JEROME MOROSS - transcription of 1970 interview with Paul Snook, WRVR radio, New York;

PS: Our guest on *Composer In Our Time* tonight is one of the most colorful, many sided and inventive figures in the annals of musical Americana, Jerome Moross. Mr. Moross has played a seminal role in the movement to create new forms by bringing the music of the people and the traditions of the concert hall into a closer and mutually more fructifying relationship. Through his numerous ballets, operatic stage works and film scores, as well as his more abstract pieces, Jerome Moross has made a rich and authentic contribution to the growth of a native American musical idiom. During the course of this program we shall endeavor to explore a representative sampling of his varied achievements. Mr. Moross, I'd like to start by remarking on something that will be evident to all of our listeners as soon as they hear a few measures of your music; the fact that popular forms, popular idioms, play a major role and you've had a formal training. I know you went to Juilliard and studied the classics and all that but what was the inception of this interest in popular music on your part.

JM: I don't think there was any inception. It is just that all my life I heard popular music. I heard folk music. It was the kind of thing we sang when I was a child and even while I was going to Juilliard I was working at jobs, in jazz bands. I worked in theatre pits. Popular music was all around me and it always seemed absolutely right to use it. As a matter of fact two people encouraged me in it. One was Charles Ives, with whom I was quite friendly in my late teens...

PS: Oh really!

JM: And I was the first pianist to play the First Sonata. Ives was very kind and very helpful. He once told me that he thought it was a good thing that I was mixing up real popular music in my style.

PS: Right.

JM: Which at that time, by the way, was quite Schoenbergian, Webernian, you know.

PS: I heard that you had a very early period where you were using dissonance.

JM: Oh yes. Some of that stuff is published. I was very intent upon quarter tones and all the rest...

PS: Really?

JM: Then suddenly I felt it was a dead end, it was a wall, and I left it and now, 35 years later, I see the same experimenting made and I can't think of them as experiments anymore.

PS: You mentioned two people who encouraged you in this direction. Charles Ives and who was the other one?

JM: I should say three people because it was Henry Cowell and Aaron Copland.

PS: Ah.

JM: Yes, Henry heard *Paeans* when it was first performed. This was in 19... the winter of 1931-32... it was either in December or January, around that time. He immediately published it and I was eighteen years old at the time. I was immensely proud. And Aaron of course organized a thing called *The Young Composers Group* and we all came down and played our things constantly and there were great discussions. It was terribly important for us.

PS: That must have been a very exciting time to be coming into ones' own as a young composer.

JM: Except there was no interest outside of a very few people.

PS: Right, but you knew you were building a new national music in a sense. Or you thought you were...the composers of that time.

JM: Yes, we were all very busy discovering. I mean, John Kirkpatrick had discovered Gottschaulk and I had discovered Ives and we traded. I introduced him to Ives and he introduced me to Gottschaulk. We became quite friendly at one point.

PS: Gottschaulk's music, later on we'll talk about this. I guess certain elements of Gottschaulk's music probably crept into yours. Certain interests.

JM: Well, you know...

PS: Minstrel, music hall.

JM: There is a great deal of American music which people forget about but which was very important. For instance, a man like Henry Gilbert with pieces like the *Dance In The Place*

Congo.

PS: Yes.

JM: We've left them completely by the wayside. Nobody pays attention to it. I should think American conductors would pick up...

PS: John Alden Carpenter, too.

JM: John Alden Carpenter and Henry Gilbert, and lots of others. Of course there was a great deal of the kind of music influenced by Brahms and Raff, etc. People like George Templeton Strong and others. But there were a number of composers who were kind of working in the dark who were interested in American music. They interested me because when I came to write material to work on I could only dig into what had grown within me, and what had grown within me was what had grown from my knowledge of the music I'd heard around me which was popular music, folk songs and things like that.

PS: From what point do you date your change of allegiance, so to speak - maybe it wasn't as clear cut as that - from the dissonant kind of complex music to something a bit more conventional in terms of its impression on the ear? I don't mean conventional in concept. I know by 1934 you were writing ballet scores like *Paul Bunyon* and I can't imagine music on that theme that would be in an Ivesian idiom even.

