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Courtesy of Elmer Bernstein

Elmer Bernstein with Fred Astaire, late 1950s

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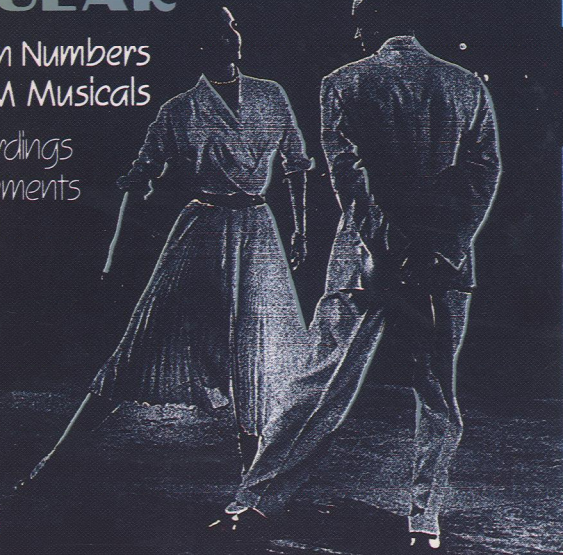
A MUSICAL SPECTACULAR

Chandos DIGITAL

Songs and Production Numbers from the Classic MGM Musicals

World Premiere re-recordings of the original arrangements

KISMET
THE BAND WAGON
MEET ME IN ST. LOUIS
GIGI
SINGIN' IN THE RAIN
THE PIRATE
BRIGADOON
THE ZIEGFELD FOLLIES



ROYAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

AMBROSIAN SINGERS

NICK CURTIS & MARY CAREWE Vocals

ELMER BERNSTEIN

A MUSICAL SPECTACULAR

Songs and Production Numbers from the Classic MGM Musicals

ROYAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

AMBROSIAN SINGERS
John McCarthy, director

NICK CURTIS and MARY CAREWE, vocals

ELMER BERNSTEIN, conductor

Musical Arrangements by CONRAD SALINGER
Reconstruction by Christopher Palmer

★ ★ ★

1 **KISMET** (1955): **Bridal Procession ('Night of my Nights')**
[5:26] WRIGHT-FORREST, AFTER BORODIN
with the Ambrosian Singers and Bruce Ogston, baritone

2 **THE BAND WAGON** (1953): **'Dancing in the Dark' (pas-de-deux)**
[3:29] SCHWARTZ

3 **MEET ME IN ST. LOUIS** (1944): **'The Trolley Song'**
[4:27] BLANE-MARTIN
with the Ambrosian Singers and Mary Carewe
(substituting Judy Garland)

4 **GIGI** (1958): **Titles and Fountain Scene**
[2:47] LERNER-LOEWE

5 **GIGI: Waltz-Sequence**
[5:12] LOEWE
(i) Palais de Glace ('A Toujours')
(ii) Chez Maxim ('She is not thinking of me')

6 **SINGIN' IN THE RAIN** (1952): **'Singin' in the Rain'**
[4:17] BROWN-FREED
with Nick Curtis (substituting Gene Kelly)

7 **THE PIRATE** (1947): **'The Pirate Ballet'**
[4:48] PORTER-EDENS

8 **BRIGADOON** (1955): **'The Heather on the Hill' vocal and ballet**
[8:00] LERNER-LOEWE
with Nick Curtis (substituting Gene Kelly)

9 **THE ZIEGFELD FOLLIES** (1944-6): **'This Heart of Mine'**
[13:40] WARREN-FREED-EDENS
with the Ambrosian Singers and Nick Curtis
(substituting Fred Astaire)

DDD **TT=52:43**

A MUSICAL SPECTACULAR

What makes a musical *musical?* Or to put it another way: what makes a *musical* musical? The answer, not unexpectedly is 'the music'; yet, considering the fact that the film-musical is one of the most sophisticated and highly-evolved of all cinematic art-forms, it is surprising that so little attention has been paid to its music. Recent years have seen the re-recording of many incidental scores for feature-films; the revival of Broadway classics like *My Fair Lady* and *South Pacific* with operatic megastars in the leading roles; and the rehabilitation of theatre scores of earlier vintage like *Porgy and Bess* and *Show Boat* which, incredibly, no-one had bothered to record complete and un-cut before. Yet *screen* musicals have so far been left out of the picture almost completely: oddly, when we recall that the majority of those most highly-regarded today – e.g. those represented in this compilation – were made before, during and just after the war, when recording techniques, though always amazingly good for their time, were still hardly comparable with today's in terms of sound-quality. Soundtrack albums, when they were issued at all (and *Meet me in St. Louis* and *The Ziegfeld Follies* pre-dated the LP era) tended to concentrate on the vocal items, for the obvious reason that the latter featured the stars of the picture. Ballets and big musical set-pieces of predominantly un-vocal substance were either omitted altogether (e.g. the 'Heather on the Hill' ballet in *Brigadoon*) or represented in truncated form only. In this pioneer recording we have rescued and polished up some of the most glittering items from a vast treasure-trove, much of it still awaiting discovery and revaluation.

