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Hotel Paradiso

Supplemental Liner Notes

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Hotel Paradiso

From the Original MGM Records LP...

When Laurence Rosenthal composed and conducted scores for Air Force documentary films, he saw the possibilities for serious musical expression in film scores. His previous works in the cinema reflect that attitude. All of them are movies based on powerful stage dramas. They include: *Becket*, a movie for which he was nominated for an Academy Award, and soundtracks for *The Miracle Worker*, *Raisin in the Sun* and *Requiem for a Heavyweight*.

However, when M-G-M's *Hotel Paradiso* came his way, serious intentions notwithstanding, Laurence Rosenthal decided to give himself a chance to "let go" and do one for the fun of it!

The Parisian setting of *Hotel Paradiso* stirred up recollections of his earlier student days when the composer studied under Boulanger in Paris after his graduation from the Eastman School of Music where he studied under Howard Hanson. Called upon to create an appropriate background—"to evoke manners and times past"—Paris in the late 19th Century—he had only to reminisce. All he had to do was think back, imagine himself still seated at a sidewalk café early in the morning before the city was up and about. He also recalled dodging traffic on the Champs Élysées, walking through the marketplaces—or enjoying the cool, steady haul up the Eiffel Tower, where one can not only look out over Paris of today—but back, into the Paris so recently past.

The Comedians

From the Original MGM Records LP...

THE COMEDIANS

The course of any Graham Greene novel is almost as predictable as the path of the sun. Step 1: Critical acclaim. Step 2: Best-sellerdom. Step 3: Successful translation into another medium—the screen, the stage or television.

But success is about the only predictable element in the works of Graham Greene. For each new entry is dramatically different from the last one. A different mood. A different setting. A different cast of characters.

Greene has explored the cloak-and-dagger world of wartime London (*Confidential Agent*, *Ministry of Fear*). The now-vanished Africa of British Colonialism (*The Heart of the Matter*). The broody Vienna of the Occupation (*The Third Man*). The mixture of comedy and corruption that was pre-Castro Cuba (*Our Man in Havana*).

But few settings have offered the novelist a stage

"A sort of satiric-nostalgic mood," was how Laurence Rosenthal described his score for *Hotel Paradiso*. A mood not too far removed from that evoked by the period and style of the play itself. "Of course it is updated a bit with slightly more modern orchestration, almost salon orchestra fashion," the composer says. However, while he is only using 15 instruments, he does not, he points out, duplicate any of them. He achieves a full little orchestra sound, as opposed to that overbearing big orchestra sound.

Hotel Paradiso, the farce comedy based on a play written by French playwright Georges Feydeau in 1885, is a natural vehicle for Laurence Rosenthal's first comedy score.

The film was made in Panavision and color and was directed by Peter Glenville. It is a broad, uproarious farce played in a wildly funny style by an all-star cast headed by Alec Guinness, Gina Lollobrigida and Robert Morley. The picture has all the classic comedy turns: a frantic chase scene, a series of mistaken identities and hilarious pratfalls. The old hotel really rocks with laughter as two very proper French middle class neighbors attempt to keep their rendezvous at the famous Hotel Paradiso a secret.

The music for this picture is also written in the great farce tradition and accents and highlights each hilarious moment. Together they make *Hotel Paradiso* more fun than an out-of-town sales convention!

—Notes by Harvey Cowen

more exotic, more violent than that he chose for *The Comedians*: Haiti today.

For present-day Haiti is a land of stunning contrasts. Of bumbling pettifoggery and brute force. Of sun by day and terror by night. Of primitive voodoo mysticism and very modern M-1 rifles. And against this background, Greene has woven one of his most powerful narratives.

The Comedians is a love story. A satire. A political indictment. And a no-holds-barred, good-to-the-last-shot thriller.

In bringing the Peter Glenville production to the screen, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer has appropriately assembled a remarkably diverse gathering of talents.

Greene himself wrote the screenplay (his first since *Our Man in Havana*). England's Glenville (whose screen credits include *Becket*, *The Prisoner* and *Summer and Smoke*) both produced and directed. And the cast of players reads like a "Who's Who" of international movie-making.

Richard Burton is the expatriate Brown, drawn back to Haiti by private ambition and his tempestuous affair with Martha (Elizabeth Taylor)—the wife of a pompous South American diplomat (Peter Ustinov). Sir Alec Guinness is Jones—mystery-man, con artist and self-styled “Major”—whose machinations accidentally plunge Brown and Martha into the netherworld of Haitian intrigue. And, in brilliant portrayals, Paul Ford and Lillian Gish are American innocents abroad—unable and unwilling to comprehend the terror that surrounds them.

