

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, October 3, 2009, 5:00-6:00 p.m.

[Victor Herbert](#) (1859-1924). *Natoma* (1911). Bratislava Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra, Keith Brion. Naxos 8559027. 15:31

[George Whitefield Chadwick](#) (1854-1931). *Symphonic Sketches* (1895-1904). Brno Czech State Philharmonic Orchestra, José Serebrier. Reference 2104. 30:09

Two composers lose parents early on. One receives his musical education on another continent with the blessing of a supportive grandfather, and the other begins to eke out a living in music after his stepfather refuses to help. They soon become two of the most important and influential American musicians of their generation.

Victor Herbert was born in Dublin 150 years ago, and when his father died, he was raised by his maternal grandfather, who was a writer, painter, and songwriter. In addition to his talent for composing, Herbert blossomed into an excellent cellist. Continuing his studies in Germany, he was quickly in demand, playing for many of the top conductors of the day, including a year in Vienna with the orchestra of Eduard Strauss. In Stuttgart to play with the opera, he fell in love with and proposed to their lead soprano. When an agent for the Metropolitan Opera wanted to hire her to sing *Aida*, she agreed on the condition that he hire her fiance as well. They married and moved to New York, and Herbert was soon the Met's principal cellist.

His career took off. He played everywhere, conducted everywhere, and taught at the conservatory where Dvorak was (it was Herbert's second cello concerto that inspired Dvorak to write *his* concerto). He became Music Director of the Pittsburgh Symphony, started the Victor Herbert Orchestra, testified for the rights of composers at the hearings leading up to the Copyright Act of 1909, and helped to found ASCAP (the first composers' rights society) with Irving Berlin and John Philip Sousa, among others.

Oh, and he wrote music. Some of it, like the second concerto and the tone poem *Hero and Leander*, is greatly admired in the classical world. But he was also writing the most popular music of the time with dozens of operettas such as *Babes in Toyland* and *Naughty Marietta*. *Natoma* was a rare foray into opera. While the production was somewhat successful, everyone agreed that the music was gorgeous, and in these selections we can hear why.

George Whitefield Chadwick overcame the early death of his mother, but his path to music was not as smooth as Herbert's. His stepfather was against any profession in music, so Chadwick supported himself by dropping out of high school, working in his stepfather's insurance office, and accepting church organ jobs. He took lessons at the New England Conservatory, tried his hand at operetta, taught school in the Midwest, founded the Music Teachers National Association, and then traveled for further study to Germany. His success as a composer began to attract almost immediate notice, in Europe and back in the States. New England offered him a professorship, and he eventually became its Director for more than 30 years.

His tenure at the Conservatory, the long list of composers he taught (including Converse, Farwell, Parker, and Still), and his serious symphonic pieces cause some to think of him as a humorless academic. That would be a mistake. He loved teaching, and he was passionate about the state of American music. Some effective lighter compositions such as his *Symphonic Sketches* are witty and good-natured. All of his music is luscious.

Herbert and Chadwick—born nearly at the same time—are represented here by works completed nearly at the same time. We think of Herbert treading the Great White Way and Chadwick strolling the corridors of academe, but there is so much more to each of them. In any case, because of them, music in America was forever changed.

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](#).