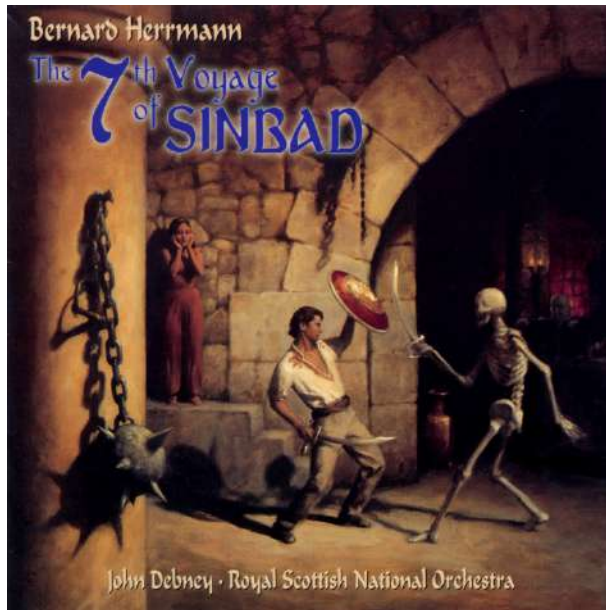


The 7th Voyage of Sinbad

An Interview with Robert Townson, part 1

Kurt Luchs

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This interview with Robert Townson took place in cyberspace in October 1998. Townson is a remarkably experienced and prolific soundtrack producer, having just celebrated his 400th release. Among many other notable achievements he has midwived some seminal Bernard Herrmann titles, including the Masters Film Music release of *Bernard Herrmann: The Concert Suites*, a long out-of-print four-disc box set that now trades for up to \$300 (if you can find it at all). For Varese Sarabande he has recently produced the acclaimed re-recordings of *Vertigo* and *Psycho*, as well as the *Fahrenheit 451* compilation album and the first-ever compact disc releases of *Torn Curtain* and *The Trouble With Harry* — all conducted by Joel McNeely.

One of Townson's latest Herrmann projects to see the light of day is a stirring version of *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad* using the Royal Scottish National Orchestra conducted by John Debney, a talented newcomer to the ongoing Herrmann revival. At close to an hour in length, this re-recording adds about 20 minutes of music to what was available on the original soundtrack album and the subsequent Varese CD, both also out-of-print and very collectible.

In his e-mail conversation with us Townson reveals himself as a charming raconteur. He is also as passionate a film music lover as any fan, with some very forthright opinions about *Sinbad* and other scores that should be of great interest to all Herrmann devotees.

Kurt Luchs: I know you've been producing reissues and re-recordings of Herrmann's music for some time now. When did you first become involved with his work personally and professionally? Or to put it another way, what were your first experiences with Herrmann as a listener and a producer?



Robert Townson: Well, as a listener I suppose it was (as it was for me with so many of the Golden Age composers) the George Korngold/Charles Gerhardt recordings, in this case *Citizen Kane: The Classic Film Scores of Bernard Herrmann*. As a series of recordings I don't think that there is another in film music history to have made such an impact. I mean, really, the whole film music renaissance that we are still enjoying today can all be traced back to the work of Korngold and Gerhardt. This was the beginning. Perhaps single-handedly they introduced the notion that the sound of the Golden Age may indeed still be relevant. Then a few years later came *Star Wars*. If George Korngold could have only lived to see what has developed today.

As a producer, well, it didn't take long! Of my first five releases, four of them were Jerry Goldsmith discs, by number six it was time for Herrmann. And how! That was my four-CD boxed set on Masters Film Music called *Bernard Herrmann: The Concert Suites*. Simultaneously I was working on a CD of *Obsession* as well. At the time I was not nearly as prolific as I am now so when I was working on these that was all I was working on ... for months! Many months! I'm so glad I did that boxed set when I did. I would never have the time to put something like that together now. Four CDs ... 52 pages of liner notes, score pages, rare photos. It was really a joy to work on ... just completely immersing myself in Herrmann. Then, of course, I topped them both off with cover paintings by Bob Peak. I think the review I got for these releases from Page Cook remains the best review I have ever received for anything. Ever. So that was the beginning. Obviously, at this point it was just the beginning.

