

= Piano music of Gabriel Fauré =

The French composer Gabriel Fauré (1845 ? 1924) wrote in many genres , including songs , chamber music , orchestral pieces , and choral works . His compositions for piano , written between the 1860s and the 1920s , include some of his best known works .

Fauré 's major sets of piano works are thirteen nocturnes , thirteen barcarolles , six impromptus , and four valse s @-@ caprices . These sets were composed during several decades in his long career , and display the change in his style from uncomplicated youthful charm to a final enigmatic , but sometimes fiery introspection , by way of a turbulent period in his middle years . His other notable piano pieces , including shorter works , or collections composed or published as a set , are Romances sans paroles , Ballade in F ? major , Mazurka in B ? major , Thème et variations in C ? major , and Huit pièces brèves . For piano duet , Fauré composed the Dolly Suite and , together with his friend and former pupil André Messager , an exuberant parody of Wagner in the short suite Souvenirs de Bayreuth .

Much of Fauré 's piano music is difficult to play , but is rarely virtuosic in style . The composer disliked showy display , and the predominant characteristic of his piano music is a classical restraint and understatement .

= = Introduction = =

Although for much of his career he made his living as a church organist , Fauré greatly preferred the piano . He never underestimated the challenges in composing for the instrument ; he wrote , " In piano music there 's no room for padding ? one has to pay cash and make it consistently interesting . It 's perhaps the most difficult genre of all . " Although his publishers insisted on descriptive titles , Fauré said that his own preference would be for utilitarian labels such as " Piano piece No X " . His works for the piano are marked by a classical French lucidity ; he was unimpressed by pianistic display , commenting of keyboard virtuosos , " the greater they are , the worse they play me . " Even a virtuoso such as Franz Liszt said that he found Fauré 's music hard to play : at his first attempt he said to Fauré , " I 've run out of fingers " . Fauré 's years as an organist influenced the way he laid out his keyboard works , often using arpeggiated figures , with themes distributed between the two hands , requiring fingerings more natural for organists than pianists . This tendency may have been even stronger because Fauré was ambidextrous , and he was not always inclined to follow the convention that the melody is in the right hand and the accompaniment in the left . His old friend and former teacher Camille Saint @-@ Saëns wrote to him in 1917 , " Ah ! if there is a god for the left hand , I should very much like to know him and make him an offering when I am disposed to play your music ; the 2nd Valse @-@ Caprice is terrible in this respect ; I have however managed to get to the end of it by dint of absolute determination . "

As a man , Fauré was said to possess " that mysterious gift that no other can replace or surpass : charm " , and charm is a conspicuous feature of many of his early compositions . His early piano works are influenced in style by Chopin , and throughout his life he composed piano works using similar titles to those of Chopin , notably nocturnes and barcarolles . An even greater influence was Schumann , whose piano music Fauré loved more than any other . The authors of The Record Guide (1955) wrote that Fauré learnt restraint and beauty of surface from Mozart , tonal freedom and long melodic lines from Chopin , " and from Schumann , the sudden felicities in which his development sections abound , and those codas in which whole movements are briefly but magically illuminated . " When Fauré was a student at the École Niedermeyer his tutor had introduced him to new concepts of harmony , no longer outlawing certain chords as " dissonant " . By using unresolved mild discords and colouristic effects , Fauré anticipated the techniques of Impressionist composers .

In later years Fauré 's music was written under the shadow of the composer 's increasing deafness , becoming gradually less charming and more austere , marked by what the composer Aaron Copland called " intensity on a background of calm . " The critic Bryce Morrison has noted that pianists frequently prefer to play the accessible earlier piano works , rather than the later music ,

which expresses " such private passion and isolation , such alternating anger and resignation " that listeners are left uneasy . The Fauré scholar Jean @-@ Michel Nectoux writes :

Fauré 's stylistic evolution can ... be observed in his works for piano . The elegant and captivating first pieces , which made the composer famous , show the influence of Chopin , Saint @-@ Saëns , and Liszt . The lyricism and complexity of his style in the 1890s are evident in the Nocturnes nos . 6 and 7 , the Barcarolle no . 5 and the Thème et variations . Finally , the stripped @-@ down style of the final period informs the last nocturnes (nos.10 ? 13) , the series of great barcarolles (nos . 8 ? 11) and the astonishing Impromptu no . 5 .

