

Next on

Discoveries from the Fleisher Collection

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

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

- **[Tibor Serly](#)** (1901-1978). *Six Dance Designs for Orchestra* (1932-33). Czech National Sym Orch, Paul Freeman. Music from the Fleisher Collection, Vol. 5. Albany Troy 876. 11:26
- **[Tibor Serly](#)**. *Concerto for Violin and Wind Symphony* (1953-58). Carla Trynchuk, violin, Czech National Sym Orch, Paul Freeman. Music from the Fleisher Collection, Vol. 5. Albany Troy 876. 13:54
- **[David Heuser](#)** (b.1966). *Three Lopsided Dances* (2008). Texas Music Festival Orchestra, Franz Anton Krager. Live recording. 19:28

Figuring out where Tibor Serly stands in the history of 20th-century music is not easy, since he's known mostly as the editor of Bartók's *Viola Concerto*. But Serly's own music is ingenious, rugged, melodious, subtle, and never far from the lightness of humor. Born in Hungary and brought to the U.S. as a child, he returned to Hungary to study music. He and Bartók met there and became lifelong friends. Back in the States, Serly played viola in the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra under Reiner, then violin in Philadelphia under Stokowski (who even appointed him Assistant Conductor). He later played violin in Toscanini's NBC Symphony Orchestra before turning solely to composing and teaching.

Popular winks and asides fill the *Six Dance Designs for Orchestra* as it beguiles with engaging rhythms and sly tempo changes. It's for a large orchestra, but it rarely sounds that way, as Serly uses colors and dynamics judiciously, regardless of the number of players he's using at any one time. He includes two fox trots—"1920," which he mocks, and "1934," which he does not. He seems genuinely to enjoy what we only see as the stylized Hollywood of *The Philadelphia Story* era, but which was *au courant* when Serly composed this.

The *Concerto for Violin and Wind Symphony*, which the composer never heard performed, is as affable as *Dance Designs*, but loosens harmonic expectations in an interesting way. It's easy to apprehend, though, as he anchors fluttering outcroppings of scalar material to vast slabs of pedal-point. The opening Improvisamente leads into a Dance Concertino in 5/4, feeling like a 4/4 with breaths. Young Serly was a violinist in his parents' New York German-Hungarian opera company, and we can understand how the old world inspired this very new-sounding music.

David Heuser, who we've heard before on *Discoveries*, today brings us *Three Lopsided Dances*, which begins with the halting, expectant qualities of Serly's *Concerto*. The first movement, Lilt, propels a long/short 5/8 pulse around a lovely tune. The next movement, Drag, is "slow with frequent pauses, like a swimmer floating between kicks," Heuser says. Then he sums up this eccentric but invigorating work in Jump, using refrains of syncopations in between Lilt's melody and Drag's water music. Bracing stuff.

Heuser and Serly both use dance to create a music of America—the land of one composer's birth, the land of another composer's choice. The music reaches to us and pulls us close. That sounds like...well, as Katharine Hepburn says to James Stewart in *The Philadelphia Story*, "It sounds like dancing, doesn't it?"

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](#).