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Communications

## NEWS RELEASE

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### JAZZ PIANIST/COMPOSER CLAIRE RITTER RELEASES 10<sup>th</sup> CD THE STREAM OF PEARLS PROJECT

Inspired by water, Ritter's 18 compositions take us on a captivating journey from Ocracoke Island to the Thousand Islands of Canada, from the Charles River in Boston to Franconia Notch in NH

With Claire Ritter (piano), Ashima Scripp (cello), Richie Stearns (banjo), Toni Naples (accordion), Rick Hansen (accordion), Jon Metzger (vibraphone), Takaaki Masuko (percussion/drums and co-producer)

Jazz pianist/composer **Claire Ritter**, "...an impassioned, melodious, idea-rich painter of the keyboard," (*JazzTimes*), celebrates the artistry of water in her 10<sup>th</sup> CD recording: **The Stream of Pearls Project**, co-produced by Ritter and Takaaki Masuko. These 18 illuminating songs stretching from north to south and east to west, exhibit a fascinating kaleidoscope of dimension and color. The CD will be released **April 19** on Zoning Recordings (ZR 1010).

The idea of this project originated in 2003 when a student gave Ritter a painting of a piano oasis from a Parisian street artist, L.Ragy. Ritter's trip to the unique **Ocracoke Island of the Outer Banks, NC** in 2006, spurred a continued intrigue with how water, its intricacies and surroundings, captivate the imagination. Over the next four years, Ritter travelled from island to islands to gain inspiration for her compositions. She went from **Ocracoke Island** to the **Thousand Islands of Canada** and to many types of water in between — lakes, creeks, rivers, mountain ridges and falls.

"I titled the CD *Stream of Pearls*, because it connects with a philosophy that the Canadian Indians coined *Manitonna*, meaning 'garden of the great spirit,'" says Ritter. "I love the idea of oneness which inspiration brings to art in its purest form."

Merging music, water, and nature, the recording features two opus variations: **North American Watercolors** and **The Outer Banks Crystal Scores**. Nuances flow from delicate to powerful, portraying heartfelt musical imagery of the noble **Charles River in Boston**; swift water of **Franconia Notch, NH**; autumn water color of the southern **Blue Ridge**; the peaceful **St. Lawrence** and the **Thousand Islands of Canada**; the grandeur of **Horseshoe-Niagara Falls of NY/Canada**; the reflective simplicity in brooks and lakes surrounding **Ritter's NC studio**; and scenes from the historic **Outer Banks Crystal Coast**: an **Ocracoke** gypsy moonrise, the towering sand dunes of **Kill Devil Hills**, the first flight at **Kitty Hawk**, a sail on the **Pamlico Sound**, and the wild mustangs of **Currituck** running playfully on the beach.

**The Stream of Pearls Project** features Ritter's solo piano as well as a selectively diverse ensemble crossing paths from NC to Boston and New York. From **Boston**: cellist **Ashima Scripp** ([www.waldenplayers.com](http://www.waldenplayers.com)) and percussionist /drummer **Takaaki Masuko** ([www.horseflies.com](http://www.horseflies.com)); from **Ithaca, NY**: banjo player **Richie Stearns** and accordion player **Rick Hansen**, ([www.horseflies.com](http://www.horseflies.com)); From **North Carolina**: **Ritter**, accordionist **Toni Naples** (Donna Duncan Band), and vibraphonist **Jon Metzger** ([www.jonmetzger.com](http://www.jonmetzger.com)). Ritter and Masuko have collaborated on multiple projects, including the debut Boston CD, *In between* with Dave Holland and Ran Blake, and more recently *Castles in the Air* with Steve Swallow.

Ritter also drew inspiration from poetry, photography and painting. Poet **Henry Wadsworth Longfellow** (Track 1: "To The River Charles," [www.hwlongfellow.org](http://www.hwlongfellow.org)); NC photographer **JoAnn Sieburg-Baker** (Track 4: "Blue Ridge's Beaverdam Creek" and "Tribute to Monet"); Canadian photographer **Ian Coristine** (Track 5 and cover, "Water, Wind & Sky," [www.1000islandsphotoart.com](http://www.1000islandsphotoart.com)); and French painter **L. Ragy** (Piano & Oasis, No-208LNHI).

A New England Conservatory and Queens University of Charlotte alumna, American new music pianist/composer/educator **Claire Ritter** began her professional career during post-graduate studies with two jazz legends: Mary Lou Williams at Duke University and Ran Blake at New England Conservatory. The Boston Globe has called Ritter "...*an artist to watch and as one of the most unique talents to have emerged in the world of jazz in two decades,*" and her music distinctly weaves a blend of classical, jazz, and ethnic styles emerging from various tributaries of American music. Ran Blake of New England Conservatory describes Ritter as "...*one of the most innovative, ingenious, and authentic composers on the east coast.*"

**The Stream of Pearls Project** is Ritter's 10<sup>th</sup> CD recording. Her 2007 release, *Waltzing the Splendor*, inspired by Georgia O'Keeffe's 1919 oil painting "Orange and Red Streak," was heralded by All About Jazz as "*beautifully melodic, distinctive, and unusually fine,*" and by Jazziz Magazine as "...*impeccably tasteful.*" In October 2008 she was featured on the cover of Cadence Magazine, which said that, "...*each (Ritter) composition yields a new treasure.*" All Music also recently reviewed her work. "*Ritter is musically painting broad strokes of bright color, based in nature and beauty, like O'Keeffe. The entire project consists of short statements, concise and edited, like O'Keeffe. And similar to the artist she chose to emulate, Ritter's classical training melds with purely folk-based American sensibilities, the substance of which jazz is based.*" *Waltzing the Splendor* was chosen as one of the Top Ten CDs of 2007 by the Canadian magazine, Coda.

Ritter's music has been performed and/or recorded throughout the world by artists including Ran Blake, Steve Swallow, Dave Holland, Houston Person, Dominique Eade, Stan Strickland, and Ricky Ford. Her music has been heard at the Ottawa Jazz Festival, Thelonious Monk Institute Festival, NEC Jazz Festival, Festival of American Women Composers, University Composers Charlotte, Brandeis University, NC New Music Series at Central Piedmont Community College and the Josef Matthias Haur Konservatorium, Osterreichischen Museum. Both Ran Blake and Franz Koglmann recorded her compositions for Soul Note Records and Hat Art Recordings. In 1985, Ritter founded her own label, Zoning Recordings, whose name was inspired by Mary Lou Williams' 1970s recording "Zoning." Ritter's music is also featured in three documentaries, and she is the recipient of numerous composer grants.

After living in Boston for 16 years where she performed frequently and taught at New England Conservatory, Ritter returned to her native Charlotte, NC where she currently composes, performs, and teaches emerging jazz composers. She is the founder of "Composers Charlotte" at Queens University in Charlotte and is a North Carolina Arts Council Jazz Composer Fellowship and Arts and Science Council two-time Regional Artist Grant recipient.

[www.claireritter.com](http://www.claireritter.com)

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