KL: Did you ever meet him? If so, any anecdotes or impressions?

Townson: No. I wish I had. I mean, I draw so much from having known Alex North when working on recordings of his music. It does add a depth to the experience by involving a personal relationship and memories. I would say that there is no composer whose music I feel as passionately about, where I didn't know them personally, as Bernard Herrmann. I love Herrmann stories. I filled the opening section of liner notes in *The Concert Suites* with as many stories and quotes as I could. They're hilarious. Who knows, maybe if I had met him it may not have been a positive experience but since we'll never know I'll give him the benefit of the doubt. Certainly, the stories of his gruffness are legend but I have also found most widely accepted characterizations of composers I have ended up getting to know well to be almost entirely inaccurate and shortsighted. I tell you, there's nothing more priceless than sitting with Jerry Goldsmith and Sidney Sax and listening to Herrmann reminiscences.

KL: What particular attraction did you feel for the score to *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad*?

Townson: It's always been one of my favorites and I don't think I'm alone in feeling that way. It's so rich and vibrant. Herrmann is clearly having fun with it. I mean, he really just went crazy. It's so witty and charming. He covers so much ground. I would cite *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad* as one of the scores which most validates film music as an art form and a forum where a great composer can write a great piece of music. As pure composition I would place *Sinbad* beside anything else written this century and not worry about it being able to stand on its own.

KL: How did you hook up with John Debney and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra? What was it like working with them? Did you make the trek to Glasgow? For my money both orchestra and conductor do an outstanding job. I suspect this is a recording that Herrmann would have loved. Also, can you say anything about Joel McNeely's departure from this series? The rumor is that he wanted time to do more of his own composing.



Townson: Well, my relationship with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra goes back to ... well ... *Vertigo*, actually. I was in love with them as soon as we had finished recording the *Prelude*. You should have heard it! The hall we record in is very live. In the room the sound is so rich and warm ... it really is a better acoustic, a better live sound than any recording studio or concert hall that I have ever been in. And the musicians, well, I had known the RSNO from the symphony cycles of Dvorak and Prokofiev that they had recorded for Chandos. I knew they were a great orchestra. Sometime early in 1995 they were staging a concert of Patrick Doyle's music and, since I release most of Patrick's scores, I was contacted by his agent, Maggie Rodford, about the possibility of recording the concert program during some recording sessions near the concert date. Maggie introduced the orchestra's then-general manager, Paul Hughes, to me and we began a dialog on how to do some recording together. Well, ultimately the Doyle sessions ended up not working out because they could not be scheduled close enough to the concert for everyone to be able to remain in town. However, Paul and I kept talking and, finally, were able to organize some sessions for that September. So trip number one to Scotland included myself, Joel McNeely and Matthew Peak. We recorded *Vertigo* and *Hollywood '95*. *Vertigo*, in particular, was very well received and it was very gratifying that this went on to win *Gramophone* magazine's first-ever award for excellence in film music recording. I can never let an opportunity go by without expressing my love for this orchestra, all the musicians and the management. I so look forward to each and every trip. It's such a thoroughly exciting time to wake up in the morning and know that after breakfast you're going to record *Psycho*... the whole thing ... with some of the best musicians in the world!

