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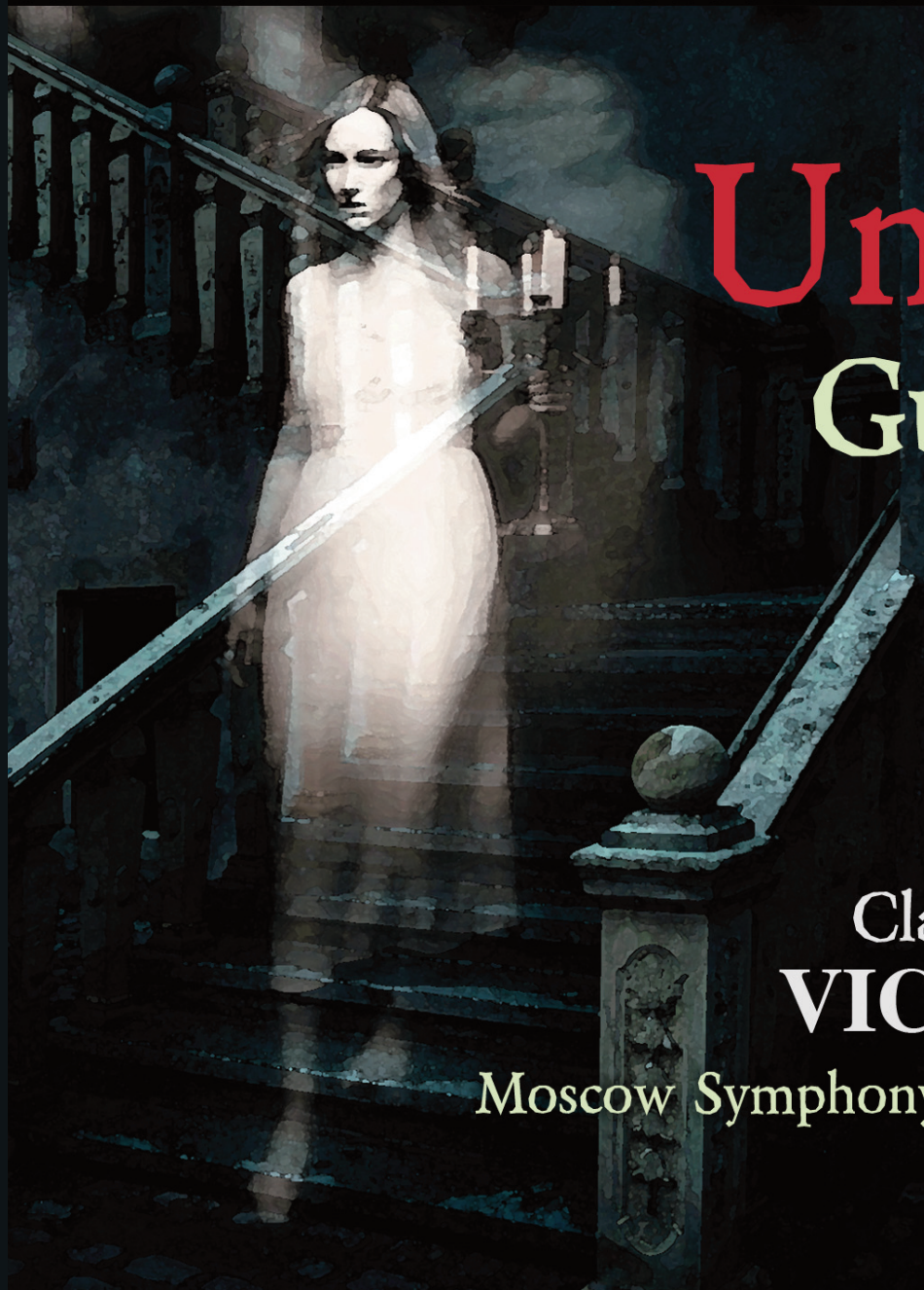

The Uninvited
Gulliver's Travels
Bright Leaf

Classic Film Scores by

VICTOR YOUNG

Moscow Symphony Orchestra and Chorus

William Stromberg

Victor Young (1900–1956)

Victor Young died last Saturday. The funeral was today at the Hollywood Cemetery. This cemetery is midway between RKO and Paramount. Crowds of people could not get into the chapel. We stood on the grass and heard the service over loudspeakers. You could hear the warning buzzers from the Paramount lot signalling for quiet during takes. Victor would have approved. A red-haired woman sat on the outskirts of the crowd on a chair provided by one of the cemetery attendants and sobbed throughout.

In his wryly illuminating diaries, published as *Musician: A Hollywood Journal* (Lyle Stuart Inc., 1987), longtime film and TV composer Lyn Murray succinctly chronicled the funeral of one of Hollywood's busiest and most beloved composers, a man whose death in November 1956 struck beyond the covey of composers, musicians and orchestrators then working in the world's film capital. One easily understands why, too. In his own, ever-infectious way, Victor Young allowed Gabby from *Gulliver's Travels* to be far more endearing than the feisty, pint-sized town-crier had a right to hope; he helped Basil Rathbone shed his persona as the world's greatest crime-solver long enough for movie-goers to really believe him as a cunning Bluebeard in *The Mad Doctor*; he made Ray Milland slightly more passable as a gypsy in *Golden Earrings*; ensured Joan Crawford seemed tougher than any man alive in *Johnny Guitar*; and made ghosts seem far more real than ever before in *The Uninvited*. And even if critics might insist others in the film-making craft had more to do with these feats than Young, the upbeat, engaging composer still ensured that viewers left the theatre with a tune dancing between their ears.

Today Victor Young's passing neatly symbolizes the end of an era. By the time of Young's death, fellow film-composer Erich Wolfgang Korngold had abandoned film scoring, Max Steiner's best scores were well behind him and Alfred Newman was but a few years from seeing his amazing music department at 20th Century-Fox all but dismantled. Within a short but turbulent decade, Hollywood's old studio system would be in shambles and the need for robust romantic film scores of the type Young and his colleagues specialised in would be slim. And yet, it is somehow reassuring to realise that, of all Hollywood's film-scoring heavyweights of the 1930s, '40s and '50s, Victor Young might have flourished almost as well in the 1960s and early '70s. Certainly, his greatest admirer, Henry Mancini, was able to do well enough in those lean and later years, partially because he, like his mentor Young, was able to navigate his way easily in both light, pop-oriented material as well as tuneful, richly orchestrated film music. In the end, though, Young's own penchant for fine cigars and rich foods and his life-long habit of overworking – often agreeing to several projects from two or three studios at a time – finally finished him. But what an incredible legacy of music he left.

