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Discoveries from the Fleisher Collection

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Saturday, November 4th, 2006, 5:00-6:00 p.m.

- [Geoffrey Peterson](#) (b.1970). The Edmund Fitzgerald, Concerto for Piano and String Orchestra (2002). Mac Carlson (piano), Orchestra 2001, James Freeman. Archival reading. 13:19
- [Tibor Serly](#) (1901-1978). Concertino 3x3 (1965). Czech National Symphony Orchestra, Lynn Kao (piano), Paul Freeman. Music from the Fleisher Collection Series, Vol. 5. Troy 876. 27:41

Each of the two works on our program this month uses piano with orchestra, and they also share a November connection. A ship named the *S.S. Edmund Fitzgerald* sank this month 31 years ago, and Geoffrey Peterson joins us in the studio to talk about the poignant piano concerto he wrote commemorating this event.

While most of us know the name “Edmund Fitzgerald” only through the Gordon Lightfoot pop song, in the Midwest, the tragedy is better known. The Ohio-born Peterson visited the Great Lakes Shipwreck Museum in Whitefish Point, Michigan, where among paraphernalia recovered from the iron-ore carrier is the ship’s brass bell. This bell plays a part in the last movement, where a chime in the actual bell’s pitch of A-flat tolls 29 times, once for each man who lost his life.

Other references occur in the 1st movement, Embarkment, and 3rd, Six-Fathom Shoal (“We’re holding our own,” echoing the last recorded words of the captain), when we hear the sea chantey “Spanish Ladies.” And Peterson uses the funeral march from the Beethoven *Symphony No. 3* under an impressionistic piano in the 4th movement, Entombment—Dirge. Still, it is an individual expression of affecting lightness. Even Movement II, The Gales, is touching; it is energetic and evocative without falling into cliché wave-and-storm writing. Throughout, there is reverence to those who died—a fitting memorial to this sad incident.

November also saw the birth of Tibor Serly, the Hungarian composer who lived most of his life in the U.S. His ingenious *Concertino 3x3* (pronounced “three times three”), is essentially nine pieces in one and showcases the full range of his ability with inspired cleverness. Each of the three movements is played three times: first, by the piano alone; second, by the orchestra; and third, all together. This might be interesting enough, but he further creates tension by having the piano and orchestra in different keys (sometimes, in different meters, too). While this sounds complex, it’s actually not difficult to hear in performance, and ends up being great fun. Perhaps not for the conductor, who has a tremendous job to keep it together, but Paul Freeman’s Czech National Symphony Orchestra absolutely shines in this recording. This is fascinating, vital music.

Serly was not a student of Béla Bartók’s as some believe, although he did finish the latter’s *Piano Concerto No. 3* and *Viola Concerto* from manuscripts at the request of Bartók’s widow. Consequently, his name has been overshadowed by his famous countryman. But it is well worth our time to assess him for his own music and to appreciate the freshness of his voice even now. This brand-new release is Vol. 5 of Music from the Fleisher Collection on Albany Records.

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](#).