

19'40" At the Gates of the Twilight Zone

~~19'40"~~

The (anti)classical recording series



<http://www.planethugill.com/2020/08/at-gates-of-twilight-zone-1940.html>

<https://19m40s.bandcamp.com/album/at-the-gates-of-the-twilight-zone>

Site quote: “19'40" is a subscription-based recording series created by Sebastiano De Gennaro, Enrico Gabrielli and Francesco Fusaro, in collaboration with Tina Lamorgese.”

[Tuesday, September 1, 2020 at 5:45 pm PDT]

Earlier this afternoon I was introduced to the music provided on the second link above (top of page 2 here). I clicked on most of the freely available tracks before I decided to make things simple (no more constant online pop-ups suggesting I purchase the tracks! :) & actually bought this digital album via *Bandcamp*, the same outfit hosting *New Discovery Recordings* by Michael McGehee that I discussed yesterday on my new Blog #65. It only cost USD \$10.45 (9 Euros).

This review analysis will be quite short & hurried compared to my 67 page analysis of the *Omni Music Publishing* engraving of Bernard Herrmann’s North by Northwest. I had about three weeks to prepare & then actually write *that* analysis. I only have a day to review *this* paper on “At the Gates of the Twilight Zone.” Hmmm. I find that title a bit curious because an iconic symbol for the series is a “door” (not gates):

#BernardHerrmann #TwilightZone 

At any rate, with this digital album you have entered “something different” indeed with this recording of Bernard Herrmann’s music for two episodes of *The Twilight Zone* (“Little Girl Lost” & “Living Doll”) plus the so-called *Outer Space Suite*. You will enter an alternate universe where the music is by Herrmann & the themes are the same *but* the instrumentation has changed. We find a flute (piccolo doubling), clarinet/bass clarinet/ alto flute/synth, violin/viola, trumpet, trombone (euphonium doubling), horn, piano, harp, and percussion (vibe, glock,

etc.). Herrmann in “Little Girl Lost” utilized the flute family (piccolos doubling), 4 harps, viola d’amore, and battery (vibe, Tam Tam, tambourine). In “Living Doll” Herrmann used a bass clarinet, 2 harps & celeste. The *Outer Space Suite* utilized 3 flutes, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 Fags, C.Fag, harp & celeste.

So you can obviously see that Herrmann’s music was newly orchestrated in this December 3, 2017 recording. If you click on the first link above, you will read: “For the Bernard Herrmann disc, they started from material found on YouTube and then contacted the [Bernard Herrmann Society](#). They approached his music with respect, and Enrico re-orchestrated Herrmann's scores for the in-house ensemble.”

<https://youtu.be/V2iPwWvFcmU> [Little Girl Lost, TZ] Herrmann

The written music they found on YouTube was of course my detailed rundown video I put online nearly six years ago based on my exhaustive research of the CBS Papers at UCLA since 1989 (see link immediately above). I scrolled down to the bottom of the second link (that has the audio samples) and saw my name credited. That’s fine. More recordings, the better as far as I am concerned. Have a blast into this wondrous land of music by Bernard Herrmann! :)

The only mild caution I need to give to first-time listeners regarding this recording is that you may need to *adjust*, especially if you are used to the original recording on the episode and the re-recording conducted by Joel McNeely. You have to get used to...“something different” (perfectly befitting the *Twilight Zone*). You may be quite satisfied with the exact way Herrmann intended his music to be heard. A Herrmann purist may, therefore, rather object to this recording. I don’t know (depending on the person). In certain respects, I tend to lean towards the purist side. On the other hand, I have re-orchestrated Herrmann’s music (but still following Herrmann’s known methods) in

Mysterious Island and *Jason & the Argonauts* (etc.). That was along the lines of simply changing ensembles. For instance, if Herrmann wrote something exclusively for the brass & timp, I may change it to the woodwinds & harp or strings & harp but still not altering the Herrmann characteristics. Indeed, he did the same often with his own self-borrowings.

