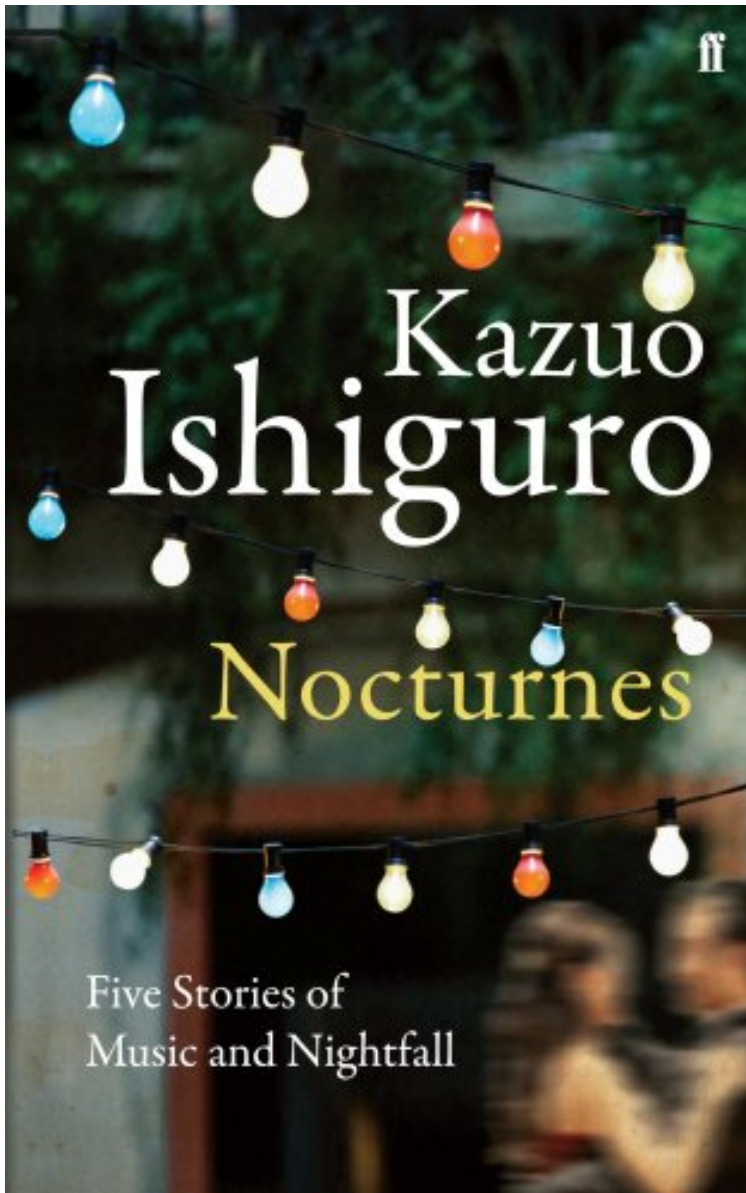


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Nocturnes: Five Stories of Music and Nightfall (English Edition)



Par Kazuo Ishiguro
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(Read ebook) Nocturnes: Five Stories of Music and Nightfall (English Edition)

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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteur'It was our third time playing the Godfather theme since lunch...'In a sublime short story collection, Kazuo Ishiguro explores ideas of love, music and the passing of time. From the piazzas of Italy to the Malvern Hills, a London flat to the 'hush-hush floor' of an exclusive Hollywood hotel, the characters we encounter range from young dreamers to cafe musicians to faded stars, all of them at some moment of reckoning.Gentle, intimate and witty, this quintet is marked by a haunting theme: the struggle to

keep alive a sense of life's romance, even as one gets older, relationships flounder and youthful hopes recede. If you enjoyed *Nocturnes: Five Stories of Music and Nightfall*, you might also like Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*, now available in Faber Modern Classics.

