

# *The MIKLOS ROZSA Society*

## "PRO MUSICA SANA"

Honorary President: MIKLOS ROZSA

Directors: John Fitzpatrick & Mark Koldys

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MRS 11

### NEWS:

Dr. Rozsa has returned from Europe only in November after accomplishing a good deal. (On his Hungarian visit see within.) He has revised his Opus 1, the String Trio, in preparation for a possible recording. Then, in London, he recorded with the Royal Philharmonic for Polydor a new album of film selections including THIEF OF BAGDAD, LOST WEEKEND, A DOUBLE LIFE, NAKED CITY, YOUNG BESS, KNIGHTS OF THE ROUND TABLE, STORY OF THREE LOVES, and A TIME TO LOVE AND A TIME TO DIE.

This disc should be released in February along with the RCA Classic Film Score effort. Dr. Rozsa also attended the recording sessions for the latter and had nothing but praise for conductor Gerhardt and producer Korngold. Unfortunately, rumor has it that the DOUBLE INDEMNITY and JULIUS CAESAR selections they recorded will not fit on the final disc. And since the overture to the latter film is not among the pieces recorded for London by Bernard Herrmann, we will have to wait a little longer before we get to hear this famous but ill-starred work.

February seems to be Rozsa month in London, for United Artists is also getting into the act by reissuing the Leo Genn version of the JUNGLE BOOK and THIEF OF BAGDAD suites at that time. (Unfortunately, TARAS BULBA has not been reissued as we erroneously reported in MRS 10.) And Andre Previn will be conducting the Tripartita at Festival Hall. (Ormandy gives the American premiere in 75/76.)

Janos Starker has now made a studio recording of the Cello Concerto with the Munich Philharmonic under Moshe Atzmon for the Bavarian Radio. A commercial coupling of this with Leonard Pennario's 1973 Piano Concerto is a possibility. Already a reality, however, is Polydor's reissue of IVANHOE/PLYMOUTH ADVENTURE/MADAM BOVARY (2353 095). The sound is authentic mono, the surfaces are

immaculate, and the notes by Christopher Palmer are intelligent. Best of all, the PLYMOUTH selections have finally been placed in their proper order and the MADAME BOVARY Waltz has lost its awkward pause (a relic of its 78rpm incarnation). This one is preferable to the original M-G-M version on all counts, and we can only hope that Polydor will unearth more a such treasures soon.

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RETURN TO HUNGARY by Miklos Rozsa:

Budapest is now a far away memory. With rehearsals, interviews, and a TV program, I had little time for seeing and feeling the city again, but twice I escaped and walked around the city alone, and seeing the old buildings and old streets again after 43 years was a most touching experience. The people couldn't have been more enthusiastic: old ladies kissed my hand (most embarrassing) and young women brought me flowers. But my greatest triumph was when I visited my aunt and wanted to call a taxi to go back to my hotel. It was around 6:00 PM and she said that this is the rush hour, and that no taxi will come. I called just the same and was informed that it will take an hour. So I told them my name. "Oh", said the operator, "for you, mester (maestro), there will be a taxi in five minutes". And so it was.

THE THIEF OF BAGDAD was running in its fifth month of sold-out houses, and I was asked to come to the Film Museum where it was playing to sign autographs. I signed 640. (They counted.) The people were most touching, thanking me that I came home.

Ed. Note: The concert with the Hungarian MAV orchestra took place on 2 August, not 22 as we previously reported. According to the Budapest Daily News (courtesy of Alan Hamer, the program consisted of music from BEN-HUR, EL CID, JUNGLE BOOK, and THIEF OF BAGDAD, along with the SPELLBOUND Concerto and Three Orchestral Songs, performed respectively by Laszlo Varsanyi and Marta Szirmay.

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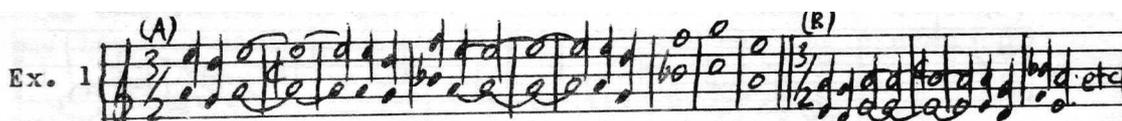
MIRLOS ROZSA AND BEN-HUR by Mark Koldys:

(Preliminary note: For their assistance in the preparation of this analysis, I wish to acknowledge and thank Frank DeWald and John Fitzpatrick.)

Of all Miklos Rozsa's film scores, none is more complex, sophisticated, or emotionally moving than BEN-HUR. Some consider it the greatest film score ever written. While some might dispute this claim, the fact remains that it would be difficult indeed to name a greater one. Certainly the ingredients of greatness were present from the start: director William Wyler worked with, rather than against, the composer; there was an unusually generous amount of time available to write the music; and the subject matter of the film was both powerful and inspiring. It is always difficult to compose good music for mediocre films; BEN-HUR, far from being mediocre, is a genuine cinematic masterpiece.

No single examination of Rozsa's intricate score can reveal all it has to offer. The intent of this study is two-fold: to reveal to those primarily acquainted with this music through the simplified arrangements released on LP the full level of craftsmanship in the score; and to attempt, where possible, to explore the meanings of Rozsa's music vis-a-vis the narrative of Wyler's film.

The score for BEN-HUR contains a number of main themes, a like number of secondary themes, and quite a few subsidiary motifs, all of which are combined, developed, and varied throughout the two hours of music written for this film. It is best to first become acquainted with the primary themes of the score, and most of these are set forth in the Overture to the first part of the film, heard before the film proper begins. The music that opens this Overture is the music that forms the foundation of the entire score, the "Anno Domini" theme:



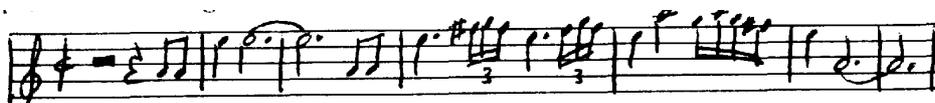
The musical idea used in the construction of this theme is elemental: the perfect fifth. But it forms not only the harmonic basis for this music, but also serves as a melodic inspiration in the construction of themes later introduced. "Anno Domini" is most often heard as in Ex. 1(a), but is less frequently heard in inverted form as in Ex. 1(b). Inverted, the perfect fifths become perfect fourths; the change, however, is primarily semantic, as the fourth and the fifth are basically the same interval, differently placed. "Anno Domini" is invariably harmonized in either fourths or fifths, and is often heard in conjunction with a counter-melody, which in the Overture to Act I of the film is given to the horns:

Ex. 2



This theme is one of several counter-melodies; there is one for nearly every major theme in the score. Unlike pure counterpoint, which has no significant melodic structure of its own except that determined by the progress of the themes it is presented with, and with which it is co-equal, a counter-melody is a recurring theme with an identity of its own, though with a clearly subordinate role to play. The Overture to Act I leads from this first statement of Exs. 1 and 2 into what Rozsa has named "Judea", here presented over plucked strings:

Ex. 3



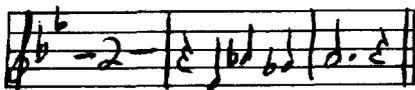
The first two notes of this music, associated in the film with the homeland of Ben-Hur, reveal the use of the perfect fifth as the germ of melody as well as harmony in the score. As this theme climaxes, the Overture proceeds into B-flat for a statement of another of the score main themes, the "love theme" for Ben-Hur and Esther:

Ex. 4



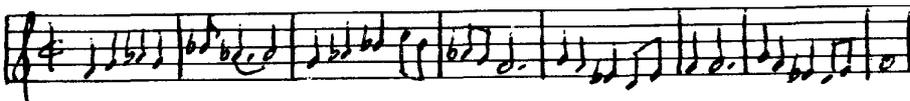
Here, as elsewhere, the love theme is heard with another motif as counter-melody; this counter-melody is not only clearly formed with a perfect fourth, but also is directly derived from "Anno Domini":

Ex. 5



is, in fact, Ex. 1(b) with its first chord broken rather than simultaneously-sounding. The Overture proceeds without pause from this theme into one based on an authentic Yemenite melody, which we shall call "Miriam's love":

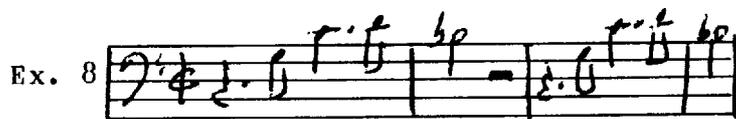
Ex. 6



The first phrase is heard in cellos and violas, after which the violins pick up the theme, which, after a woodwind figure, leads into still another of the scores important themes, "Friendship":



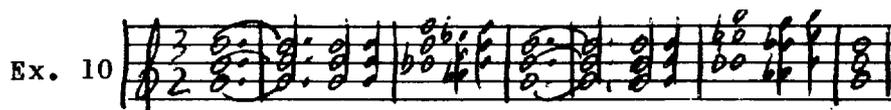
Friendship is a major theme of the film, as well as of the score; the warmth of this theme stands in contrast to many others in the score, as it is not directly derived from the fourths and fifths that permeate the music elsewhere. The harmonization, parallel major chords throughout, prevents the chromaticism of the melody from sounding out of place, as does the counter-melody Rozsa fashioned for the theme from the interval of the fourth:



First heard in C, "Friendship" constantly changes tonal bases, until its last statement in the Overture is in E-flat. As the intensity of the music subsides, strings in their extreme registers play a pianissimo statement of "Anno Domini", a distant horn answers with Ex. 2, and the Overture concludes. Full brass and horns triumphantly restate "Anno Domini" as the film proper begins, with tam-tam strokes punctuating the effect. This leads directly into a statement of "Judea" by strings, with the lower strings playing the counter-melody for "Judea":



This statement, in c, is interrupted as narrator Finlay Currie speaks of Roman power (solemn brass chords in major) and imperishable faith (a chant-like choral line). Thereafter, "Judea" returns in the higher key of g. With mention of the Redeemer, and a visual shot of Joseph and Mary, another of the score's major themes makes its first appearance, the "Christ theme":



This theme is heard throughout the score harmonized, like "Friendship", with parallel major chords, usually in high

strings, chorus, and/or organ. Its appearance here is but a fleeting one, lasting no longer than the melody's first phrase, but certainly enough for recognition. The theme fades into the sounds of the Bethlehem census.

Music is next heard for the Nativity scene, beginning with "Star of Bethlehem", played by the orchestra with choral accompaniment:

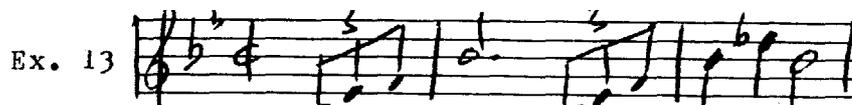


The counter-melody fashioned by the brass at regular intervals is the same one heard in conjunction with the love theme (i.e. Ex. 2). A complete statement of this theme is followed by the "Adoration of the Magi", delicately with strings and woodwinds:

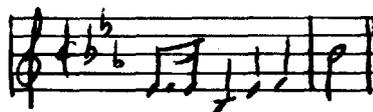


At each cadence of this theme, the lower regions of the orchestra play a two-note phrase of D-flat-C, to connote the sounds of the animals at the manger. Then the key changes from F to A-flat for the second half of the theme, a women's chorus picks up the melody. In theatres, auxiliary stereo speakers (there were seven sound channels available!) placed these voices behind and above the audience. The music then returns to F until, as a conclusion, "Star of Bethlehem" is heard briefly in strings with choral accompaniment.

