

Reverie



Carol Rosenberger
piano

DEBUSSY
SCHUMANN
CHOPIN
LISZT
GRIFFES
RAVEL
FAURÉ
HAYDN
BACH



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Beverie

- Debussy:** [1] Arabesque No. 1 [4:21]
Chopin: [2] Mazurka Op. 17, No. 4 in A Minor [5:05]
Liszt: [3] Au lac de Wallenstadt (*By the Lake at Wallenstadt*) [3:28]
Debussy: [4] Bruyères (*Heather*) [3:25]
Chopin: [5] Berceuse (*Cradle Song*), Op. 57 [5:05]
Fauré: [6] Nocturne No. 8 in D Flat, Op. 84 [3:46]
Liszt: [7] Sancta Dorothea (1877) [3:35]
Ravel: [8] Pavane pour une Infante défunte [7:25]
Schumann: [9] Romance in F-sharp, Op. 28, No. 2 [4:17]
Haydn: [10] Andante from Sonata in A, Hob. XVI:12 [5:57]
Bach: [11] Sarabande from French Suite No. 5 in G [5:50]
Ravel: [12] Menuet from *Le Tombeau de Couperin* [5:28]
Schumann: [13] Träumerei from *Kinderszenen*, Op. 15 [3:14]
Griffes: [14] The Lake at Evening, Op. 5, No. 1 [3:28]
Liszt: [15] Consolation III in D Flat [4:35]

Carol Rosenberger, Bösendorfer Imperial Concert Grand Piano

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 71:00

*Dedicated to the memory of my mother,
Whilamet Gibson Rosenberger (1904-1992)
whose beauty of spirit will be with me always
C.R.*

*"For always...
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds
by the shore..."*

William Butler Yeats

In 1989, Delos International presented a program of music intended, in part, to introduce young people to classical music...and to remind all listeners of music's great power to heal. The response to Carol Rosenberger's PERCHANCE TO DREAM was among the most gratifying Delos has received. The simple eloquence of its program, its creators learned, not only enchanted young listeners; it aided doctors performing delicate surgeries and monitoring patients in intensive care, and provided peace for terminally ill loved ones.

Four years later, Delos offers a sequel, in spirit, to that collection — REVERIE, whose name suggests a similar dream state...a retreat, perhaps, but one that can lead to self-renewal.

Not surprisingly, some of the works presented here were responses to times of great stress: the effortlessness of Ravel's *Menuet* from *Le Tombeau de Couperin* belies its composer's shattered nerves after the horrors of World War I; Chopin's elegant miniatures give no hint of the physical pain their composer endured. Other works pay homage to

nature, or recall the fragile pleasures of childhood. All, however, bear simple testament to a timeless desire for inner peace.

The **Arabesque No. 1** by Claude Debussy (1862-1918) is among its composer's earliest piano works; its title has a visual as well as musical component, referring to the sinuous, "natural curve" of an ornamental line. The influence of art in Debussy's music was always significant; settings like **Bruyères (Heather)**, from the second book of *Preludes* (1910-1913), are not specific portraits of nature, but the aural equivalent of Debussy's contemporaries, the Impressionists; his tonal palette analogous to those painters' use of light versus detail.

Frederic Chopin (1810-1849) dedicated his four **Mazurkas, Op. 17**, to Mme. Lina Freppa, an accomplished singer whose salons the composer frequented. **No. 4 in A-minor**, however, is worlds away from the lively dance form its title suggests, instead conjuring a place of haunting solitude and introspection. Only in its central, A-Major section does sunlight suggest itself, before night returns, carrying us

away, as Herbert Weinstock wrote, “on a sigh of vanishing enchantment.”

Chopin’s **Berceuse (Cradle Song)** in D-flat major, composed a decade later in 1843, was dedicated to a favorite pupil, Elise Gavard; she and her brother Charles rewarded the composer’s affection with aid during his final, imminent battle with tuberculosis. Above a simple, unchanging rhythmic figure, Chopin transforms his theme through a series of decorative variations, whose simple harmonies nevertheless evoke a remarkable other-worldliness.

