ABSTRACT

MIKLÓS RÓZSA'S *THE KILLERS:* COMPARING

THE CONCERT SUITE TO THE

ORIGINAL FILM SCORE

By

Mark Alpizar

May 2015

In 2005, materials from Hungarian composer Miklós Rózsa's personal collection were donated to Syracuse University. Among them were copies of materials used in the recording of the original film score to the 1946 movie, *The Killers*. In this report, these materials are analyzed and compared to the concert suite that was orchestrated by Patrick Russ and John Kull at the request of the composer. This comparison is augmented by an analysis of each of the scores themes including their cinematic functions and discussion of *The Killers*' origin as a short story by Ernest Hemingway. A brief historical overview of Rozsa's life and notable works is also included.

MIKLÓS RÓZSA'S *THE KILLERS:* COMPARING THE CONCERT SUITE TO THE ORIGINAL FILM SCORE

A PROJECT REPORT

Presented to the Bob Cole Conservatory of Music

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Master of Music

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PREFACE

Hungarian composer Miklós Rósza's "Double Life" of both film and concert composition accrued him an atypical success throughout the twentieth century. With performances given by conductors as prominent as, Donányi, Otto Volkmann, Charles Münch, and Leonard Bernstein in the 1930s and 40s, Rozsa's concert works were performed frequently. With over 100 film scores to his credit, Rózsa's impact on the dramatic film score is inescapable. One of his most prolific periods was the film noir era during which he scored eighteen noirs. *A Double Life, Brute Force, The Killers, The Lost Weekend,* and *The Red House*, among others, contain classic scores.

This paper investigates the process by which Miklós Rózsa and arrangers Patrick Russ and John Kull created the concert suite of the original film music from Robert Siodmak's 1946 classic film, *The Killers*. It traces the form of the suite and compares it to the original film score and highlights its symphonic and programmatic intentions. Tracing the plot of the film is a key element in this discussion. The evolution of the Hemingway short story into a feature film is also addressed. The score radically departs from the films of Rózsa's psychological era that included *Spellbound* and *The Lost Weekend,* among others, and ushered in a new period of composition for Rózsa; this transition and the differences in the two compositional styles are discussed.

In 2005, Nicholas Rózsa, the composer's son, donated over 300 oversized items and over 100 boxes containing Rózsa's letters, scores, personal effects, recordings, and fan mail to the library of Syracuse University. In this special collection, Box 45 contains three materials related to *The Killers*: "Despair," "Nocturne No. 2," and "Exit the

Killers." The first two are handwritten scores and the last is an unbound reproduction. Nearly a third of the movie's 103 minutes contains underscoring, so unfortunately, the contents of the special collections at Syracuse are merely a fraction of the original score, but they contain enough of the main thematic material to do an accurate comparison of the two versions. This investigation will help not only composers to understand the process by which Rózsa completed his original concert suites, but also conductors and theorists to analyze them.

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND

Rózsa's Impact

Rózsa was an influential composer of the twentieth century because of his numerous flim scores, concert output, 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* in 1945, George Cukor's *A Double Life* in 1947, and William Wyler's Classic Epic *Ben Hur* in 1959.[1]

Many of his concert works were popular in Europe during the 1930s and 1940s. His initial success came from his *Theme, Variations and Finale* that launched his concert-composing career. This career eventually included Rózsa's violin and viola concertos that were commissioned by Jascha Heifetz, his Cello Concerto commissioned by Janos Starker, and the *Theme and Variations* commissioned and premiered by Heifetz and Piatagorsky. Many of his later chamber works are also frequently performed.[2]

Rózsa taught at the University of Southern California for over twenty years. During this time, he created the first classes solely dedicated to scoring films in the nation.[3]

Biography

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

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

3. Miklós Rózsa, *Double Life*, (New York: Winwood Press, 1989), 157.

Though Rózsa's path to success included extended stays in Leipzig, Paris, London, and Hollywood, he is of Hungarian descent and was born in Budapest in 1907 to a pianist Mother and a father who, though not a professionally trained musician, was a lover of native Hungarian folksong and even published the book, *To Whom does the Hungarian Soil Belong*?[4] This love of folksong was transmitted to Rózsa from 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 parent's wishes, to study composition with Hermann Grabner.[5] In 1927, at the age of twenty, Breitkopf and Härtel published Rózsa's Opus No. 1 and his concert composition career began.[6] After his schooling was completed, he moved to Paris in 1931 where he composed popular songs and wrote his most important early composition, *Theme, Variations and Finale* in 1933[7]. This piece would have countless performances in Europe in the 1930s and was championed by many conductors who would premiere his later works. The work was on the program in 1943 in Carnegie Hall when Leonard Bernstein did his first live broadcast with the New York