= = Nocturnes = =

The nocturnes , along with the barcarolles , are generally regarded as the composer 's greatest piano works . Fauré greatly admired the music of Chopin , and was happy to compose in forms and patterns established by the earlier composer . Morrison notes that Fauré 's nocturnes follow Chopin 's model , contrasting serene outer sections with livelier or more turbulent central episodes . The composer 's son Philippe commented that the nocturnes " are not necessarily based on rêveries or on emotions inspired by the night . They are lyrical , generally impassioned pieces , sometimes anguished or wholly elegiac . "

Nocturne No 1 in E ? minor , Op 33 / 1 (c.1875)

Nectoux rates the first nocturne as one of the best of the composer 's early works . It is dedicated , like Fauré 's song " Après un rêve " , to his friend and early patron Marguerite Baugnies . Morrison calls the piece " cloistered and elegiac . " Though published as the composer 's Op 33 / 1 in 1883 , it was written considerably earlier . It opens with a slow , pensive melody , followed by a more agitated second theme and another melody in C major , and ends with the return of the opening theme . The pianist and academic Sally Pinkas writes that the work contains many hallmarks of Fauré 's style , including " undulating rhythms , syncopation of the accompaniment against the melody and layered textures are already in evidence . "

Nocturne No 2 in B major , Op 33 / 2 (c.1880)

The second nocturne opens with a bell @-@ like passage , andantino espressivo , recalling ? although Fauré said it was unconscious ? the sound of distant bells that he heard frequently when a boy . Nectoux singles out " the light footed episode in alternating fifths and sixths " and its extremely delicate passagework , and points to the influence of Fauré 's former teacher Saint @-@ Saëns in the allegro ma non troppo toccata section . Saint @-@ Saëns himself declared the piece " absolutely entrancing . "

Nocturne No 3 in A ? major , Op 33 / 3 (c.1882)

In the third nocturne , Morrison notes that the composer 's fondness for syncopation is at its gentlest , " nostalgia lit by passion . " Like its predecessors , it is in tripartite form . An expansive melody with syncopated left @-@ hand accompaniment leads into a middle section in which a dolcissimo theme metamorphoses into bursts of passion . The return of the opening section is concluded by a gentle coda that introduces new harmonic subtleties .

Nocturne No 4 in E ? major , Op 36 (c.1884)

The fourth nocturne , dedicated to the Comtesse de Mercy @-@ Argenteau , contrasts a lyrical opening section and an episode in E ? minor with a sombre theme recalling the tolling of a bell . The first theme returns and is followed by a short coda . The pianist Alfred Cortot , generally a great admirer of Fauré , found the piece " rather too satisfied with its languor . "

Nocturne No 5 in B ? major , Op 37 (c.1884)

By contrast with its predecessor , the fifth nocturne is more animated , with unexpected shifts into remote keys . Nectoux writes of its undulating outline , and the " almost improvisatory , questioning character " of the opening .

Nocturne No 6 in D ? major , Op 63 (1894)

The sixth nocturne , dedicated to Eugène d 'Eichthal , is widely held to be one of the finest of the series . Cortot said , " There are few pages in all music comparable to these . " Morrison calls it " among the most rich and eloquent of all Fauré 's piano works . " The pianist and writer Nancy

Bricard calls it " one of the most passionate and moving works in piano literature . " Fauré wrote it after a six @-@ year break from composing for the piano . The piece begins with an emotional , outpouring phrase , with echoes of Fauré 's song cycle *La bonne chanson* . The second theme , at first seemingly tranquil , has what the composer Charles Koechlin calls a persistent inquietude , emphasised by the syncopated accompaniment . The initial theme returns , and is followed by a substantial development of a gentle , contemplative melody . A recapitulation of the principal theme takes the piece to its conclusion . Copland wrote that it was with this work that Fauré first fully emerged from the shadow of Chopin , and he said of the piece , " The breath and dignity of the opening melody , the restless C sharp minor section which follows (with the peculiar syncopated harmonies so often and so well used by Fauré) , the graceful fluidity of the third idea : all these elements are brought to a stormy climax in the short development section ; then , after a pause , comes the return of the consoling first page . "

Nocturne No 7 in C ? minor , Op 74 (1898)

The seventh nocturne departs from the A ? B ? A form of Fauré 's earlier nocturnes ; in Pinkas 's view is it constructed more like a ballade than a nocturne . It opens with a slow (*molto lento*) theme of harmonic ambiguity , followed by a second theme , equally ambiguous in key , though nominally in D major . The central section is in F ? major , and the re @-@ emergence of the first theme brings the piece to a conclusion . Morrison finds in this piece a sense of bleakness , and of the composer 's struggle against despair . Pinkas , however , regards the work as a " contrast between ambiguity and joy , ending in reassurance . " It is sometimes known as the " English " nocturne , having been composed while Fauré was staying in the UK , and being dedicated to the English pianist Adela Maddison .

Nocturne No 8 in D ? major , Op 84 / 8 (1902)

Fauré did not intend the eighth nocturne to appear under that designation . His publisher collected eight short piano pieces together and published them as 8 *pièces brèves* , allocating each of them a title unauthorised by the composer . The nocturne , the last piece in the set of eight , is shorter and less complex than its immediate predecessor , consisting of a song @-@ like main theme with a delicate semiquaver accompaniment in the left hand .

