

SINGING ON THE WATER



CAROL ROSENBERGER

PIANO BARCAROLLES



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- 1 RAVEL: *Une barque sur l'océan* (A ship on the ocean) from *Miroirs* (1904-5) [7:16]
- 2 FAURÉ: *Barcarolle No. 4 in A-Flat, Op. 44* (1886) [3:37]
- 3 RICHARD RODNEY BENNETT: *Barcarolle* (1993) [3:10]
- 4 FAURÉ: *Barcarolle No. 3 in G-Flat, Op. 42* (1885) [8:17]
- 5 DEBUSSY: *L'isle joyeuse* (The Isle of Joy) (1904) [6:07]
- 6 CHOPIN: *Barcarolle, Op. 60* (1845-6) [9:39]
- 7 FAURÉ: *Barcarolle No. 6 in E-Flat, Op. 70* (1896) [3:53]
- 8 RACHMANINOFF: *Barcarolle, Op. 10, No. 3* (1893-4) [4:59]
- 9 FAURÉ: *Barcarolle No. 5 in F-Sharp Minor, Op. 66* (1894) [6:53]
- 10 GRIFFES: *Barcarolle, Op. 6, No. 1* (1912) [7:16]
- 11 FAURÉ: *Barcarolle No. 8 in D-Flat, Op. 96* (1906) [3:58]
- DAVID DIAMOND: *Two Barcarolles* (1993)
 - 12 No. 1 (1:59)
 - 13 No. 2 (2:29)
- 14 SCHUBERT-LISZT: *Auf dem Wasser zu singen* (To be sung on the water) [5:02]

CAROL ROSENBERGER, piano

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 74:35

*Dedicated to the memory of my father,
Maurice Seiberling Rosenberger (1903-1995)
whose fearless and generous spirit
will always be my North Star
C.R.*

In 1979, when digital recording was a new and rare process, I put together a group of “water” pieces for my first digitally recorded album, *Water Music of the Impressionists*. Ever since then, I have been asked when and if another “water music” recording would surface. As I thought about a possible sequel over the years, it began to take shape as a collection of more personal experiences connected with water, rather than the primarily pictorial images which had been the theme of the first “water” recording.

Barcarolles — boat songs — tend to convey the personal emotions of floating on the water, of a romantic gondola ride, of being surrounded by water — blissful or ecstatic or lonely or hypnotic or peaceful — or all of these at the same time. As such, this program is in tune with the more recent “mood” albums such as *Perchance to Dream* and *Reverie*, as well as the first “water music” collection.

The title “Singing on the Water” was suggested by Franz Schubert’s (1797-1828) song *Auf dem Wasser zu singen* (“To be sung on the water”), and sums up my aim for the album — to combine song-without-words and water images, expressing the varieties of feelings that being around water brings out in many of us. Thus Liszt’s transcription of the song became the title track for this recording.

*The sea, ever endless
and beautiful!*

CLAUDE DEBUSSY

*There, all is order
and beauty,
luxuriousness, calm
and sensuous delight.*

CHARLES BAUDELAIRE

*I have bathed in the Poem
Of the Sea...
Devouring the green azures.*

ARTHUR RIMBAUD

*Let us sail in a boat over the sea
to pass the night under the stars.
See, there is just enough breeze
to inflate the canvas of the sails.*

*On the sea, calm and dark, see,
our souls may commune,
and none will understand our voices
but the night, the sky and the waves.*

PAUL BOURGET

*I have embarked on a ship which
dances
and rolls from side to side, and
pitches and rocks.
My feet have forgotten the earth and
its paths,
the supple waves have taught me
other cadences
more beautiful than the weary
rhythm of human songs...*

*I want only the sea, I want only the
wind
to rock me like a child in the bosom of
its waves.*

JEAN DE LA VILLE DE MIRMONT

*Music is the expression of the move-
ment of the waters, the play of curves
described by changing breezes... Of all
the arts, music is closest to nature —
offers her the most subtle attraction...
To musicians only is it given to cap-
ture all the poetry of night and day, of
earth and heaven, to reconstruct their
atmosphere and record the rhythm of
their great heart-beats.*