Chapter 1 The morning I spotted Tony Gardner sitting among the tourists, spring was just arriving here in Venice. We completed our first full week outside in the piazzaa relief, let me tell you, after all those stuffy hours performing from the back of the cafe, getting in the way of customers wanting to use the staircase. There was quite a breeze that morning, and our brand-new marquee was flapping all around us, but we were all feeling a little bit brighter and fresher, and I guess it showed in our music. But here I am talking like I'm a regular band member. Actually, I'm one of the gypsies, as the other musicians call us, one of the guys who move around the piazza, helping out whichever of the three cafe orchestras needs us. Mostly I play here at the Caff Lavena, but on a busy afternoon, I might do a set with the Quadri boys, go over to the Florian, then back across the square to the Lavena. I get on fine with them all and with the waiters too and in any other city I'd have a regular position by now. But in this place, so obsessed with tradition and the past, everything's upside down. Anywhere else, being a guitar player would go in a guy's favour. But here? A guitar! The cafe managers get uneasy. It looks too modern, the tourists won't like it. Last autumn I got myself a vintage jazz model with an oval sound-hole, the kind of thing Django Reinhardt might have played, so there was no way anyone would mistake me for a rock-and-roller. That made things a little easier, but the cafe managers, they still don't like it. The truth is, if you're a guitarist, you can be Joe Pass, they still wouldn't give you a regular job in this square. There's also, of course, the small matter of my not being Italian, never mind Venetian. It's the same for that big Czech guy with the alto sax. We're well liked, we're needed by the other musicians, but we don't quite fit the official bill. Just play and keep your mouth shut, that's what the cafe managers always say. That way the tourists won't know you're not Italian. Wear your suit, sunglasses, keep the hair combed back, no one will know the difference, just don't start talking. But I don't do too bad. All three cafe orchestras, especially when they have to play at the same time from their rival tents, they need a guitar something soft, solid, but amplified, thumping out the chords from the back. I guess you're thinking, three bands playing at the same time in the same square, that would sound like a real mess. But the Piazza San Marco's big enough to take it. A tourist strolling across the square will hear one tune fade out, another fade in, like he's shifting the dial on a radio. What tourists can't take too much of is the classical stuff, all these instrumental versions of famous arias. Okay, this is San Marco, they don't want the latest pop hits. But every few minutes they want something they recognise, maybe an old Julie Andrews number, or the theme from a famous movie. I remember once last summer, going from band to band and playing *The Godfather* nine times in one afternoon. Anyway there we were that spring morning, playing in front of a good crowd of tourists, when I saw Tony Gardner, sitting alone with his coffee, almost directly in front of us, maybe six metres back from our marquee. We get famous people in the square all the time, we never make a fuss. At the end of a number, maybe a quiet word will go around the band members. Look, there's Warren Beatty. Look, it's Kissinger. That woman, she's the one who was in the movie about the men who swap their faces. We're used to it. This is the Piazza San Marco after all. But when I realised it was Tony Gardner sitting there, that was different. I did get excited. Tony Gardner had been my mother's favourite. Back home, back in the communist days, it had been really hard to get records like that, but my mother had pretty much his whole collection. Once when I was a boy, I scratched one of those precious records. The apartment was so cramped, and a boy my age, you just had to move around sometimes, especially during those cold months when you couldn't go outside. So I was playing this game jumping from our little sofa to the armchair, and one time I misjudged it and hit the record player. The needle went across the record with a zip this was long before CDs and my mother came in from the kitchen and began shouting at me. I felt so bad, not just because she was shouting at me, but because I knew it was one of Tony Gardner's records, and I knew how much it meant to her. And I knew that this one too would now have those popping noises going through it while he crooned those American songs. Years later, when I was working in Warsaw and I got to know about black-market records, I gave my mother replacements of all her worn-out Tony Gardner albums, including that one I scratched. It took me over three years, but I kept getting them, one by one, and each time I went back to see her I'd bring her another. So you see why I got so excited when I recognised him, barely six metres away. At first I couldn't quite believe it, and I might have been a beat late with a chord change. Tony Gardner! What would my dear mother have said if she'd known! For her sake, for the sake of her memory, I had to go and say something to him, never mind if the other musicians laughed and said I was acting like a bell-boy. But of course I couldn't just rush over to him, pushing aside the tables and chairs. There was our set to finish. It was agony, I can tell you,