At their best, the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer musicals were masterpieces. From the earliest days of sound-films all the Hollywood studios made musicals. The 1930s are remembered for Busby Berkeley at Warner Bros. (e.g. *42nd Street*, *Footlight Parade*) and for the Astaire-Rogers partnership at RKO (*Top Hat*, *Swing*



Courtesy of Miklos Rozsa

The MGM Music Department, May 1950
Right-hand table includes:-
(at foot) David Raskin, composer of 'Laura'
(first on his left) the then 21-year-old André Previn
(on Previn's left) Conrad Salinger
Left-hand table includes:-
(at head) Miklos Rozsa, the studio's most prestigious dramatic-feature composer
(first on his right) John Green, head of the Music Department
(second on Green's right) Scott Bradley who did the scores for all the *Tom and Jerry* cartoons

Time and others). But once MGM established its pre-eminence in the 1940s it had no serious rivals right up to the breakdown of the studio system (which started in the 1950s and led eventually to the end of Hollywood's Golden Age).

MGM's prestige in musicals was largely the result of the discernment and enterprise of one man. Arthur Freed joined MGM as a songwriter in 1929 – among his lyrics were 'Singin' in the Rain' and 'This Heart of Mine' – but turned to producing in the 1940s, with spectacular results. He had a genius for scenting genius; and, after bringing together the best people in every creative department – actors, dancers, writers, directors, choreographers, designers, musicians – gave them the opportunity to explore the farthermost reaches of their capacity without regard to the usual constraints of money, time and interference from executives. Vincente Minnelli, the best of his directors (he directed all but one – *Singin' in the Rain* – of the films on this album) recalled "My instinct told me Arthur was a great showman, as the rest of the world would soon discover ... *he* was the true revolutionary, more than the people who worked for him. He gave his creative collaborators extraordinary freedom, which is the highest confidence one person can place in another." Freed recruited – in some cases even discovered – not only directors like Minnelli with his marvellous visual eye (he had begun his career as an artist and designer) but also stars like Judy Garland, Fred Astaire, Cyd Charisse, Gene Kelly; choreographers like Michael Kidd and Robert Alton; and composers like Harry Warren, Cole Porter, Arthur Schwartz and Frederick Loewe. The Freed Unit's musico-technical department was, similarly, one of the most distinguished in Hollywood. The most prominent screen credit was generally given to the Music Director, which in Freed's case might be John Green, Adolph Deutsch, Lennie Hayton or – later – André Previn, who joined MGM at 16 and learnt his musical trade there. But the M.D., however vital, was only one cog in the complicated behind-the-scenes machinery of the musical.

Freed's right-hand man was Roger Edens. It is not easy to pin-point exactly what Edens did, but everyone involved seems to agree that his role was crucial, that he was involved in some way with every musical aspect of a production. He



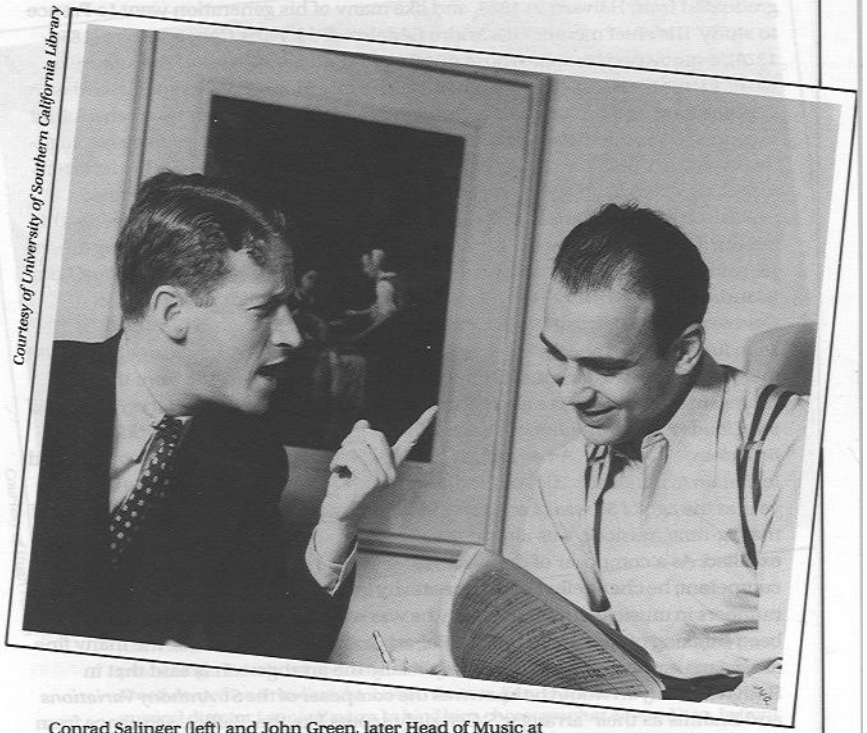
Courtesy of Elmer Bernstein

Elmer Bernstein (left) with producer Arthur Freed.

wrote songs, he 'adapted' music, he co-produced. He was not a 'real' composer, or orchestrator, or conductor; yet his input in shaping and structuring big sequences – his role as middle-man between the dancers, directors and choreographers on the one hand and the executive musical staff (arrangers, orchestrators and musical directors) on the other – was of paramount importance. Edens was the musical architect of, established the musical continuity of, numbers like 'This Heart of Mine' and the *Pirate* ballet; the others constructed the building according to his plans. This is a common process in films and musical theatre, which are collaborative, democratic art-forms in which music is neither more nor less significant than any other elements (as opposed to opera, where all extra-musical elements are, or should be, subordinate to the score).

