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Saturday, January 7th, 2006, 5:00-6:00 p.m.

- [Ilja Hurník](#) (b.1922). *The New Clavecin* (1975), 10:00. Ivan Klánský, piano; Musici de Praga, František Vajnar. Panton 71-0584-2
- Hurník. *Aesop* (1964), 20:39. Helena Tattermuschová, soprano; Czech Radio Mixed Choir, choirmaster Milan Malý, Prague Symphony Orchestra, Martin Turnovský. Panton 71-0584-2
- Hurník. *Seasonal Madrigals* (1984), 11:23. Prague Madrigal Singers, Svatopluk Jányš artistic director; Aleš Bárta, piano; Jan Riedlbauch, flute. Panton 71-0584-2

We turn the new year over with music by the Czech composer **Ilja Hurník**, starting with *The New Clavecin* for piano and strings. He treats the piano like a clavecin, or harpsichord, in this neo-classic work of clean lines and sprightly demeanor. Hurník is himself a concert pianist and writes expertly for the instrument. In fact, everything he does is of the highest professionalism, as he is one of the leading Czech composers of his generation. Born in 1922, he studied with Vítěslav Novák, a student of Dvořák, so his music springs from that deep tradition. But we may hear, in addition to Eastern European colors and folk flavor, the impressionistic influence of Debussy, a composer Hurník greatly admires.

The characteristics of lightness, chromaticism, and motion we hear especially in *Aesop*, a work for chorus, soprano, and orchestra, which recounts four fables. Although a challenging work to perform, requiring the greatest resources to be drawn from the choir, it is immensely entertaining and humorous. “The Oak and the Cane” reminds us that while a storm can cause a proud oak to fall, the reed will merely bend. “The Wolf’s Verdict” teaches us not to argue with those who are powerful, since even if the lamb wins the argument, the wolf still wants to eat dinner! We also learn from the pompous oil lamp that although its light is brighter than that of the stars, a mere breeze can blow it out. In “The Hares and the Frogs,” the hares decide to commit suicide by jumping into the pond. But in their rush to the pond, their noise causes the frogs to jump in ahead of them, making the hares think (wrongly, of course) that the frogs also want to kill themselves and are even more cowardly than they are. We’re always delighted by the supposed suffering of others, *Aesop* reminds us.

Seasonal Madrigals finish out the program. There are four, to Hurník’s own words, going from Spring to Summer to Fall to Christmas, and in the last is the brief echo of a Bohemian carol known by the German title “Kommet ihr Hirten,” or “Come, all you shepherds.” This is a delightful work for voices, piano, and flute. Hurník’s music is so well crafted and graceful, that we are drawn to it. It invites us into its world and welcomes us, and perhaps that’s what the best art always does.

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](#).