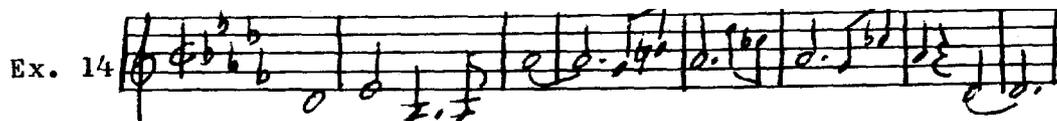
There is at this point a brief moment of silence, following which an on-screen ram's horn sounds the note of F twice, once close up and once from a distance. Then a brass fanfare sounds, based on fourths, and heard here in canonic form:



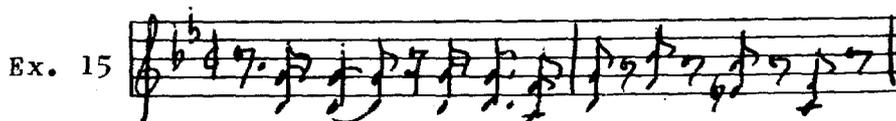
This fanfare is particularly interesting. It is, for one thing, virtually identical to a fanfare in QUO VADIS? Furthermore, it bears more than a passing resemblance to the melody of "here we go, up, up, up!" in YOUNG BESS:



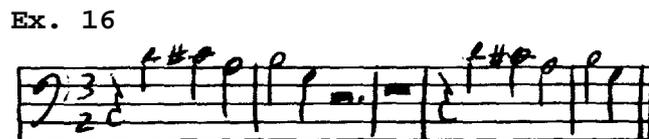
The fanfare is heard here in B-flat, and then the great brass choir moves through several chromatic key changes (A-flat/C-flat/A-flat/C-flat/D-flat/F-flat), each of which reflects a major chord heard in its second inversion (a distribution of the notes of the chord so as to have the fifth of the chord, rather than the tonic, as the base of the chord, thereby giving a greater sense of urgency to the sound). This brass build-up continues through the presentation of the title of the film, and only when the sub-title appears ("A Tale of the Christ") does a cymbal clash excitingly mark the triumphant presentation of the "Christ Theme" as heard in the familiar Prelude. This, presumably, is a subtle way to shift the emphasis from Ben-Hur to Christ. The orchestration is colorful and imposing: full orchestra, chimes, percussion, and organ. This modulates to F-flat, as rushing woodwind obligatos with surging orchestration behind them form a background for the first statement of the heroic melody that is "Ben-Hur":



Fourths and fifths again play an important melodic role here, as horns present this theme, with a short development through several keys that leads into the love theme, in a brief statement in B-flat (unlike the oft-recorded Prelude, in which the theme gets a full A-B-A statement). Then, a fever-pitched restatement of Ex. 14 concludes with the first phrase of "Anno Domini", subsiding into a march-like statement of "Judea", with a low-string accompaniment in open fifths. A modulation to G, without a change in rhythm, heralds the first of the score's many Roman marches:

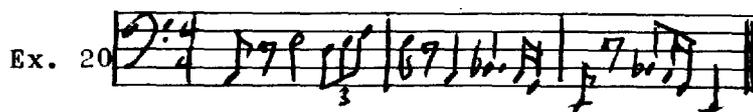


Played by the brass, the harmonization is in fourths and fifths. "Judea" is heard in strings at the mention of the word "Jerusalem" in response to a soldier's inquiry: "What village is this?" As "Judea" fades, the musical sequence concludes. Christ is seen for the first time as armies pass the home of Joseph, and the Christ theme is presented by organ and strings, with plucked lower strings presenting a counter-melody to this theme:





As Ben-Hur and Messala clash over the question of loyalty to Rome, Ben-Hur tells Messala, "I am against you", Messala's theme is first heard here:



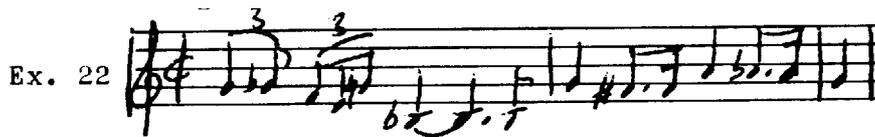
Played in low strings, fashioned from an introductory leap of a fifth, this theme is none too firmly connected to Messala. Throughout the course of BEN-HUR, it will be seen to connote vengeance, decadence, evil, and the lack of morality that was Rome. It is here harmonized in open fifths, in conjunction with a minor-mode variation of "Friendship", the use of which is clearly ironic. Both themes are developed as Ben-Hur tells his family that they shall never see Messala again, and the sequence ends in d, on the chord of the dominant. Ben-Hur's initial meeting with Esther is accompanied by the love theme in muted strings. This simple theme is developed beautifully as Ben-Hur asks Esther if she loves the man she is to marry; as that scene fades out, another fades in, and the love theme then changes to a flute and harp, for an introduction to a restatement of the theme. A solo violin then introduces a new harmonization of the theme in e-flat (this is the version heard on the BEN-HUR Vol. II album, incorrectly attributed to the film's second half. The music reaches its high point with a D-flat chord in the strings that allows cellos to sing the melody in major, reverting to violins to conclude the scene.

In sharp contrast, footsteps of marching soldiers appear, accompanied by a series of plodding drum beats, leading into another fanfare, based on the march that signifies Gratus's entry into Jerusalem:



Open fifths form the accompaniment and the harmonization for this purposefully stodgy military music. When Messala falsely accuses Ben-Hur of an attack on Gratus, the "Friendship" theme returns ironically as a counterpoint to scenes of the arrest. The tonality changes to minor, and the clarinet plays a variation of the theme as the music develops further and further into distant minor keys. This is heard as Messala inspects the roof of Ben-Hur's house. One of the few examples of a scene that was filmed to fit music, rather than vice-versa, it was made

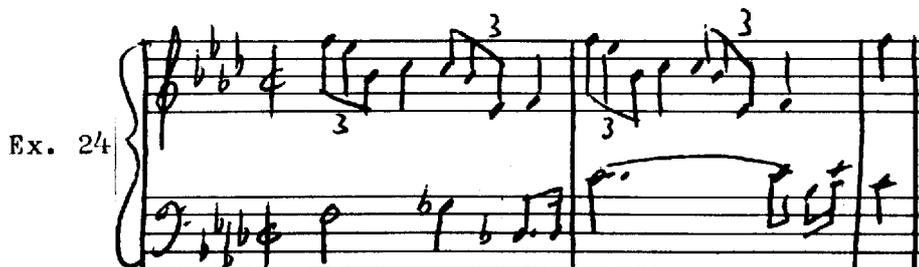
possible by Wyler's suggestion to Rozsa that he, Wyler, could extend the scene if Rozsa could do something with it musically. The music ends in a fifth played by low strings. Ben-Hur's escape from captivity and into the office of Messala is without music (the music on the Vol. II disc is not in the film). The silence is probably more eerily effective, anyhow. The next music heard is Messala's theme, in low brass and strings, punctuated by trumpet interjections, as he condemns Ben-Hur to the slave ships. Juxtaposed with it is "Friendship", in a bitter minor mode. Messala's theme returns when he decides to imprison Esther's father, and this time it leads not into the friendship theme, but rather into the "Burning Desert":