Edens' team of co-workers were no less expert. Kay Thompson, described in lexicons as 'comedienne-author-composer-lyricist-arranger-vocal coach-singer-dancer-conductor-pianist' (she has an on-screen starring role in Paramount's 1956 *Funny Face*, which Edens produced) was an invaluable asset. So was Lela Simone, a former concert pianist whose remarkable qualities of intelligent musicianship were quickly noted by Edens while she was still a member of the MGM orchestra. Like Thompson, her musical responsibilities were varied. She later helped to produce many of the early soundtrack albums of MGM musicals, and after leaving the Freed Unit became the second wife of the composer Franz Waxman. (I am indebted to Miss Simone, one of the few surviving members of Freed's quasi-permanent music staff, for much of the information contained in these notes.)

But the *real* hero of this album was the man whom his life-long friend and colleague John Green – head of the MGM Music Department in the 1950s – described as the studio's 'star orchestrator', "one of the two or three outstanding arranger/orchestrators in the entire field of musical theatre". If there was one man responsible more than anyone else for giving the MGM musicals their unique sound it was Conrad Salinger. Born in Brookline, Massachusetts in 1901, he



Courtesy of University of Southern California Library

Conrad Salinger (left) and John Green, later Head of Music at MGM, in New York, 1937

graduated from Harvard in 1923, and like many of his generation went to France to study. His chief mentor was André Gédalge of the Paris Conservatoire (1856-1926), a renowned teacher whose pupils included composers of the stature of Ravel, Florent Schmitt, Darius Milhaud and Arthur Honegger. His specialities were counterpoint and orchestration; he would no doubt have been taken aback (but presumably gratified) to find many of his precepts bearing fruit – delectable, high-quality fruit at that – in the American film musical of the 1940s! On his return to America in 1929 Salinger settled in New York and joined Harms (the music publishers) as a staff arranger, and was soon working on Broadway shows – this being the era of Rodgers-and-Hart, Jerome Kern and the Gershwins among others. He gained some early film experience at the Paramount-Astoria Studios on Long Island, and first came to Hollywood in 1937 to work for Alfred Newman at Goldwyn – United Artists. In 1943 he signed a permanent contract with MGM. He soon became a member of the Freed Unit, and for nearly 20 years scarcely an MGM musical of note was produced on which he did not work. Aside from the titles represented here Salinger also contributed substantially to *The Harvey Girls*, *Till the Clouds Roll By* (the Jerome Kern 'bio-pic'), *Easter Parade*, *The Barkleys of Broadway*, *Show Boat*, *An American in Paris*, *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* and *Invitation to the Dance*. His last credit was *Jumbo* in 1962. His death in June of that year at the age of 59 was premature, but in a sense his work was done; the era of the big-time musicals was almost over, and this was the sphere in which he excelled. As a composer of dramatic feature and TV music he was no more than competent; he channelled his real creativity into arranging songs and production numbers in musicals. In this capacity he was without peer. Stravinsky must have been thinking of him when he told Robert Craft of his respect "for the many fine musicians employed by the films, especially the arrangers. It is said that in Hollywood Haydn would be known as the composer of the *St. Anthony Variations* and Brahms as their 'arranger'". Certainly scores like the 'Raffles' sequence from *The Ziegfeld Follies*, the 'Heather on the Hill' ballet (*Brigadoon*) and the *Kismet* Bridal Procession are as much compositions as arrangements. The latter term



Courtesy of Hugh Fordin

At a rehearsal for 'Till the Clouds Roll By' (the Jerome Kern 'bio-pic') c.1946. At the piano, Roger Edens; behind him on his left, Conrad Salinger; on his right, Arthur Freed. Seated on Freed's right, Lucille Bremer. Kern is seated centre; on his left, musical director Lennie Hayton; behind him, choreographer Robert Alton. In front of piano, Kay Thompson.
(Courtesy Hugh Fordin).

implies formula, slickness, commercialism, none of which played any part in Salinger's scheme of things. He was an aristocrat: he had taste, class and a solid classical background. He dressed well, spoke perfect French and had beautiful manners. He revelled in the new freedom and flexibility the movies offered. In the theatre, arrangements and accompaniments were obliged for the most part to support the singers, which meant that elaborate flights of fancy could not often be indulged in. In films there were fewer such restrictions, and the orchestras were bigger; and for all the chamber-music-like delicacy of many of his effects, the quasi-impressionist wash of colours, the shadows and half-lights, Salinger liked to paint on a large canvas.