19'40" did a mix utilizing many very different instruments (probably accommodating their specially known musicians adept in certain instruments already). Sometimes this approach worked, and sometimes it did not (after listening to the tracks, more than once). Frankly, I think that overall the *Outer Space Suite* tracks (except for one) worked the best in their approach. "Living Doll" fared the worst of the three (more details shortly as I focus briefly on each or most cues). Despite that, *all* of the tracks have a terrific *vibrant* sound like you're in the recording room or concert hall as it was being recorded—quite upfront & intimate. Sometimes the balance of instruments were off, say, the vibraphone did not sound pronounced when it should.

Nevertheless, I think this 19'40" recording is a very interesting experiment, and I commend it. It's just sometimes they did not choose wisely in their arrangement of various cues so it mars the intended overall desired effect (consistent listening satisfaction). So, as a warning, they rather failed in being consistent, and actually allowed some very poor tracks to be allowed in this rollout (probably because they cannot now make new & improved takes since the recording was done nearly 3 years ago). I will give them four stars out of five for effort & intention & creative fun & experimentation, but three stars out of five for actual overall rating status (which is GOOD, by the way) & failing to make other takes that improve bad takes. Also there is a mislabeling of track names & actual music in "Living Doll" more later).

OK. Let's start where the digital album starts, "Little Girl Lost."



Track#1: "Where Are You?" Actually, this is misleading because this longest of all the tracks (5 minutes) is a compilation of the Twilight Zone theme (both Constant & Herrmann) and then finally cue I of that episode. The Constant theme starting 00:00 thru :13 sounds actually quite nice. I was impressed. Then it got a bit awkward in the transition thru 00:27. From 00:28 to 2:00 we hear the Herrmann TZ theme music. Unfortunately, their re-orchestration did not work for me. It failed to have that ethereal, "outer-worldly" effect that Herrmann intended. I did not like the over-emphasis of some of the instruments nor the use of the piano here (but unavoidable since they only have one harp, not at least two harps needed for the pedal changes of I believe E minor to

Eb minor arpeggiando chords). The high-pitch string substituting for the organ did not do it for me either. Nice try though!

From 2:03 thru 2:44 we hear another TZ variation from Constant that I felt was definitely better overall than the first attempt. Then from 2:46 to end we have Cue I “Where Are You?” It’s fine although they forgot to play Bar 25 (a repeat of Bar 24). It is not tremendously missed but a sharp-eyed (or sharp-eared?! :) recording tech supervisor would’ve heard it & suggested a new take. But of course, if this is a concert hall performance, then that is impossible! :). I believe the viola doubled for the viola d’amore but that’s fine. She did a good job. Once again, you need to start getting used to that piano playing arpeggios (instead of just harps since there is only one harp here).

Track # 2: “Gone” [:06] Yes, it is “gone” quickly because it lasts only six seconds! Fine.

Track#3: “Emptiness” [1:57] Good but once again you need to adjust to that piano because I noticed that the piano tends to dominate over the harp in a close-miking or close-quarters recording in most cases. Why not simply get another harpist? Have two harps playing and forget that piano. That is my preference & instinct. Besides, Herrmann did not want to use a piano for obvious reasons (it really doesn’t “fit” in this music & in this episode). I think 19’40” made a poor judgment call here, but then piano does work in some cues coming up.

Track #4: “Dog Gone” [:46] The music is fine enough but the tambourine hits/accenuations at spots is a bit too noticeable. Less emphasis there needed & more balance. It was bringing too much attention to itself (not what Herrmann wanted).

Track#5: “Hole In the Wall” [1:07] OK but I think the vibe player needed to tweak it a bit better. The viola player was fine.

Track#6: "Third Dimension" [2:12] Very nice track, one of the best in this episode batch. The piano actually was not obtrusive here, displaying nuances such as decreasing volume for each arpeggiando (vertical wavy line rolled chord). While I prefer what Herrmann intended (4 harps) you cannot do this cue with one harp due to the quick pedal changes, so the piano was necessary. Nevertheless, it did well here.

