

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

Series 2: Vol. 6, No. 2

Spring 2008

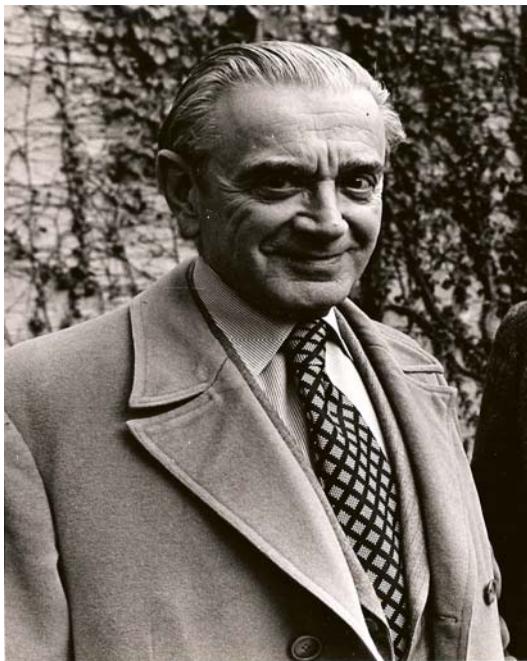
PMS 64

- PRELUDE AND FIRST HUNGARIAN SKETCH** The journey to Budapest . . . The centenary concert . . . Travels around the old city . . . Gilad Karni . . . Also: *Sinfonia concertante* in London and a Rózsa-Korngold festival in East Anglia. By Alan Hamer. 2
- SECOND HUNGARIAN SKETCH** Jill Arbetter and Gilad Karni and how it came to pass . . . More travels in search of MR. By John Fitzpatrick. 9
- SENSATIONAL CENTENNIAL** Preston Jones reports on the Academy's Hollywood tribute, with remarks by Bruce Broughton. 14
- THE WASHINGTON TRIBUTE** Anastasia Khitruk and János Starker at the Hungarian Embassy. By Steve Vertlieb 19
- RÓZSA AUF NAXOS** Frank DeWald on two important new recordings. 21
- NEWS AND NOTES** Belgrade 2008 . . . Sherlock Holmes and Spell-bound albums. 27

John Fitzpatrick
Editor

Frank K. DeWald, Alan Hamer
Associate Editors

© 2008 The Miklós Rózsa Society
ISSN 0361-9559



Prelude

Alan Hamer

MIKLÓS RÓZSA was a man and musician who knew few borders, and his thirst for knowledge and his need to communicate were not restricted to music, nor even to art or culture in the wider sense. He had an instinct for exactly matching his compositions to the requirements imposed upon him and, moreover, every piece bears the strong and unique stamp of his distinctive musical personality. He chose not to remain in his native Hungary, but instead to broaden his musical horizons by studying in Leipzig and then by living in both Paris and London prior to settling in Los Angeles. That he became one of the leading composers ever to work in Hollywood is well known; that his many works for both film and the concert hall are of probable equal importance and value is only just starting to become broadly recognised, and quite rightly so.

Amidst the many on-going tributes—concerts, disc releases, essays and retro-

spectives—marking this, his centenary year, we are pleased to add this homage of true admiration to a great composer, conductor, teacher, inimitable raconteur, and—to many of us—a very good friend. This Society, begun in his honour and with his approval, is itself now in its 36th year, and the purpose of its existence was, and still remains, “to unite the many, but widely scattered, admirers of the music of Miklós Rózsa,” to quote from our very first issue of *Pro Musica Sana* of Spring 1972. We trust we have helped to achieve this goal and also maintain the standards as requested by Dr. Rózsa in his original letter to us: “I think that the aim of the society should not be alone to promote MR, but to fight for better music in films and to re-establish sanity in concert music. ...Otherwise, the whole thing might smack of press agency and I would feel like a musical Zsa Zsa Gabor.” From this excerpt one can discern his humour but also his humility, modesty and especially his concerns over the state of music at the time.

We are honoured to present this special tribute issue, detailing some centenary events that have occurred already, and advising of others to come. We trust you can all manage to attend some of the concerts and purchase the CDs which are currently being recorded. It is certainly to be hoped that in another hundred years Rózsa’s name and music will remain to the forefront of all that was notably memorable in composition within the twentieth century. The Hollywood of the Golden Age is dead, but the work of Miklós Rózsa remains as a living monument of dedication and sincerity, always reflecting, in the essence of its being, an intense love of the country in which it was nurtured.

We certainly need have no doubt that when the creative achievements of those who have striven for emotion and beauty in their work are weighed in the balance, Rózsa’s will not be found wanting.

First Hungarian Sketch

Alan Hamer

UNCERTAINTY accompanied our arrival at Budapest Airport in the early evening of 15th March, not just because neither I nor my three travelling companions had ever visited this renowned city before but, more pertinently, because many demonstrations and antigovernment protest marches had been scheduled for that day. Would we come across violent scenes to recall the 1956 uprising, or even get caught up in the melee? We did see some signs of it all, but more of that later. At any rate, we had a speedy arrival through immigration to the waiting car to take us to our centrally situated, pension-hotel. Soon we found ourselves in a nearby restaurant to grab some much-needed sustenance and to talk about the week ahead with heady anticipation. With me were my wife, Sheila, the William Alwyn expert Andrew Knowles, and his young wife, Peiyuan.

We had come to celebrate the centenary of Miklós Rózsa in his city of birth, the place he had left as a young man and returned to only once in his life, when he was sixty-seven years old. He always retained fond memories of Budapest and its surrounding hills and countryside, but sadly remembered his countrymen with rather less affection. We knew our visit would be unique and we were determined that we would not waste any time over the next six days, but instead see as much as we could, and breathe the good Hungarian air—on the banks of the mighty Danube—that infused and inspired the young composer-to-be all those years ago. Budapest is a large, sprawling city clustered on both banks of the river—ancient Buda on one side and modern Pest on the other—impressive with its wide avenues; imposing, battle-worn buildings; welcoming traditional shops and restaurants; and bustling, good-humoured populace.

Our return to the hotel was slightly marred by an on-going rowdy protest march (with the multitude in ill humour!) and the sight of riot police arrayed nearly opposite; but we were nothing short of intrepid as we forged through the crowd—despite warning alarms from some of the protesters—and attempted to reach our destination, finally succeeding after some problems with entry at the massive wooden door. Welcome to Budapest!

By the next day things were back to normal, and sightseeing was the order of the day; later we returned to our abode to greet John Fitzpatrick, who had landed that morning. Soon we all took off once more to explore the city, ending up at a bustling *Kávéház* for beverages, delicious cakes, and much to chat about. The Saturday prior to the day of the concert was crowned by our visit to the Bartók Museum out in the suburbs, a fascinating monument to Hungary's greatest composer which boasted many unique documents and photos, all prominently displayed. The composer lived in the house prior to his departure to America, and his music room remains almost intact. There was also an elegant concert room and a useful gift shop in which to purchase all sorts of mementoes. It left a vivid impression of this seemingly mystic and introverted master and his secluded later life in his beloved land.