Whenever Hollywood's golden age of film music is discussed today, Victor Young's name surfaces only as a grand afterthought. Several reasons exist for this. For one thing, some of his film scores initially seem to lack the musical ingenuity and titanic individuality of, say, Miklós Rózsa or Erich Wolfgang Korngold. It has been noted, too, that when faced with films he found lacklustre or uninspiring, Young occasionally failed to furnish his best (though one is also reminded that colleague Korngold eventually gave up film music altogether because, for one thing, he tired of the increasing number of substandard films he was asked to score). And there are few stories of Young stubbornly standing up for his principles in the legendary, much-loved manner of Bernard Herrmann or Franz Waxman. What is more, associates have remarked how Young, possibly because of the sheer volume of work he tackled, not only proved somewhat sloppy when composing but also frequently (and happily) left most decisions of symphonic colouring to able orchestrators such as Leo Shuken. Perhaps worst of all, he didn't even look like a composer. Anyone working in the busy music departments of Hollywood during that era is quick to remember Victor Young as a compactly built, cigar-loving character whose very appearance suggested a Chicago warehouseman more than a distinguished film-composer, arranger and recording artist. "Amazing," fellow composer Irving Gertz said of Young on occasion of the recording at hand. "The first time I met him was at Columbia and he was coming to the podium to conduct. He was a little guy who looked like a prize-fighter with a cigar. I asked somebody who he was. It was Victor Young." (Of course, if one wonders just what a composer of

that period was supposed to look like, the public back then might well have suggested stern-looking character-actor Victor Francen, who portrayed the stern, temperamental conductor in *Tales of Manhattan* and stern, temperamental pianist in *The Beast With Five Fingers*.)

And yet Young effortlessly produced something other composers then and now find difficult to serve up – melody. It's little wonder he found inspiration and kinship in the music of that great displaced Russian, Sergey Rachmaninov, who had himself settled in Los Angeles during Young's career and continued writing in an unashamedly romantic and songful manner. "He was very nice," Hollywood composer Herman Stein said during a lively 1996 interview, recalling a lunch he enjoyed with Victor Young decades before. "I told him Rachmaninov was thoroughly underrated as a composer and he said, 'Oh, yes, I agree. He's not just a second-rate Tchaikovsky!' But I think a lot of people held that opinion then." Even as scores embraced more brittle, hard-edged tones in the 1950s, Young refused to bend to the trends of the times. "He wrote music from his heart," music editor and associate Bill Stinson later remarked of Young. "He had so much melody within him. He may have been the best melody writer we ever had in Hollywood." There was little telling what might trigger such melodies. Today his full-blooded scores for such popular, critically successful films as *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1943), *Samson and Delilah* (1949) and *Around the World in Eighty Days* (1956) are frequently cited, yet there is just as much musical merit in less prestigious fare such as *Blackbeard the Pirate* (1952), vibrant with soaring melodies and memorable battle music and nefarious harmonies. Like the best of Victor Young's music, it is as fully satisfying heard away from the film as it is alongside it.

Young's genius as a songwriter, composer and arranger, coupled with his cheerful, pliable personality, certainly won him the respect and affection of many in Hollywood's film-making and musical realms. And while such qualities also probably resulted in the overwork that eventually taxed his health and contributed to his death at a relatively young age, Young's impact was evident at his jam-packed funeral. No less than Frank Sinatra, Michael Todd and Peggy Lee gave moving eulogies to the fallen composer. But perhaps no-one in the entertainment business drew so much music from Victor Young as Paramount's autocratic director and producer, Cecil B. DeMille, who recognized the exuberance and great appeal of Young's music (as well as Young's amazing industriousness and willingness to tolerate the blunt orders DeMille routinely barked at his crew). And so, in 1940, DeMille tapped Young to score *North West Mounted Police* and all manner of spectacle thereafter. Only upon their seventh project did Young take the uncharacteristic move of finally stepping aside in his long-running collaboration with the demanding (and, whatever else, steadfastly loyal) film-maker, owing to Young's rapidly declining health. Even then, Young did his old boss a supreme favour by recommending that DeMille tap a talented young composer by the name of Elmer Bernstein for the job – advice DeMille wisely took. And what a job it was: composing the score for DeMille's sprawling epic *The Ten Commandments* (1956) – much of it, intentionally or otherwise, showing Young's influence on the otherwise highly individualistic Bernstein.

Although Cecil B. DeMille no longer commands the regard he once did as a film-maker, one cannot deny his presence during the cinema's first fifty years. Granted, he may have been well on his way to becoming wearily predictable during the final decade of his life, hackneyed in his epics mixing innocuous sex (including a seeming love of leading ladies taking peek-a-boo baths), patriotism (so that even an army of the truly dead took to the field in *Unconquered*) and spectacle (and who has not initially marvelled at the parting of the Red Sea in either of his takes on *The Ten Commandments*). In some ways, DeMille had become the P.T. Barnum of Hollywood during his later years, not only tackling all sorts of mammoth, eye-catching spectacle but touting his films with such flamboyance that one felt distinctly un-American ignoring DeMille's exhortations that one and all see his latest picture. It was only natural DeMille finally mount a film in a genuine circus, as he did in *The Greatest Show on Earth* (1952). Whatever one thinks of the storyline – mostly about ambition, jealousy and love among circus stars – the film still has an air of awe about it, with DeMille's cameramen following the high excitement and riveting drama of the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus in performance and linking it to their credo that the show must go on – even after a horrible train-wreck sets half of the circus animals loose, seriously injures the circus manager and leaves the performers and crew in a quandary over how to make good on their next

performance. Victor Young's spirited **Prelude (March)** 1 captures the determination and energy behind their drive and the sheer joy at their success, piccolos soaring acrobatically overhead while brass and percussion drive home the all-American point. Even those critics who think some of Young's music is itself a bit too obvious would have to concede his upfront talents fit this picture like a glove. Certainly, it's more interesting than most genuine circus marches.

