

## JULIUS CAESAR

Miklos Rozsa

In my previous articles about the music of QUO VADIS, IVANHOE and PLYMOUTH ADVENTURE I have expanded my theories about music written for historical films. Shakespeare's JULIUS CAESAR presented new problems. If it had been merely a historical film about Julius Caesar I would have undoubtedly tried a reconstruction or approximation of the Roman music of the First Century B.C. However, it is more than that. It is a Shakespearean tragedy, and, with its language, a true mirror of Elizabethan times, and it is principally this language which dictates its style. In Shakespeare's time, as they had few scruples about stylistic correctness, the music was undoubtedly their own - Elizabethan. Should I have composed it in Roman style, it would have been wrong for Shakespeare - should I have tried to treat it as stage music to an Elizabethan drama in Elizabethan style, it would have been anachronistic from the historical point of view. I decided, therefore, to regard it as a universal drama, about the eternal problems of men and the most timely problems about the fate of dictators. I wrote the same music I would have written for a modern stage presentation: interpretative incidental music, expressing with my own musical language, for a modern audience, what Shakespeare expressed with his own language for his own audience three hundred and fifty years ago. The example set by Mendelssohn with his music to MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM was obvious, as he wrote his own, highly romantic music which now everybody accepts as authentic, to this romantic play of Shakespeare.

To emphasize the Shakespearean stage drama I wrote an overture, based on the main themes of the music, to precede the play. It was strong and stark, to set the audience in the mood of the following events. It was later replaced by Tchaikowsky's "Capriccio Italien", which addly enough, some people found more appropriate to precede "Julius Caesar".

The four protagonists of the play are Caesar, Marc Antony, Brutus and Cassius. The first two represent the ruthless, ambition filled, arrogant, Roman imperialists; Brutus, the honest, straight-forward man who loves Caesar but loves his country better, and finally Cassius with a "lean and hungry look" who is filled with envy and jealousy of Caesar.

The three main musical themes are these:

- 1) The theme of Caesar, which also serves later as the theme of Marc Antony, as the two represent the same basic ideas in the play, for "Antony is but a limb of Caesar." It is a martial theme, stern and "Constant as the Northern Star", which appears the first time as Caesar's march as he and his entourage come for the "Course" and is interrupted by the soothsayer's voice, "shriller" than all the music.



Marciale

Handwritten musical score for 'Marciale'. The score is written on two systems of five-line staves. The first system contains two staves of music, with the upper staff in treble clef and the lower staff in bass clef. The second system also contains two staves of music, ending with a double bar line and the word 'etc.' written to the right. The music features a variety of note values, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests.

2) The theme of "gentle and most noble Brutus" is brooding, musing and sighing" portraying musically the man who is willing to sacrifice his friend (or was he his father?) who knows "no personal cause to spurn at him, but for the general!" The theme appears first under the titles as a canon with motives of the Caesar theme interrupting it.

Handwritten musical score for 'Andante'. The score is written on two systems of five-line staves. The first system contains two staves of music, with the upper staff in treble clef and the lower staff in bass clef. The second system also contains two staves of music, ending with a double bar line and the word 'etc.' written to the right. The music is marked 'Andante' and 'mp cresc.' and features a variety of note values, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. The notation includes many accidentals (sharps and flats) and dynamic markings.

3) We first hear Cassius' theme under his monologue after Brutus' departure, when he first tells about his intriguing. The music portrays the determined character of this envious intriguer who "reads much; is a great observer, looks quite through the deeds of men; loves no plays and hears no music."

*Molto moderato*

etc

This music leads to the street scene of thunder and lightning and disappears with the opening words of Cicero.

Calpurnia's dream (this is only mentioned by Shakespeare but in the film we can also see it) about the murder of Caesar, is accompanied by a dissonant muted brass figure in which high violin harmonies eject the Caesar motif. The nervous music follows the scene until Caesar addresses his own statue: "Nor heaven nor earth have been at peace."

*Allegro*

etc

Before I set out to compose the music and before I saw the picture, I thought that no dialogue scene should have any music, as on the stage one uses music only for pre and postludiums, transitions and entr'acts. The filmed stageplay, however, dictates new aesthetics and dramatic rules. Scenes with strongly dramatic content could be emphasized and brought nearer to our consciousness by the use of appropriate music.

As Artemidorus waits for Caesar before the Capitol, reads his letter of warning, Caesar and the senators arrive, and until he enters the Senate-house, there is a tremendous tension - as we know that he enters the trap laid for him by the conspirators.

The music which accompanies this scene is low; dissonant seventh chords are slowly creeping forward on a basso ostinato of tympani and bass pizzicati.

*Ostinato*

The whole assassination scene in the Senate and the oration of Brutus and Antony at the Forum are without music. These are not only the strongest scenes of the whole tragedy, but undoubtedly the most famous and greatest writing of the entire dramatic literature. Here every line is precise in meaning and does not need any help from any other medium. Music sets in only as a final punctuation, as the citizens of Rome rise in mutiny.