Salinger's was actually a complex musical personality, narcissistic and perfectionist (everything sounds fresh and spontaneous, but I have a feeling the wastepaper basket overflowed many times with rejected drafts). Ravel described his own orchestration as 'complex but not complicated' and much the same could be said of Salinger's. His scores are studded with detail, with incidental subtleties and small felicities of all kinds; but they are never cluttered, never made-up to the point whereby glamour becomes overkill. The perfume is exclusive – *and* expensive – but Salinger knows exactly how much to put on, and where. Pop-songs are like people in that if they are to be dressed up a basic simplicity must always obtain. That Salinger understood this was part of his genius.

Occasionally he ventured into jazz or swing or big-band territory – he could scarcely avoid doing so in musicals – but generally those numbers were given to others. He *could* be big and bold and brassy if the occasion demanded – as in *The Pirate* and in the *grandioso* central climax of 'This Heart of Mine'. But the real Salinger was the de luxe quality of orchestral texture exemplified by 'Dancing in the Dark', 'Singin' in the Rain' and 'The Heather on the Hill' – a quality born of his feeling for beauty of timbre, for mood, for atmosphere, for nuance, above all for *line*, for the give-and-take of melody and countermelody. His vocal accompaniments are object-lessons in subtlety, sensitivity and understatement



Conrad Salinger

Courtesy of William Rosar

in this regard. Of course he *does* support the voice, however unobtrusively; but he also cushions, cradles and caresses it in a way inimitably his own. The melodic thread may be finely drawn, even elliptical and ambiguous, but it is always present and a vital shaping force. In fact a full-bloodedly expressive ballad like 'Dancing in the Dark' finds Salinger taking a passionate stance – passionate human feelings in music have to be expressed through strong singing melodic lines – and he brings a quick-tempo number like 'The Trolley Song' to life not merely joyously but ecstatically. He was an artist; he celebrated life. No wonder his influence, not only on his contemporaries but also on later generations, was so tonic. André Previn says he keeps (figuratively speaking) a candle burning in his honour. John Williams admits to studying Salinger's scores avidly whenever the opportunity arose; and surely the blend of sensuality and spectacle to which we thrill in the orchestras of *Star Wars*, *Superman*, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* and *E.T.* is part of the legacy.

What of the shaping forces on Salinger's own personality? The energy, the lavish, even luxuriant invention in general, and the fondness for stratospheric horn parts in particular, suggest the Richard Strauss of *Der Rosenkavalier*; but Salinger's sense of the fastidious, his poetic sensibility, is better attuned to France (where, as we know, he studied) than to Germany, and the Ravel of *Daphnis et Chloë* is an inspiring presence; likewise the Debussy of *La Mer* and the *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, and the Dukas of *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* and *La Péri*. Then there is the music of Frederick Delius (who lived most of his life in France and was deeply influenced by Impressionist painting) which was widely known and admired by American showbiz and pop-music practitioners both East and West – witness the work of men like Duke Ellington, Mel Tormé and Ferde Grofé, composer of the *Grand Canyon Suite*. Delius' superfine instrumentation, his ear for colour-harmonies and his fondness for dissolving, kaleidoscopic textures surely left their imprint on Salinger. In this regard it is worth remarking that Freed's favourite director, Minnelli, was not only an ardent romantic but also a lifelong Francophile, and this may be one reason why Salinger's musical

arrangements seem to complement Minnelli's visual textures so perfectly. But we must also remember their Russian prototypes. The Hollywood musical as men like Freed and Minnelli developed it could almost be described as a cross between Broadway and the Russian Ballet of Diaghilev. The Russian Ballet – which derived in its turn from such hybrid productions of the Russian Nationalist School as Rimsky-Korsakov's opera-ballet *Mlada* – shared in a pronounced degree many of the characteristics of musicals like *The Ziegfeld Follies*, *The Pirate* and *Kismet*. A flair for the exotic, the extravagant, colour and spectacle, for fantasy and fairy-tale; a basic naïveté, a child-like sense of wonder, a child-like conception of drama; well, 'That's Entertainment' to quote the title of another famous Schwartz-Dietz song from *The Band Wagon*. Diaghilev had dreamt of uniting all the arts on the stage; Minnelli and Freed, aided by the mobility of the camera and by sound-recording, worked towards uniting them on the screen. What a pity Diaghilev did not live on into the sound-films era (he died in 1929)! He might have become the biggest maverick producer-impresario of all time. Musically, the key-figure in Russia was Rimsky-Korsakov (composer of *Scheherazade*), whose enormous influence on 20th-century orchestration has gone largely un-credited. Debussy and Ravel both recognised him as a master and found him a fertile source of inspiration; it was, therefore, both logical and inevitable that Salinger found in Debussy and Ravel the help he needed to bring his own work in films to fruition.

In making and recording this selection from Salinger's best work we knew that it would be neither possible nor desirable to make carbon copies of the original soundtracks. For though the notes are the same, 30-40 years on the times, singers, players, conductor, recording techniques, recording venue – all are different. A piece of music, like a play, is recreated every time it is performed, and there is no 'definitive' interpretation. As long as the spirit of the work remains un-violated, deviations from the letter are permissible, even to be welcomed. In the case of film music – where the original soundtrack often exerts an influence more authoritarian than authoritative – it is essential to bear this in mind if maximum enjoyment is to be obtained from new recordings.