Chopin’s contemporary — and sometime rival — Franz Liszt (1811-1886) composed his **Au Lac de Wallenstadt** in 1835, inspired not only by the beauty of Switzerland, but by the lovely Countess Marie d’Agoult; her passion for art and music helped spark Liszt’s first great period as a composer. The piece is an aural transcript of an idyllic summer the couple shared (followed at year’s end by the birth of d’Agoult and Liszt’s child). The Countess was especially fond of the piece’s “melancholy harmony imitative of the sigh of the waves and the cadence of oars.”

The two other Liszt pieces heard here, though similarly tranquil, chart the emotional shifts their composer underwent in a long and eventful life. The **Consolation III in D-flat** (1849) was written in the year of Chopin’s death, and imparts more than a suggestion of

that composer’s influence in its simple, sad lyricism. The **Sancta Dorothea** of 1877 — depicting St. Dorothy’s contemplative and spiritual service — finds Liszt in his final, ardently religious years; after decades of amorous adventures, he had retired to an Italian villa, spending time in solitude and worship.

The **Nocturne No. 8** of Frenchman Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924) comes from an album of miscellaneous *Pieces brèves*; like its companions, it delicately captures the still poetry of night, with a characteristic freedom of key changes that return, with an elegant fluidity, to their origin.

Fauré’s countryman, Maurice Ravel (1875-1937), achieved one of his earliest successes in 1899 with his **Pavane pour une Infante défunte** (usually translated as Pavane for a dead princess). Only its composer eventually seemed immune to its delicate beauty; he was most bored by the endless speculation over its “story.” Ravel insisted he chose the title purely for its alliterative effect, not as a guide to performance. (He reportedly told one earnest performer of the piece, “The next time, remember that I have written a ‘Pavane for a deceased princess’ and not a ‘Deceased pavane for a princess.’”)

The **Menuet** from **Le Tombeau de Couperin** is also sometimes overshadowed by its origins. Ravel began the piece shortly

before the First World War, but completed it as an antidote to the terrors he had seen firsthand. He inscribed it to the famous 17th century composer not so much to directly evoke Couperin but the music of his period; he also dedicated each movement to a friend killed in the war. Nevertheless, the fifth movement *Menuet* seems entirely unshackled by all these associations, existing simply for the sake of its own abstract loveliness.

The stately, meditative **Romance in F-Sharp, Op. 28, No. 2** of Robert Schumann (1810-1856) was a favorite of its composer's; it dates from 1839, an era of extraordinary creativity for Schumann. The previous year he had written **Träumerei (Reverie)**, perhaps his best-known work, as part of his Op. 15, *Kinderszenen (Scenes from Childhood)* — some "droll little things," he wrote his beloved Clara, composed as if he "had suddenly grown wings."

No programmatic association need be ascribed to the **Andante**, from the **Sonata in A** of Joseph Haydn (1732-1809). Although dating from a period of stylistic adventurousness, as the Kapellmeister for the house of Esterhazy explored a variety of musical forms, the *Andante* is exquisitely traditional in its use of classic sonata form.

In 1722, the Leipzig-based Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) began a collection of pieces

for his wife, Anna Magdalena; among the best known of these are the so-called **French Suites**, which earned their name after Bach's death less through linkage to French music than to distinguish them from Bach's English Suites. These works, from which we hear the **Sarabande, from No. 5 in G**, are among the simplest to play of Bach's keyboard works, earning them an enduring favor among both piano students and instructors.

The final composer on REVERIE is its sole American. Charles Tomlinson Griffes (1884-1920) was a native New Yorker with an affinity for piano music (much of which he transcribed for orchestra; see *The Musical Fantasies of Charles Griffes and Deems Taylor*, Delos CD DE 3099). **The Lake at Evening** (1910) was among Griffes' most popular works during his short lifetime; yet when he first offered the piece in 1915 to the publisher Schirmer's, it was turned down; Griffes was told it would achieve little popular success because it was too "subjective."

Nevertheless, both its piano version and a later orchestral setting found their audience...for who cannot relate to that most "subjective" state of mind in which serenity and beauty replace — however fleeting — life's "objective" realities?

Steven C. Smith

Steven C. Smith is the author of *A Heart at Fire's Center: The Life & Music of Bernard Herrmann* (University of California Press, 1991).

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