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Discoveries from the Fleisher Collection

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Encore presentations of Discoveries every Wednesday at 7:00 p.m. on WRTI-HD2

Saturday, March 1st, 2008, 5:00-6:00 p.m.

- Carl Ruggles (1876-1971). *Men and Mountains* (1924/36/41). Polish National Radio Orchestra, William Strickland. CRI 715. 9:27
- Ruggles. *Portals* (1925/29/41/52-3). Buffalo Philharmonic, Michael Tilson Thomas. CBS M2 34591. 6:39
- Ruggles. *Angels* (trumpet version) (1920-21). Brass Ensemble, Gerard Schwarz, leader. CBS M2 34591. 2:54
- Ruggles. *Angels* (trumpet/trombone version) (1938). Brass Ensemble, Gerard Schwarz, leader. CBS M2 34591. 3:16
- Ruggles. *Sun-treader* (1926-31). Buffalo Philharmonic, Michael Tilson Thomas. CBS M2 34591. 16:22

Last month we learned that Carl Ruggles was one of the students of John Knowles Paine, and since we can hardly think of a composer of that time further removed from Paine's Germanic training and sound-world, we thought it was time to give Ruggles a listen.

In small-town Massachusetts his musical life started when he played, on a cigar-box violin, songs his mother sang to him. Working up to a real violin before long, he was playing in orchestras by his teens. He moved to Boston, studied composition privately with Paine (not at Harvard, although he later took an English lit class there), did engraving work for a music publisher, and reviewed concerts for a local paper. He moved to Minnesota, married, taught music, and founded the Winona Symphony Orchestra, now celebrating its 100th anniversary. Moving back to the East Coast, but this time to New York City, he met Varèse and Ives, both of whom provided important performance and publication opportunities. He was now, in the 1920s, a mature composer of intensely individual, highly charged music.

He is essentially a Romantic. *Men and Mountains* is a perfect example of the employment of nature to capture an emotional state. The middle movement, "Lilacs," depicts the heightened reverie brought on by a whiff of flowers through an open window in the evening. The title is from William Blake: "Great things are done when men and mountains meet."

As a Romantic, Ruggles took inspiration from all the arts; he was himself an accomplished painter. *Sun-treader* refers to Browning's homage to Shelley: "Sun-treader, light and life be thine forever." *Portals* echoes the Walt Whitman poem: "What are those of the known but to ascend and enter the Unknown? / And what are those of life, but for Death?"

Carl Ruggles is a shining example of America's growing musical independence. Still, he knew that we do not outrun our past. His given name was Charles, but he changed it professionally to Carl. He thought that was more in keeping with his love of Bach and Beethoven and the inner strength and craft of German music. Maybe he wasn't so far removed from John Knowles Paine after all.

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](#).