JM: No, oh well, it was very americana. *An American Saga* it was called. I did it for Charles Weidman. But I was writing both of them simultaneously. I was doing this kind of experimentation with all the so called new effects open to the composer and bit by bit I began to inch my way toward forgetting about further experiments, which seemed to me useless, and concentrate on writing music. I would say that the moment that I personally knew that I was through with fussing around with other people's style - with Schoenberg's style or Stravinsky's style or Webern's style - and I wanted to write my own style, was *Frankie And Johnny*.

PS: Really. I see. So this was a watershed.

JM: In the midst of writing it, this was in 1937, I suddenly realized that I was really being myself. I was being like nobody else I knew.

PS: Yes, well I think that is quite apparent. I know the first time I heard *Frankie And Johnny*, some twenty years ago, I'd never been exposed to anything like it under the sun. I haven't since. In fact, I think a lot of composers who have since gained considerable fame in the area of the American musical theatre were at least subconsciously aware of what you had done in *Frankie And Johnny* back in the late '30s. At least my ear picks up influences from your music on theirs. I wanted to ask you about a piece, *American Pattern*, which was a kind of a musical review.

JM: No. That was a ballet. I wrote it for the Chicago Opera.

PS: You were still basically oriented to music for the dance at that time.

JM: Well, that's how I made a living. Ruth Page commissioned me to write *American Pattern*. It was rather a mixed-up ballet and it has disappeared and I haven't even got a copy of it and thank heavens I haven't.

PS: Well, what's the story behind *Frankie And Johnny* then, because that's what we are going to hear first this evening, in terms of, well, the use of the chorus, the narrative chorus which sounds like a parody on a Greek chorus? Was that used in the ballet or is it just for the recording?

JM: No, they were on the stage. There were three girls. It's a female trio, it's really not a chorus. After *American Pattern* Ruth invited me to do another ballet and I came up with the idea of *Frankie And Johnny*. It was going to be done also by the Chicago Opera Company - her company was called the Chicago Opera Ballet - they never did do it but it was done instead - she gave a performance for the WPA. She did a production for the WPA in which she did *Frankie And Johnny*. That was its first performance. Then it went into the repertory of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. And it called for three Salvation Army girls who played percussion and sang at the same time. They played a tambourine, cymbals and one had a bass drum. I thought it was rather amusing that the Salvation Army girl, who would be in a slum parading around trying to save souls, would be singing the narrative of what was then considered a very naughty (?) poem.

PS: Wasn't there something of - I know you are probably sick and tired of this but wasn't there something of a scandal associated with a few performances of this ballet in Europe?

JM: Well, it was in New York most peculiarly. It was just at a time when a play called *Trio* had been banned by the City fathers who were shocked at *Trio's* subject. And *Frankie And Johnny* opened a few days later and one newspaper had a headline, "City Produces Dirty Ballet." It was the Ballet Russe production at the City Center.

PS: But the choreography was not really that suggestive, was it?

JM: Well, it was quite frank, it really was quite frank.

PS: Well, the music itself - all of the sections that are on this disk, and the disk is far from complete, you tell me, seem to be derived from the *Frankie And Johnny* ditty.

JM: No.

PS: That isn't true?

JM: The *Frankie And Johnny* ditty appears in the first section and it appears in the second section, at the end of the second section. I break up the phrase...

PS: Yes, the motifs derive from the theme...

JM: So I derive that but then after that I dropped it until at the very end when it reappears. For the very last few bars I reintroduce it as it was at the beginning.

PS: So this is not a fantasia on a popular theme, or anything of that sort, because I think a lot of people have that impression from hearing that familiar melody crop up during the course of...

JM: It comes back about two thirds of the way through the last movement. I'm wrong. There is a little more use of it but the entire body of the work just forgets it totally and goes out on its own.

PS: Although it does make use of popular dance forms like Blues and Stomp, and there are two Rags and a Fox Trot I see here and a One-Step.

PLAYS MUSIC

PS: ....this was your first big success, the scandal as well as...

JM: Oh no, I had...

PS: In terms of public recognition.

JM: I had had a review produced by the Theatre Guild two years before it. It was the first social review. It was produced in the Spring of '35.

PS: By social review you mean with...

JM: Social topic.

PS: Social topic. I see.

JM: And immediately had a whole series of imitators, **Pins And Needles** and all the others came within...

PS: Oh, what was it called?

JM: It was called **Parade** and starred Jimmy Savo and Eve Arden in the spring of '35 produced by the Theatre Guild.

PS: So you were already moving into the musical theatre as well the ballet at that time. I didn't realize we had to credit you also with the origination of that musical form. This was a topical type of...with satiric commentary on the current scene?