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

5. Ibid., 8.

6. Miklós Rózsa, *Double Life*, (New York: Winwood Press, 1989), 36-38.

7. Roger Hickman, *Miklós Rózsa's Ben Hur: A Film Score Guide* (Toronto: The Scarecrow Press, 2011), 9-10.

Philharmonic.[8] While in Paris, he also wrote is ballet *Hungaria* and met his friend, Arthur Honegger. It was Honegger that introduced him to serious film music by way of his score to *Les Miserables* and it was he who helped Rózsa initially enter the film business[9].

By 1937 Rózsa moved to London and began scoring films. He soon became the head of the music department for the films of Hungarian film producer Alexander Korda and his two brothers. His first Oscar-nominated picture was for Korda Pictures's *The Thief of Bagdad* in 1940. During the outbreak of war, the production of *Thief of Bagdad* continued in Hollywood where the Korda brothers had close connections with Paramount Pictures. Rózsa stayed in Hollywood to work on future Korda films and also became a freelancing composer and teacher in the early 1940s.[10]

Rózsa became a staff composer at MGM in 1948 and eventually became the head of its music department until the end of the golden age of Hollywood when his contract expired in 1962. During this period Rózsa composed the music for many Hollywood epics including *Ben Hur*, *El Cid* in 1961, *Ivanhoe* in 1952, and *King of Kings* in 1961.[11]

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8. Miklós Rózsa, *Double Life*, (New York: Winwood Press, 1989), 131-2.

9. Ibid., 69-70.

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

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.

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. 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 in 1984.[12]

Rózsa's Style Change

Rózsa provided the scores to many of Hollywood's psychological thrillers including *Spellbound* and *The Lost Weekend* both composed in 1945.[13] Rózsa describes this as his second period or his "psychological" period of composition. This period differs from his first "oriental" period in terms of orchestration and harmonic language.[14] 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.[15] His use of the Theremin is particularly striking in *Spellbound*'s madness theme; it contains four

12. Ibid., 10.

13. Ibid., 6.

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

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

descending half-steps.[16] 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 played forward in the film.[17] These madness themes are riddled with parallel major chords and typically 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 measure[18].

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 can be very different. This style change was demanded by the harshness of the films, particularly in *The Killers* and its counterpart,

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

17. Miklós Rózsa, *Double Life*, (New York: Winwood Press, 1989), 151.

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

Brute Force.[19] 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.[20]

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 scales, bitonality, and stacking multiple chords on top of one another.[21] 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.[22]

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER 2

THE KILLERS MOVIE

Robert Siodmak's 1946 movie, *The Killers*, is based on a Hemingway short story of the same name.[23] In the story, two hit men hold up a lunch counter while they wait for their target. When he does not show, the killers leave to find the target at his home. Before they arrive, one of the customers at the counter warns the target, but, to his surprise, the target seemingly knows the killers are coming for him and he is resigned to his fate. Though Hemingway allegedly was uninterested with the film adaptation as a whole, he did admit to it being the only one he could tolerate. The same short story was adapted for a radio show in 1949, as a short film in 1958, and as another full-length feature film in 1964. Each of these adaptations was a heist plot that centered on a double-cross.[24]

In addition to the Hemingway source material and its compelling screenplay, the 1946 film also benefited from a star-studded cast: Burt Lancaster debuts as "The Swede", Eva Gardner is "Kitty" Collins, Edmond O'Brien plays Jim Reardon, and Albert Dekker is "Big Jim" Colfax. The story unfolds mainly through a series of flashbacks. The convoluted plot begins as hit men Max and Al murder "The Swede." Insurance

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23. Philip Booth, "Hemingway's "The Killers" and Heroic Fatalism: From Page to Screen (Thrice)," *Literature Film Quarterly* 35 (2007): 406.

