

The Naxos logo, featuring the word "NAXOS" in a bold, serif font inside a rectangular frame with decorative elements.A banner with a film strip border containing the text "FILM MUSIC CLASSICS" in a large, white, serif font.A scenic landscape at sunset or sunrise, with a river winding through a valley and mountains in the background. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and purple.

Max Steiner
The TREASURE of the
SIERRA MADRE

The Classic 1948 Film Score

Moscow Symphony Orchestra and Chorus • William Stromberg

Max Steiner (1888–1971)

Music for the film

The Treasure of the Sierra Madre 1948

Score restoration by John Morgan

Behind the Scenes

The theme of greed coupled with a tale of what happens when three men find gold can be traced back to the fourteenth century in one of the stories from Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*. In fact, earlier versions exist in Latin, Italian, and German. But Chaucer's exact source, if he had one, is not known.

B. Traven's most famous novel, *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, originally published in Germany in 1927, is a study of human greed and how it affects three gold prospectors in Mexico. The book was published in America in 1935. Often referred to as "the mysterious B. Traven," the author guarded the secrecy of his identity all his life. Conjectures, theories, and interpretations are still being put forth.

After a ten-month convoluted legal search to ascertain who B. Traven was and if the title could be cleared owing to a confusing international copyright status, Warner Bros., with some trepidation, finally purchased the rights in September 1942 for \$6,500.

Following service in World War II, writer-director John Huston returned to Warners and was assigned *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, which he had recommended the studio purchase. In his early draft of the script (17th August, 1946), Huston designated the following casting choices: "Dobbs – a guy like Humphrey Bogart; Howard – a guy like Walter Huston (with his teeth out); Curtin – a guy like Burgess Meredith; Lecaude (changed to Cody) – a guy like Ronald Reagan."

In a letter to Huston dated 4th January, 1947, the book's author, replying to correspondence from Huston, said he felt actor Walter Huston, John's father, was "too robust, too healthy and looks too young for the part. My idea would have been somebody like (MGM player) Lewis Stone, really old, stocky, looking sickly somehow, more short than tall, inclined to stoop, making the impression that he might drop down any minute ... The surprise should be that ... (he) beats any of those who brag about their being the tough guys." However, Walter Huston was cast – without his false teeth. Then Tim Holt was cast as Curtin and Bruce Bennett as Cody.

If you look quickly, you can spot unbilled actor Jack Holt, the father of Tim Holt, during the scene in the Tampico flophouse.

On the fifth day of filming at the studio, prior to leaving for location shooting in Mexico, the in-joke pattern continued. Warner contract star Ann Sheridan, as "a good luck gesture," agreed to do an unbilled "silent bit part" of a passing prostitute who walks by Dobbs (Bogart) and goes into a Tampico rooming house. Sheridan was made up and wardrobe for the role, but actress Florita Romero is in the finished film – at least in the foreground. Sheridan may have taken over in the last part of the shot, when the woman is seen in the distance. Or an alternate protection shot may well have been made in case Sheridan proved too recognizable on the screen in the studio projection room.

The bandit "Gold Hat" (Alfonso Bedoya) appears

only once in Traven's novel – during the attack on the train episode. In the film, “Gold Hat” encounters the prospectors three times. When Traven questioned the change in a letter to Huston, the director explained that this “would serve to bring out the fate that pursued Dobbs ... The primary purpose was to give the moving picture a certain dramatic unity which novels don't necessarily require to be great novels. Pictures and plays, however, seem to fall apart when new characters and incidents are introduced in final scenes.”

Sierra Madre and the Unstoppable Max Steiner

Four basic periods mark Max Steiner's long film-composing career. The first period covered his RKO, Selznick and Warner years through 1937. These were the experimental and innovative years when film music came into its own as an American art form. The RKO years offered comparatively little reward or recognition (each *King Kong* or *She* or *The Most Dangerous Game* was matched by twenty minimally scored potboilers) and the Selznick years offered innumerable headaches. At Warners, starting with *The Charge of the Light Brigade* in 1936, Steiner achieved recognition and autonomy and he composed for the studio, though not exclusively, till his retirement in 1965.