At Caesar's funeral we hear the lament of women. It is a dirge in the manner of a Greek Nenia.

*Adagio doloroso*

Female  
Voices

After the so-called pricking scene, when Octavius leaves, Antony remains alone, sitting on Caesar's chair and imagining himself as his successor. The brassy music brings back the ominous Caesar-theme.

In Brutus' camp, the meeting of Brutus and Cassius, their quarrel over their grievances are scenes of matter-of-fact realism and did not need any music. After Cassius and his captains leave, Brutus asks his little servant Lucius to sing a song. Shakespeare only indicates "music and a song", and I thought that an Elizabethan song, because of its language, would be the most appropriate. I chose John Dowland's "Now, O now, I needs must part", which was published in 1597 and might have been known to Shakespeare.

*John Dowland*

*Now, O now, I needs must part, Part-ing though I at-sent a-sorrow,*

The famous scene in the tent when the ghost of Caesar appears before Brutus to tell him that he will see him again at Philippi, is accompanied by a cold, glassy and shimmering sound and we hear the distorted Caesar motif again. It breaks off as the ghostly image of Caesar disappears.

The next music we hear is during the battle of Philippi. It starts with the frantic bugles of Brutus' array as it is attacked by Antony's legions. It is rather an impression of the battle instead of a detailed and long debacle and on the victorious close-up of Antony, we hear the victorious Caesar-Antony theme.

The last music starts after Cassius dies and continues from here to the end of the picture. The themes of Cassius and Brutus appear again in a subdued, low and depressed manner. Brutus appeals to his friends for death and they refuse him. He asks his servant Strato to hold his sword whilst he runs on it. He dies with the words on his lips: "Caesar, now be still; I kill'd not thee with half so good a will."

*Largamente*

*etc.*

Throughout these scenes I wanted to give the impression that the victorious armies of Antony and Octavius are continuously advancing and coming nearer and nearer. This scene, however, is the culmination of the tragedy, when its noblest character, Brutus, like a Greek hero in a Greek drama, faces his inescapable fate. I wrote, therefore, two entirely different scores, contrapuntally worked out, but in content completely independent. The one, which represents Antony's nearing army, is a march based on Caesar's theme and is scored for brass, woodwind and percussion instruments. The other, which plays the scene in the foreground and underlines the tragedy of Brutus, is scored for strings only. Thus there is a complete contrast of color between the two, apart from their emotional, rhythmic and thematic differences. The new stereophonic technique, with three loudspeakers behind the screen, came to my help. As the direction of the approaching army is from the right corner of the screen, we put the march track on this loudspeaker and the string track on the two others, screen center and left corner. Thus there is complete separation of the two scores, which were recorded separately, and geographically the listener immediately feels that the army is marching from the right corner of the screen.

As Brutus dies the march becomes louder and louder and as Strato runs out from the scene it completely overpowers Brutus's string music and dominates the whole screen.

The image shows a handwritten musical score titled "Quasi-march". It consists of three staves. The top staff is for the piano, with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). It contains a melodic line with various dynamics and articulations, including a section marked "pp" (pianissimo) and "V. marc." (Vivace marcato). The middle staff is for the strings, with a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp. It features a rhythmic accompaniment with many sixteenth notes, marked "H. mod. m." (Moderato). The bottom staff is a bass line with a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp, containing a simple harmonic accompaniment. There are various performance markings throughout, such as "V. marc.", "pp", and "H. mod. m.". The score is written in ink on aged paper.

This juxtaposition of two different moods is not entirely my innovation, as Bizet already most effectively used it in the third act of "Carmen", when Escamilio enters the arena and Carmen remains alone with Don Jose. In the background we hear the gay, bullfighter music which is interrupted by the orchestra with somber comments about the impending drama in the foreground.

Octavius and Antony arrive in the camp where Brutus's body lies in a tent and we hear from outside the mournful rhythm of the drums. As Antony finishes his final eulogy on Brutus; "his life was gentle, and the elements, so mixed in him that Nature might stand up, and say to all the world "This was a man", the sound of the drums grows with the growing flame of the taper, and breaks off as the taper goes out. There is a moment of silence and then the tragic theme of Brutus concludes the picture.

An MGM LP record album of the somewhat condensed soundtrack is available for the public. With its beauty of language, rhythm of its words and weight of its thoughts, it can be listened to without seeing the action just as much as one listens to a recording of an orchestra without seeing the performers.

JULIUS CAESAR .. Metro-Goldwyn- Mayer .. Louis Calhern, Marlon Brando.  
Director, Joseph L. Mankiewicz. Music, Miklos Rozsa.

Capitol records is releasing a triptych of Dr. Rozsa's film scores (12 inch LP) - a symphonic suite based on themes of "QUO VADIS, the SPELLBOUND Concerto, and THE RED HOUSE suite. SPELLBOUND and THE RED HOUSE are also available in a separate album. ( 10 inch LP) as is "QUO VADIS.