Courtesy of National Film Archive, London

Gigi: (from left) Musical Director André Previn, Louis Jourdan, composer Frederick Loewe, lyricist Alan Jay Lerner

Bridal Procession ('Night of my Nights') from *Kismet*

WRIGHT-FORREST, ARR. SALINGER

Kismet was, exceptionally, a musical Vincente Minnelli had to be talked – or rather discreetly pressured – into directing: the studio would agree to allow him to proceed with the Van Gogh biopic *Lust for Life* – a cherished project – the moment *Kismet* was completed. Virtually the only episode which interested Minnelli – the only one which permitted him to play any tricks of visual magic – was the scene of the young Caliph (Vic Damone) setting forth with his retinue in quest of a bride, looking forward as he does to the pleasures of the nuptial night:-

Come where the so well beloved is waiting
Where the rose and the jasmine mingle
While I tell her the moon is for mating
And 'tis sin to be single…

Unfortunately the length of this scene turned out to be so disproportionate to the rest of the picture that the studio was obliged to cut it down – which they did so ruthlessly that what remains is a travesty of Minnelli's original concept. However the musical materials of the original version have survived, and this is what we have attempted to reconstruct for this recording. Few will disagree, I imagine, that the *Urtext* is in every way superior to the familiar mutilated version.

The melody of 'Night of my Nights' – first delivered as a mightly *fortissimo* by the six horns in unison, once the opening full-orchestra conflagration has died down – is derived, like all the songs in *Kismet*, from the works of the Russian Nationalist composer Alexander Borodin (in this case from a movement of his *Petite Suite* for piano solo). It was clever of Messrs. Wright and Forrest, the adaptors, to perceive the proto-Hollywoodian elements endemic



Vincente Minelli

Courtesy of National Film Archive, London

in Borodin's exoticism (see my remarks above in regard to the probable part-Russian genealogy of Hollywood showbiz). Salinger's orchestra for this number is full of Eastern promise *à la russe* – harps, guitars, keyboards, plucked strings and a large array of glitzy percussion.

'Dancing in the Dark' (pas-de-deux from *The Band Wagon*)

SCHWARTZ, ARR. SALINGER

A wonderful number, perhaps the epitome of Astaire's greatness as a screen artist, and of Salinger's too. It is a warm moonlit night in New York. Two dancers in a Broadway show (Astaire and Cyd Charisse), frustrated by problems in rehearsal, take a horse-drawn cab to Central Park to seek out a place to dance. Their romance is charted in the dance and in the music. At first they are distant and reluctant to touch: but as the music builds they gradually gain in joy and confidence, the dance becomes more elaborate and intimate until a rapturous climax is reached. As in classical ballet, the full range of emotion implied by the dance is made articulate in the music, which smoulders sensuously as the tune starts up, flares and flames at its climax, and ends as it began, with the clip-clopping rhythm of the carriage.

'The Trolley Song' (*Meet me in St. Louis*)

BLANE-MARTIN, ARR. SALINGER

When in November 1989 *Meet me in St. Louis* opened for the first time as a stage-show on Broadway, the critic of the *New York Times*, stirred by hearing the band, in the Overture, launch into 'The Boy Next Door', 'The Trolley Song'

and 'Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas', wondered if Ralph Blane and Hugh Martin had perhaps touched something in the American character when they first wrote these songs for the MGM musical in 1943-4, when the war was on. There was little light in Europe at that time, but in California it was high summer – it is *always* high summer in California – and the trolley-load of boys and girls, dressed *à la* St. Louis of 1903, sped along without a care in the world:

The day was bright, the air was sweet,
The smell of honeysuckle charmed me off my feet;
I tried to sing, but couldn't squeak,
In fact I felt so good I couldn't even speak.

Not *quite* without a care. Judy Garland is disappointed when her beau (Tom Drake) fails to arrive on time and the trolley leaves without him; but he sprints along behind it and finally manages to jump on board:

As he started to leave I took hold of his sleeve with my hand
And as if it were planned
He stayed on with me, and it was grand
Just to stand with his hand holding mine
To the end of the line.

Salinger's arrangement is masterly in its use of excited motor-figures, dancing rhythms, splashy, sparkling colours and heart-wrenching key-shifts. The sound (Clang! Clang! Clang!) and motion of the trolley, the feel of the summer day, Judy's bursting exhilaration – all are brilliantly captured at one and the same time in the musical treatment. Hugh Fordin, in his book on the Freed Unit based entirely on reminiscences of those who belonged to it, writes that "even after the orchestra's first reading of 'The Trolley Song' an excitement spread among those playing and listening. Then, when Judy came in with her dead-sure instinct of what she was to deliver, the ceiling seemed to fly off the stage".