Track#7: "Coin Disappears" [:29] No. This one didn't work for me. Besides, 19'40" messed up. The flute family was not supposed to play in Bar 6 (starting at about :20), returning in end Bar 7 as a fermata-held chord. Herrmann did not put a repeat bar in Bar 6 but obviously they thought he meant it there (he actually didn't).

Track #8: "Move Around" [29] OK. Again I would prefer the harp than that piano.

Track#9: "Look For Her" [1:43] This is my favorite cue in the original tracks but unfortunate the 19'40" version disappoints me. Herrmann intended 3 alto flutes and a bass flute (and they worked fabulously together) but the 19'40" re-instrumentation sounded awkward, not "right." The piano-harp synergy did not quite work either but better than the other combinations just mentioned. Nice try. It just shows you: Normally one cannot out-do Herrmann himself! :)

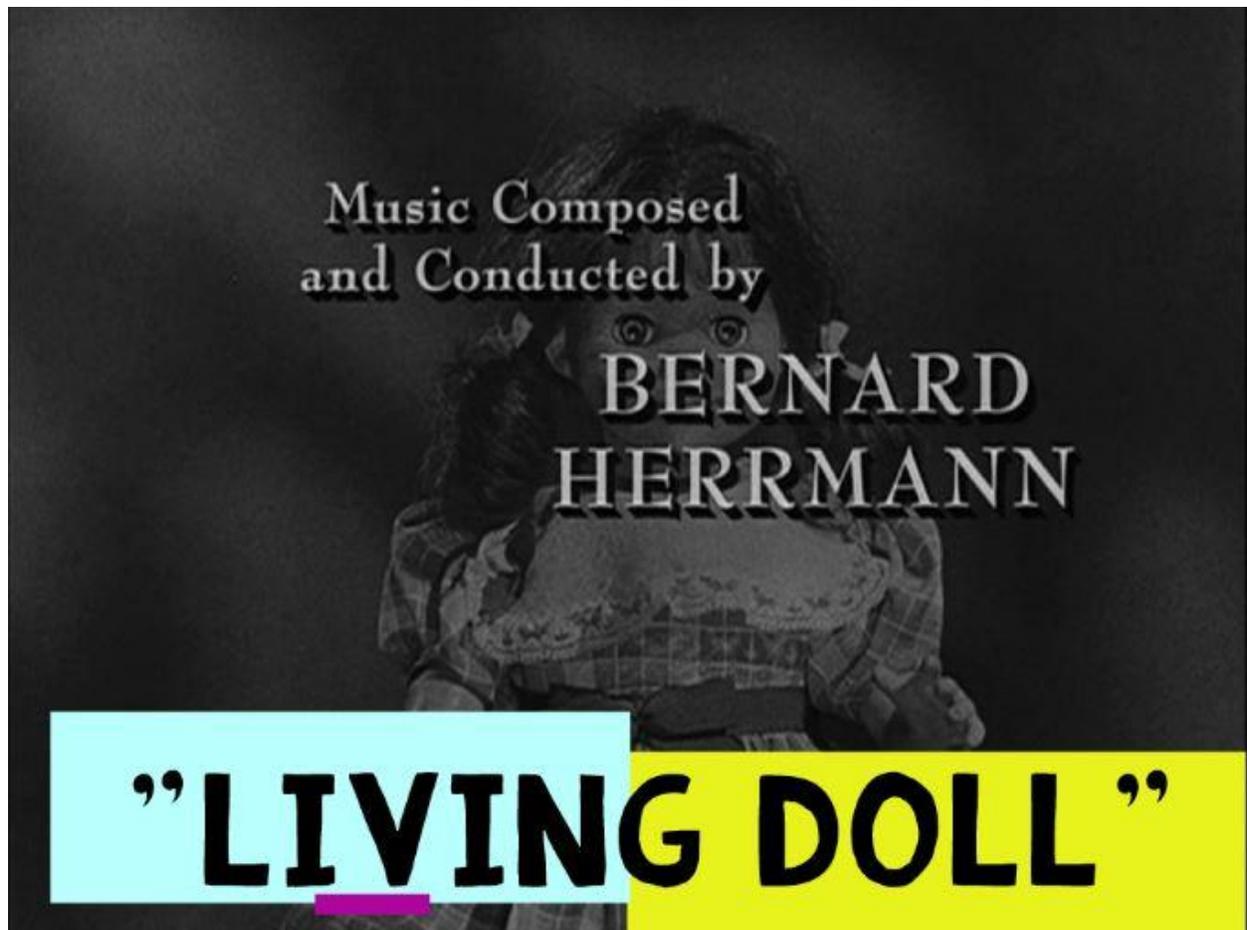
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pgSlpkVPzeY&feature=youtu.be>