THE MUSIC

As integral to the film’s success as the distinguished script, direction and stars is the compelling score of Laurence Rosenthal.

For a young composer, Mr. Rosenthal has racked up an astonishing list of credits—film, stage and television.

A graduate of Howard Hanson’s composition classes at Eastman, Rosenthal pursued his studies—as had Aaron Copland and Marc Blitzstein before him—with France’s Nadia Boulanger.

In the last dozen years, he has divided his talents between Broadway and Hollywood.

His name is a *Playbill* familiar to theatergoers,

Laurence Rosenthal Interview

John Takis conducted the following interview with composer Laurence Rosenthal on November 15, 2010.

John Takis: I’d like to begin by talking a little bit about your first meeting with Peter Glenville, which I presume took place on *Rashomon*.

Laurence Rosenthal: Yes, that’s right. It all happened in New York because of my friend Beatrice Straight (a great actress, no longer with us), who was about to co-produce with David Susskind a theater version of *Rashomon*, based on the great classic Japanese film, which had been adapted for the stage by Fay and Michael Kanin. I was a good friend of Beatrice’s, and when I read about it, I got all excited. This was my meat. I happened to be staying at her house at the time and told her that I was something of an expert in Japanese music—which was an absolute, bald-faced lie, but my mouth was watering to do the project. I figured, “Little as I know about Japanese music, I probably know more than she or David Susskind do!” Anyway, she called Susskind, who immediately got in touch with Lenny Bernstein to check up on me, because Bernstein had just premiered a piece of mine with the Philharmonic. Of course, Bernstein gave me the “Good Housekeeping seal of approval.” So I got together with Susskind, who was now really pleased

via the incidental music to such prestigious plays as the David Susskind production of *Rashomon*, the Peter Glenville-directed *Becket*, and the Alec Guinness vehicle *Dylan*.

In the lighter-hearted world of musical comedy, Rosenthal created the ballet music for *The Music Man*, *Take Me Along* and, more recently, the entire score for last season’s hit musical *Sherry*.

No less impressive is his list of motion picture scores. Among the most memorable are *A Raisin in the Sun*, *The Miracle Worker*, *Requiem for a Heavyweight* and, of course, *Becket* (for which he earned an Oscar nomination).

Two successful television series have brought Laurence Rosenthal’s music into America’s living rooms: the highly acclaimed *Twentieth Century*, and *Coronet Blue* starring Robert Goulet.

Interestingly enough, it was TV that brought about the first coupling of the Rosenthal-Graham Greene names, when Larry provided the musical setting for a special dramatization of Greene’s *The Power and the Glory*.

Now, in his second realization of a Graham Greene work, Laurence Rosenthal offers a score as rich, as colorful, as full of astonishments as the motion picture itself: the dramatic adventure of *The Comedians*.

to have me on the project, and he immediately suggested that I go and chat with Peter Glenville, the director, who was staying at the Sherry-Netherland Hotel in New York. I went over and met him, and was totally impressed. He was an elegant Englishman—very intelligent, very good-looking, perfectly put together, a fashion plate... and completely charming. So we had a wonderful conversation, but there was only one thing he was worried about. “I don’t want any touch of German Romanticism in this score.” I told him that was the last thing I would dream of. So we talked about a very indigenous-sounding score, which should be, I thought, not literally Japanese, but very evocative of that musical style. And so this really was the beginning of a long and very pleasant and fruitful relationship. We really got on like a house on fire, and after a while he realized that he didn’t have to draw pictures for me. In other words, we were totally in tune in questions of idiom, dramatic approach and general point of view about a score, whether for theater or film. We spoke the same language. So *Rashomon* was to be the first of quite a few collaborations. I feel it is still one of my best scores. You know, it’s just been released recently.

JT: On Kritzerland, yeah.