Beginning in 1938, Steiner's scores took on a much more lavish and extended quality. The musical relation between one cue and the next was greatly enhanced and his scores became more singularly cohesive. This golden period included *Four Daughters*, *Angels With Dirty Faces*, *Now, Voyager*, *Since You Went Away* and *Tomorrow Is Forever*. Steiner generally scored eight to ten pictures a year (thirteen including *Gone with the Wind* in 1939) till the early 1940s when his pace slackened. After doing five films per year from 1943-45, Steiner began working at tempo furioso in 1946. These ensuing renaissance years lasted till 1954 when his pace

For *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, John Huston won two Academy Awards in 1949: Best Director and Best Screenplay. Walter Huston received the Award for Best Supporting Actor. This was the first time a father and son received Oscars for the same film.

Rudy Behlmer

Author of *Inside Warner Bros.*, *Memo From David O. Selznick*, *Behind the Scenes: The Making Of . . .*, etc.

reverted to one of human endurance (though still resulting in many remarkable scores, including *The Searchers* and *A Summer Place*). However, from 1946-53 Max averaged ten pictures a year. In 1948, the year of *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* and his sixtieth birthday, Steiner astonishingly scored twelve features.

This was not only a period of quantity but also of remarkable quality and diversity – soap operas (*My Reputation*), comedies (*Life With Father*), film noir (*The Big Sleep*), military extravaganzas (*Fighter Squadron*), gothic horror (*The Beast with Five Fingers*), swashbucklers (*Adventures of Don Juan*), and hybrid classics such as *Pursued* and *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* (both containing noir and western elements). While not every picture was a classic, each score was prepared as though the film might turn out to be so.

Max's success as a supremely versatile composer may have contributed to the somewhat tarnished reputation attached to his music for *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, for how can one so adept at scoring so many diverse genres possibly excel at composing for any one of them! At the time of the picture's release the score was universally hailed, earning Max the Vienna Cinema Exhibition Award. While he did receive an Oscar nomination that year, it was for *Johnny Belinda*

(an Academy loss that Max deeply regretted). However, as *Sierra Madre* has garnered praise as a cinema masterpiece, some critics have complained that Max's full-blown musical accompaniment is intrusive and detracts from the otherwise "realistic" style of the film. Others (including Steiner's former orchestrator Hugo Friedhofer) have charged the music is of "Spanish" rather than "Mexican" character.

An objective analysis of the film will surely find that Steiner's instincts were, as usual, right on target. As for the "Spanish" quality of the music, this claim may partly be due to the fact the score is dramatic rather than merely illustrative and, therefore, has a more Romantic-era construction. Had Steiner simply played guitars in the background or limited his score to "source" cues (music that emanates from an on-screen source), it would have featured sparse orchestration and would have been specific to the Mexican setting, but would not have the more grandiose sound that appears to have offended some purists.

Also, while the location is Mexico, the characters are American. Were the story about three Mexican prospectors, the music would have been very different indeed. As it happens, a definite Spanish sound was devised by Steiner for *Adventures of Don Juan* later that same year. Then too, Steiner proved many times his affinity for the Mexican idiom, as in *Raton Pass*, *The Last Command* and *South of St. Louis*, so it is not as if Max was confused by variable Latin flavors. (By contrast, Dimitri Tiomkin seemed completely off-course scoring the South American-set *Blowing Wild* with Mexican folk songs.)