The Sunday of the concert dawned with sunshine—and an invitation to have breakfast with Juliet Rozsa and two of her daughters, plus Jill Arbetter who organised the concert—part of the annual Budapest Spring Festival— together with her violist husband, Gilad Karni. It was a time for renewing acquaintances, plenty of conversation, and not really too much breakfast! Better was to come as Juliet suggested that we go walkabout in the city to find Rózsa's birthplace and his high school or “gymnasium.” This we eventually did, which proved to be a most captivating experience. We retraced the route the youngster would have taken to school each day, and even discovered a “Rózsa utca” (street—pronounced “ootsa”), but not named after our man! We also later visited the spectacular Opera House, which had been commissioned by the Emperor Franz Joseph in 1875. Its interior is voluptuously marbled, gilded and decorated with frescoes by the finest painters of the time. We all retired to rest for an hour or two before heading down

to the Festival Theatre, on the Danube's banks, to attend what promised to be an utterly unique event.



Juliet Rozsa with daughters Arianna and Nicchi on the steps of the Festival Palace. Photo by John Fitzpatrick

After a brief reunion with Juliet and Jill on the red-carpeted stairway leading up to the hall, we eagerly took our places in the smallish modern auditorium, in readiness for the appearance of the orchestra and their conductor, Tamás Pál. The programme began

with the *Three Hungarian Sketches* in a slightly ponderous rendition, but incisive and quite accurately realised. Pál's rhythms were often the very essence of Hungarian folk dance: lean, hungry, and earthy, as opposed to slickly virtuosic.

Then: the Main Event, as Gilad Karni returned with Maestro Pál to perform the Viola Concerto, and a hush descended on the audience wondering just what to expect. Well, it was soon made very clear to them just what a fine work this is, and Gilad's interpretation was spot-on; questioning in Rózsa's lyrical reveries of the first movement, which seem possessed of a poetic half-remembered quality; then skipping through the scherzo with easy aplomb, a player fully at ease with the many intricacies of such a demanding piece. The torrid, but elegiac, slow movement had both charm and elegance, and the golden tones of Gilad's instrument sung out with abandon. It led straight into the finale, where both soloist and orchestra really tore into the brilliant and rousing climax. The pace was fast—faster than Zukerman's premiere back in 1984 with Previn and the Pittsburgh—and the muscle-flexing effect was electric. This was a real “hold on to your hats” performance which had many cheering afterwards, long and loud.



Gilad Karni and Julist Rozsa after the performance.
Photo by Jill Arbetter.

The second half consisted of film suites from both *QUO VADIS* and *BEN-HUR* accompanied by back projections from mostly appropriate scenes corresponding to the various movements, but sadly deriving from rather faint and grainy prints. Their inclusion

was generally considered to be unnecessary, as the music could—and has previously been able to—stand up perfectly well without them. Never mind; both suites were performed expertly and with verve and vigour. The applause after each movement was spontaneous and sustained, but regrettably there were no encores, which would have been judicious and wholly reasonable. A commemorative restaurant supper was to follow, which turned out to be full of reflective, but often animated moods of excitement over the day's events. Gilad gave a speech and we all partied on into the early hours. A very apt conclusion to an all-absorbing day.

The next day was full of more discussions about the concert, and sightseeing. But there was to be yet one further treat: an unscheduled invitation to a recital at the residence of the Israeli Ambassador, to be given again by Gilad. This was far too attractive an opportunity to miss and so, after an early dinner, we headed off to the outskirts of Buda, not far from the Bartók home, to witness another extraordinary event. No Rózsa on the programme this time, but fascinating works by the Israeli composer Paul Ben-Haim; the Hungarian-born Ödön Partos, who is also celebrating a centenary year; and Brahms (his F minor Sonata). As an encore, Gilad and his accomplished pianist played two folk tunes arranged by Bartók—an excellent finale to a concert that was full of beauty and melancholy tunes, as well as having been most scintillatingly performed.

Then it was time to bid *au revoir* to Gilad and Jill, plus Juliet and daughters Nicchi and Ariana—until the next time. But, of course, there could never again be such a uniquely wonderful and memorable week in the city of Miklós Rózsa's birth, on the occasion of his centenary commencement. The next time we all meet up will have to be under different circumstances, but will probably still entail listening to more of Rózsa's wonderful works. How could any of us ever stop doing that?

*

Two additional worthy events awaited back home: a major performance of the *Sinfonia concertante* at London's Queen Elizabeth Hall on the 1st May and also a potentially enthralling festival in a small village called Stoke Ferry in West Norfolk. Both turned out to be important additions to the Centenary celebrations.

Double concertos for violin and cello seem to be thin on the ground, and it has always been cause to applaud Rózsa for deciding to write one for the combined forces of Jascha Heifetz and Gregor Piatigorsky no less, especially as it resulted in arguably his most fascinating, and visually exciting, concertante work. The genesis of the work is documented in *Double Life*, manifestly detailing the temperamental whims and demands of the duelling protagonists. There seemed to be none of these on display with the two soloists at QEH, as both violinist Phillipe Graffin and cellist Raphael Wallfisch had previously recorded the work, and not only were they fully in tune with the piece but they also seemingly had great respect for it and its composer.

There was a pre-concert talk given nearby by film music educator Miguel Mera of the Royal College of Music; he spoke informatively about Rózsa's life and music, and his

introduction to film writing. The talk was interspersed with projected quotations from the autobiography, film clips, and live musical examples from the *Sinfonia concertante* provided by the two co-operating soloists. The concert itself was a big success and the packed hall most appreciative, especially of the Rózsa work as well as Korngold's Sinfonietta, which made up the second half. The soloists were on terrific form, and the empathy between them—and with the BBC Concert Orchestra under Barry Wordsworth—was electric and masterly. In this case the conductor was very much in charge, and brought a particularly searching quality to the orchestral part, which seemed to have much more distinction and character than on the ASV disc they had all made together. Wallfisch's aristocratic playing is always a joy, and Graffin's tone and phrasing powerful and imaginative.

It is worth mentioning that the cellist has had older, equally successful recordings of both this work and the Cello Concerto broadcast by the BBC. The BBC also recorded this concert for future broadcast. The opening trifle, incidentally, was a (mercifully short) suite from Hans Zimmer's plodding and very unimaginative GLADIATOR. The year's next English event took place in Norfolk—an East Anglian county 100 miles northeast of London—in September. No fewer than six of Rózsa's works were to be included, along with a similar number by Erich Wolfgang Korngold, amongst others. Festival director Desmond Hayes-Lynge had invited both Brendan Carroll and myself to help herald this West Norfolk Music Festival with curtain-raising lectures on EWK and Rózsa. I certainly needed no further incentive!

The venue for all nine concerts was the intimate All Saints Church in the quaint village of Stoke Ferry. It is owned by the patron of the festival, one Kit Hesketh-Harvey, a broadcaster and musical humorist of some renown, who was actually on hand for one of the evenings of delight, when he ably read poetry by W. H. Auden as part of an intriguing and highly entertaining "cabaret night." The lectures took place at nearby Downham Market Methodist Church to much appreciation. I had included several musical excerpts and spoken comments by the composer, as well as a few key scenes from films. These had the audience enthralled—, as did the chance to watch the video of Rózsa conducting his score for BEN-HUR. Welcome visitors included James Fitzpatrick, who chatted at some length about his exciting EL CID recording project.