John Debney is fabulous and I am so thankful to him. Months of planning goes into each and every recording trip to Scotland. The amount of music that needs to be prepared can be enormous! The amount of work ... endless. Now, while John Debney and I had worked together on albums of his own scores, he had not been part of my conducting team prior to *Sinbad*. By the time *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad* rolled around I had been to Scotland almost a dozen times. My accent was coming along nicely. I had been to Glasgow with Jerry Goldsmith, Elmer Bernstein, Joel McNeely, Cliff Eidelman and that was it. It is important to me to keep an order to my recordings. When I am going to record an Alex North score it's always going to be Jerry Goldsmith on the podium. Prior to *Sinbad*, the same had been true having Joel McNeely conduct all of my Bernard Herrmann recordings. Well, things didn't go quite as planned this time. Joel and I departed for Scotland for a rather out-of-control number of recording sessions. Along with many other projects on our agenda, we had two more Herrmann scores in the lineup, *The Trouble With Harry* and *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad*. While Joel and I were still in London recording John Barry's *Body Heat* with the LSO at Abbey Road, things took an unforeseen turn. Joel was going to have to leave to score *The Avengers*. He could stay two more days and that was all. Well, that would have him available to conduct *The Trouble With Harry* but left me conductorless for *Sinbad* and everything else. The transatlantic phone lines were in for a workout. I remember trying to squeeze in phone calls to Los Angeles on a cell phone between breaks recording *Midway* (which ended up being conducted by Rick Wentworth—an English composer represented by Maggie Rodford who also dropped everything to come to my rescue) and *Harry*. John Debney and I had just finished work on *Paulie* before I left. He didn't know what hit him ... he's got me on the phone saying something like, "Hey John, what are you doing this weekend?" I needed help and John literally came running. We got him a set of scores right away and he was hard at work later that same day studying Bernard Herrmann. Two days later he was in Glasgow!

John would make his Royal Scottish National Orchestra debut conducting *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad* and the first reading of the *Sinbad* overture is one of my favorite moments of any recording session I have ever been a part of. John raised his arms and the orchestra exploded with sound. I wish we had recorded that! After that first run-through John was frozen on the podium. He and I just looked at each other with big smiles on our faces. It sounded SO great! Once we were done with the *Overture* we just had thirty-six more cues to go.

What a debut! I was so excited and so relieved. John and the orchestra developed an immediate rapport. Also, it was great to see how into the music John was. That's important to me. I want everyone who works on my recordings to do it because they really want to. Because they love the music and feel that it's important. It's not a job. It's not a paycheck. That's the only way to get through it ... otherwise it would kill you. There's not enough money in the world to go through what we have had to go through for some of these recordings.

KL: Long-time Herrmann aficionado and producer John Waxman is mentioned in the liner notes. What was his contribution to this project?

Townson: John Waxman has a library of concert music, and among his vast collection is the concert suite from *Sinbad* that Herrmann had recorded himself—the one on *The Concert Suites*. For the *Overture*, *Bagdad*, *The Duel With The Skeleton* and *The Finale*, we used John's music. Unfortunately, that left everything else for me to have re-copied from Herrmann's original scores. Once again, all of the original parts were lost. This was a race to the finish line that got about as close to disaster as I hope I ever get. John Debney ended up bringing all of the parts for *Sinbad* as his "carry-on" luggage on the plane!

KL: This recording allowed you to fill in the gaps in the abbreviated original soundtrack (subsequently rereleased on CD in the late 1980s). Besides adding previously unreleased cues, did you record longer versions of some cues than were used in the final edit of the film? I'm thinking especially of the *Overture*, which was cut short on the original soundtrack CD.

Townson: In every case, including the *Overture*, we recorded the pieces the way they were composed. Nothing more. Nothing less. This is always the rule we stick to: present the music as the composer intended, which may not necessarily be how it ended up in the film. The *Discovery* cue from *Psycho* is a great example of this. The piece Herrmann composed for this scene didn't end up in the film. To duplicate what was in the film we would have had to edit together the murder music at this point on the disc. But, with all due respect to Alfred Hitchcock, our recording is not Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* ... it's Bernard Herrmann's.

KL: Although many previously unreleased cues were added to the new recording, one cue from the original seems to be missing: *Street Music*. Was that left off intentionally, and if so, why?

Townson: Well, for *Sinbad* we have not recorded every cue ... almost ... but not quite. The only thing that makes *Street Music* stand out more than the others we have omitted is the fact that, as you say, it *did* appear on the other CD. That said, however, we did, frankly, plan on recording it ... we simply ran out of time. There were actually five other cues that we didn't get to during the time we had for this recording. We ended up stealing some time from another recording and squeezing them in. But for *Street Music* the clock simply ran out. I wish I could give some great artistic reason but it's a simple one: when the musicians leave ... you're finished recording.