One can only begin to appreciate the vast amount of work Young produced when considering his amazing versatility. In addition to scoring more than 300 films during the two decades he spent in Hollywood, he also wrote numerous popular songs for some of the best-known singers of the day, proved successful as a recording and radio artist, was peerless when it came to arranging, and even found time to compose concert works. When colleagues later remarked that music was a natural part of Young's make-up, they weren't exaggerating. Born on 8th August, 1900, in Chicago, he found music evident throughout the house. His father, William Young, was a tenor with the Chicago Opera Company, though he reportedly abandoned his family after the death of Victor's mother. With nowhere else to turn, ten-year-old Victor and his sister Helen went to Poland to be raised by elderly grandparents. It was in Warsaw that Victor's musical roots took hold, and in the most story-book manner. Thanks to savings his grandfather had set aside as a tailor, Victor was able to study at the Warsaw Conservatory of Music, devoting much of his attention to the violin. He must have been an apt pupil. Family tradition has it that Victor's début as a concert violinist with the Warsaw Philharmonic proved so successful a wealthy music-lover presented him with a 1730 Guarnerius, an instrument Young continued to play upon his return to America.

Young's versatility went on parade in his native land only after 1914, when his concert activity across Europe was interrupted by World War I. Upon his return to Chicago, he picked up work of all kinds and in the 1920s toured as a concert violinist. However, as his musical gifts became apparent to himself and others, he took a turn toward popular music, quickly finding great success as a song-writer and band-leader. A career in radio began in Chicago in the late 1920s but eventually took him to New York City. In 1935 he settled in Los Angeles, where he continued his success, forming another ensemble and continuing to broadcast regularly. By this time, he was writing and arranging songs for some of the most prominent performers of the era, including Al Jolson and Don Ameche. But even before he began composing film scores for Paramount – always his home studio, despite the numerous scores he wrote for others – Young had already gained something of a background in movie music. In the 1920s, just as his career was beginning to bloom, he worked as a concertmaster in a motion-picture theatre in Los Angeles and later back in Chicago. Together with his natural gift for melody – proven time and again with his success as a song-writer – it was only a matter of time before Hollywood became his permanent home and film music his main profession. "When fellow musicians in more sedate branches of the music field ask why on earth I chose to become a film-composer, I am stumped for a ready answer," Young wrote shortly before his death. "Why, indeed, would any trained musician let himself in for a career that calls for the exactitude of an Einstein, the diplomacy of a Churchill and the patience of a martyr? Yet, after doing some 350 film scores, I can think of no other musical medium that offers as much challenge, excitement and demand for creativity in putting music to work. Every new film is unique in its dramatic values and, scene for scene, asks for a fresh musical interpretation of the human comedy. The film composer must be equipped with an unflagging interest in the universe of man and a gargantuan knowledge of musical forms."

If one film score displays Young's exceptional compositional talents at their zenith, it is *The Uninvited* (1944), a richly atmospheric, genuinely scary film that is arguably the best ghost story ever produced by Hollywood. Set on a lonely stretch of British seacoast, *The Uninvited* concerns a witty London music critic and his sister (Ray Milland and Ruth Hussey) who very unwittingly move into a haunted house in the neighbourhood, only to discover that the icy air hovering over part of the house and the after-hours sobbing inhabiting yet another corner of the place are connected with ghostly forces, both linked to the doe-eyed granddaughter (Gail Russell) of the house's crusty former owner. As this very adult ghost mystery gradually unfolds, the ghosts' past history is reassembled, bit by bit, just in time for the old mansion's truly malevolent forces to be exposed and grandly put to flight. Graced by razor-sharp

dialogue, a top-notch cast and Charles Lang's moody camera-work, the film can still give one shivers today and has the added novelty (at least for 1944) of not trying to explain away the supernatural goings-on with ordinary, perfectly rational explanations. Young's wondrous and wildly fantastic score is as pivotal as any of these other assets, perhaps more so.

Certainly, the war-time year of 1944 is exceptional in that it provided more truly great film scores evoking the weird and the fantastic than any other year. At RKO, Roy Webb provided one of his most intriguing scores for *The Curse of the Cat People*, in some ways as subtle as producer Val Lewton's famous horror films themselves, sending the French children's tune *Do, do, l'enfant, do* into a musical world balancing a child's make-believe with an adult's suspicion and bitterness. Over at 20th Century-Fox, Hugo Friedhofer furnished one of his most vivid and underrated film scores in *The Lodger*, dispatching the tune of Big Ben into the fog-shrouded, fear-struck realm of Jack the Ripper's London. And for Universal's campy *House of Frankenstein*, Hans J. Salter and Paul Dessau took the classic motifs composed for the studio's classic spooks Dracula, the Wolf Man and Frankenstein's Monster and set them loose in a full-blooded, musical maelstrom that not only served as a grand summing up of Universal's remarkable horror-scoring practices but, in complete form, stands as one of the most enjoyable and rollicking scores of Hollywood's golden age. But Victor Young's vibrant score for Paramount's *The Uninvited* introduced something none of these other film scores did – a hit tune that, decades later, is just as enrapturing as it was in 1944. The tune, which introduces itself straightaway in the film's **Prelude** (or main title) 2, went on to become the song *Stella By Starlight*, made further famous by such notables as Frank Sinatra and Harry James after the film's release. Young thought so much of the tune he even crafted a concert piece for piano and orchestra based on it, neatly capturing the sumptuous style and bracing charisma of his idol Rachmaninov.