Concert highlights were too many to record here. A fine British 'cellist, Marie Macleod, and the Swedish pianist Martin Sturfalt played the Cello-Piano Duo (Op. 8) most effectively. The following evening Rózsa's Theme and Variations (2nd) movement from the *Sinfonia concertante* was featured within a finely varied programme containing also Britten's Cello Sonata and Korngold's early *Don Quixote* piano suite. Performers were an all-Swedish trio of violinist Frederick Paulsson, 'cellist Jacob Koranyi, and pianist Anna Christensson. All three blended together well, and although at first I thought the playing a shade stiff and unvaried, before long I found myself won over by the players' quietly appealing, sometimes slightly understated, expression in the Variations.

As the week progressed, audiences grew and became even more appreciative of

the superb quality of the fresh and richly varied programmes. A case in point was on Wednesday evening when Korngold's uncompromising Third Piano Sonata was played by Raphael Terroni, who seemed a notably unpredictable artist, often impressing with the stylishness and perception of his playing. This was evident in this rather ponderous (overblown?) Korngold work, which was followed in the second half by Rózsa's String Trio (Op.1a), with Warren Zielinsky, Morgan Goff, and Justin Pearson, all full of imagination in their playing. There was so much to admire in their cultivated, discerning and immaculate playing, especially in the vigorous finale, which almost brought down the house! All three had been really pleased to discover a work which they had not previously known, and even expressed a wish to maybe record it one day. Other works in this highly impressive concert were by Arnold Cooke, Howard Ferguson and Ernő Dohnányi (his fascinating Sextet in C Major).

The cabaret night included three of Rózsa's songs, "My Little Town" from the two Gyarmathy settings collectively known as *Nostalgia* and the two Opus 16 Vansittart songs, "Invocation" and "Beasts of Burden." They were sung as beautifully as contralto Phillida Bannister's flu-troubled voice would allow. By the end of the week, it was sad to be leaving this beautiful part of England, and bidding *au revoir* to organisers and friends, and eagerly looking forward to next year's programme.

It had been a successfully diverse week of music-making, as well as another distinguished Rózsa event, which hopefully introduced his concert and film scores to many who perhaps had never heard the name, despite knowing some of the music. Prior to my lecture, Andrew Knowles and myself had mounted an extensive exhibit in the church lobby, including most of Rózsa's scores from Andrew's collection as well as photos, album covers, articles and other memorabilia; all these seemed to have been keenly regarded. I hope so as, together with the talk and the concert performances, the good people of Norfolk have had a golden opportunity to learn much—and, as we are all aware, Rózsa's music really is worth getting to know.

Second Hungarian Sketch

John Fitzpatrick

I've wanted to visit Hungary for most of my life. Somehow it seemed like "key" to understanding the life of Miklós Rózsa. That the opportunity arose in this resonant year is due very largely to Gilad Karni and his wife and manager, Jill Arbetter. I'll never forget the day in the spring of 2006 when Jill followed up some exploratory e-mails with a request to speak on the phone. Speak we did for a good long time—she from Zurich! We had some things in common. Jill is from Hartford, Connecticut, and has connections with

the Hartford Symphony. Her most important connection is marital. She is married to the violist Gilad Karni, who just loved the Rózsa concerto, couldn't imagine why it has been relatively neglected, and was eager to play it in public. Actually Gilad *had* played Rózsa before. He was a very young member of the New York Philharmonic viola section for John Mauceri's memorable Korngold-Rózsa concerts in 1995 (see PMS 53). Today he plays with the Zurich Tonhalle Orchestra. For Jill, I filled in some background about Rózsa and his works. "What's this "Ben-Hoor" Suite for Orchestra I see in the catalog?" (We sometimes forget that musicians have other things on their minds and don't always know much about the movies!) I think I was the first to alert Jill to the Rózsa centennial.

That was all she needed. She had connections in Budapest and knew about the city's annual Spring Festival. How could they not include some Rózsa, particularly as it seemed the Viola Concerto would be a Hungarian premiere? Amazingly, Gilad's repertory also includes music by yet another Hungarian composer born in 1907, Ödön Partos, who was himself a notable violist and became a founding member of the Palestine (later Israel) Philharmonic Orchestra. What a coup if Gilad could play music by both composers in the city of their birth in 2007!

Jill made it happen. Negotiations were long and hard. The music business may not dispose of Hollywood's millions, but its ways can be just as Byzantine. Thoroughly cosmopolitan, the Karnis (who have lived in Israel, America, and Switzerland) had to combine all their energies to put the Budapest package together. It was a given that film music would be part of the program, and the Festival organizers wanted to represent as many of the arts as possible. The goal was to offer a "live with film" presentation, such as John Mauceri gave so memorably in New York. Mauceri was in fact my first recommendation as a conductor, but he was already booked for the week in question. It turned out that the full-scale synchronized presentation, which is administered by John Goberman of Lincoln Center Productions, proved to be far beyond the Budapest budget. Linguistic barriers posed challenges as well. In the event, we didn't know exactly what sort of film presentation was going to occur until conductor Tamás Pál raised his baton on the 18th of March.

No matter. Jill confirmed the Concerto was on. I booked for Budapest. Armed with some lively reading (the historian John Lukacs's evocative *Budapest 1900* and Michael Korda's vivid new memoir, *Journey to a Revolution*), I flew nonstop on Malev to rendezvous with Jill and Gilad. The Festival publicity director had thoughtfully noticed our nearly simultaneous arrivals and kindly arranged to ferry us to our hotels.

And there I was, in an utterly European pension with inner courtyard, looking out on the Kossuth Lajos utca where Russian tanks had burned in 1956, just a few blocks from the famous New York Café so vividly described in Korda's memoir of his youthful

relief mission. Arriving in mid-morning, I found myself with time to stroll across Danube on the Erzsébet Bridge and look back to Pest from the heights where St. Gellert had been martyred in 1046.

Then we settled into the routine of strolls and cafés in this beautiful city. We also stopped in record stores, where I'm afraid we found very little Rózsa. One shop held the French piano concertos, another the Heifetz Violin Concerto. A third held no Rózsa at all. "He only composed film music," the clerk explained. It is a sad fact that few Hungarians know very much about their native son. That first night I could scarcely blame them for their confusion. *THE STRANGE LOVE OF MARTHA IVERS* was on television, and there was something very strange indeed about this version—quite aside from hearing Kirk Douglas and Barbara Stanwyck dubbed in Hungarian. I caught the final scenes, and the musical spotting seemed rather odd—not as apposite as you would expect in even a second-tier Rózsa score. Then I recognized the twisting, anguished music for the tragic pair's final agon: it was the scourging from *KING OF KINGS!* A Hungarian friend later told me that such capricious remixes are common in foreign dubs, especially those made during the Communist era, when international copyrights were not uniformly respected. There was no law in that arena. It now occurs to me that such practices may hold out a ray of hope for the recovery of certain lost recordings. Could somebody in Belarus be in possession of a lost *EL CID* or *QUO VADIS* track that was secured decades ago to fill in parts of a dubbed *ADAM'S RIB*?

On to the great day itself. Its pleasures were many: Breakfast with Juliet and Jill and their families. The stroll up to the former Rózsa family apartment—a formidable building located directly opposite the side porte cochère of the opera house (where a ballet version of *GONE WITH THE WIND* was soon scheduled to open!). Not far off was MR's one-time gymnasium. And then on to the concert.