Nocturne No 9 in B minor , Op 97 (1908)

The ninth nocturne , dedicated to Cortot 's wife , Clotilde Bréal , is the first of three that share a directness and sparseness in contrast with the more elaborate structures and textures of their predecessors . The left @-@ hand accompaniment to the melodic line is simple and generally unvaried , and the harmony looks forward to later composers of the 20th century , using a whole tone scale . Most of the piece is inward @-@ looking and pensive , presaging the style of Fauré 's final works , although it ends optimistically in a major key .

Nocturne No 10 in E minor , Op 99 (1908)

Like its immediate predecessor , the tenth nocturne is on a smaller scale than those of Fauré 's middle period . In contrast with the ninth , however , the tenth is darker and angrier . The composer applies the A ? B ? A form less rigorously than in earlier nocturnes , and the opening bars of the piece recur intermittently throughout , eventually building to a fierce climax , described by Morrison as " a slow central climb ... that inhabits a world of nightmare . " The piece ends with a calm coda . It is dedicated to Madame Brunet @-@ Lecomte .

Nocturne No 11 in F ? minor , Op 104 / 1 (1913)

The eleventh nocturne was written in memory of Noémi Lalo ; her widower , Pierre Lalo , was a music critic and a friend and supporter of Fauré . Morrison suggests that its funereal effect of tolling bells may also reflect the composer 's own state of anguish , with deafness encroaching . The melodic line is simple and restrained , and except for a passionate section near the end is generally quiet and elegiac .

Nocturne No 12 in E minor , Op 107 (1915)

With the twelfth nocturne Fauré returned to the scale and complexity of his middle @-@ period works , but both melodically and harmonically it is much harder to comprehend . There are deliberate dissonances and harmonic ambiguities that Pinkas describes as " taking tonality to its limit while still maintaining a single key . " Morrison writes that " the ecstatic song of No 6 is

transformed in a central section where lyricism is soured by dissonance , held up , as it were , to a distorting mirror . " The work is in Fauré 's customary nocturne form , A ? B ? A , but with a reiteration of the material of the second section , harmonically transformed , followed by a coda that draws on material from the opening section .

Nocturne No 13 in B minor , Op 119 (1921)

Fauré scholars are generally agreed that the last nocturne ? which was the last work he wrote for the piano ? is among the greatest of the set . Nectoux writes that along with the sixth , it is " incontestably the most moving and inspired of the series . " Bricard calls it " the most inspired and beautiful in the series . " For Pinkas , the work " achieves a perfect equilibrium between late @-@ style simplicity and full @-@ textured passionate expression . " The work opens in a " pure , almost rarefied atmosphere " (Nectoux) , with a " tone of noble , gentle supplication ... imposing gravity and ... rich expressive four part writing . " This is followed by an allegro , " a true middle section in a virtuoso manner , ending in a bang " (Pinkas) . The repeat of the opening section completes the work .

= = Barcarolles = =

Barcarolles were originally folk songs sung by gondoliers in Venice . In Morrison 's phrase , Fauré 's use of the term was more convenient than precise . Fauré was not attracted by fanciful titles for musical pieces , and maintained that he would not use even such generic titles as " barcarolle " if his publishers did not insist . His son Philippe recalled , " he would far rather have given his Nocturnes , Impromptus , and even his Barcarolles the simple title Piano Piece no. so @-@ and @-@ so . " Nevertheless , following the precedents of Chopin and most conspicuously Mendelssohn , Fauré made extensive use of the barcarolle , in what his biographer Jessica Duchén calls " an evocation of the rhythmic rocking and lapping of water around appropriately lyrical melodies . "

Fauré 's ambidexterity is reflected in the layout of many of his piano works , notably in the barcarolles , where the main melodic line is often in the middle register , with the accompaniments in the high treble part of the keyboard as well as in the bass . Duchén likens the effect of this in the barcarolles to that of a reflection shining up through the water .

Like the nocturnes , the barcarolles span nearly the whole of Fauré 's composing career , and they similarly display the evolution of his style from the uncomplicated charm of the early pieces to the withdrawn and enigmatic quality of the late works . All are written with compound time signatures (6 / 8 or 9 / 8) , except number 7 , which is in 6 / 4 .

Barcarolle No 1 in A minor , Op 26 (1880)

The first barcarolle was dedicated to the pianist Caroline de Serres (Mme. Montigny @-@ Remaury) and premiered by Saint @-@ Saëns at a concert of the Société Nationale de Musique in 1882 . The piece begins with an uncomplicated melody in a traditional lilting Venetian style in 6 / 8 time . It develops into a more elaborate form before the introduction of the second theme , in which the melodic line is given in the middle register with delicate arpeggiated accompaniments in the treble and bass . Morrison comments that even in this early work , conventional sweetness is enlivened by subtle dissonance .

