

Listen to

Discoveries from the Fleisher Collection

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

Saturday, June 14th, 2008, 5:00-6:00 p.m. (second Saturday this month!)

- **Carlos López Buchardo** (1881-1948). Escenas Argentinas (1922). Entre Rios Symphony Orchestra, Gabriel Castagna. Chandos 10185. 15:07
- **Silvestre Revueeltas** (1899-1940). Ocho por Radio (1933). Ebony Band, Werner Herbers. Channel Classics 21104. 5:45
- **Alejandro García Caturla** (1906-1940). Trés Danzas Cubanas (1928/30). Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra, Keri-Lynn Wilson. Dorian 90254. 8:32
- **Mozart Camargo Guarnieri** (1907-1993). Flor de Tremembé (1927). Camerata de las Américas, Joel Sachs. Dorian 93230. 6:17

While it may not be as dramatic as the Vulcan proverb averring, “Only Nixon could go to China,” there still stands—in the border-land between the incredible and the obvious—the startling fact that while the world flailed in a war that would at any moment engulf the United States, a Soviet-émigré-turned-American-citizen traveled from Boston to Latin America solely for the purpose of collecting orchestral scores for the Philadelphia collection of a Russian-American philanthropist. How on earth did this happen?

In January 1941 Fleisher Collection Curator Arthur Cohn heard Nicolas Slonimsky (1894-1995; yes, those dates are correct) lecture on contemporary music at the Curtis Institute. This was just after Edwin Fleisher had mentioned to Cohn that he’d like to collect “some Mexican music” to fill a gap in what was already the world’s largest collection of orchestral music. After hearing the lecture and being impressed by the man, Cohn discussed Fleisher’s wish with Slonimsky, who asked, “Why don’t you get all of Latin American music?” This bold request Cohn referred to Fleisher, who saw at once the opportunity to be grasped—and the man to do the grasping.

So Fleisher bankrolled the entire trip of Slonimsky, a conductor who would become famous as a musical lexicographer, to the countries of Central and South America in the fall of 1941, just weeks before the attack on Pearl Harbor propelled the U.S. into World War II. Its two results were a small mountain of scores mined and freighted to the Free Library of Philadelphia, and one book, *Music of Latin America*, penned by Slonimsky.

Gary Galván, an expert on the history of the WPA music project (1935-1943) in Philadelphia, joins us in the studio to convey the importance of that trip and the entire music project. Staff microfilmed or copied by photostat all of the Latin American scores, then returned the originals to their owners. A team of copyists extracted parts for about half of them before the project was disbanded at the height of the war.

We listen to four fascinating pieces out of the hundreds collected on this trip. Dr. Galván walks us around the music and composers, giving us a peek into the thousands of letters he’s sifted and catalogued at the Fleisher Collection. And we acquire a renewed appreciation for the giants behind and in front of the scenes—Fleisher, Cohn, Slonimsky—who energized culture in a time of war, at the same time crossing border-lands to make friends in distant countries. Even a Vulcan, perhaps, would be tempted to smile.

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](#).