JM: Well, there were topical reviews at the time, things like **As Thousands Cheer**, etc. which were...

PS: And **Bandwagon**, but they were more...frivolous

JM: They all were about people's stresses or things like that but here was a topical review which was entirely on social things, on starvation and whatnot, on depression. The audience, I must say, was a little confused by it and the Theatre Guild dropped it as quickly as they could. It was playing to sold out houses but they shut it down the minute their subscription season ended.

PS: Was the score in the form of popular tunes or more elaborate than that?

JM: Well, it was in the form of popular tunes. It also had elaborate ballets.

PS: I get the impression that in the late '30s you began to move out of the area of New York dance and musical comedy to a certain extent and to... well, you worked for Hollywood for a year or so then, didn't you? Did you write scores at that time?

JM: No, I couldn't get a job writing scores and I was desperately broke and an offer came along to become a commercial orchestrator for Warner Bros., so I became a commercial orchestrator for Warner Bros.

PS: So I imagine some of those Max Steiner scores bear the...

JM: No, I never orchestrated for Max. But I had a whole series of other composers I was assigned to, people like Freddy Hollander and Franz Waxman occasionally and Adolph Deutsch all the time. You see my name on all those old Bette Davis, Humphrey Bogart movies for the orchestration.

PS: You were also writing, at this time, and perhaps a few years earlier, scores on commission from Radio, weren't you, for CBS? I mean I've heard a couple of them. *A Tall Story For Orchestra* and *Variations On A Hobo Theme*.

JM: No, *Ramble On A Hobo Tune*. The *Ramble On A Hobo Tune* which I did at the end of 1940 was what started the symphony.

PS: Yes. That was my next topic, so go right ahead.

JM: I had written this movement - they had asked me...asked a series of composers to do pieces using folk songs. They assigned folk songs and they assigned me this folk song which was supposed to be played very fast and was generally sung very fast. It was either called *Midnight Rider* or *Easy Rider*. Its a classic American folk song. And I hated it in its fast version so I played it very slowly and I wrote a counterpoint to it and the whole thing became a two part invention. It starts off with my theme and then the folk song comes in after a while. And then I loved the piece but it seemed to exist in nothing. It seemed to call for something before it and something after it. It certainly...being an invention it seemed to me it should end with a fugue. I began to fuss around with it and before I knew it I had two movements before it and a fugue after it. I shouldn't before I knew it. It was another year's work because I was also doing a lot of commercial work in between - playing the piano and radio and things, so that was that.

PS: I see. Wasn't it about this time that you sort of made your first discovery, or not your first but it really had a creative impact upon you to discover America's west. In this symphony one hears an element of the open country sound that has come to typify some of your music since then, for the first time. It certainly isn't there is *Frankie And Johnny*. Is this an accurate impression, that the western topography and the style of life had really made an impact upon you?

JM: Oh, it made a great impact upon me. The first time I hit the west was in the late fall of 1936 when the opera season was over in Chicago. I didn't want to come back to New York. There seemed nothing here so I headed out for Hollywood to see what would happen there. Being unmarried I was footloose and could go anywhere I wished. The dimensions of everything starting with the Great Plains just overawed me. I remember I went by bus because there was no money to go any other way. At the age of 23 sitting up a few nights on a bus is not so difficult. I remember I just had to get out of the bus at Albuquerque and stay. I just couldn't go on you see. I had to get out and I had to wander around the town. Albuquerque at time was a small town of about ten or twelve thousand people and you could easily walk from the center of town to the edge of town and be out in the desert, you know. The whole thing was just too much for me. And then when I hit Los Angeles and California was not the way it is now, of course. It was marvelous. I just fell in love with it. I wandered all around the West. I just was ecstatic about it.

PS: I doesn't begin to show up in your music until later.

JM: Well, it shows up a couple of years later in *Tall Story*, which was written right after *Frankie And Johnny*. *Frankie And Johnny* is a city piece and *Tall Story* is a country piece, you know.

PS: Well, the symphony...you say the third movement is the core of the work in terms of...

JM: Of conception.

PS: Conception. Right. That is what is left of the *Ramble On A Hobo Theme*.

JM: It is the *Ramble On A Hobo Theme*, re-orchestrated. It was done originally for a small group.

PS: The symphony, we are going to hear in a few minutes by the way, was, I understand, premiered by Sir Thomas Beecham.

JM: That's right.