LR: Shortly thereafter, he was preparing a Broadway production of Jean Anouilh's play *Becket* with Laurence Olivier and Anthony Quinn, and asked me to compose incidental music for it, which I did. And it was a brilliant show. The two actors were just phenomenal. Then some months later, he told me he was going to make a film version of *Becket*, and would I like to come to London and expand my theater music into a whole film score. This was in spite of tremendous resistance from Hal Wallis, the producer. Wallis had never heard of me and wanted an "A-list" composer, not a fledgling. But Peter was steadfast, and insisted that I was the right guy. Wallis eventually came to love the score, and the morning it was nominated for the Oscar he called me up and asked me to score his next picture. Anyway, by now Glenville and I were in a really harmonious artistic relationship. I loved working with him and we became good personal friends. So I think the very next thing that came up, if I remember correctly, was *Hotel Paradiso*.

JT: Yep, right after *Becket*.

LR: It was a film with Alec Guinness, Gina Lollobrigida and Robert Morley... a French, 1890s bedroom farce by Georges Feydeau, the great comic playwright. Again to be filmed and scored in London. And I remember that this was a real problem for me, because I had just signed on to do my first television series.

JT: *Coronet Blue*.

LR: *Coronet Blue!* In New York, with a very nice guy producing it, Edgar Lansbury—a charming man, Angela's brother. I had already started on it, and had composed a theme that everybody seemed to like. It was my first attempt to even approach something that sounded like rock and roll. So right in the middle of that, suddenly Peter calls me and says, "I'd like you to do *Hotel Paradiso*. We've been shooting, and I'd like you to come to London immediately and start working on it." Well, I was in an absolute tizzy! I didn't know what to do. Here I was, committed to Edgar Lansbury, but I hated to give up the possibility of doing this wonderful comedy with these great stars, and working with Peter, of course. So after considerable agonizing, I finally went to Edgar and said, "Look..." I just told him flat-out what my dilemma was. By the way, I know I'm telling you much more than you need to know.

JT: Believe it or not, I had a question about *Coronet Blue* and how it fit in, so this is right in line with what I wanted to know!

LR: Well, I was still a fairly young composer, and this was another important step in my career. Edgar was very understanding. On the other hand, he was counting on me and I had committed myself to him for this project; the theme was composed, and we

were already in business with this series. So I said—in retrospect, my youthful bravado now amazes me—"Supposing I go to London. They won't really be starting heavy work on *Hotel Paradiso* right away. I will start writing these scores for *Coronet Blue*, if you can send me the films. I will score them and ship them back to New York." As it happened, I knew a really excellent conductor who could record the music in New York. "You'll still have my scores, except I won't be there, but they'll be very well-conducted." Well, he wasn't wild about the idea... but on the other hand, he felt bad about standing in my way. He didn't want to obstruct my taking this assignment with Peter. What a guy.

So in fact, I left for London, and what proceeded was one of the most harrowing experiences I've ever had in my life. I would get up at five o'clock in the morning and immediately start working on *Coronet Blue*. I had rented a nice house just a few blocks from Harrods in Knightsbridge, and had a piano brought in. I would do *Coronet Blue* all morning, until about midday. Then I would have lunch (brought in) and start working on *Hotel Paradiso*. I worked on *Paradiso* until dinnertime, and after dinner (also brought in) I would get into a taxi and take the *Coronet Blue* scores out to Heathrow airport and put them on a plane—a package which would be delivered, counter to counter, in New York to be picked up the next day by my friend the conductor, who would then have to have the parts copied. Then I would come back home, sleep for a few hours, get up at five, start working on *Coronet Blue* again, have lunch, do *Hotel Paradiso*... this went on for weeks. I actually got sick. It was obviously psychological; I suddenly realized that in this entire time, outside of the person who worked in the bakery, from whom I used to go out to get a croissant in the morning for breakfast, the taxi driver and the guy at the airport desk, I never saw a human being for about three or four weeks. I worked non-stop cranking out *Coronet Blue*, which was fine; it was a nice series, it was enjoyable. But *Hotel Paradiso* was really a challenge, and I really worked very, very hard at that.

Paradiso is quite a stylish score, very Parisian, very late nineteenth century, full of Gallic wit, and that kind of French lightness and humor and irony. That's what really interested me.

And even though M-G-M offered me a full orchestra, I decided that it would be completely wrong for the film to have a big orchestral sound. So I elected to compose the whole score for a small orchestra... I think it was 15 players, one soloist on each instrument. And because it was such a small complement, we were able to get the all-stars of London. We got first-desk people from the London Symphony, and the London Philharmonic, and the BBC Orchestra... it was a staggering lit-

tle band, and they played brilliantly. They played their hearts out. Only one problem: In films of this kind, very sophisticated high comedy, music cues have to be right on the button, almost like an animated cartoon. Click-track time. Totally precise synchronization. But there was, surprisingly for a top film-studio, no click track available. So I conducted the whole score by a kind of timing instinct. And it was amazing how well it worked. Even without a click track, I miraculously never missed a cue. Unbelievable good luck.

