchestration is more polished here, and this time Rózsa makes the Rome Symphony sound like one of the world's great orchestras.

EL CID is perhaps the finest of all the "sound track" recordings (as opposed to suites). It follows the action of the film closely yet maintains a formal integrity of its own. If the record has a flaw (aside from the thin sound), it is the omission of the Cid's victory theme as stated triumphantly in the major by brass, bells, and drums for his early conquests. Polydor is to be commended for squeezing an additional scene onto its reissue, though tape fans will want to place it in its proper sequence (fourth).

Twelve years have passed since this superb record appeared, and the record industry has not done well by Rózsa since. SODOM AND GOMORRAH is another cut-and-paste job on the actual sound tracks. This one is terribly sloppy; splices are audible everywhere, and you can even hear someone say "okay" after the last chord of the "Destruction of Sodom". Worse, RCA engineered a headache-inducing treble peak into the sound (although the tape release was somewhat more bearable). Still the record is invaluable, for it preserves an overture, intermezzo, and epilogue that would never have been heard otherwise.

Almost every record mentioned so far has a basic flaw: not enough music. But THE VIPs is different. A slender score, it could have provided an admirable 20-minute suite. Stretched out to twice that length, it becomes a bit tedious. And it is sad to hear the Rome Symphony playing again in that murky, reverberant BEN-HUR acoustic.

Then ... nothing. Commercial neglect of THE POWER and THE PRIVATE LIFE OF SHERLOCK HOLMES is unsurprising in view of their failure at the box office. But THE GREEN BERETS was a hit, and even had a popular song. At least Geoff Love's spirited version of the main theme (not the song) is well worth ordering.

Three collections of the 1960s deserve some comment. *Wide Screen Spectaculars* is faithful enough to the letter of the scores (despite some rearrangement by ballet composer Romeo Cascarino), but the unnamed conductor is unimaginative and metronomic to the point of absurdity. The love theme from EL CID comes out in a crisp staccato as if it were a march! The M-G-M collection is strange in a different way. Credited to Rózsa and Savina, it is actually performed by a number of orchestras, all under Rózsa except in the BEN-HUR (which is Kloss). It's a mixed bag of old and new, with one unquestionable treasure: an arrangement of the two DIANE love themes for strings and harpsichord. The mood is restrained, but these themes have a beauty that makes you forget all comparisons with the passionate originals. There is nothing so striking on the Capitol collection, newly reissued on Angel, but it is good to have these serviceable stereo recordings back in print.

And there it stands--twenty-one records and some excerpts. I have spoken harshly of some of them because it is too easy to blind ourselves to faults in a good cause. But the only really damning fault is that there are not more of these records. The film music of Miklós Rózsa, more than 70 hours of it, is as significant a contribution to the literature of dramatic music as we have seen in this century. There is a rich and unexplored vein that Polydor, RCA, and other adventurous companies can only begin to mine. It remains to us to point the way for them.

Note: According to *Films in Review*, Capitol T456 is to be reissued soon, as are Herrmann's VERTIGO and Waxman's TARAS BULBA.

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LETTERS:

An educational film was recently previewed in New York: *Hollywood's Musical Moods* (58 min., 16mm, sound and

color. Blackwood Productions, 1972). Guess who's in it? Amidst interviews and film clips illustrating interactions of action and score, there is a large segment by Rózsa with SPELLBOUND sequences. It's rather expensive to buy, and rental rates are not yet obtainable, but here's the address of the distributors:

58 West 58th St. / New York, N.Y. 10019

Amazing that the Capitol disc came back on Angel, not Seraphim like the Walton. Apparently they saw the light with the popularity of the RCA Korngold and Steiner albums. But to upgrade the label is an unusual step.

Ken Yamashita, Montclair, N.J.

In April, Miklós Rózsa conducted a concert of his film music and concert music by other prominent composers at Whittier High School in Whittier, California. The event was arranged to display the skills of many high school bands from the area, amalgamated here into one huge symphonic band. I understand Elmer Bernstein and Henry Mancini have conducted past concerts of the same general kind, but I was particularly pleased to be able to attend this one. To see in person a man I admire as much as Miklós Rózsa was exciting in itself, but to watch him conduct made it even more so.

