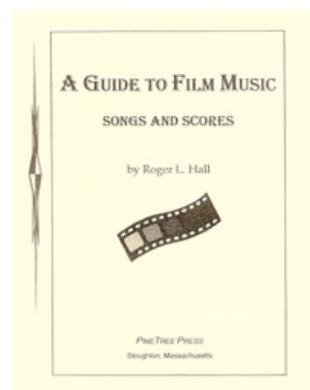




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Special Merit



[THE KENTUCKIAN \(1955\)](#)
and
[WILLIAMSBURG:
THE STORY OF A PATRIOT \(1957\)](#)

72 Tracks (Playing Time =73:19)

Music Composed by Bernard Herrmann

The Moscow Symphony Orchestra,
conducted by William Stromberg

Album produced by Anna Bonn, John Morgan and William Stromberg. Executive Producer for Tribute Film Classics: Anna Bonn. Executive and Distributor for Screen Archives: Craig Spaulding. Music Reconstruction and Preparation: Anna Bonn, John Morgan, William Stromberg. Recording Engineer/ Editor: Alexander Volkov. Recorded at Mosfilm Studio, Moscow, Russia, November 2007.

Tribute Film Classics TFC-1004

Rating: ****

This is the fourth release for Tribute Film Classics and like the previous three: [FAHRENHEIT 451](#)- winner of a 2008 [Sammy Award](#), [MYSTERIOUS ISLAND](#), [SHE](#), this new release is a superior release.

These two scores from 1955 and 1957 are wonderful examples of Bernard Herrmann at his peak. Tribute producer Anna Bonn has said that "Herrmann's score provides both wistful and spirited insight into frontier life in 1820s America. THE KENTUCKIAN intertwines many of his compositional styles into an Americana-themes score with undeniable trademark Herrmann characteristics."

THE KENTUCKIAN was a Hecht-Lancaster Production and was the debut as director for Burt Lancaster. He also stars in the film with Dianne Foster, Diana Lynn, John McIntire, and Walter Matthau in his first major screen role. The screenplay was by A.B. Guthrie Jr. from a novel by Felix Holts, *The Gabriel Horn*. This story about a frontiersman Big Eli Wakefield (Lancaster) and his young son Little Eli (Donald MacDonald) from Kentucky who encounter all sorts of problems on their trek to the Texas frontier is full of action and tender moments as well. It was filmed on location in Kentucky. There are several songs sung in the film, but since they are not by Herrmann, they have been left off this soundtrack. An earlier recording was made of THE KENTUCKIAN with the National Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Fred Steiner, but that was only a few excerpts.

Score reconstructionist John Morgan mentions that "Herrmann wrote forty-eight separately titled cues" and so "we put many of the short cues together without pause to maintain a solid, rewarding listening experience." This complete soundtrack provides a very smooth transition of these separate cues that flow together so seamlessly there is no abruptness at all.

The opening Prelude (1:50) makes a robust entrance and includes several themes. In his CD notes, Kevin Scott finds the first theme very similar to Vaughan Williams' incidental music to *The Wasps*, which Herrmann had scheduled in an earlier radio production. There might be a similarity there but much of Herrmann's score just resonates with rustic American charm.

Much of this highly enjoyable score is of a more tranquil nature, beginning with "Daydreaming" (track 4, 1:36), a lovely theme with solo clarinet soaring above muted strings. This gorgeous pastoral theme is heard again later on, such as in "The Forest" (track 9, 1:12) and the next track, "Morning and Night" (2:04). These are among the most memorable tracks of the soundtrack.

There are also spirited Afro-American style dance rhythms in "The Steamboat" (track 23, 1:03) and "Welcome Aboard" (track 24, 0:34). Also, great effort was made to be as authentic as possible, as in "Saloon Piano" (track 30, 1:47). Kevin Scott explains in his notes: "For this appealing extended solo, the piano was tuned approximately a quarter-tone flat to give the instrument a sense of honky-tonk authenticity."

The orchestra employed by Herrmann is smaller than a usual Hollywood orchestra at that time and includes no trumpets or heavy brass, mainly softer woodwinds (flutes, oboes, English horns, French horns, muted strings and percussion instruments, such as triangle, tambourine, suspended cymbal, and glockenspiel).

WILLIAMSBURG: THE STORY OF A PATRIOT is now the longest running short film of all time. It is still shown at Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia, and has been ever since its first showing in 1957.

After extensive restoration, the film was released on DVD in 2004 in full Vistavision and Todd-AO sound. It looks and sounds terrific. But up until now the Herrmann has not been released on CD.

This delightful score pays homage to some of Herrmann's favorite British composers, George Frideric Handel, William Boyce and Thomas Arne. There are also two early American patriotic tunes: "Chester" by William Billings of Boston, and the anonymous "Yankee Doodle."

As in **THE KENTUCKIAN**, the Prelude (track 49, 2:09) features a rousing opening theme, this time a lively hornpipe like the kind later used in **THE THREE WORLDS OF GULLIVER**. There is also a quote of the "Chester" tune by Billings written in the style of a Handel fanfare. Herrmann manages to combine both the British and American styles just as the film's story discusses the conflict over the British taxes just before the beginning of the American Revolution.

This memorable score is a real gem and deserves to be performed in concert halls.

The CD notes by Kevin Scott are extensive and highly informative. He obviously knows his stuff about American music history, mentioning not only composers such as Copland and Moross, but also Lamar Stringfield and Carlisle Floyd. Scott mentions the effect the shape-note hymnody had on Herrmann's writing but gives the incorrect date for William Walker's *Southern Harmony* -- it should be 1835 not 1845. Other contributors to the 32 page CD booklet are Herrmann biographer, Steven C. Smith, in a clear and concise essay titled "Herrmann Americana." Also personal reflections by Anna Bonn, John Morgan, William Stromberg. In his remarks, Stromberg writes the following:

"It's amazing how Herrmann could write such simple music that just goes straight to the heart...Truly his was the most original musical voice to come along in American cinema, in my opinion."

That would be my opinion as well.

Just listen to these two lesser known Herrmann scores from the 1950s and you'll hear genius at work, and brilliantly played too by the Moscow Symphony Orchestra under William Stromberg's assured direction. Mention should be made of superb production of the CD art design and excellent notes by Kevin Scott.

This CD adds two more musical jewels to the crowns of Anna Bonn, John Morgan and William Stromberg.

They should be called the Terrific TFC Trio!

For Herrmann fans everywhere this is a must have CD.

One of the best CD releases of the year.

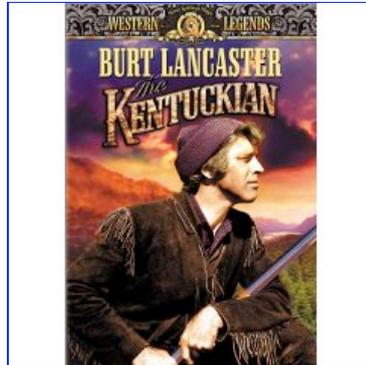
Highest recommendation.

Roger Hall
16 September 2008

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