

# THE BOESENDORF SOUND



*Carol Rosenberger*

BOESENDORFER IMPERIAL CONCERT GRAND PIANO



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CAROL ROSENBERGER  
BOESENDORFER IMPERIAL CONCERT GRAND PIANO

*"SOMETIMES PIANISTS TRY TO SOUND LIKE SINGERS:  
ME PERSONALLY, I TRY TO SOUND LIKE A BOESENDORFER."*

— PLACIDO DOMINGO

CHOSEN ESPECIALLY FOR THIS COLLECTION ARE BEAUTIFULLY RECORDED EXAMPLES OF THE **BOESENDORFER MODEL 290 IMPERIAL GRAND PIANO'S** UNIQUELY PURE AND RESONANT SOUND — SELECTED FROM THE OUTSTANDING **DELOS RECORDINGS** THAT PIANIST **CAROL ROSENBERGER** ("RAVISHING, ELEGANT PIANISM" — *THE NEW YORK TIMES*) HAS MADE ON HER PERSONAL INSTRUMENT SINCE 1979. — *LINDSAY KOOB, ANNOTATOR*

**DEBUSSY:** LA CATHÉDRALE ENGLOUTIE; NOCTURNE; REFLETS DANS L'EAU  
**RAVEL:** JEUX D'EAU; UNE BARQUE SUR L'OCEAN • **BENNETT:** BARCAROLLE  
**LISZT:** HARMONIES DU SOIR • **GRANADOS:** THE MAIDEN AND THE NIGHTENGALE  
**GRIFFES:** THE FOUNTAIN OF THE ACQUA PAOLA • **BARCAROLLE**  
**CHOPIN:** NOCTURNE OP. 55, No. 2

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 71:15



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1. **RICHARD RODNEY BENNETT:** BARCAROLLE (3:10)
2. **MAURICE RAVEL:** JEUX D'EAU (FOUNTAINS) (5:32)
3. **FRANZ LISZT:** HARMONIES DU SOIR (EVENING HARMONIES) (12:06)
4. **MAURICE RAVEL:** UNE BARQUE SUR L'OcéAN  
(A SHIP ON THE OCEAN) (7:14)
5. **ENRIQUE GRANADOS:** QUEJAS Ó LA MAJA Y EL RUISEÑOR  
(LAMENTS, OR THE MAIDEN AND THE NIGHTINGALE) (6:39)
6. **CLAUDE DEBUSSY:** LA CATHÉDRALE ENGLOUTIE  
(THE SUNKEN CATHEDRAL) (6:48)
7. **CHARLES TOMLINSON GRIFFES:** THE FOUNTAIN OF THE  
ACQUA PAOLA (3:46)
8. **CLAUDE DEBUSSY:** NOCTURNE IN D-FLAT (6:22)
9. **CLAUDE DEBUSSY:** REFLETS DANS L'EAU  
(REFLECTIONS IN THE WATER) (5:31)
10. **FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN:** NOCTURNE OP. 55, No. 2 IN E-FLAT (5:57)
11. **CHARLES TOMLINSON GRIFFES:** BARCAROLLE OP. 6, No. 1 (7:16)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 71:15

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**Executive Producer:** Carol Rosenberger

**Engineering:** Stan Ricker (tracks 2, 6, 7, 9); John Eargle (tracks 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11)

**Mastering:** Matthew Snyder

**Booklet design:** Marc Ikeda

**Cover photo:** A glimpse of the inside of Carol Rosenberger's Boesendorfer Imperial

**Piano Technicians:** Heriberto Lurgenstein (tracks 2, 6, 7, 9); Richard Davenport (tracks 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11)



*Карол Розенбергер и Константин Орбелян*

*Carol Rosenberger with conductor Constantine Orbelian  
after a concert in St. Petersburg*

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## NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

### EDITOR'S FOREWORD:

Soon after I began writing and editing for Delos, I learned (to my surprise and delight) that Delos Director and stellar pianist Carol Rosenberger and I had lived and studied in Vienna at the same time – though we never met there. At the time, she was an advanced student at the Vienna Academy – and I was a wide-eyed young teenager, just beginning to cut my musical teeth. Thus we both speak German, and have similar cultural tastes and outlooks that were shaped by that wondrous city's incomparable musical life.