As for Steiner's "intrusive" score, *Sierra Madre* is, in fact, very much a "studio" picture. While most of the shooting took place at various Warners exteriors, as well as locations in Mexico, there was still a considerable amount of rear-screen process work and interior studio shooting to belie the "documentary" style of filmmaking

that has been ascribed to John Huston's classic. With regard to the characters devised by novelist B.Traven, they're as extraordinary as are the performances by their screen portrayers: Humphrey Bogart does a magnificent job of showing the progression of Fred C. Dobbs' paranoia, evident in even the earliest sequences; Oscar-winner Walter Huston gives the performance of his screen career as the elderly prospector Howard, alternately ragged rascal and reluctant executioner; and western hero Tim Holt, who had proved himself dramatically in *The Magnificent Ambersons*, is in fine sagebrush form as Curtin. The bandits weren't picked up off the streets of Tampico either. Alfonso Bedoya and José Torvay were well-established actors in the Mexican film industry. And while a Lawrence Tierney might have made Gringo Pat McCormick more of a "noir" villain, Barton MacLane's presence as the swindling American contractor reassures us that this is a first-class Warner Bros. epic all the way.

All this is pointed out as evidence that Max Steiner was not intruding on new cinematic ground but doing what he did better than anyone else in Hollywood — providing musical accompaniment to a very well-told story. Try to imagine *Treasure* without the "Trek" motif playing as the three prospectors make their way through the mountain territory. Turn down the soundtrack when they spy the banditos below making their way up the hillside and see if the scene plays with the same dreaded anticipation as with Steiner's subtle scoring. See if your heart still leaps without the Federales' fanfare blaring as the soldiers come to rescue, or if it still breaks while Curtin reads the letter from Cody's wife, now his widow. Imagine Howard and Curtin's desperate ride to the ruins to rescue their goods without Max's bold, minor key mountain motif playing at gallop pace, encouraging the spectator to say to himself, "C'mon, hurry up! Hurry up!"

This score glistens with numerous touches of

Steiner's often overlooked brilliance in the art of film scoring. When two of the prospectors believe they've found gold (in Track 4 of this recording), Steiner employs some of his trademark musical illustration technique by using a combination of percussion (triangle, small suspended cymbal, small bells, gong) and keyboards (two harps, two vibraphones, two pianos and celesta) to heighten the musical excitement of the discovery. For a sequence in which the old prospector leaves the field to tend to a sick boy in a destitute Mexican village (Track 12), the scene is sensitively scored for a wordless choir, chanting mournfully till life returns to the boy, at which time the voices become beholden to answered prayers. Steiner's choral work here and elsewhere (including *She*, *Tomorrow Is Forever* and *Gone with the Wind*) is often overlooked by his critics, but it was always employed subtly and, often, subliminally. The chorales herein are more foreground in nature, but remarkably subtle in expression. Perhaps most impressive of all in Steiner's *Treasure* music is his scoring for the scene in which the surviving prospectors find the fruit of their back-breaking labors literally scattered by the wind. The high-pitched whirring of strings with female voices enhances the deafening sound of the wind, which has blown the gold back to where it came from. All of this plays in the film amid almost maniacal laughter from Howard and Curtin, who can only look at their loss as a terrific joke.

Also included in our recording is the scoring of the film's theatrical trailer. Almost all of Warners' trailers featured specially composed scores utilizing thematic material from the pictures. The *Treasure* trailer score gave 1948 audiences as much a preview of the exciting music they would soon be hearing as well as a peek at what would be one of the year's best films. Our presentation of the score ends with an alternate main title, nearly identical with the final film version but for the use of Steiner's famous 1937 Warner fanfare, and an

alternate finale, which suggests a more optimistic resolution to this story of greed and paranoia. The rescored version obviously reflected a crucial change in how the film would end, with the released picture's ominous finale definitely more effective.

Steiner's music enhances the drama and excitement of *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*. Were it not for his score, it might still be a great film but not nearly as appealing. And therein lies the single-most constant factor in Steiner's compositions – appeal. While he felt that music must be subordinate to the on-screen elements, it must also have emotional appeal if it is to serve any purpose at all. With his Viennese background, it was natural for his music to be primarily melodic in character and rich but not overly decorative in orchestration. The development of his melodies and the progression of his orchestration during the course of a picture made Steiner the premier dramatist of film composers.

