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PMS 67

- TURNING THE PAGE** Reviewing the print era of PMS and envisioning the unknown future. 2
- QUO VADIS 2012: Like Making a Movie** John Fitzpatrick, Frank K. DeWald, and Alan Hamer recount the week-long recording sessions in Prague. 6
- THE SCREEN CREDITS THAT WEREN'T** Albert Sendrey's posthumous account of his London years offers a new perspective on the start of a famous career. 19
- VERITABLE BEACONS** Alan Hamer on concerto performances in Glasgow and London. 23
- JUNE 10TH, 1972** Recalling an early milestone in our 40-year history. 26

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Turning the Page

John Fitzpatrick

THIS IS THE LAST ISSUE of *Pro Musica Sana*. More precisely it is our last regularly scheduled print publication. The Miklós Rózsa Society goes on, of course, with a vigorous online presence. More on that later.

The decision should come as no surprise. PMS aspired to a quarterly schedule in its early years, semiannual after 1995. But things have lagged considerably. We've managed only about one issue per year lately, and PMS 66 appeared way back in 2009. The reasons for our change of media should be apparent but deserve to be recorded here.

Finances. Our Society has always operated on a subscription model. Membership was maintained by subscribing to the print journal. Subscriptions (or “dues”) provided the funding, buttressed somewhat by donations and (in earlier years) by revenue from informal sales of audio recordings. Membership peaked back around 1980 and has been declining ever since. The rise of the Internet in the 1990s greatly accelerated this process. It's been the same for all print media of course. But while we have established a strong online presence, we have also put off the final reckoning with fiscal realities. The bottom line is that we've run out of funds. Printing and mailing are expensive. PMS 66 (our largest issue) cost over \$800 to print and another \$400 to mail. I've been subsidizing these expenses out of my own pocket for several years, a process that cannot continue indefinitely.

The Online Challenge. Despite the unquestioned editorial sophistication of PMS, the simple fact is that many of its readers looked to us not so much for commentary as for news. They simply wanted to know what MR was up to, when and where his music was being performed, and what they might look forward to in the way of new recordings. PMS provided a more or less adequate link to such activities for many years. But our reporting has been superseded by today's “twenty-four hour news cycle” in which a new album can be announced and completely sold out within a week. (This actually happened recently with a Varèse Sarabande “limited edition” reissue of EYE OF THE NEEDLE.) As a news source PMS has become nearly irrelevant.

The journal's commentary has also been compromised. It is no longer timely. Who wants to read a review of an album issued years earlier? Also, to an increasing extent, we find ourselves co-opted. The wider world of the online community is paradoxically a more integrated world. I've had the pleasure of offering modest services to a number of performers and producers in recent years. Several of us have been guests at important recording sessions. And one of our key writer-editors, Frank DeWald, now retired from teaching, has been playing an increasing role in the preparation and annotation of disc releases for both Naxos and the soundtrack labels. I take some pride in having started Frank in this direction, even as I lament his inability to write the kind of objective criti-

cal commentaries that have enriched our pages in the past. You cannot dispassionately review projects in which you have had a hand.

Burnout. Honesty compels me to cite the exhaustion factor. I love Rózsa as much as ever; his music sustains my life, as it has since 1963. But I've been editing this journal for more than forty years and am not blind to the possibility that my inspiration may not be at its freshest. In a sense, we have also been victims of one of our greatest successes. Ralph Erkelenz's magnum opus has so dominated the publication in recent years that both editor and writers have neglected to come forward with projects of their own. With Frank DeWald mostly unavailable for serious reviewing, there was a void that no writer has yet volunteered to fill. Nor has a new editor come forth, even when I tried to resign—twice! My associates offered me a much appreciated tribute last fall. (You can read about it at the Web site.) And it seemed to mark the right time to step back and share the leadership with a broader circle, albeit in a somewhat informal manner, whose ultimate structure has yet to emerge.

A Word to the Old Faithful. Today's news may come as a genuine surprise to a few readers. I speak of those who for whatever reason lack Internet access. PMS has been their primary link to the world of Rózsa. I know that some of you will sorely miss the print journal. For this I am genuinely sorry. You are one reason that we have persisted into the second decade of the twenty-first century. I urge you get in touch by mail. We will contrive some means of print communication (perhaps just an informal page or two on special occasions). We care about you and are resolved not to lose touch. As many of you know, there have been other Rózsa societies and publications over the years. John Stevens has presided with energy and passion over several incarnations of what is now called Ben-Hur: Miklós Rózsa's Appreciation Music Society. Contact him at Unit 2 / 199 Alexandra Street / Albury, NSW 2640 / Australia.

Thanks Are Due. The history of PMS can wait for another day. The future will sort itself out. Here I wish offer personal thanks to the scores of individuals who have contributed to the journal over the years, whether through their writing or simply by lending practical, technical, moral, or financial support. While I have served as the publisher and editor, little would have achieved without the support of many. Let me thank them in a roughly chronological fashion so as to recall what some of us have forgotten or never knew. My special gratitude goes to

Miklós Rózsa†, our inspiration from the start, whose encouragement and tolerance of our frequent gaucheries and gaffes allowed the publication to find its own way. To have been a friend of Miklós Rózsa is among my most treasured memories.

Charles Boyer (Page Cook)† for a few key years of inspiring friendship at the outset. His published criticism for *Films in Review* could be eccentric (to say the least), and he dropped out of communication early. But he was the first person in my

experience to bring an evangelical passion to writing about film music.

Ken Doeckel for opening a door via the first substantial biographical article (*Films in Review*, October 1965) and for securing the maestro's blessing for our proposed organization.

Mark Koldys for his writing, typing, mailing and general energizing in the earliest years and for creating and sustaining a recording service that allowed people to hear broadcast performances and deleted albums. In the days when a "soundtrack album" was a rare event, Mark's cassettes and CDs did as much as PMS itself to propagate the music of Rózsa.

Mary Peatman for practical support through her writing, editing, and production assistance in the 1970s and for inspiration and encouragement that continue to the present day.

Frank K. DeWald, who lent genuine musical authority to some of our finest critical and discographic writings over four decades and who has been my coeditor in recent years.

Christopher Palmer†, whose mighty contributions to Rózsa studies need no introduction here, for his liaison to the composer and for introducing me to one of my most important contacts and friends in the person of

Alan Hamer, who took on the challenge of UK liaison and European distribution when membership was growing by leaps and bounds and whose many accounts of concerts and recording sessions form part of the journal's backbone.

Ronald L. Bohn†, who helped to professionalize our typography in the 1980s through the then novel technology of IBM memory typewriters and who created the first important discography of Rózsa's film music.

Matthew Gear, who seemed to emerge from nowhere (actually Australia) to create both the MRS Web site and Rózsa Forum out of an amazing surplus of energy, curiosity, and sheer good will.

Jill Arbetter, who with her husband, Gilad Karni, almost single-handedly brought about a glorious Rózsa centenary celebration in the city of his birth.

Hank Verryt, who has maintained the Web site and is taking it to new levels of beauty, functionality, and imagination.

Doug Raynes for bringing the film music discography—and videography—into the digital era.

Ralph Erkelenz for creating the magnum opus that essentially carried the journal through its final years.

