

Miklós Rózsa's *Theme, Variations, and Finale*

A Guide for Performers

by

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ABSTRACT

Hungarian composer, Miklós Rózsa, is primarily known for his career as a film composer, but he wrote over forty-five pieces for the concert hall. The most famous of these works, *Theme, Variations, and Finale*, was composed in 1933 and premiered the following year, ushering in a long history of performances throughout Europe and abroad in the 1930s and 1940s. This document serves as a guide for performers of *Theme, Variations, and Finale* by offering biographical information about Rózsa, the compositional history and performance history of the work and recorded legacy, details about its two versions, and a detailed analysis of the score. This document also clarifies important details about the work's performance history, which have previously been recorded inaccurately.

DEDICATION

To Sonia Amable Alpizar

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PREFACE

Hungarian-American composer Miklós Rózsa's impressive output of concert music and nearly one hundred film scores are evidence of his rich "double life" in concert and film composition, hence the name of his autobiography penned with the help of musicologist, Christopher Palmer.¹ His earliest international success, *Theme, Variations and Finale* (Op. 13), was performed in Europe and abroad by the top conductors of the 1930s including Charles Münch, Otto Volkmann, Bruno Walter, Frederick Stock, and Ernst Dohnányi. It also shared the program of a 1943 New York Philharmonic broadcast that made Leonard Bernstein an overnight sensation and aided his meteoric rise to prominence as America's first born-and-trained conductor to be the music director of a major American orchestra. One variation of the work was used as uncredited music in several episodes of *The Adventures of Superman* directed by George Blair in 1954. Despite some historical significance, *Theme, Variations, and Finale*, as well as Rózsa's other concert works, have fallen into relative obscurity in the twenty-first century. In fact, the *Miklos Rózsa Society*, which catalogues performances of Rózsa's works internationally, has tracked a mere ten performances of *Theme, Variations, and Finale* since 2005, including the performance by the Arizona State University Symphony Orchestra (ASUSO) November 21, 2017.

Having been neglected for many years, *Theme, Variations and Finale* is more difficult to program because the vast majority of conductors, performers, and audiences are now unfamiliar with it. This document will provide conductors and performers of

1. Miklós Rózsa, *Double Life* (New York: Winwood Press, 1989).

Rózsa's *Theme, Variations, and Finale* a guide to help them study and perform the piece. It will also trace the history of the work's major performances throughout Europe and the United States and clarify their details, which have been recorded inaccurately in several sources. Additionally, in hopes of encouraging more performances of this unfortunately neglected work, this document will include an overview of available recordings.

CHAPTER 1
BACKGROUND

Rózsa's Impact

Rózsa was an influential composer of the twentieth century because of his position as music director of Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer (MGM) in Hollywood, his numerous iconic film scores and concert works, and his teaching post at the University of Southern California. As a film composer, Rózsa won three Academy Awards for his original scores to Alfred Hitchcock's *Spellbound* (1945), George Cukor's *A Double Life* (1947), and William Wyler's classic epic *Ben Hur* (1959).²

Though his first concert works were published by Breitkopf und Härtel and performed in Budapest and Leipzig, his first major international success came from his *Theme, Variations and Finale*. Other celebrated concert works include Rózsa's violin and viola concertos commissioned by Jascha Heifetz, his Cello Concerto commissioned by Janos Starker, and the *Theme and Variations* (Op. 29a) commissioned and premiered by Heifetz and Piatagorsky. Many of his later chamber works are also frequently performed.³ Rózsa taught at the University of Southern California for over twenty years. During this time, he created the first classes in the United States dedicated solely to scoring films.⁴

2. Christopher Palmer, *The Composer in Hollywood* (London: Marion Boyars, 1990) 188.

3. Nick Jones, *Rózsa: Concertos for Violin and Cello* (Cleveland: Telarc, 2000) 6-7.

4. Rózsa, *Double Life*, 157.

Biography

Though Rózsa's musical career included extended stays in Leipzig, Paris, London, and Hollywood, it was his Hungarian upbringing that nurtured his love of folk melody. He was born in Budapest in 1907 to a pianist mother who trained two classes behind Bartok at the Budapest Academy and a father who, though not a professionally trained musician, was a lover of native Hungarian folksong.⁵ His father was a proud Hungarian nationalist who penned a book, *To Whom does the Hungarian Soil Belong?*⁶ This love of folksong was transmitted to Rózsa at an early age when he began collecting Hungarian melodies and writing tunes of his own based on their sounds.

Rózsa initially moved to Leipzig, Germany to study chemistry in 1926. After only one year, he began, against his parents' wishes, studying composition with Hermann Grabner at the Leipzig Conservatory.⁷ Though Grabner is not remembered as a celebrated composer, Rózsa admits that he was a strong teacher and a fierce promoter of Rózsa's early compositions. Through Grabner he met and eventually assisted Karl Straube, another early promoter of Rózsa's career who financed trips for him to meet celebrated conductors. In 1927, at the age of twenty, Rózsa's Opus No. 1 was published by

5. Roger Hickman, *Miklós Rózsa's Ben Hur: A Film Score Guide* (Toronto: The Scarecrow Press, 2011) 8.

6. Ibid., 8.

7. Ibid., 8.

Breitkopf und Härtel, launching his concert composition career.⁸ After his schooling was completed, he moved to Paris in 1931 where he composed popular songs and wrote his earliest compositions embracing a more Hungarian style. While in Paris, he also wrote his ballet *Hungaria* and met Arthur Honegger. It was Honegger that introduced Rózsa to film music by way of his score to *Les Misérables* (1934) and also helped him enter the film business⁹.

By 1937 Rózsa had moved to London and began scoring films. He soon became the head of the music department of Korda Pictures, run by the Hungarian film producer Alexander Korda. Rózsa's first Oscar-nominated score for Korda was for *The Thief of Bagdad* (1940). Although filming was complete in 1939, Korda decided two scenes needed to be reshot later in the year. The entire production and crew of *Thief of Bagdad* were relocated to Hollywood where the Korda brothers had close connections with Paramount Pictures. Rózsa stayed in Hollywood to work on Korda's *Lady Hamilton* (1941) and became a freelancing composer and teacher.¹⁰

Rózsa became a staff composer at MGM in 1948, eventually becoming the head of its music department, a position that lasted until 1962, a time that many consider the end of the golden age of Hollywood. During this period, Rózsa composed the music for

8. Rózsa, *Double Life*, 36-38.

9. *Ibid.*, 69-70.

