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Discoveries from the Fleisher Collection

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Saturday, July 7th, 2007, 5:00-6:00 p.m.

- [Florencio Asenjo](#) (b.1926). *Angels Dancing on a Pin* (2003). Bohuslav Martinu Philharmonic, Kirk Trevor. MMC2159. 6:25
- [George Frederick Bristow](#) (1825-1898). *Symphony No. 3 in F# minor, op. 26* (1858). Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Neeme Järvi. [Chan 9169](#). 34:41

On this program we listen to some of the newest and some of the oldest American symphonic music. *Angels Dancing on a Pin* is a delightful piece from Florencio Asenjo, the composer and mathematics professor from Pittsburgh. Born in Argentina, he studied music there with the Spanish composer Jaime Pahissa, but turned his professional attention to the field of advanced mathematics. He has continued to compose all along, though, with five CDs of his music released.

Asenjo talks about “maximalism” as a way to describe his music that constantly changes, without exact repetition. “I like when large-scale forms are built on many ideas,” he says, and he prefers to compose themes that do not exactly repeat. *Angels* develops themes canonically, and is a short, three-section work where the last section repeats the first—well, almost.

Then we listen to a work from one of the earliest American composers of orchestral music, George Frederick Bristow, who was also a founding violinist, in 1843, of the New York Philharmonic. We’ve come across Bristow’s name earlier on *Discoveries*, in connection with his friend, the composer and critic William Henry Fry. After moving to New York from Philadelphia, Fry took up the cause of American music, and Bristow in particular. He lamented the fact that the New York Philharmonic would not perform Bristow, and he caused such a ruckus that Bristow eventually left the orchestra for a short period in the early 1850s.

It all turned out fine, however. Not only did Bristow come back; he became concertmaster, staying until 1879, and the orchestra did eventually play his work. Bristow became an established fixture in American music, and his pieces garnered raves (even from critics other than Fry!). Perhaps most important, Bristow was a pioneer. In addition to making it easier for American composers after him to embrace their native land, he also spearheaded the teaching of music in public schools, spending many years as an educator.

Bristow’s symphonies are strong and well-crafted, evincing the prevailing tastes of Beethoven, Schubert, and Mendelssohn, but with a developing individual voice. Listen for the unusual harp writing in the outer movements of this symphony, as well as the overall deftness of orchestration from this early hero of American music.

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](#).