One of our most significant shared passions, however, stems from the fact that Vienna is home to Boesendorfer pianos: instruments that, even now, remain completely handmade, and are acknowledged by many as being the finest pianos that money can buy ... that is, if you can even find one. The meticulous, old-world craftsmanship that goes into them means that the company makes only a few hundred instruments per year, making them much rarer than other top instruments, like Steinways. Boesendorfer's biggest concert grand models remain the instruments-of-choice for some of the world's great pianists; they offer a unique depth of resonance underlying an otherwise pure and singing tone (many describe it as bell-like) that makes them especially suitable for the music of classical-era composers like Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert – also Impressionist composers like Debussy and Ravel.

Not long after my family arrived in Vienna, I begged my parents for piano lessons. As luck would have it, my mother – an inveterate antique-hunter – found a lovely and well-preserved instrument: an ornately decorated, seven-foot Boesendorfer grand wrapped up like a massive mummy in the sub-basement of a Viennese “Altwarengeschäft” (second-hand store), where it had apparently been hidden away to save it from World War II's bombing raids. Mom played piano well enough to know that it was a decent instrument, and in salvageable condition. The proprietor obviously didn't know what she had, and sold it to Mom for a tiny fraction of its value. After we got it home, we hired a Boesendorfer factory technician to make a few necessary repairs. He told us it was a real treasure: a custom-made antique model (c. 1890's) – in excellent condition for its age – that had probably been custom-made for a wealthy household. Within weeks, I began what was to become my four-year regimen of lessons on it. Not only did I have my own beloved, sweet-sounding “Boesie” to play and practice on, but I was blessed as well with a wonderful teacher: a genuine Countess of the old Austrian aristocracy who took me – then her star student – to countless recitals, concerts and operas. Thus were spent my magical “wonder years,” exploring the heady world of great music.

It broke my heart to leave the piano behind when we returned to America; but we donated it to the newly built American International School ... where I found it, still in

good repair and regular use, when I returned to visit Vienna over 20 years later. Like Carol, I didn't get to play a Boesendorfer Imperial until many years later, when I visited a leading Washington, DC-area piano store and found a prime specimen among their stable of concert rental instruments. Again, as for Carol, it was love at first touch. Unlike Carol, I may never have become a concert pianist – but I still play, mostly for my own pleasure. And, after all, I did become a professional singer and classical journalist: someone who can rightfully claim that his musical development and destiny were, in part, guided by a protracted relationship with the world's finest piano.

It is thus with feelings of great personal nostalgia and gratitude that I play some small role in introducing this wonderful collection of choice piano masterpieces from the more than 30 recordings that Carol has made for Delos over the years, many with her beloved “Boesie.” All of them stand as indisputable evidence – not only of the consistently “ravishing, elegant pianism” (*New York Times*) that is the cornerstone of her glowing reputation – but of the sheer, intoxicating glory of the legendary Boesendorfer sound, as perfected with the company's flagship instrument, the model 290 Imperial, and as lovingly recorded by Delos engineers Stan Ricker and John Eargle.

– Lindsay Koob

One of Delos' earliest digital recordings, and my very first digital recording, took place in June 1979, when Delos label founder Amelia Haygood and her team undertook to

record me in a program of Impressionistic water music, appropriately titled *Water Music of the Impressionists*. Scientist/inventor Thomas Stockham, who had created the prototype Soundstream Digital Recorder, was excited about the project, and I had been touring with much of the repertoire.

When Tom, Amelia and recording engineer Stan Ricker first began discussing the repertoire with [me](#), we decided to seek out a very special instrument, the Boesendorfer Imperial Concert Grand. [I](#) had become acquainted with 7- and 9-foot Boesendorfers during [my](#) student days in Vienna, and marveled at their singing sound, but had never played an Imperial. It was exciting to discover that one of the few Boesendorfer Imperials in captivity in the U.S. could be found in Southern California.

So, in the spring of 1979, Amelia and I made what was to be for me a life-changing trip to Colton Piano Company in Orange County, for a live encounter with the exotic Imperial. After an hour or so of playing a variety of repertoire on the splendid instrument, I had fallen hopelessly in love.

