

Gramophone reviews

Fauré's Complete Nocturnes

Sally Pinkas, pianoforte

Musica Omnia mo0109 (M)

(73 minutes: DDD)

Bonus discussion disc included

Beautifully phrased performances, graced with exquisite tone

Fauré's Nocturnes span his creative life, from the charming Chopinesque salon pieces of his early years to the relentless, questioning works of his maturity. Listening to Sally Pinkas' traversal straight through, one is made very aware of the gradual rise in emotional temperature, though rather less of the music's increasing starkness of texture—an odd divergence that Kathryn Stott charts quite effectively. Yet Pinkas really revels in the opulent fabric of the first few nocturnes, finding a wider variety of colour and shading than Stott. Listen, for example, to the pianist's careful weighting of voices—one shyly shadowing the other—in the central section of the First Nocturne (beginning around 2'11"). Pinkas has a natural feeling for *rubato*, too, and while she occasionally exaggerates what should be a gentle *ritard*, the sense of fluidity is consistently conveyed. She captures the song-like character of No. 4 beautifully, making her instrument sing even in ornamental runs. The central section of No. 6 is delicately ecstatic, like a seraph strumming a celestial harp, and the fidgety sequences of No. 9, which can seem to meander, are sensitively shaped into expressive phrases.

Pinkas' exquisite tone deserves special mention, as it never becomes hard or edgy in the way Stott's sometimes does, and the engineer has put enough air around the instrument to make the upper registers shimmer. In fact, this is one of the best-sounding piano recordings I've heard in some time. In addition to her thoughtful booklet notes, Pinkas gives an animated and jargon-free 18-minute introduction to Fauré's Nocturnes (with helpful musical examples) on a second complimentary disc. Now may we please have her Barcarolles?

Andrew Farach-Colton

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