

Next on

Discoveries from the Fleisher Collection

Listen to WRTI 90.1 FM Philadelphia or online at wrti.org.

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

Saturday, April 4th, 2009, 5:00-6:00 p.m.

[Albert Hurwit](#) (b.1931). Symphony No. 1 "Remembrance" (2002), Movement 3, Remembrance. Michael Lankester, Bulgarian National Radio Symphony Orchestra. MSR Classics MS 1134. Tr 3. 16:09

[Felix Draeseke](#) (1835-1913). Piano Concerto in E-flat major, Op. 36 (1885-6). Markus Becker pno, Berlin Radio Orchestra, Michael Sanderling. Hyperion 67636. Tr 7-9. 30:28

On this *Discoveries* we take snapshots of journeys by two composers who are separated by a hundred years. Albert Hurwit travels a path from Prague to Russia to America, following the persecution and survival of his family in a symphony he calls "Remembrance." And while that history was unfolding, Felix Draeseke was on his own journey from progressive to traditionalist, nicely encapsulated in his E-flat Piano Concerto.

Connecticut-born Albert Hurwit came to composition fairly late in life, after a career in radiology. For a long time he had wanted to immerse himself in the creation of music, and after taking retirement he was able to devote all his energies to it. Successes with smaller works led to this symphony, which recounts the discrimination against the Jewish people in Europe throughout the 19th century. In particular, his family went from Prague to Russia, and suffered through the pogroms there. The third movement, also titled "Remembrance," hearkens to their sadness after being dispersed. They survive tragedies to come to the United States, but the memories of separation, as well as the strength of love, live on. Hurwit's music is cinematic, charming, and suffused with sweeping melody. This third movement may be performed by itself and has been used as the setting for a ballet.

Felix Draeseke's biggest journey was philosophical. He began in the avant-garde of German culture with Liszt and Wagner but came to disown that world, preferring conservation to provocation. His liberal *bona fides* came from a hearing of Wagner's *Lohengrin* that changed his life. As if that weren't enough, Liszt himself stood at the barricades and defended Draeseke's modernist (for 1861) *Germania-Marsch* to an angry audience (which Wagner witnessed). Here was a rabble-rouser in the making.

But a move to Switzerland didn't prolong the festivities. He had to earn his keep as a piano teacher, he started to lose his hearing, and an engagement to a French-speaking young lady was revoked by her parents when they discovered that her intended was a German (a little thing called the Franco-Prussian War had just broken out). He moved to Dresden, became an established professor, married, continued to compose, and wrote articles condemning the younger generation of composers and their harmonic experiments. This concerto comes from just after his move back to Germany, and is a tantalizing mix of both sides of Draeseke. Its harmonic palette is basic, but there are just enough Lisztian flourishes to show us a portrait of this 50-year-old artist as a young man.

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](#).