another three, four numbers, and every second I thought he was about to get up and walk off. But he kept sitting there, by himself, staring into his coffee, stirring it like he was really puzzled by what the waiter had brought him. He looked like any other American tourist, dressed in a pale-blue polo shirt and loose grey trousers. His hair, very dark, very shiny on those record covers, was almost white now, but there was still plenty of it, and it was immaculately groomed in the same style he had back then. When I first spotted him, he had his dark glasses in his hand. I doubt if I had recognised him otherwise, but as our set went on and I kept watching him, he put them on his face, took them off again, then back on again. He looked preoccupied and it disappointed me to see he wasn't really listening to our music. Then our set was over. I hurried out of the tent without saying anything to the others, made my way to Tony Gardner's table, then had a moment's panic not knowing how to start the conversation. I was standing behind him, but some sixth sense made him turn and look up at me. I guess it was all those years of having fans come up to him and next thing I was introducing myself, explaining how much I admired him, how I was in the band he had just been listening to, how my mother had been such a fan, all in one big rush. He listened with a grave expression, nodding every few seconds like he was my doctor. I kept talking and all he said every now and then was: Is that so? After a while I thought it was time to leave and I started to move away when he said: So you come from one of those communist countries. That must have been tough. That's all in the past. I did a cheerful shrug. Were a free country now. A democracy. That's good to hear. And that was your crew playing for us just now. Sit down. You want some coffee? I told him I didn't want to impose, but there was now something gently insistent about Mr. Gardner. No, no, sit down. Your mother liked my records, you were saying. So I sat down and told him some more. About my mother, our apartment, the black-market records. And though I couldn't remember what the albums were called, I started describing the pictures on their sleeves the way I remembered them, and each time I did this, he put his finger up in the air and say something like: Oh, that would be inimitable. The inimitable Tony Gardner. I think we were both really enjoying this game, but then I noticed Mr. Gardner's gaze move off me, and I turned just in time to see a woman coming up to our table. She was one of those American ladies who are so classy, with great hair, clothes and figure, you don't realise they're not so young until you see them up close. Far away, I might have mistaken her for a model out of those glossy fashion magazines. But when she sat down next to Mr. Gardner and pushed her dark glasses onto her forehead, I realised she must be at least fifty, maybe more. Mr. Gardner said to me: This is Lindy, my wife. Mrs. Gardner flashed me a smile that was kind of forced, then said to her husband: So who's this? You've made yourself a friend. That's right, honey. I was having a good time talking here with . . . I'm sorry, friend, I don't know your name. Jan, I said quickly. But friends call me Janeck. Lindy Gardner said: You mean your nicknames longer than your real name? How does that work? Don't be rude to the man, honey. I'm not being rude. Don't make fun of the man's name, honey. That's a good girl. Lindy Gardner turned to me with a helpless sort of expression. You know what he's talking about? Did I insult you? No, no, I said, not at all, Mrs. Gardner. He's always telling me I'm rude to the public. But I'm not rude. Was I rude to you just . . .

Revue de presse s from the UK: A brilliant new book . . . Art, its dangers, its pains and its gaiety [are] all topics seriously considered in this accomplished book. Frank Kermode, London of Books Spellbinding . . . Each of these stories is heartbreaking in its own way, but some have moments of great comedy, and they all require a level of attention that, typically, Ishiguro's writing rewards . . . The final story [is] exquisite. Observer By now it is clear that this exquisite stylist is serious in his pursuit of a minimal perhaps even universal mode of expression for the emotional experiences that define our lives as human. Nocturnes is a set of poised and playful reflections on the falling away of sentiment . . . These stories recall Ishiguro's best known novel, The Remains of the Day. In their surreal touches they resonate with The Unconsoled. And in their deceptively simple exploration of love and loss, they build on the achievement of Never Let Me Go. The Times It is hardly surprising that a writer as resonant, and as emotionally pitch-perfect, as Kazuo Ishiguro should be so keen on music . . . [The title story's] set-up is so beautifully engineered that it left me simultaneously gasping in admiration and shaking with laughter. Sunday Telegraph These stories come up on you quietly, in Ishiguro's strangely weightless style [and] haunt you for days . . . A nocturne is a piece of music inspired by, or evocative of, the night . . . These little pieces could only be the work of a great composer. Evening Standard Chopin is the composer most associated with the form [of the nocturne], bringing to it grace and beauty, fragility and poise, qualities conspicuous in this diverting collection of five stories by Kazuo Ishiguro . . . Serious as Ishiguro's intentions surely are, in these well-tempered, witty and droll stories he is more playful than he has ever been. Glasgow Herald Ishiguro's volume has the quality of a song cycle, with recurring themes developed in different guises . . . They resonate long after the book is set aside. Daily

TelegraphIts hardly surprising that the arrival of a new Ishiguro book makes a reader eager to pounce on it . . . The quintet consists of first person narratives and each one is likeable, original and succeed in sustaining the reader to the final word . . . There are echoes of Somerset Maugham. But Ishiguro, the most literary of writers, is seldom derivative. [He is] a canny writer who is cool, poised and well capable of shifting directions and shaping surprises . . . Somehow he manages to say a great deal about the business of being alive.The Irish TimesFrom the Hardcover edition.