The new Palace of Fine Arts is a major addition to a city already full of splendid musical halls. (A few days later we strolled through the Academy where Liszt had taught and the great hall where he and so many others had performed.) There was a pang of regret when I realized that our concert was not in the primary space, but a smaller hall. Nor for that matter, was the MAV Orchestra (sponsored by the state railway) the city's most prominent. That honor goes to the Budapest Festival Orchestra, directed by Ádám Fischer, which was to play a Strauss program in the larger hall.

No matter. The intimacy of the space had its rewards. Though I had previously heard Gilad Karni project the delicate sounds of Mozart admirably into the vast spaces of Hartford's Bushnell Auditorium, here we would have the different pleasure of hearing

him give a larger-than-life reading of the most fragile of Rózsa's major concertos.

The program opened fittingly with Three *Hungarian Sketches*, Opus. 14. I had never heard these played live, and I looked forward to hearing a native Hungarian inflection in the playing. My hope was rewarded, though the performance was slightly tentative, as if Maestro Pál needed to husband all his energy just to keep his musicians together through



Doug Raynes, Alan Hamer, Peiyuan Knowles, John Fitzpatrick, Andrew Knowles. Photo by Sheila Hamer.

this rhythmically challenging work. Then Gilad took the stage and held it for half an hour of spectacular music making. Halfway back in the hall, we were still close enough to view the effort and intensity with which he drew beautiful sounds from his instrument. This was the most dramatic and the most intense that I've ever heard the Viola Concerto. Gilad was a heroic protagonist, projecting the classic concerto solo vs. orchestra struggle with a trademark Israeli brashness. He emerged flushed and drained but victorious. He seemed to draw beauty and passion out of the air through sheer force of personal musical will. The performance was worth my journey.

Film music followed the intermission. We finally discovered what they meant by "accompanying projections." These would not be synchronized episodes from the films but merely random scenes, chosen for a general rather than particular applicability. This worked well enough for the BEN-HUR excerpts (Joppa Gate and Nativity scenes; Rowing of the Galley Slaves [synchronized, sort of], and Parade of the Charioteers). For the great QUO VADIS Suite, which is a more fully developed musical score, there were problems. "Ave Caesar" and the "Bacchanale" worked well with the still-spectacular Forum and banquet images. But a visually unremarkable scene between Marcus and Lygia had little

do with the sublime beauty of the “Romanza” (especially with the Petronius section!), and the mundane closing images of the film scarcely measured up to the canonic splendors of “Quo Vadis, Domine.” The audience seemed to enjoy the experience, but for me at least the visuals (poor video-derived rear projections) actually detracted from the music. Perhaps any film music would have been an anticlimax after the glories of the Concerto.



The Rózsa family apartment (third floor, opposite.
Photo by John Filtzpatrick

Gilad’s patrons, Herbert and Evelyn Maxwell, treated our group to dinner. There were some Rózsa family relations to greet after the concert, as well as the guitarist David Pavlovits, who would be playing in New York a few months later, and a new Hungarian friend, the young film scholar Gergely Hubai. I became the escort of a pair of Rózsa cousins as we navigated the darkened streets in search of the hard-to-find restaurant. “It

was like . . . how you say? . . . a *Western*,” said Mrs. Halbrohr. (I was starting to think it was going to be a film noir.) Gilad’s dinner speech was a model of grace. He told how he first discovered the Concerto and felt he just *had* to play it: “This is me.” He was grateful to all who helped him reach this moment. You can see video of his remarks at http://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=rozsa+karni.

I had two more days to walk the streets of Budapest in the crisp early spring chill. The discoveries were many. How appropriate to find the art museum sponsoring a major van Gogh exhibition! We were dissuaded from traveling north to the Nagylóczy region. War, collective farms, and suburbanization left little of MR’s world to be seen. (The Bartók Museum, by the way had an interesting tabletop map showing the sites where that composer and folklorist had collected his invaluable samples. His work was concentrated in the Transylvanian east (including lands now ruled by Romania), in contrast to the more westerly Paloć region, which lies a few miles north of Budapest.

In the end, however, I don’t think I found a secret key to Miklós Rózsa in Budapest. Rózsa was a cosmopolitan, a citizen of the world. His story begins in Budapest, but the trail soon leads to Leipzig and beyond. That will have to be saved for another trip.

SENSATIONAL CENTENNIAL **The Academy Honors Rózsa’s 100th**

Preston Neal Jones

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, which had bestowed three of its Oscars (out of seventeen nominations) on Miklós Rózsa in his lifetime, honored his centennial with three celebrations over the course of a weekend last summer. The main event, on Friday, August 17th, took place at the Academy’s sumptuous, state-of-the-art Samuel Goldwyn Theater on Wilshire Boulevard, hosted by film music historian Jon Burlingame. A screening of *IVANHOE* was preceded by a suite of film clips and a panel discussion featuring historian Rudy Behlmer, composer Bruce Broughton (governor of the Academy’s music branch), and Rózsa’s daughter, Juliet.

Third-term Academy President Sid Ganis kicked off the proceedings with his welcoming remarks, during which he announced that the *IVANHOE* print would be in original IB Technicolor—and then confessed that he had only heard that term defining 3-strip imbibition for the first time that evening. Ganis briefly sang the praises of the occasion’s honoree, but better he had left the biographical details to Burlingame, as it quickly

became apparent that the Academy President had probably only heard of Miklós Rózsa for the first time that night, too.

Happily, once Jon Burlingame took the podium, the evening was on firm footing. In his resonant, radio-friendly voice—in addition to authoring books and teaching at USC, Burlingame has introduced film music programs on the city’s leading classical station—our host authoritatively offered Rózsa’s curriculum vitae, both in the concert hall and on the cinema screen, in a manner entertaining for Rózsa buffs and newcomers alike. Burlingame also ventured a personal opinion with which few familiar with Rózsa’s work would wish to quibble: “But Rózsa’s uniqueness extends beyond his compositional technique. He could craft a melody, of course—lots of Hollywood composers could—but his melodies seemed endowed with a passion, a fire, that was unlike the music of almost anyone else. The love themes he wrote for BEN-HUR, for EL CID, for SPELLBOUND, are so soaring, so tear-your-heart-out gorgeous, that I often think they may never be surpassed.”



Sid Ganis, Jon Burlingame, Juliet Rozsa, Bruce Broughton, Rudy Behlmer. Note posters for fellow centenarian Barbara Stanwyck. a.m.p.a.s.

Burlingame himself had personally prepared a splendid selection of clips on video, which were projected with varying quality on the Goldwyn screen. The JUNGLE BOOK’S foliage seemed a little too realistically dark and murky, for instance, but the NAKED CITY’S black-and-white cityscapes looked surprisingly effective and spectacular in

their transfer from silver disc to silver sheet. From the former film, Burlingame showed Mowgli introducing the young girl to his jungle world; from the latter, of course, we saw the famous climactic chase. A carefully chosen snippet from SPELLBOUND enabled us to hear both the love theme and the theremin-tinted paranoia motif, and then the final clip presented prisoner Judah receiving a blessed drink of water in the desert from a Good Samaritan in BEN-HUR. Preceding all of these clips, however, was a pleasant surprise: a section from an Andre Previn interview of Dr. Rózsa from the 1979 PBS series, *Previn and the Pittsburgh*, in which the composer wittily recalled his first exposure to the hitherto unknown world of scoring for motion pictures, pretty much as he later wrote it down in his autobiography: “What?” he said to Honegger, who had just told Rózsa that he wrote music for movies, “You write fox-trots?”