PS: How did he get into that picture? I just don't think of Sir Thomas Beecham being out in Hollywood asking composers to write symphonies for him.

JM: No, he was conducting at the Hollywood Bowl and I went backstage and asked him if he would like to see a new symphony, and he was rather amused at my request and said "certainly." The next day I dropped it off at his hotel and I thought no more of it until...except that two months later I suddenly got a telegram saying "rehearsals in three weeks. Where are the parts?" There were no parts. I was working at Warner Bros. then and I hired some of the copyists at Warner Bros. to make a set of parts.

PS: You might as well get some value for all the labor you put in.

JM: Oh, I had to pay for it.

PS: The work is in four movements and the scherzo obviously... if the third movement is a kind of slow movement, isn't it?

JM: Yes.

PS: The second is the scherzo. This is a performance that Alfred Wallenstein conducted a while after the Beecham premier.

JM: It's a year later.

PS: A year later. It's the Los Angeles Philharmonic

PLAYS MUSIC

PS: The next milestone, so to speak, in your career that I know about, are the *Ballet Ballads.* I have a very confused idea in my own mind as to what this was. I think of it as a kind of a libretto with dance passages and also a little bit of musical comedy or opera. What exactly were the *Ballet Ballads*?

JM: The *Ballet Ballads* were an attempt by John Latouche and myself to really create a multimedia, or mixture, so that you wouldn't know who were the dancers, who were the singers. The singers had to move and mix with the dancers. The idea was to do a stage work in which the whole story was told through dance and song but so mixed up that it was not the usual pattern of singers at the side.

PS: I see. Well, it sounds very contemporary in a sense. Contemporary in today's striving for a smorgasbord approach to all the art forms.

JM: It is so contemporary that the middle one is a discussion of marijuana. We took two folk poems, *Willie The Weeper* and *Cocaine Lil* and used them as part of the libretto.

PS: The musical fabric was a continuous one...I mean there weren't just set pieces with dialogue in between. The whole story was told through...

JM: No dialogue.

PS: No dialogue whatsoever. Right. Were these done on Broadway, or New York or...?

JM: Yes, originally they were done at the ANTA Experimental Theatre and then it was moved up to the Music Box theatre and had a Broadway run. But it was done at ANTA in May and moved up in June and couldn't bear our blast of summer heat.

PS: Right.

JM: Besides which they were very odd pieces.

PS: Yeah, I was going to say I don't think many people think of you as an experimentalist in terms of harmony and rhythms and all that but in terms of form...you know, the innovation of trying to blend different strands in the American musical experience into something altogether unique and homogeneous. It seems that a lot of this...we talk a lot about the integrated musical comedy today but you were integrating long before it became fashionable.

JM: As a matter of fact, the *Ballet Ballads* started the whole talk about integration. They were a seven day wonder and while their whole life in New York lasted eight weeks, it was, for the intellectuals in the city, very influential. And, every time I go to a show now I see something which developed out of *Ballet Ballads*.

PS: Were any of them staged individually? I mean, there were three segments.

JM: There were four but we only did three.

PS: What were the titles, just for the record?

JM: *Susanna And The Elders*, and that was done like a camp meeting version...by camp meeting I mean religious camp meeting...version of the story with the audience becoming the characters and the whole thing done in homespun, you know, ginghams. Later on that turned up...the idea of doing *Susanna And The Elders* in the country style...turned up as an opera by another composer.

PS: Yes, I know.

JM: Then the middle one was a city piece. It was a jazz piece. Most peculiarly it used what has since become Rock and Roll rhythms. It was a set of variations and it was based upon two folk poems, *Willie The Weeper*, which is the study of a marijuana smoker, and *Cocaine Lil*, who becomes his desired enamorata. It is a famous folk poem that's almost been forgotten.

PS: Is the tone moralistic or is it humorous or...?

JM: No, it's quite serious. It's a discussion of alter ego, of Willie as he actually is and his alter ego which is what he would like to be and which he achieves through the influence of drugs. And Willie himself is a decrepit tenor and the alter ego is an elegant dancer and they work together you see, they work simultaneously. At one point they...well, at a number of points they are almost fused.

PS: What was the third?

JM: The third one was *Davy Crockett*. We took the Davy Crockett legend and presented it as a wild American tall story. It had a funny repercussion. Disney wanted to buy it and offered us $7500 for it. We both felt indignant and said, "we won't sell it to him for that" and so he went off and did his own. And the *Davy Crockett* boom started in the '50s.

