

Next on

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 4th, 2011**, 5:00-6:00 p.m.

[Friedrich Gernsheim](#) (1839-1916). Cello Concerto in E minor, Op. 78 (1906). Alban Gerhardt, cello, Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra, Hannu Lintu. Hyperion 67583. Tr 5. 13:50

[Engelbert Humperdinck](#) (1854-1921). *Königskinder, Concert Overture* (1897/1907). Bamberg Symphony, Karl Rickenbacher. Virgin 61128. Tr 4. 7:53

Engelbert Humperdinck. *Königskinder, Introduction to Act 3*. Bamberg Symphony, Karl Rickenbacher. Virgin 61128. Tr 5. 3:14

Engelbert Humperdinck. *Tone Pictures from Sleeping Beauty* (1902). Bamberg Symphony, Karl Rickenbacher. Virgin 61128. Tr 7-11. 19:35



We're going to pick up the thread from last month's *Discoveries* and follow it a bit further. Felix Mendelssohn convinced two friends of his, Ignaz Moscheles and Ferdinand David, to work with him in Leipzig. Moscheles and David both taught Friedrich Gernsheim. We'll hear his music, and that of one of *his* students, who has one of the more recognized names of any composer.

Gernsheim was a well traveled and prolific composer who early on had thoughts of being a pianist or violinist; he concertized as both before he was even a teenager. After his studies in Leipzig he became active in conducting, taking over the directorship of the Saarbrücken orchestra from Hermann Levi, Richard Wagner's favorite conductor.

As an aside, the long friendship of Levi and Wagner is one of the more puzzling ones in music history. Wagner's scurrilous article on the supposed taint of "Jewishness" in music singled out the recently deceased Mendelssohn—ironically, since Mendelssohn by all accounts had taken to heart his family's conversion to Christianity. (About the only one who publically excoriated Wagner over his article was Moscheles.) Hermann Levi, the son of a rabbi, a student at Mendelssohn's Leipzig conservatory, and a future professor there, was nevertheless a devoted associate of Wagner's for years, conducting the premiere of *Parsifal* at Bayreuth.

Anti-semitism affected Gernsheim's reputation only in the decades after his death. Not only was he Jewish, but a number of his works have Jewish themes ("Miriam" Symphony, *Elohehu* for cello and orchestra), so his name was eradicated by the Nazis. Fortunately, the world is coming around to the admiring opinion of his music held by his contemporaries Brahms, Bruch, Mahler, and many others.



The manager of British pop singer Arnold Dorsey cast about for a stage name that would attract attention, and grabbed that of Gernsheim's harmony and counterpoint student, Engelbert Humperdinck. (The strategy seems to have worked.) Composer Humperdinck is known for *Hänsel und Gretel*, of course, not only an immediate smash and perennial success, but also in the generations after Weber's *Der Freischütz*, the most German of operas. He considered *Königskinder*, however, his best work. Another great friend and colleague of Wagner's, he came into his own as an artist when he shook off the older composer's influence. Not manufactured neo-Norse myth, the operas of Humperdinck seem to spring out of the German soil itself.

More than just a tale-spinner, he invented a singing technique later embraced by the avant garde of the next generation. *Sprechgesang*, or speech elevated to a point just short of singing, is a hallmark of the high expressionism of Schoenberg and Webern. Humperdinck first used it in *Königskinder*, though, creating a kind of German *verismo* mirroring the folk quality of his music drama.

True Wagnerites didn't like his music at first, but the utterly German Richard Strauss recognized his genius, knowing that Engelbert Humperdinck's music is integral to the understanding of his nation's art.

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](#).