

DOWNBEAT

Tigran *A Fable*

VERVE 276 068 6

★★★★½

With *A Fable*, the 24-year-old Armenian pianist Tigran Hamasyan, who goes by Tigran, delivers a poetic and haunting album. His fourth album as a leader and first solo-piano recording, *A Fable* consists of Tigran's original compositions, which were inspired by Armenian poetry and folk tales, and arrangements of music by Armenian composers. The album is more stylistically similar to classical music than jazz, and its 13 emotionally laden character pieces express diverse images and affects. Tigran's voicings and rhythmic approach are similar to his countryman Aram Khachaturian's solo-piano compositions, and his use of lush harmonies, sustain pedal, open octaves and rubato make the music romantic and enchanting. Tigran's touch is sublime: Single notes sparkle, chords radiate luminously. His multi-sectional compositions present numerous themes, which are developed, exchanged for new ones and return in slightly altered ways.

The track sequencing gives the album a narrative arc. The brief "Rain Shadow" evokes a sad yet beautiful music box and introduc-



es "What The Waves Brought." The latter piece's roiling figures and numerous hemiolas give it a "wave" feel, and it includes two ethereal and dreamy sections featuring Tigran's overdubbed whistling, humming and singing. "Longing" and "Carnaval" both feature Tigran singing along with

layers of his overdubbed vocals. "Longing" is based on Hovhannes Tumanyan's poem about the feelings of exiled Armenians longing for home. "Carnaval," a medium-up celebratory piece, is the album's emotional high point and includes drummer Nate Wood's percussion. A jazz standard almost seems out of place here, yet Tigran's reharmonized version of "Someday My Prince Will Come" is melancholy and fits the album's aesthetic perfectly. The album's closing piece is Tigran's arrangement of the Armenian hymn "Mother, Where Are You?" which serves as a reflective and moving coda to this gorgeous album.

—Chris Robinson

A Fable: Rain Shadow; What The Waves Brought; The Spinners; Illusion; Samsara; Longing; Carnaval; The Legend Of The Moon; Someday My Prince Will Come; Kakavik (The Little Partridge); A Memory That Became A Dream; A Fable; Mother, Where Are You? (51:31)

Personnel: Tigran Hamasyan, piano.

Ordering info: vervemusicgroup.com