The theme, with its chromatic twists, is given an even stranger, more bizarre sound by Rozsa's harmonizing it with the tritone (the interval between the fourth and the fifth). (The tritone has acquired the nickname of "diabolus in musica", presumably because of the "devilish" difficulties the interval presented to singers; is it stretching matters to suggest that the diabolical connotation may have some relevance to Rozsa's use of the interval in this scene?) As Rozsa develops the music, another motif emerges:

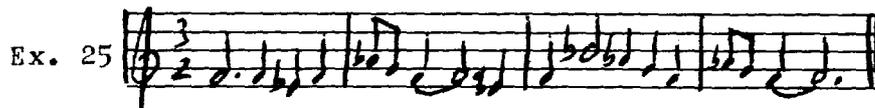


It reaches its peak as the soldiers beg for water, and is then combined with Ben-Hur's theme in the following variation:

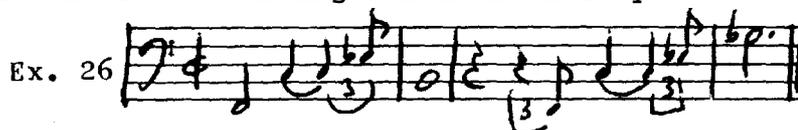


A series of rising chords, as Ben-Hur says "God help me", lead into the theme for Christ in the key of F, with strings and organ, and its counter-melody underneath. But when a soldier tells Christ, "No water for him", the music changes to a minor

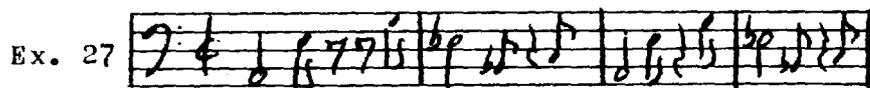
motif that is in fact a theme for the Roman persecution of Christ:



It is heard in the strings with insistent tympani underneath that heighten the despair in the music. Then Ex. 10 returns for a brief restatement. Then the orchestra takes up Ben-Hur's theme, as the water gives him new strength to continue, but Rozsa tells us that it is not really the water that renews Ben-Hur's energies but rather Christ himself, by combining Ben-Hur's theme with Ex. 16, the counter-melody for the Christ theme. The two have become as one, at least musically. Suddenly and boldly, the brass of the orchestra present the theme of the naval armada, triplet figures in trumpet, with lower brass sounding forth the melody:



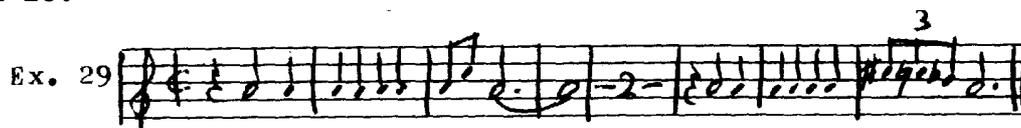
This is only a brief statement, however, as a bridge to the music of the rowing of the slaves, which is basically the same as Ex. 26, but in a slightly different rhythm:



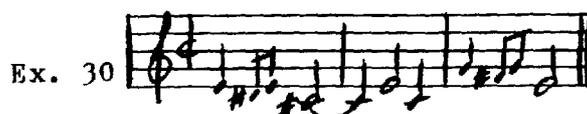
The counter-melody for this theme is heard in the horns:



A second counter-melody is heard simultaneously with Exs. 27 and 28:



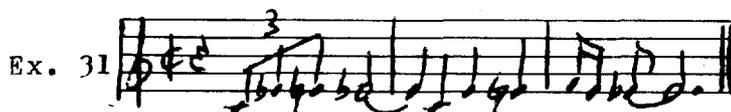
A brass fanfare then welcomes the new commander Arrius (it consists of two notes, C and G). He wastes little time in getting acquainted, and as he starts his men rowing again, that music resumes. The mood of the music changes, however, as Arrius discusses the upcoming battle. Here his theme is heard for the first time:



It is heard in a series of sustained chords in brass and strings, with rumblings below in the lowest strings; these rumblings are chromatic scales, which return when the actual battle is about to get underway in a more obvious fashion. The galley slaves get a rehearsal for the battle as Arrius takes them from normal rowing speed up to ramming speed. Ex. 27 forms a sort of ground bass (the form is very like that of the passacaglia), and Exs. 28 and 29 are added as tempo increases. When we reach the key of c, Ex. 29 has become dominant, until the music finally and suddenly stops on a unison F.

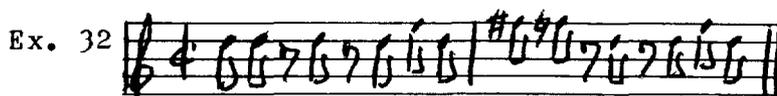
A long shot of the ships at sea restates again Ex. 26, which immediately becomes Arrius's theme as Ben-Hur goes to Arrius's cabin. The theme gets a misterioso treatment, as it appears in pizzicato bass under minor chords.

As the ships prepare for battle, the sequence is introduced with a horn figure heard under open-fifth fanfares:



This leads again to the rowing music; but here, the rowing music becomes very free in a rhythmic sense, and is developed in a somber, harmonic manner as the guards lock the slaves to the ship. But when Arrius orders that Ben-Hur be unlocked, Arrius's theme reappears, the music lifts itself to higher regions in the strings, and then an unusual harmonization of Ben-Hur's theme manages to reflect the bemused gratitude he must have felt. Ben-Hur recalls that once before a man helped him (Christ), and the Christ theme is heard, only to be broken by the reappearance of the rowing music in the somber key of d.