After the last clip, Burlingame sat down with the three panelists to glean three different perspectives on Rózsa, the man and the artist. Behlmer recalled the personal impact Rózsa’s music had made on him since he first saw THE FOUR FEATHERS, and repeated the anecdote Rózsa had shared with Behlmer (and other film historians) about the Paramount music department chieftain who was not kindly disposed toward Rózsa’s acerbic music for DOUBLE INDEMNITY. Behlmer also found in Rózsa the kinship of a fellow historian, one who conscientiously researched the evolution of the music in the various epochs in which his epic films were set. (Juliet Rozsa remembered her father sending her to UCLA to help him research authentic Vietnamese music for THE GREEN BERETS.)

As Bruce Broughton is not only a leading film composer but also one who, emulating Rózsa, continues to make contributions to the concert field, I feel it might be interesting to quote his remarks at some length. Broughton, of course, has conducted two album recreations of Rózsa film scores, (IVANHOE and JULIUS CAESAR), and Burlingame later informed me that Broughton had enthusiastically prepared for this Academy event by studying Rózsa’s chamber works. When asked by Burlingame to “appraise (Rózsa) as a composer and a dramatist,” the musician responded:

Well, the thing I find interesting about Rózsa in his music is that, essentially, he’s a composer. I know that’s a silly thing to say about a film composer, but there are film composers and there are film composers. He and Korngold were two composers who had careers as composers of music that had nothing at all to do with film. Many of the composers who started in Hollywood—and this continues to the present day—had more or less a commercial background. Max Steiner worked in operettas, and Waxman, I think, the same way, and Rózsa already had a solid career going before he came to films, and Korngold, of course, the same way. Korngold ... left after a few movies, but Rózsa stayed with it. When I was doing IVANHOE, it was actually a great job. For one thing, we had this huge orchestra doing this huge score, and I had the scores in front of me, and I’m able to look at how he did all his stuff. You can hear the lines, and see

the lines. To see how he put together—how he actually constructed a score, how he composed it—for a composer, it’s a very interesting job. And you can see that this man was really a composer. His music for film is probably a little bit more straightforward than his concert music, which is not uncommon. People say the same thing of Copland, anybody doing dramatic music. But it’s written with the same technique: he still does canons, and he still does fugues, and he does imitation, he still does all these things. And to me, there’s always this slight Hungarian sound in it, which somehow isn’t anachronistic, even in *IVANHOE*, or *SPELLBOUND*—but you can still hear his background. Which means that he has a peculiar, unique style which doesn’t sound like everybody else. He doesn’t sound like an Austrian composer, or a German composer, or one of the New York guys, he sounds very, very distinctive... There’s always something that’s distinctively Rózsa.

The thing I find as interesting as that is, when I look at his films, as a film composer, I see his enormous craft that has been fit into a very, very specific structure. Now, film music is primarily accompaniment. It’s accompanying a visual image, it’s accompanying a dramatic image, and the requirements of a film score are very, very different than the requirements of the concert score. And frankly most people can’t do both, they can’t do them both successfully. He was one of the very small handful of people who could write very, very strong concert music and very, very strong film music. You look at the films and, boy, they’re really put together well. You look at that waltz from *MADAME BOVARY*, and you have to gasp a couple of times. Not just for the quality of the music. I mean, you would expect that would be okay. But, the way that this is constructed with the film, it’s just a masterful piece of dramatic writing. And he was able to—I don’t know whether it was sublimate or exorcise his technique, so that he could fit the film. ... He had a great sense of timing, of dramatic timing. And he knew when to build the orchestra, he knew when to pull back.

It’s interesting, we saw this *SPELLBOUND* clip... When you see Ingrid Bergman for the first time, you hear the tune on a solo violin, and of course it’s a beautiful tune. Later in the film, she has a scene with her mentor, the other doctor. And it’s kind of a problem, what do you do? Because, there’s this intimate little scene between these two people, and again you hear the solo violin—but, you don’t hear that theme. So, you get the intimate sense, but you don’t get the connection of Ingrid Bergman and Gregory Peck and, you know, the romance. (Rózsa)’s really a stunningly crafted writer, and that’s what I like about him.

Later, in another reference to *SPELLBOUND*, Broughton pointed out how Rózsa resisted the temptation—which was present in the narrative—to utilize the theremin to “make goofy sounds—instead, he used it as another instrument of the orchestra. Another thing I appreciate: you never have the sense—at least, in the pictures of his that I’ve

seen—you never get the sense that he’s just biding his time, watching the clock and waiting to get out. ... A lot of film music is ‘vamp until ready.’ Sometimes you can hear the composer just sort of moving in the background, waiting for the Big Moment. You don’t get a sense of that with Rózsa. That chase up to the bridge (in *NAKED CITY*). That’s very hard to do. In concert music, you never write a piece like that. In concert music, you rarely have a piece going full blast for more than a minute, a minute and a half. In a film, you will often go for three, four or five minutes. So, what do you do? Either you noodle, or you vamp, or you just bite the bullet and you go with it. This guy just bit the bullet and went with it. If you look at the way it’s structured, as [the criminal] is going up the bridge, the music is going up with him, and he pauses and he stops and he goes back and forth—(Rózsa) put in a full day’s work, I have to tell you, every time he did it. I admire that a lot. It wasn’t sitting down at a synthesizer and going, ‘Ooooo... Oooo... There’s three minutes, right there! I’ve got that one done.’” To which Juliet added, “Synthesizer—that was a bad word in the Rózsa household.”

When Burlingame asked Juliet about the twin strains of her father’s double life, Rózsa’s daughter felt that her father was equally proud of both of them. Although he tried to keep the two lines parallel and never intersecting, she said, he was always writing for the public, and he saw film music not only as a way of reaching a vaster audience than in the concert hall but also as a way of educating the public, and he hoped that the film scores would lead movie goers to some of his concert works—or the other way around. “No matter what he did, he always gave his best, and neither one compromised his artistic integrity. He was a perfectionist, and it showed in all his music.”

Rózsa’s daughter also shared various memories of growing up in her father’s house. She even told that when Rózsa and her mother were house hunting in 1947, they bought the house (previously owned by actor Richard Greene) wherein they found what appeared to be a favorable sign and portent: a piano with the sheet music from *SPELLBOUND* on it. She pointed out that Rózsa’s MGM contract not only gave him time off for concert composition, but also permitted him to write his film scores at home. Juliet then recalled her father’s disciplined household routine of breakfast, composing, lunch, siesta, composing, dinner with the family, and then perhaps reading afterward. (“He also would listen to talk radio—do you remember Joe Pyne?—because I guess he couldn’t sleep.”) As a small girl, Juliet kept trying to sneak down to listen to her father at work, and she took great umbrage at the fact that he would always find her and send her back upstairs, but he would let Mowgli, the family boxer, stay contentedly under the piano. A happier memory for Juliet was the annual “big deal” Rózsa made of Christmas, including his insistence on selecting and negotiating the purchase of the tree—usually one so big that it stretched lopsidedly up to the ceiling. Happiest of all her memories, perhaps, were those of accompanying her father on his annual sojourns in Italy.

Calling herself, to no one’s surprise, “One of his biggest fans,” Juliet also expressed the wish that a CD some day might alternate Rózsa soundtrack pieces with Rózsa

concert pieces. To a very minor extent, of course, there are precedents for such an album, but perhaps an enterprising record producer will yet take her up on this concept, and maybe even enlist her advice in selecting the material. The result could be very special.

