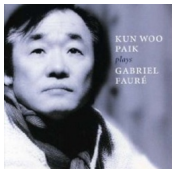


Kun Woo Paik Plays Gabriel Faure (2002)

Written by bluesever

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1. *Trois Romance sans paroles op. 17 - 3. Andante moderato*
2. *Nocturne No. 1 in E flat op. 33-1*
3. *Nocturne No. 3 in A flat op. 33-3*
4. *Impromptu No. 2 in F minor op. 31*
5. *Nocturne No. 6 in D flat op. 63*
6. *Barcarolle No. 1 in A minor op. 26*
7. *Nocturne No. 11 in F sharp minor op. 104-1*
8. *Nocturne No. 13 in B minor op. 119*
9. *8 pieces breves op. 84 - 5. Improvisation in C sharp minor*
10. *Trois Romance sans paroles op. 17 - 1. Andante, quasi allegretto*
11. *Prelude in C sharp minor op. 103-2*
12. *Prelude in A op. 103-7*
13. *Ballade in F sharp major op. 19*

Kun Woo Paik - piano Rec Brangwyn Hall, Swansea, 29-31 July 2001

Such are the similarities between the lives and music of Fauré and Chopin that their piano works, central to both their outputs, seem to belong together. The two lived in Paris as outsiders, both revelling in poetic feeling and tender lyricism, and even the names of their pieces - Nocturnes, Impromptus, Ballades - jump up and down in their eagerness to form a club. So why has the music of Fauré been eclipsed so completely by that of his Polish forebear? Is there a limit to the number of preludes and nocturnes the musical public can take to their heart? Do music lovers have only so much affection to go round?

Hopefully not. Perhaps it is because the similarities between the two lead people to believe that Fauré's music is more of the same, inevitably overshadowed by the great Chopin - one of musical history's few naturals of the keyboard. The similarities are, however, superficial. For all his Italianate melodies, Chopin was a profoundly contrapuntal composer, taking his inspiration

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from Bach. Essentially nostalgic, nobody would attempt composition on these terms again. Fauré was much more a composer of his time, interesting for his harmonic refinement, a path that would be taken up by Debussy.

This dichotomy is illustrated by the order of tracks on this disc. It is bookended by the two poles of Fauré's art, starting with the almost soppy Romance sans Paroles, Chopinesque enough to be mistaken for something Polish, and ending with the Germanic Ballade Op.19. Kun Woo Paik's great virtue is that he strikes a tone that neglects neither facet of the music, but is free of blandness or compromise. The voicing is extremely clear, important as Fauré often places the melody in an inner voice, giving a cool, Debussian texture, especially apt in the stunning C sharp minor prelude, a prophetic and futuristic work if ever there was one. In other places, especially the Ballade, Kun Woo Paik is not afraid to use rubato, lending a suitably passionate feeling to the piece. Technical excellence abounds throughout the disc – the beautifully shaded dynamics of the Barcarolle or the Improvisation, for example.

Best of all, this is a wonderfully musical disc. For all its technical marvels, its most enjoyable aspect is the wonderfully idiomatic music making, the thought given to each moment of even the longer pieces, the love of this very great music. Kun Woo Paik has created a very beautiful record that places these works in the context of their more celebrated relations, yet demonstrates their marvellous individuality at the same time. Highly recommended. ---Aidan Twomey, musicweb-international.com

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