



AMERICAN RECORD GUIDE

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FAURE: *13 Barcarolles; Dolly Suite*

Sally Pinkas, Piano

Hirsch-Pinkas Piano Duo

MSR 1438—73 minutes

Fauré was a pivotal composer in French history. He was the clear link between the romantic era as exemplified by Saint-Saens and the 20th century. At Fauré's birth, Chopin was alive and active in Paris. When he died in 1924 (almost 80), Stravinsky was a resident of Paris and already known for his scandalous *Rite of Spring*. He was a long time teacher, and Ravel was one of his greatest students. There is not a more important figure in the history of French song. Fauré's first piece titled 'Barcarolle' was a song (1873). The 13 Barcarolles for solo piano were composed over a 40-year period (1881-1921) and despite the common triple meter, each is a truly unique work. They also make for a perfect way to follow the growth and development of Fauré's compositional style.

Sally Pinkas has just the right approach to Fauré: always allow the melody to come through. His writing has counterpoint, chromatic harmonies, interesting and unexpected turns of phrase. Like Chopin's Nocturnes, you will find some fairly big sections in some of these. While Pinkas has all the subtlety and panache you could ever want, she also has power and passion when it is called for. The bottom line, for someone whose greatest compositional achievement is probably his songs, is melody. Although Fauré was a master pianist and organist, his piano writing is rarely virtuosic despite its difficulties. Pinkas has come to grips with the detailed nuances of his writing, and we are the beneficiaries.

I first learned these wonderful pieces from Jean-Philippe Collard's EMI recordings, which have fortunately been reissued by Brilliant (94035, Mar/Apr 2011). If you want complete (almost 5 hours on 4 CDs) and quite affordable (\$20) search out Collard. Sally Pinkas's playing is also superb, and the recorded sound here is even better; so if you want just a great single disc, this would be a great place to start. In the *Dolly Suite* for piano duet, Pinkas is ably partnered by her husband, Evan Hirsch. This is guaranteed to bring smiles to your face, and is played with sensitivity, impeccable ensemble, and a twinkling of the eye.

HARRINGTON