10. Christopher Palmer, *The Composer in Hollywood* (London: Marion Boyars, 1990) 188.

many Hollywood epics including *Ben Hur* (1961), *El Cid* (1961), *Ivanhoe* (1952), and *King of Kings* (1961).¹¹

Rózsa most heavily focused on his concert career during the bookends of his life. During his last thirty years, he composed many original pieces, including concert adaptations of his film scores and two double-piano concertos based on his film themes. In 1984, the *Spellbound Concerto Fantasy for Two Pianos and Orchestra* and the *New England Concerto* were both recorded, alongside many concert adaptations by his contemporary, Elmer Bernstein.¹²

Rózsa's Style Changes

Throughout his compositional output, Rózsa's music embraced the Hungarian folk style. He had several self-ascribed style changes, which affected his instrumentation and harmonic language. These changes closely paralleled the films he scored.

Rózsa's first period of film composition was his "oriental" period where he scored films for Korda with exotic settings like *The Thief of Bagdad*, *The Four Feathers*, *The Jungle Book*, and others.¹³ His use of different modes, the pentatonic scale, melodies with

11. Jerry McCully, "Reflections on a Double Life" from *Miklós Rózsa: A Centenary Celebration*, produced by Robert Townsen, Varese Serebande (CD) 3020668102, 2007, 7-9.

12. Ibid., 10.

13. Rózsa, *Double Life*, 152.

simple ranges, and percussion-driven accompaniments contributed to this stylistic period.¹⁴

Rózsa provided the scores to many of Hollywood's psychological thrillers, including *Spellbound* and *The Lost Weekend*, both composed in 1945.¹⁵ Rózsa describes this as his second period or his "psychological" period of composition, which differs from his first "oriental" period in terms of orchestration and harmonic language.¹⁶ One of Rózsa's greatest innovations was the use of the theremin and ondes martenot that he used to portray a character's madness or slipping sanity.¹⁷ His use of the theremin is particularly striking in *Spellbound*'s madness theme; it contains four descending half-steps.¹⁸ In his 1948 score to the psychological noir *Secret Beyond the Door*, Rózsa, fearing an inseparability of his music with the theremin, used a new technique instead; the orchestra recorded the cues backwards and then they were reversed and played forward for the film.¹⁹ These madness themes are riddled with parallel major chords and

14. Roger Hickman, *Miklós Rózsa's Ben Hur: A Film Score Guide* (Toronto: The Scarecrow Press, 2011) 31.

15. Jerry McCully, "Reflections on a Double Life", 7-9.

16. Miklós Rózsa, *Double Life*, (New York: Winwood Press, 1989) 152.

17. Rudy Behlmer, "Interview with Miklós Rózsa" *Alfred Hitchcock's: Spellbound*, DVD, Directed by Alfred Hitchcock (Irvington, NY: The Criterion Collection, 2002).

18. Roger Hickman, *Miklós Rózsa's Ben Hur: A Film Score Guide* (Toronto: The Scarecrow Press, 2011) 38-9.

19. Rózsa, *Double Life*, 151.

often make use of the whole-tone scale. The psychological noirs also typically have a sweeping love theme to contrast the music associated with the psychological elements. These themes have wide ranges and use chromatic ascension contrasted with large leaps. For example, the initial moments of *Spellbound*'s love theme dance around tonic chord-tones until an abrupt ascension to the flat-six followed by a quick leap to the supertonic by tritone (outlining a diminished chord) and finally resolving to the tonic only to be quickly swept up a major-sixth in the following measure²⁰.

Rózsa's third period, inaugurated by his score to *The Killers*, focused on "hard-hitting" noirs. Though these two periods slightly overlap chronologically and cinematically, the music for the two periods are drastically different. This style change was demanded by the harshness of the films, particularly in *The Killers* and its counterpart, *Brute Force*.²¹ Noir plots focused on murder and presented themes of nihilism and pessimism that were looming ideologies in the wake of the Second World War. Endings were bleak, and directors chose to keep their movies in a black and white format to highlight the shadowy cinematography.²²

As a result, Rózsa's new style incorporated harsh dissonances and unrelenting themes. These include: chords of stacked fourths and fifths, octatonic and whole tone

20. Roger Hickman, *Miklós Rózsa's Ben Hur: A Film Score Guide* (Toronto: The Scarecrow Press, 2011) 38-9.

21. Rózsa, *Double Life*, 152.

22. Miklos Rozsa, *Miklós Rózsa: Double Indemnity; The Killers; Lost Weekend*, James Sedares director, The New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, Koch International Classics, 3-7375-2-H1, 1997. CD and notes.

scales, bitonality, and stacking multiple chords on top of one another.²³ Many scores including *The Killers* avoid a secondary love theme in the main titles to foreshadow the brash content of the film. Rózsa's instrumentation became much larger and employed darker-colored orchestration. He preferred the lower reeds to the flute, he engaged large brass sections, and his timpani parts occasionally played a central, and at times, melodic role.²⁴

His next period, from 1951-1959, was his epic period where he scored twenty-six films including *Ben-Hur*, *Quo Vadis*, *Ivanhoe*, *Julius Caesar*, *El Cid*, and other similar films. Hickman describes four trends from Rózsa's output in this period: "the emergence of a neo-Romantic style, the use of popular musical themes, the expanded role of leitmotifs, and a more realistic depiction of time and place."²⁵ Oversized instrumentations, brass fanfares and large passages of unresolved dissonances permeate the music of this period.

23. Christopher Palmer, *The Composer in Hollywood* (London: Marion Boyars, 1990) 203.

24. Roger Hickman, *Miklós Rózsa's Ben Hur: A Film Score Guide* (Toronto: The Scarecrow Press, 2011) 38.

25. *Ibid.*, 44.

CHAPTER 2

ANALYSIS OF *THEME, VARIATIONS, AND FINALE*

Recordings

There are three commercial recordings of Op. 13a available,²⁶ and one recording of Op. 13, available as well. In addition to these recordings, CBS and the New York Philharmonic released the broadcast recording of Bernstein's debut as a record in 1996, and it remains the earliest recording of the work. The program for the concert, which has been digitized in the New York Philharmonic Digital Archives, lists the work as Op. 13, but it clearly contains revisions Rózsa made at the suggestion of Walter for their performances earlier in the month, effectively making it a recording of 13a, in all but the name. The most significant changes in the revised edition are the fifty-nine-measure cut to the finale and rescoring the finale's opening theme for violin solo instead of a section passage. This edition was published by Eulenburg in 1966 and is used in every commercial recording up until the Chandos release in 2012.²⁷ Without a rehearsal with the orchestra, Bernstein was unable to deviate from Walter's interpretation of the work, so in a way, this recording is as much Walter's recording as Bernstein's and offers valuable insight into the work as Walter envisioned, including his cuts. Though it is a live performance from the 1940s, it is clean and the audio quality is clear.

