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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, June 5, 2010, 5:00-6:00 p.m.

[Paul Kletzki](#) (1900-1973). Piano Concerto in D minor, Op. 22 (1930), orch. John Norine. Joseph Banowetz, piano, Russian Philharmonic Orchestra, Thomas Sanderling. [Naxos 8.572190](#), Tr 1-3

[Johannes Brahms](#) (1833-1897). [Symphony No. 1](#), Op. 68, Adagio sostenuto (2nd movement) (1862-76). Berlin Philharmonic, [Wilhelm Furtwängler](#). Deutsche Grammophon 415-662-2, Tr 2

This month we take a look at the music of Paul Kletzki. Not his conducting, for which he is known by cognoscenti the world over, but his composing.

His life was filled with astonishing highs and lows. Born in Poland in 1900, he was a child prodigy on the violin. At 15, he became the youngest member of the Lodz Symphony Orchestra, but his career was interrupted by the Polish–Soviet War of 1919-21. A Russian bullet grazed the head of soldier Kletzki, coming within an inch of killing him. After the war he went to Berlin for music studies. His conducting and composing attracted the attention of Toscanini and, especially, Wilhelm Furtwängler, the newly appointed Music Director of the Berlin Philharmonic. Kletzki guest-conducted the Philharmonic at 25, and a fast rise for the young man seemed assured. But other events in Germany were about to boil over.

Furtwängler hired him as his Assistant Conductor, but what was to be his 1933 debut concert took place without him on the podium. The Nazi Party had just taken power, and they would not allow this Jewish musician to enjoy such an exalted position. He fled the country, leaving behind much of his music, saying later that all of the plates for his published music were melted down. Escaping to Italy, Kletzki had to leave because of the Fascist anti-Semites there, and the story repeated itself with the Communists when he went to the Soviet Union. He finally ended up in Switzerland: safe, but with no prospects for work.

During all this time he produced fascinating music, but at 42, he gave up composing for good. All of the unceasing oppression had killed that particular creative spirit in him. But Kletzki found conducting to be the outlet he needed. He led many orchestras, including the Kharkov and Israel Philharmonics, the Dallas Symphony, and the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande. He was a sought-after conductor, and many saw in him the qualities first discovered by Furtwängler. The older conductor's lyrical and bittersweet sensibilities speak to us in his own reading of the Brahms.

The powerful pianist Joseph Banowetz spearheaded the world-premiere recording of Paul Kletzki's Piano Concerto. It's a remarkable look into the unknown land of his lost career of composition. Since the full score was destroyed, Banowetz had it re-orchestrated by John Norine from the piano solo and sketches. The concerto can be lavishly chromatic; while it is in the big Romantic piano tradition, it tantalizingly skirts the edges of functional tonality. An air of rumination—not unlike that of the Brahms—draws us closer to this man who composed for only 20 years, but who left behind a lifetime of music. Enjoy this unknown world.

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](#).