Also: Bertrand Borie, Myron Bronfeld†, Royal S. Brown, Sara Davis Buechner,

Richard Bush, John Caps, Jeffrey Dane, Nicolette Dobrowolski, Derek Elley, Jack Gallagher, Preston Neal Jones, Anastasia Khitruk, George Komar, Clifford McCarty†, Royce Malm, John Mauceri, Nicholas Meyer, Thomas Moore†, Gregg Nestor, Michael Pochna, Michael Quigley, Craig Reardon, Charles W. Rileigh, A. C. Robbins, Daniel Robbins, William Rosar, Juliet Rozsa, Nick Rozsa, John Stevens, Dean Streit†, Ken Sutak, Gary Swartz, Steve Vertlieb, John W. Waxman, John J. Wayne, Les Zador.

Special thanks for exceptional financial support to Ron Burbella, Edith Rózsa Jankay†, Robert Karam, Stephen Pettit, and Craig Spaulding.

The Race Goes On. Celebrating our forty-year history is something I plan to undertake at length on the Web site. Suffice to say that when we started, there were virtually no publications devoted to Miklós Rózsa or indeed to the subject of film music at all. *Film Music Notes*, under a variety of titles, had been significant from 1944 to 1958, but by 1972 it had been extinct for more than a decade. Publications like *Soundtrack! CinemaScore*, *Filmmusic Notebook*, *Main Title*, *Film Score Monthly*, and so many others were then undreamed of. Only the Max Steiner Music Society (our initial model) was out there to point the way. So PMS was a pioneer. By Miklós Rózsa’s own wish it aspired to be a general review of serious film music—a goal it adhered to until the 1990s, when the rise of many other publications suggested that we narrow our focus. And PMS was not only the first; it was in many respects the best of the lot. For most of our history the quality of the writing was far above the “fanzine” foolishness that used to dominate the field. Other journals ranged far more broadly and created more appealing graphic packages. A couple of them boldly morphed into record labels. But for many years we had the most intelligent film music commentary anywhere. But that is a subject to celebrate another time.

News of performances, publications, and recordings will continue to appear on the **Miklós Rózsa Society Web Site**. Informal discussion, open-ended and accessible to all, will be at the **Rózsa Forum**.

www.miklosroza.org

<http://miklosroza.yuku.com/forums/1>

At the site we shall continue to publish the kind of substantial essays and reviews that have distinguished PMS. (The Bernard Herrmann Society models this procedure nicely.) And while we mourn the loss of print, we can simultaneously celebrate the advantages of digital publication. Budgetary and length constraints will disappear, not to mention the labors of printing and addressing and mailing. Audio and video links will deliver musical examples with unparalleled immediacy. And published writings can be infinitely revised and expanded—a boon to the overly cautious among us who have thus far held back from committing to print.

Of course this all depends on participation. We encourage everyone to come along with the Miklós Rózsa Society on the next step of the journey. Join in the Forum discussions, consider submitting quality writing (reviews, memoirs, musical analyses,

whatever you are inspired to do) for consideration as online articles. We are confident that the exploration of Rózsa's legacy will continue to fascinate, delight, and reward us for many years to come. I am committing myself right here to my first online essay: a detailed history of the Society, the journal, and our relationship with Miklós Rózsa in multiple installments. But of course I would be only too happy if somebody else beats me to the punch. The editor's in-basket is waiting . . .

Quo Vadis 2012 "Like Making a Movie" John Fitzpatrick *with* Frank K. DeWald and Alan Hamer

IF ONE IMPRESSION dominated the March recording sessions for QUO VADIS—apart from the majesty of the music and the pleasures of reuniting with old friends—it was the way the modern process has come to resemble moviemaking. These were actually the first orchestral recording sessions I had ever attended. (For my report on Sara Davis Buechner's solo piano sessions of 1998 see PMS 56.) Nevertheless, the fundamentals of the process were quite familiar to me from numerous published accounts, including several by our own Alan Hamer (PMS 18 on the Decca BEN-HUR; PMS 19 on PROVIDENCE, THE PRIVATE FILES OF J. EDGAR HOOVER, and THE THIEF OF BAGDAD; PMS 21 on the Decca QUO VADIS) and Preston Jones (PMS 24 on DEAD MEN DON'T WEAR PLAID), and most especially from John Culshaw's classic *Ring Resounding*, which chronicled Decca's great Wagnerian project in the 1960s. (The book was supplemented by Humphrey Burton's documentary film *The Golden Ring*.) Things have changed in the digital age, however. And the challenges of recording classic film scores, which are not in an orchestra's repertory, have demanded the special solutions developed by such producers as James Fitzpatrick and the Tribute Film Classics team of Morgan, Stromberg, and Bronn. The process is now somewhat akin to that of making a movie.

We all know how films are made. We know how a street scene shot in London may lead to a Hollywood studio interior filmed months later. We know how the performers in a two-shot conversation sequence may not even be present in the same room at the same time. In the most extreme cases, such as galaxies far, far away and the depths of Middle Earth, the action may just involve a performer in a funny suit standing before a special green screen. It's all about montage—the art of assembling thousands of component parts into a meaningful whole. And that is very much what is happening right now, as

producer Fitzpatrick (no relation!) goes about assembling and enhancing the music that was made, piecemeal, in Prague's Smečky Studios last March.

It's worth contrasting this process with the traditional and, yes, "ideal" (James's word) way of recording classical music. Think of all those Beethoven symphonies as recorded by prominent orchestras in the heyday of the major labels. The musicians would have known the music since childhood. They had likely played it in school and conservatory concerts and (for the veterans) in more than a few Philharmonic concerts. They had worked through three or four rehearsals, followed by a series of public performances. Only then would they venture into the recording studio to put the highest polish on the conductor's interpretation. Some great recordings (as well as much redundancy) emerged from this system. But those days are gone, even for the majors. And film music recreations get only a fraction of this time and effort. The differences soon became apparent in Prague.

James has generously invited interested parties to sit in on his projects. This time Frank DeWald, who is assisting with the reconstruction and the booklet notes, decided to make the trip from Michigan, his first overseas adventure following his retirement from decades of teaching and choral direction. For Alan Hamer, Doug Raynes, and myself this was our third joint Rózsa venture of the young century. Alan and Doug had also attended recording sessions in Bratislava and elsewhere. You can read our accounts of the 2007 Budapest centennial events and the 2008 Belgrade Rózsa Festival in PMS 64 and 65, respectively. Incidentally, the supplementary materials on the third disc of Tadlow's EL CID—video from the sessions and Doug Raynes's interview with producer and conductor—are as illustrative of the Prague experience today as they were in 2008.

In Prague

The QUO VADIS sessions were tightly scheduled to begin at 9:00 A.M. on a Sunday morning and continue for eight hours a day through Thursday. James was already working Saturday, completing a scoring assignment on a *National Geographic* special for composer Robert Neufeld. As with much contemporary scoring, the process involved adding live string accompaniment to an established synthesizer track. Arriving Saturday, we stayed at the K&K Fenix Hotel, just off Wenceslas Square and only a few doors from the Smečky Studios. There we would meet conductor Nic Raine at breakfast every day. He had driven down from his home in northern Germany for the sessions and would be continuing southward later in the week to observe the Budapest filming of a movie for which he has contracted to write the musical score. Nic, who has orchestrated for John Barry and others, and who has given us many fine re-creations of classic film music, is also a composer in his own right. He had no great ambitions in that direction, he told us, but eventually discovered the he could do a better job than many of the people who score films today.

That very first breakfast conversation on Sunday morning produced the most re-

vealing remark of the entire week. This was before I had even stepped into the studio. Frank and I asked if Nic would be recording the QUO VADIS Suite as well as the film music proper. Yes, he would. And what did he think of the suite (which is, of course, very different from the film score)? “I don’t know. I haven’t looked at it yet.”