PS: It seems like a great deal of your career people have just been stealing ideas from you, either borrowing ideas and exploiting them in the wrong way in a sense. It seems to me that...

JM: No, that's wrong, because if I come along with an idea and other people can grow on it, that's fine.

PS: But don't you think that *Ballet Ballads* is overdue for a revival? I certainly do in terms of the subject matter and also the fact that I don't think they've dated at all. I haven't heard them but...

JM: No, they haven't dated.

PS: ...dated in terms of their techniques and style.

JM: Actually, in technique and style they are still way ahead of the time. But I think it would be too expensive to mount them now. What I would like to see done is, since they are all contained forms, musical forms, and make musical sense, I would like to see them done in concert.

PS: Without the choreographic element?

JM: You don't need the choreographic element.

PS: Well, this is really a step on the way to probably your most dazzling success in terms of, I don't know, public recognition, which was *The Golden Apple*. This is probably the only American musical comedy that's been written on a Guggenheim fellowship.

JM: I would hardly call it a musical comedy.

PS: Right. I don't know. It's a new genre really.

JM: Yeah. We were fooling around. I wanted to fool around with the opera form. I love to fool around with the opera form.

I think it's a great form and I've done a great deal of experimenting with it. And the idea was to do a Broadway piece using idioms that would not push the audience out, you know...make them feel part of it...and still utilize the opera form to present our ideas on war and peace, on love, on hate, good and evil and all the rest of it...and actually write an opera for Broadway, and we did, just that.

PS: Right. It was. I can't say it was the first time anyone had done that because apparently you and John Latouche had attempted it before in slightly different...

JM: We attempted it in *Ballet Ballads* and we had one or two other attempts in between which came to nothing.

PS: I see. But this was luckily...

JM: Operas had been done on Broadway...

PS: Well, straight operas.

JM: But they were grand operas which happened to be produced on Broadway. But this was something to utilize the Broadway forms and the opera forms. For instance, in the second act we decided we would use all the elements of the review and so the wanderings of Ulysses are done as a review with a master of ceremonies.

PS: What we have on the recording here is maybe less than half the total score.

JM: A little less than half.

PS: Right. I remember the production. I saw it when I was in my teens and I was completely taken by it. I was waiting for the singers to stop so that the story could go on but I saw after a while that the story was told entirely in terms of music and it's really just an adaptation of the Iliad, isn't it?

JM: Well, it's the Iliad and the Odyssey.

PS: And the Odyssey both.

JM: Mixed up. The first act is the Iliad and the second act is the Odyssey.

PLAYS MUSIC

PS: Mr. Moross, now we are going to move on to a work that I think will be new to everyone. It unfortunately hasn't been heard outside of your living room. But we are very happy to be able to present a kind of broadcast premier in a truncated form here. This is a ballet which you wrote in the 1950s called *The Last Judgement*.

JM: Yes.

PS: And also for Ruth Page who commissioned *Frankie And Johnny*. Why was this ballet not ever done. I know it has to do with the subject matter but I'll let you tell the story.

JM: The subject matter is a discussion of the original sin. I had written the scenario and in the course of the ballet woman is to be vindicated of original sin and man is to be condemned because he committed the original sin for the sake of power.

PS: And this is what you mean by the last judgement, rather than the sense of the apocalypse? Because it sounds very forbidding in its present title. One thinks of something very grandiose and...

JM: Yes. It takes place on Judgement Day and Eve is exonerated.

PS: I think this is due for a revival. The work was supposed to have been done in the bible belt and this is the reason that...

JM: Oh no, it couldn't be done there.

PS: It couldn't be done, they wouldn't have accepted this interpretation.

JM: The managers didn't accept the idea. Ruth had the scenery and costumes made and then just never did the...the piece was copied and all the rest of it and then she never performed it.

PS: I see. It's in the form of ten dances. I think this is really one of your most...one of your richest conceptions in terms of music and it also has an interesting formal scheme. Would you care to tell us a little bit about that?

JM: Well, the first theme of each movement becomes the secondary theme of the next movement, until at the very end the primary theme of the last movement is what was the secondary theme of the first movement. So it's a circular form.

