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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

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**Saturday, September 4, 2010, 5:00-6:00 p.m.**

**Louis Spohr** (1784-1859). *Overture to Jessonda* (1822). Budapest Symphony Orchestra, Alfred Walter. Marco Polo 223122. Tr 6. 7:35

**Henri Vieuxtemps** (1820-1881). *Fantasia appassionata*, Op. 35 (1846-52). Misha Keylin, violin, Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra, Andrew Mogrelia. Naxos 570974. Tr 1. 17:58

**Vieuxtemps**. *Ballade et Polonaise*, Op. 38 (1860). Misha Keylin, violin, Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra, Andrew Mogrelia. Naxos 570974. Tr 2. 15:16

Interview with violinist [Misha Keylin](#)

Henri Vieuxtemps stands in the center of that line of Classical and Romantic violinist composers. In fact, a chronological list of the 40 biggest violinist composers, from the beginning (Arcangelo Corelli, b.1653) to well into the 20th century (Amadeo Roldán, b.1900) also places Vieuxtemps right in the middle, at number 20. For a chart—yes, we made a chart!—look [here](#).

The list is an instructive picture of the legacy of Vieuxtemps, since he serves as a nice fulcrum between two eternally opposed forces in classical music. He balances entertaining the audience with satisfying the academy, surface virtuosity with musical depth.

It's not easily done. Nicolò Paganini wowed the much younger Vieuxtemps—and everyone else—with almost magical pyrotechnics, but most agree that beneath the sizzle of his music there's not much steak. Joseph Joachim, on the other hand, wrote solid works not known for brilliance. Vieuxtemps seems perfectly balanced between the two.

What explains it? A clue may come from two Ludwigs, Spohr and Beethoven. At 13, Vieuxtemps met Spohr (then, as now, usually known by the French form of his name, Louis). Not only a virtuoso violinist, Spohr was a gifted composer who wrote in every genre. He saw depth as well as talent in the young prodigy and aided his career. Vieuxtemps was in Vienna with Spohr and other colleagues of Beethoven, who had died there seven years earlier. Someone showed the young man the titanic Beethoven concerto, and after only two weeks of practice the now-14-year-old Vieuxtemps fired a cannon shot over Vienna by performing it. His future was assured, and so too, incidentally, was the future of the Beethoven concerto. It had been almost forgotten since its ragged 1806 premiere, but Vieuxtemps put it back into the consciousness of the musical world. Its place would be cemented into the repertoire ten years later by the even younger (12-year-old!) Joachim.

The love of Vieuxtemps for Beethoven's music continued, and he often played and taught the old master's chamber music. Perhaps Beethoven's influence explains the integration of orchestra and soloist that is a hallmark of the Vieuxtemps style.

We're fortunate that Misha Keylin has made a special project of recording so much of this literature. Violinists may know the Fifth concerto; Keylin has recorded all seven. In addition to his gorgeous playing, we get to hear two quite different instruments on this program. Keylin performs the *Fantasia appassionata* on his own 1831 Gagliano, rich and burnished. But for the *Ballade et Polonaise* he turns to the 1715 "Baron Knoop" Stradivarius, loaned especially for this recording. The instrument is a wonder, all silver fire. Though the violins inhabit distinct sound-worlds, Keylin's poetic soul glows throughout.

In the studio he'll share with us why he's attracted to Vieuxtemps, who sums up so much of what defines the violinist composer. In the process, we may find ourselves likewise drawn to Vieuxtemps, this man in the middle of all that brilliance.

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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](#).