

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, January 8th, 2011, 5:00-6:00 p.m. (Second Saturday this month!)

Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971). [Suite No. 2 for Small Orchestra](#) (1915-21). Academy of St. Martin in the Fields, Neville Marriner. EMI 74305. CD2 Tr 16-19. 6:05

David Finko (b.1936). [Concerto for Viola and Orchestra](#) (1971). Michael Strauss, viola, Orchestra 2001, James Freeman. New World/CRI 723. Tr 5. 14:58

Louis Gruenberg (1884-1964). [Symphony No. 2, Op. 43](#) (1941, rev. 1959/63). Czech National Symphony Orchestra, Paul Freeman. Albany 467. Tr 1-3. 29:14

Only in America...in the midst of WW II, Columbia Pictures was deciding who would compose the score to a film about an Allied battle in Norway. Two Russian-born composers were in the running. Igor Stravinsky, the most famous composer alive, had the inside track. Yet, the other composer got the job. Who did Stravinsky lose out to?

As we enter the New Year, thinking about the possibilities that await us, it's a good time to consider how our nation has been enriched by the work of Russian-born composers who enjoyed the creative freedom in the U.S. that was not possible in their homeland. Igor Stravinsky and two less-familiar artists—Louis Gruenberg and David Finko—all contributed to the American musical landscape. They arrived in the U.S. at different times; Louis Gruenberg's family brought him to America as an infant, David Finko came in mid-career, and Stravinsky arrived with his most famous works already written.



Stravinsky lived in many different places, but the longest time he lived in any one place was in West Hollywood, California. He was world famous in 1939 when he left France for the States, ending up in the burgeoning artistic scene around Los Angeles. His most famous works—the notorious *Firebird* and *Rite of Spring*, the coolly neo-classic *Pulcinella* and *Symphony of Psalms*—were well behind him, but his influence over the 20th century remained gargantuan. He still had a significant output ahead, including 1951's opera *The Rake's Progress*. The second suite was orchestrated from dances he wrote for piano four-hands just after the *Rite's* premiere, and is filled with the vigor of the famous ballet, though on a smaller scale.



David Finko was a submarine-design engineer in the Soviet Union before becoming a full-time composer. He was a member of the Union of Soviet Composers and an editor in the state music-publishing house, as well as a pianist and violinist, and was enjoying a growing career. But KGB persecution—including surveillance and arrest—of supposed anti-state intellectuals and artists weighed heavily. Some tried escape, and some suicide. Finko wrote his 1971 Viola Concerto under this constant pressure of awaiting the knock on the door.

Thus is it filled with furtiveness and anxiety as the viola darts in and out of the tissue of music. Above all, though, the concerto is filled with that essence Finko imparts to all his works (six operas, about a dozen concertos, three tone poems, two symphonies, and piano and chamber works): a large soul yearning for release. Finko came to America in 1979 and became a citizen in 1986, living in Philadelphia and now upstate

New York.

Louis Gruenberg inherited at least some of his musical talent from his violinist father. He studied piano at the National Conservatory in New York during the time Dvořák headed it, and composition with Busoni in Vienna. After his huge Metropolitan Opera success with *The Emperor Jones*, he moved to Beverly Hills and wrote film music, a [violin concerto for Heifetz](#), three other operas, an oratorio, jazz-inflected works, and this second out of five symphonies. It's a powerful introduction to this gifted composer.



Oh, the composer who beat out Stravinsky for the Hollywood gig? Gruenberg, living about twelve blocks from Stravinsky, got the job of scoring *Commandos Strike at Dawn*, and his music grabbed an Oscar nomination. But Stravinsky took his rejected music for the film set in Norway, and, like all efficient craftsmen, immediately reworked it into another piece. Two years later, right around the time he became a U.S. citizen, Stravinsky conducted the premiere of *Four Norwegian Moods* with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Only in America.

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](#).