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Discoveries from the Fleisher Collection

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Saturday, October 20, 2007, 5:00-6:00 p.m.
3rd Saturday this month!

- Amy Beach (1867-1944). Symphony in E minor, "Gaelic," Op. 32, 2nd movement, Alla siciliana—Allegro vivace—Andante (1893). Nashville Symphony, Kenneth Schermerhorn. Naxos 8559139. 7:30
- [Amy Beach](#). Piano Concerto in C# minor, Op. 45 (1900). Alan Feinberg, Nashville Symphony, Kenneth Schermerhorn. Naxos 8559139. 36:40

Amy Beach was the first American woman to achieve real success in the field of classical music, and her fame paved the way for the many women composers who followed her. Blessed with perfect pitch and a perfect music memory, she was a child prodigy composing by age four. Not only a composer, she was a formidable pianist revered by all the leading musicians of her day. She was also a synesthete—one who experiences synesthesia, a condition in which one type of sensory stimulation evokes the sensation of another—which in her case meant that her aural perceptions of sounds were accompanied by visualizations of colors. The key of A-flat was blue to her; she saw E as yellow; and she immediately knew a pianist was playing a Chopin work in a different key because the color didn't match!

During her marriage to the physician Henry Beach (she was properly known for many years as Mrs. H.H.A. Beach), she ceased concertizing and touring, and concentrated on writing music. Like many American composers at the time, she heeded Dvorak's 1893 call to use folk music in crafting a national style, and immediately started writing her Gaelic Symphony. It uses Irish tunes from her ancestry, although the second movement heard today is a distinctly non-Irish-named "Siciliana."

Amy Beach was known as a piano virtuoso before her composing was widely recognized, but she agreed to Dr. Beach's wishes to curtail public performing. However, when Boston Symphony's conductor, William Gericke, heard that she was writing a concerto, he prevailed upon her to play the premiere with him. Her husband apparently acquiesced to this exception, and so the premiere took place in 1900 with Amy Beach at the piano. After her husband's death in 1910 she resumed her playing career here and in Europe, and she performed her concerto widely.

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](#).