Well! Think back to the traditional classical recording process, where conductor and musicians bring a lifetime’s experience and a week of intense preparation into the recording studio. We know that session orchestras are essentially sight-reading in these circumstances, but here was a conductor who would be doing the same! It sounded unreal. The Prague players are demonstrably expert musicians. But could they really make music under such conditions? The week promised to be revelatory as well as challenging.

This is not to say that there was any absence of preparation. For, like most such efforts nowadays, this would be a producer-driven project. James Fitzpatrick had dreamed of recording this music for years and had commissioned the talented young Leigh Phillips to reconstruct the full score and orchestral parts that M-G-M had shamefully destroyed in 1970. (Rózsa’s initial sketches, preserved at Syracuse University, were not available for this project.) Years producing for Silva Screen, and more recently managing his own contracting and recording operations in Prague, have made James a seasoned veteran in the soundtrack re-creation process, with outstanding recordings of Rózsa, Waxman, Tiomkin, and Poledouris to his credit. The new QUO VADIS scores had been vetted, the recording sequence planned, and the parts printed out and set on the musicians’ stands the night before. Smečky’s resident engineer, Jan Holzner, had positioned dozens of microphones around the hall. Everything would be ready to go at 9:00.

The Downbeat

Nic had just a few words of greeting for the players. “This is another one of those big epic film scores.” And then the downbeat. Not a rehearsal but an actual take of the Intermezzo (as the film’s pre-curtain overture is curiously titled in the score). The four-day recording schedule tracked the actual film sequence more closely than we had imagined, although some of the source music for smaller ensembles was to be isolated on Wednesday. The chorus would come last, on Thursday afternoon. The full orchestral suite would be a kind of interlude on Monday.

This was straightforward, no-nonsense, music making. Nic’s eyes were on the score. There would be few obvious entry cues and almost no expressive gestures. Nic certainly was not posing for the cameras. The goal was timing and ensemble. The lack of visual conducting cues seemed alarming at first. But appearances can deceive. After this and every take, Nic had a list of very specific points for adjustment. It was clear that he was in command of the material. If this was indeed sight reading, then it was reading of a high order. And the musicians were really making music from the first take. Which isn’t to say that there was not room for improvement. The very first notes—the Marcus Vinicius fan-

fare from the French horns—demonstrated the possibilities. The players were note perfect from the start. But they weren't as boldly assertive as befits a proud Roman commander or the start of an epic movie. Were they not yet fully awake? It was, after all, early Sunday morning—effectively eight o'clock, considering a daylight savings shift. Also, the players had no way of knowing that the horns would be completely exposed in this opening. No other instruments would play with them. By the second take they had instinctively grasped that fact, hardly needing Nic's advice.

The conductor's instructions, by the way, were usually relayed through the interpreter who sat beside the podium throughout. "Interpreter" is too modest a term for Stanja Vomackova, an orchestra manager in her own right and a valued member of James's team. The language of music (including all that Italian) may be international, and most of the players surely knew some English. Nic could throw out bits of Czech when needed. But for convenience, certainty, and full communication between booth and podium, and players, Ms. Vomackova's amplified instructions were essential.



James Fitzpatrick and Nic Raine Confer about the Score
(John and Alan by the entrance). PHOTO BY PETR KOCANDA



Our Vantage Point. Interpreter Stanja Vomackova is seated behind the podium. PHOTO BY PETR KOCANDA

I've said that this was a producer-driven project. It was not surprising, therefore, to hear as many comments from the control room as from the podium. Nic focused explicitly on the execution of the score in front of him. James (with Leigh Phillips, Jan Holzner, and Frank DeWald at his side) provided feedback based on what the microphones were picking up. Proper balance was required in the audio feed as well as in the hall. And please no noises! Multimiking can pick up every crackling page, creaking chair, and exhaled breath—things that go unnoticed in concert but distract mightily on record. James's input was already apparent almost immediately. The score calls for four horns, but James had arranged for six. The musicians would be playing all day long—the equivalent of two Wagnerian operas—and it was imperative to maintain full energy throughout. The extra players provided backup in the section, so that the musicians could spell each other at need. This practice is actually part of normal orchestra procedure. The late Romantics often called for eight horns, but only occasionally do they all play together.

The Main Title was next. Or so the score described the credit music, although Róza disliked the inelegant and anachronistic term. Here the musicians donned their headphones—Sennheiser single-ear models that had been provided at every desk. Some of the players placed the phone up on the skull rather than over the ear. They needed to hear their colleagues more than they needed tempo indications. The wiring required for these devices added to the complex crowding typical of the recording studio. And woe to any

musician who left his device on after use! Open switches could cause feedback during the recording of quieter music for small ensembles. The Main Title would be recorded with the aid of a click track. This was not so much for the sake of tempo—which would approximate the film rather than the slower Decca version—as for synchronization. For the choral parts were to be added later, with some portions created in Prague and others in Britain. The click track would be necessary to keep things together.

Just as a conductor may emphasize two or three or four beats in a measure, so the clicks were sometimes set for the half note and sometimes for the quarter. And Nic would often instruct the players that the clicks would cease entirely at a certain point, notably for a closing *rallentando*. The click track is a practical but controversial aid for musicians. Rózsa disliked the device and said he never used it. Clicks facilitate synchronization, but they threaten to throttle the *rubato* (expressive variation within a basic tempo) that is the very lifeblood of musical performance. The click track would be employed for something like a third of the Prague sessions—for all of the vocal music, obviously, and also for many pieces with supplementary instrumentation. The Triumphal March was an example of the latter process. Here the score calls for cornets and additional trumpets and trombones. Rather than hire extra players for a full session, the supplementary parts would be recorded separately during a special brass session, where new specialists would be joined by regular orchestra musicians taking different parts. Not enough hands to play all the tom-toms and tambourines in the Assyrian Dance? No problem. The extra instruments would be dubbed in later. If you ever wondered about those “140 musicians” playing in parts of *THE FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE*, this is how it was done. As to the musicality of the end result, we must await the final mix. But things sounded glorious in the hall, and I rarely had any sense of excessive rigidity of tempo. There were times when the tempo didn’t seem right. Then Nic would consult with James and have Jan Holzner revise the computerized beats. This is where modern technology pays off. Such rapid adjustments would have been impossible in the old days. And when an instrumental part was wrong or missing—it happens often—there was no need to shut down and put a copyist to work. That is what they had to do in the old movie studio days, which is why hordes of orchestrators and copyists were on staff. In Prague, Leigh could generate and print a revised part from his computerized score in a few minutes. It is thanks to such innovations that classic film music can be re-created more efficiently today than in years past.

Clicks were sometimes employed simply to save rehearsal time in difficult passages. The score’s two nocturnal fight scenes were examples. “Escape” (Lygia’s rescue) was particularly challenging because of its changing meters, so typical of Rózsa’s 1940s music of crime and angst. Like other complex passages, this one was broken into smaller segments. A 5/4 passage in the middle was recorded separately. There were pauses and puzzlements as Nic supervised the conversion of notes into music. “Now the shit hits the fan” was his prediction for one challenging moment. “Vae Victis” (the Croton-Ursus encounter) was

another such challenge, which saw Nic dashing to the control room for consultation and alteration of the click track.

