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Saturday, September 6th, 2008, 5:00-6:00 p.m.

- [Miklós Rózsa](#) (1907-1995). Concert Overture, Op. 26 (1957). New Zealand Sym Orchestra, James Sedares. Koch 3-7191-2H1. 8:45
- [Robert Russell Bennett](#) (1894-1981). Abraham Lincoln: A Likeness in Symphony Form (1929). 1. His Simplicity and His Sadness (Moderato con moto), 2. His Affection and His Faith (Andantino), 3. His Humor and His Weakness (Allegro animato), 4. His Greatness and His Sacrifice (Moderato maestoso). Moscow Sym Orchestra, William T. Stromberg. Naxos 8.559004. 29:32

Two composers have helped to define what is American about American music, and while Robert Russell Bennett was born in Kansas City, Miklós Rózsa came to the United States from Hungary by way of Germany and Paris. Bennett practically invented the sound of Broadway, and Rózsa became a well-known Hollywood film composer, but they both wrote wonderful concert music for orchestra.

While Miklós Rózsa was raised in prosperous surroundings, he was influenced early and lastingly by the peasant Magyar songs he heard near his family's rural estate. He learned the melodies and often played violin with the locals, and although he wasn't interested in collecting tunes as thoroughly as Bartók or Kodály did, the language affected his later film and concert music. Rózsa studied in Leipzig and Paris where his reputation gained the attention of critics, audiences, and publishers. But the upheavals of the 1930s drove him to the U.S., and he ended up in Hollywood, later becoming a staff composer for MGM.

Rózsa won three Academy Awards, his music underscoring more than 100 films, including *The Thief of Baghdad*, *Double Indemnity*, *Spellbound*, *Ben-Hur*, and even the Steve Martin comedy *Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid*. All the while, he continued writing for the concert stage, and today's *Concert Overture* was inspired by the 1956 Hungarian Uprising. The music does not follow a story line, but Rózsa said that its persistent and defiant themes reflect the poorly armed Hungarian civilians standing up to the Soviet tanks.

As much as Rózsa was one of the top film composers in history, so was Robert Russell Bennett at the apex of that uniquely American form, the Broadway musical. He was the orchestrator that made Richard Rodgers sound like Richard Rodgers. He scored more than 300 musicals in all, wrote books teaching his technique, composed many works for band, and arranged the music for NBC's *Victory at Sea* in the early 1950s.

In 1926 he took a break from being the top gun on Broadway to study composition with Nadia Boulanger in Paris. It was then that he wrote this *Abraham Lincoln* symphony, and his mastery of the orchestra is apparent. There is an ease of use—a clarity and lightness—in how he handles the instruments that is always attractive. Although the music is serious, it is never ponderous. The conflicting aspects of Lincoln's personality are what drive this work. The symphony, from this most American of composers, depicts this most American of presidents during the crisis that in many ways defined America.

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 in 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](#).