But if the love theme from *The Uninvited* reeks of Hollywood's beloved brand of romanticism (or, to quote colleague Miklós Rózsa regarding friend Young's music, "Broadway-cum-Rachmaninov"), its eerie ghost music blossoms with rampant impressionism. In the chilling cue **The Sobbing Ghost** 5, heavily cut in the film but restored by John Morgan for the re-recording at hand, a crashing orchestral chord suggests the fury of the sea and its rôle in the mystery behind the haunted house in question. Flighty woodwinds then dart about, echoing the unholy restlessness along this stretch of coast and hinting at dark matters not easily grasped or understood. Brass sound with great solemnity while strings rustle quietly with mounting urgency. Before very long we encounter, first through the tones of alto flute and English horn in unison, then amidst other sections of the orchestra, a two-note figure that beckons most sorrowfully. Eventually, this figure becomes more strident, more insistent, before bursts from the harps and scattering woodwind figures clear the air for a reassuringly human melody. This quickly evolves into a light-hearted variation, led off by the flute, as the home's new owner tries to laugh off the whole ghostly affair by strolling back to bed – only for the wind to send the critic's bedroom door flying shut behind him, prompting him to dive beneath the covers. This is accompanied by a hair-raising but thoroughly comic orchestral finish, courtesy of good-humoured Victor Young. (Incidentally, the instrumental song heard on the radio in the film just before the music critic discovers his home is haunted is *My Silent Love* and, ironically, comes not from Young's own creative pen but that of Dana Suesse, an underrated rarity among song-writers and composers of that era – a woman!)

The rich score for *The Uninvited* offers many other musical morsels, including the delightful **Squirrel Chase** 3, which finds piano and orchestra joining forces as the Londoners' small terrier chases an agile squirrel through the abandoned, sun-lit house they have just stumbled upon – a chase concluded when the squirrel runs up the inside of an old chimney, accompanied by a spirited dash across the keyboard. And though terribly short, John Morgan, in reconstructing this suite, could not refrain from adding the brief cue **The Village** 4, which finds Young revelling in the Celtic domains that so invigorated his later score for *The Quiet Man*. **Sunday Morning** 6 chronicles young Stella Meredith's walk to church, interrupted by the captivated music critic in his motor-car, while the church bells continue to echo in the horns in an almost approving fashion (and considering what beckons for poor Stella, why shouldn't such innocent love be approved?). But such scenes of happiness and tranquillity cannot last long in *The Uninvited.*

Even in **The Cliff** 7, when the young composer plays a piece he has written for child-like Stella – predictably, *Stella by Starlight* – the tune goes "awfully sad," to quote the young dedicatee. The love theme manages to resurface, only for poor Stella to fall prey to the tension of the house's hauntings and the emotion of the moment. She races absent-mindedly toward the cliff overlooking the sea, trumpets desperately warning of the malevolent ghost that seeks to lure Stella over the side and into the murky waters that have also claimed the woman Stella has wrongly been led to believe was her mother.

Besides its refusal to surrender the supernatural integrity of its ghosts, the genius of *The Uninvited* lies in the delightfully complicated mystery behind the mansion's troubled spirits, a matter that involves unravelling an illicit affair and vengeance gone awry. Early on in the film the new home-owners discover they are haunted by not one ghost but two, one of them very obviously seeking Stella's destruction, the other set upon guarding her. In the complete score, Young plays along with the mystery, sometimes providing clues as well. The aforementioned beckoning musical figure generally associated with the dead woman Stella mistakenly believes is her mother may sound enticing at first in **The Sobbing Ghost** but quickly becomes more edgy when in the same cue the figure is coloured by two flutes, English horn, muted trumpet and high cellos in somewhat uncomfortable unison. When the "good ghost" of the unfairly charged maid takes the room, her Spanish background is suggested by a lightly exotic melody – a motif not heard in this suite till very near the end. But the darker elements of the score reign supreme in **Grandfather and the Cliff** 8, when Stella's dying grandfather tries to save her from the ghost of his very own daughter, a situation that finds the ghost nearly succeeding in sending Stella over the cliff once more, the trumpets screaming more frantically than before as the girl runs headlong toward certain death. And listen, just moments before the trumpets explode in panic, as two flutes trade off rapid-fire chromatic passages, followed by demonic runs in the strings, other woodwinds and the xylophone, conjuring up the ghostly apparition of evil Mary Meredith as she reaches out for Stella – chilling music that can raise goose-bumps.

In the score's last minutes, with Stella safe and the mystery at last solved, the dead maid's melody is given room to flower before Young musically acknowledges that all is well, at least with this particular poltergeist. He does this through a fuller treatment in **End of Ghost** 9 of the comforting theme first heard toward the end of **The Sobbing Ghost**. All that remains afterward is for the glib hero to give Mary Meredith's ghost one good tongue-lashing before shaming her into giving up the grounds for good (though, judging by her final presence in the score, she puts up one solid front). Thereafter Young's love theme *Stella by Starlight* wraps things up amidst smiles and wisecracks. (Amazingly, everyone seems quickly to have forgotten poor Grandfather's body upstairs.) Victor Young certainly had reason to smile. The movie showcased one of his finest melodies. He had every reason to feel proud of the rest of the score, too.

Young's talents both as a composer and arranger set sail in *Gulliver's Travels* (1939), famed cartoonist Max Fleischer's bid to sketch himself into feature-length animated films in the same manner that Walt Disney was then attempting. But while Disney was able to build on his success in *Snow White and The Seven Dwarfs* (1937), the creator of Popeye the Sailor and Betty Boop found full-length cartoon films somewhat unwieldy. The ambitious *Gulliver's Travels* certainly has a great deal to recommend it, even if much of the sharp wit and globe-trotting adventure furnished by Jonathan Swift is absent. In fact, the film was hindered by several factors, including wildly uneven production values. Most notably, Max Fleischer, for all his talents in shorter animated films, lacked the keen vision required to make a more substantial work. "The crucial point that Disney understood and Fleischer's staff did not was that, in a short subject, an audience did not demand characterization; personality and gags were enough," Leonard Maltin wrote in his insightful *Of Mice and Magic* (MacGraw-Hill, 1980). "But in a feature, one had to present a character with depth and feelings with which the audience could identify. Otherwise there was nothing to hold the viewer's interest for 80 minutes." Indeed, while *Gulliver's Travels* may enchant children, the characters are way too thinly sketched. Even the warm, congenial giant Lemuel Gulliver is largely limited to saying, "My, my," on most occasions – hardly the foundation for true wit. The only character who seems to have any sense in Lilliput is red-haired town-crier Gabby (and Leonard Maltin has repeatedly stated how obnoxious he found him).

