

Rudi Russel 2 ****



MARCEL BARSOTTI
The Score Record Company SRC-10000-2
23 tracks - 65:30

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German composer Marcel Barsotti has received several good reviews in *FSM* over the last couple of years, but his name is still hardly known in the United States. Meanwhile, he continues to write endearing scores for a variety of projects in Europe while Hollywood looks the other way. *Rudi Rüssel 2* is the latest from the composer, and the soundtrack album is being released on his new label.

Unfortunately, the likelihood of *Rudi Rüssel 2* being shown in the Americas is slim, despite it being released by Warner Bros. in Europe. For whatever reason, audiences for foreign films in this country only want to see “art films.” I mean, can you imagine little Johnny being asked to read subtitles when the family goes to the movies? Of course not, so your best chance for seeing the film, and hearing Barsotti’s score alongside it, will be on DVD—and that’s if it’s released in this country. Again, very unlikely.

Though I am unclear what the film’s story is about exactly, I do know that it involves a small pig and a young boy. Think action-suspense with small kids, farm animals and some bad guys, and you’re sure to be close to the plot.

Rudi Rüssel 2 is scored for large orchestra, with a huge string section and full complement of woodwinds and brass. Also noteworthy is the eight-person percussion section, which gets a thorough workout, though not in the usual bombastic way. While they handle the normal assortment of snare, bass drum, triangle, etc., there is a large amount of mallet work in the score. Surely all that xylophone will cue the listener that this is a children’s film, after all.

As I’ve written before, Marcel Barsotti is not afraid to use big melodies, and that is clear in the opening track, which immediately launches into the elegant main theme, featuring flute backed by pizzicato strings. This is old school scoring in the very best way. Once again, Barsotti seems comfortable writing on the foundation of the previous generations of film composers, yet still developing his own style.

[“Das Grosse Hunderennen”](#) starts with a three-note string ostinato with brass accents, after which the strings build as woodwinds and percussion join the propulsive rhythm. Exciting and suspenseful, the cue rises to a triumphantly climatic theme, and then simmers down with beautiful performances by the woodwinds and brass.

An upward pitch bend from the strings and timpani introduce temple blocks and triangle at the start of “Ein Haufen Schweinekacke.” Further comical touches from the rest of the orchestra demonstrate a willingness from Barsotti to write with a tender touch when needed. [“Die Kloschussel”](#) features more of Barsotti’s unique sense of musical humor, with the percussion section providing most of the punch lines. Shaker, temple blocks, triangle and xylophone are all used to great effect. Midway through the cue there is a short segment that winks obviously at Aaron Copland; [a sweet touch](#).

At almost nine minutes in length, the final cue, [“Durch Wald und Sumpf.”](#) presents listeners not with the usual recap of the major themes, but with an extended action cue full of new ideas. Bits of Goldsmith’s *Basic Instinct* mingle with Elfmanian touches, with even a little Herrmann thrown in to boot. A very satisfying cue, to be sure.

The Slovak National Symphony Orchestra is to be commended for their fine performance under the baton of Allan Wilson, who guides the ensemble through the score with an even hand. Incredibly detailed, yet natural, this is a first-class recording.

Any film score fan who grew up listening to the great masters will appreciate Barsotti’s heartwarming melodies and beautiful orchestrations. I wish I would have been able to hear the score within the context of the film, as it is obviously written to picture. As a standalone CD, however, I still think the album is quite enjoyable—but I just can’t help wondering what’s happening to the pig!