Gigi – Titles and Fountain Scene

LOEWE, ARR. SALINGER

If *Gigi* was the last of the great MGM musicals, it was also one of the best and most honoured. It deserved those honours: all Freed's musicals (and this one above all) glow with the pride he took in his artists, craftsmen and technicians, and credit the public with intelligence and good taste. No expense was spared: the setting being Paris of *la Belle Epoque* Freed decided to film all the exteriors in *la Ville Lumière* itself. The all-star cast included Leslie Caron, Maurice Chevalier, Louis Jourdan and Hermione Gingold, and a Lerner-Loewe score was newly created for the purpose. Salinger must have relished the opportunity yet again to visit the city where he had studied and whose music meant so much to him (earlier in the 1950s he had worked on *An American in Paris*, based on Gershwin's music). The film's titles (designed by Cecil Beaton, who was also responsible for the costumes and sets) are introduced by a fanfare based on the 'Gigi' title-song and then sail into a vivacious can-can ('The night they invented champagne'). We dissolve to the film's penultimate scene in which Gaston (Louis Jourdan), standing pensively with huge fountains behind him shooting high into the night sky of Paris – wonderful to behold – decides he will ask Gigi (Leslie Caron) to become not his mistress but his wife.

Oh, Gigi, while you were trembling on the brink
Was I out yonder somewhere blinking
At a star?
Oh, Gigi, have I been standing up to close
Or back too far?
When did your sparkle turn to fire?
And your warmth become desire?
Oh, what miracle has made you the way you are?



Courtesy of Hugh Fordin

Shooting *Gigi* – producer Arthur Freed and Maurice Chevalier

In his autobiography *On the Street where I live* Alan Jay Lerner, the lyricist, makes special mention of this moment:-

> **The night scene with Louis Jourdan pacing up and down in silhouette in front of a shimmering fountain and being shaken into a decision when a horse and carriage, also in silhouette, pull up short to avoid hitting him, is among the most memorable effects ever filmed and uniquely Minnelli.**

One could perhaps say of Loewe's melody for 'Gigi' – shapely, long-limbed, lovely as a celebration of Gigi's transition from gawky schoolgirl to dazzling bird-of-paradise – that it also is "among the most memorable ever composed" and "uniquely Fritz Loewe".

Waltz Sequence (from *Gigi*)

LOEWE, ARR. SALINGER

Frederick "Fritz" Loewe, one of the great melodists of 20th century musical theatre – *My Fair Lady*, *Paint Your Wagon* and *Brigadoon* are among his other credits – was of Viennese origin and therefore congenitally Waltz-conscious, even in a setting of *fin-de-siècle* Paris. Two waltzes make up this 'sequence' – 'Palais de Glace' for the ice-skaters, cool, gliding and graceful; and then, *Tempo di Valse Viennoise*, the passionate 'Valse chez Maxim' for Louis Jourdan and Eva Gabor, set to a marvellous Lerner lyric:-

In her eyes tonight
There's a glow tonight
They're so bright they could light Fontainebleau tonight…

It is a magnificent waltz and Salinger gives it the all-star MGM (or is it *Rosenkavalier*?) treatment, complete with the exuberant horn parts that were

one of his trade-marks. As in the case of *Kismet*, we have returned here to Minnelli's (or Salinger's) original concept of this sequence, which is richer and more symphonic than the version ultimately approved. Since Gaston (Louis Jourdan) did not really sing the lyric – he rather spoke or declaimed it – and the tune is represented in the orchestra anyway, it seemed sensible here to omit the voice altogether.

'Singin' in the Rain' (from *Singin' in the Rain*)

BROWN – FREED, ARR. SALINGER

Here, in black-and-white as it were, is the synopsis of what is perhaps the most famous 'musical' number ever filmed, as described by authors Betty Comden and Adolph Green (who also wrote *The Band Wagon*) in the published version of their screenplay:

Street Outside Kathy's House.

Don (Gene Kelly) and Kathy (Debbie Reynolds) are kissing in the doorway. It is raining hard. A cab is waiting in the street.

Don: *Good night, Kathy. See you tomorrow.*

Kathy: *Good night, Don. Take care of that throat. You're a big singing star now – remember? This California dew is a little heavier than usual tonight.*

Don: *Really? From where I stand, the sun is shining all over the place.*

They kiss again, Don holding his umbrella over them. As Kathy goes in, Don looks up at the rain, motions the cab to drive off, closes his umbrella, starts strolling and singing the introduction to 'Singin' in the Rain'.

In the pouring rain, Don, happy and in love, sings and dances in the wet street, jumping up on the lamp post, sloshing joyously through

puddles, letting the water from a rain pipe hit him in the face, balancing like a tightrope walker on the curb, and finally, in an outburst of exuberance, kicking up water in the gutter like a kid. He notices a policeman eyeing him with suspicion, collects himself, and after getting up on the sidewalk, strolls off, drenched and in love with life.

The song 'Singin' in the Rain', (by Nacio Hers Brown and Arthur Freed) first heard in the finale of *Hollywood Revue of 1929*, turned up in several other MGM musicals along the way to its definitive incarnation, i.e. this one. As to Salinger's contribution, we need do no more than quote Elmer Bernstein's comment to the effect that were Mozart employed by MGM as an arranger, this, in its effortless perfection, is the kind of work he might have produced. (No, dear reader, this isn't Hollywood 'hype' but a plain-and-sober statement of musical fact.)

