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Discoveries from the Fleisher Collection

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Saturday, August 6th, 2005, 5:00-6:00 p.m.

- [Mily Balakirev](#) (1837-1910). Grande Fantaisie on Russian Folk Songs (1853), 18:17. Joseph Banowetz, piano, Russian Philharmonic Orchestra of Moscow, Konstantin Krimets. Belwin
- [César Cui](#) (1835-1918). Suite No. 2 in E Major (1887), last 3 movements, 28:23. Czecho-Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra, Robert Stankovsky. Marco Polo 8.223400
- Interview with [Joseph Banowetz](#)

The pianist Joseph Banowetz has made 30 recordings already in his busy career, and he speaks to us on today's show about this, his newest. His recordings and solo performances take him constantly around the world. He has received the German Music Critics' Outstanding Record of the Year award, and *Fanfare* hails him as "a giant among keyboard artists of our time." The two-piano score of the *Grande Fantaisie* of Mily Balakirev was sitting on a shelf in St. Petersburg when it was suggested to Banowetz, who was in the city at the time for another recording project, that it might be worth a look. He eventually made a performing edition of it, and we can now hear the world premiere recording.

This is a work that was never published, never performed as far as we know, and indeed, never completed by the composer. Balakirev wrote this when he was 16, and although he intended to write more, never did get back to it. But it provides a fascinating glimpse into the mind of the young man who was to become one of the leading "nationalist" composers of Russia and counted among the group called The Five (actually, in Russian, "The Mighty Handful"), the others being Borodin, Cui, Mussorgsky, and Rimsky-Korsakov. They were admired at the time—or vilified—as heralds of a new direction for Russian music, distinguished from the Germanic leanings of an Anton Rubinstein. They often quoted Russian folk tunes, as Balakirev does here, or otherwise tapped into the ethnic roots of the land.

Each of The Five has his own voice, of course, and so it's instructive to hear them side by side, even when the voice of the young Balakirev is still developing out of its indebtedness to Chopin and Berlioz. For though we may think of Russian nationalism as a later development of the 19th century, the *Grande Fantaisie* was written as far back as 1853. César Cui, born two years before Balakirev, composed his *Suite No. 2* in 1887, and it is the work of maturity and a sure hand. It is not often performed, but should be heard more, as it is full of beauties and energy. It gains speed through its four movements, and the last two substantially make use of the color and vitality we associate with this Russian school. The materials for this performance, as with many of the works we hear on *Discoveries*, came from the shelves of the Fleisher Collection.

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](#).