Suddenly Ex. 31 is heard under trilling strings, while underneath the chromatic scales heard earlier add menace. The music is developed with increasing frenzy, occasionally interrupted by the rowing music. Themes become less recognizable, and oddly altered scales played on a xylophone intersperse themselves. As the ship is being rammed, the music takes on a rhythmic irregularity that is punctuated with percussive effects:



As Ben-Hur frees himself from the fast-sinking ship, his theme is thrown into the general musical melee, and is heard in combination

with another motif of the battle:



The battle rages with increasing ferocity, both visually and musically. Accents fall on off-beats, and Ben-Hur's theme becomes elongated to several octaves in its variations. Finally, it returns triumphant, over the irregular rhythm of the battle below it, in a brass statement as Ben-Hur escapes from the ship. It descends into the lowest regions of the orchestra as the ship sinks, and Ben-Hur rescues Arrius. As he does so, fragments of "Friendship" are recognizable in the cellos and double-basses, reflecting perhaps an act of friendship on the part of both of these former enemies. In any event, it reinforces the fact that the theme, like others in the score, has a general as well as a specific import. As Arrius gets on Ben-Hur's raft, Arrius's theme is heard, and then the music for the armada as the ship sinks into the sea. A fragment of the rowing music, and the battle segment ends. It is to Rozsa's credit that, despite the director's cross-cutting and the different themes that had to be juggled, the music never sounds arbitrary or hodge-podge. It of course does not have the unity that, for example, Goldsmith brings to the battle scenes in *THE BLUE MAX*; but that approach could not be used here. Once Rozsa established music for the rowing of the slaves, music of rhythmic certitude, he was committed to using that music in all scenes of the slaves' rowing; to do otherwise in the midst of the battle scene for "musical unity" would sound uncomfortable.

A rising motif based on Ben-Hur's theme is heard as a ship is sighted; it falls when it is seen that the sail is Roman. The rowing music ends the sequence, and is heard again when Ben-Hur, on board the ship, looks down and sees the slaves. Arrius's victory march (although he lost his ship, he won the battle) is heard as he receives his medal from Tiberius:

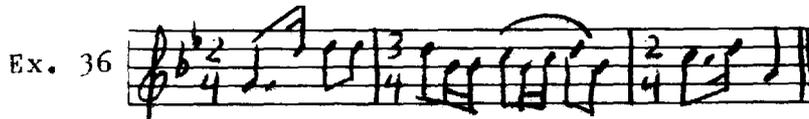


Fourths and fifths dominate the harmonization. The B section of this A-B-A march is a series of fanfares that echo from opposite sides of the orchestra; the first statement is harmonized in open fourths and fifths, the echo in full triads.

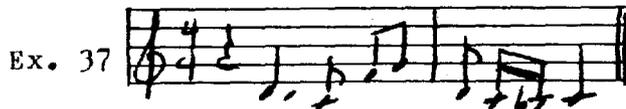
At party, an African dance is played by wind instruments and percussion; essentially unharmonized, the melodic line again is derived from fourths and fifths:



Another piece of on-screen music is similarly derived:



When Ben-Hur tells Arrius why he must leave for Judea, a string orchestra plays a radiant setting of the love theme in G. But only a few measures of this is heard, as the music becomes a new theme, heard in the cellos:



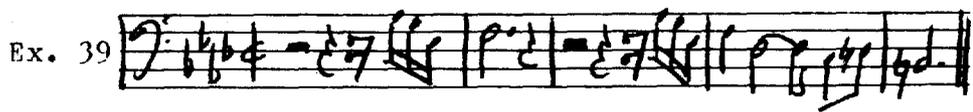
The theme is restated in several keys, until the music ends with a gentle string statement of "Anno Domini". A gentle statement in f of the "Judea" theme, upon Ben-Hur's return to the city, becomes "Star of Bethlehem" in F as Balthazar is seen. This serves not only as an aural flashback, recalling previous connections with the land of Judea, but also serves a more practical purpose: to subconsciously help prepare the viewer to recognize Balthazar, who has not been seen for two hours. A particularly flowing statement of Ben-Hur's theme in D-flat becomes a fragment of the love theme as Ben-Hur looks at the ring of Esther, then leading into a phrase of the "Adoration of the Magi". The Christ theme is heard, not surprisingly, as Balthazar mentions that he is seeking a man from Nazareth. The next scored scene begins as Balthazar tells Ben-Hur that his (i.e. Ben-Hur's) life is a miracle. An oboe lays a fragment of Messala's theme, so plaintively that one hardly recognizes it—an apt reminder of the man who tried to end Ben-Hur's life, and reinforcement of the fact that his survival is, indeed, miraculous. This actually develops into the "Star of Bethlehem" (Balthazar reminisces about his visit to Bethlehem), the Christ theme (at the words "He is near"), and finally a fragment of "Star". As this scene ends, horns play a somber variation of Ben-Hur's theme, which leads again into "Judea". Then the "House of Hur", and Judea again, as Ben-Hur decides to return to his home. The actual reunion of Ben-Hur and Esther is without music, but

when the two are alone again, a flowing, rising string introduction becomes the love theme, played in a far-off manner on flute and harp, just as in the previous meeting between the two in the same location four years previous, but this time with a trembling string background that is nearly inaudible. The strings pick up the melody for the rest of the theme. As it ends, growling, dissonant, but subdued, brass interject as Esther mentions Messala, and the music dwells on a troubled sequence:



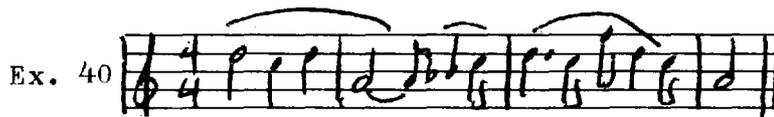
The music of Ex. 38 actually appears just before Messala is mentioned, and prepares us for her words. But as Esther mentions a "young Rabbi", the Christ theme returns, but the music turns dark as Ben-Hur refuses to abandon vengeance. Esther tells him "This time you won't be sent to the galleys—you'll die!", and cellos and basses play a downward chromatic scale identical to the opening notes of the "Burning Desert". A five-note sequence concludes the music on a note of deep troubling.

Messala orders his men to find Ben-Hur's long-imprisoned relatives. The score is silent until they look in the jail and see that the prisoners are lepers. That moment is stabbed musically by a dissonant chord in winds and brass with tam-tam strokes, as the lower brass play the theme associated with the lepers:



The music at this point fades out very unsatisfactorily, in mid-phrase, as though an engineer had just turned down the volume knob. Possibly there was more to this scene than remained in the final version, and the conclusion of Rozsa's music was edited along with the visuals.