Barcarolle No 2 in G major , Op 41 (1885)

The second barcarolle , dedicated to the pianist Marie Poitevin , is a longer and more ambitious work than the first , with what Morrison calls an Italianate profusion of detail . Duchén writes of the work as complex and questing , harmonically and melodically , and points to the influence of Saint @-@ Saëns , Liszt and even , unusually for Fauré , of Wagner . The work opens in 6 / 8 time like the first , but Fauré varies the time signature to an unexpected 9 / 8 in the middle of the piece .

Barcarolle No 3 in G ? major , Op 42 (1885)

The third barcarolle is dedicated to Henriette Roger @-@ Jourdain , wife of Fauré 's friend , the painter Roger Jourdain . It opens with a simple phrase that is quickly elaborated into trills reminiscent of Chopin . The middle section , like that of the first , keeps the melody in the middle register with delicate arpeggiated ornaments above and below . The pianist Marguerite Long said that these ornaments " crown the theme like sea foam . "

Barcarolle No 4 in A ? major , Op 44 (1886)

One of the best @-@ known of the set , the fourth barcarolle is " tuneful , quite short , perhaps more direct than the others . " (Koechlin) .

Barcarolle No 5 in F ? minor , Op 66 (1894)

Dedicated to Mme la Baronne V. d 'Indy , the fifth barcarolle was written after a five @-@ year period in which Fauré composed nothing for the piano . Orledge calls it powerful , agitated and virile . It is the first of Fauré 's piano works in which there are no identifiable sections ; its changes are in metre , not in tempo .

Barcarolle No 6 in E ? major , Op 70 (1896)

Koechlin brackets the sixth and seventh of the set together as a contrasting pair . Both pieces show " an economy of writing " , the sixth " more moderate and tranquil in expression " . The Fauré scholar Roy Howat writes of a " sensuous insouciance " with an underlying virtuosity and wit under the " deceptively nonchalant surface " .

Barcarolle No 7 in D minor , Op 90 (1905)

The seventh barcarolle contrasts with its predecessor in being more restless and sombre , recalling Fauré 's " Crépuscule " from his song cycle La chanson d 'Ève .

Barcarolle No 8 in D ? major , Op 96 (1906)

Dedicated to Suzanne Alfred @-@ Bruneau , the eighth barcarolle opens in with a cheerful theme , which soon gives way to melancholy . The second episode , in C ? minor , marked cantabile , is succeeded by an abrupt ending with a fortissimo chord .

Barcarolle No 9 in A minor , Op 101 (1909)

The ninth barcarolle , in Koechlin 's view , " recalls , as in a hazy remoteness , the happiness of the past " . Nectoux writes that it consists of " a series of harmonic or polyphonic variations on a strange , sombre , syncopated theme , whose monotony recalls some sailor 's song " .

Barcarolle No 10 in A minor , Op 104 / 2 (1913)

Dedicated to Madame Léon Blum , the tenth barcarolle stays more closely within conventional tonality than its predecessor , " with a certain sedate gravity ... the monotony appropriate to a grey evening " (Koechlin) . The melancholy theme is reminiscent of Mendelssohn 's Venetian themes from Songs Without Words , but is developed in a way characteristic of Fauré , with " increasingly animated rhythms and , at certain points , excessively complex textures " (Nectoux) .

Barcarolle No 11 in G minor , Op 105 (1913)

Dedicated to Laura , daughter of the composer Isaac Albéniz . The eleventh and twelfth of the set can be viewed as another contrasting pair . The eleventh is severe in mood and in rhythm , reflecting the prevailing austerity of Fauré 's later style .

Barcarolle No 12 in E ? major , Op 106bis (1915)

Dedicated to Louis Diémer , the twelfth barcarolle is an allegretto giocoso . It opens in what was by now for Fauré a rare uncomplicated theme , in the traditional Venetian manner , but is developed in more subtle rhythms . Despite the increasing complexity of the polyphonic lines , Fauré keeps the melody prominent , and the piece ends with it transformed into " a theme of almost triumphal character " (Nectoux) .

Barcarolle No 13 in C major , Op 116 (1921)

The last of the set is dedicated to Magda Gumaelius . Koechlin writes of it : " bare , superficially almost dry , but at heart most expressive with that deep nostalgia for vanished bright horizons : sentiments that the composer suggests in passing rather than comments on in loquacious or theatrical oratory ; he seemed to desire to preserve the soothing and illusory serenity of the mirage . "

= = Impromptus = =

Impromptu No 1 in E ? major , Op 25 (1881)

Cortot compared the first impromptu to a rapid barcarolle , redolent of " sunlit water " , combining " stylised coquetry and regret " .

Impromptu No 2 in F minor , Op 31 (1883)

Dedicated to Mlle Sacha de Rebina , the second impromptu maintains an airy tarantella rhythm . It is scored less richly than the first of the set , giving it a lightness of texture .