CLAUDE DEBUSSY

I had enjoyed playing the original Schubert song with singer friends for many years before I came to know Liszt's transcription of the piece for piano solo. Franz Liszt's (1811-1886) wizardry at the piano is the stuff of legends; less well known is his equally formidable musical presence over the decades in which he brought to public attention many composers and works which would otherwise have been neglected. He introduced the audiences of his day to a considerable number of Schubert's songs through piano transcriptions such as this one — a genre which has fallen out of favor and is rarely heard today. For the most part, Liszt's piano solo version of *Auf dem Wasser zu singen* is faithful to the Schubert song, artfully arranged with each verse "sung" by the piano in a different register (first tenor, then alto and finally soprano). Once the song's reflective, philosophical verses are finished, however, it's a different story; Liszt's exuberant "extra" verse develops in bravura Lisztian fashion, concluding with his own characteristic watery shimmer at the very end.

Maurice Ravel's (1875-1937) magnificent *Une barque sur l'océan* (A ship on the ocean) from *Miroirs* (1904-5) creates the most pictorial image of water on this program and sets the watery scene for the album. Ravel is in a class by himself with his innovations in pianistic style and his use of the

Maurice Ravel and the great teacher Nadia Boulanger. (As a further "thread" through this album, Boulanger in turn taught American composer David Diamond.)

Fauré wrote thirteen Barcarolles in all, and the form seems particularly suited to his classically balanced but poignantly expressive, lyrical style. No. 3 is the most Romantic of the five included here, and probably has the most in common with Chopin's approach to the piano. However No. 5, harmonically the richest, has close ties with Chopin's own Barcarolle, also built on F-sharp. Nos. 4 and 6 are the most light-hearted and buoyant of the group. Although No. 8 shares the flowing pace of 4 and 6, and even has an uncharacteristically brilliant close (most of Fauré's Barcarolles end quietly), its emotional mood is still more of a mixture of light and dark. I have woven the five Fauré Barcarolles through the program so that each could be set off from the others and have its own space.

It is easy to give oneself over to a sense of well-being at the gentle and songful invitation of Fauré. A kind of quiet rapture pervades these gliding, lilting pieces; their undulating arpeggios capture a quiet afternoon on shimmering water, when the soul is at peace...

My own love of Fauré began when I was about 13 and my piano teacher, Edward Bredshall, gave me a dog-eared, fragile-looking copy of the 4th Nocturne which he had

bought years before at one of the second-hand bookstalls along the Seine in Paris. I can remember playing that Nocturne on the humid Michigan summer nights which followed, and dreaming of far-away places (probably France, as I was just beginning to study French in school). Years later, when I was actually in Paris, studying with Nadia Boulanger, she, too, gave me an inscribed, well-used copy of a Fauré Nocturne — this time, it was the haunting, introspective 13th, the last Nocturne Fauré wrote.

Fauré and the French Impressionist composers who followed him owe much to the "poet of the piano" Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849) in their piano writing. In his edition of Chopin's piano works, Debussy refers to Chopin's music as "amongst the most beautiful ever written...[which] often takes flight towards the forest of *As You Like It*, where the fairies alone hold sway over our minds..."

The eloquent, harmonically luxuriant Barcarolle, Op. 60 transforms the idea of a Venetian gondolier's song, a love duet, into an astonishingly rich and inventive work of art. But this magical creation also opens windows into the future, especially for later composers whose art centered on the piano. For example, writing about what has come to be called the "harmonic daydream" in

Chopin's music (listen to the passage starting at 6:09 from the beginning of the piece) Nicholas Temperley says that "such passages ...exercised important influence on the Impressionists, through such works as Fauré's nocturnes and barcarolles. With them Chopin had shown a way to appeal directly to sensation, suspending for a while the stimulation of the listener's intellect."