26. Throughout the analysis of the work presented in this document, the recordings of the work will be referenced.

27. Steven Wescott, "Miklós Rózsa: A Portrait of the Composer as Seen Through an Analysis of his Early Works for Feature Films and the Concert Stage" (University of Minnesota, 1990) 169.

The first commercial recording of the piece was in 1952 for the Vox label with the Royal Philharmonic and Rózsa at the helm. Looking past the largely erroneous notes, the LP contains Rózsa's own analysis of the work he provided Eugene Ormandy for program notes to accompany a performance with the Philadelphia Orchestra.²⁸ In the analysis, Rózsa refers to the finale's opening "solo violin" passage, indicating that the Philadelphia performances must have taken place after the Walter revisions of 1943. This recording has yet to be rereleased, and neither exists digitally nor on CD. This may be because Vox simply does not wish it, or because Rózsa's next recording of the work for Decca (which has been rereleased) was superior.

The next recording of the work was again conducted by Rózsa, this time with the Frankenland State Symphony Orchestra in 1957 for the Decca label, only four years after the first. This may be an indication that Rózsa was not satisfied with the Vox recording. The notes were provided by George Jellineck and again feature the composer's own analysis.²⁹ This recording was rereleased in 1978 by the Varèse-Sarabande label, which also released collections of Rózsa's film music, and again rereleased in 2007 as *A Rózsa Concert* by And More Bears.³⁰ This recording is clean and precise indicating that the orchestra likely had ample rehearsal time. Ensemble articulations and dynamics are carefully crafted throughout the recording. Several accelerando passages and transitions are not performed at the full tempos indicated in the score. This may have been the

28. Leo Kepler, *Rózsa*, 1952, LP and Notes.

29. George Jellineck, *Miklós Rózsa, Frankenland State Symphony Orchestra – Orchestral Works*, DL 9966, 1958, LP and Notes.

30. *Rózsa Conducts Rozsa*, Varèse Sarabande, VC 81058, 1978, LP and notes.

orchestra's limitation, or simply Rózsa's decision to favor cleanliness over interpretation for the recording. Rózsa had been conducting his own film-score recording sessions since *The Thief of Bagdad* (1940), so with seventeen years of professional conducting experience, he presumably was a confident orchestral conductor.

Op. 13a was again recorded in 1993 by James Sedares and the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra for Koch International Classics for their series tackling the gems of Rózsa's repertoire entitled, "The Miklós Rózsa Collection."³¹ This recording was done with the blessing of Rózsa, who kindly offered a complimentary quote about the recording. However, this recording was not as powerful, precise, or dynamic as Rózsa's own. In Koch's effort to record "The Miklos Rózsa Collection," it is likely the orchestra was not properly rehearsed. The recording quality itself was much higher and the clarity of sound in this 1990s recording points to the obvious advancement of recording technology.

The aforementioned Chandos recording in 2012 of Op. 13 by Rumon Gamba and the BBC Philharmonic was the first recording of the original edition produced after Rózsa's death. It is unlikely that this recording would have received the blessing of Rózsa, who approved of all the cuts and changes to the 1966 edition of the work himself. However, this recording does offer an interesting glimpse into Rózsa's original intensions. This recording is easily the most crafted interpretation of the work commercially available. The score's tempo indications are followed precisely and the orchestra has no problem

31. *Miklós Rózsa, New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, James Sedares – Hungarian Nocturne / Theme, Variations And Finale / Three Hungarian Sketches / Overture To A Symphony Concert*, Koch International Classics, 3-7191-2 H1, 1993, CD and Notes.

tackling the most difficult of passages. It is also the most literal interpretation, favoring exactly what is on the printed score and not bending to performance traditions left behind from Rózsa and previous recordings.

The instrumentation of Op. 13 is two flutes (one doubles piccolo), two oboes, two clarinets in B-flat, two bassoons (one doubles contrabassoon), three horns in F, two trumpets in C, three trombones, timpani, two additional percussionists (playing triangle, crash cymbals, bass drum, snare drum, suspended cymbal, and tam-tam), harp, celesta (ad lib.), and strings.³² Op. 13a additionally includes a fourth horn and tuba. A typical performance of Op. 13 lasts approximately eighteen minutes. Op. 13a takes approximately seventeen minutes to perform because of the substantial cut to the *Finale*.

Form

As the title suggests, the form of the work is a theme and a set of variations. However, the number of variations is debatable, as Rózsa does not label any variations or sectional divisions. In Rózsa's own analysis, found in the liner notes of the Vox recording, he labels the form: theme, eight variations, and a finale. The in-depth analysis by Steven Wescott interprets both the second statement of the theme and the finale as variations themselves; therefore, a ten-variation work. However, possible evidence against this interpretation lies in Rózsa's idea of variation: "Instead of writing a set of variations I tried to express in each variation an inherent aspect of this so-called folk tune, thinking that the way in which a folk melody often develops and changes naturally could

32. Miklós Rózsa, *Thema, Variationen und Finale* (Leipzig: Edition Eulenburg, 1966).

be applied equally well to symphonic music.”³³ The second statement of the theme, with the exception of its presentation in two different octaves, contains no variation of the theme itself, so it does not meet Rózsa’s requirement for a variation. The second statement is also the first time harmony is introduced and defined. Further evidence for an eight-variation interpretation is supported by Rózsa’s inscription of the title page “Zwischen den einzelnen Variationen sind nur kurze Atempausen zu halten!” indicating that each variation should have a short pause between it. Additionally, each variation is separated by a breath mark in the score and there is not one present between the two initial statements of the theme nor before the finale begins. However, there is a pause Rózsa intentionally labels *lunga* to differentiate it from the pauses between variations.

Another analysis of Op. 13a’s form from Lou Harrison suggests that the work is a series of programmatic tableaux.³⁴ However, Rózsa never gave any such programmatic descriptions to the work, but simply said that the theme “arose out of [his] feelings of nostalgia for the village where [he] had felt at home.”³⁵ Yet another formal analysis by Hickman suggests, “the placement of several variations in slow tempos followed by a scherzo variation creates the effect of a four-movement classical work.”³⁶ Indeed, excluding the sixth variation, *Andante quasi pastorale*, the work resembles a symphonic structure.

33. Miklós Rózsa, *Double Life*, 58.

34. Steven Wescott, “Miklós Rózsa,” 164.

35. Rózsa, *Double Life*, 58.

36. Roger Hickman, *Miklós Rózsa’s Ben Hur: A Film Score Guide* (Toronto: The Scarecrow Press, 2011) 10.

Theme



FIGURE 1. Miklós Rózsa, *Theme, Variations and Finale*, oboe theme, mm. 1-8.³⁷

The theme is first presented by a solo oboe in a short eight-measure phrase marked *Andante rubato*. The interesting marking of *rubato*, the choice of a solo-instrument introduction, the use of the dorian mode, the tempo, the use of dotted rhythms and fermatas, and the range of the melody in the first two measures are strikingly similar to the introduction of the third movement of Kodály's *Háry János Suite* written in 1927.³⁸



FIGURE 2. Zoltán Kodály, *Háry János Suite*, movement III, mm. 1-6.

