

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, December 4th, 2010, 5:00-6:00 p.m.

Paul Juon (1872-1940). *Episodes concertants*, Op. 45 (1912), Allegro moderato. European Fine Arts Trio, Krakow Philharmonic, Tomasz Bugaj. Musiques Suisses 6202. Tr 1, 15:45

Paul Juon. Violin Concerto No. 2 in A major, Op. 49 (1913). Sibylle Tschopp, violin, Winterthur Stadtorchester, Nicholas Carthy. Musica Helvetica 114. Tr 1-3, 31:31

Paul Juon was born in Russia and died in Switzerland, but is a German composer. His music is influenced by Tchaikovsky, Dvorak, and Sibelius, so of course he was called “the Russian Brahms”! Well, Taneyev, Glazunov, and Medtner have all been called that, but it was a schoolmate, Sergei Rachmaninoff, who pinned the nickname on Paul Juon.

So who is he?

Originally, Pavel Yuon. His family was in Switzerland for generations, but his grandfather Simon, a candy maker, moved to Finland, finding a market there for his business. Simon’s son Theodor found work in Moscow as a civil servant, and that’s where Pavel was born. He studied violin and composition, first at a German school in that city, then at the Moscow Conservatory. He studied with Arensky and Taneyev, as did the one-year-younger Rachmaninoff, and then moved to Berlin for work at the Hochschule für Musik. He taught in Russia, but after one year was hired back to the Hochschule by its Director, the famed violinist Joseph Joachim (for whom Brahms wrote his concerto). Juon remained there for the rest of his career.

Along with composing, he worked with words, too. He wrote a book on harmony, and translated into German those of Arensky and Tchaikovsky. He also translated the first biography of Tchaikovsky, and edited the music of Sibelius for his German publisher. His many students over the years included Stefan Wolpe and the great Bulgarian composer Pancho Vladigeroff. Juon retired in 1934 to his ancestral home of Switzerland, where he died six years later, and indeed, it is Swiss record companies that are bringing his music to a new audience.

He loved writing chamber music, especially pieces that involved his own instrument, the violin. Along with smaller works for violin and piano he wrote more substantial string trios, quartets, sonatas, and more. There aren’t an overwhelming number of orchestral works, but three violin concertos and a concerto for piano trio with orchestra, the sizeable *Episodes concertants*, provide a good look into his handling of large forms.

Overall, he’s a Romantic, and if his music doesn’t have the sweep of a Tchaikovsky (whose does?), we detect a craftman’s care and an honesty coming from him, with no ingratiating. His tunefulness does sound Russian, though, and the harmonic ear does seem German, doesn’t it? Maybe Rachmaninoff wasn’t too far off.

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](#).