Impromptu No 3 in A ? major , Op 34 (1883)

The third impromptu is the most popular of the set . Morrison calls it " among Fauré 's most idyllic creations , its principal idea dipping and soaring above a gyrating , moto perpetuo accompaniment " . It is marked by a combination of dash and delicacy .

Impromptu No 4 in D ? major , Op 91 (1906)

Dedicated to " Madame de Marliave " (Marguerite Long) , the fourth impromptu was Fauré 's return to the genre in his middle period . Unlike much of his music of the period , it avoids a dark mood , but Fauré had by now moved on from the uncomplicated charm of the first three of the set . His mature style is displayed in the central section , a contemplative andante , which is followed by a more agitated section that concludes the work .

Impromptu No 5 in F ? minor , Op 102 (1909)

Nectoux describes this impromptu as " a piece of sheer virtuosity celebrating , not without humour , the beauties of the whole @-@ tone scale . " Morrison , however , writes that the work " seethes with unrest " .

Impromptu in D ? major , Op 86 bis (Transcription of the Impromptu for harp , Op 86 , 1904)

The last work in the published set was written before numbers four and five . It was originally a harp piece , composed for a competition at the Paris Conservatoire in 1904 . Cortot made a transcription for piano , published in 1913 as Fauré 's Op 86 bis . The outer sections are light and brilliant , with a gentler central section , marked meno mosso .

= = Valses @-@ caprices = =

The four valeses @-@ caprices are not a cycle , but rather two sets of two , the first from Fauré 's early period and the second from his middle period . Morrison calls all four " more ' caprice ' than ' waltz ' " , and comments that they combine and develop the scintillating style of Chopin and Saint @-@ Saëns waltzes . They show Fauré at his most playful , presenting variations before the theme is heard and darting in and out of unexpected keys . Aaron Copland , though generally a keen admirer of Fauré 's music , wrote , " the several Valses @-@ Caprices , in spite of their admirable qualities , seem to me essentially foreign to Faure 's esprit . His is too orderly , too logical a mind to be really capricious . " Cortot , by contrast , spoke approvingly of their " sensual grace ... perfect distinction ... impassioned tenderness . "

Valse @-@ caprice No 1 in A major , Op 30 (1882) ; and

Valse @-@ caprice No 2 in D ? major , Op 38 (1884) :

Chopin 's influence is marked in the first two pieces . Orledge observes that the right @-@ hand figuration at the end of No 1 is remarkably similar to that at the end of Chopin 's Waltz in E minor . In No 2 Nectoux detects the additional influence of Liszt (Au bord d 'une source) in the opening bars . In the closing bars of No 2 , Orledge finds a resemblance to the end of Chopin 's Grande Valse Brillante , Op , 18 .

Valse @-@ caprice No 3 in G ? major , Op 59 (1887 ? 93) ; and

Valse @-@ caprice No 4 in A ? major , Op 62 (1893 ? 94) :

Orledge writes that the second two valeses @-@ caprices are subtler and better integrated than the first two ; they contain " more moments of quiet contemplation and more thematic development than before . " There still remain touches of virtuosity and traces of Liszt , and these two valeses @-@ caprices are , in Orledge 's words , the only solo pieces in the middle period to end in a loud and spectacular manner . No 3 is dedicated to Mme. Philippe Dieterlen , No 4 to Mme. Max Lyon .

= = Other solo piano works = =

= = = Romances sans paroles , Op 17 = = =

Fauré wrote these three " songs without words " while still a student at the École Niedermeyer , in about 1863 . They were not published until 1880 , but they then became some of his most popular works . Copland considered them immature pieces , which " should be relegated to the indiscretions every young composer commits . " Later critics have taken a less severe view ; Morrison describes the Romances as " an affectionate and very Gallic tribute to Mendelssohn 's urbanity , agitation and ease . " The commentator Keith Anderson writes that although they were a popular French counterpart to Mendelssohn 's Songs without Words , Fauré 's own voice is already recognisable . Instead of placing the slowest piece in the middle of the set and ending with the lively A minor piece , Fauré , already with musical views of his own , switches the expected order , and the set ends pianissimo , fading to nothing .

Andante quasi allegretto

The first romance , in A ? major , has as an opening theme an uncomplicated melody with Mendelssohnian syncopations . The theme is presented first in the higher and then in the middle register , before flowing evenly to its conclusion .

Allegro molto

The second romance , in A minor , an exuberant piece , has a strong semiquaver figure supporting the theme , and running high into the treble and low into the bass . This was later to become one of Fauré 's most recognisable characteristics . After a lively display , the piece ends quietly .

Andante moderato

The final piece of the set , in A ? major , is a serene andante , with a flowing tune in the Mendelssohnian style . After gentle variation , it equally gently fades to silence at the end .

