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Jerome Moross's The Big Country: A Film Score Guide (Film Score Guides)

Mariana Whitmer

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With its unique focus on pacifism, *The Big Country* was an unusual Western for audiences of the 1950s. Produced in 1958, this epic film featured an all-star cast that included Gregory Peck, Charlton Heston, and Oscar-winner Burl Ives. One of the most enduring elements of the film has been Jerome Moross's score. Inspired to re-think the traditional Western score and approach it in a way that enhances the emotional content, rather than simply accompanying the action, Moross created a work that stands as one of the great achievements of cinematic music.

In *Jerome Moross's* The Big Country*: A Film Score Guide*, Mariana Whitmer examines Moross's landmark work, a score that continues to attract listeners and influence composers of film, Westerns and otherwise. This book begins with a biographical survey of Moross's formative years, his early dramatic compositions in ballet and musical theater, and his early film work, providing an historical context for understanding his approach to scoring *The Big Country*. Drawing upon Moross's original manuscripts and correspondence, Whitmer looks carefully at the score itself. She relates the history of this magnificent score and how the film's music differs significantly from contemporary trends in the Western. Whitmer also examines the music's individual cues and describes how Moross approached the film as a dramatic entity, delineating sections of the narrative into mega-scenes through the music. Finally, the aftermath of this score is considered, including how it has influenced not only subsequent Westerns but also music videos.

The first book devoted to a Western film score and the only biographical book on the composer, *Jerome Moross's* The Big Country*: A Film Score Guide*, will be a valuable read for musicologists, film scholars, and anyone interested in Moross and his music.

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