By the way, click on the link immediately above. I had some fun last April creating this *Twilight Zone* video & famous Herrmann music. It revolves with coronavirus going on and the nationwide shut down. The couple cannot go any bar for drinks so they enlist a neighbor friend to help find where they put their f'ing beer & wine! :)

Track#10: “4th Dimension” [2:59] Despite sounding different (instrumentation) than Herrmann’s intended version, it still is fine for me (except for the hesitant end three bars). This track will keep your attention.

Track#11: “Half In Zone” [:48] Good one. The glock is a bit prominent but I like it. Good job.

Next is “Living Doll.”



Track #12: “Tina Arrives” [:45] Solo bass clarinet. Fine. The player does not rush in this cue, relaxed.

Track#13: "Tina Talks" [:35] The piano does all right here, not obtrusive. The harpist does very fine. No special attention complaints here. Worth the hearing.

Track#14: "Eric Throws the Doll" [:44] Not as effective (especially in the beginning) as Herrmann's but the bass clarinetist does fine here.

Track#15: "Supper" [:16] Short but has stature.

Track#16: "Tina Talks Again: **NOTE:** I am afraid 19'40" really messed up in these five tracks coming up because the tracks do not fit the actual music. Track #16 states "Tina Talks Again" but actually the music is cue IX "Talking Doll Lead In." Sounds ok but this misalignment of tracks to titles is really going to confuse the poor listener. They need to fix this problem. Maybe it will be fixed even before this review is online.

Track#17: "Tina Threatens" **NOTE:** Once again, music heard does not fit the cue title. It is actually cue V "Tina Talks Again" (that was supposed to be Track #16). This track needed a new take. The conductor should hear the issues and say, "You guys need to do better next time. Let's do it again. One more time!"

Track#18: "In the Cellar" **NOTE:** Sorry, what you hear is actually cue VI "Tina Threatens" (that was supposed to be Track #17).