Amelia, who hadn't encountered a live Imperial up close before, was ecstatic. We inquired about rental availability for possible sessions in June. “Yes, it's available, if it hasn't been sold by then,” was the reply. Sold? This glorious instrument was for sale? And someone else might buy it? My world changed.

Bolstered by Amelia's enthusiasm, I did a quick but intense soul-search, decided on a trade-in maneuver, and made my peace with a long-term financial obligation. And just like

that, I became the lifelong guardian of “Boesie,” as we came to call the magnificent Imperial. Boesie must have been comfortable with the arrangement, as it has been singing happily ever since.

Boesie’s singing sound is due to many things. Its lowest note is a C, an interval of a sixth below the lowest note (A) on a conventional piano. The extra strings give a richer resonance to the entire instrument. The Imperial is also six inches longer than the standard concert grand.

To quote Boesie’s longtime piano technician, Heriberto Lurgenstein, in his notes for the original album: “The design of the Boesendorfer’s plate allows for an unusual escapement of sound, and the extra length and width add to its characteristic sound ... A unique use of solid spruce is another key to the Boesendorfer’s resonance. Spruce is the material used for all concert grand sounding boards ... In the Boesendorfer, however, the entire inner-rim assembly is also constructed from solid blocks of spruce and the outer rim is made of panels of sounding-board spruce. The piano’s construction therefore resembles that of a string instrument rather than a percussion instrument.”

Boesie seemed to all of us the perfect instrument for this recording, as its subtle bloom after the hammer has hit the string enables the player to convey the liquidity and flow of “water music.” Interestingly enough, Ravel himself expressed the desire that the piano tone continue to sound, or at least give the illusion of doing so, after the hammer has hit the string. And Debussy wanted the piano to sound as if it were “an instrument without hammers.” Boesie’s

new hammers were soft; and this, together with its special resonance, did allow a blending of tones and at times an almost “attackless” sound.

I’ll never forget the first time Stan, Amelia and I had a meeting to discuss how best to record Boesie and the Impressionist repertoire. I happened to be practicing with the lid raised when Stan came in. He ran/walked straight to Boesie, bent over, and stuck his head as far as he could in between the raised lid and the strings. He motioned for me to keep going, a look of utter ecstasy on his face, drinking in that special sound from its purest source.

Amelia, together with Stan, decided on Bridges Auditorium in Claremont, California for the Water Music recording. As she wrote in the original album notes, the hall had “a good music-making ambience; a large warm, not echoing room with height, irregular surfaces and lots of wood. With our engineering we tried to create the sensation that you (the listener) are seated in the choice seats – about ten to twelve rows back in the hall... Since this music is all about water and liquidity and motion, I did not want to emphasize each tone at the sacrifice of the natural blend of the hall and the ‘watery’ atmosphere created by the pianist.”

Sometime between this meeting and the June sessions in Claremont, Stan called Amelia one morning to say that he had sat bolt upright in bed in the middle of the night, having had a vision of exactly how he would place the microphones for the upcoming recording. He had been thinking constantly about how best to capture Bösie’s singing sound, and balance its resonant bass with the clarity of its treble.

Meanwhile I told Amelia that I was tempted to add the low C found only on an Imperial (see above) to Debussy's single-tone "bourdon" effect in "The Sunken Cathedral" (track 6 in this album). Thus each sounding of the "bourdon" would be a sonorous octave rather than a single tone. Amelia egged me on to do it; we both felt that Debussy would have approved. The enriched "bourdon" special effect, suggesting the tolling of a great cathedral bell, thrilled Stan, Amelia, Tom, the Soundstream engineers and countless subsequent listeners. There — captured lovingly by Stan — is Boesie's bass in all its glory!

Also from the *Water Music of the impressionists* album are Griffes' gently sentimental "Fountain of the Acqua Paola," with its "shimmering lights" reflected in "happy bubbles" (track 7); Debussy's "Reflections in the Water," peaceful in its lovely, ever-changing images (track 9); and Ravel's celebrated "Jeux d'eau" (track 2), which he prefaced with the quote "Dieu fluvial riant de l'eau qui le chatouille" (a river god laughing at the water which tickles him).