Rózsa says of the theme, “First announced by the oboe, the theme is in the manner of a Hungarian folksong, although not of folk origin.”³⁹ Rózsa does not mention Kodály's suite or any possible significance it might have played on Op. 13, but he does remark that his own work may have inspired Kodály's set of variations entitled, *The Peacock*. Münch remarked to Rózsa that Kodály was present at Op. 13's second performance in Budapest.⁴⁰

37. The figures presented in this chapter are the author's own typeset edition.

38. Roger Hickman, *Miklós Rózsa's Ben Hur: A Film Score Guide* (Toronto: The Scarecrow Press, 2011) 10.

39. Rózsa, *Double Life*, 58.

40. *Ibid.*

Hickman highlights the half-note cadences in every other measure and identifies them as the pillars of the theme's structure. The first two measures each have the range of a perfect fourth, and they form the first phrase. This phrase is embellished in the third and fourth measures by diminishing the rhythmic value of the first two measures into measure three and adding an expressive cadence in measure four. This same diminution is used in the next four measures of the theme. The rhythmic design of the theme is ABA₁B₁, and the melodic design is AA₁BB₁.⁴¹ Hickman analyzes the first two measures as a C-pentatonic scale, and the fifth and sixth measures as a B-flat-pentatonic scale.⁴² When the two notes unaccounted for in this analysis, the F-natural and A-natural, respectively, are added to the pitch content of these pentatonic scales, they form a G-dorian scale,⁴³ a common mode used in Hungarian folk music.

On the second statement of the theme (mm. 9-16), marked, *Poco animato ed al rigore di tempo*, the melody is tossed between the strings and the woodwinds. The half notes in the melody rest on the following chords: C major, C major, B-flat major, and G minor, respectively. Though the counterpoint surrounding the theme uses expressive chromatic notes, these cadences provide harmonic clarity to the ambiguous oboe introduction as these chords are found in the natural harmonic progression of G dorian (IV, IV, bVII, i).

In the oboe's opening statement, there are only fermatas on the first half of the theme, and there are very specific dynamics written beneath each phrase. However, in the

41. Steven Wescott, "Miklós Rózsa," 164.

42. Roger Hickman, *Miklós Rózsa's Ben Hur: A Film Score Guide* (Toronto: The Scarecrow Press, 2011) 10.

43. Steven Wescott, "Miklós Rózsa," 164.

recorded tradition, each oboist takes ample time in this section and sings the theme comfortably, even when passages are marked *pianissimo*.

Variations

“Variation 1. *Poco Animato*. The horn sings the theme under a running figure in the strings; a viola phrase now and again interrupts.”⁴⁴



FIGURE 3. Miklós Rózsa, *Theme, Variations and Finale*, Variation 1, mm. 2-4.

The trumpets join the horns to state the second half of the theme. The melody is not altered in this variation, but the interruptions by the violas, marked *molto espressivo*, are the highlight. This variation is the same tempo and key as the second statement of the *theme*. Wescott remarks of this variation, “[it] extends the *caesura* of each of the four phrases in a manner consistent with folk practice.”⁴⁵

The swirling counterpoint of this movement makes it a challenge to balance the theme. The first horn is in its middle register which can easily be covered by the strings. Having the *espressivo* “interruptions” in the violas and cellos significantly louder than the counterpoint against it from the first note helps listeners identify this new material on the first listen.

44. Leo Kepler, *Rózsa*, 1952, LP and Notes.

45. Steven Wescott, “Miklós Rózsa,” 165.

“Variation 2. Allegro scherzando. A light staccato figure derived from the original theme, shared between woodwinds and strings, characterizes this capricious variation.”⁴⁶ Rózsa achieves this capricious character by choosing a brisk tempo using the piccolo as the primary voice stating the theme in diminution over a soft wash of string harmonics. These harmonics take a fast and generous bow to achieve with good tone quality and run the risk of becoming too slow and long if not addressed.



FIGURE 4. Miklós Rózsa, *Theme, Variations and Finale*, Variation 2, mm. 1-3.

The strings, trumpets, and horns take turns playing a short interjecting fanfare composed of a perfect fourth followed by a major second, which is the same intervallic relationship of the first three pitches of the theme. This fanfare also runs the risk of dragging because of its dotted rhythms and off-beat entrances.



FIGURE 5. Miklós Rózsa, *Theme, Variations and Finale*, Variation 2, mm. 3.

The last phrase of this thirty-six measure variation ends in a hush after characteristically Rózsaian muted trombone glissandos. This movement is also in G dorian, though it cadences on an open fifth (B and F-sharp) which is difficult to tune and balance in the horns, clarinets, and high flute. Rózsa’s own recording from 1957 suffers from unpleasant resultant beats in this passage.

46. Leo Kepler, *Rózsa*, 1952, LP and Notes.

“Variation 3. *Poco meno allegro, ma sempre molto energico*. The theme, changed in rhythm, is accompanied by alternate pizzicato and bowed figuration. It develops to a climax with the theme high in the strings and imitations of it in the brass.”⁴⁷ The pizzicato version of the theme played by the low strings at the top of this variation forgoes the usual dotted rhythm in favor of a series of eighth notes. No other instruments play during this low-string pizzicato, so there is no danger of balance issues. Therefore, careful consideration can be paid to the printed dynamics in the opening low string pizzicatos: their second pizzicato passage is marked *mezzo forte*, which is different than the passages before and after it. This difference is not noticeable in any commercial recording, and it helps the theme relate back to the oboe dynamics at the top of the piece.



FIGURE 6. Miklós Rózsa, *Theme, Variations and Finale*, Variation 3, mm. 1-2.

Every two measures, *energico* punctuations by the strings and timpani reinforce a G-minor tonality. The opening chord is a clear example of Rózsa’s use of quartal chords as a means of Hungarian folk expression. Only half of the string section has the C note in this chord, so it must be brought to the fore by those players to really hear the chord as quartal.



FIGURE 7. Miklós Rózsa, *Theme, Variations and Finale*, Variation 3, mm. 1.

