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Discoveries from the Fleisher Collection

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Saturday, October 4th, 2008, 5:00-6:00 p.m.

- **Ma Szû-tsung** (1912-1987). Violin Concerto in F maj. Chen Xi, violin, Youth Orchestra of the Central Conservatory of Music, Beijing, Xia Xiao-Tang. Archival. 35:44
- **Josef Suk** (1874-1935). Fairy Tale (Pohádka), 4. Runa's curse and how love triumphed over it. Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, Libor Pesek. Supraphon 33C37-7509. 8:08

Ma Szû-tsung was the foremost composer and violinist in China, President of the Central Conservatory of Music, a leader of the Union of Chinese Musicians, and sought-after international judge of the Chopin and Tchaikovsky competitions. But in 1967 he was in a fisherman's rowboat in the middle of 20 miles of open water, escaping to Hong Kong. This was as dramatic a change of circumstances as one could imagine for this official operating in the highest artistic circles of Communist China.

Ma Szû-tsung (also spelled Ma Sicong and Ma Sitson) studied violin and composition at the Paris Conservatory, then returned to China to write, play, teach, conduct, establish orchestras, and run schools. All the while he brought Western theory and training to a country that already had a deep love for music. But as Mao Tse-tung's Anti-Rightist Movement gained more control within the Communist Party, murmurings against anything Western broke out into the open with the 1966 Cultural Revolution. Ma and 500 artists were rounded up into a concentration camp, beaten, then released to a crowd now agitated against these "traitors" by the newly formed Red Guard. He underwent physical and psychological torture for months, before he and his family luckily escaped.

From Hong Kong he eventually settled in Philadelphia after the United States granted him political asylum. Two years before his death in 1987, China, having admitted that the Cultural Revolution was a criminal failure, dropped all charges against him and sought to revive his reputation. The *Violin Concerto* we hear today is performed by a graduate of Philadelphia's Curtis Institute soloing with the Youth Orchestra of the very institution Ma Szû-tsung led, Beijing's Central Conservatory of Music, binding together these chapters in the life of this remarkable man.

Josef Suk struggled with a situation less dire, but no less real. He was in love with a girl but was afraid to tell her dad, so he wrote this piece. The father? That would be his composition teacher, Antonin Dvorak. Suk admitted that he identified with the characters in *Fairy Tale*, who love each other but who are kept apart. (Don't worry, though: love triumphs in this, the last movement.) He poured his emotions into this music, and many consider it his most unaffected, natural, and successful work. The little violin solo reminds us how far determination and a pure spirit can carry one man through trials—of any kind.

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, at the Parkway Central Library of 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](#).