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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, **December 3rd, 2011**, 5:00-6:00 p.m.

**Jean Sibelius** (1865–1957). *Nightride and Sunrise*, Op. 55 (1907). London Symphony Orchestra, Adrian Boult. Vanguard 1202, Tr 2. 14:02

**Sibelius**. *Romance in C*, Op. 42 (1904). Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra, Neeme Järvi. BIS 252, Tr 4. 5:16

**Sibelius**. *Valse romantique*, Op. 62b (1911). New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, Pietari Inkinen. Naxos 570763, Tr 12. 4:13

**Sibelius**. *Humoresques*, Opp. 87, 89 (1917/23). Mela Tenenbaum, violin, Czech Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra, Richard Kapp. Essay 1075, Tr 1-6. 21:42



Gustav Mahler famously remarked that the symphony “must be like the world—it must embrace everything.” This explains those disjunct themes delightfully butting against each other in his symphonies. What is often forgotten is that he said this to disagree with Jean Sibelius, who told Mahler that every part of a symphony must have a logical, ruthless interconnection with every other part. Not the world, replies Sibelius: a symphony is like the earth.

The orchestra was the reason Sibelius composed. He wrote songs, and early on dabbled in the string quartet. But mostly, he had no time for chamber music, which he considered too aristocratic—too Viennese—for his taste. No, only symphonic forces could express what he felt from the earth, the landscape, and the people of Finland.

Each country is unique, but Finland is remarkably set apart. It had been controlled by Sweden for centuries, so the language of commerce, culture, and education was Swedish. Russia took it over in 1809, and Finland wouldn't gain independence until 1917, two days before Sibelius's 52nd birthday. Finnish is unlike any other language; it's not Romance, Germanic, Russian, or Scandinavian, and only distantly related to Hungarian and Sanskrit, of all things. Those who spoke it—usually rustics far from the cities—were almost foreigners in their own country.

The Swedish-speaking Sibelius was caught up in the Finnish patriotism burgeoning in the late 19th century. He took classes in Finnish, and immersed himself in the growing nationalistic literature. His music is so steeped in the national ethos that his own melodies have been mistaken (over “the smirks of the self-appointed authorities,” he wrote) for traditional tunes, such as the famous ending of *Finlandia*. His numerous tone poems based on the folk epic *Kalevala* would shape Finnish music.

But after popular works of the late 1800s he turned deeper, trying new sounds in the orchestra as he embarked on his run of seven symphonies. He continued to write smaller pieces, mostly to work out his ideas. *Nightride and Sunrise* is, frankly, odd. In the almost interminable churning of the horse ride, Sibelius strives for a gravelly, essential sound. It borders on mesmerizing.

In his *Romance* for strings and the little-played *Valse romantique*, another side of Sibelius emerges. It's the husband and father Sibelius, living in the idyllic house in the country, away from urban distractions, close to nature. He composed the six *Humoresques* during the burst of brilliance of his final symphonies to keep his name in front of the public, as writing symphonies was tough sledding. Normally performed separately, they were originally heard together. There's an element of gravitas hearing them this way, and it's an education listening to an extended solo violin work other than his Violin Concerto, one of the greatest in the repertoire.

In the awakening of Finland, Sibelius invented its music. But it's also true that Finland—its people and landscape, even its very earth—created the music of Sibelius.

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](#).