As for his philosophy, Max's musical optimism was usually reflected in the End Cast of every score he wrote. When Zola dies at the end of *The Life of Emile Zola*, it is not the great writer's theme that closes the picture but that of Cézanne, his surviving friend who had berated Zola for losing sight of the important aspects of life; when Rocky dies in the chair at the end of *Angels With Dirty Faces*, it is the Father Connolly theme that plays over the End Cast, signifying the continuation of Rocky's childhood friend in his work to better the lives of "his boys;" though the End Title of *Dark Victory* is spiritually in keeping with Judith Traherne's brave death, the End Cast utilizes her husband's theme, who survives her and continues with his noble medical research; and at the conclusion of *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, while the End Title concludes the drama retributively over the empty bag of gold, the End Cast joyfully revives the earlier announced "Fruit Harvest" theme, anticipating Curtin's journey to Texas. All these

trappings may seem calculatingly premeditated when observed over the course of a career, but within each film they are dramatically proper and musically reassuring.

This dramatic instinct and the regard for the audience Steiner employed when scoring a picture is perhaps the reason why, more than any other film composer, Max Steiner's name on the screen invariably sparked applause in the theatre. So while the cineastes may occasionally chastise him, the audience for whom

he composed responded, and continues to respond, with overwhelming approval.

Ray Faiola

Longtime director of CBS audiences services, Faiola is a film historian whose Chelsea Rialto Studio has restored archival soundtracks for release on CD, including music by Max Steiner for such films as *The Three Musketeers*, *Marjorie Morningstar*, *Battle Cry*, *Johnny Belinda* and *The Fountainhead*.

Arranger Notes

Max Steiner's music for *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* is one of the composer's best remembered scores and gathered recognition by winning the Venice World Award in 1948. Although the film was a critical success, it didn't have the box office appeal Warners had hoped for. Its reputation, however, has grown over the years and it is now considered one of the true classic American films.

There have been previous suites recorded from this score, which amounted to highlights of the main thematic material. I thought the time was right for a substantially complete recording of Steiner's score. I say substantially because I eliminated a couple of cues that ran only for a few seconds and also some of the repetitious sections where extreme paranoia has taken over Bogart's character in the last third of the picture.

Because of the nature of the film, much of Steiner's music was composed for transitions and montages rather than his usual approach of underscoring long dialogue sequences or action scenes. This approach makes many of his cues shorter than normal, so I have lumped many of these cues together to make a more effective listening experience away from the film. However, all the music on this recording is in "film chronological order."

From an orchestrational point of view, this score is

very complicated. In addition to the large studio orchestra, Steiner added numerous "colour" instruments to represent a "gold effect." These include two harps, two pianos, celesta, two vibraphones, glockenspiel, triangle, and various sized suspended cymbals. I was also determined to implement all the instrumentation Steiner indicated in his sketches, which his orchestrator, Murray Cutter, brilliantly realized in full score. The composer coloured his music with instruments associated with Mexico, including accordion, guitars, marimbas, xylophones, Mexican drums and shakers, as well as saxophones, harmonica, four mandolins, and choir.

A word should be said here about Murray Cutter, a consummate musician. Born in southern France in 1902, he studied music and wrote a ballet at the time he met his future wife, Linette, a ballet dancer. I have fond memories of Murray and our discussions on music in the early 1970s. Although he could and did compose, he preferred the relatively stress-free orchestrational work he did for others. One night, Max Steiner Music Society founder Albert Bender and his wife and I went to the Cutters for a dinner party (Murray was also a fine French chef), and when he took me to his study, my jaw dropped as I gazed upon the hundreds upon hundreds of

first-edition full scores of such masters as Stravinsky, Mahler, Debussy, Ravel and many others lining the walls from floor to ceiling. He truly loved music. He also had a record collection that would rival many fine music universities. When I inquired where the film music was, he said he didn't enjoy listening to it away from the film and by the time he finished his twelve-hour day of orchestrating, he certainly didn't want to "relax" by listening to film music!