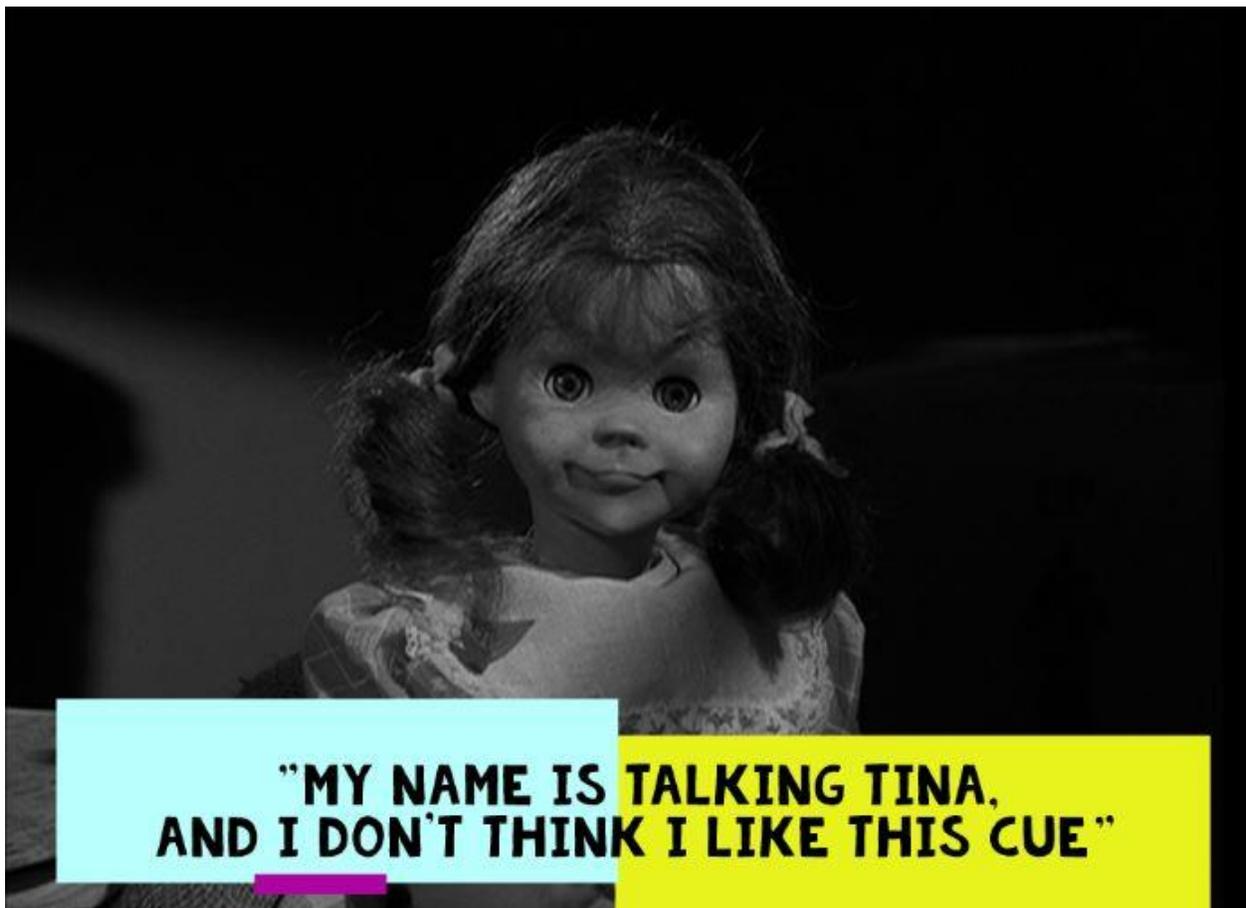
Track#19: "I'm Going To Kill You" **NOTE:** Nope. Actually this is cue VII "In the Cellar." Not a satisfying cue at spots, especially Bars 17-44 starting at :17. Awkward, not flowing. Plus the bass clarinet player is not up to par playing the notes as written. For instance, he cuts short in Bar 54, taking his breath too soon.

Track#20: "Talking Doll Lead-In" **NOTE:** You are incorrect, sir! (borrowed from the *Jeopardy* tv shows). This is actually cue VIII "I'm Going to Kill You."

Track#21: "Tina Disappears" [:28] The music once again fits the cue title here. Unfortunately the take is not too good, cuts off quickly.

Track#22: "Eric Finds Tina" [:50] OK track but it cuts short. The last four bars are missing. How did they not catch this? So obvious.

Track#23: "Destroy Tina" [1:38] Not effective as Herrmann's version. It sounds rather diminished (not talking about intervals & chords! :)... The bass clarinetist plays staccato "3" triplet value 16ths instead of legato as Herrmann wanted such as from Bars 53-56.