One thing Max Fleischer's cartoons relied on heavily, though, was music. Busy Paramount tune-smiths Leo Robin and Ralph Rainger provided most of the songs, including the engaging *All's Well*, which Gabby sings as he marches right into the hand of a sleeping giant who has been washed onto the beach near Lilliput. And while not by Robin and Rainger, the song *It's a Hap-Hap-Happy Day* was joyfully worked into the musical mix. Maltin – an unabashed fan of animation and an obvious admirer of Fleischer's earlier works – suggests the songs might have been better, but that's fairly debatable. Most of the songs compare favourably with those in Disney feature films from the same period. (And, as further proof of the pair's talent, Rainger and Robin won a song-writing Oscar months before with a tremendously winning tune for the otherwise forgettable film *The Big Broadcast of 1938*, a tune Bob Hope made distinctly his own for the rest of his long career – *Thanks for the Memory*.) Of Victor Young's dynamic orchestral score for *Gulliver's Travels*, there need be no such debate. In *Gulliver's Travels*, Young's ease with the material – even when many of the melodies were not from his own pen – is obvious from the very outset, the main title or **Prelude** 10 joyfully touching upon snippets of songs to come, never lingering long, only long enough to tantalize. In short fashion, he mentions, initially in the brass, the theme for Gulliver himself (*I Hear a Dream*), followed by bits from *Faithful*, *All's Well*, *Bluebirds in the Moonlight*, *We're All Together Now*, *Forever* and *It's a Hap-Hap-Happy Day*, before a chorus joins in to bring us back to Gulliver. Quickly we are hurled into the raging sea which will wash Mr. Gulliver from his ship and leave him in the land of the tiny Lilliputians. This fanciful prelude boasts music that cannot help but bring an innocent smile for all those who revel in childhood adventure yarns painted in sunny tones.

Under musical circumstances, it's hard to blame Fleischer's script-writers for dumping the story's main bone of contention – two shaker-sized kings warring over which end of an egg to crack – and replacing it with their violent disagreement over what song to sing at the marriage of their royal children. One need have only the most meagre musical education to realize how Gulliver will solve this dilemma for the two tiny kingdoms – proposing that the love-songs be properly married and sung together (which Young does ever-so-briefly when he touches upon *Faithful* moments into the aforementioned **Prelude**). Meanwhile, there is much else in which to revel musically, such as the purposeful **Pussyfoot March** 11, which finds Gabby stealthily leading the townspeople out of the village and through a starlit night to find and bind the sleeping giant, then haul him back to the king. **Giant in Tow** 12 finds Gulliver, still out cold, flat on his back and being carted away by horses and villagers toward the kingdom of Lilliput, the heavy burden and enormous power required to transport the hefty load conveyed by the deepest recesses of the orchestra, while upper strings, winds and light percussion wonderfully suggest the continuing hustle and bustle of the little people.

Although these toilings are briefly interrupted by the king's reaction to the giant the Lilliputians have brought to the palace door – represented by a madly rushing figure in upper strings and woodwind against a royal fanfare in **Gabby and the King** 13, humorously conveying a frightened ruler who has fled straight back to bed – the Lilliputians' industriousness continues to dominate the score. Lemuel Gulliver awakens only after the little people accidentally fire his "thunder machine," blasting away a tower. Heavy orchestral chords represent what Lilliputians are sure is doom for them all, sending those instrumental forces favouring them into panic. Gulliver's warmly reassuring and thoroughly heroic theme, announced in this scene by the brass, alerts us that the giant in Lilliput has only the most honourable of intentions, though judging by the increasing nervousness in the rest of the orchestra – woodwind frantically alternating with upper strings – it's also obvious villagers don't recognize this right off. Yet another frantic turn in the orchestra, underlined by a quotation from the song *Forever,* informs us that the kingdom of Lilliput is under attack by the stubborn ruler so attached to that tune. Gulliver's size quickly puts the invaders to flight, with the *Forever* motif crumbling in the process. Afterwards, amidst the eerie still of Lilliput, Gulliver's broad theme once again comes to the fore, flexing its muscle in the brass, then in the rest of the orchestra. In the **Finale** 14 of this suite, the heartbreaking woes of the little people are acknowledged, along with bright hopes for their days ahead. Gulliver's theme then makes a last appearance, this time with choral accompaniment, as our hero sets off to sea. The lyrics indicate what is already felt in the music:

Come back again, come back,
Wherever you may be.

Come back again, you sailor man,
Sailor man.
Back again, from the sea.

Although Victor Young had only been scoring films four years when he wrote the "atmospheric music" (as he's credited in the film's titles) for *Gulliver's Travels*, he quickly came to be seen as someone brimming with musical invention and capable of writing on deadline. While Paramount kept him busiest at his new craft, other studios such as RKO, Republic and MGM tapped his talent early on, even before he was nominated for an Academy Award for his *Gulliver's Travels* music. Not long afterward, for instance, Young was brought in to score Columbia's western *Arizona* by studio executives who were worried about the finished film and hoped Young's scoring could bolster the picture. (To no surprise of veteran composers asked to perform such musical miracles, it didn't.) Incidentally, when the 1939 Academy Awards were handed out, Young's *Gulliver's Travels* lost in the original scoring category to Herbert Stothart for *The Wizard of Oz* (which, for the record, also edged out Aaron Copland's *Of Mice and Men*, Alfred Newman's *Wuthering Heights* and Max Steiner's mammoth score for *Gone With the Wind*). For his part, Young didn't seem to mind losing out to *The Wizard of Oz*. In fact, he could take special solace in the fact that he had conducted the orchestra in the huge hit record made of teenaged Judy Garland singing *Over the Rainbow*, the film's most beloved song.

By the time Young came to score Warner Bros.' *Bright Leaf* a decade later, he was a seasoned pro at film composing and showed no signs of weariness, despite a pace that would shatter most composers. Besides continuing to score as many pictures as, if not more than, other composers, he also kept making records and doing radio broadcasts, in addition to writing occasional songs. And while most biographies state he had abandoned his so-called "serious music" written specifically for the concert hall, a casual look at his work reveals a number of such pieces, including *An Elegy to FDR*, suggesting Erich Wolfgang Korngold, with his titanic symphony, wasn't the only composer with a Hollywood background prompted to remember the late war-time president. Family and friends suggested Young slow his maddening pace, but the composer probably thought he knew how to relax. This he did sometimes at his home in Desert Hot Springs (where he eventually suffered his stroke), sometimes at the home of his sister, Helen Hill. "His love was music and cards – gin rummy, actually," niece Bobbie Hill Fromberg recalled on occasion of the re-recording at hand. "They had these three-day card games on weekends. He'd meet with Dimitri Tiomkin, Max Steiner, Leo Forbstein, Lou Forbes and my father, Henry Hill, among others. You know, someone actually *died* during one of these games, but before they did anything else, they called someone to take the hand he had! Only after that did they call the wife, then the mortuary!" On another occasion, Young and his fellow card-players played a terrible joke on Max Steiner, whose eyesight was by this time fast in decline. "The only thing he could see was women, music and cards," Fromberg said. "One time they had my mother serve Max dog biscuits with their tea and coffee or whatever. Max liked them so much he told his chauffeur to find out what kind of cookies they were because he wanted them for his own home. Everyone around the table thought that was so funny, taking advantage of a blind man! They had a wonderful time together."

