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Saturday, July 1st, 2006, 5:00-6:00 p.m.

- [Charles Ives](#) (1874-1954) Symphony No. 4 (1910-1916), 31:30. American Symphony Orchestra, Leopold Stokowski, David Katz, José Serebrier, Schola Cantorum of New York, 1965. Columbia MS6775

Leaving aside the significance of the work itself, someone could write a book just on the first performance of Charles Ives' Symphony No. 4. That concert and the subsequent recording never would have happened but for the work of Theodore A. Seder, Curator of the Fleisher Collection from 1952-1967.

It took a decade after Ives' death for the symphony to be heard in its entirety (portions had been played in the '20s and '30s), but the time between its completion and its premiere was almost 50 years. Ives wrote most of it in 1910, finished it in 1916, and suffered from a heart attack in 1918 at the age of 43. He wrote little after that and was in frail health for the rest of his life. A year after his death, Ted Seder, who had been corresponding with the composer's widow, Harmony Ives, and with his publisher, offered to take on the job of interpreting and recopying the notoriously complicated manuscripts and putting the symphony into performance shape. He would later say that it was pure naïveté that led him to take it on: he knew it would be hard, but the complexity is monstrously indecipherable in places.

The music of Ives is full of the bumps, jumps, and chaos of boys somersaulting on hillsides and marching bands playing competing tunes at the town square. It breathes New England Transcendentalism, Yankee individualism, Victorian hymns, and "Camptown Races." All of this Ives stirs into an immense orchestra that includes saxophones, extra brass, offstage players, two timpanists, and three pianos, one of which is deliberately out of tune. On top of it all, the musicians sometimes navigate three separate metrical worlds (along with separate tonalities) simultaneously without getting lost. Ives required three conductors at places (the score's barlines often don't align); they beat different meters and tempos, and the individual parts inform the musicians which conductor to watch. Reading the faint and sometimes shaky pencil of Ives caused Seder to travel to Yale or Manhattan (round-trip by train: \$7.08) for a look at original manuscripts. He also consulted extensively with composer Henry Cowell and pianist John Kirkpatrick, the two leading Ives experts of the day, on the particularly knotty points.

While they realized that some decisions were best guesses, they knew that if they waited longer the performance would never happen (a critical edition is still not finished). As it was, Leopold Stokowski never met with Seder (and Fleisher copyist, composer Romulus Franceschini) for final decisions on the second movement until December 1964, after years of prodding. Perhaps Leonard Bernstein's offer to conduct the premiere with his New York Philharmonic was the spark needed for Stokowski finally to commit his young American Symphony Orchestra to the project. In any case, for this American master-piece it was a collaboration of historic importance, all driven by Ted Seder and 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](#).