PS: I see. And the style is...we've been sort of following chronologically through your development now as kind of...up to that point as a synthesis of all the things you'd been doing from *Frankie And Johnny* through *The Golden Apple*, in a way. I mean, it has this kind of...I can only characterize it as a feeling for practically every form of the American vernacular from the home spun melodies of the nineteenth century through the hot jazz, but treated in a way which is very, very...I mean this wealth of melody...I mean simple melodies...each one is different from the other and yet they all seem to come from the same source. And your treatment of them...you get such tremendous mileage out of these simple motifs.

JM: I would say that by this time in my career I'm no longer thinking about style. My style is there and it is at my service.

PS: I see.

JM: I am now interested in what the piece says, what would be the best way to say it, how to make the audience feel what I want them to feel, what I felt and that's what I'm interested in getting across now.

PS: Well I hope as a result of this broadcast, although we don't have an exaggerated sense of our importance here at WRVR, that maybe some conductor would be interested in doing the piece in its full orchestral dress which exists ready to do any time, isn't that correct?

JM: Any conductor who wants to may have the first performance.

PLAYS MUSIC

PS: Mr. Moross, now we will move along into a more recent period of your career but I know there is a work we can't play any excerpts from that you want to talk to us about, and I'd like to hear more about, called *Gentlemen, Be Seated!* This is a kind of a, I don't know, review, minstrel show type of musical review, or what?

JM: No, it was an opera.

PS: An opera, ok, I'm sorry.

JM: And it was done by the City Opera.

PS: As an opera.

JM: Well...but actually the formal structure...it was a history of the Civil War in the form of a minstrel show and it was meant to be done on the opera stage. All the critics thought it was absolutely outrageous to use the opera stage that way but why not? Only the opera stage...only the opera companies have the equipment, the machinery, for a work so elaborate. It was kind of an epic work. It had a big sweep but they were so indignant about the formal structure that they didn't see any of that.

PS: And this was done in 1963?

JM: Uh huh, it was done in 1963.

PS: And you made use of ballet, of song?

JM: No ballet. There was tap dancing. But it seemed to me that if I was going to do an American...the Civil War, and do an analysis of it, the only kind of dancing that made any sense to me would have been tap dancing and we got Paul Draper to do the tap dancing.

PS: I find it hard to believe that it didn't make more of an impression on people than you say it did.

JM: Oh, it made an impression on people. The mail I got was tremendous and wildly enthusiastic. It only had three performances. But the critical reception was...with one exception, a magazine called *Show*...but the critical reception was absolutely outraged. You'd think I had trampled on the grave of Verdi.

PS: Was the style similar to *The Golden Apple*? Did it make use of so called popular forms from the period of the Civil War in a stylized way, or what?

JM: Yes, it did, it did. A great deal of it was patterned on the salon music of the period, of the song style. Except of course it was much freer harmonically than they were then. And it...

PS: Did it have a story, a personalized story or was it more like a...I don't know, a dramatized newsreel? Was it tongue in cheek or was it...

JM: No, it was quite serious. Except, there were very funny moments in it. But it utilized the classic minstrel figures, Mr. Interlocutor, Tambo and Bones, and Mr. Banjo.

PS: Oh, it did have the framework of the minstrel show?

JM: Yes, and we kept going back to the minstrel circle. And there were the performers that they always had in minstrel shows. There was the comedienne, there were two pairs of juveniles, you might say. A tenor and a baritone, and a soprano and a mezzo soprano, who represented...who constantly were either the Johnny Reb or the Billy Yank, or the Southern Girl or the Northern Girl.

PS: So a lot of the characters were archetypes, so to speak...

JM: Yes.

PS: ...or representative of more than just the individual.

JM: Just as they were in the minstrel show, you know.

PS: I see.

JM: And then there was also a large Negro cast, or should I say black cast now. At that time we called it a Negro cast. And there was a kind of a mother earth figure who represented...what I really was after was that sort of thing that happens in Faulkner's *Sound And The Fury*, in which he remarks about Delsey that she "remained"...

PS: Yes, "she endured."

JM: "She endured." And she endures. She's a slave woman, she's Harriet Tubman, she's various characters through it. And Mr. Interlocutor joins in and becomes things...he becomes a Pinkerton man when we do an episode on the spies, Belle Boyd, etc.

PS: I think of this as sort of in the line of *Oh, What A Lovely War*, although it has a musical score of substance to go with it, but kind of an extravaganza.