Flashback to 1977

Alan Hamer

It was all rather different thirty-five years ago at London's Kingsway Hall, when Decca followed their well-received *BEN-HUR* with a *QUO VADIS* re-recording, this time using the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. (See PMS 21 for my original report on this notable event.) The famous Kingsway venue, now long defunct, was often used for its splendid acoustics and for the physical suitability of its size and shape, with a large platform behind the orchestra to accommodate a full chorus or soloists. Such was the set-up for Miklós Rózsa's own re-recording, which was accomplished in just two sessions of three hours each. We sat some distance to the rear of the harpists who were located behind the conductor, just as in Prague. Not for Rózsa the luxury of overdubbed choral tracks or string or brass overlays; his large forces of perhaps 130 players and singers were recorded concurrently and with little time for repeated takes. The routine then was to play the selection straight through twice (on average) and then correct as many "fluffs" as time allowed. Frequently the final version was simply cobbled together from just those two complete run-throughs. The procedure was a far cry from the "sectional breakdown" approach used in Prague.

On that earlier occasion Christopher Palmer, roaming between studio and control room along with producer Raymond Few, was in close attendance to help detect any errors in the parts or the playing. And errors were frequent. There was no computer program like today's Sibelius to generate parts from the full score. When the playing revealed ambiguities or wrong notes, everything had to be corrected by hand. Speaking after the sessions, Rózsa confided that a mere six hours to record forty minutes of the score had been "a bit rushed." Indeed, it was hardly a surprising comment under those breathless circumstances; more surprising was just how this great orchestra had so idiomatically responded under such pressure. The composer, as usual, had exercised plenty of old-fashioned podium authority. I suspect that Nic Raine's success, apart from the obvious fact that he is a first-rate musician and a pleasant personality, is that he spends a lot of time with the this orchestra, and he too seemed to exercise a similarly masterful authority—yet wholly in sympathy with his fine players, not least the very talented leader, Lucie Svehlova, who is fully worthy of her fine reputation as a soloist (witness her valuable and sensitively phrased solos in Tadlow's *SHERLOCK HOLMES* re-recording).

Rózsa had conducted the RPO many times since 1950, and he had estab-

lished the same sort of lasting bond with them, his favourite of the UK orchestras. This gave their 1977 take on *Quo Vadis* an almost heroic quality. By then, however, his advancing years had brought mellowness and inner wisdom, and a refusal to be hurried, that were far removed from the constraints of the movie's soundtrack. Somewhat contrastingly, Nic Raine's use of the click track yielded results closer to the composer's original intentions of 1951. This should make for a fascinating comparison with the Decca album. One other noticeable difference between the two sessions was the absence of any sort of filming or video-taping at Kingsway Hall (just some odd stills by Derek Elley), whereas at Smečky the constant presence of the affable Petr Kocanda ("Lokutus" of the Film Score Monthly Message Board), with his collection of cameras and equipment, will undoubtedly result in some lasting and brilliant images of an outstanding occasion which left us all spell-bound by the time it came to bid farewell to this city.

* * *

The Layout

Let's pause here for a picture of the facilities. Smečky Studios is housed in a 1930s building that was originally constructed as a German cultural center and used as an officers' club during World War II. The hardwood recording floor was a former ballroom. The entryway offered a cloakroom, a canteen serving refreshments for musicians on break, and a lobby decorated with scores of posters and album covers from the cinema and disc

projects created by James Fitzpatrick's team over the years. You have to pass through the (crowded!) studio floor to get to the control area, separated by double doors and totally out of sight. The floor could, however, be observed by video monitors, and the video feed was in fact being transmitted to Luc Van de Ven in Belgium (whose Prometheus label is financing the production) and John Waxman in Connecticut (who rendered important assistance in securing some of the score materials). Seating on the recording floor was tight. The layout was fairly standard, with the percussion partly segregated by a partition at the rear. Witnesses perched in a corner, amid the empty instrument cases and alarmingly close to the cellists' up-bow strokes. The two harps plus the celesta, piano, and occasional guitar had to sit nearby, behind the conductor. Each harp had its own microphone and was shielded by a sound-absorbing panel. More about the studio at www.smeckymusicstudios.com.

Room with a View



K. **Between Sessions:** Jan Holzner, Doug Raynes, John Fitzpatrick, James
The Fitzpatrick, Alan Hamer, Frank DeWald. PHOTO BY PETR KOCANDA
from

Frank
DeWald
view
the con-

control room was, indeed, via two video screens—a large one surveying the entire orchestra and a smaller monitor focused on Nic Raine. Producer James Fitzpatrick kept his eye on both, occasionally showing a moment of irritation when the players (especially percussion) did not appear settled and ready to begin a take.

It was a great honor to sit beside James, both of us following our scores and monitoring each take as it took place. Orchestrator Leigh Phillips sat on the other side—also following along—for the first three days, before returning to his native Wales. The music came at us through a massive pair of Tannoy speakers (large enough to give anyone woofer envy), but James listened primarily through Sennheiser headphones. I was amazed by his intense focus throughout. He caught extraneous noises that were otherwise inaudible, every cracked note from the brass, every misaligned rhythm, every instance of poor balance and every out-of-tune chord. These flaws necessitated retakes, but—mindful of the player's concentration and energy levels—he limited them to isolated portions of the cues.

Most amazing was the infrequent need for retakes. It is a given that professional session players are good sight readers, but what impressed me (shocked me, actually) is not so much what they grasped on the first run-through as how

much they “fixed” on the second—whether or not it was mentioned from the podium or booth. Subtle things, like a countermelody line that wasn’t brought out quite enough the first time, or the interplay between motives that didn’t initially register, were always better the second time around. Even the overall shape of a cue—its dramatic peaks and valleys—seemed to be intuitively comprehended by the orchestra once they had heard it. It was obvious that these players really listen to one another (a prerequisite of any great ensemble), and it pays off in countless musical felicities that characterize so many of their recordings.

It was also a revelation to watch Nic Raine at work. Having seen only a few session videos, I admit I thought he seemed, well, inexpressive. Little did I know! We are so conditioned by an “image” of the classical conductor—the overt gymnastics of a Leonard Bernstein or a Gustavo Dudamel—that we forget the more efficient (but less interesting to watch) styles of the Fritz Reiners and Arturo Toscaninis of this world. Nic is a member of the latter school. His goal is to provide as clear and precise a beat as possible, and—especially given the time constraints of session recording—allow the musicians to do what they do best. He displays no ego on the podium, and he has no studied “interpretation” to impose on the music. But his ear is phenomenal, and the way he can identify problems and propose solutions in the precious (and costly) minutes between takes was a godsend under the circumstances.

James, Leigh, and I were seated at a long table, outfitted only with comfortable chairs (each session is four hours long), a telephone (connecting with the podium), and a switch to the studio P.A. system, over which James could address the orchestra. He used the phone to talk to Nic about performance issues that might have been insensitive to mention in public. James’s own laptop computer also sat on the table for his remarkable multitasking. In front of us sat recording engineer Jan Holzner, who presided over his massive editing mixer (with two large monitors) like a master virtuoso, pushing buttons and moving sliders simultaneously with both hands. Before each take, he would announce, “Quiet, please,” and the red “recording in progress” light went on. Then he would announce the take number, which James would hastily scribble in his score, using one of several colored markers (in a prearranged system to help him sort everything out at the editing stage). To Jan’s left, at a smaller computer, sat assistant engineer Michael Hradisky.

* * *

Watching the Orchestra

Sitting virtually amid the players had its own fascination. There was of course the sheer beauty and presence of the sound. A symphony orchestra, heard live, has a *weight* that no recording can capture. We heard an unnatural balance from just in front of the cello sec-

tion. The first harp, right next door (behind the podium), was nearly inaudible, thanks to the sound-absorbing panel that shielded the player's spot mike. It didn't matter that brass and percussion were far away; they came through loud and clear. But for all the grand *tutti* passages, it was the score's quiet moments that proved most fascinating. We can all remember delicate moments in Rózsa's music, but without a score it is usually impossible to ascertain the exact instrumentation. Here we could see it. There was, for example, a long viola solo at the end of "Marcus and Lygia" (their second meeting). It happened that the player on Sunday was a last-minute substitute. Everybody appreciated his work. For "Tu Es Petrus" (the mournful music after the fire), the scoring was here revealed as a septet: string quartet, reinforced with extra viola and cello and a single bass. It is one of the score's most beautiful passages.

