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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, January 4th, 2014, 5:00-6:00 p.m.

1914: Machines and Dreams

John Alden Carpenter (1876–1951). [*Adventures in a Perambulator*](#), excerpts. Eastman-Rochester Symphony Orchestra, Howard Hanson. Mercury Living Presence 434319, Tr 1. 10:47

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958). [*A London Symphony*](#). London Philharmonic Orchestra, Sir Adrian Boult. EMI 35672. 43:14



In 1914, if you were in the market for the stuff that makes big things move—rope, sails, block and tackle gear, every kind of ship, railroad, or mill supply—you would've known George B. Carpenter & Co. of Chicago. Its predecessors went back to 1840. After burning down in the 1871 Great Fire it was rebuilt in a year. George Carpenter, who had been helping run the company, bought it outright in 1882.

His son John had music on his mind, not a manufacturing and wholesale business, and the family supported his evident gifts. John went to Harvard, was President of its Glee Club, and composed for Hasty Pudding larks. More seriously, he studied with John Knowles Paine, and then traveled to England and Rome, where he studied with Edward Elgar. He came back to Chicago in 1909 and composed, but also took on the day job he'd hold until his 1936 retirement, Vice President of George B. Carpenter & Co.

Perhaps machinery was in his blood after all, because in 1914 his creative breakthrough was an evocation of the baby carriage. *Adventures in a Perambulator* is a symphonia domestica relating a child's point of view all the way from Envoiture! (All aboard!) to Dreams, the two sections we'll hear (in between are a policeman, a hurdy-gurdy, a lake, and dogs). Carpenter's skill was not lost on audiences and critics, who were charmed by his humor and light touch with a large orchestra. His precise program notes narrate the child's inner voice, ending with: "It is pleasant to lie quite still and close my eyes, and listen to the wheels of my perambulator. How very large the world is. How many things there are!"

Across the ocean in 1914, England saw the premiere of a symphony by a composer who was already well regarded, Ralph Vaughan Williams. His 1909 *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis* and 1910 *A Sea Symphony* moved him beyond his successes editing folk music, Henry Purcell, and *The English Hymnal*. *A London Symphony* remains, out of his nine symphonies, the most popular.

After its premiere, he sent the score to Germany, to the conductor Fritz Busch, but it was lost in the turmoil of the World War. The composer then rewrote it from the orchestral parts, changing it greatly, for a 1920 performance under Albert Coates, who provided program notes to which the composer grudgingly agreed. Vaughan Williams insisted he did not have a story in mind when composing it, although he said one might perhaps call it *Symphony by a Londoner*.

That he composed a "symphony" at all is due to his good friend, the composer George Butterworth, who insisted he ought to. So he took sketches for a symphonic poem about London, worked them into four movements, and dedicated the music to Butterworth, who would die in that same World War, in 1916.

After the 1920 revision, Vaughan Williams reworked it again in the 1930s, and the version heard most often today is two-thirds the length of the original. The ending, Vaughan Williams suggested just before he died, was inspired by "Night and the Open Sea," the last chapter of the 1909 novel of H. G. Wells, *Tono-Bungay*, where the machinery of empires and schemes, small and large, sink into dreams.

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](#). (215) 686-5313, fleisher@freelibrary.org.