KL: Somewhat uncharacteristically, Herrmann used a mostly conventional orchestra for this score, augmented by extra percussion, winds and brass. Did you do any further augmenting?

Townson: Absolutely not! Herrmann wrote what he wanted. There's no way I would ever dream of "revising" Herrmann. Bernard Herrmann is almost the only composer where the scores we work from are in his own handwriting ... however illegible. I think Georges Delerue may be the only other. Herrmann made no mistakes ... he wrote in ink on full score. And we look at these pages as though they are the Bible.

KL: Any special problems to be overcome in the recording process that would be invisible to the average listener? I'm thinking of acoustics, mike placement, mixing, instrumentation, and how they all interact with the score.



Townson: Actually, I find recording Bernard Herrmann's music easier than most. Maybe easier isn't the right word ... it's more that his music translates so well into a good sounding recording. I think that people would be surprised by how a composer's, well, let's call them "chops" are shown during a recording session. There are many problems that you run into during the course of a making a recording. The music of truly great composers solves many of these problems for you. They know enough about music ... about sound and about each instrument ... that they are solving problems for you in the composition. I mean, there have been pieces I have had to record written by composers who simply don't think orchestrationally. You're in a session and your microphones are set up to reflect a certain orchestra balance. Then a piece comes up that is nowhere near as complex as something you have recorded previously and all of a sudden, the musicians are having problems playing it and the sound out of the orchestra is no longer clear. With Herrmann, and in fact most of the composers whose music I record, they actually write air into their music. They accommodate the physical sound being produced into the composition. All of the instruments are exposed ... you can listen *through* the orchestra. *Sinbad* really showed off Herrmann's talents in this department. So did *The Trouble With Harry*. Needless to say, Herrmann *really* knew his stuff! Genius!

KL: Is it true that Herrmann was not involved in the original recording due to the same strike that barred him from leading the sessions for *Vertigo* that same year? (And who did conduct the original *Sinbad*? Whoever it was, it sure sounds like Herrmann.)

Townson: That's my understanding but I don't know for sure. I certainly wasn't there and I didn't put any time into researching the original recording sessions.

KL: In general, the new recording seems to follow the original soundtrack fairly closely in pace and approach. Were there any places you felt it necessary to depart from the original? And were you working from the original score or was it necessary to reconstruct it?

Townson: The scores, as I say, were, in fact, in Herrmann's own hand. They all existed. We did have to have all of our parts re-copied though. What we followed were his score markings without worrying about an A/B comparison with the original recording. Once again, as with *Vertigo*, since even the original wasn't conducted by Herrmann, I felt even less of a responsibility to that performance.

KL: To the general soundtrack-buying and music-loving public there is nothing controversial about re-recordings. As you know, however, the subject can be a contentious one for Herrmann fans. There's been quite a lot of discussion about it on the AOL film music newsgroup. Do you care to comment on reissues vs. re-recordings, or don't you have a dog in that fight? I know you've worked on both, and of course most fans are happy to buy both, *Vertigo* being a good case in point.

Townson: Well, after careful consideration, the argument against re-recordings is one I refuse to acknowledge. Music is supposed to live and not be sentenced to death after its first performance. I also think the closed-mindedness on this subject is something held by only a few vocal people. A new recording and the original recording have *nothing* to do with each other. I simply don't understand how someone can endeavor to sentence music written for a film to one recording and one recording only and then claim this to be in the best interest of the music and of the composer. My release of a new recording of *Vertigo* doesn't stand in the way of any new release of the original tracks. It didn't even stand in the way of *me* releasing a new CD of the original tracks ... even when I already had one *Vertigo* in my catalog. As far as I'm concerned, any undertaking of a new recording, so long as it is done professionally and with care, honors a composer. There are both positive and negative elements about new recordings and originals *in every*

case because there is no such thing as a perfect recording. As you say, I think the vast majority of fans buy this argument ... as well as the CDs! I have released literally hundreds of original soundtrack recordings and I have now done quite a number of new recordings. I will continue to do both.

