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Discoveries from the Fleisher Collection

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Saturday, January 3rd, 2004, 5:00-6:00 p.m.

- [Joseph Achron](#) (1886-1943). *The Golem (Suite)* (1931). Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, Gerard Schwartz. Naxos 8.559408. 12:31
- Emma Lou Diemer (b.1927). *Concerto in One Movement for Piano* (1991). Czech Radio Symphony, Betty Oberacker, Vladimir Valek. MMC New Century Vol. 10, MMC 2067. 27:08
- [Emma Lou Diemer](#) interview

The New Year reminds of us past and future, death and life, and out of the many legends related to our wish to control the uncontrollable, the Golem stories have persisted through the centuries. Joseph Achron wrote music for a play based on the myth of the 16th-century Prague Golem. Achron was born in Poland and spent his later years writing for films in Hollywood and working as a concert violinist, but in between composed this incidental music for the Jewish theater while he lived in New York City, later extracting the suite we hear today.

The Golem is a creature brought to life from clay through the addition of mystical letters in a certain order. Depending on the story, the creature would obey its maker but would slowly gain a mind of its own, with devastating results. We can easily see where the Frankenstein story comes from. Removal of the letters would destroy the creature, and this suite depicts five scenes, starting with the creation and ending with the destruction of the monster. The final section is actually a mirror of the first, literally depicting in the music what happens mystically. Achron wrote this for an orchestra without violins or violas, greatly darkening the quality of the sound.

Emma Lou Diemer is a prolific composer in many genres, and her piano concerto is a good introduction to her concert music, especially for the many listeners who may know only her choral or organ music. She was for many years professor of theory and composition at the University of California at Santa Barbara, and was also the Resident Composer for the Santa Barbara Symphony, for which this concerto was written in 1991. Although she employs many techniques—note clusters, muting of the piano strings, unmeasured and non-synchronized accompaniment—we consider “modern,” Diemer’s music is anything but forbidding. It is chock-full of rhythmic energy and flights of melody, and is a sunny celebration of the joy of making music. We’re delighted to hear this concerto and to speak to her about her life and compositions.

Hosted by [Kile Smith](#), Curator of the Fleisher Collection, and [Jack Moore](#), Program Director of WRTI. In *Discoveries from the Fleisher Collection* we uncover the unknown, rediscover the little-known, and take a fresh look at some of the remarkable treasures housed in the Fleisher Collection of Orchestral Music in the [Free Library of Philadelphia](#). The Fleisher Collection is the largest lending library of orchestral performance material in the world. For recording details, please go to our [web page](#). For a detailed list of all our shows, please visit our [archives](#).