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Discoveries from the Fleisher Collection

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Saturday, August 4th, 2007, 5:00-6:00 p.m.

- [David Raksin](#) (1912-2004). *A Song After Sundown* (1983). Michael Stairs, organ, Mannes College of Music Orchestra, David Hayes. 9:30
- [Nancy Van de Vate](#) (b.1930). *Pura Besakih* (1987). Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra of Bratislava, Szymon Kawalla. [VMM 3006](#). 14:06
- Nancy Van de Vate. *A Peacock Southeast Flew*, Concerto for Pipa and Orchestra (1997). Gao Hong, Moravian Philharmonic, Jiri Mikula. [VMM 3043](#). 22:20

This month we listen to exotic music by modern American composers. David Raksin was a Hollywood composer and songwriter known mostly for the exquisite song “Laura,” but we’ll listen to a work for organ and orchestra based on a jazz film score, which might be called “exotic” in classical circles. Raksin originally composed music used in this piece for the 1961 John Cassavetes film *Too Late Blues*, starring Bobby Darin and Stella Stevens, but the tune was cut from the final version. He then took this music and fashioned it into *A Song After Sundown* in 1983 for the Philadelphia organist Keith Chapman, who played this for the 1984 National Convention of the American Guild of Organists in San Francisco.

The title is a play on *A Song Before Sunrise* by Frederick Delius, a favorite composer of Raksin’s. He wrote in the score, “I think of this piece as a kind of Blues Meditation (for people who falter at twilight).” The Philadelphia-born Raksin (whose big break was scoring *Modern Times* for Charlie Chaplin) knew Edwin Fleisher, so it’s entirely fitting that the Collection produced this edition, in collaboration with Kimmel Center Presents. This performance was part of the Kimmel Center’s two-week-long Organ Festival in 2006, inaugurating the Fred J. Cooper Memorial Organ, on which this piece was played.

New Jersey-born Nancy Van de Vate has lived in Vienna for years, and much of her music is based on sights and sounds from different cultures. *Pura Besakih* is named after the “Mother Temple” of Hinduism in Bali, situated on Mount Agung, a volcano. Agung erupted in 1963, destroying much around it, but the temple remained unscathed, and so the music depicts both calm and danger, keeping a balance with precisely handled form.

The pipa is a pear-shaped Chinese lute with four silk strings and frets affixed to both the neck and body. It is held upright on the lap and played with picks slipped over the fingertips of the right hand. Silk can be as strong as steel, so the sound, although softer than higher-tension modern instruments, nevertheless carries quite well. *A Peacock Southeast Flew* echoes a tragic love story from one of the oldest and longest of Chinese poems. Van de Vate arranges the orchestra effortlessly around the soloist, and the result is an effective five-movement concerto—actually three movements with two poignant interludes. The first interlude for just flute and pipa exhilarates through an economical use of materials. The marriage of Eastern solo instrument with Western orchestra sounds exotic at first, but the rightness of it all is what stays with us.

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](#).