KL: An even more petty controversy is the use of reverb on re-recordings. *Torn Curtain* took some heat for this (somewhat unjustly, in my opinion, but I understand how ears differ). It sounds to these ears as if reverb is kept firmly in check on the new *Sinbad* recording. Any thoughts here?



Townson: We almost never added artificial reverb to our recording. The acoustic of the hall where we record simply doesn't need it. There is a wonderful natural reverb. Once again I think that concerns here stem from the fact that many old recordings were done in rooms too small for them. The sound is very present but it can be very dry and thin sounding. Simply because this is how you are used to hearing a score doesn't mean that what may have even been unfavorable recording conditions for the composer done with limited recording technology should be duplicated on all future recordings of that music. The whole mentality of continuing to do something such-and-such a way just because that's how it's always been done in the past is not one I ever buy. I do agree that if it ain't broke don't fix it ... but if you can improve on something or at least have a different and valid point of view to express, why should you not take advantage of it. When I finished recording *To Kill a Mockingbird* with Elmer Bernstein himself conducting, again using the RSNO and at City Halls, Elmer's first comments were, "Well, that's the best that *that* score's ever sounded!" How can you argue with that?

Torn Curtain was done in London, in Watford actually, and we were in a foreign hall with the National Philharmonic Orchestra but whose numbers were so severely altered by Herrmann's music that they barely resembled themselves. Would I do things differently if I was to record *Torn Curtain* again? Sure. But I could say that about every recording I have ever done. No recording is perfect. On such-and-such a day in whatever hall we are in and in the time we had, that's the best we could do. We recorded the score in sequence. That means we started with the *Prelude* and it's a very difficult piece. Jonathan Allen was still fine-tuning the mix. Even the acoustic in our make-shift booth was unfamiliar. At the time it sounded fabulous. The *Prelude* is really the only cue that when I listen to it I wish I could take another crack at it. I must say that I much prefer working in familiar surroundings. Even under these conditions or in a controlled environment getting a good recording of a good performance is hard enough.

KL: Christopher Husted (another Herrmann veteran) did some fantastic liner notes for this release. Among other things, he reveals that Herrmann borrowed from himself for this score—specifically, from two works written for CBS radio in 1934: *The City of Brass*, and *Egypt: A Tone Picture*. Had you known that? Have you ever heard these works? Do CBS recordings exist? And is there any chance Varese might favor us with some of these radio rarities someday?

Townson: To be honest, I had not been aware of this. I haven't heard either of these radio works and don't know what their status is as to whether or not recordings may have survived. As far as what I may or may not get around to, I think I'll quote the old Varese Sarabande tag line, coined long before I came on board ... "Expect the Unexpected"

KL: By the same token, Herrmann later apparently borrowed from the Arabesque portion of *Sinbad's Overture* for the love theme from *Marnie*. And Steven C. Smith says that both tunes are "surprisingly similar to the main theme of Leonard Rosenman's 1957 score for *Rebel Without a Cause*." Do you know anything about that? Herrmann often borrowed from himself but I don't believe he was in the habit of lifting from his contemporaries.

Townson: Well, I do recognize the similarities between all three but don't really attribute much to it. The treatment in both cases of Herrmann is so different that the similarity is really is just a footnote. As far as *Rebel Without a Cause*, I feel comfortable in chalking that up to the same sort of coincidence that existed between a piece by Shostakovich bearing a striking likeness to a piece that Franz Waxman had composed some years before. This sort of sleuthing doesn't hold much interest for me; however, there is a line, you know. I hate when people cite examples like these as an excuse, allowance or justification for what is just shameless musical thievery.

KL: Can you talk about Herrmann's use of the Javanese pelog scale for parts of *Sinbad* (e.g., in *The Egg*), something he had learned earlier when doing *Anna and the King of Siam*? And could Herrmann be called a pioneer for the way he incorporated what today would be called World Music into some of his scores?