Chopin must also have provided considerable inspiration for composer/pianist (and conductor) Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943), one of the finest and most imaginative pianists of his own, or probably any, era. As "the last great representative of Russian late Romanticism" (Geoffrey Norris) Rachmaninoff as a composer is still most familiar to us through his piano writing. Although this Barcarolle comes from an early set of *Morceaux de Salon* (Salon Pieces), Op. 10 (1893-4), its composer's "melancholy, nostalgic idiom" is instantly recognizable. Rachmaninoff's Russian boat song is one of loneliness and yearning, resounding through the cool, rippling, accumulated vibrations of the accompanying figuration.

The picturesque music of American composer Charles Tomlinson Griffes (1884-1920) also centers mostly on the piano, although his colorful orchestral scores, such as *The Pleasure-Dome of Kubla-Khan*, and orchestra-

*Asia, I should like to sail away with
the schooner
that rocks this evening in the port,
mysterious and solitary,
and that at last unfurls its violet sails
like an immense night bird in the
golden sky.*

*I should like to sail away to the
islands of flowers,
listening to the perverse sea singing
to an old, bewitching rhythm.*

TRISTAN KLINGSOR, "SHÉHÉRAZADE"
(set by Ravel)

*The boat is chafing at our long delay
And we must leave too soon
The spicy sea-pinks and the inborne
spray,
The tawny sands, the moon.*

*Keep us, O Thetis, in our western
flight!
Watch from thy pearly throne
Our vessel, plunging deeper into night
To reach a land unknown.*

JOHN DAVIDSON

"Lighter than a cork I danced on the waves."

ARTHUR RIMBAUD

*In the shimmering mirror-like waters
Glides, swanlike, the rocking boat;
Ah, on the joyful, soft-shimmering waves
The soul too, glides away like the boat;
Descending from heaven upon the waters
An evening glow dances around the boat.*

*Over the tree-tops of the forest in the west
Beckons kindly the rosy glow.
Under the boughs of the forest in the east
Reeds rustle in the rosy glow,
Joy of heaven and peace of the forest,
Breathes the soul in the reddening glow.*

*Ah, and on dewy wings vanishes
From me the time on gently rocking waters.
Tomorrow again on shimmering wings,
Time will vanish, as it did yesterday
and today;
Till I, on higher radiant wings,
Myself shall vanish from changing time.*

L. GRAF ZU STOLLBERG (set by
Schubert in *Auf dem Wasser zu singen*)

**for original German text, see page ten*

tions of piano music, such as *The White Peacock*, are highly prized. In his tragically short-lived creative career, the New England native, who studied in Germany, moved from a style influenced by German Romanticism to one increasingly inspired by the French Impressionists. Griffes has been a constant in my own recorded collections of atmospheric piano music: his shimmering *Fountain of the Acqua Paola* forms the centerpiece of the "fountains" group on *Water Music of the Impressionists*; his dreamy *Notturmo* is one of the *Night Moods*; while *The Lake at Evening* contributes its wistful calm to the *Reverie* program.

The Barcarolle from the *Fantasy Pieces*, Op. 6 is a thoughtful, dreamy piece; the gently rocking barcarolle rhythm still allows Griffes' characteristically pervasive sense of nostalgia to come through. Our water-voyager gets excited toward the end, however, and this boat song becomes full-throated and triumphant as it reaches its climax, ending with brilliant swirls which Griffes usually avoided in his dreamy music.

Not often does a classical musician have music written especially for a new recording, and I will always have fond memories of the way the new works for this album came about. Around the time that *Reverie* was released in 1993, I was in New York City, along with Delos' founder and President Amelia Haygood and Public Relations V.P. Rudi

Simpson. One day the three of us were having an early lunch at the Juilliard cafeteria with American composer David Diamond (b. 1915). David had just finished teaching his weekly composition classes at Juilliard and was about to catch a plane back home to Rochester. We were talking about his new symphonic album, which was just about to be released; and Amelia, in particular, was telling him how much she liked his E.E. Cummings-inspired orchestral piece *The Enormous Room*.