47. Ibid.

The first great climax of the piece occurs in variation 3 between rehearsal numbers 6 and 7, marked *poco a poco stringendo*. The fifth measure of this passage has an ensemble rest on the second eighth note, creating a huge emphasis on the chord that follows on beat two, an evocation of Hungarian expression. Except for the ringing suspended cymbal at *fff*, the orchestra again is silent for the first half of the first beat at the climax at rehearsal 7, creating a strikingly dramatic effect when the open-fifth (B and F-sharp) arrives at *ff* in the second half of the beat. The *stringendo* in this passage is incredibly difficult to achieve. Rózsa ignores it in his 1957 recording, presumably for this reason. However, Gamba achieves this affect in the Op. 13 Chandos recording: the orchestra naturally feels the impulse to relax at the climax at rehearsal 7, but the timpanist pounds the eighth notes so loudly and quickly in the first measure that the orchestra launches forward in the new tempo to the end.

The variation ends with a return to the low-string pizzicatos now transposed to B dorian. The theme grows softer and less punctuated, falsely signaling a soft ending, when a final thunderous tutti *subito* punctuation brings this variation to a dramatic close. In Hickman's formal analysis, this is the end of the first symphonic section.⁴⁸

“Variation 4. *Moderato con gran espressione*. After an introductory measure by the harp, the cellos present a broad new aspect of the theme, which later all the strings take up, accompanied by clarinet figurations, *appassionato*. Flute and harp deal with the idea in a nostalgic closing.”⁴⁹

48. Roger Hickman, *Miklós Rózsa's Ben Hur: A Film Score Guide* (Toronto: The Scarecrow Press, 2011) 10.

49. Leo Kepler, *Rózsa, 1952, LP and Notes*.



FIGURE 8. Miklós Rózsa, *Theme, Variations and Finale*, Variation 4, mm. 2-3.

This variation, in the Neapolitan key of A-flat dorian, begins with a series of descending fourths in the harp while the bassoons play a perfect fifth as a drone behind it.



FIGURE 9. Miklós Rózsa, *Theme, Variations and Finale*, Variation 4, mm. 1.

The first three statements of the theme are in A-flat dorian, F dorian, and D dorian, respectively. Sequences traveling by minor thirds is a typical convention Rózsa employs throughout the piece. Another great climax builds from rehearsal 10 to 11 in a twelve-measure *poco a poco stringendo*. Three measures before the climax at rehearsal 11, Rózsa employs his most brash and dissonant chord of the piece. The brass play a *ff* A-major chord over the strings and woodwinds belting C-naturals in their upper tessituras in a violent and syncopated manner. The C-naturals prove to be the dominant of an open fifth (F and C) played at the final climax at rehearsal 11 and the F-dorian tonality in the harp, flute, and strings that brings the movement to a quiet end. Wescott remarks that the

expressive use of pentatonic scales in the harp and clarinet, help Rózsa explore the folk elements of the theme.⁵⁰

The expressive theme, initially in the cellos, can become rhythmically divorced from the harp sixteenths if the harp cannot hear the melody. If the harp is in a position in the orchestra where it can hear the cellos, this passage stays together easily. On the return of this material at rehearsal 12, the violas pluck F-naturals each first and third beat, adding to the harp and drone (now in the horns and violins). This pizzicato slowly decays to a *pianissississimo* (*pppp*) and will not be heard without adjusting its starting dynamic to a *mezzo forte*.

“Variation 5. *Vivo con spirito*, 6/8. The brass has a lively version of the subject, in conversation with woodwind and celesta.”⁵¹



FIGURE 10. Miklós Rózsa, *Theme, Variations and Finale*, Variation 5, mm. 1-3.

Wescott dubs this variation another scherzo and it is the first use of compound meter in the piece.⁵² The theme, here in D dorian with two alternating trumpets, explores the intervals of a perfect fourth and a major second. Underneath, the violins and horns play short punctuated diminished chords with jazzy extensions.

50. Steven Wescott, “Miklós Rózsa,” 165-6.

51. Leo Kepler, *Rózsa*, 1952, LP and Notes.

52. Steven Wescott, “Miklós Rózsa,” 166.



FIGURE 11. Miklós Rózsa, *Theme, Variations and Finale*, Variation 5, mm. 1-3. Violin chords.

These two textures are rocketed forth by a crash cymbal on the first beat of the variation. It is marked to be choked on the second beat, and should not be so loud that the chords and trumpets beneath it are lost to the ear. In the fifth measure, the cymbal returns at a *pianissimo* marked “*pendenti.*” Rózsa’s recording, as well as Sedares’s recording with New Zealand, both play this note with a soft mallet on a suspended cymbal. However, the Bernstein and Gamba recordings have a very quiet crash. The sound of the suspended cymbal is more suited for the new texture of woodwinds and celesta that occur below it.⁵³

Through a series of section tradeoffs and punctuations, the theme is presented three measures after rehearsal 15 in a striking string-section unison in f-sharp minor. As many of the variations before it, this one ends (after a brief *accelerando* to a spritely *vivace*) in the same key of the climax, F-sharp dorian.

“Variation 6. *Andante quasi pastorale*, 3/4. The woodwinds make use of the second half of the theme, violins are added, and a broad climax grows up. In a diminuendo

53. The celesta part is marked “(ad. Lib)” in the score, but it is the dominant presence in this passage in every recording. It also is the only instrument with chords beneath the melody, so it is indispensable.

finish, solo strings play the pastoral subject in harmonies, which mixed with harp and celesta, creates an atmosphere of mystery and unreality.”⁵⁴



FIGURE 12. Miklós Rózsa, *Theme, Variations and Finale*, Variation 6, mm. 1-5.

The flute’s first tune starts in C major, with a perfect fifth drone below it in the cellos and harp. Though it is an expressive and pastoral melody based on the second half of the original oboe theme, it is modified to contain leaps of fifths and seconds inverting the dotted rhythms derived from the theme. Rózsa brings this movement to a climax at rehearsal 24 by way of another *poco stringendo* before a *molto ritardando* in the penultimate measure. This is the first variation to climax with a major chord: an E-major chord signals the return of the tune. A secondary theme dominates both sides of the climax and is written most expressively in the high clarinet six measures before rehearsal 26.



FIGURE 13. Miklós Rózsa, *Theme, Variations and Finale*, Variation 6, mm. 32-33.

The movement ends in an astonishing C-sharp major chord, the only variation to end in a major tonality. Of the ending, Wescott remarks, “The variation concludes with an unusual, quietly mystical statement of the B-material, set with eerie yet innocently naïve

54. Leo Kepler, *Rózsa*, 1952, LP and Notes.

string harmonics, that seems to wake, like a child in the night, to pose some unanswerable and half-understood question: perhaps, ‘Where am I?’”⁵⁵

This variation is nearly sight-readable for the orchestra. However, the treacherous string harmonics at rehearsal 25 require careful tuning and demand significant rehearsal time. The strings must also play extraordinarily soft at the last two measures for the harp’s final harmonics to be heard. The harp is the only voice to play the E-sharp to create the major chord at the end, so the harp must play significantly louder than the *piano* it is marked.