Boesie participated glowingly, dramatically and songfully in the next recordings I did for Delos: Beethoven, including the magnificent Op. 111 sonata; Schubert, including the great B-flat major sonata; Shostakovich's *Concerto No. 1*; and chamber music by Mozart, Beethoven and Brahms. During this time the distinguished recording engineer/guru, John Eargle, came to Delos to become its Director of Recording. He and Amelia explored a number of venues, all of which welcomed Boesie as guest.

Then, in 1988, it was time for Boesie to shine in another

"concept" album, *Night Moods*, this time including Romantic, Post-Romantic and Impressionistic repertoire. John and Amelia decided to record in the lovely chapel of the First Congregational Church in Los Angeles. Boesie, caringly tended by piano technician Richard Davenport, was in top voice for all of it. I include four tracks from *Night Moods* here.

What instrument could sing the Chopin Nocturne (track 10) the way Boesie does? As for Liszt's "Harmonies du soir" (track 3), I found myself wishing that the pianist supreme himself could have known how this piece, almost orchestral in scope, could sound on Boesie — from the low tolling in the bass at the beginning to the massed harmonies, in all registers of the piano, that support the melodic climax.

More colors came forth in Granados' "Laments, or the Maiden and the Nightingale" (track 5). The maiden's haunting, richly ornamented lament and the nightingale's enchanting cadenza-like song at the end give, in the words of Ernest Newman, "the voluptuous sense of passing the fingers through masses of richly colored jewels."

It's easy for me to fantasize the Debussy Nocturne, also from *Night Moods* (track 8) as being inspired by Boesie's sound. It is improvisatory in style, with sweeping arpeggios, a relaxed, engaging melody and a dreamy middle section marked with the suggestion "in the spirit of a popular tune," with just a hint of the informality of the café. What a luxurious café that would be!

Richard Rodney Bennett's "Barcarolle" (track 1), also improvisatory in style, is from the album *Singing on the Water*, recorded in 1994, also at the First Congregational Church in Los Angeles with the same *Night Moods* team. Richard had become a friend and Delos artist (as well as fellow duo-pianist in the children's album, *My Keyboard Friends*), and wrote this lovely Barcarolle especially for *Singing on the Water*, dedicating it jointly to Amelia and me. When he sent me the manuscript, he 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 — in what I think of as Richard's "Enchanted April" mood. (The film "Enchanted April," for which Richard wrote the score, had been released shortly before he wrote the Barcarolle.) Richard had become acquainted with my beautiful Boesie, and I like to think that the piece was written, not just especially for me, but also especially for Boesie.

Ravel's "Une Barque sur l'océan" (track 4), also from *Singing on the Water*, illustrates once again that this composer is in a class by himself with his innovations in pianistic style and his use of the piano's resources to create vivid images of water. Boesie's rich range serves to enhance the sense Ravel's music provides of the vastness of the deep and the insignificance of any craft venturing upon it; of the cresting of the waves and of their magnitude. It is both a beautiful and an elemental experience, and we feel both exhilaration and awe at this image of an encounter with the ocean.

Also from *Singing on the Water* is Griffes' "Barcarolle" from the *Fantasy Pieces*, Op. 6 (track 11). It 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 that Griffes usually avoided in his dreamy music.

– Carol Rosenberger

P.S. – A New York City cousin of Boesie's is quite wonderful on another recording I greatly enjoyed being part of: Howard Hanson's *Fantasy Variations on a Theme of Youth*, together with the New York Chamber Symphony under Gerard Schwarz. (The recording is included in three different Delos collections: *Carol's Concerto Collection*, DE 3306; *The Great American Composers Collection*, DE 3708; and also on the Delos 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Collection, DE 3440.) I have long been thrilled by the unique way a Boesendorfer can blend with string sections, even in material that is not especially pianistic. Hanson, for example, uses the piano as part of the orchestra, for the most part, and has not written lines to be "sung" in particular, and yet the sonic blend in this recording is so luminous and rich that I venture to call it unforgettable.

- C.R.



## ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

American pianist **Carol Rosenberger** has attracted an international audience for bringing her special blend of refined virtuosity and poetically compelling interpretations to both traditional and contemporary repertoire. “Eloquent and sensitive playing” wrote *The Times of London*, while that city’s *Daily Telegraph* commented: “Her playing was alive to every fleeting sense impression, yet intellectually commanding. These were ideal performances.”

Beginning with the debut tour that elicited such comment in New York, Boston, London, Paris, Vienna, Berlin and other capitals, Carol’s distinguished recital programs and guest appearances with orchestras carried her to most major European and American cities. More recent concert appearances include New York’s Town Hall, Philharmonic Hall and the Great Hall of the Tchaikovsky Conservatory in Moscow, Peter the Great’s Palace in St. Petersburg, Italy’s Rossini Opera House, and tours of Scandinavia and the U.S., with the Moscow Chamber Orchestra under Constantine Orbelian.

Over 30 recordings on the Delos label have extended Carol Rosenberger’s individual vision to a wide range of piano repertoire. Her recording of Howard Hanson’s *Fantasy Variations on a Theme of Youth*, with Gerard Schwarz and the New York Chamber Symphony, brought her a 1991 Grammy Nomination for Best Performance, Soloist with Orchestra. Rosenberger and Schwarz followed this recording with the rarely-heard Hanson Piano Concerto with the Seattle Symphony. Together with Constantine Orbelian and the Moscow Chamber Orchestra, Carol has recorded the premiere of Frank Bridge’s Chamber Concerto for Piano and String Orchestra (arr. C. Orbelian), an arrangement of the Quintet (1912).

Carol’s celebrated series of concept-recordings began with *Water Music of the Impressionists*, which was selected by *Stereo Review* as

one of the 25 Best Classical Compact Discs of all time, by *Gramophone* as a Recording of the Year, and by *Billboard* as an All-time Great Recording. The Impressionistic *Night Moods* was the successful sequel; and a second water-music disc, *Singing on the Water*, included Barcarolles written especially for the album by Sir Richard Rodney Bennett and the American composer David Diamond.

Together with co-producer Amelia Haygood, Carol led the way into another area of concept recordings with the 1989 release of Carol’s *Perchance to Dream, Lullabys for Children and Adults*. One of the first classical CDs designed primarily for young people, *Perchance* struck a responsive chord with all ages. The *American Record Guide* called it “a splendid disc, to be treasured by young and old, and *Fanfare* commented that it is “the perfect gift among recordings for introducing a child to the intimacies and universality of music.” Subsequent albums of relaxing piano music were *Reverie* and *Such Stuff as Dreams* — the latter a lullaby album including themes from three major works of Mozart, Schubert and Beethoven heard in their entirety on a companion disc. She has also appeared as soloist on two orchestral CDs designed to be relaxing in nature: with Constantine Orbelian and the Moscow Chamber Orchestra in *Mozart Adagios*, and with James DePreist and the Monte Carlo Philharmonic in *A French Romance*.

Carol and Amelia guided and co-produced the Delos Music for Young People Series. As producer of special recording projects combining music and narration, Carol has worked with such distinguished narrators as James Earl Jones, Michael York and Natalia Makarova. She also wrote the script for Makarova’s narrated version of Stravinsky’s *The Firebird*, a recording that won the American Library Association’s “Notable Recording” award.

Carol's affinity for the late works of Beethoven and Schubert resulted in highly acclaimed recordings of the Beethoven Sonatas Op. 111 and 57, and the Schubert Sonata in B-flat, together with the Impromptus Op. 90. Her contribution to the performance of 20th Century music is reflected in her recordings of the Hindemith *Four Temperaments* with James DePreist and the Royal Philharmonic, and an all-Szymanowski disc, including the *Masques*, a group of Mazurkas, and the Etudes op. 4 and op. 33.

The Schwarz/Rosenberger recording of the Haydn D Major Concerto with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra was called "the best recording of that work now available" by *American Record Guide*, and the subsequent recording of the Haydn G Major Concerto with the same collaborators brought to light another rarely-heard work. With the London Symphony, Rosenberger and Schwarz recorded the Falla *Nights in the Gardens of Spain* and the Beethoven Concerto No. 4; with the Seattle Symphony they recorded the Strauss *Burleske*, and with the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra the Shostakovich First Piano Concerto.