The Pirate – ballet

PORTER-EDENS-SALINGER

In *The Pirate*, set in the West Indies of the 1830s, Gene Kelly plays a strolling player who pretends to be a notorious pirate and turns the head of a naïve, impressionable young girl (Judy Garland). She imagines a fantasy-ballet in which he is the protagonist, cavorting and swashbuckling in black tights, sword in hand *à la* Douglas Fairbanks at his most flamboyant. The music's character is Hispanic, the tempi fast and furious, Salinger's orchestrations among his rowdiest and brashest – horns and piccolos are forced up to heights unfit for human habitation, pianos play fistfuls of chords, and a large percussion section beats bass drums, *tamburi militare* and tom-toms of various sizes for all it's worth. Bright primary colours prevail and Russian-style orchestral pyrotechnics abound as Kelly leaps, prances and battles aboard his

pirate ship, zooming from the mast-head and dancing with a spear, with fires and flares and explosions lighting up the night all around him. The long-suffering basis of the whole sequence is the Cole Porter song 'Mack the Black', which Judy sings earlier in the picture. After the drum-prelude we hear it once *in toto*, warmly sung by all strings in unison; then it is torn limb-from-limb.

'The Heather on the Hill' – vocal and ballet (*Brigadoon*)

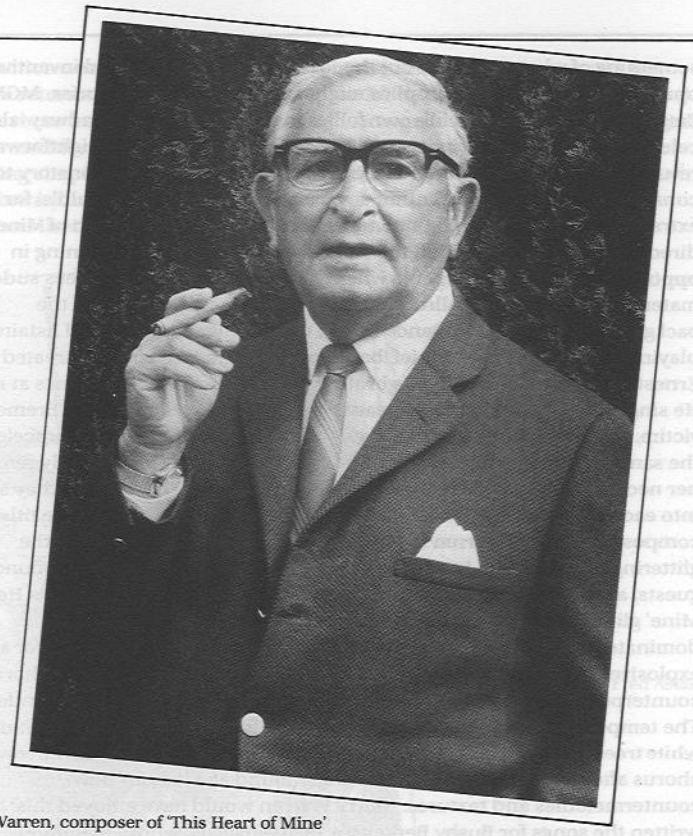
LERNER-LOEWE, ARR. SALINGER

As the American who gets lost in the Scottish highlands and stumbles upon Brigadoon, a village that comes to life only once every hundred years, Gene Kelly had plenty of opportunities to charm and seduce in his inimitable Irish-American way – nowhere more than in this beautiful ballad which he first sings, then dances with Cyd Charisse against a mountain backdrop, all misty purples and duns and browns. It is one of his most lyrical pas-de-deux, and Salinger's setting of the tune is of his most unabashedly romantic, not to say sensual. The song itself is liltingly simple, almost folksong-like, although Loewe does not try investing it with any *ersatz* Scottish inflections; and Salinger respects its simplicity as long as the vocal lasts. After that, however…

'This Heart of Mine' (*The Ziegfeld Follies*)

WARREN-FREED-EDENS-SALINGER

In true MGM-musical style we have left the best – or at least the biggest – till last. 'This Heart of Mine' is an orchestral-solo vocal-choral fresco of symphonic proportions. Those who know anything about Florenz Ziegfeld will also know



Harry Warren, composer of 'This Heart of Mine'

something of what to expect; but the tour-de-force of sustained inventive opulence which Salinger supplies might still take them by surprise. MGM's *Ziegfeld Follies*, like Ziegfeld's own follies in their heyday on Broadway (already celebrated by the studio in its 1936 *The Great Ziegfeld*), is a straightforward revue consisting of 14 skits and musical numbers with no plot or story to connect them. The musical numbers are noteworthy (like Ziegfeld's) for the extravagance of their staging, nowhere more so than in 'This Heart of Mine'. As director Minnelli recalled "all the stops were out: treadmills running in opposite directions, a turntable where dancers carrying white trees suddenly materialised, a circular ballroom with Tony Duquette statuary in the background". Subtitled 'A Dance-Story', the number features Fred Astaire playing a gentlemen jewel-thief (based on the 'Raffles' character created by Ernest Hornung, Conan Doyle's brother-in-law) who preys on guests at a ball. He singles out the aristocratic, beautiful, richly bejewelled Lucille Bremer as victim, and, after dancing with her, contrives to steal a kiss and her bracelet at the same moment. When they are about to part, however, she coolly removes her necklace and gives it to him. Realising they are kindred spirits they sweep into each other's arms. The musical mainstay of the sequence is the title-song composed by Harry Warren to lyrics by Arthur Freed himself. After the glittering introduction, in which trombones and then trumpets announce the guests, a *tempo di valse moderato* is established and the tune of 'This Heart of Mine' glides in almost casually. After Astaire's solo vocal, however, it dominates, and little by little marshals the full orchestral resources for an explosive climax (marked 'broadly and with grandeur') in which the horn counterpoints are audacious – and outrageous – even by Salinger's standards. The tempo switches to a brisk foxtrot, at which point the dancers with the white trees come on and pick up the tune. The music rolls on, wave after wave, chorus after chorus; and never is Salinger found at a loss for new countermelodies and textures. (Harry Warren would have enjoyed this: he'd written the songs for Busby Berkeley's 1930 musicals, whose mammoth