As the released relatives go to see Esther, the same theme is heard in a less blatant orchestration, leading into an oboe treatment in c of "Miriam's love". The predominantly minor-mode theme, however, gets a few major mode twists and harmonizations in this appearance. When the lepers ask Esther not to tell Ben-Hur of their plight, and he is seen in the distance, his theme is heard in minor, leading to the love theme as it becomes apparent to Miriam that Esther is in love with Ben-Hur. Then another theme is introduced:



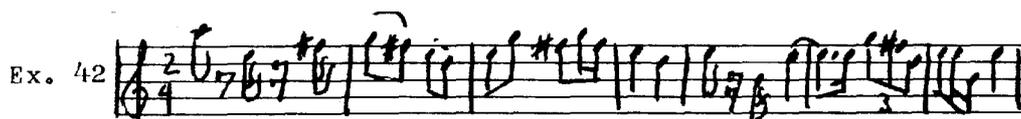
It leads quickly back into the music for "Miriam's love" in a setting in d for strings. Following this, Esther tells Ben-Hur that Miriam and her daughter are dead, and the music develops a motif in minor:



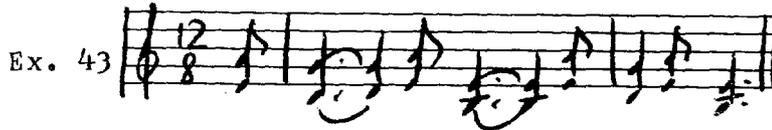
This eventually becomes "Judea" in b-flat, with brass stings stabbing the music in painful remorse. Then "Messala" is heard growling from the lower brass, and grows in fury until, in the peroration to the film's first half, it is combined with a trumpet-chords variant of Ben-Hur's theme that is so angry that it is almost indistinguishable from "Messala". In this way, Rozsa has imparted and attributed to Ben-Hur the hatred and desire for vengeance that characterized Messala. It is with this music that Act I concludes.

The Act II Overture opens again with "Anno Domini", and proceeds into "Judea" exactly as in the Act I Overture. The same segue is made into the love theme, but it here leads into two statements of "Anno Domini", the second in a hither key than the first, ending the Overture.

The exciting chariot race is preceded by much on-screen music, leading off with Galba's march from QUO VADIS?:



Lots of fourths and fifths in the orchestration, and a somewhat brighter sound than was given Galba, make this pseudo-Roman march convincing. The first of several pre-race fanfares is then heard; it is based on the opening four notes of Ex. 13. The second is a richly harmonized one based on the chords of A and e; the third an even more richly (and anachronistically) harmonized one based on the progression of F/A-flat/B-flat/D-flat/E-flat/F; the fourth beyond it still (E-flat/D-flat/C-flat/F-flat/E-flat). Then Ex. 42 is encored, followed by horn fanfares:

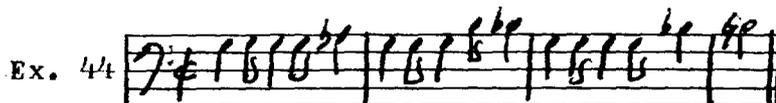


These introduce the "Parade of the Charioteers", more abbreviated here than in its concert setting (and hence less effective). It is an A-B-A march, with "Messala" and Ex. 43 the "A", and Ben-Hur's theme the "B".

Then a set of fanfares in major and based on Ben-Hur's theme prepare the viewer for the fantastic chariot race sequence. Following the race, a third (!) performance of the march is heard for the victory of Ben-Hur, after which the Ben-Hur theme-derived fanfare is presented in expanded form.

For the critical scene of Messala's death, the music begins with a morbid low strings-and-brass statement in minor of "Friendship", ending with the commencement of dialogue. There is no music until Messala's actual death, as he tells Ben-Hur of the leprosy of his mother and sister. Again, the "Friendship" music is heard in a dismal portrait of despair; as Ben-Hur leaves Messala's deathbed and enters the now-empty stadium, tinny, muted trumpets play a mocking version of Ex. 43 over the friendship music, a bitterly ironic and totally masterful piece of musical commentary that says more than a page of dialogue could. A bitter minor chord punctuated by a tympani stroke ends the sequence.

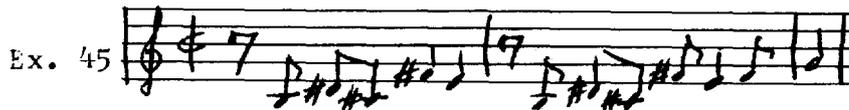
We next see the valley of the lepers, and the leprosy theme is heard in cellos under dissonant brass and woodwind chords, given an inexorable march tempo by a solemn bass drum beat on the first and third beats of each measure. Another theme in the brass can be heard over the somber foundation:



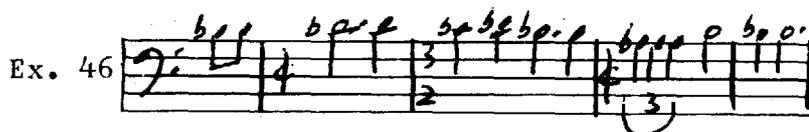
Then the music returns to the leprosy theme, leading into a series of rising orchestral figures that culminate in a sustained double-diminished chord, under which Ex. 23 (earlier associated with the desert) is heard, which emphasizes Roman oppression and/or visual dryness.

The leprosy music again picks up as Esther takes food to them, eventually becoming "Miriam's love" in e and she inquires about Ben-Hur's health, concluding the sequence.

When Ben-Hur leaves the valley of the lepers, the music picks up again with a stormy figure:



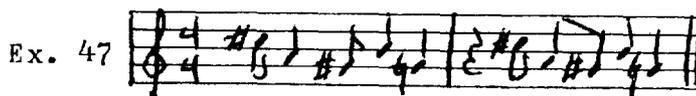
This quickly dissipates into the Christ theme, and then "Star of Bethlehem" as Balthazar tells Ben-Hur that he has found the son of God. The music turns to despair, however, as Ben-Hur reflects upon his situation, returning to the Christ theme as Ben-Hur, reaching for water, recalls the man who gave him water in the desert. Ben-Hur's theme, in lower strings and brass, is then picked up by the rest of the orchestra, leading into "Anno Domini" in *f*. This central motif serves as introduction for "The Sermon on the Mount":



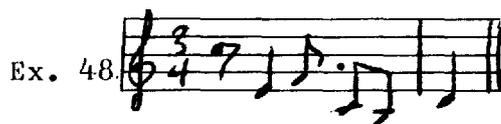
The music is wordless, although its rhythm fits the words of the sermon; it is, in fact, the Christ theme in an elaborate variation.