24. Ibid., 406-7.

claims investigator Jim Reardon discovers Swede was murdered by order of "Big Jim" Colfax for double-crossing him. Colfax and Swede stole 250-thousand dollars together in heist and Swede ran away with the money along with Colfax's romantic interest, "Kitty" Collins. Kitty double-crosses Swede, allowing him to be murdered. In the end, the police gun down Max and Al while Colfax is murdered in a gunfight with a former associate. Kitty is presumably incarcerated after failing to procure deathbed exoneration from Colfax, who is revealed to be her husband.[25]

25. Mark Hellenger, *Ernest Hemingway's: The Killers*, DVD, directed by Rober Siodmak (Irvington, NY: Criterion Collection, 2003).

CHAPTER 3

THE FILM SCORE'S THEMES AND MOTIFS

Though several themes and leitmotifs frequent the score, the most famous is the killers leitmotif. It is Rózsa's most recognizable tune because of its association with the Dragnet television series that began in 1951 and is most commonly referred to, even by Rózsa himself, as the "Dum da dum dum" theme. [26]

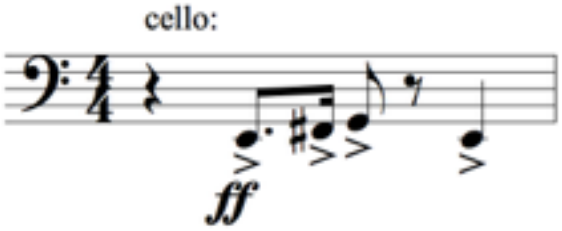

FIGURE 1. This is the Killers motif from the original film score.

The killer's leitmotif, most frequently in the key of E minor, appears in the opening credits and again in all three subsequent appearances of the killers, Max and Al.

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

In the first reappearance, the door opens to Swede's apartment; the leitmotif, up a half-step in the key of F minor, is a clue to the audience that Max and Al are behind the door. The second reappearance is nearly seventy-five minutes later as the killers follow Reardon and Kitty to a club; the motif is in B-flat minor. The final reappearance is when the killers enter the club to kill Reardon; it appears in the home key of E minor. The only other appearance of the killers motif is very brief and occurs in E minor when Reardon examines the bullet holes in Swede's room after the shooting, though the killers are not actually there. This statement creates the allusion for the audience that Max and Al may show up to murder Reardon.

This motif contains the tonic, supertonic, and minor third in quick dotted succession before a final cadence back to the tonic. It frequents the opening credits as an ostinato in the piano, low strings and occasionally tuba and snare drum. In the opening moments of the film, the violins continue the leitmotif through a tritone leap to a Bb, forming the E diminished chord.

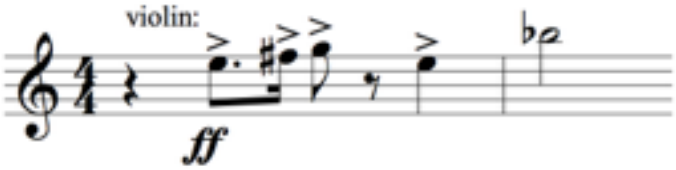

FIGURE 2.

The most frequently used leitmotif in the score is Kitty's theme, which is based on Rozsa's song "The more I know of Love".

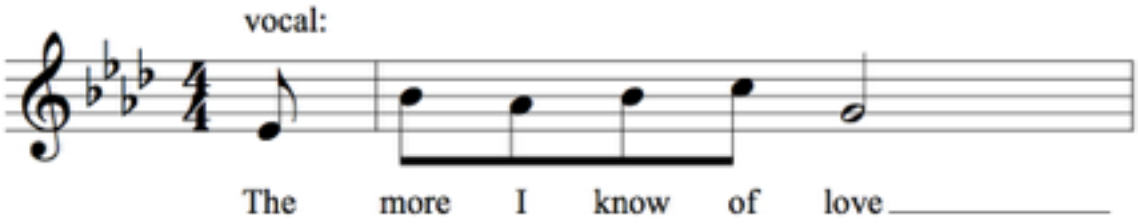

FIGURE 3.

Though Ava Gardner first sings the theme in A-flat major, forty minutes into the film, it appears twice beforehand as a leitmotif; the first is when Swede is laying in bed waiting to be murdered. A high violin with expressive portamento plays Kitty's theme, cluing the audience into Swede's thoughts during the final moments of his life.

