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Discoveries from the Fleisher Collection

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

Saturday, August 1, 2009, 5:00-6:00 p.m.

[Camille Saint-Saëns](#) (1835-1921). *Romance*, op. 36 (1874). Ulrich Hübner, natural horn, Kölner Akademie, Michael Alexander Willens. Ars 38027. Tr 2

Saint-Saëns. *Morceau de concert*, op. 94 (1887). Ulrich Hübner, valve horn, Kölner Akademie, Michael Alexander Willens. Ars 38027. Tr 1

Saint-Saëns. *Wedding Cake, Valse-Caprice*, op. 76 (1885). Stephen Hough, piano, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Sakari Oramo. Hyperion 67331. CD1 Tr 10.

[Paul Jeanjean](#) (1874-1928). *Nocturne*. Ulrich Hübner, valve horn, Kölner Akademie, Michael Alexander Willens. Ars 38027. Tr 5

Jeanjean. *Romance*. Ulrich Hübner, valve horn, Kölner Akademie, Michael Alexander Willens. Ars 38027. Tr 7

Saint-Saëns. *Morceau de concert*, op 62 (1880). Philippe Graffin, violin, The Ulster Orchestra, Thierry Fischer. Hyperion 67294. Tr 2

On this French program, we feature three solo instruments with orchestra ... or is it four? Camille Saint-Saëns and Paul Jeanjean bring us pieces for violin solo, piano solo, and two different kinds of horns—with valves and without valves, the so-called "natural" horn.

The French horn is usually called just "horn" by orchestral musicians, but France does play a big part in its development. The natural horn is simply a coiled brass tube, the pitches being produced by changes in lip pressure at the mouthpiece and by changes in hand position in the bell at the other end. Interchangeable tubing was then invented to allow it to play in different keys. Players replaced these "crooks" as needed, but still, only a certain number of notes were available at any one time. In 1814 (by most accounts) the first valves were added, providing access to different lengths of tubing, and therefore more notes, without wrestling with any machinery. All modern horns use variations of this valved tubing design.

But the increase in notes comes at the price of a loss in character. Much of the appeal of the natural horn is the different quality of notes and keys. The modern instrument equalizes all of that, and 19th-century composers were quite aware of the issues, usually specifying the type of horn to be used. Richard Strauss loved the new horns, Brahms loved the old ones, and Gounod feared that the horn without its "natural" character would be just another trombone. (Let it here be stated that the Fleisher Collection is second to none in its appreciation of the trombone, and of the trombone-playing community, its friends, and its loved ones.)

Well, thanks to Ulrich Hübner and this recording of the Saint-Saëns *Romance*, we can hear what the natural horn sounds like. Listen to how diverse and wild the colors of the different notes are! He plays the other works (including the two Jeanjean pieces, supplied for this recording by the Fleisher Collection) on a 19th-century piston-valved horn. Clarinetists know Paul Jeanjean from his many etudes, and while most of his works are for his instrument, he did take time off to write a *Nocturne* and *Romance* for horn-playing friends of his.

Other works by Saint-Saëns round out the program, bringing to mind what a versatile composer he is. He wrote masterfully in every idiom. At a time when the classical forms were seen as the special province of German composers, his many concertos are almost a political statement. The shorter works on our program are evidence of the clarity, precision, and balance that is the hallmark of Saint-Saëns in particular, and indeed, of all things French.

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](#).