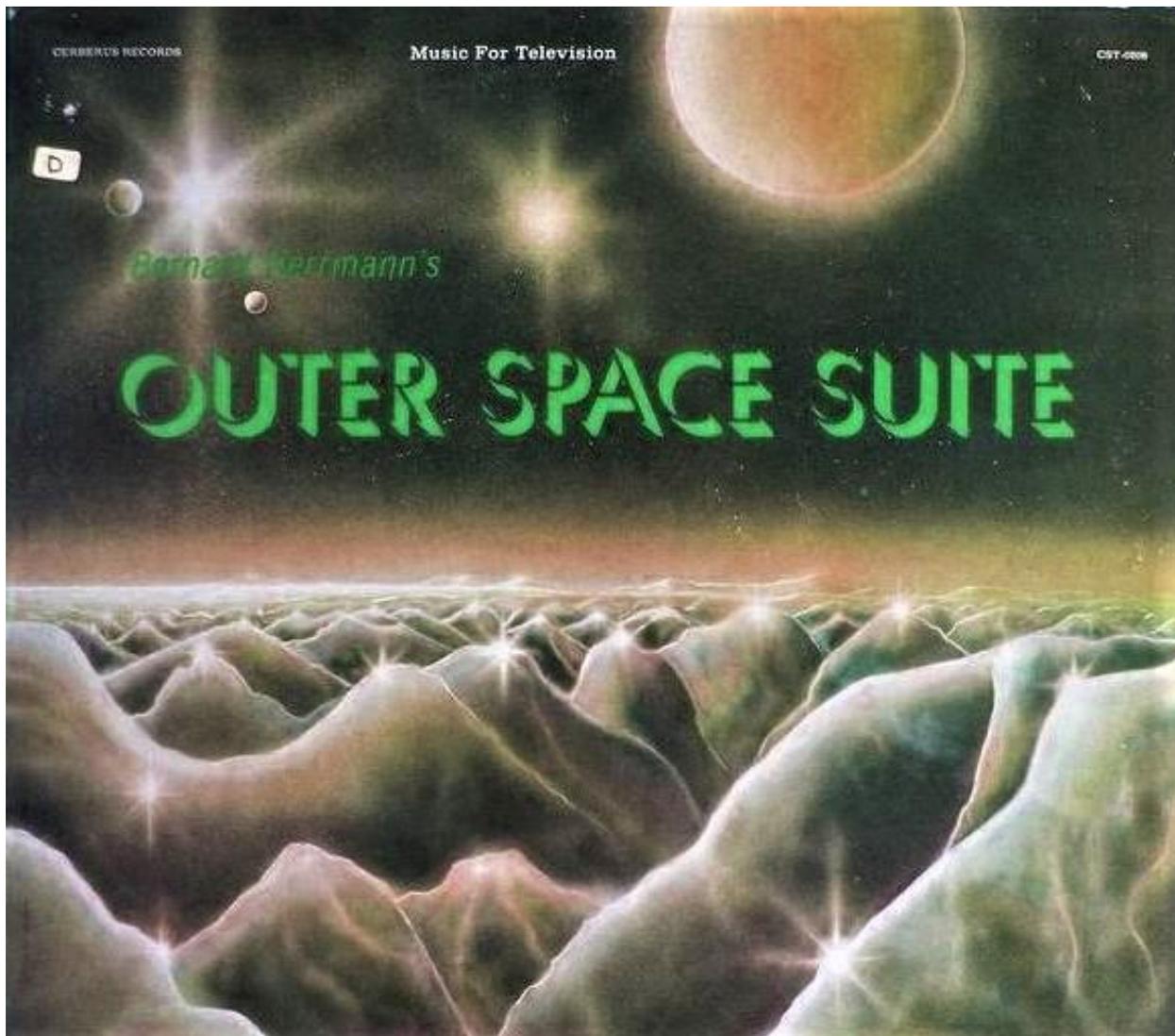


Track#24: "Indestructible Tina" [1:01] Eeekkkk! My hands are covering my ears as I am forced to hear that extremely annoying buzz saw strident noise in the first ten seconds! : (... Terrible intrusion

preluding the music. This is a performance of the music. It is not the actual tv show scene that had the noisy tool (Eric trying to cut off Tina's indestructible little neck!). Bars 5-6 [:27 - :33] sounds bad...and why add the vibe here (doesn't work)? Just sounds jumbled in combination, no clear-cut. The piano shortly afterwards playing that pattern is better.

Track#25: "Eric Returns Tina" [1:11] OK. Fine.

Track#26: "Finale" Fine finale.



Finally the third entry is *Outer Space Suite*. This will be more pleasant to hear & review compared to several of the poor takes of "Living Doll." Win some, lose some.