Tepid though director Michael Curtiz's tobacco dynasty drama *Bright Leaf* (1950) is, the film must have struck a chord with cigar-chomping Victor Young, for it prompted from him one of his most restrained and thoughtful film scores. Certainly the film promised much, if only for its cast alone – Gary Cooper playing a down-on-his-luck Southern tobacco farmer parlaying what few resources he has into a successful cigarette empire, all the while wooing his rival's quirky, trouble-causing daughter, portrayed by Patricia Neal, and ignoring the stereotypical girl with a heart of gold, played by Lauren Bacall. In the end, however, this bleak, draggy drama, complete with utterly downbeat ending, was sunk further by miscasting. In a ticklish 1997 interview with Kevin Shinnick in *Scarlet Street*, Patricia Neal admitted how terribly she longed for Bacall's rôle. "I did everything except kill myself I so badly wanted it," she told Shinnick, "and they wouldn't even *think* about it." Neal was on-target in her complaint. The film might well have taken on a new energy had the two lead actresses exchanged rôles. As it was, Bacall came off tired, hackneyed and unconvincing in her rôle, while Neal proved weirdly off-putting but little else. The fact both were playing up to a leading man that, alas, seemed too old for the part didn't help. In the end, *Bright Leaf*

had little to recommend it beyond ever-reliable actor Donald Crisp's brooding portrayal of an old tobacco tycoon driven to dark extremes and Victor Young's magnificent score, providing a colour and verve the film itself lacks and furnishing a motif for determined tobacco farmer Brant Royle that is genuinely American in its yearning.

One of Young's few film scores for Warner Bros., *Bright Leaf* works well both as a soundtrack and music on its own. The **Prelude** 15 offers up a broadly arching theme that captures the aspirations of Brant Royle in its endless striving. Young offers other material in this stretch of music, including a slow-going passage suggesting the Old South and bitter-sweet homecoming Royle is finding; disturbing tones for Major Singleton, who has long bedevilled Royle's family; and the spry suggestion of a jig that briefly infuses humour and vitality into Royle's return to Kingsmont. This is the same Old South so wonderfully captured by Young's friend Ferde Grofé in his own lively *Mississippi Suite*, William Grant Still in his many symphonic works and Max Steiner in such films as *Gone With the Wind* and *Band of Angels* (and, indeed, Young's work on *Bright Leaf* came at the behest of Steiner, who like his friend at Paramount had managed to get himself overcommitted in scoring assignments). In the opening scene to *Bright Leaf*, Young remains faithful to his protagonist's theme, successfully negotiating it through the various moods conjured up by other material. Only in the last seconds is Brant Royle's theme overwhelmed by uncertainty in the orchestra. **Sonia** 16 comes across like the shadow of a waltz, engaging enough but also ill-fated, mirroring the well-intentioned woman of the town whose love for Royle is continually ignored. On the other hand, **Margaret** 18, scored for Brant Royle's nightside encounter with the rich old tycoon's daughter, is utterly bewitching, partially because it never firmly settles on a theme, hinting of many delectable things – all of them intriguing to the ear, yet none ever quite fulfilled. It well reflects the courtship on view in the film – frustrating and ill-fated, yet weirdly tantalizing. Skilful orchestration and enchanting wisps of melody allow this cue to maintain interest, even apart from the on-screen action.

Some of the most enjoyable moments in Young's score come from the film's montages, including that entailing the success of a new-fangled cigarette-machine – **Machine Montage** 17 – a piece as dynamic and to the point as Mossolov's famous *Iron Foundry*, the orchestra chugging along at an unrelenting pace, Brant Royle's motif at one point breaking out triumphantly in the brass. Only near the very end does this breathless montage pause to show Major Singleton's own cousin sneaking a cigarette manufactured by the family's arch-rival, her lighting of a match captured by a rapid-fire high flute (and just seconds before the disapproving major comes into the room, hence the dark tones at the end). The second montage – **Tobacco Montage** 19 – showing the expansion of Brant Royle's tobacco empire, is almost as spirited, exploding into a furious passage taxing strings and trumpets most of all, the brass shouting out success. **Sonia and The Wedding** 21 is yet another montage, the music beginning in promising fashion, complete with mention of Mendelssohn's wedding march, only for things to turn dark toward the cue's finish.

Drama surges forth in other portions of the score, though Young's writing is always sure enough to stand on its own. The cue **Suicide** 20 is scored for the sequence in which the proud old tobacco tycoon, having thoroughly humiliated himself in a bar-room standoff with Royle, leaves shattered, only to dispatch himself in his waiting carriage. The mounting tragedy reaches its height as drums accompany the horse-drawn carriage and the dead major in their mad rush home. The score's final stretch, beginning with **Southern Vengeance** 22, finds the major's daughter, now Royle's wife, confessing at last how she has gained revenge on her husband, beginning at the moment of their wedding vows, the strings painstakingly climbing to the heights of insanity (or at least as high as Young dared go in a drama about revenge among genteel Southern folks) before wild harp glissandi break the tension. Soon the orchestra is erupting in calamity as an enraged Brant Royle accidentally sets fire to the mansion he has struggled so hard to occupy. Later the score returns to musical materials heard at the beginning of this suite, including the reassuring little waltz symbolizing a woman not pursued and a passage suggesting that life will go on in the South, whatever the fortunes of Brant Royle. The score ends with Royle's striving theme once again triumphing over all else, seemingly promising better things on the road ahead.