Townson: That's a good point. He really was one of the first, if not *the* first to do this. Franz Waxman certainly contributed to this and I think no one ultimately did more than Alex North in this regard, with scores like *Viva Zapata!*, *The Rose Tattoo* and *A Dream of Kings*. But I think we would be hard pressed to find examples prior to *Anna and the King of Siam*. What a great score!

KL: As Husted notes, "Much of the music is written for small forces." In the liner notes to the original soundtrack, John Morgan says it this way: "Rarely does Herrmann use the entire body of the orchestra for tutti passages: instead he more often utilizes separate choirs, such as brass or woodwinds..." Can you comment on this most distinctive of the composer's traits as used in this score?

Townson: *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad* is a quite extreme example of this. To record the whole score you need a huge orchestra but then you almost never use them all. In fact I almost ended up with a revolt from the string section after recording too many of the *Cyclops* and *Dragon* cues. The brass were blowing their brains out and the violins were reading their newspapers but with this enormous sound in the room. *The Cyclops* ... I have never heard anything so loud! An interesting physical example of this is that almost all of Herrmann's score pages for this film are horizontal! Anyway, I tossed in a couple of Princess cues to give the strings a feeling of purpose, then it was back to Full Metal Herrmann.

All of this very selective orchestrating was clearly done with great forethought and for good purpose. It is such a great way to create very individual character portraits. And when the characters are as extreme as a Tiny Princess and a giant Cyclops, the music must be equally extreme.

KL: There is such wild stuff in this music that one can't help wondering how the orchestra reacted to playing it—say, to the *Dragon* and *Cyclops* cues, where, as Husted says, "the emphasis is entirely on the raw and guttural timbre!" or to the famous *Duel with the Skeleton*, a difficult passage that comes off very well in this performance. Incidentally, how hard is it to get two xylophones to play such a frenetic piece in time?



Townson: The brass had a great time. The woodwinds were kept busy. The percussionists didn't know what hit them and the strings couldn't wait for it to all be over. Special mention should be made of our timpani player, Martin Gibson. He had a real workout on this one. I have to say though that the sessions did go very smoothly. The music is just so well written and the orchestra is so wonderful. I was very nervous going into these sessions given the amount of music we had and the eleventh hour change of conductor but my concerns turned out to be unfounded. *The Duel with the Skeleton* didn't cause a problem. It's definitely a showpiece of the score, like the murder in *Psycho*, so we wanted to get it just right. I'm very happy with it. With the whole CD, in fact. As you can see, we went with the skeleton duel for Matthew Peak's cover painting as well. It was a difficult decision. Matthew actually did about half-a-dozen sketches with different ideas for the cover. I loved them all! But in the end the bones won. I have been so happy with Matthew's work on this series. *Fahrenheit 451*, *Vertigo*, *Psycho*, *Sinbad* and *The Trouble With Harry*... I

think Bernard Herrmann has inspired some of Matthew's best work. Matthew will be on board for *Citizen Kane* as well.

KL: Chronologically, this score falls squarely in the middle of a most fertile period for Herrmann, the mid-to-late 1950s. *Vertigo* was just behind him, *North By Northwest* and *Psycho* just ahead. Where do you think *Sinbad* fits creatively in his work overall? Graham Bruce speculates in his book *Bernard Herrmann: Film Music and Narrative* that the Harryhausen films gave him an outlet for fantasy and sometimes humor which was generally denied him throughout his career, and quotes Herrmann as saying, "The nearest I got to it was Hitchcock's *The Trouble With Harry*, and perhaps *North By Northwest*."

Townson: I think that *Sinbad* should always be among the first handful of works cited when giving examples of Herrmann's best work. I also think that it is absolutely integral if you want to create any sort of accurate representation of Herrmann as a composer. I suppose, if forced to be utterly ruthless, that list would include *Citizen Kane*, *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir*, *Vertigo*, *Psycho* and *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad*. Obviously you would indeed need to consider everything to paint a complete picture but these five scores would do a great job in conveying the gravity of Herrmann's contribution and in showing his range. In fact, I would go as far as saying that if these five scores represented Herrmann's entire career, he would still be revered widely today as one of the greatest and most influential film composers of all time. Then when you consider what a small selection of his work this is, you can just start to grasp the enormity of this man's genius.

