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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, August 3rd, 2013, 5:00-6:00 p.m.**

**Alberto Ginastera** (1916-1983). *Concierto Argentino* (1935). Barbara Nissman, piano, University of Michigan Symphony Orchestra, Kenneth Kiesler. Pierian 0048, Tr 1-3. 18:57

**Alban Berg** (1885-1935). *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra* (1935). Leonid Kogan, violin, Philadelphia Orchestra, Eugene Ormandy. PhilOrch 7 Disk 3, Tr 4-5. 25:08

**Sergei Prokofiev** (1891-1953). *Violin Concerto No. 2, III: Allegro* (1935). Nathan Milstein, violin, New Philharmonia Orchestra, Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos. Angel 76862, Tr 6. 6:21



The year 1935 was a critical one for three composers at different stages of their careers. Sergei Prokofiev was just about to move back to the Soviet Union. Alban Berg (*pictured*) stopped work on his opera *Lulu* when the daughter of a friend died; he composed his astounding Violin Concerto in her memory, but would not live out the year.

Alberto Ginastera, however, was just at the beginning of a great life in music, and his youthful *Concierto Argentino* for piano brims with energy. He was still a conservatory student when he wrote this, and he later wished to revise it, but it caught the attention of conductor/composer/writer Nicolas Slonimsky. He was on his 1941 journey through Latin America, funded by Edwin A. Fleisher, founder of the Fleisher Collection. This was one of hundreds of works gathered by Slonimsky for the Collection.

Ginastera never did get around to reconsidering the *Concierto Argentino*, but the pianist Barbara Nissman found it at the Fleisher Collection about two decades after his death. Nissman was already devoted to the composer's music and had become a friend of Ginastera. His estate was happy to encourage this premiere recording of a work foreshadowing the national pride and harmonic variety that would shine throughout his career.

Alban Berg had been commissioned for a violin concerto, but had done nothing on it while writing *Lulu*. Then, Manon Gropius, the 18-year-old daughter of Walter Gropius and Alma Mahler (Gustav Mahler's ex-wife), died of polio. Berg stopped working on the opera, composed the concerto, and dedicated it "To the memory of an angel."

It is an intricate, warm, feathery, and sad work, calling for the utmost control and expression from the soloist. The last movement is built on the notes of the chorale "Es ist genug" (It is enough), a centuries-old tune so chromatic that it employs all twelve notes. Berg deftly layers in the Johann Sebastian Bach harmonization, bringing the work to a profoundly moving close. It was the last piece of music he'd complete. He never finished *Lulu*, dying of blood poisoning on Christmas Eve 1935. He was 50.

As we saw on a previous *Discoveries*, Sergei Prokofiev was hemming and hawing over whether to move back to the Soviet Union. He had lived abroad for many years, but while he was enjoying the fame of a busy career, the very busyness from constant travel was catching up to him. He was homesick for the land of his birth, and although the regime had cracked down on artists, there seemed to be a fresh wind blowing. Different people—important people—wanted him back, and were willing to make it worth his while.

His second violin concerto premiered in December 1935, in Madrid, the finale tipping its hat with castanets, thanking Spain for the honor. The next year he was residing, for good, in the Soviet Union—which again began suppressing artists. 1935 was indeed a critical year.

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Hosted by [Kile Smith](#), former 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](#).