production numbers treated the music in the same generous way.) As the couple return to the ballroom and prepare for their exit the opening musical events recur in reverse order: except for the moment when Bremer calmly takes off her necklace and hands it to Astaire, which is marked by an oboe solo of affecting simplicity (the start of the song's final 'chorus'). The number ends in full-blown jubilation: as always in those far-off Hollywood-musical days, everyone lived happily ever after. Good for them then; good for us now.

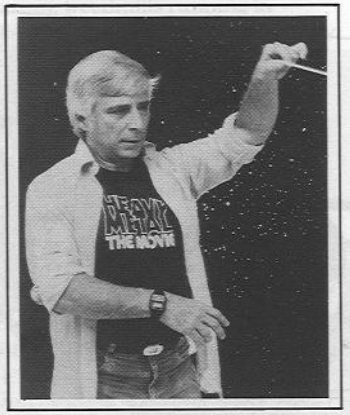
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Courtesy of Elmer Bernstein

Elmer Bernstein with Fred Astaire, late 1950s

Elmer Bernstein is one of America's most distinguished composers for the screen. Born in New York City, he studied composition with Roger Sessions and Stefan Wolpe, and also received encouragement from Aaron Copland. After war service with the U.S. Air Force he spent several years as a concert pianist before discovering that his real *forte* lay in composing for films and TV. He made a good first impression on Hollywood in the early 1950s with a distinguished Joan Crawford thriller entitled *Sudden Fear*, and after Cecil B. deMille's *Ten Commandments* and a pioneering jazz-oriented score for *The Man with the Golden Arm*, he quickly became one of the most sought-after and influential screen composers. Later successes include *Walk on the Wild Side, Hawaii, The Sweet Smell of Success, The Great Escape, To Kill a Mockingbird, Summer and Smoke* and – best-known of all – *The Magnificent Seven*. More recently he has scored *Animal House, Ghostbusters* and the highly acclaimed *My Left Foot*, with Daniel Day-Lewis. An accomplished musician with wide knowledge and experience of music of all kinds, Elmer Bernstein has always been particularly interested in the great achievements of the Hollywood past, and in the 1970s formed his own label, *Filmusic Collection*, to make world premiere recordings of classic film scores by Miklos Rozsa, Max Steiner, Bernard Herrmann and others. Since he has worked on Broadway and in film musicals, since he knew the Hollywood of the Golden Age, and since men like Fred Astaire, Arthur Freed, Vincente Minnelli and Conrad Salinger were colleagues and/or friends, Mr Bernstein is the ideal person to be conducting this repertoire.



- A Chandos Digital Recording
- Recording Producer: Brian Couzens
- Sound Engineer: Ralph Couzens • Assistant Engineer & Editor: Richard Lee
- Recorded in The Great Hall, Goldsmiths' College, London on 7 & 8 August 1989
- Sleeve Design: Jane Embley • Art Direction: Vicky Langdale

- Album devised and coordinated by Christopher Palmer

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Songs and Production Numbers from the Classic MGM Musicals

★ ★ ★

1. KISMET (1955): Bridal Procession ('Night of my Nights') [5:26] WRIGHT-FORREST, AFTER BORODIN
2. THE BAND WAGON (1953): 'Dancing in the Dark' (pas-de-deux) [3:29] SCHWARTZ
3. MEET ME IN ST. LOUIS (1944): 'The Trolley Song' [4:27] BLANE-MARTIN
4. GIGI (1958): Titles and Fountain Scene [2:47] LERNER-LOEWE
5. GIGI: Waltz-Sequence [5:12] LOEWE
6. SINGIN' IN THE RAIN (1952): 'Singin' in the Rain' [4:17] BROWN-FREED
7. THE PIRATE (1947): 'The Pirate Ballet' [4:48] PORTER-EDENS
8. BRIGADOON (1955): 'The Heather on the Hill' [8:00] LERNER-LOEWE
9. THE ZIEGFELD FOLLIES (1944-6): 'This Heart of Mine' [13:40] WARREN-FREED-EDENS

ROYAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

AMBROSIAN SINGERS

John McCarthy, director

NICK CURTIS and MARY CAREWE

vocals

ELMER BERNSTEIN

conductor

Musical Arrangements by

CONRAD SALINGER

Reconstruction by

Christopher Palmer

DDD TT=52:43

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