The second leitmotif appearance is when Swede is distraught over Kitty's double-cross. Swede lays on the hotel bed screaming, "She's gone!" and "Charlston was right!" alluding to Kitty before she is ever mentioned in the film. The motif is in a sullen minor

key in this particular cue alluding to both Kitty's treachery and Swede's heartbreak. The theme also appears twice more as a leitmotif after its full appearance. The first is when Swede talks about Kitty and her handkerchief with his cellmate, Charleston, in prison; this is the largest development of the theme in the score. The violin melody in this cue is intervalically identical to the original motif but seemingly in B Major; however, the C-sharp minor chord underneath implies a much darker C-Sharp Dorian selected for the the prison scene.

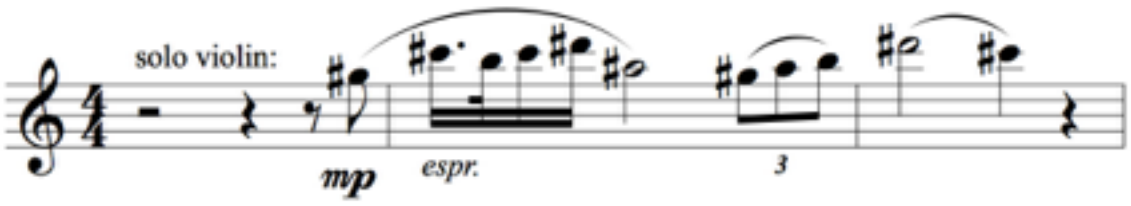

FIGURE 4.

The motif in example 3 is built on an A-flat major seventh chord that utilizes jazz harmony. The theme appears either on piano as source music in the background, or in a solo violin and string section as underscore. The theme is narrowed to G-F-G-A-flat-F at the end of the hotel scene to fit the F-diminished chord underneath and match the

intensity of the scene. This reworking also makes it contain the same three pitches as the killers ostinato in the previous musical cue.

The opening E-minor horn theme is the longest and most developed theme in the score and serves as the principal theme for the main titles.

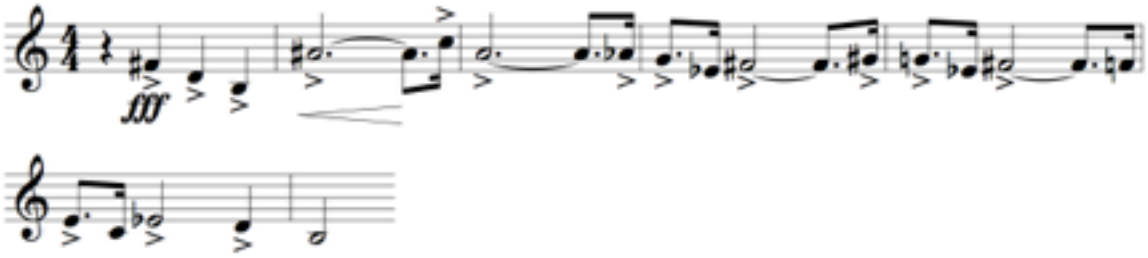

FIGURE 5.

The horns play the entire seven-measure theme to introduce it, but then the low brass quickly takes up the theme in a truncated four-measure version that becomes a canon with the second voice, the upper strings, and the third voice, the tuba and cellos, each entering two beats apart from the original. Through slight key changes, small pitch alterations, and a diminution of the theme, the first two measures of the theme are finally restated in a powerful two-measure *meno mosso* in the original E minor. This entire development uses the killers leitmotif as a brash ostinato. The first four notes of the theme, B-G-E-D-sharp form a minor chord with a major seventh, which is one of Rózsa's most iconic chords in the score. The leap of a major seventh and his use of an insistent G-sharp over an E diminished chord give this theme its brutal quality.

The opening horn theme returns twice during the flashbacks of Blinky, another of the heist gang. The first is in A minor in the string section while Swede punches Big Jim over a poker match. This particular cue contains another substantial development of the theme, though it is not in canon like the main titles. The second is merely a few measures in D minor in the horns and occurs when Swede holds up the heist gang and steals the money for himself.

Another motif used frequently in the score is "a series of harsh, syncopated polychords with roots separated by a tritone."[27] This motif appears twice in the main titles, both times as a prelude to the opening horn theme, and appears three times after in the underscoring; two appearances are in the same two flashbacks containing the opening horn theme, seemingly linking the two themes together. The last is as the police in The Green Cat gun down Max and Al.