So that was the way *Hotel Paradiso* was written. . . kind of cheek-by-jowl with *Coronet Blue*. I finally finished both the series and the film, if I'm not mistaken, at just about the same time. In the process I probably lost 20 pounds! I was really a wreck. But I had really enjoyed it, enjoyed the composing and even the pressure, and soon was able to regain my normal health and strength.

As for *Hotel Paradiso*, I feel that in some ways the film was a disappointment. Even though it's a very funny script, I think Peter miscalculated, and the whole thing was too elegant, and too grand, and too rich in its appearance. It was a very luscious-looking set, whereas it should have almost been more like a cartoon. It should have been lighter on its feet. It got bogged down in too much production. And in fact, one reviewer said the funniest thing about the picture was the score. Nonetheless, I do feel that there were some brilliant performances. Alec Guinness, always a master. And there was an actress named Peggy Mount who plays Morley's wife, who was absolutely dazzling, a brilliant comedienne. And, of course, Morley himself.

JT: I love Morley.

LR: They were all good. They were all really very good. But I think maybe Peter Glenville didn't have the light touch that was needed. When he was doing a show like *Becket*, or later on with *The Comedians*, that was really his field. . . dramatic and intense. And he really knew how to "conduct the orchestra" when it came to directing a film. That is, he always hired great actors—most of them his personal friends!—and he just let them do their thing. He was full of exquisite taste. I'll never forget when I worked with him on *Rashomon*. . . he had the ability, that I've never met in any other director: to help the composer without in any way telling him what to do when there was a problem. He would never suggest any specific device or instrumentation. I remember there was one scene change in *Rashomon* that baffled me. I said, "Peter, I know this is just a scene change, but I simply don't understand what the music is supposed to be saying at this point. What's the feeling of the music? What's its function, its inner purpose?" He thought for a long moment, and then said, "Tea ceremony, with stifled laughter." And

the minute I heard that, I knew exactly what to write! It was perfect. And that's the way it always was with him. He could produce an image—a colorful, witty image that would instantly evoke in me the musical equivalent. And that's what was so great about him: his intelligence, his impeccable taste, his imagination, all of which I truly respected. Our collaboration was always stimulating and gratifying.

JT: Was it through his brief time on *Man of La Mancha* that got you on that assignment?

LR: Yes, that was a couple of years after *The Comedians*. I was in California, working on some television film or other, when he called up one day and said, "I know this is not the usual thing that you do, but I'm going to be doing a film called *Man of La Mancha*, and we've got Peter O'Toole and Sophia Loren, and a slew of great English actors, and of course the original songs are by Mitch Leigh. Would you be interested at all in coming to Rome and just being the musical director?" This would mean, he told me, supervising new orchestrations, composing whatever underscore is necessary, teaching O'Toole, Loren and the others the songs, conducting the scoring sessions, and just in general being the musical head of the whole thing. Well, of course, I was more interested in composing, doing something original. But what Peter was offering was, literally, a year in Rome, and, as it turned out, with very handsome compensation! I think I made more money on that picture than anything else I've ever done purely as a composer, and the conditions were incomparable. We were working at the Dino De Laurentiis Studios. I was given a very generous per diem, which made it possible for me to live one half-block from the Roman Forum, in what they called a "palazzino," a kind of townhouse. It was beautiful.

But at the very outset, shortly after I arrived in Italy, there was suddenly a problem. Peter Glenville did not like Dale Wasserman's script. He just didn't like it; he felt it was too Hollywood, and he had a script by another writer, a script much closer to Cervantes' original. There were big arguments with United Artists about it, and they couldn't come to an agreement. Finally, Peter said he didn't feel he could work with Wasserman's script, and he walked off the project. . . leaving Sophia Loren and Peter O'Toole and me and a couple of others—the set designer and the costume designer, all of whom Peter had engaged—suddenly stranded. We began to feel somewhat rudderless. They then brought in Arthur Hiller, because he had just had a big success directing *Love Story*. Well, this film was about as far from *Love Story* as you can imagine! And Arthur Hiller called us all to a meeting the first morning and admitted that he didn't like costume dramas very much, and he didn't really like mu-