Our peculiar location gave particular emphasis to aspects of the string writing. Pizzicato playing was far more prevalent than I had ever realized. I've heard the "Ave Caesar" movement of the suite countless times but never suspected how the pizzicato were reinforcing the beat. So too with the ending of the Vestal Hymn and the opening of "Quo Vadis, Domine." The film's very first dramatic cue, "Marcus' Chariot," ends with a pizzicato passage that was inaudible in the film. In fact there are so many "pizz" markings in the score that the recording sequence was spaced out to spare the players' fingers from too much plucking in a given session. In another instance, the score instructed the cellos to play two notes simultaneously with double stops, but Nic simplified matters by assigning the notes to different players. Such are the special considerations of the album recording process.

Watching the orchestra over the five days offered several surprises. The City of Prague Philharmonic Orchestra is a session orchestra, that is, an ad hoc aggregation of players pulled together for specific projects. Such arrangements are familiar from London's "National Philharmonic" and indeed from most Hollywood film scoring sessions since 1958, when the studios disbanded their house orchestras. Prague is a notably musical city, with multiple orchestras, including the world-class Czech Philharmonic and two opera companies. The CoPPO players are drawn from various groups. What we learned from watching was that the personnel actually rotated on a session-to-session basis. Although concertmaster Lucie Svehlova was engaged for the duration, many other positions changed hands during the week, even from morning to afternoon. A player with a scheduled rehearsal or lesson elsewhere would be replaced for an afternoon by somebody else who was free that day. The sinuous cor anglais solo that opens and closes the "Assyrian Dance" (both film and suite) was a case in point. On Monday (in the suite version) the player was having trouble with the part just before lunch. He later came back, alone, for another try. But James and Nic were still not satisfied. It is possible that the solo may be dubbed in later by a different player. And it may have been somebody else entirely who played the film version, recorded the following day.

This raises the age-old question of “truth in recording.” James recounted witnessing classical sessions where the music was stopped for retakes every few bars. The players really did know the music and had played it in concert. But they were not note-perfect—concert performances never are—and the general expectation of such perfection on records had so terrified some musicians and record companies that they wind up assembling a “performance” bit by painstaking bit. Are such products real or counterfeit?

There was a bit of a break on Wednesday, when James had scheduled a small ensemble for some Maurice Jarre materials (including POPE JOAN) needed to finish an album devoted to that composer. It gave us some extra time (not enough!) to explore Prague’s beautiful Old Town. Thursday morning was mostly fill-ins: extra brass and percussion parts recorded while the musicians listened to the main ensemble’s playing through headsets.

The Chorales Frank K. DeWald

The final session on Thursday afternoon brought together the City of Prague Philharmonic Chorus and conductor Miriam Makova. Like the orchestra, the chorus (which in this case numbered around 45 voices) is a pick-up ensemble; it exists for recording purposes only. Each of the singers was equipped with a chair, a music stand, and headphones. Conductor Makova had on her left a Petrof grand piano, which she used to give starting pitches and to correct the few passages not sung properly the first time though.

James was not sure how many cues could be covered in the four hours allotted, but since he was already planning to record some of the cues with a small British choir as well, he wasn’t too worried. In the event, all that was recorded that afternoon were the cues involving chorus with orchestra (the main and end titles, the Hymn of the Vestal Virgins and “Peter’s Vision”). The group also recorded a special choral-orchestral arrangement of the Resurrection Hymn. Although the hymn is performed *a cappella* in the film, Rózsa’s score included an *ad libitum* keyboard accompaniment—possibly for rehearsal purposes—which Leigh Phillips orchestrated for the album.

Although many Czechs speak English, it was apparent that the pronunciation of some of Hugh Gray’s text was presenting a challenge. The Latin parts were fine, of course (choirs from all over the world perform in Latin), but certain English words were sounding strange. It is unsurprising that words like “whither,” “goest,” and “thou” might be unfamiliar to Czech ears; they are not the stuff of everyday conversation! As we came to this realization in the booth, James had an idea. “You’re a choral conductor, aren’t you? Go help them get it right!” So I found myself on the studio floor, score in hand, trying to model the correct English pronun-

ation of the text for the singers and their conductor! It was an exciting moment for me.

When all is said and done, I don't know if I helped very much. There is still an accent evident in the singers' pronunciation. And, if I'd had time, I would have loved to talk to them about some of the phrasing. But really, in the end—especially when combined with the orchestral tracks—it doesn't matter very much. They sound glorious!



* * * **Frank DeWald with Choral Director Miriam Makova** (Alan Hamer and John Fitzpatrick at rear). PHOTO BY PETR KOCANDA

And glori-
final im-

Will it all meld correctly? Will the vocal solos (to be recorded in England with some choral patches) find the appropriate balance between musicality and dramatized caricature?

ous was the
pression.

Will the playing over several days maintain intensity and consistency? Impossible to know right now. But James and Nic and the CoPPO have an excellent track record, and there is every reason to hope for “the glory on high” this fall.

The Screen Credits That Weren't Albert Sendrey

WOULD YOU BELIEVE—is it conceivable?—that the career of one of the greatest of all screen composers was built not only on his genuine phenomenal talent but also on the fact that, when asked by the head of a studio what films he had scored, he invented two picture titles which not only he had not composed, but which two films had never been made! This he had to do, for the plain truth was that he had never written a film score, nor, according to his own admission, had not the foggiest idea how to write for films.

I was living in London at the time, in a roomy flat at 20 Gunter Grove, near the Embankment in Chelsea. I was a lowly music student at London's Trinity College of Music, making a fair living, illegally, since I had no Labour Permit, making piano arrangements for Lawrence Wright (better known as Horatio Nicholls), Jimmy Campbell, Will Gross, and other Denmark Street songwriters. The tab was five pounds sterling per, and with the dollar at five to the pound, this was “big money”! The Savoy Hotel bandleader, a marvellous chap named Carroll Gibbons, gave me my first few society-style dance orchestrations to do, which he also broadcast over Radio Luxembourg and the BBC. I recall I made ten pounds each for those, so I was swimming in the filthy lucre.

At this identical moment the said screen composer was living in a small Paris apartment on the ground floor, street level, across the street from a whorehouse, eking out a modest living writing song choruses and fanfares for a chap named Monsieur Solar, at about 50 francs each. What Solar did with them, before our composer friend got world famous, no one knows, nor really cares. But it was a miserable existence for a composer who knew his real worth, a young genius who had already written and had published and performed a set of symphonic variations, with Breitkopf & Härtel in Leipzig doing the former, and Bruno Walter doing the second performance! Not bad for a 27-year old! Except that fifty francs was only U.S. \$2 and 8 shillings U.K.

The question whether the young man ever crossed the street and entered the *maison de joie* will torture many a reader of this tale, but we have it on impeccable authority, namely his own, that he never did. However, when not knocking out lead sheets for Monsieur Solar, he sat in his window and watched a never-ending stream of pimps bringing customers to the bordello, but always with the amusing innocence that all good pimps and purveyors must exhibit. They pretended not to have been there before, steering their

quarry past the address, returning, searching, ad libbing that they really were not sure where that place was, when our composer had seen them daily, half a dozen times, and in each case piloting their customer to the door, and after another unsure glance at the house number, then a reassuring nod, entering. Minutes later the pimp would leave, having pocketed his commission often counting it a few meters down the street, to make sure the *maison* had not shortchanged him.

