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# Discoveries from the Fleisher Collection

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Saturday, February 19th, 2005, 5:00-6:00 p.m.  
(Third Saturday this month!)

- [Amy Beach](#) (1867-1944). Gaelic Symphony in E minor (1894), 3rd and 4th movements. Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Neeme Järvi. Chandos 8958. 22:01
- [Ernst Bacon](#) (1898-1990). Fables for Narrator and Orchestra (1953). New York Chamber Orchestra, Edward Everett Horton, Robert Shaw. Text by John Edmunds and the composer. Live recording. 19:13
- Interview with Ellen Bacon

Probably the form of musical output Amy Beach and Ernst Bacon most have in common is the art song. Both wrote in a number of idioms, but perhaps what sets them apart among American composers is their genius in setting the English language to music. They have few peers in this, and no masters; during their lifetimes singers often performed their songs in concert, and there is now, rightfully, a renewed interest. While we won't hear any of their songs on today's program, we will listen to two works that evince the lyricism and flexibility of rhythm that is the common currency of all great song composers.

Amy Beach was known as a piano virtuoso—indeed, a child prodigy—before her composing was widely recognized. Blessed with perfect pitch and a perfect music memory, she was composing by age four, but it was as a pianist that she first made her mark in Boston. Eschewing the European musical training some had advised, she basically taught herself composing, translating books by Berlioz and others to do this. During her marriage to the physician Henry Beach, she ceased concertizing and touring, and concentrated on composition. After his death in 1910 she resumed her playing career, but she is best known as the first American woman to break through as a recognized composer—and not just of songs or small piano pieces. The *Gaelic Symphony* is a remarkably crafted work built from what Beach called “simple, rugged” Irish tunes, but full of passion and symphonic power.

The works of Ernst Bacon range from symphonies to songs to chamber music to oratorios, and they all have a jauntiness and athleticism that's hard to resist. Many of his works deal with landscape: *Great River*, *Nantucket Fling*, and *By Blue Ontario* come to mind, and even his *Elegy to Ansel Adams*, which we heard on *Discoveries* last year, evokes the muscular but luminous art of that famous photographer, and Bacon's good friend. Today's work, *Fables*, is filled with the humor and color that defines so much of his music. In our interview with Ellen Bacon, the composer's widow, we glimpse what a vigorously talented man he was. The Fleisher Collection is proud to join her and the Ernst Bacon Society as they continue to introduce new listeners to the profound and optimistic music of this vital composer.

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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](#).