sicals, and suddenly we were wondering why he accepted to do the picture. I think that finally it may be for that reason it was not a very successful film. The whole thing was certainly a very pleasant experience for me, but without Peter Glenville it was not quite the same. However, there were compensations. Rome is just about my favorite city in the world and we all had a wonderful time living it up. Sophia and O'Toole were great fun, as were principal actors Ian Richardson, John Castle and Jimmy Coco. In addition, I had Herbie Spencer with me, doing the orchestrations. He was Chilean himself—or half-Chilean—and the Spanish sounds of *Man of La Mancha* were right up his alley. All in all, it was an unforgettable year. But maybe we should come back to *The Comedians*!

JT: Real briefly, *La Mancha* would have been the last project you worked with Peter on?

LR: Yes, I think that would have been the last one, had he actually completed it. I think he sort of retired after that, and went to live in Mexico...

JT: Yeah, he did a few more plays.

LR: And I completely lost touch with him. One day I just Googled him. I had suddenly remembered him and thought, "My God, I wonder what ever happened?" And it turned out he had passed away in the late '90s in New York. Sadly, I completely lost touch with him after *La Mancha*. I think he got discouraged. He wasn't getting very good reviews. He was always clever with his money, and I think he was able to live very nicely in Mexico and just decided to go down there.

But *The Comedians* was another story. This was back in 1967. Peter shot a lot of it in Dahomey, which substituted for Haiti—because, of course, they couldn't film in Haiti, because Duvalier was still in power. So he filmed it in Dahomey, and then they came up to do the post-production at La Victorine Studios in Nice. As usual, Peter Glenville always managed to capitalize on his film assignments by finding the most wonderful places to shoot and live! And, as usual, he asked me to come and compose near where the action was. So there again, life was fantastic. The studio, M-G-M, found me a gorgeous villa in St. Paul de Vence (next door to Marc Chagall!) with a swimming pool. It was a beautiful house, We brought in a grand piano and that's where *The Comedians* was composed.

I recall making quite an intense study of Haitian rhythms, Haitian percussion and Haitian folk melodies, which are an essential element in the score. I remember working very hard on this music. (Precious little time in the pool!) Graham Greene, the author of the original novel, and a great friend of Peter Glenville, was very much in evidence. I don't know if they were both lapsed Catholics, or half-lapsed, or whatever they

were—all I know is that I used to sit with them at endless dinners, Graham Greene and Peter, listening to them have agonized theological conversations about Catholicism. It was quite fascinating, actually, because they were both extremely intelligent men, speaking of somewhat arcane religious matters, and I was having quite a time trying to follow what they were talking about.

Anyway, Peter was very nervous about one thing—I never knew him to be nervous in this way with any other film. I don't know if you've ever read the original novel, *The Comedians*. It's about some rather broken-down characters, including a sort of failed expatriate British hotelkeeper in Port-au-Prince, the unhappy wife of the German ambassador, an unsuccessful American presidential candidate, and so on. And the whole atmosphere was full of fear of the Tontons Macoute, Duvalier's secret police, with their ominous dark glasses. The whole book is terror-ridden, the tone very nasty and hard. So Peter suddenly began to worry that any music—any aspect of the score—might possibly soften the gritty edge of the film. He was worried about it. And being very close to Graham Greene, who lived in Antibes, just a few miles from Nice, and frequently came by the studio, I think Peter was really uneasy about the music, fearing that Greene would be in some way unhappy if his book were being "Hollywood-ized" in any way. Of course, I felt his apprehensions were completely unnecessary. There was a lot of exciting Haitian rhythm and dynamism—and I had, in London, by the way, an absolutely brilliant percussion section of six men who played the hell out of those Haitian drums. I have to say, they were all Caucasian—but boy, they certainly played like Haitians! There was an absolute feeling of authenticity in what they did.

But that wasn't really the problem. But I remember distinctly that because of this illicit love affair between Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor—or, at least, the illicit love affair between the characters.

JT: Yes, they were married at the time.