But what has all this *histoire gaie* to do with the screen credits that weren't? We are coming to that.

Having gotten tired of this unworthy musical work, and also of the parade of pimps to and fro in front of his window, the young composer, not yet a screen composer, but who would rank with Steiner, Newman, Korngold., yes, even Tiomkin, asked an older friend, a former symphony and opera conductor living in Paris, whether he would give him a letter to his young son, a student in London at Trinity College. Yes, he wanted to try his luck across the Channel, where a famous Hungarian film mogul had created a huge complex of stages in Denham, outside of London.

The conductor wrote out the son's address: 20 Gunter Grove, Chelsea, told him it was near the river, and that no doubt the aforementioned son would let the composer stay with him until he got settled, got a job writing films, preferably for the mogul, and started making better money than he did for Monsieur Solar's primitive fanfares and songs, eight shillings apiece!

And so: quick dissolve to Chelsea, where our screen composer rings the doorbell at 20 Gunter Grove. The chap opening the front door was delighted to have this already distinguished houseguest, who had been published by Breitkopf, and performed by Walter. What an honor, what a privilege! And the two-story flat was roomy, though cold: it had only a fireplace in the huge living room, and a gas fire upstairs in the bedroom. The other bedroom had *goornisht*, which is French for nothing. Only a bed, a wardrobe, a chair. And so this became the abode for our yet unnamed world-famous screen composer. Who, as we have pointed out, had yet to write his first score.

"Do you know anybody in the music department at Denham?" may have been the question directed at me (for I was the young chap renting 20 Gunter Grove, and now subletting the cold, dank second bedroom to my new friend). Well, I had met the music head of the studio, a young Scot from Stirling. He was a pupil of Malcolm Sargent, who when offered the job as music director, had refused but recommended his 21-year-old student, Muir Mathieson. And my fame as an American "jazz arranger," having been proclaimed by Carroll Gibbons, had so impressed young Muir that he gave me, also illegally of course, all the dance music the studio needed to record.

I promised my new houseguest I would take him to Denham, by tube and bus, and introduce him to the young Scot. First stop, since it was lunchtime, was a trip across the road to a pub, the *Lame Bull*, where Muir astounded us by downing, first, two jiggers of

his native brew from Glasgow, then a couple of bitters, followed by another Scotch. Neither my houseguest nor I drank; we thought we would eat, not drink, our lunch. In the States we would barely have been old enough to be served at a bar, but the British aren't that, particular. Muir got sloshed while we ordered some steak and kidney pies.

Result: he *looved* my new friend and houseguest, and back in his office he had him give a recital for his secretary, Miss Doris Sliver, and his assistant, a Mr. Freddie Lewis. He then sobered up a wee bit, and got a French director, who was at Denham planning a picture on the lot, on the phone.

"Jacques," he intoned, "Muir Mathieson here. You know the music chap. I have a genius in my office, a Hungarian composer, who would be splendid for your film. Would you come by and hear him play his stuff?" Let's make this short. Jacques came, heard, and was conquered. The film he was shooting was a pseudo-Russian epic starring Marlene Dietrich and Robert Donat, entitled KNIGHT WITHOUT ARMOUR. But Jacques Feyder thought our young friend should see the studio head first.

There was only one rub: the mogul, being a Hungarian, and prone to nepotism where his own brothers were concerned (all by the way talented, not necessarily like Mayer's *gantse mishpocha*, which originally gave M-G-M its lettering,) was rumored to "hate" fellow Hungarians, of which our young friend was one. Nevertheless, a meeting was arranged forthwith.

So now we are in the Hungarian mogul's office, where the young composer was politely ushered into a lovely leather armchair. But in English! No Hungarian spoken here, not even between "landsmen"! In his heavily accented English, he asked the composer what films he had done. And in equally accented English he was told the Big Lie, the Fabrication, the unheard-of made-up screen credit of two documentaries, neither of which had ever seen the light of day, not to say the emulsion of 35mm film. Here are the two beauties: *Shepherd's Life* and *Lake Balaton*. Made in Budapest by a small independent. What independent? That the mogul, being the most illustrious Hungarian in the film industry, swallowed this is hard to believe, for surely he must have known that these two titles had never come from the Beautiful Blue Danube, where he and his brothers had migrated from. But apparently he never checked.

And so history was made, and the most fabulous career was begun on what so many of us in the film business (for it is a business) have at times been guilty of—lying a little bit about our accomplishments until those accomplishments, in truth speak for themselves and soon give us a recognizable name, which then becomes a saleable commodity and we end up in the *Motion Picture Almanac* with two or more inches of honest-to-God screen credits. That's when your name appears on a big screen and your barber, who up to then has always called you "Next!" now knows your name as he has seen it up there at the neighborhood movie house, or more recently in replays on television.

Miklós Rózsa's barber has not called him "Next" for at least four decades. And so,

happily, ends the story of the only little white lie that most accomplished screen composer has ever committed in his fruitful life.

Afterword

Albert Sendrey's recollection was provided by the musicologist William Rosar, editor and publisher of the *Journal of Film Music*, who interviewed Sendrey before his death.

Albert Sendrey (1911–2003) was a Chicago-born composer-arranger-orchestrator, educated in Leipzig and London, who toiled anonymously in the Hollywood dream factory from the 1940s to the 1970s. He worked, often uncredited, on such films as *THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE*, *THE GREAT CARUSO*, *AN AMERICAN IN PARIS*, *GUYS AND DOLLS*, and *FINIAN'S RAINBOW*, and later in Las Vegas, notably as Tony Martin's arranger and accompanist. He is said to have composed the music for Fred Astaire's famous "ceiling dance" in *ROYAL WEDDING*. Trained in Leipzig, Sendrey also composed original music, including three symphonies and other works. (I find no record of public performances, and Sendrey's name does not appear in *Grove* or *Baker's*.) His father, Alfred Sendrey (or Aladár Szendrei, 1884–1976), was known as an opera conductor in Europe and America and was director of the Leipzig Symphony when Rózsa lived in that city. He migrated to Paris (1933), New York (1941), and Los Angeles (1945). He too was a composer and was particularly noted for writing several books on the history of Jewish music. *Bibliography of Jewish Music* (1951), *David's Harp: The Story of Music in Biblical Times* (1964), *Music in Ancient Israel* (1969), and *Music in the Social and Religious Life of Antiquity* (1974).

Mr. Rosar also kindly furnished us with an interview published in Richard McCurdy's newsletter *Music Tracks* (vol. 1, no. 4 [1980]). From this interview, published as "Adventures in Orchestrating Film Music," we can glean a few more details about Sendrey's Rózsa connection. He first met Rózsa in his father's music room in Paris and also in Leipzig, where the elder Sendrey was preparing to perform a work of Rózsa's. Later, "when we were roommates and friends in London, I was the student and he was the master."

"Mickey needed an orchestrator like he needed two heads . . ."

"I was by no means an equivalent talent to Rózsa. . . . But he took me under his wing anyway, on pictures like *THIEF OF BAGDAD*, *JUNGLE BOOK*, *LADY HAMILTON*, *SUNDOWN*, *LYDIA*, etc."