“Variation 7. *Allegro molto agitato e tumultuoso*, 4/4. A swirling figure begins with cellos and is taken up by other strings. The theme appears, in full force and rhythmically distorted, in the wind instruments. The variation breaks abruptly in a wild tonal climax.”⁵⁶ In the Hickman analysis, this would be the start of the final symphonic movement. Both this variation, the next, and the finale are in D minor and use the theme in dorian. The “swirling figure” is an astonishing sextuplet sixteenth run derived from pentatonic scales like the theme.

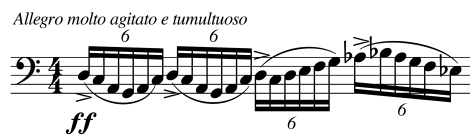


FIGURE 14. Miklós Rózsa, *Theme, Variations and Finale*, Variation 7, mm. 32-33.

In the score, Rózsa writes an impossibly brisk tempo marking of quarter note equals 120 beats per minute. This is simply not a feasible tempo to achieve clarity in the

55. Steven Wescott, “Miklós Rózsa,” 166.

56. Leo Kepler, *Rózsa*, 1952, LP and Notes.

swirling figure, which is an exposed unison in the string section. Rózsa and Gamba's tempos for this variation fluctuate, but hover around 108 beats per minute. Sedares is even slower at 98 beats per minute. The “rhythmically distorted” winds are led by the trombones that have another expressive glissando leading into the theme.



FIGURE 15. Miklós Rózsa, *Theme, Variations and Finale*, Variation 7, mm. 9-12.

The *moto perpetuo* flourish continues through the end of the movement when a *molto stringendo* ushers in an abrupt and pointed end to the variation. This is the most famous standalone variation of the piece because of its appearance in several episodes of *The Adventures of Superman*. A particularly striking example is at the end of the sixteenth episode of the second season, “The Clown Who Cried.” Interestingly, Wescott draws a comparison between this variation and the music Rózsa would write for the rowing scene of *Ben Hur*.⁵⁷

The movement ends with a grand pause over a whole note marked *senza fermate*, which is very short considering the *molto stringendo* which is marked preceding it. This shows the relationship between this movement and the next one: they should feel connected and part of the same “final movement” of symphonic form. The preceding *stringendo* is not assigned a metronome marking, but a tempo of 184 beats a minute would be exactly twice as fast as variation 8 (marked 92 beats per minute), making it

57. Steven Wescott, “Miklós Rózsa,” 168.

very easy to honor the grand pause literally (the quarter of variation 7 would become the eighth note of variation 8).

“Variation 8. *Moderato e molto giusto*, 4/4. Heavy accents and general robustness are reminiscent of a peasant dance. A crescendo of timpani and a roll of the bass drum are added to the final orchestral uproar.”⁵⁸ The second half of the theme is used in short *marcato* sixteenth-note strikes.



FIGURE 16. Miklós Rózsa, *Theme, Variations and Finale*, Variation 8, mm. 5-6.

Percussion and harp help punctuate the ends of phrases. The peak of this movement is rehearsal 30 which is preceded by a *molto ritardando* where the brass play a series of parallel major chords, a technique he would employ frequently in the noir scores of his third period.

The climax of this variation is a return to this same horn theme played by the entire string section as *martellato* all-down bow strokes at a more deliberate *Largamente e molto pesante*.

58. Leo Kepler, *Rózsa*, 1952, LP and Notes.

Finale

“Finale — *Vivace*, 2/2. Introductory material is again of a light Hungarian folk-dance style, opening with a solo violin like a country fiddler. The woodwinds continue, new ideas are added, the tempo and dynamics grow, there is a pedal point, rhythmically distorted phrases of the original theme lead to a climax, after which the strings again present the theme in its original form. The wild dance reappears and heavy chords are the final punctuation.”⁵⁹



FIGURE 17. Miklós Rózsa, *Theme, Variations and Finale*, finale, mm. 1-8.

This is Rózsa’s most intense reworking of the original theme. He favors perfect fourths and major seconds, dotted rhythms and Scottish snaps, half-note cadences on every other measure, an AA₁BB₁ structure, and pitches from the dorian mode, but otherwise whimsically departs from the original theme. This fiddle tune has much in common with the finale theme of Rózsa’s Op. 6 Symphony that he regretfully laid to rest shortly before composing Op. 13. The fiddle tune and the symphony finale’s theme share the exact same intervallic relationship on the first seven notes. The fiddle tune gets a lengthy development and cycles through a plethora of keys before a second theme, similar in character, marked *feroce*, appears in the strings at rehearsal 34. The horns play parallel major chords (E-flat, D-flat, E-flat, and F) in the two measures before rehearsal 34, the same technique utilized in the previous variation.

59. Ibid.



FIGURE 18. Miklós Rózsa, *Theme, Variations and Finale*, Variation 8, rehearsal 37.

The brass usher in a new theme at rehearsal 37 that will continue to be developed along with the fiddle tune. The cellos take the lead in a *piu mosso* at rehearsal 40 that has no direct tempo relationship to the previous section. This transition requires several attempts to establish a clear tempo memory for the cello section. The fiddle tune and subsequent themes continue their development until a *molto rallentando* ushers in the return of the original oboe theme in the strings at rehearsal 43. The brass take up the tune for its second half. The fiddle tune returns in a final *vivacissimo* and works into a unison G-pentatonic scalar passage in the strings before the brass punctuate chords over a *molto allargando* to bring the work to an exciting finish. The last measure suddenly snaps back to tempo and Wescott comments, “by a single gesture [the last measure] dismiss[es] the whole [work] as a mere flight of fancy.”⁶⁰

The transition into the *vivacissimo* (rehearsal 45) is problematic. The return of the theme at rehearsal 43 is marked *meno mosso e largamente* with a half note indication for the beat. The measure before the *vivacissimo* has a *molto accelerando* where the half note should speed up to 176 beats per minute. With the woodwinds and strings playing a flourish of sixteenth notes in this measure, this *accelerando* is simply not possible. The Gamba recording makes a valiant effort here to do what is printed, and it sounds cacophonous and energetic, but rag-tag into the fiddle tune restatement at rehearsal 45.

60. Steven Wescott, “Miklós Rózsa,” 168.

Rózsa's own solution is to speed the quarter note up to 176 and then the quarter note becomes the half note at rehearsal 45. The sixteenths no longer are a flourish, but are the impetus that becomes the fiddle tune.