LR: In any case, I had written a very sad waltz, a kind of *valse triste*, for them... because it was an agonized, pained, impossible love affair, which was never going to go anywhere, and they were both just as miserable as they were happy to be with each other. So I came up with this mournful waltz, uneasy, haunted. Well, at the recording session, the orchestra played it with a scene between Burton and Taylor. Suddenly Peter was quite alarmed. He flew out of the control room, ran up to the podium, and in great agitation said, "You are completely romanticizing this relationship!" Well, this is the one time I felt he missed the point completely. This was not a romantic waltz, but really

a melancholy, tortured kind of a waltz, perhaps a bit wistful, but full of strange little dissonances. I think he was just obsessed with the fact that it should be “edgy.” And I didn’t know what to do. He was, after all, the director. It’s one of those problems that can come up, although it had hardly ever come up with me. But when you’re right up there on the recording stage, and suddenly the director comes up to the podium and says, “I don’t like it! Fix it! Do something about it!” And there you are! You’ve got the whole orchestra sitting there, waiting! What are you going to do? How are you going to do it? You can’t take it home and rewrite it. (I had already actually taken a couple of cues home, and rewrote them overnight to accommodate Peter’s concerns, even having to copy the parts myself, to be able to get them played the next day.) But this waltz I felt was an integral part of the score, and there was nothing I could do about it. Too late for rewriting; it was the last day of recording. So I just stood there, thinking desperately, “What can I do with what I’ve got?” It was a scene in which Burton and Taylor were having a kind of miserable, suffering conversation with each other. Suddenly, I had a flash: what about having their conversation become the melody? So what I did was to play the whole waltz as written, except that I left the melody out. I kept the accompaniment, and all the figures, so you got the feeling of the strings, and the minor harmonies. Suddenly the whole thing worked. And Glenville was amazed. He said, “What did you do? What did you do? It’s all right now!” And I said what I had done was simply to take away the most surface feature of the waltz, the tune (which I suddenly realized was what was essentially troubling Peter), but kept the feeling of those dark, bittersweet harmonies that were underpinning the melody.

In any case, we finally got it all finished and scored and dubbed. And then something happened which had never happened before, and it was the only moment in my entire time with Peter Glenville that I was ever really angry with him. It was some weeks later when the premiere of the film was held in New York. Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor were there, it was quite a gala event, black tie, all very elegant, and full of celebrities—it was a major film. This picture not only starred Burton and Taylor, it had Alec Guinness, it had Peter Ustinov; it was loaded with really distinguished actors. And that wonderful black actor, I can’t remember his name. . .

JT: James Earl Jones.

LR: James Earl Jones, yes! Who was fabulous in it! Anyway, they started to run the film, and suddenly my heart sank. I suddenly realized that after I had left Paris (where the film was dubbed) to come back to New York, Peter must have gone back into the dub-

bing studio and completely re-mixed the whole picture. And what he had done was obvious. He was so nervous about the music, that at any moment when he felt the music was in any way blunting what he called the “edge” of the picture, he would just dial it out. It was done very, very crudely and unceremoniously, and I felt very betrayed. After the screening, I just walked out. In fact, my friend Beatrice Straight, whom I mentioned before, was at the premiere and lived a few blocks from the theater. So my wife and I just walked with Beatrice to her apartment, and I said, “I really need a strong whiskey.” I was shattered. I was feeling very bad. And then my wife said, “You know, this doesn’t make any sense. You have to go and talk to Peter.” So—in spite of my great reluctance—we went over to wherever it was (the Rainbow Room, I believe) where they were having an after-premiere party. Peter couldn’t have been nicer. He apologized, and said, “I know I didn’t do it well enough. Please blame it on my nerves and my exaggerated concern. I know we didn’t do a good job, and I’m just sorry.” He couldn’t have been more genuine, and he was so humbly apologetic that I almost didn’t notice that he was already talking to me about the next project which he wanted me to do with him.

Which was, incidentally, a stage production for Broadway of a play by John Osborne called *A Patriot for Me*, which all takes place in Vienna at the end of the nineteenth/beginning of the twentieth century. Peter wanted to have a very rich and sumptuous Viennese score—a lot of music underpinning the entire play, almost like a movie. Maximilian Schell was to play the lead. It was a story of betrayal and treachery and was given a really fantastic production, including a great deal of dancing and singing, unusual for a stage play. And now again, Peter and I were on the same wavelength. What I was writing was exactly what he wanted to hear, and exactly what I wanted to hear. And I have, incidentally, made a concert suite of that score, which is full of lush, but also bitter, ironic use of waltzes and polkas, and other formal devices. I call the suite *Vienna Sweet and Sour*. It is still one of my favorite scores, and it was thanks to Peter and his unwavering loyalty to me that we came together for this extraordinary production. In addition, it involved the whole subject of homosexuality. I think that in 1969, this subject made people a lot more uncomfortable than it does today. I mean, it was not something you talked about very much, even though in Osborne’s play it is treated in a very beautiful and sensitive way. I think maybe that’s one of the reasons the show didn’t do as well as it might do today. However, it did run for several months, a dazzling spectacle. It was to be our last complete project together.