== Ballade in F ? major , Op 19 ==

The Ballade , dedicated to Camille Saint @-@ Saëns , dates from 1877 . It is one of Fauré 's most substantial works for solo piano , but is better known in a version for piano and orchestra that he made in 1881 at Liszt 's suggestion . Playing for a little over 14 minutes , it is second in length only to the Thème et variations . Fauré first conceived the music as a set of individual pieces , but then decided to make them into a single work by carrying the main theme of each section over into the following section as a secondary theme . The work opens with the F ? major theme , an andante cantabile , which is followed by a slower section , marked *lento* , in E ? minor . The third section is an andante introducing a third theme . In the last section , an *allegro* , a return of the second theme brings the work to a conclusion in which Nectoux comments , the treble sings with particular delicacy .

Marcel Proust knew Fauré , and the Ballade is thought to have been the inspiration for the sonata by Proust 's character Vinteuil that haunts Swann in *In Search of Lost Time* . Debussy , reviewing an early performance of the Ballade , compared the music with the attractive soloist , straightening her shoulder @-@ straps during the performance : " I don 't know why , but I somehow associated the charm of these gestures with the music of Fauré himself . The play of fleeting curves that is its essence can be compared to the movements of a beautiful woman without either suffering from the comparison . " Morrison describes the Ballade as " a reminder of halcyon , half @-@ remembered summer days and bird @-@ haunted forests " .

== Mazurka in B ? major , Op 32 ==

The Mazurka was composed in the mid @-@ 1870s but not published until 1883 . It is a tribute to Chopin , and contains echoes of the earlier composer 's music . Chopin , however , composed more than 60 mazurkas , and Fauré wrote only this one . Morrison regards it as an experiment on Fauré 's part . The piece owes little to Polish folk @-@ dance rhythms , and may have had a Russian influence through Fauré 's friendship with Sergei Taneyev at around the time of its composition .

== Pavane , Op 50 ==

The Pavane (1887) was conceived and originally written as an orchestral piece . Fauré published the version for piano in 1889 . In the form of an ancient dance , the piece was written to be played more briskly than it has generally come to be performed in its familiar orchestral guise . The conductor Sir Adrian Boult heard Fauré play the piano version several times and noted that he took it at a tempo no slower than *crochet* = 100 . Boult commented that the composer 's sprightly tempo emphasised that the Pavane was not a piece of German romanticism .

= = = Thème et variations in C ? minor , Op 73 = = =

Written in 1895 , when he was 50 , this is among Fauré 's most extended compositions for piano , with a performance time of about 15 minutes . Although it has many passages that reflect the influence of Schumann 's Symphonic Studies , in Jessica Duchén 's words " its harmonies and pianistic idioms " are unmistakably those of Fauré . As in the earlier *Romances sans paroles* , Op 17 , Fauré does not follow the conventional course of ending with the loudest and most extrovert variation ; the variation nearest to that description is placed next to last , and is followed by a gentle conclusion , " a typically Faurean understated finish . " Copland wrote of the work :

Certainly it is one of Faure 's most approachable works . Even at first hearing it leaves an indelible impression . The " Theme " itself has the same fateful , march @-@ like tread , the same atmosphere of tragedy and heroism , that we find in the introduction of Brahms 's First Symphony . And the variety and spontaneity of the eleven variations which follow bring to mind nothing less than the Symphonic Etudes . How many pianists , I wonder , have not regretted that the composer disdained the easy triumph of closing on the brilliant , dashing tenth variation . No , poor souls , they must turn the page and play that last , enigmatic (and most beautiful) one , which seems to leave the audience with so little desire to applaud .

= = = Prelude to Pénélope = = =

Fauré 's opera based on the legend of Ulysses and Penelope was first performed in 1913 , after which the composer published a version of the prelude transcribed for piano . The piece , in G minor , contrasts a gravely noble *andante moderato* theme representing Penelope with a forthright theme for Ulysses . The polyphonic writing transfers effectively from the orchestral original to the piano .

= = = 8 Pièces brèves , Op 84 = = =

Fauré did not intend these pieces to be published as a set ; they were composed as individual works between 1869 and 1902 . When Hamelle , his publishers , insisted on issuing them together as " Eight Short Pieces " in 1902 , the composer successfully demanded that none of the eight must be allocated its own title . When he moved on to another publisher , Hamelle ignored his earlier instructions and issued subsequent editions with titles for each piece . Nectoux comments that the labelling of the eighth piece as " Nocturne No 8 " is particularly questionable (see Nocturne [No 8] , below) . In the first decade of the 21st century the publisher Peters issued a new critical edition of the Eight Pieces with the spurious titles removed . The eight pieces take less than three minutes each in performance .