Cutter started orchestrating for MGM, and Herbert Stothart in particular, in 1937 and was one of many orchestrators on *The Wizard of Oz* (1939). In 1946, when Hugo Friedhofer, Steiner's principal orchestrator since 1936, eagerly began pondering his own career as a film composer, Steiner started looking for a new orchestrator. Steiner and Cutter had professionally touched bases back in 1939 when Cutter orchestrated a few cues for *The Oklahoma Kid*. Word got around that Steiner was seeking a new orchestrator and Cutter called the composer and was hired on the spot. His first complete orchestration for a Steiner score was *The Beast with Five Fingers*, though Friedhofer's name erroneously appears on the film's credits. Murray stayed with Steiner for the rest of the composer's career, retiring at the same time Steiner did. Cutter told me he was delighted to work for Max as Steiner's sketches were very complete and practically orchestrated themselves — a far cry from what he often had to work with at MGM.

Steiner had this to say about Cutter and his composing methods in his unpublished autobiography *Notes to You* (ca. 1963-1964): "Murray Cutter has been my orchestrator since 1946. He has orchestrated every picture I have done since that time right up to the present date....I print my own music paper and I write in three staves, four lines; eight staves, six lines; twelve staves, sixteen lines, depending upon the composition and what is required. As I write every note that you hear in my score, it becomes a sort of sketch, actually a condensed score, which my orchestrator then puts in the orchestra. In the old days, I used to write every harp note, every piano run, but with my wonderful orchestrator, Murray Cutter, this is no longer necessary because he knows every move I make. There have been some rare instances in which I have orchestrated my own music as a pattern. In other words, if there is any peculiar pattern that I have figured out, I may orchestrate sixteen bars or eight bars just to show Murray the color and pattern that I want. Usually, however, four staves suffice for Murray. The accompaniment and the melody, the counterpoint and the harmonies are all written [in my sketch] and are obvious unless I have a very unusual or difficult rhythm."

In was my great pleasure to know Murray from the mid-1960s throughout the 1970s during the many gatherings at the Steiner home. Murray Cutter died in 1980.

John Morgan June 2000

Let's hear it for those who pitched in ...

James V. D'Arc (Curator BYU Film Music Archives); Albert K. Bender (Founder of The Max Steiner Society); Danny Gould (Warner Bros. Music); Noelle Carter; Carlos Noriega (Warner Bros. Archive, USC); Keith Zajic (Vice President of Business Affairs at Warner Bros.); Anna Bonn; Rudy Behlmer; Valle Music Services; Stacey Behlmer; Scott MacQueen; Louise Steiner Elian & Ray Faiola

John Morgan

Widely regarded in film-music circles as a master colorist with a keen insight into orchestration and the power of music, Los Angeles-based composer John Morgan began his career working alongside such composers as Alex North and Fred Steiner before embarking on his own. 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. His work can be found on the Naxos, Marco Polo, RCA and Tribune Film Classics labels.

William Stromberg

Besides his own film scores and his work conducting studio orchestras in Hollywood, William T. Stromberg is noted for his passion in reconstructing and conducting film scores from Hollywood’s Golden Age. For Naxos and Marco Polo he has conducted albums of music devoted to Max Steiner, Erich Wolfgang Korngold, Alfred Newman, Philip Sainton, Bernard Herrmann and Franz Waxman. He has also conducted several albums devoted to concert works of American composers, including a second album of music by Ferde Grofé, featuring his *Hollywood Suite* and *Hudson River Suite*. He and longtime colleague John Morgan have collaborated on numerous film scores, ranging from *Trinity and Beyond* to *Starship Troopers 2: Hero of the Federation*.