Asked if he ever made mistakes, Sendrey recounted: "Once, for Rózsa, I wrote a low A on a bassoon part. He red-pencilled my score and wrote on it in huge letters, 'Oh, Albert!!' Adolph Weiss, the bassoonist, had once told me how to get that low A, and I was prepared. I brought the inside of a roll of toilet paper to the session, stuck the tubular cardboard into Adolph's bell, and out came a low A. Cockily, I told Rózsa, 'Here's your low A.' That, of course, is chutzpah—not musicianship."

It would be pedantic to footnote Mr. Sendrey's fascinating piece. The variances from Miklós Rózsa's familiar account hardly need to be pointed out to readers of this journal. They illustrate the inescapable difficulty of establishing a definitive account of events that took place more than half a century ago. In Rózsa's telling Jacques Feyder (who was Belgian, not French) reencountered Rózsa in London in the summer of 1936. This was during the run of the ballet *Hungaria*. Rózsa had been in London since the previous autumn. Rózsa never described his initial meeting with Alexander Korda. In his version, the whole thing was set up by Feyder, with reference to Rózsa's supposed acquaintance with Vincent Korda. At this remove it is impossible to determine the exact truth, let alone the sequence of events. Nevertheless, a few details warrant comment for the unsuspecting reader.

Goornisht is Yiddish for "it's hopeless; nothing helps." *Gantse mishpocha* signifies "the whole family."

Bruno Walter did take up the Theme, Variations, and Finale, but he did not give the second performance. That was Charles Munch (Budapest, 1934). Walter conducted it in Amsterdam later the same year.

Veritable Beacons Two Rózsa U.K Performances Alan Hamer

WE HAVE LONG been waiting to hear a live broadcast on BBC Radio 3 of a major Rózsa work, and at last, on 15th April 2010 from City Halls in Glasgow, we were treated to a beauty: Lawrence Power playing the Viola Concerto with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra under the very able baton of Alexander Titov. To say it was a successfully realised performance would be insufficient praise of such a vital and idiomatic reading; in fact, it shone out as a veritable beacon of unwavering clarity, well emphasising the vibrancy of this masterwork.

Mr. Power's interpretation has of course been recorded by Hyperion, though with a different conductor and orchestra. That disc meets the standards of authenticity achieved here. The soloist seems to understand the Hungarian idiom—in like fashion to fellow violist Gilad Karni, who has almost made the work his own in recent concert outings and of course has also committed the work to a Naxos CD. Karni has expressed his own thoughts about the importance of the Rózsa concerto amongst a barren sea of really worthwhile works for his instrument, and it seems others are joining this same group of supporters. Apart from Mr. Power, just a week earlier, a young player, Tegen Davidge, played it at the Cleveland Institute of Music under Carl Topilow and managed to achieve yet another very spirited and nicely fashioned reading. Luckily, it is available online at InstantEncore.com.

I had missed Power's 2008 performance in Liverpool, but based on this showing,

his is a formidable talent indeed, possessed of a fine, generous quality of tone. I can say without reservation that I admired this performance as much as any of the others I have heard of this complex, big-scale work; for him the music scintillates and is easy to listen to, his deft bowing light and mercurial. Ms. Davidge's spirited efforts were hard to fault and absolutely acceptable, and she handled both the brooding melancholy of the opening as well as the rapid melodic material of the finale with some enthusiasm and as much virtuosity as she could muster. Power played the first movement stylishly and his phrasing was warm and communicative. His slow movement glowed (no other word for it), and the finale was taken at a very fast tempo—faster even than Karni on Naxos. In comparison, Zukerman at the premiere was quite subdued, a fast canter rather than a gallop. Power won this race hands down! I feel sure no one would have been happier than Rózsa himself to hear two such engaging performances within a week of each other; I also feel confident that the work, a golden, autumnal vision by the composer, will gain a large and appreciative following amongst not just viola players but all who seek a superbly written showcase for this neglected instrument.

Carla Whalen, in *The Scotsman*, remarked that Power's beguiling tone gave voice to the tenderness writ large in the slow melodies, whilst "his stylish prowess meant he was able to convey improvisatory freedom, while tackling a stream of tricky passages." Indeed. And to her credit that no mention was made of it sounding like QUO VADIS! A fine concert, with a charming account of Rachmaninov's First Symphony in the second half, its timbres nicely delineated and detail splendidly clear; first rate and dazzlingly effective.

And now fast forward to the 28th April, London's St. John's, Smith Square in Westminster, a stone's throw from Big Ben; the orchestra, the London Phoenix under Levon Parikian; the soloist, violinist Warren Zielinski to play another concerto. Under a general programme heading "Aspects of Patriotism," the Violin Concerto was sandwiched between Sibelius (*Finlandia*) and Shostakovich (his masterly Tenth Symphony)—an adventurous choice of works for a relatively young group of players. But they certainly gave their all for the conductor and whatever they lacked in polish they made up for in overall enthusiasm. I had seen and heard the soloist play the String Trio (Op.1a) at the West Norfolk Festival back in 2007, in a lovely village church setting at Stoke Ferry (see PMS 64).

Born in Vancouver, becoming the youngest-ever leader of the National Youth Orchestra of Canada, Zielinski moved to London at the age of 19. Here he studied at the Royal College of Music and now makes his home in the U.K. giving master classes and concerts and appearing prominently on numerous film recording sessions. He actually began playing the violin at the age of three, a full two years before Rózsa took up the same instrument! He told me he knew little of Rózsa's music. But he was eager to learn... so, tonight he was to play the Violin Concerto which (along with the Korngold concerto) had been recommended to him by a colleague who had encountered the Heifetz record-

ing. Zielinski had earlier played the Korngold with some success. So he decided to take up the Rózsa work. Well, we were all in for a most wonderful and successful result, and I found myself completely won over by this richly characterised, fresh performance. What he seemed to bring to it was a beautifully channelled, youthful exuberance, and in that sense his reading had something valuable to contribute to our understanding of the work. To me, it sounded like he had been playing this concerto a lot longer than he actually had; his account was carefully balanced, very well played, and thoughtfully paced, especially in the demanding first movement. He certainly provided not a second best, but a very valid alternative to Matthew Trusler's formidable playing in this movement on the Orchid Classics CD; I can only wish that the BBC had seen fit to record this present concert for a future transmission.

The openness and ardour of the *lento cantabile* movement took me completely by surprise; there was so much to admire in his beautiful tone quality and acutely sensitive response to the music's gently shifting moods. The time he took exactly matched Heifetz's (seven and a half minutes), and it was thoughtful and affectionate playing. The finale was full of vigour and zest, an admirably warm-blooded performance which succeeded in bringing down the house. Certainly a brilliant violinist, Zielinski tackled the hair-raising difficulties with aplomb. Parikian and his orchestra accompanied well, although some poor horn intonation grew wearying after a time. Incidentally a piano substituted for the celesta. Rózsa Society members and friends, Doug Raynes, Andrew Knowles, Paul and Pauline Talkington, Gunther Kögebehn, and conductor John Wilson were all present.

Writing online at MusicWeb International (*Seen and Heard*), Bob Briggs praised both the Concerto and Zielinski's playing. Quoting the story that Paganini must have been in league with the devil to have played as he did, Briggs suggested that Zielinski must have signed a similar pact, "for his playing defied what would seem possible, let alone plausible on his instrument." Also: "Although there is Hungary in every bar [of the concerto], it is the Hungary of Dohnányi, more than Bartók, for, despite the nationalistic feel, this is a work with a broader European accent." He then praised everyone for the performance, "for it served to prove just what a fine composer Rózsa was." To hear it performed as well as at this concert served to underline that the work has, like fine wine, improved with age. The meticulous spinning of such melodies as in its slow movement remains Rózsa's greatest gift, and during the 1950s—arguably one of his most fertile periods—he enhanced this melodic affinity to embrace a more extroverted emotionalism which remained a vital aspect of much of his finest music, from the *Concert Overture* to BEN-HUR. One thing seems certain: his concert works, far from being neglected or unfairly criticised, are now widely played, often recorded, much more talked about, and rightly approved of. These two 2010 performances have again emphasised this happy fact and, importantly, introduced two of his most eloquent scores to newer and larger audiences.

