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

- **Josef Suk** (1874-1935). *Summer Tale (Pohádka léta)*. Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, Sir Charles Mackerras. Decca 289 466 443-2. 50:38

Last month on *Discoveries*, we were introduced to Josef Suk with *Fairy Tale*, a cheerful work from a happy time in his life. Suk was in love with Otylka, the girl of his own fairy tale who also happened to be the daughter of his teacher, Antonín Dvořák. The pair married in 1898, but his life would soon endure misfortune and tragedy.

Dvořák died in 1904. Suk's dear Otylka died in 1905. The composer plunged into despair, writing his second symphony, *Asrael* (Angel of Death), in an attempt to confront his anguish. Then, he wrote *Summer Tale*.

In this work, he slowly, ever so slowly, faces his sadness. By living through it, walking with it, and even embracing it, he arrives at a place of comfort. The worlds of nature and of normal life are his companion in this journey. The upward-looking, yearning lines of the first movement are markedly different from the resignation we hear in *Asrael*. In the second movement, *Midday*, it's as if he is warmed by the blazing sun on a noontime walk, the high strings searing and yet somehow therapeutic.

An Intermezzo follows and a scene plays out which Suk recalls from a village near his hometown: blind musicians repeating the same haunting melody over and over, constructing one of the most remarkable symphonic movements in the literature. In the midst of this huge orchestra, only two English horns, a solo violin and viola, a harp, and a few contemplative strings mesmerize. Then a demonic Scherzo leads into the final movement, *Night*, where cool, complex, almost Straussian, harmonies resolve into an ending that is stunningly powerful in its repose.

Josef Suk lived through real joy and real sorrow, as we all do. But his composing speaks it and lives it out for us with a force only the finest of composers have. *Summer Tale* is a vast work of music, but it is also a vast work of healing—a journey of struggle and, ultimately, consolation.

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](#).