Moscow Symphony Orchestra

Established in 1989, the Moscow Symphony Orchestra includes prize-winners and laureates of Russian and international music competitions and graduates of conservatories in Moscow, Leningrad and Kiev who have played under such conductors as Svetlanov, Rozhdestvensky, Mravinsky and Ozawa, in Russia and throughout the world. In addition to its extensive concert programmes, the orchestra has been recognized for its outstanding recordings for Marco Polo, including the first-ever survey of Malipiero’s symphonies, symphonic music of Guatemala, the complete symphonies of Charles Tournemire and Russian music by Scriabin, Glazunov, Rachmaninov, Tchaikovsky and Nikolay Tcherepnin. The orchestra also stays busy recording music for contemporary films. Critical accolades for the orchestra’s wide-ranging recordings are frequent, including its important film music re-recordings with conductor William Stromberg and reconstructionist John Morgan for Marco Polo. *Fanfare* critic Royal S. Brown, reviewing the complete recording of Hans J. Salter and Paul Dessau’s landmark *House of Frankenstein* score, saluted the CD as a “valuable document on the kind of craftsmanship and daring in film scoring that passed by all but unnoticed because of the nature of the films.” *Film Score Monthly* praised the orchestra’s recording of Korngold’s *Another Dawn* score, adding that “Stromberg, Morgan and company could show some classical concert conductors a thing or two on how Korngold should be played and recorded.” The same magazine described a recording of suites from Max Steiner’s music for *Virginia City* and *The Beast With Five Fingers* as “full-blooded and emphatic.” And Rad Bennett of *The Absolute Sound* found so much to praise in the orchestra’s film music series he voiced a fervent desire that Marco Polo stay put in Moscow and “record film music forever.” Many of these recordings are now being reissued in the Naxos Film Music Classics series.

FILM MUSIC CLASSICS

Playing
Time
60:17



8.570185

DDD

www.naxos.com

© 2000 & © 2007 Naxos Rights International Ltd.
Made in Canada



MAX STEINER (1888-1971)

The Treasure of the Sierra Madre 1948

Score Restoration by John Morgan

Moscow Symphony Orchestra and Chorus¹ conducted by William Stromberg

1 Main Title	1:48	12 Funeral Chant ¹	3:12
2 El Desayuno <i>composed by Alfonso Sanchez</i>	1:59	13 Unwilling Caretakers	2:21
3 Attack on the Train	1:39	14 Madness	3:37
4 The Journey Commences	3:29	15 Narange Dolce	1:26
5 Windstorm	1:28	16 After Dobbs—'The Man in the Hole!'—Arrested	5:43
6 Campfire ² —Up There— Water Trough—Gold-digging— Cave-in—Rescue	5:25	17 The Ruins	2:04
7 Texas Memories	1:06	18 Texas Memories—Finale	1:37
8 Night—Distrust—Gila Monster	4:42	19 End Cast	0:22
9 Bandits—Outnumbered— Federales	7:01	BONUS TRACKS	
10 Cody's Letter—Texas Memories (reprise)	3:07	20 Theatrical Trailer	2:38
11 Packing Up ² —Indian Visitors	2:26	21 Alternate Main Title	1:48
		22 Alternate Finale	1:22

² *Harmonica solo by Dino Soldo, recorded
by Lennie Moore*

Recorded at Mosfilm Studio, Moscow, Russia, in October 1999

Producer: Betta International • Recording Engineers & Editors: Edvard Shakhnazarian, Vitaly Ivanov
Music Notes: Ray Faiola • Film Production Notes: Rudy Behlmer • Design: Ron Hoares
Cover image (modified): The Chisos Mountains, Texas (Mike Norton / Dreamstime.com)

Previously released on Marco Polo 8.225149