* * *

June 10th, 1972

By June 1972 the Society was well established, having already published two issues of Pro Musica Sana. But I had met the maestro only briefly (at the 1968 Philadelphia concert). After that we had merely exchanged some letters. He wanted to meet me when he passed through New York on his annual trip to Europe. The result was this memorable luncheon. Here (slightly abridged) is the somewhat breathless account I wrote that very afternoon as an aide-mémoire and for the benefit of colleagues Mark Koldys and Ken Doeckel. Much here requires comment or qualification. The online version will be fully annotated. But for the present I offer this historical document “as is” to mark the passage of forty years of the MRS. - JF

I have just returned from a three-hour lunch with Miklos Rozsa and I am writing this to preserve my own memories as well as to keep you informed. R notified me a couple of days ago that it would be ok to bring as many others as I wanted. I was able to reach six of our local members and four of them came—Myron, Jeffrey Dane, Alex Goldstein, and John Keenan. I offered that R be our guest but he refused and paid for six expensive lunches at the Russian Tea Room.

Myron and I picked him up at 12:15 at his hotel. He looked very well, much like he does on the RCA cover except that the hair might be a little grayer. We asked what he had been doing in NY—seeing publishers mainly. He had not arranged any NY concerts. Sometimes he gave very simple one-word answers but most of the time he went into great detail. He could remember many complex incidents of more than 30 years ago although he had forgotten some details about some of the scores. He was curious about local reactions to Boulez, who, he said, played mainly the music of his friends. He said that he had wanted to do the *Mark Hellinger Suite* or something else not so familiar as *BEN-HUR* in London this fall but that Universal had simply thrown out the music from its old days. Everything. He didn't believe that any copies of the score existed. He seemed (understandably) bitter about the matter and suspected that the other studios were no better. So he didn't have anything but *BEN-HUR* et al. available for performance. He asked everyone if they wanted a drink. All refused and he seemed pleased. We reminded him of his comment on *THE LOST WEEKEND* and he laughed. “Yes, that picture taught me.” I said that I much preferred that score to *SPELLBOUND* and couldn't understand why the latter had become so much more popular. He agreed that it was a far better score and then went on to give the story of the genesis of the *Spellbound Concerto*. It was exactly as Ted Wick had explained it me in a letter. R was surprised that we knew of Wick.

We asked if he had ever expanded the *LYDIA* concerto. Yes, for *TIME OUT OF MIND*. That was his only contribution to that film. I said that the actor who played the blind composer looked like him. R said, no, the actor was too good looking. He then asked us if the actor was still alive (?) and proceeded to tell us how his wife had been living with some Viennese baron (or something like that). He said that he had appeared in one other film—*KNIGHT WITHOUT ARMOUR*. He had just happened to be on the set and Feyder grabbed him to be an on-screen pianist. We talked so long that the waitress gave up after waiting for our order three different times. She didn't come back until 10 minutes later.

We told him about the *Double Life Fantasy* and he was surprised that a recording exist-

ed. He only remembered doing it once at the Hollywood Bowl. We showed him the complete Syracuse catalogue. It included the DOUBLE LIFE score and he seemed interested—as if he might be able to exhume it for concert performance. We are going to give R a tape of the work. At that concert he had also done a duet from *La Bohème* with Mario Lanza and a soprano. There was a good deal of orchestral music after the vocal parts ended but R was amazed to hear applause. Out of the corner of his eye he saw the two leaving the stage. By the time he was finished, they were coming back for their second bows! We also told him about the Stokowski “Pastorale” and he was amazed and dismayed that a recording of the existed. It was the result of a great *faux pas* on R’s part. Stokowski had expressed interest in the work so R offered to play it on the piano for him. Then he added as an afterthought that he had a tape of the whole thing by Ormandy. Would Stokowski like to hear it? After an icy silence there came the reply (this was over the telephone): “That will not be necessary.” R was very embarrassed by the performance, which he regarded as fatally drawn out.

He also recalled the famous Leonard Bernstein debut. He was listening to a broadcast. The announcer began: “Because of the illness of Bruno Walter . . .” and Rozsa groaned. But R was very happy with the performance. He said he exchanges congratulatory telegrams with Bernstein every 10 years. “Going Steady,” he called it. He was also surprised that we had the premiere of the Concerto for String Orch. He had only an old transcription disc. He agreed that it had gone very well.

He said he had done concert suites from other films as well. He recalled something called *Blind Flight* but he couldn’t remember what film it was from. We knew: MEN OF THE FIGHTING LADY. And that explained a mysterious item in the Syracuse catalogue. Other mysterious items included BEN-HUR, parts 1–8 and EL CID, parts 1–6. R thinks, but is not sure, that there are the ORIGINAL MUSIC TRACKS !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! AND HE HAS AUTHORIZED US TO OBTAIN THEM!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

He says that the Symphony is not very good. Also that *Hungaria* is mostly adaptation of folk material. He said the he had been asked to score TO BE OR NOT TO BE but did not want to because he found it tasteless. (I disagree—it’s satire.) He did obtain Werner Heymann to write the music. It turned out to be Mickey Mousing and Lubitsch hated it. So R did wind up doing one scene. But he did not think it was very good and he was glad I had not recognized it.

Nicholas is a photographer and trying to find a job. Juliet is a librarian. Mrs. R tapes all of his films from TV and plays them at breakfast—which drives R crazy.

He told the story of the BEN-HUR recordings again and it is still confusing. He was told that he would never be allowed to perform with an American orchestra if he conducted those recordings. He was in the studio when Savina conducted, groaning and trying to correct at least a few things. We asked if he were Erich Kloss. He hoped not—Kloss died two years ago. He said he had been a good, straightforward conductor.

He said he still didn’t know what THE POWER was all about. He had asked George Pal but Pal didn’t seem to know either!

He has been asked back to Hungary several times but had never gone. The American government advised him that, once there, he might be considered a Hungarian citizen. They offered him a large villa with *servants* for his entire stay but his wife asked if they would let him leave. One of the inviting officials asked for asylum in the U.S. only a few months later. He almost went in ’65. He had a contract to do one concert of his own works and one of contemporary American works. But the flare-up in Viet-Nam caused him to be disinvented. He was

reinvited a few years later but refused. *Nostalgia* was not done on the radio It seems that some official found one line of the text (about longing to return to the homeland) politically offensive.

Tripartita will probably premiere in Europe. Then maybe Philadelphia season after next. Future plans are for choral works. He is interested in something concerning the recent vandalism of the Pietà, perhaps relating it to the destruction of works of beauty in general. (A very good theme for him.) He is still looking for a suitable text though.

He had had high hopes for SHERLOCK but was very discouraged that such extensive cutting could be imposed on one of the great masters (Wilder). He learned not to write complex fugal passages for battle scenes on SAHARA and made some funny battle noises to illustrate.

We asked if he had a favorite film score. A very hard question, he said. He admitted that his choices were influenced by the associations each had in his life. QUO VADIS marked his return to Europe after the war. He had special personal reason for remembering THE JUNGLE BOOK (meeting his wife?). Also LOST WEEKEND and LUST FOR LIFE.

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