JM: No, it was done before *Oh, What A Lovely War* and it...the point was quite different. I wanted to give the feeling...I wasn't making a denunciatory statement or anything like that. I just wanted to transfer onto the stage my feeling that...of the sweep and the scope of what the Civil War was, what it had done. There was another secondary theme, which I suppose the audience found a little unpleasant, which was that, lets not kid about ourselves, our prejudices are almost inherent and are going to be very difficult to overcome.

PS: Yes. We are going to turn now to a purely abstract instrumental work because you have been writing instrumental music right along during these years you devoted to musical theatre. This is a sonatina, one of four, that you composed recently for clarinet choir. Would you tell us how this came to be written?

JM: I wanted to write a series of sonatinas and my publisher asked me to...which I was going to call *Sonatinas For Diverse Instruments*...and my publisher asked me to write one of them for a clarinet choir which he said was a formal structure that existed throughout the country and there were any number of clarinet choirs in high schools and colleges. I became fascinated with the idea and transferred the ideas I had for another group to the clarinets.

PS: I see. That must be a very interesting kind of sonority you get from six clarinets playing at once. I don't know that I've ever heard that.

JM: Well, you will in a minute.

PS: Yes. Is this in three traditional movements, or all in one movement?

KM: No, it's in three traditional movements. As a matter of fact one of the points about the piece is to use very classical sonatina form. You know, the allegro sonata with a short development and a regular three part form in the middle movement and a rondo at the end.

PS: Right.

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PS: Mr. Moross, a program on your music could not be complete without at least a glance in the direction of one of your most popular scores...I think popular with the general public. Even those who do not know your name will know this music and that's the film score for *The Big Country*. Now, there was a soundtrack album of this and we can only play some excerpts from what amounts to about seventy-five minutes of music in its original form. But I'd like to ask you how you came to write *The Big Country*. I know that you were in Hollywood during that earlier period and not doing any original work for the films but in the late 50s you began to write...I mean a number of other soundtracks have appeared like *The War Lord* and *The Cardinal* and *Proud Rebel* with your name on them. I remember then realizing you were the same man who had written *Frankie And Johnny*...I was in my twenties then...and I'd never associated your name at all with Hollywood but all of a sudden you spent a number of years out there and I imagine rather lucrative years for you.

JM: No, it was exactly...I hate to keep telling you no...but in

1950 I was asked to do a film score, and that was finally the breaking of the ice, and then two years later I was asked to write another film score and bit by bit I began composing film scores. But I only did them when I actually needed money. I would run back from Hollywood and come here and work.

PS: I see.

JM: Then, when I was short of the green stuff I'd go back and do a score.

PS: Well, I hope *The Big Country* certainly brought in a good deal of it because I know the record was in print for almost a dozen years which is quite a record.

JM: As a matter of fact I think it just went out of print.

PS: Yes. And on top of that this is one of the few film scores I know of that does not try to ingratiate itself with the listener with a love theme which can be turned into a popular song with lyrics. This is really a full scale orchestral score, conceived orchestrally, developed as a...you know, I think you could have another symphony there if you wanted to restructure it that way.

JM: Well, I made an orchestral suite out of it and it's been performed in England and I think in Japan, but its never been performed here and considering the extreme popularity of this score I can't understand that at all. As far as people who listen to radio goes this is an American classic,

PS: Absolutely. I mean it's the quintessence, I think, of all the western style film music and also of that particular component of your own muse, so to speak. It's there way back in, you know, long before *The Golden Apple*. It's in the Symphony really, in fact there are passages in the Symphony that I think anticipate themes from *The Big Country*.

JM: Stylistically yes. But it obviously seems to strike a chord because there are certain radio stations I know that wouldn't consider letting a day go by without playing it once.

PS: You're not unhappy about that.

JM: I'm not unhappy, no.

PS: Well, I think it is because it does have that heroic quality about it and a tremendous gift you have for evoking and describing action. I think your music, even as far back as *Frankie And Johnny* really has this ability, this plastic ability, to really get to the heart of a scene and capture it in just a few notes. Also, another thing I like about it, and I hope our little manufactured suite will indicate...because we've taken several sections that are not on the recording and combined them with some of the more familiar ones...the way you are able to make different uses of the thematic material for different moods. Of course, this is maybe elementary from film composing standpoint, but not many film composers do it with the kind of dexterity that you do.

JM: Well, I must say the film allowed it because there were broad passages of action and scene painting. I'd like to point out that the suite that you've made is not the suite that I made.

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END OF INTERVIEW MATERIAL ON TAPE