I must confess that I had never seen *IVANHOE* before, but I'm glad I waited until this night finally to catch up with it. The print was a fine one, and the venue was perfect, from the screen and the sound system to the appreciative audience savoring the experience. Of the many things that impressed me about this fine production, I was struck by the three-dimensionality scripted into the George Sanders part. I trust that no one reading this issue of *PMS* needs to be told that Rózsa's score captured these subtleties with great sensitivity, as well as providing a dynamic and lyrical—and carefully researched!—background to the whole sweeping pageant.

The following two nights found Rózsa films gracing the screen at the Academy's more intimate Linwood Dunn Theater on Vine Street in Hollywood. Juliet Rozsa brought her young daughter, Nicchi, to the Saturday night show, because "She's never seen *THE THIEF OF BAGDAD* on a theater screen." The *THIEF* print was basically a good one, though its colors were probably a tad too much on the softer, more pastel side, compared with the vibrancy of the original three-strip Technicolor. The *KILLERS* print, however, was "killer," to use the vernacular, with its noir shadows sharp and clear.

On Sunday night, although advertised as an original release print, the monophonic, slightly truncated version of *EL CID* was something of a disappointment, but seeing the film on a big screen again was nevertheless a joy. As a youngster, I saw *CID* in its initial Manhattan run, and again a number of years ago when it was restored, and it was good to re-experience and be reminded why Rózsa's scoring of the joust sequence has always affected me so powerfully. I left the theater afterward with Rózsa's themes ringing in my grateful ears, walking out to the parking lot just in time to note the license plate on a departing auto: "HUR CID."

THE WASHINGTON TRIBUTE AND CONCERT

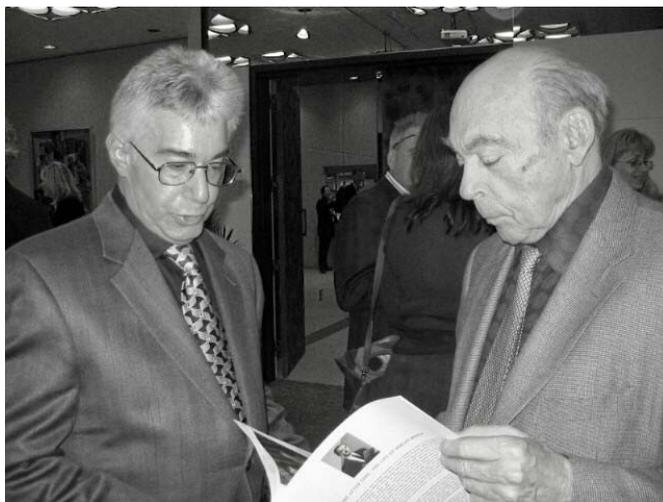
Steve Vertlieb

With additional reporting by Art Haupt and Rea Culpepper

Violinist Anastasia Khitruk managed to fit a number of Rózsa performances into her busy performing schedule in 2007. The goal was both to celebrate the Rózsa centennial and to better prepare for the challenge of her May recording sessions in Moscow. I was fortunate to attend one such event on April 14th at the Hungarian Embassy in Washington, D.C. I hadn't any intention of attending the festivities until I received a special invitation from Juliet Rozsa. Now, Miklós Rózsa has been my favorite composer for fifty

years and we were friends for twenty-five of those wonderful years. I'd known Juliet through correspondence only. When her father grew too ill to write any longer, Juliet would read him my articles and correspondence, and he would dictate a response. Prior to that, he was an avid correspondent and I have, perhaps, hundreds of handwritten notes and letters from him. So, when Juliet announced that she would be attending the concert along with her daughter Nicchi, I made arrangements with one of my dearest friends, John Durso, to drive to Washington and spend the evening. John's father, Eddie Durso, was Mario Lanza's best friend when they were boys growing up on the streets of South Philadelphia, and John, himself, manages the career of the brilliant operatic tenor Frank Tenaglia. John, then, seemed the perfect traveling companion for the event.

Some eighty or so people climbed the hill to participate in this tribute at the modernist Embassy building perched by the edge of Rock Creek Park. The evening began with remarks by the young ambassador, András Simonyi. He even invoked the classic national witticism: "It is not enough to be Hungarian! You must have talent, too!" Rózsa certainly qualified on that count. Ambassador Simonyi spoke of Miklós Rózsa's enormous



Steve Vertlieb with János Starker.

contribution to the world of symphonic music, and of the honor and pride he brought to everyone of Hungarian ancestry. He then introduced the distinguished guests in the audience, including cellist János Starker, who had premiered the Rózsa concerto, and both daughter Juliet and granddaughter Nicchi Rozsa. Starker followed the ambassador and captivated the audience with affectionate and humorous stories about his beloved friend

and colleague. He was utterly charming as he spoke about his relationship with Rózsa. He recalled how every year, Leonard Bernstein sent Rózsa a telegram on the anniversary of the 1943 concert that was Bernstein's big break. Starker also recalled once visiting MR at Santa Margherita, where he did his concert composing, recalling Rózsa as very happy there except when his face would turn dark at the onset of one of his recurring migraines. The concert itself, with piano accompaniment, was joyous and intense and included the *Toccata capricciosa* for Cello Solo. Surprisingly, János Starker had quipped that the work, though written especially for him, was just "too difficult." In fact, Starker allowed one of his students, Gary Hoffman, to give the premiere at Indiana University in 1977—another memorable Rózsa program that I was fortunate to have attended. We then heard the first movement of the Violin Concerto and the *Tema con variazioni*, which is of course the reduced version of the *Sinfonia concertante*'s second movement. In addition we heard works by Kodály and Bartók. As well as Ms. Khitruk, the passionate performers included cellist Emilio W. Colón, also of Indiana University, and pianist Nariaki Sugiura. Ms. Khitruk played beautifully throughout the evening. Her inspired, breathtaking performance of Rózsa's Violin Concerto was the emotional highlight of the evening.

John and I were invited by the Ambassador to join the celebrated guests at a private dinner following the official reception in the Ambassador's residence. The dinner was sumptuous, and the company was delightful. I sat next to Juliet for the balance of the evening, as I had done so many years earlier with her illustrious father, while John shared conversation with Nicchi. I was also honored to speak for a time with the Ambassador and a fascinating gentleman by the name of Mike Pochna who represented Ms. Khitruk and is the producer of the Naxos CD. It was Mr. Pochna's Miklós Rózsa Centenary Project that helped to inspire this tribute and many other of the 2007 events involving Ms. Khitruk, including the Grammy-nominated Naxos recording.

Saying our farewells, to Starker and Juliet and Nicchi, it was as though Miklós Rózsa was himself present in the Embassy. I trust that he was listening to and observing the outpouring of love paid in devotion and respect to his life and legacy. As for his family, colleagues and friends, I wished them all a safe journey home, and God Speed.