The only other major theme that is not contained in the main titles is the suspense theme used to create and keep tension over a long dramatic scene. The theme starts softly and with a solo voice, typically first violins, and grows to incorporate all of the violins and the heavy brass. This theme is chromatic and is played over a dominant flat nine.

27. Roger Hickman, *Miklós Rózsa's Ben Hur: A Film Score Guide* (Toronto: The Scarecrow Press, 2011), 37.

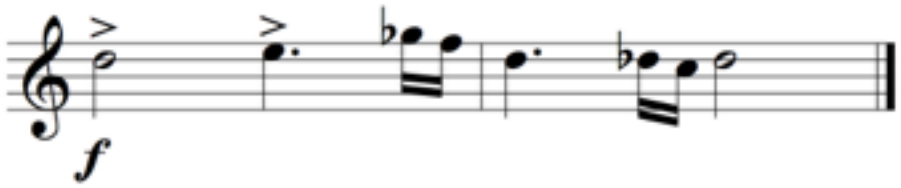

FIGURE 6.

The theme in example 6 is scored at first in the tremolo violin, soft low strings, and eventually a trumpet. It is constructed with dotted figures and sixteenth notes at first, but eventually is elongated by quarter-note triplets. It first appears immediately before Reardon holds up Dum-Dum, another of the heist gang, and is developed in its second and final appearance before Reardon meets Kitty Collins for the first time. In the second cue, the strings and trumpets plane parallel major chords with the theme always as the fifth of the chord; these clash with the dominant flat nine chord against it. At one point, the C-sharp dominant flat nine chord in the background clashes with the G major chord in the theme by a tritone creating a harmonically unstable feeling.

CHAPTER 4

THE CONCERT SUITE

Patrick Russ and Jon Kull arranged the concert suite version of *The Killers* under strict supervision of the composer. The idea was to remove any "mickey mousing" in the underscore and to leave the themes in their most pure and direct forms. The orchestration is for three flutes (one doubles piccolo), two oboes (one doubles English horn), three clarinets (one doubles bass clarinet), two bassoons (one doubles contrabassoon), four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, one tuba, one timpanist, three percussionists who play snare, field drum, vibraphone, finger cymbals, and xylophone, one harp, one pianist who doubles celesta, and strings. The suite is twelve minutes long and has three movements in the traditionally symphonic fast-slow-fast format and the material in the suite appears in nearly perfect chronological order with the plot of the movie.

The first movement, "Main Title," is an exact copy of the music from the film's opening sequence. The first eight measures introduce the "dum da dum dum" theme in an ominous E-diminished ostinato in the low strings, piano, and percussion until the trumpets and violins take up the theme and raise the harmony by half steps through a series of punctuated *forte-pianos*. A final *forte-piano* rests the harmony on an F-minor chord with a major seventh where the light orchestration, strings and trumpets, precedes a large orchestral crescendo into the syncopated polychords. These polychords are a B-flat minor sharp eleven (B-flat, D-flat, F, E-natural), alternating with an E fully diminished

seventh sharp ten chord (E, G, B-flat, C-sharp, G-sharp) with the root a tritone away from the tonic.

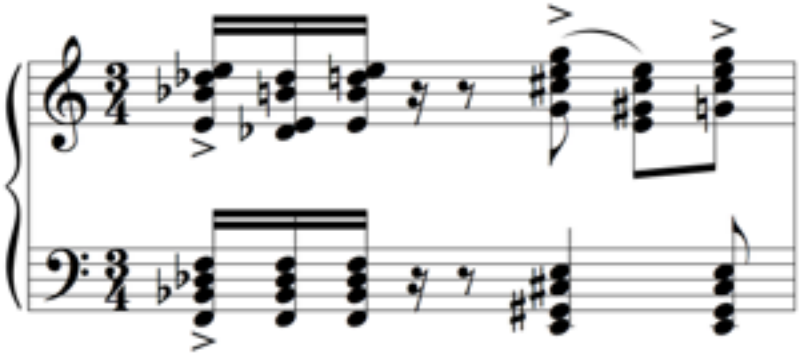

FIGURE 7.