Then Esther tells Ben-Hur "It is as though you have become Messala", Messala's theme growls forth from the lower regions of the orchestra; the viewer has been prepared, however, by previous association of this theme with Ben-Hur (Finale of Act I). This gives way to the love theme in the oboe. Then a shift of scene to the valley of the lepers ushers in that march-like dirge again, which ceases as dialogue begins.

When we are told Tirzah is dying, a second theme associated with the lepers is heard:

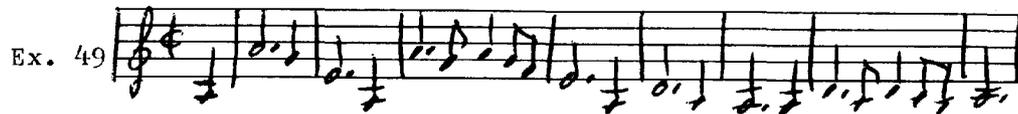


Its stay is brief, however, as the Christ theme is heard; then Ex. 47 returns and eventually becomes "Miriam's love" as Ben-Hur is reunited with her. It becomes more powerful, beginning in lower strings, and then subsides; Ben-Hur's theme, in a fragmented form, then appears in the lower strings. It is developed in various ways as they go back into the town to seek a cure from Christ. The music gains in volume and seriousness, and a variant of Ex. 23 is introduced:



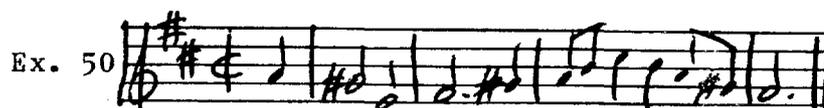
At the peak of this development, an eerie chord is suddenly sustained, and in *mysterioso* fashion, their entry into the city is accompanied by a tritone-harmonized setting of "Anno Domini", which concludes the musical sequence.

Christ's carriage of the cross is marked by a melancholy melody with solemn bass drum beats:



The music is repeated several times, each time higher in orchestral registers, with a series of rising, oddly-harmonized chords serving as a *middle* section for the music. As Ben-Hur says "I know this man", the music begins to become less distinct and more solemnly intoned, sinking lower and lower in pitch. Esther despairs over contacting Christ as He passes her with his cross, and in the bass and tympani, under rising thirds in the brass, snatches of Messala's theme are recognizable, universalizing all the more this theme. Ex. 25 reappears as Ben-Hur goes to give Christ water, and gives way to the Christ theme as Ben-Hur looks in His eyes. A stabbing brass chord interrupts and the solemnity of Ex. 49 resumes. The crucifixion, intended to be without music, is accompanied by a somber treatment of and "Messala" and "Friendship", similar to that heard following Messala's death. The music inserted is not Rozsa's choice, but was lifted from available music when someone decided that the scene "needed music". However, when the Christ theme appears briefly, followed by Ex. 25 in a series of broken orchestral stabbings, and then the Christ theme again, the inherent "rightness" of this musical sequence suggests that it was scored intentionally, and by the composer.

Christ's death, with surround-stereo thunderclaps and winds, is superbly effective in theatrical showings; it is capped by a triumphant A-flat statement by full orchestra of the Christ theme as the lepers are cured of their ailment. The music modulates up to B-flat for another statement, leading into a magnificent development in D of the Christ theme counter-melody, which here assumes a character and status of its own:

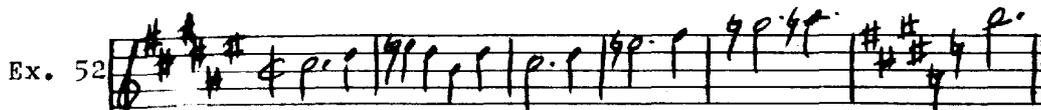


Chimes, brass, and strings pour forth a series of variations

on this theme as the blood of Christ is seen rushing from the cross into the water below. The music then subsides into the Ben-Hur theme in cellos, followed by an extremely sad variation of the Christ theme. But then we hear a transfigured variation of "Friendship":



Its use here not only reinforces the fact that the hatred within Ben-Hur has been cast out, but also perhaps reflects the bond that exists between Christ and Ben-Hur. This is not unlikely, as the Christ theme, in strings only, is then heard as Ben-Hur speaks Christ's final words on the cross. (Interestingly enough, some prints of film differ slightly at this point; a Canadian copy and an American copy, on comparison, had this dialogue displaced by several seconds vis-à-vis the musical score. I would assume that Rozsa intended the Christ theme to be heard as Ben-Hur repeats His words. The love theme then returns in the oboe, with "Miriam's love" interrupting in the cellos and growing to a climax with a chorus-and-orchestra statement of an extension of Ex. 50 that develops that theme still further:



The love theme in E, and finally the Christ theme, set to a magnificent "Alleluia" in the chorus, cap this memorable score.

The treatment of the finale, as described above, is vastly different from that on any of the recordings available, and vastly superior. indeed, for a score that has been given as much record space as this one has, its representation has been extremely poor: several collections of "Greatest Theme"-type snippets, minus the brilliant Rozsa development that makes the score so extraordinary. No analysis of the music for BEN-HUR can communicate the beauty and power of the work--that is only available to the listener. At present, only tapes of the original soundtrack of the film, although hobbled with dialogue, sound effects, etc., reveal the work's true brilliance in full measure, Until the original music tracks become available, or until someone like Charles Gerhardt pores over the M-G-M vaults and comes up with the original scores for a new recording of this work, none of us will be able to fully appreciate the depth and scope of this most underrated 20th Century masterpiece.

MRSSS NEWS by Mark Koldys:

The main focus of this issue is on BEN-HUR, and that goes for our tape announcements as well, although this quarter's new releases should include something to please most anyone:

WM-14, WM-15, WM-16: ROZSA: BEN-HUR (tv tape)

WM-17: ROZSA: BEN-HUR Suite (Rozsa/Glendale Symphony)  
"Tarentella" (music track)  
"Pursuit" from JUNGLE BOOK (music track)  
Waltz from MADAME BOVARY (Joseph Tura, piano)  
Triumphal March from QUO VADIS? (arranged  
for Brass Choir)

M-18: HERRMANN: THE BATTLE OF NERETVA (tv tape)

To fully appreciate BEN-HUR, one must be familiar with the score in its original version. There are nearly two hours of music in this epic work, and our three tapes include every note of Rozsa's magnificent background score. The film has never been telecast in its entirety in the U.S., but our tapes derive not only from American telecasts but also from Canadian telecasts. The end result is the only complete, good fidelity tape of the film's soundtrack that we know of. In addition, the Overtures to Act I and Act II of the film are included (drawn from a somewhat battered but still serviceable 16mm print). As in all our tv tapes, this trio of releases consists of the musical sequences from the film with dialogue and sound effects; until the original music tracks surface, this remains the only road to full comprehension of BEN-HUR.