JT: Did a record ever get put out? I haven't heard of one.

LR: No, it did not. Maybe I could persuade Doug Fake to do a recording of the original tracks. But in the suite version that I made, I have actually improved on a lot of it. What should be recorded is the suite. We would need a string orchestra. I'd really like to do it.

JT: Yeah, I'd love to hear that someday.

LR: So anyway...I have babbled and babbled, John. I've told you much more than you need to know.

JT: You've covered a lot of my questions along the way! So let me go through here and see what else I wanted to ask you.

LR: Yes.

JT: The main title for *The Comedians* was revised...do you recall the impetus for that change?

LR: I wasn't very happy with the way the orchestration came out on the main title, and I remember I did revise the main title, and re-scored it. How does the whole score sound, actually?

JT: It sounds good! And it was kind of a revelation, because as you say it's kind of dialed down in the film, and actually there are several cues that were just removed from the film.

LR: They were definitely removed. I know that.

JT: And people are going to be hearing them for the very first time.

LR: You can imagine, I was pretty upset! Because I left Paris seeing one film, and at the premiere I saw a completely different one, with a different score.

JT: I think he did hurt the picture by toning it down.

LR: I think he did.

JT: Because it's a relatively slow-paced film, and the music really brings something.

LR: The music's pretty exciting. A lot of dynamic stuff.

JT: Now, on that children's song in the main title...is that something original that you arranged, or is that taken directly from Haiti?

LR: The song was given to me, and we got a bunch of little girls from an English school to come into the studio, where we recorded it. It's the song that children sang in Haiti in praise of Duvalier, a hymn to the "President for Life" (read: Supreme Dictator). And of course, it was designed to be superimposed over an orchestral background. The voices are not being accompanied; it's kind of a montage. The singing is intentionally quite independent of the orchestral texture, which is a kind of ostinato, designed so as not to get in the way of the words and melody. I thought that was a very effective moment.

JT: Oh yeah. It's chilling.

LR: Quite chilling.

JT: It's very interesting to me, because it would have been very easy in this film to simply paint the Tontons Macoute with exclusively dark and dissonant music. But you put this veneer of upbeat, almost cheery music over it, and it's a striking combination and contradiction.

LR: Well, if I remember correctly, when Alec Guinness first arrives in Haiti, I wrote a merengue—I think it's called "Port-au-Prince." Is that the name of the cue?

JT: That's the name of it, yep.

LR: Yeah. Which is very kind of jolly and upbeat, and very Caribbean. It's total irony, of course, like an ad for the Haitian Chamber of Commerce.

JT: There are a couple of scenes where there's music being performed on screen, like the Voodoo ceremony. Did you dub over that?

LR: No, I didn't. That Voodoo ceremony you hear is the original Voodoo ceremony. I came in with some overlaid music, but most of it is the real thing. They actually shot a genuine Voodoo ceremony in Dahomey. It's really interesting to listen to.

JT: You said you made quite a study of Haitian music.

LR: Yes, I did!

JT: Did you incorporate any unusual percussion instruments, or were you able to work with the standard ensemble?

LR: I think I had quite a collection of drums, Haitian drums of various kinds. I believe Hunt was the name of the great place in London, where you could rent all kinds of instruments, especially percussion instruments. It was a warehouse full of them. I went over there and selected the instruments that I thought were appropriate for the locale. And as you can hear, the drums really sound wonderful. I had listened for hours to masses of Haitian music when I was starting to compose the score in the south of France, and got to know it quite well.

JT: Was it more flying by the seat of your pants on *Paradiso*?

LR: Well, *Paradiso* was an idiom that I was much more familiar with. I mean, it was the French music hall of 1890...that kind of thing. Very much more related to our own culture. It's very elegant, and rather sophisticated in its silly, kind of funny way.

JT: Did you ever have a chance to write music in that vein again? There's nothing that I'm personally familiar with.

LR: Not really. You know, that's the interesting thing about being a film composer. You may deeply investigate a certain ethnic idiom or style. Really get into it. Master it. Work it into a score. And then you may never again have occasion to revisit it. Nature of the job.