Following these *fortississimo* chords is the first statement of the aforementioned opening horn theme that is developed in three parts. The same two syncopated polychords return with a slightly altered rhythm and then a flourish of sixteenth notes introduce the final statement of the main melody in the fortissimo brass stacked in three parts separated by perfect fourths. The movement comes to a close with unpredictable iterations of the "dum da dum dum" ostinato in the piano and low strings with forte-piano interjections by the French horns and trumpets.

The second movement, “Prison Stars”, is derived from two cues containing Charlston’s flashbacks. The first is when he and the Swede are in prison talking about the stars and Kitty Collins, the second is when they are out of prison and planning the heist with Kitty, Big Jim and the others. Both cues contain the same two themes and if played together, like they are in the suite, create an arch form ABABA with each subsequent iteration of A and B appearing truncated.

The first measures introduce the lamenting A theme in the muted string tutti with answers from the piano and harp in a D-diminished tonality with major seventh C-sharp in the melody for color. The lento tempo and the triplet and eighth-note subdivisions of the beat provide this theme with its sad and introspective quality. The English horn then takes the melody with the woodwinds echoing. The harp and viola tremolo now take an impressionistic supporting role as they play eighth-note arpeggios back and forth on F-dominant chord tones and extensions voiced in fourths and fifths. By the ninth measure, the violins play a brief yet constantly ascending development of the A theme that ends in a whisper in the upper register of the instrument; the horn provides the countermelody answer to the theme in this section. The strings then return to the impressionistic eighth notes, this time enhanced by temolo effects while the English horn restates the theme.

The B section is the aforementioned C-sharp Dorian passage with the solo violin playing “The more I know of love” (measure [mm.] 26). The violins take up the melody in octaves and eventually hand it to the violas briefly for two measures. The transition material (mm. 35-37) into the A theme is only three measures long and contains soft

strings playing dotted rhythms with the short note on the strong beats in true Hungarian fashion.

The second A section, a mere 12 measures (mm. 38-49), reintroduces the English horn melody with wind countermelody, the high string melody, and the impressionistic eighth-note accompaniment in a highly truncated version. Another three-measure transition contains dotted rhythms in the middle strings in a truncated version of the opening horn theme (mm. 50-52) over a minor/major seventh tonality. This is where the original film score fades out until the second of Charleston's flashbacks; however, the concert suite takes no pause. The second B section, only seven measures this time (mm. 53-59), again starts with the solo violin, continues with the cello section, and finishes with the violins in octaves.

The final A section is only four measures with another fermata measure inserted at the end; however, in the original film score, these measures are repeated to give the cue more length. The clarinet has the theme with the answers in the viola. The tremolos are in the cellos and basses giving this final section a dark and solemn ending fitting for Charleston's last words in his flashback, "And I never seen the Swede again."

The suite's final movement, "Exit The Killers" begins exactly as the original film cue of the same name, but eventually transitions into portions of other cues with aforementioned themes. Bits of the themes are slightly altered for dramatic purposes. For example, a dramatic ending and a restatement of the killers theme bring the work to a conclusion, instead of the soft underscore that ends the original film cue.

The movie scene inside The Green Cat contains a pianist playing soft jazz; however, moments before the killers enter to murder Reardon, the pianist begins to play a minor boogie-woogie in a standard twelve-bar blues form and then solos over the tonic E-minor chord. For the remainder of the scene, the boogie-woogie continues and Rózsa underscores the "dum da dum dum" theme on top of it as the killers enter. As the boogie-woogie continues, Rózsa combines a suspenseful timpani roll to a clarinet and viola trill amidst the sporadic interventions of the "dum da dum dum" theme in the low strings. The orchestra crescendos as the killers draw their pistols to murder Reardon. In a string and woodwind flourish of sixteenth notes similar to the main title, the syncopated polychords return as the gunfight ensues.

Russ and Kull keep these first twenty-two measures of underscore exactly the same as the film cue. In order to keep the striking effect of the killers theme against the source piano music, the concert suite contains a transcription of the boogie-woogie in the score. The instruction for the conductor in the score says, "Attention Conductor: Piano continues independent of the orchestra." To keep the orchestra and piano separate, the pianist counts measures by letters, e.g. A, B, C; versus the orchestra that counts traditional measure numbers.