KL: This release is the first of four covering Herrmann's work on the Charles Schneer and Ray Harryhausen films. Will the other three be released in their original chronological order? And will there be any music previously unheard on the Cloud Nine original soundtrack releases of *The Three Worlds of Gulliver* and *Mysterious Island* (from which I believe the *Giant Bee* cue was missing)?

Townson: To be honest I have not put a moment of thought into this. These days I have so many projects going on all at once that between new films, new recordings, concerts, pre-production, traveling, post production ... I have to stay very focused on just what I'm working on at the moment to keep things from unraveling into chaos. All I know is that there is still a lot to do ... even if all I was doing was Herrmann. Once *Citizen Kane* is released that will clear out all of the Herrmann recordings I have had in the can, so it will be time to do more.

KL: What did you learn from this release that you can bring forward into those other projects?

Townson: I suppose that if you look at the *Sinbad* recording as a success then, in order to duplicate that success with other recordings you might try to duplicate the recording conditions. That would then call for a badly jet-lagged conductor who has had almost no time to prepare, a producer who hadn't slept for two days and had been living on the telephone and on room service, an equally stressed out recording engineer helping me keep the sessions from derailing completely and an orchestra who had never worked with, or even met, for that matter, the conductor. There's the recipe for success!

KL: Do you know anything about the Bruce Broughton re-recording of *Jason and the Argonauts* scheduled for release on Intrada? Will that affect your plans at all?

Townson: Well, I've heard they might be doing it and I think that's wonderful. I can't wait to hear it if they do. My plans are to record it ... but I have a lot of plans. Now, the existence of another recording may affect the urgency with which I schedule it. I had been planning a new recording of *Taxi Driver* to be recorded this past spring when I heard about the expanded Arista release. I am thrilled that Arista did what they did. There is only one original after all and it's about time that this score was given a proper release. But that's not to say that I won't proceed with my own recording someday. One example of this is the new recording of *The Magnificent Seven* I did with Elmer conducting the RSNO. The vast majority of the mail we got when this was announced was of the "Thank you so much! When is coming out?" variety. But there was a not insignificant number of comments asking "Why? There is already a good recording by James Sedares and the Phoenix Symphony." I have to say that this reasoning really baffles me. With all due respect to Sedares and his orchestra, my response is, "So what?" The Sedares record is wonderful. I have listened to it many times and enjoyed it considerably. But, and it is a big BUT—there are a limited number of years remaining for the possibility of a composer conducted recording of *The Magnificent Seven* to take place. Even if the

Philharmonic orchestras of New York, Los Angeles, Berlin and Israel as well as the Chicago and London Symphony had *all* recorded it with their own conductors, I would have still done what I did. How could I let this opportunity go by?? To record *The Magnificent Seven* with Elmer Bernstein conducting ... how can there be any question?? The difference here, of course, is that we no longer have Bernard Herrmann around to conduct.

KL: Finally, once this release has its chance in the marketplace, would Varese consider reissuing the original soundtrack, perhaps in an expanded version?

Townson: Anything is possible. Once again, as I proved with *Vertigo*, I really don't see the two items as related or at least not mutually exclusive. They *are* different recordings. I have now produced two *Torn Curtain* CDs ... Herrmann's unused score as well as John Addison's. I would say, though, that I think *Vertigo* is one score I am finished with. I released the only Bernard Herrmann conducted performance of it on *The Concert Suites* boxed set. I recorded the score with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, I released a greatly expanded CD of the original tracks and I have programmed excerpts of the score into concerts I have produced. I think that about covers it. But never say never.



All illustrations are from Matthew Joseph Peak's cover paintings for Varese Sarabande's **The 7th Voyage of Sinbad**.