Capriccio in E ? major : Dedicated to Madame Jean Leonard Koechlin . Morrison calls it " capricious indeed " , and notes a harmonic twist at the end " as nonchalant as it is acrobatic " . It was originally written as a sight @-@ reading test for students at the Paris Conservatoire , of which Fauré was the professor of composition from 1896 and director from 1905 to 1920 .

Fantaisie in A ? major : Koechlin calls this piece a pleasant *feuilleton* d 'album .

Fugue in A minor : This , like the other fugue in the set , is a revised version of a fugue Fauré composed at the start of his career , when he was a church organist in Rennes . They are both , in Koechlin 's view " in a pleasant and correct style , obviously less rich than those in the Well @-@ Tempered Clavier , and more careful , but whose reserve conceals an incontestable mastery " .

Adagietto in E minor : An *andante moderato* , " serious , grave , at once firm and pliant , attaining

real beauty " (Koechlin) .

Improvisation in C ? minor : Orledge calls this piece a middle period " song without words " . It was composed as a sight @-@ reading test for the Conservatoire .

Fugue in E minor : See Fugue in A minor , above .

Allégresse in C major : " A bubbling perpetuum mobile whose surging romantic feelings are only just kept under restraint " (Orledge) . " A song , pure and gay , uplifted to a sunlit sky , a youthful outpouring , full of happiness . " (Koechlin) .

Nocturne [No 8] in D ? major : As noted above , this piece stands apart from the larger @-@ scale works to which Fauré gave the title " nocturne " . It would not be listed among them were it not for the publisher 's unauthorised use of the title in this case . It is the longest of the eight pieces of Op 84 , but is much shorter and simpler than the other 12 nocturnes , consisting of a song @-@ like main theme with a delicate semiquaver accompaniment in the left hand .

= = = 9 Préludes , Op 103 = = =

The nine préludes are among the least known of Fauré 's major piano compositions . They were written while the composer was struggling to come to terms with the onset of deafness in his mid @-@ sixties . By Fauré 's standards this was a time of unusually prolific output . The préludes were composed in 1909 and 1910 , in the middle of the period in which he wrote the opera Pénélope , barcarolles Nos. 8 ? 11 and nocturnes Nos. 9 ? 11 .

In Koechlin 's view , " Apart from the Préludes of Chopin , it is hard to think of a collection of similar pieces that are so important " . The critic Michael Oliver wrote , " Fauré 's Préludes are among the subtlest and most elusive piano pieces in existence ; they express deep but mingled emotions , sometimes with intense directness ... more often with the utmost economy and restraint and with mysteriously complex simplicity . " Jessica Duchen calls them " unusual slivers of magical inventiveness . " The complete set takes between 20 and 25 minutes to play . The shortest of the set , No 8 , lasts barely more than a minute ; the longest , No 3 , takes between four and five minutes .

Prélude No 1 in D ? major

Andante molto moderato . The first prélude is in the manner of a nocturne . Morrison refers to the cool serenity with which it opens , contrasted with the " slow and painful climbing " of the middle section .

Prélude No 2 in C ? minor

Allegro . The moto perpetuo of the second prélude is technically difficult for the pianist ; even the most celebrated Fauré interpreter can be stretched by it . Koechlin calls it " a feverish whirling of dervishes , concluding in a sort of ecstasy , with the evocation of some fairy palace . "

Prélude No 3 in G minor

Andante . Copland considered this prélude the most immediately accessible of the set . " At first , what will most attract you , will be the third in G @-@ minor , a strange mixture of the romantic and classic . " The musicologist Vladimir Jankélévitch wrote , " it might be a barcarolle strangely interrupting a theme of very modern stylistic contour " .

Prélude No 4 in F major

Allegretto moderato . The fourth prélude is among the gentlest of the set . The critic Alain Cochard writes that it " casts a spell on the ear through the subtlety of a harmony tinged with the modal and its melodic freshness . " Koechlin calls it " a guileless pastorale , flexible , with succinct and refined modulations " .

Prélude No 5 in D minor

Allegro . Cochard quotes the earlier writer Louis Aguetant 's description of this prélude as " This fine outburst of anger (Ce bel accès de colère) " . The mood is turbulent and anxious ; the piece ends in quiet resignation reminiscent of the " Libera me " of the Requiem .

Prélude No 6 in E ? minor

Andante . Fauré is at his most classical in this prélude , which is in the form of a canon . Copland wrote that it " can be placed side by side with the most wonderful of the Preludes of the Well @-@

Tempered Clavichord . "

Prélude No 7 in A major

Andante moderato . Morrison writes that this prélude , with its " stammering and halting progress " conveys an inconsolable grief . After the opening andante moderato , it becomes gradually more assertive , and subsides to conclude in the subdued mood of the opening . The rhythm of one of Fauré 's best @-@ known songs , " N 'est @-@ ce @-@ pas ? " from La bonne chanson , runs through the piece .