Track#27: "Prelude" [1:32] I feel the music in OSS lends itself rather well to the 19'40" treatment. I commend the orchestrator of this cue. He did a clever & creative job in pleasantly mixing instruments for chords & intervals. Good job! I think Herrmann would have liked it.

Note that only Bars 1-27 were performed out of 59 total bars. I don't feel cheated because this was a pleasant experience, but I do wonder: what happened? Were there mistakes in the rest of the performance so best to cut it short and sweet in this official digital offering? I don't know.

Track #28: "Time Passage" [2:41] Nice enough track *but* it is not satisfying because the track has missing bars (22-30) and the final four bars with a dial-down at their end Bar 62 (supposed to be 66 bars). In original Bar 41 (1:33 in this recording) the harp is supposed to play two harp notes L.V. per bar. Instead we just have one. But the harpist is very good on the glisses starting at 2:05. The trombone plays for the bassoon (but seems to work). The flute is good (such as in Bars 7-9). Due to the strange editing cuts, this cue only gets two out of five stars. Perhaps they had to edit out a section of poor performance? No time for a new take?

Track#29: "Space Drift" [2:21] Note that they skipped cue III "Signals" and went to cue IV ("Space Drift"). Fine-sounding but once again there were obvious edits, cutting of many bars. Nevertheless, I liked how, say, the viola would substitute for an oboe, and so on. It all worked.

Track#30: "Space Stations" [1:25] The whole cue is there but this is the only one of the seven cues I didn't think worked well. The softer, gentler, more mystique cues did better here for this instrumentation.

Track#31: "Starlight" [3:15] This is probably the most innovative of instrumentation changeovers of the bunch. For instance, the horn would take over for the oboe and later the English horn (as Herrmann wrote it). It works. This is probably the strongest track of the OSS that is "something different." Again, if you like the original, then this one will take some extra adjustment. But I like it.

Track#32: "Moonscape" [2:21] Again "something different." Works well in this moody music. I especially liked the end bar. Good job.

Track#33: "Airlock" [:56] This cue takes an adjustment but I like it. The way 19'40" combined the new instrumentation in this somewhat strident cue appeals to me. Actually it reminds me of that famous Robert Wise scary movie, *The Haunting* (music by Humphrey Searle). This version of the music (not Herrmann's) with the brass would actually fit that movie far better! Good job, at least in terms of my strange associative connections! :)



So, in conclusion, if I rated each suite separately, then I would give *Outer Space Suite* **** four out of five stars. They are missing several cues from the entire suite, but that's okay. You can't have everything in life. "Little Girl Lost" would get *** three out of five stars. "Living Doll" would get **two out of five stars. So combined I give the total offering three *** out of 5 stars.

-(minus) Terrible/Worst/Disaster/UGLY Stinker/Repellant/Pathetic

1 *Bad/Lousy/Inferior/Shoddy/Groaner/Turkey/Waste of Time

2 ** Poor/Below Average/Mediocre/Third Class/Some Merits

3 *** Fair/Good/OK/Average/Second Class/Commonplace

4 **** Excellent/Classic/First Class/Superior/High Merit

5 ***** Outstanding/Masterpiece/Extraordinary/Best

The main thing is that 19'40" definitely needs to double or triple check or proof-read their offerings on *bandcamp* (or anywhere else) before putting their product officially online. That means making sure the cue titles match up with the tracks, making sure no track is defective (cut short, bad audio, etc.).

My wife says that "1940" reduces down numerologically to number "5" [$1 + 9 + 4 = 14 = 5$]. Considering the nature of this outfit as advertised (in effect, once again, "being something different") then this number designation symbolizing it is quite fitting. "5" is the number of change, freedom, variety, never standing still at one place for too long, being creative. So lots of movement, travel, restlessness, on the go, "sexy" expression, sensual (auditory) pleasures, imagination, the freedom of doing their own creative thing.

I wish them luck & lots of fun, and hope they do more Herrmann in the future!

[end session Wednesday, September 2, 2020 at 8:55 am PDT]

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