For all his success, Young's career promised new heights in the 1950s, much of it borne upon his delightfully shimmering score *Scaramouche* (1952) for MGM, the

aforementioned seafaring romp *Blackbeard the Pirate* for RKO and his exhilarating music for *Strategic Air Command* (1955) back at Paramount. The composer was particularly delighted when he was tapped to write a score for *The Brave One*, a film about a boy and his beloved bull. As Young recalled later, producers informed him simply, "It's your baby now," prompting from the composer a Latin-flavoured composition he found "deeply satisfying". No less than Hollywood producer David O. Selznick – a man whose best-known productions boasted scores by Steiner and Tiomkin – singled out Young for praise late in his own career. While watching over actress and wife Jennifer Jones' involvement in *Ruby Gentry* in 1952, Selznick fired off one of his famous memos to director King Vidor on the subject of film scores and hit songs, strongly proposing Victor Young as an "extremely practical and successful man in doing scores without chichi, and without tricks and without nonsense and within economic boundaries". (For whatever reason, the scoring assignment went instead to Heinz Roemheld.) For all this praise, Young's habit of overloading himself with work and ignoring his health finally caught up with him. While his huge score for Michael Todd's *Around the World in Eighty Days* finally netted him an Oscar, it was to be, sadly, a posthumous honour. Old friends stepped in to complete other projects left undone by the fallen composer, including colleague Max Steiner, who finished up work on the film *China Gate*.

In the years since his death, Victor Young's film music has largely faded from the public mind, to the degree his finest work has remained untouched even after interest in re-recording great works of golden-age film music erupted in the 1970s. Today some critics still suggest his music is too overwhelming or too sentimental, even for the much-maligned art of film scoring. But others in Young's colourful musical orbit – ranging from his cherished idol Rachmaninov to his disciple Henry Mancini – have survived such barbed arrows of criticism, and it is quite likely Young will, too. As long as captivating tunes, vibrant harmonies and a straightforward desire to delight, amuse and invigorate in utterly imaginative ways are treasured by music-lovers, Young's music will always be in the wings, if not on the air. For all the success Young enjoyed during his lifetime, he knew full well the crazy and careless whims of others when it came to music and musicians. Shortly before his death, he recalled how earlier in his career a director brought him by Selznick's office, only for the famed producer to exclaim, apparently to Young's utter, everlasting amusement: "This man can compose music? He looks more like a prize-fighter to me!"

Bill Whitaker, 1998

Notes by the Arranger

When we embarked on the Marco Polo Classic Film Music series, it was a foregone conclusion that we would tackle a Victor Young album at some point. As the first major American film composer to die (in 1956), he never lived to see any serious interest in him as a dramatic composer of film scores. Young, who had a penchant for writing memorable tunes and songs, must also be classified a first-class film composer who knew what to do with those tunes and developed them in subtle and unique ways in his scores. In an interview with the *Chicago Sun-Times* near the end of his life, Young commented: "Writing a movie score is like a boy sitting in the balcony seat with a girl. He must be forceful enough to impress the girl but not loud enough to attract the usher!"

We start the album with the rousing **Prelude** (the main title sequence) to *The Greatest Show on Earth*, which consists of a march, the principal motif in the film. For a big Cecil B. DeMille production, money was naturally no object and Victor Young and orchestrator George Parrish used a very large ensemble consisting of two piccolos, one oboe, two E flat clarinets, two B flat clarinets, two tenor saxophones, one bassoon, four French horns, two euphoniums, six trumpets, four trombones, two tubas, percussion battery employing six players, piano, two harps, novachord and strings.

Most casual listeners know *The Uninvited* for the song that came out of it, *Stella by Starlight*, which has been recorded numerous times. This, however, is the first recording of the dramatic score itself. In assembling this suite, I noticed that some of the conductor books indicated much more music in several cues than is actually heard in the final release of the film. Some of this was due to post-scoring editing, but a great deal of it was eliminated for

dramatic reasons. The truth is the film works well without these scored sections and the right decision was probably made. However, the music is so atmospheric and moody, I couldn't resist putting it into our recording. After all, we need not concern ourselves here with the dramatics of the film, only the integrity of the music itself. Most of the musical cuts appear in **The Sobbing Ghost**, **Grandfather and the Cliff** and **End of Ghost**. Because many key full scores were missing or incomplete, I have reconstructed this music to the original orchestral specifications of double woodwind, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, three percussion, piano, two harps (which we have recorded stereophonically) and strings.

Composers such as Alfred Newman, Max Steiner, Ray Heindorf and John Green, among many others, have often adapted and incorporated songs and other compositions into their scores when called for. *Gulliver's Travels* was Young's greatest achievement in this area and he was nominated for an Oscar in that very musically prolific year of 1939. A great deal of the atmospheric music Victor Young provided was based on songs written for the film by Ralph Rainger and Leo Robin. Young's interpolations were masterful. In reconstructing the music for this suite, we have included full chorus and even reinstated it in the **Finale**, where it was originally dropped during the last statement of *I Hear a Dream*. The orchestra for *Gulliver's Travels* consists of four flutes, two oboes, three clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, five percussion, harp, keyboard (celeste and piano), choir and strings, with woodwind doubling the usual auxiliary instruments.

Max Steiner was originally scheduled to score Warner Bros.' production of *Bright Leaf*, but other assignments prevailed so that he recommended his friend Victor Young for the job to music director Ray Heindorf, who subsequently borrowed Young from Paramount. The **Finale**, as recorded here, differs slightly from the actual film's soundtrack as the character of the little black farm boy (who is introduced at the film's beginning) meets Brant Royle during the last moments of the film. This latter scene was cut, but we decided to restore this portion of the score, as it rounds out the proceedings and makes for a satisfactory conclusion on purely musical grounds. In putting this suite together, we were fortunate to have the original full scores, as orchestrated by Leo Shuken and Sidney Cutner. The orchestra used for *Bright Leaf* consists of two flutes, two oboes, five clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, four percussion, two pianos, celeste, harp and strings.

I want to thank my friend, conductor William Stromberg, who really caught the spirit of fun in his authentic readings with the marvellous Moscow Symphony Orchestra. Also, I must thank the members of the MSO and all the good people in Moscow who made sure we had what was needed for these diverse suites. Thanks also go to Bill Whitaker, whose tireless research and writing skills make these liner notes as delightful as the music itself. Finally, my thanks to Klaus Heymann and the people at Marco Polo whose support of these recordings makes it a joy for all of us involved.