Rózsa auf Naxos

Frank K. DeWald

NAXOS is not your father's record company. When Klaus Heymann founded the label in 1987, the discs cost \$5.99 and the catalog consisted mainly of repertoire pieces performed and recorded on the cheap by minor-league musicians with no interna

Music for Violin and Piano (Naxos 8.579190)

Philippe Quint, *violin*; William Wolfram, *piano*

- ... Variations on a Hungarian Peasant Song, Op. 4
- ... Duo Sonata for Violin and Piano, Op. 7
- ... North Hungarian Peasant Songs and Dances, Op. 5
- ... Sonata for Violin, Op. 40

Violin Concerto / *Sinfonia concertante* (Naxos 8.570350)

Anastasia Khitruk, *violin*; Andrey Tchekmazov, *cello*; Russian Philharmonic Orchestra, cond. by Dimitry Yablonsky

- ... Violin Concerto, Op. 24
- ... *Sinfonia concertante* for Violin, Cello, and Orchestra, Op. 29

tional reputations. Today, the discs cost \$8.99 and the catalog is colossal, comprising a previously unheard-of spectrum of music performed, at least in part, by well-known artists (many of whom owe a good part of their repute to their Naxos recordings). It has become the world's best-selling classical label, and its product is available virtually everywhere that compact discs are sold. The appearance of Miklós Rózsa's concert music (both orchestral and chamber) on this label during his centenary year is a cause for celebration.

Let it be said at the outset that, although I provided booklet notes for both discs (thanks to a recommendation from John Fitzpatrick), I was not paid for the work and I have no financial stake in the discs' success. I would like to think that the opinions which follow reflect only my passion for the music of Miklós Rózsa.

The chamber music disc with Philippe Quint and William Wolfram brings a fresh perspective to familiar works. The musical values which both these instrumentalists apply throughout are a constant joy to hear. They play with the give and take of the best chamber musicians. Dynamic and tempo markings are (for the most part) scrupulously observed, but the results always sound inevitable and not imposed on the music by willful interpreters.

The pianist establishes the standard within the first eight measures of Opus 4; Rózsa's *tenuto* and *rubato* markings are completely and naturally realized, the tone is warm, and pedaling is discreet. When the violinist enters, one notes the excellent balance, both from the musicians and the engineers. The many changes of tempo within the work are all nicely judged, helping to make a unity out of the fifteen short variations. Lyrical and rhythmic elements are perfectly balanced.

More delights are to be found in the Opus 7 Duo. In the first movement, the musical line is always propelled forward and tension never lags. In the second, the play between duple and triple meters (also characteristic of the first movement of the Violin

Concerto) is effortlessly captured. One tiny flaw escaped the musicians here. Wolfram misreads the rhythm at measure 47, where he should mirror exactly what the violinist has just played. The third movement (*Largo doloroso*, which the composer might well have subtitled *Arioso*), features some lovely shadings of tone in the piano. Consider, for example, the passage at measure 70 (4:13–4:23), where Wolfram so beautifully conveys the rise and fall of the phrase. The final *accelerandi* in the lively fourth movement (which prefigure the pattern which Rózsa would follow in his concerti) are excitingly engaged and cap off a most winning performance.

Quint and Wolfram have chosen tempi for Opus 5 that are on the relaxed side, stretching their performance out to nine-and-a-half-minutes, as compared with the composer's own recording (with orchestra), which lasts just over eight. But nothing seems slow, and again musical felicities abound. Note, for example, the unwritten ritard at the end of the piano introduction to the second dance, and the slight holding back of the tempo when the violin enters. It seems a natural interpretation of the *scherzando* (playful) marking and totally in keeping with the work's folk origins.

In the Opus 40 Sonata, Quint, of course, is left to make his musical points on his own; he does so with virtuoso technique and great faithfulness to the composer's numerous markings. Throughout all three movements he captures the improvisatory quality of the writing, effortlessly weaving Rózsa's somewhat diffuse motives into a unified tapestry.



Miklós
RÓZSA

Sonata for Solo Violin

**Variations on a
Hungarian Peasant Song**

**North Hungarian
Peasant Songs and Dances**

**Philippe Quint, Violin
William Wolfram, Piano**





Miklós
RÓZSA

Violin Concerto • Sinfonia Concertante

Anastasia Khitruk, Violin
Andrey Tchekmazov, Cello
Russian Philharmonic Orchestra
Dmitry Yablonsky



The disc of concerti recorded in Moscow by Anastasia Khitruk and Andrey Tchekmazov is a world-beater. Shortly after the disc was released (but prior to a Carnegie Hall recital in which Ms. Khitruk played some of the same pieces recorded by Quint), producer Michael Pochna arranged for me to speak with the violinist over the phone, and her enthusiasm for Rózsa's music in general and this disc in particular was palpable.

From the outset, Khitruk establishes that her interpretation of the Violin Concerto will be strikingly original. Her opening tempo for the first movement is noticeably slower than the Heifetz-Hendl recording with which we are all so familiar. When I asked her about her choice of tempi, she responded quickly, "They are Rózsa's tempi, not mine." A good professional answer, I suppose, but the reality is a bit more complicated. The metronome marking at the beginning is dotted quarter note = *ca.* 66. Khitruk's tempo is closer to 60, where Heifetz moves along at about 76. The *ca.* in the marking gives leeway, of course, and both soloists can be said to be within reasonable limits, but the spread here is enough to change the character of the music. In our conversation, the word "romantic" came up several times when Khitruk was describing Rózsa's style, and certainly the expansive tempo she takes not only in the first movement but in the following two as well (adding over five minutes of playing time to the whole work!) allows the music to breathe and seem more ardent and passionate. Her choices bring a new dimension to the work and allow us to hear it from a different perspective, as it were, that isn't necessarily more "correct" than the legendary Heifetz performance but is every bit as mu-

sically valid.

In the first movement, for example, the principal theme takes on a previously unnoticed languor (not to be confused with dragging or lack of momentum) that sets in relief some of the more significant tempo adjustments. The first movement finale *Vivace* (at 12:35) is a case in point, taking on an extra urgency because it contrasts more with the beginning of the recapitulation. Orchestral details also seem to emerge more fully. And let us not forget to praise conductor Yablonsky and his Russian Philharmonic forces, who almost certainly had no previous experience with Rózsa and yet so thoroughly assimilated his idiom. I had not previously noticed, for instance, that the counterpoint to the principal theme in celli and bassi at measure 128 (4:00) bears a striking resemblance to what Americans know as “The Carol of the Bells” (but which actually comes from Ukraine)!

In the slow movement, Khitruk enters with great subtlety, but I wonder if the lovely woodwind counterpoints (clarinet and bassoon) at the beginning could have been helped along a bit by the engineer, since they are not quite as prominent as I think they should be. Such delicate and exquisite contrapuntal writing is one of Rózsa’s most prominent characteristics, but those little “echoes” often seem to get lost in the texture, at least on recordings. I almost wonder if, when he orchestrated (and I’m sure he would have vigorously denied this), Rózsa was subconsciously thinking of the Hollywood soundstage, where spot miking is not uncommon. It’s not a consistent problem, and it varies from recording to recording. The soloist, at least, seems quite aware of what else is going on in the orchestra; listen to how nicely she defers to the flute soloist at measure 74 (6:29). This entire dreamy, rhapsodic movement is exquisitely done, although I wish Yablonsky had lingered over the final fermata just a bit longer before plunging into the finale.

That movement begins at almost exactly the prescribed quarter note = *ca.* 144, and all subsequent tempo changes are well handled and sound completely natural. The technical fireworks inherent in this movement pose no challenge to Khitruk (who described them as “sadistic”). While never slighting the relatively few lyrical moments, she keeps our focus on virtuosity and brings it all to a breathtaking conclusion using Rózsa’s slightly longer ending, in deference to what she feels were the composer’s first thoughts before Heifetz pressed for a change.