Of the various concert arrangements of BEN-HUR, Rozsa's own Suite is the most satisfying. The composer conducts a performance on WM-17 with the Glendale Symphony that would do credit to many orchestras of far greater repute. There are also other items on WM-17. Two segments from original music tracks to films present a harried moment from JUNGLE BOOK, and a tarentella from a yet-to-be identified film. (Perhaps some MRS member will recognize this music and fill us in!) Although the Tura performance of the waltz was originally issued on WM-8 it had to be deleted from that release when WM-8 was remastered; hence, we offer it again here. The brass choir is startlingly effective in the QUO VADIS? march. Sonics throughout, except for the two music track excerpts, which are somewhat aged, are first-rate.

When THE BATTLE OF NERETVA was originally released, it ran close to three hours and had music composed by three composers. For release to English-speaking countries, the film was cut to 102 minutes and given a score by Bernard Herrmann, who recorded his 44 minutes of music with the London Philharmonic Orchestra for the film's soundtrack. Because of the film's limited distribution, most interested parties have never heard the music; for that reason, we offer WM-18, another "tv tape", that includes all of Herrmann's score audible under the machine-gun fire, mortar bursts etc. Actually, because the fidelity of the sound track is high, there is exceptional clarity in the musical reproduction, and little is lost to sound effects. Aside from some audible wow in one or two scenes, this print (and our tape of it) are flawless.

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LETTERS:

At the end of the Herrmann interview (MRS 10) you have a misquote. The fourth line from the bottom should read: "because they haven't a chance". Herrmann is a blunt man, you know!

I got the first issue of Film Music Notebook, the journal of the Bernstein group. Let me tell you, it's good. It contains an interview between Bernstein and Hugo Friedhofer, a piece on the current condition of film music by David Raksin, and an examination of Herrmann's PSYCHO by composer Fred Steiner (whose old TV scores used to ape Herrmann's style). This last includes a photo of the first page of the manuscript score. There is also an article about Max Steiner by Albert R Bender and an opening statement by Bernstein... .Quality printing and several photos....

First to be announced as a recording is A SUMMER PLACE and HELEN OF TROY, which is pretty sickening, but it's necessary to buy this in order to support future offerings.

CRAIG REARDON, Redondo Beach, CA

The MARNIE bootleg is an extremely poor case of editing. The "suite" is culled from a studio tape of practice sessions that I was recently given. Practice sessions from THE VIRGINIAN and some other material recently pirated seem to be from the same tape.

"Entr'acte" is a new recording society, similar to Elmer Bernstein's. Annual dues are \$5.00, plus \$6.95 (approximately) per record. They are at work on Herrmann's SISTERS and this should be released this winter....

A friend from New Zealand writes: "I stumbled across a copy of THIEF/JUNGLE BOOK about two years ago. It was pressed here on the 'Top Rank' label, probably about 1958."

RONALD BOHNN, Los Angeles, CA

I recently came across an interview with Fred Zinnemann in Focus on Film (Spring 1973, No. 14, p. 26) in which he speaks of the NUN'S STORY score referred to most recently in the first part of Ken Sutam's article:

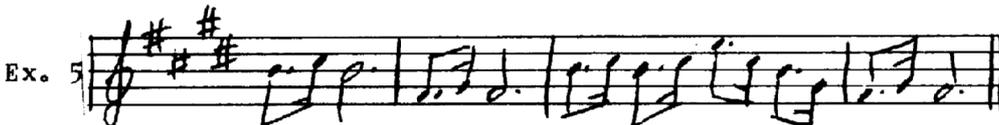
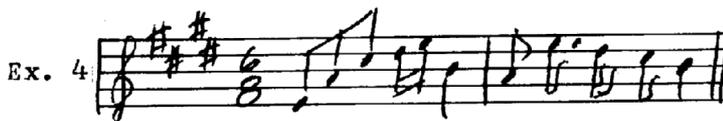
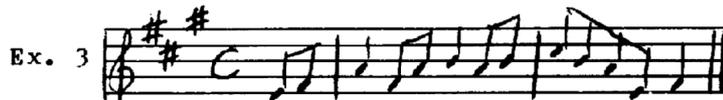
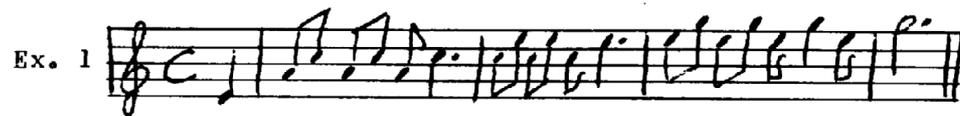
"While Franz Waxman was scoring the picture I discovered that he had a deep dislike for the Catholic Church and this was coming across in his music. The theme he originally wrote for the convent scenes would have been more appropriate for scenes set in a dungeon. For the final scene, when Sister Luke leaves the convent and returns to the world, he wrote an exultant theme to end the film and I removed it from the soundtrack so that the film ended in silence. He was very upset about this and at the post-mortem after the first preview of the picture he said so to Jack Warner. When Warner asked me about it, I answered his question with another: 'What kind of music do you want at the end of the film? If the music expresses gloom it will imply that it is too bad that Sister Luke left the convent. If it is joyful people will think that Warner Brothers is encouraging nuns to leave the convent. And so, the film ends in silence, the way I wanted it to.'

PRESTON JONES, New Caanan, CT

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FILMUSIQJJIZ #6 by Craig Reardon:

The following musical examples are tv themes composed by well-known film composers. Identify both the composer and the name of the tv show associated with these themes:



\*

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Dues, inquiries, policy,  
news-letter subscription and  
back issues, editorial  
matter.

MRSSS tape recordings