After these initial measures, the material of the movement is derived completely from non-sequential previous cues in the score. The strings, trumpets and horns play a thirteen-measure passage (mm. 23-35) alternating between common time and 6/4 based on the suspense theme. It is stated in full parallel-major-chord format in the trumpets and strings and in in the same key as it is presented in the film score:

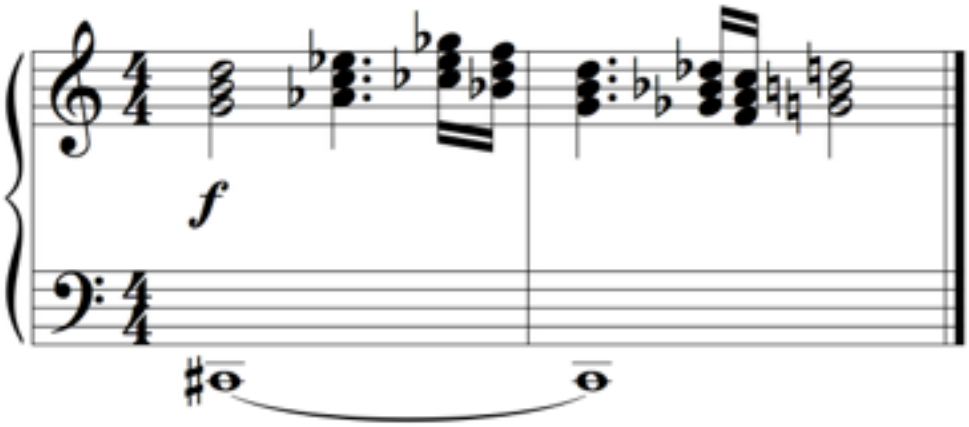

FIGURE 8.

Dotted rhythms with the quick notes on the beats continue in the timpani and the strings throughout. The music in the following passage (mm. 36-59), is based on the cue for the scene where Dum-Dum interrogates Reardon at gunpoint; he eventually incapacitates Reardon and escapes through the window and onto the roof despite the pursuing police officers who are shooting at him. The music of the concert suite, marked "piu animato ed agitato" starts in the violins and violas in their lowest registers playing parallel major chords that ascend and modulate higher and higher to create increasing intensity needed to convince the audience that Dum-Dum will shoot Reardon. The low strings continue to play heavy low C pedals in a dotted rhythm. At this point, in the original film cue, heavy brass interjections provide the "Mickey-Mousing" for specific moments in the film between the string build-up. The final *crescendo* leads to a *presto* with brass major chords ascending in half steps against a violent timpani volley. This passage is entirely

redacted for the concert suite in favor of a smooth presentation of the ascending strings without interruption. Instead of a presto, Kull and Russ add a *rallentando* into a recapitulation of the killers theme nearly identical to the main title and in the home key of e minor/diminished (mm. 60-64); a final statement of the syncopated polychords follows (mm. 65-68). A brief three-measure flourish of sixteenth notes in the brass and woodwinds brings about a final statement of the killers theme in a large unison marked "piu largamente" (mm. 76-77).

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

Rózsa's score to *The Killers* clearly contributes to the film's universal success. The resurrection of the main theme in the Dragnet television series may have something to do with the score's continued praise. Given the theme's popularity, it is surprising that the suite is not programmed more often on modern concerts. The parts used for California State University, Long Beach's performance in 2014 were the first labeled set from the publisher, G. Schirmer. Both the score and parts were completely blank suggesting that the piece may have never been programmed since it's original arrangement and recording in April of 1996. This further implies that the recording failed to produce a renewed interest in the work, perhaps because *Double Indemnity* is the first score listed on the cover.

Had Rózsa's score to *The Killers* produced an Academy Award, it would have meant three victories in succession between the years of 1945-1947. Being the score that did not produce the award may have left an unfortunate mark on its reputation. It is decidedly more dissonant and brash than Friedhofer's Copland-esque score to *The Best Years of Our Lives,* which won in 1946; however, it is obviously unfair to compare the two films, which are completely different in dramatic focus and scope.

The audience in Long Beach welcomed the piece enthusiastically and praised it for its recognizable theme, impressionistic second movement, and fun piano theatrics in the

finale. With time and perhaps a smaller arrangement for purchase rather than hire, this music could yet be a popular choice for youth orchestras and pops shows.

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