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## Discoveries from the Fleisher Collection

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Saturday, **February 4th, 2012**, 5:00-6:00 p.m.

[Igor Stravinsky](#) (1882-1971). [Symphony No. 1](#) (1907). Scottish National Orchestra, Sir Alexander Gibson. Chandos 8345, CD1, Tr 1-4. 33:14

**Igor Stravinsky**. [Capriccio](#) (1929). Geoffrey Tozer, piano, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, Neeme Jarvi. Chandos 9238, Tr 8-10. 16:59



Rimsky-Korsakov was not a man given to high praise. So when he wrote the words "Not bad" in his diary about the music of one of his students, that was unusually complimentary. The student was Igor Stravinsky.

Even though he already was a talented musician, Stravinsky followed his family's wishes and studied the law. But as chance would have it, one of his classmates at St. Petersburg University was the youngest son of Rimsky-Korsakov. A meeting was arranged with the famous composer, and private lessons began. The professor had once told another law student (and prospective composer) not to give up the law, so he obviously detected some promise in young Igor. He advised him not to enter the Conservatory, fearing that dry scholarship might dull his instincts.

Stravinsky dedicated his first symphony to Rimsky-Korsakov, and well he might. His teacher arranged to have the middle movements of it performed, and then to have the entire symphony published. The first complete performance took place in 1908, the year Rimsky-Korsakov died.

The influence of Tchaikovsky and Mussorgsky in it is not surprising, nor is the solid orchestration. Stravinsky was hardly making a splash—barely registering in the various new-music concerts of the time—but he was growing. He continued to write, and slowly became known to some who, like the impresario Diaghilev, would later figure so prominently in his career. In two years they would collaborate in the creation of the groundbreaking ballet *The Firebird*. This may have completed his final graduation from his late teacher. Rimsky-Korsakov detested ballet.

Not 20 years—and more ballets—after that, Stravinsky was a world-famous composer. Even so, lean times forced him to compose concert music in which he could perform and earn extra money. *Capriccio* is a piano concerto in which he performed often. Serge Koussevitzky, the new director of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, heard it and commissioned him for his orchestra's 50th Anniversary celebrations in 1930. For that, Stravinsky produced another major work, the *Symphony of Psalms*.

Stravinsky may be the most important composer of the 20th Century, but his teacher kept him out of music school. Rimsky-Korsakov knew something about that. He had been in the Navy, never took a formal music class, and became himself a great composer. His music and his handling of the orchestra influenced generations around the world. Perhaps he saw something of himself in Stravinsky. Not bad.

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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](#).