John Morgan, 1998

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David and Kathleen Schecter • Mark Frisbie • Bob Tiffany • Ann Whitaker • B. A. Waltrip • Ray Faiola

Moscow Symphony Orchestra

The Moscow Symphony Orchestra was established in 1989. During the following years the orchestra not only survived the period of economic difficulties, but strengthened its position and became one of the top Russian orchestras. Since 1996, under the general sponsorship of Nestlé, the MSO has performed an annual series of concerts in the Grand Hall of the Moscow Conservatory. Famous Russian and foreign conductors of the orchestra include Vladimir Ziva, Sergey Stadler and Arnold Katz, and it has performed with outstanding soloists such as Yuri Bashmet, Victor Tretyakov, Vadim Repin, Alexander Knyazev and Alexander Rudin. Apart from its educational work and its extensive concert programmes the orchestra has been widely acclaimed for its outstanding recordings, with over a hundred since 1994, principally for Naxos and Marco Polo. International awards for its recordings include CD of the Month by the American magazine *CD Review*, the prestigious French Diapason d'Or and the Chairman's Choice at the Cannes Classical Awards. *The Economist* voted the orchestra's recording of film music by Bernard Herrmann [Marco Polo 8.225168 / Naxos 8.570186] one of the ten best records of the year. It has also recorded music tracks for several Hollywood films. The Orchestra has toured in the United States, Japan, South Korea and Western Europe. Its chief conductor and artistic director is Arthur Arnold. **www.moscowsymphony.ru/en**

William Stromberg

Born in 1964, William Stromberg was introduced to the world of classical music at a very early age. His filmmaker father filled the house with the sounds of classic film scores by such great composers as Erich Korngold, Bernard Herrmann and Max Steiner. Through the constant study of the classical scores that inspired these film composers, he developed a passion for music that laid the foundation for his career. A native Californian, Stromberg moved to Hollywood when he was eighteen to study privately under the tutelage of film-composer John Morgan. He soon began conducting his own film scores and garnered a well-respected reputation as a gifted composer and conductor. He has scored more than a dozen feature films including the thriller *Other Voices*, the documentary *Trinity and Beyond*, *Killing Streets*, *Edge of Honor* and *Starship Troopers 2.* His devotion to classic film scores cultivated several joint ventures with John Morgan in reconstructing and recording the works of such composers as Max Steiner, Erich Wolfgang Korngold, Alfred Newman, Philip Sainton, Adolph Deutsch, Hans J. Salter, Victor Young and Sir Malcolm Arnold, available on the Naxos and Marco Polo labels. He has also conducted several much-praised Naxos albums devoted to concert works by American composers, including two albums of music by Ferde Grofé. In 2008, he led the Moscow Symphony Orchestra in a massive re-recording of Bernard Herrmann's *Mysterious Island* for his and John Morgan's own label Tribute Film Classics. Stromberg is much in demand among Hollywood composers as a conductor of film music and sound-track recordings, as well as undertaking engagements to conduct renowned European orchestras.

John Morgan

Widely regarded in film-music circles as a master colourist with a keen insight into orchestration and the power of music, Los Angeles-based composer John Morgan began his career working as an orchestrator alongside such composers as Alex North, Bruce Broughton and Fred Steiner before embarking on his own composing assignments. Among other projects, he co-composed the richly dramatic score for the cult-documentary film *Trinity and Beyond*, described by one critic as "an atomic-age *Fantasia*, thanks to its spectacular nuclear explosions and powerhouse music." In addition, Morgan has won acclaim for efforts to rescue, restore and re-record lost film scores from the past, including Hans J. Salter's spooky *House of Frankenstein*, Hugo Friedhofer's moving *The Rains of Ranchipur*, Roy Webb's *Cat People* and Max Steiner's *The Most Dangerous Game*. More recently, Morgan and conductor William Stromberg with the Moscow Symphony Orchestra recorded Bernard Herrmann's *Fahrenheit 451* and *Walking Distance* for their own Tribute Film Classics label.

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FILM MUSIC CLASSICS

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VICTOR YOUNG
(1900–1956)

The Uninvited
Gulliver's Travels
Bright Leaf
The Greatest Show on Earth

Moscow Symphony Orchestra & Chorus
conducted by William Stromberg

The Greatest Show on Earth (1952)
Orchestrations: George Parrish

1	Prelude (March)	2:16

The Uninvited (1944) 24:10
Reconstructions: John Morgan

2	Prelude	1:36
3	Squirrel Chase	1:24
4	The Village	0:46
5	The Sobbing Ghost	4:22
6	Sunday Morning – Stella's Emotions	3:07
7	The Cliff	2:35
8	Grandfather and the Cliff	4:41
9	End of Ghost – Finale	5:33

Gulliver's Travels (1939) 16:38
Reconstructions: John Morgan

10	Prelude – The Scroll and Storm	3:57
11	Pussyfoot March	0:45
12	Giant in Tow	1:34
13	Gabby and the King – The Tower – The Archers	7:19
14	Finale	3:01

Bright Leaf (1950) 26:20
Orchestrations: Leo Shuken & Sidney Cutner

15	Prelude – Welcome to Kingsmont	6:04
16	Sonia	1:41
17	Machine Montage	2:26
18	Margaret	3:29
19	Tobacco Montage	1:18
20	Suicide	1:43
21	Sonia and The Wedding	3:08
22	Southern Vengeance – The Fire – Finale	6:29

Victor Young was one of Hollywood's busiest and most esteemed film composers, his upbeat and engaging style ensuring that viewers left the cinema with a catchy tune in their ears. His lively circus march captures the spirit of *The Greatest Show on Earth*, and his Broadway-cum-Rachmaninov and eerie score for *The Uninvited* with its hit tune *Stella by Starlight* was pivotal to arguably the best Hollywood ghost story ever produced. The animated *Gulliver's Travels* relied heavily for its charm and dramatic impact on Young's fabulous orchestrations, while the tobacco dynasty drama *Bright Leaf* inspired one of his most restrained and thoughtful film scores.

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