The first half of the program was given over to established concert fare, beginning with Ralph Vaughan Williams' *English Folk Song Suite*. There followed the finale from Dvorak's *Symphony #9*, a work called *Chant and Jubilo* by Francis McBeth, *Variations on a Theme by Glinka* by Rimsky-Korsakov, and concluding that half, "Pines of the Appian Way" from Respighi's *Pini di Roma*. Ensemble was not always perfect, and the hard-to-play French horns were now and then off-pitch, but by and large I was very impressed. A problem in band concerts is the absence of strings, but (except for the Vaughan Williams, which was written for concert band) the works were specially arranged to accommodate the lack, and a huge clarinet and flute section worked hard to this end.

The second half of the program consisted of Rózsa film music. We heard the QUO VADIS? Triumphant March, the SPELLBOUND *Concerto* (sans piano), themes from KING OF KINGS, the BEN-HUR Prelude and Parade of the Charioteers.

I enjoyed the handling of SPELLBOUND, and even more the marches. Most of the themes from the film score were present in SPELLBOUND, to comprise a fuller representation of the score than I've ever heard before. The "Triumphal March" is exciting in its evocation of Roman might and cruelty, mingled with pageantry. The band played it well, and their brassy sound was perfectly appropriate. Unfortunately KING OF KINGS and BEN-HUR suffered, not merely for the lack of string sound, but in tempo. Rózsa's were slow, and as a result, KING OF KINGS lost its exuberance, and BEN-HUR its magnificence. Both were very heavy. In the latter, some parts were not balanced, so that the towering opening statement was wheezy, and the answer in the horns muffled. In every case with all these pieces, the primary excitement lay in hearing them performed live. The thrilling effect of that massive sound pouring forth made up for flaws in tempo and performance. It was not a session designed to produce ideal performances anyway, but rather an event, something to enjoy as an audience. It was very successful in that way.

Afterwards, Miklós Rózsa, awash in perspiration but impeccably attired in formal black and tails with white tie, was signing many outstretched programs. I was impressed by his dignity and presence, which comfortably co-exists with an evident charm and courtliness. I had a few words with him while he regarded me with enormous eyes, and I tried to convey my admiration for him without it seeming like fawning or fakery. He sympathized with my discomfort and thanked me for coming to see him, smiled, and patted my shoulder. At that time, in April, he confessed to having scored about a quarter of SINBAD'S GOLDEN VOYAGE, and predicted a Christmas release. He had kind words to say about that clever and inexhaustible film sorcerer Ray Harryhausen, and I assured him that mutual fans of both him and Harryhausen are anxious to see this wedding of their artistry.

Craig Reardon, Redondo Beach, CA

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MRSSS NEWS by Mark Koldys

We are happy to announce to cassette fans that tapes are now available in that format. Write us for details. We have two new releases to announce:

WM-5: RÓZSA: THE POWER (TV broadcast of soundtrack with dialogue excerpts) sonics: b+

WM-6: RÓZSA: *JUNGLE BOOK Suite*; Sabu, narrator; RCA victor Symphony (from RCA 78s) c-
A DOUBLE LIFE Suite; Rózsa cond. c+ (unreleased rarity/contains a mini-survey of this Oscar score in the time it takes to play an Overture)

Ordering instructions remain the same. Any questions? Send a stamped self-addressed envelope.

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FILMUSIQUIZ #1 ANSWERS by Adam Hart:

- (1) SPELLBOUND--the theremin theme
- (2) THE VIPs--the secondary love theme (some thought this to be the title theme from SHERLOCK HOLMES; I think the HOLMES theme sounds more like "My Favorite Martian" than it does like VIPs!)
- (3) THE POWER--main title theme (cimbalom)

FILMUSIQUIZ #2 by Craig Reardon:

A more advanced test for those who found #1 too easy:

(1) Hermann - tranquillo



(2) Steiner - animato



(3) Rózsa



etc.

MRS DIRECTORY (*addresses deleted*)