Prélude No 8 in C minor

Allegro . In Copland 's view this is , with the third , the most approachable of the Préludes , " with its dry , acrid brilliance (so rarely found in Faure) . " Morrison describes it as " a repeated @-@ note scherzo " going " from nowhere to nowhere . "

Prélude No 9 in E minor

Adagio . Copland described this prélude as " so simple ? so absolutely simple that we can never hope to understand how it can contain such great emotional power . " The prélude is withdrawn in mood ; Jankélévitch wrote that it " belongs from beginning to end to another world . " Koechlin notes echoes of the " Offertoire " of the Requiem throughout the piece .

= = For two pianists = =

Souvenirs de Bayreuth

Subtitled Fantasia en forme de quadrille sur les thèmes favoris de l 'Anneau de Nibelung (" Fantasy in the form of a quadrille on favourite themes from Der Ring des Nibelungen ") . Fauré admired the music of Wagner and was familiar with the smallest details of his scores , but he was one of the few composers of his generation not to come under Wagner 's musical influence . From 1878 , Fauré and his friend and ex @-@ pupil André Messager made trips abroad to see Wagner operas . They saw Das Rheingold and Die Walküre at Cologne Opera ; the complete Ring cycle in Munich and London ; and Die Meistersinger in Munich and at Bayreuth , where they also saw Parsifal . They frequently performed as a party piece their joint composition , the irreverent Souvenirs de Bayreuth , written in about 1888 . This short , skittish piano work for four hands sends up themes from The Ring . It consists of five short sections in which Wagner 's themes are transformed into dance rhythms . The manuscript (in the Bibliothèque nationale , Paris) is in Messager 's hand .

Suite d 'orchestre , Op 20

Between 1867 and 1873 , Fauré wrote a symphonic work for full orchestra . The piece was first heard in 1873 when Fauré and Saint @-@ Saëns performed it in a two @-@ piano version , but that transcription has not survived . Léon Boëllmann made a new transcription of the first movement in 1893 .

Dolly Suite , Op 56

The Dolly Suite is a six @-@ section work for piano duet . It was inspired by Hélène , nicknamed " Dolly " , daughter of the singer Emma Bardac with whom Fauré was intimately associated in the 1890s . The opening piece was a present for Dolly 's first birthday , and Fauré added the other five pieces to mark her subsequent birthdays and other family occasions . Unusually for Fauré , who generally favoured strictly functional titles , the movements of the suite have whimsical titles associated with Dolly and her family .

Its six movements take about fifteen minutes to perform . The first is a Berceuse , or cradle @-@ song . " Mi @-@ a @-@ ou " , despite a title suggesting a cat , in fact represents the infant Dolly 's attempts to pronounce the name of her brother Raoul ; after " Le jardin de Dolly " , the " Kitty Valse " , again confounds its feline title , being a sketch of the family 's pet dog . After the gentle " Tendresse " , the suite ends with a lively evocation of Spain , which , Orledge notes , is one of Fauré 's few purely extrovert pieces .

Masques et bergamasques , Op 112

From the orchestral suite drawn from his music for the stage presentation Masques et bergamasques , Fauré made a transcription for piano duet , which was published in 1919 . Like the

orchestral suite , it consists of four movements , titled " Ouverture " , " Menuet " , " Gavotte " and " Pastorale " .

= = Recordings = =

Fauré made piano rolls of his music for several companies between 1905 and 1913 . The rolls that survive are of the " Romance sans paroles " No 3 , Barcarolle No 1 , Prelude No 3 , Nocturne No 3 , Thème et variations , Valses @-@ caprices Nos 1 , 3 and 4 , and piano versions of the Pavane , and the " Sicilienne " from Fauré 's music for Pelléas and Mélisande . Several of these rolls have been transferred to CD . Recordings on disc were few until the 1940s . A survey by John Culshaw in December 1945 singled out recordings of piano works played by Kathleen Long , including the Nocturne No 6 , Barcarolle No 2 , the Thème et Variations , Op 73 , and the Ballade Op 19 in its orchestral version . Fauré 's music began to appear more frequently in the record companies ' releases in the 1950s .

In the LP and particularly the CD era , the record companies built up a substantial catalogue of Fauré 's piano music , performed by French and non @-@ French musicians . The piano works were first recorded largely complete in the mid @-@ 1950s by Germaine Thyssens @-@ Valentin , with later sets being made by Grant Johannesen (1961) , Jean Doyen (1966 ? 1969) , Jean @-@ Philippe Collard (1974) , Paul Crossley (1984 ? 85) , Jean Hubeau (1988 ? 89) , and Kathryn Stott (1995) . Recital selections of major piano works have been recorded by many pianists including Vlado Perlemuter (1989) , Pascal Rogé (1990) , and Kun @-@ Woo Paik (2002) .