Born in Detroit, Michigan, Carol studied in the U.S. with Webster Aitken and Katja Andj; in Paris with the legendary Nadia Boulanger; and in Vienna with harpsichordist/ Baroque scholar Eta Harich-Schneider and Schenker theorist Franz Eibner. In 1976 she was chosen to represent America's women concert artists by the President's National Commission on the Observance of International Women's Year. She has been the subject of articles in many of the nation's leading newspapers and magazines, and has been on the faculties of the University of Southern California and California State University Northridge. She has given performance workshops for young musicians on campuses nationwide.

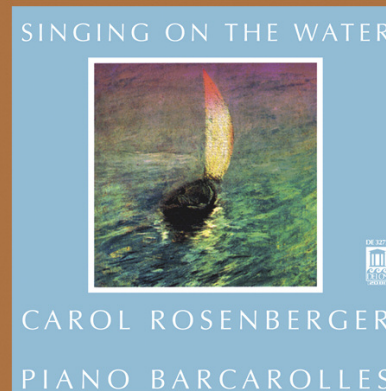
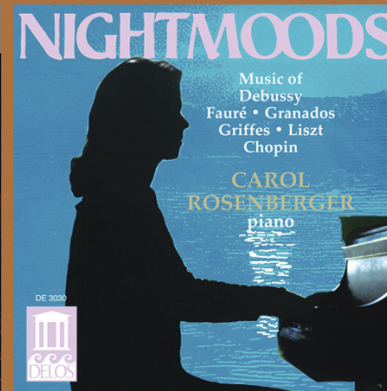
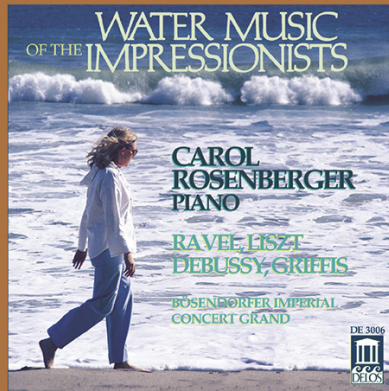
Carol has given numerous benefit performances for physical rehabilitation programs, an effort motivated by her own experience. Her official debut was delayed ten years by an attack of paralytic polio at the outset of her career. She spent those ten years of seclusion and rehabilitation partly in Vienna, studying Baroque style and theory at the Academy, and absorbing German *lieder*, opera, instrumental music and literature.

Upon Carol's return to the concert stage, not even her management knew, at the beginning, about her long ordeal. As her story became known, she proved to be an inspiration to many, and is currently working on a book about her experiences. She feels that her successful struggle to overcome the after-effects of polio taught her a great deal that she has been able to pass on to others. She has taught workshops, at the University of Southern California and other universities, in the wide-ranging area of physical and psychological preparation for performance.

In an enthusiastic review of a Rosenberger recital at Carnegie Hall, Mark Kanny, then Music Editor of *FM Guide*, had his own response to the artist/person he heard that night: "Her performances have an unforced quality that has nothing to do with lack of energy. Rather her playing draws on an inner calm. One hears this too when she talks about the problems of a woman pianist, or about the need for a more engaging concert format...she has retained her humanity; her name is worth remembering."

Since the deaths in 2007 of Delos founder Amelia Haygood and Delos Director of Engineering John Eargle, Carol has taken on a larger responsibility for the label, and is now its Director. She and conductor Constantine Orbelian have extended their musical collaborations to label activity, since Constantine is now the international A&R Director for Delos.

**ALSO AVAILABLE FROM DELOS  
FEATURING CAROL ROSENBERGER**



DE 3006 **WATER MUSIC OF THE IMPRESSIONISTS**  
DE 3009 **BEETHOVEN PIANO SONATAS** - DE 3030 **NIGHTMOODS**  
DE 3113 **REVERIE** - DE 3172 **SINGING ON THE WATER, PIANO BARCAROLLES**  
DE 3306 **CAROL'S CONCERTO COLLECTION**