The same virtues apply to the performance of the *Sinfonia concertante*, but here we can also take great delight in the two soloists being so well attuned to each other. For example, note how the cello defers to the violin at m. 170 (3:54) of the first movement, or the perfect ensemble of their octaves in the sixth variation of the second (9:20). It is a striking asset that, for me, puts this recorded version before others in the catalog. It was interesting to learn from Ms. Khitruk that, prior to meeting in the recording studio, she and cellist Tchekmazov played the work several times in recital (with piano accompaniment). This allowed them to become thoroughly familiar with each other’s parts, and this paid off handsomely when they finally came to perform it with the orchestra. She ex-

plained that it can be difficult for the two soloists to hear one another when accompanied by the full orchestra—a problem exacerbated in the studio, where the orchestra can sound especially loud. She also credited Tchekmazov with helping her discover the strong underlay of romanticism in Rózsa, which eventually affected (“completely changed”) the way she played the concerto.

It is an interesting coincidence that the release of this disc follows shortly after the Chicago Symphony Orchestra released its own recording of the 1968 premiere (in stunning stereo sound, by the way). That performance is only about fifteen seconds longer than the Naxos, yet it contains considerably more measures of music, which the composer cut prior to publication. While there is no denying that the CSO’s sharpness of attack in orchestral *tutti*s has its own visceral appeal, Yablonsky’s reading rarely disappoints. Yes, the *Vivo e agressivo* passage in the first movement (4:44) is neither as lively or frenetic as it could be, and the *Meno Allegro* which starts the final drive in the last movement (7:15) seems a bit less maniacal than some other performances, but he gets the initial tempo of that same finale just right, and imbues the fourth variation in the middle movement with great ardor (listen from 6:48 to the end).

In our conversation, Ms. Khitruk also spoke excitedly about her (then) upcoming Carnegie Hall recital. She said she had considered two possible contexts for Rózsa’s work: a film music theme with Waxman’s *Carmen Fantasie*, some Korngold, and perhaps the Williams SCHINDLER’S LIST theme, and a Hungarian-themed program with additional works by Kodály and Bartók. In the end, she chose the latter, believing that Rózsa would have preferred it that way. I am sure she was right.

The music of Miklós Rózsa needs no special advocacy from this journal; its readers are already passionate believers. But it does need young, talented, exciting, and aggressive performers to bring it to new and receptive audiences. That is exactly what Quint, Wolfram, Khitruk, Tchekmazov, and Yablonsky have done on these two new Naxos discs. Careful, critical listening to both of them has, in the end, brought me closer to the **music**. Can any higher compliment be paid to a performer’s work?

Ed. Note: Find additional reviews at Naxos.com and Amazon.com.

On to Belgrade!

The centenary year may be coming to a close, but the race goes on. In May 2008 (16th to 18th), Rozsaphiles from around the world will congregate in Serbia for an unprecedented three-day music festival centering on the music of Miklos Rozsa, but also including some other Hungarian composers. Under the baton of the California-based Yair Samet, the Belgrade Philharmonic will perform a wide selection of Rozsa's major works:

- ... **Violin Concerto**, performed by Robert Bokor
- ... **Viola Concerto**, performed by Gilad Karni
- ... **Sinfonia Concertante**, performed by Raphael Wallfisch (cello) and Ilya Gringolts (violin)
- ... **Overture to a Symphony Concert**
- ... **Tripartita**
- ... **Quo Vadis Suite**
- ... **Theme, Variations, and Finale**

A film series, photographic exhibition, and pre-concert lectures are planned. Members of the Rozsa family will be in attendance.

Rózsa News and Notes

February 2008

THE events of the past year range well beyond what has been reported in the preceding pages. Whereas previous issues of PMS have attempted a more or less complete accounting of the year's events, we are here capable of only a bare summary. As always a fuller account may be found at the www.miklosrozsa.org (see especially *Performances* and the *Rózsa Forum*). Our thanks to Hank Verryt, who has developed an entirely new sector of the Web site to announce forthcoming events as soon as we learn about them. Here, then is a bare summary for 2007–2008.

Performances

In addition to launching her Grammy-nominated recording—the award went to a new recording of Korngold's concerto in a coincidence that MR would have surely greeted with courteous words—Anastasia Khitruk also performed Rózsa chamber music not only in Washington (see Steve Vertlieb's report) but also in New York and Paris. The latter two programs, in December, were part of a centennial tribute organized by *L'Écran Sonore*.

The **Concerto for String Orchestra** was heard in March at the University of Southern California, where Rózsa taught for many years. David Pavlovits brought his fresh interpretation of the **Guitar Sonata** to New York after playing it for the Budapest Radio. Robert McDuffie continued to represent the **Violin Concerto** with performances in Bordeaux and Salt Lake City. The work was also heard in Jerusalem (Sergey Ostrovsky and the Jerusalem Symphony on 31 January 2008, together with music by Herrmann, Waxman, and L. Bernstein). Likewise, Jaimie Laredo and Sharon Robinson continued their advocacy of the **Sinfonia concertante** in Wilmington (Delaware Symphony on 12 January 2008). And the **BEN-HUR Prelude** had an apparent concert premiere in New York, when the New York Pops offered the original version (with opening fanfare) thanks to a score that the Society helped to provide.

Aside from the two Naxos releases reviewed in this issue, there was a landmark issue of the *Sinfonia concertante* (original version) in its 1966 world premiere performance. It is available directly from the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Leonard Pennario's recording of the Op. 20 Piano Sonata (once described as "the finest recorded performance of *any* Rózsa score") has been reissued as part of a four-disc set, *LP: The Early Years*, available for less than \$20.

Film music recordings includes the widely hailed **PRIVATE LIFE OF SHERLOCK HOLMES** on Intrada and the more controversial **SPELL-BOUND** on Intrada. Both albums feature previously unknown music omitted from the film soundtracks and heard here for the very first time. Tadlow's work in progress is a long-awaited complete **EL CID**. Reissues included a near-complete **SODOM AND GOMORRAH** from and the fabled Decca **BEN-HUR** and **QUO VADIS** on Vocalion, the latter two packaged together at a bargain price.

The brand new video release of **EL CID** has generated considerable enthusiasm and features a Rózsa documentary, "The Maestro of the Movies," featuring Juliet Rozsa, John Mauceri, and Jeffrey Dane (author of last year's *A Composer's Notes: Remembering Miklós Rózsa*). Criterion's forthcoming video of **THE THIEF OF BAGDAD** will also feature extensive Rózsa material.

At the end of 2007 San Francisco's Castro Theatre featured a splendid retrospective Rozsa film series organized by Steve Vertlieb.

See www.miklosrozsza.org for details forthcoming concerts and for the new film music CD discography by Doug Raynes.

RECORDED LEGACY	SUBSCRIPTIONS & EDITORIAL MATTER	EUROPEAN REPRESENTATIVE
Mark Koldys 7545 Manor Dearborn, MI 48126	John Fitzpatrick P.O. Box 666 Norwalk, CT 06852	Alan J. Hamer 37, Brunswick Park Gardens New Southgate London N11 1EJ England
Mkoldys@mac.com	Rozsaphile@earthlink.net	AlanHamer@btinternet.com
www.miklosrozsza.org Webmaster: Matthew Gear		