At one point, David asked me what I was planning as my next solo album, saying he hoped it would be more Schubert. (He was referring to my recording of the B-Flat Sonata). I said that Schubert would be represented in a Barcarolles collection that was beginning to take shape in my mind. We all talked about some of the wonderful French barcarolle repertoire, and I asked David if he had ever written a barcarolle. "No," he replied, "but I've been asked that question several times, and have been thinking about a pair of contrasting barcarolles." He went on to describe the kind of inner-voice interest, which he found in the Schubert B-Flat Sonata, that he would imagine for such pieces ("You like inner voices, don't you?" David interrupted himself to ask me); and offered to write the pair of barcarolles for my album if I liked the idea. We all expressed great enthusiasm, and he said he would

begin work on them as soon as he got home.

Later that same week Amelia, writer Whitfield Cook and I were having dinner with another composer and long-time friend, the multi-talented Richard Rodney Bennett (b. 1936). Richard and I had exchanged information about our musical activities on a fairly regular basis ever since our collaboration on his children's album *My Keyboard Friends*, so inevitably the topic of my plans for "the next one" came up. When I mentioned that David Diamond was going to write a pair of barcarolles for the album, Richard looked up with a twinkle in his eye, and an expression of mock-reproach on his face. "Well, I'll write you a barcarolle, too!" he said, as if I were somewhat obtuse not to have asked his participation as well. When I flew home to California at the end of that week, the "Barcarolles" program had just about assumed its present shape.

When David's manuscript arrived at the Delos office, we found that the first of his two contrasting Barcarolles was dedicated to me, and the second to Amelia. The first of the set turned out to be gentle and reflective, with all kinds of interesting inner-voice activity, just as its composer had described. The second, also as predicted, was strong and passionate, and David noted that, just for Amelia, he had ended it with a quote from *The Enormous*

**Mitten im Schimmer der spiegelnden
Wellen*

*Gleitet, wie Schwäne, der wankenden Kahn;
Ach, auf der Freude sanftschimmernden
Wellen*

*Gleitet die Seele dahin wie der Kahn;
Dem von dem Himmel herab auf die Wellen
Tanzet das Abendrot rund um den Kahn.*

*Über den Wipfeln des westlichen Haines
Winket uns freundlich der rötliche Schein;
Unter den Zweigen des östlichen Haines
Säuselt der Kalmus im rötlichen Schein;
Freude des Himmels und Ruhe des Haines
Atmet die Seel im errötenden Schein.*

*Ach, es entschwindet mit tauigem Flügel
Mir auf den wiegenden Wellen die Zeit.
Morgen entschwinde mit schimmerndem
Flügel
Wieder wie gestern und heute die Zeit,
Bis ich auf höherem strahlenden Flügel
Selber entschwinde der wechselnden Zeit.*

L. GRAF ZU STOLLBERG (set by
Schubert in *Auf dem Wasser zu singen*)

Room. We all tried not to speculate too much about the rougher waters depicted in Amelia's Barcarolle, especially in light of the realities of sustaining an independent classical music enterprise in the U.S. in the 1990s...

When Richard's manuscript arrived, we found that it, too, bore a dedication to both of his dinner companions from California. He had enclosed a note describing the piece as "feverishly romantic." Even though its song is sung in a brief three minutes, the style is fluid and free. At about that time a charming movie called *Enchanted April*, for which Richard had written the score, was catching on in the U.S., and I couldn't help thinking of the Barcarolle as Richard's "Enchanted April" mood. "Smoky and sensuous," remarked a friend after one of my early run-throughs of the piece.

All through this collection, the perspective is ever-changing. Sometimes the song prevails; sometimes one is surrounded by the motion or shimmer of the water; sometimes an inner, reflective mood softens the colors of everything in sight; sometimes a sense of sheer bliss takes over... The musical impressions welcome a wide variety of personal interpretations; it is my hope that the vistas they create can inspire the imagination to re-create a favorite scene of refreshment and renewal.

Carol Rosenberger

Other Delos Recordings featuring Carol Rosenberger

WATER MUSIC OF THE IMPRESSIONISTS • Liszt • Debussy • Ravel • Griffes • Critic's Choice, Gramophone • All Time Great Recording, Billboard • Best Classical Compact Disc, Stereo Review • "defines the state of the art in piano recordings." CD Review • "cascading musical flow that effectively brings the music flooding into your listening area." American Record Guide • DE 3006 (DDD)

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