

Next on

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, September 5, 2009, 5:00-6:00 p.m. *Beginning our 8th Season!*

[Romeo Cascarino](#) (1922-2002). *Blades of Grass* (1945). Geoffrey Deemer, English horn, Philadelphia Philharmonia, JoAnn Falletta. Naxos 8.559266

[Maurice Wright](#) (b.1949). Concerto in Two Movements, for Flute and Orchestra (2008). Prema Kesselman, flute, The Metropolitan Sinfonia, Tommy Harrington

Romeo Cascarino. *Prospice* (1948). Philadelphia Philharmonia, JoAnn Falletta. Naxos 8.559266

On this *Discoveries*, we listen to three works by two composers with Philadelphia connections. Romeo Cascarino was born in South Philadelphia and taught himself orchestral music through frequent visits to the Fleisher Collection and the Music Department in the Free Library of Philadelphia. He constantly studied orchestral scores here and loved reading literature, too, especially poetry—which would be a catalyst for many of his later works. Not the bookish recluse, though, he once said, “With a name like Romeo, I had better be good with my fists.”

Prospice, based on the Robert Browning poem, is about fighting of a different kind. It’s the fight against the fear of death and the fight of the soul to express itself. Cascarino had gone to Tanglewood at Copland’s invitation, and this is the young composer’s first full orchestral work. The influence of Copland is apparent in it, but his own voice comes through in this powerfully wrought tone poem (originally a ballet commission). It is a manifesto of courage and a call to arms for the creative artist. *Blades of Grass*—an even earlier piece for English horn, strings, and harp—is inspired by the Carl Sandburg poem “Grass,” a memorial to those who have fallen in battle. This was composed just at the end of World War II, and it resonates not only with sadness, but with renewal. Cascarino went on to become a sought-after orchestrator: listen, in this utterly beautiful work, to the gift he had from the start.

Maurice Wright, originally from Virginia, studied at Duke and Columbia and has been Professor of Composition at Temple University for more than 20 years. He has many commissions, recordings, and national awards to his name. His compositional activity is wide-ranging, from opera and art song to electronic, electro-acoustic, and film music, and he co-founded the Interactive Arts and Technology Laboratory at Temple.

His music is always smart and luscious. Like Cascarino, Wright has an innate sense for how to get the most out of live instruments. This means not only that his music always *sounds*, but that it always sounds *big*. This brand-new concerto—for a small orchestra of strings, a few winds, harp, and flute soloist—plays big and plays romantic. It’s engaging and a gorgeous addition to the literature, wonderfully performed by Prema Kesselman in this live concert recording.

All three works come out of Philadelphia, by one who was born and lived here, and by one who makes this his home.

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](#).