CHAPTER 3

HISTORY OF *THEME, VARIATIONS, AND FINALE*

Hungarian Influence and Rózsa's Symphony

In 1929, Rózsa wrote his *Variations on a Hungarian Peasant Song* (Op. 4) and *North Hungarian Peasant Songs and Dances for Violin and Orchestra* (Op. 5) as transition pieces away from the Germanic styles that had permeated his conservatory compositions. He longed to return to the peasant music from his native Hungary, and these two pieces served as the first signs of this transition. Beyond the typical “Scottish Snaps, strong accents on second beats, and several pentatonic themes,” Roger Hickman notes that these pieces also “reflect some influence of Gypsy music” particularly in their whimsical solo lines.⁶¹ The Op. 4 *Variations* is his first exploration of this form and his only attempt before Op. 13a. Interestingly, the third movement of Kodaly's *Hary Janos Suite* has a similar form and pathos, though the Rózsa is intentionally more expansive. Rózsa's claim that Paul Hindemith was the “reigning master of contemporary music”⁶² exposes his bias towards Germanic music at that time, but the evidence suggests that Kodaly's music was certainly another influence.

Even though premieres at the Gewandhaus and the publishing contract with Breitkopf und Härtel had established Rózsa as Leipzig's most prized musical commodity, he had yet to achieve a major international success. With the encouragement of Straube to write a large-scale orchestral work, Rózsa began composing his only Symphony (Op.

61. Roger Hickman, *Miklós Rózsa's Ben Hur: A Film Score Guide* (Toronto: The Scarecrow Press, 2011) 9.

62. Rózsa, *Double Life*, 41.

6).⁶³ Upon its completion, Straube gave Rózsa a hundred-mark note to finance a trip to Berlin to meet the conductor Wilhelm Furtwängler and propose his symphony's premiere. Though Rózsa did meet with the famed conductor for a few brief moments, Rózsa's lack of international success left Furtwängler ultimately disinterested. Again, with the help of Straube, Rózsa approached Walter at the Gewandhaus about the Leipzig premiere. Walter was disenchanted by the symphony's fifty-minute length and suggested Rózsa write a smaller work for him. Dohnányi expressed similar sentiments about the symphony's length when Rózsa visited him in the winter of 1930 and he also promised a performance of a shorter work. Rózsa met Pierre Monteux on first trip to Paris and played the symphony for him. In spite of Monteux's offer to perform the scherzo alone, calling it the "plum" of the composition, Rózsa never sent it to him.⁶⁴ Sadly, this "plum" is the only movement that is lost. The remaining three movements were edited down into a thirty-nine-minute symphony by Rózsa and Christopher Palmer in 1993 for a recording with James Sedares and the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra for Koch Classics. Rózsa said of the completed piece in 1993, "It was a moving experience for me to hear the first sounds of my first-born, my Symphony, sixty years after the event! I now see it was a mistake to suppress it, but when one is young - and I was only 23 - one is often unreasonably vulnerable to criticism."⁶⁵

63. Ibid., 42.

64. Rózsa, *Double Life*, 48.

65. Christopher Palmer, *Miklós Rózsa: Symphony in 3 Movements, OP 6a, The Vintner's Daughter, OP 23a*, Koch International Classics KIC3-7244-2, 1994.

Following the dismissal of his Symphony, Rózsa wrote a *Serenade* (Op.9) in five movements to fulfill the request of a shorter piece for Dohnányi in Budapest. Though the piece was met with enthusiasm (Richard Strauss attended the premiere and famously led the thunderous applause), it failed to gather the international success Rózsa needed to be counted as a major European composer. Rózsa revised the piece in 1946 adding an additional horn part at Strauss's suggestion, renaming it *Hungarian Serenade* (Op. 25).⁶⁶

Inception of Op. 13

After his first trip to Paris, Rózsa postulated that life in Paris would be more suitable for his compositional success. This inaugural trip, which included his meeting with Monteux, was so encouraging that after his trip to Budapest for the *Serenade* premiere, he returned to Paris to establish a permanent residence.

On his journey from Budapest to Paris, Rózsa decided to write his medium-sized orchestral work that was requested by several prominent European conductors. It would become his Op. 13, the *Theme, Variations, and Finale*. Rózsa states in *Double Life* that the initial oboe theme came to him during his journey which started with a boat ride from the medieval town of Visegrád to Vienna on the Danube, and then a train ride from Vienna to Paris. He told Steven Wescott in an interview that, “for two days on the train, he thought of home and family, knowing that he was saying goodbye to Hungary, but unaware that he would never see his father again. During the trip, a melody came into his melancholy mind; a folk-like tune that he jotted down and stuffed into his luggage.” Rózsa reiterates and expands this in *Double Life* saying, “A melancholy theme floated in

66. Rózsa, *Double Life*, 49.

to my head. I jotted it down and later in Paris kept looking at it, until I began to feel a set of variations growing up around it.”⁶⁷ Rózsa worked tirelessly at completing the *Variations* over his first three months in Paris until finally it was complete.⁶⁸ He hearkened the criticism of his symphony and kept the length of Op. 13 to a modest twenty minutes.

Once the *Variations* were complete, Rózsa showed them to two colleagues for their approval. The first was the organist and concert presenter, Marcel Dupré. Upon hearing the *Variations*, Dupré exclaimed, “That’s *exactly* what I was expecting from you. And now I am going to call up all of the conductors.”⁶⁹ Rózsa was certain Dupré was a man of his word, but no immediate performances materialized from his efforts. Rózsa reiterated in *Double Life* that Dupré seemed certain the piece would be performed in Paris, and he wished him success.

Rózsa also enlisted the help of Honegger. When he played the work for Honegger at his flat in Paris, Honegger admitted he liked the piece, but offered several practical criticisms. Rózsa specifically recalls a moment in the work with a timpani roll over pizzicato strings – Honegger suggested he take out the timpani roll, which was destroying the texture of the pizzicato. By Honegger’s estimation, the ninth variation was superfluous and needed to be excised. Rózsa, though initially resistant, removed it and Op. 13 was published without it.⁷⁰ Honegger, a master orchestrator, suggested several

67. Ibid., 58.

68. Steven Wescott, “Miklós Rózsa,” 163.

69. Ibid., 169.

70. Rózsa, *Double Life*, 59.

other orchestration changes that Rózsa happily accepted, the most helpful and drastic were the addition of a fourth horn and tuba.⁷¹

Publication and Premiere

Before the first performance was secured, Rózsa sought publication for the Op. 13 *Variations*. Breitkopf und Härtel were preoccupied with his Op. 10 *Serenade* and did not wish to cannibalize their own profits by splitting them between the two, so Rózsa wrote Kurt Eulenburg, then publisher of study scores and new music, about publishing the new work. They met in the summer of 1934 in Bayreuth during the summer festival where Dr. Eulenburg explained that he had his sights set on Rózsa and his music “for a long time, but... it was always Breitkopf und Härtel.”⁷² He brought with him a contract that Rózsa readily signed, and their warm friendship and the international success of Op. 13 began.

