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## Discoveries from the Fleisher Collection

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**Saturday, April 3, 2010, 5:00-6:00 p.m.**

**Hugo Alfvén** (1872-1960). “Shepherd Girl’s Dance” from *Bergakungen* (The Mountain King) (1923). Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra, Neeme Järvi. Bis 585, Tr 4, 3:59

**Alfvén**. Symphony No. 4 (1918). Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra, Neeme Järvi. Bis 505, Tr 4, 47:21

Composers write music about love all the time. Hugo Alfvén—urbane, well-trained, and rising in all the right circles—began one such piece as a young man in his twenties. It so overwhelmed him, however, that 20 years later it had mutated into a craggy three-quarter-hour symphony of four movements played without break, a luxuriant, ardent, and stunning wordless tale of such power that some critics thought it too suggestive for public performance.



He originally called the piece *A Tale from the Archipelago*. It became his Symphony No. 4, subtitled “From the Outskirts of the Archipelago.” The orchestra is huge and includes two instruments rarely seen in orchestral concerts: wordless singers. The soprano and tenor take the “roles” of the lovers. The trajectory of their love is played out against, and amplified by, the elemental forces of nature. The rocks of the skerries, the crashing of the waves, and the sunlight and moonlight on the sea all contribute to this über-Romantic showpiece for orchestra. To counter the criticism of propriety, Alfvén pointed out that the symphony is dedicated, after all, to his daughter.

He started his musical career as a violinist in the opera orchestra, but he soon gave that up to have more time to compose. But he was also an influential choral conductor, leading three different choirs—one for 53 years. In addition to being Director of Music at Uppsala University from 1910 to 1939, he was an accomplished painter and well-respected writer.

But it’s as one of the great Swedish composers of the early 20th century (along with the one-year-older Wilhelm Stenhammar) that we know Hugo Alfvén. The “Shepherd Girl’s Dance” from his ballet *Bergakungen*, or *The Mountain King*, is a good introduction to his music. It shows his love of Swedish culture, as the symphony exhibits his love for the Swedish landscape that crops up in so much of his work. All in all, expansive work from a great, and passionate, painter of sound.

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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](#).