Rózsa received a timely letter from Otto Volkmann, conductor of the Duisburg Symphony Orchestra, who had heard Rózsa’s Piano Quintet in 1929 in Leipzig. He sent Volkmann the score to the *Variations* and received a reply securing the work’s premiere on October 8, 1934, with Duisburg. Charles Münch, a former assistant concertmaster of the Gewandhaus Orchestra who knew Rózsa from Leipzig, approached him for the second performance. Münch had resigned his Gewandhaus post after his financially-lucrative engagement to Geneviève Maurey, a granddaughter of the Nestle Chocolate founder’s fortune. Münch was forty-one years old when he started conducting publicly in 1932, and he approached Rózsa for permission to take one of his compositions on a tour

71. Steven Wescott, “Miklós Rózsa,” 163.

72. *Ibid.*, 172.

of Europe he would finance himself.⁷³ Rózsa played the Op. 13 *Variations* for Münch who embraced it immediately. He made the twelve-hour trip to Duisburg from Paris to attend rehearsals for the premiere and take notes in his score. Münch first performed the work on November 3, 1934⁷⁴ (not “the following week” as Rózsa recalls in *Double Life* and his interview with Wescott) in Budapest to a rousing success. Rózsa’s parents telegraphed him, “Great reviews.”⁷⁵ The first-ever recording of Op. 13 in its original form was completed in 2011 and distributed beginning in 2012 under the Chandos label. While it lists Münch as the conductor of the premiere, this is erroneous.⁷⁶ It is likely that the notes from the Chandos recording were an edit of Leo Kepler’s notes used for the LP of the premiere recording for the Vox label in which Kepler also erroneously credits Münch with the premiere.⁷⁷

Subsequent Performances

After these initial performances, Op. 13a was performed all over Europe by many famous conductors and orchestras. Kepler’s notes for Vox state that the work had been performed “more than 85 times in Europe alone since the second world war...”⁷⁸

73. Ibid., 170.

74. Steven Wescott, “Miklós Rózsa,” 171.

75. Rózsa, *Double Life*, 60.

76. Ralph Couzens, *Rózsa: Orchestral Works: Volume 3*, Chandos, CHAN 10738, 2012, CD and Notes.

77. Leo Kepler, *Rózsa - Royal Philharmonic Orchestra Theme, Variations And Finale, Opus 13*, Vox PL 7690, 1952, LP and Notes.

78. Ibid.

Eulenburg was a fierce promoter of Op. 13 and went to see many conductors about it immediately after its publication. Rózsa recalls, “[Eulenburg] went in person to see Walter in Vienna – who wasn’t allowed to conduct in Germany anymore – and showed him the score. Karl Böhm conducted it in Dresden, Hans Swarowsky in Vienna and Walter in Amsterdam, and countless more performances took place.”⁷⁹

Rózsa estimated “twenty-or-so” performances and broadcasts took place in 1935, and “forty or more” in 1936. Wescott expands, “Still other performances were heard in concerts in Rotterdam, Wiesbaden, The Hague, Dortmund, and even Ankara, Turkey. Via the radio, it was heard in Leipzig, Lausanne, Luxembourg, Stuttgart, and Stockholm. In May 1937, Frieder Weissmann conducted a performance in the Teatro Colon in Buenos Aires. In October of that same year, the *Theme, Variations, and Finale* was premiered in the United States by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Frederick Stock.”⁸⁰ Kepler’s notes again have an error that has made its way in to several sources: Hans Lange, who was Chicago Symphony Orchestra’s associate conductor from 1936-1943, did not conduct the U.S. premiere.

The most famous performance of Op. 13 was Bernstein’s New York Philharmonic debut performance at Carnegie Hall on November 14, 1943. That concert also included Strauss’s *Don Quixote*, Schumann’s *Manfred Overture* and Wagner’s Prelude to *Die Meistersinger*. The Philharmonic had played Op. 13 with Walter at the helm for a series of subscription concerts on November 4, 5, and 6, and he was scheduled to conduct it on

79. Rózsa, *Double Life*, 67.

80. Steven Wescott, “Miklós Rózsa,” 172.

the fourteenth as well. With Walter falling ill, Bernstein, with only one brief meeting with the bedridden maestro hours before the performance, received outstanding reviews that made him a sensation overnight.⁸¹

81. Rózsa, *Double Life*, 131-2.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

Though Op. 13a is rarely performed in the twenty-first century, it has a promise of a long legacy. Two of the recordings available were conducted by Rózsa himself, and the third, New Zealand Symphony with Sedares, was done with Rózsa's consultation and blessing. The recorded legacy of the piece not only helps clarify questions of interpretation, but is an indication of a continued interest in the work: the recordings have been made over the course of fifty years. In addition to the recordings of Op. 13a, the Chandos recording of Op. 13 gives an interesting glimpse into Rózsa's original thoughts on the work. Rózsa himself approved of all the changes incorporated into the 1966 revision, so it is unlikely that he would have approved of a recording of the earlier version, but the Chandos recording remains a powerful piece of his recorded legacy as the BBC Philharmonic gives it an astonishingly clean and dynamic performance. Op. 13 is available for hire through Ernst Eulenburg & Co and its parent company, Schott Music. It would be interesting to hear audience reactions to this version and see if the ending really needed the cuts that Walter proposed. The 1966 revisions were published as Op. 13 and are now available for hire from Kunzelmann and its parent company, Edition Peters.

The use of Op. 13a in *The Adventures of Superman* also remains a fascinating part of its legacy. It provides compelling evidence that the dramatic intensity of Rózsa's music makes his style of composition ideal for the big screen. This piece would make a great overture to Michael Daugherty's *Metropolis Symphony* based on the mythology of *Superman*, or any other superhero-based concert.

Lastly, Op. 13's legacy will be preserved by the legendary performance in Carnegie Hall under Bernstein's direction with the New York Philharmonic, which gave the piece its greatest exposure in the United States. For this reason alone, it is unlikely that Op. 13a will ever completely disappear from the orchestral repertoire in the United States. As an example, the National Philharmonic is set to perform a historic recreation of Bernstein's debut in celebration of his centennial on February 23, 2019. Another similar idea for the centenary or any celebration of Bernstein would be to program each of the four works from that legendary concert throughout an orchestral season.

The modest length and dramatic qualities of Op. 13 make it an exciting part of any program for large orchestra. Rózsa wrote it to appeal to conductors who wanted to showcase a living composer, without taking over the program. Its brevity and huge finish could also make it a strong concert opener; however, placing this piece before the intermission is as perfect a strategy now as it was when Walter programmed it in 1943.

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