

One of the great frustrations in [George Gershwin](#)'s musical life -- actually, given the great success he enjoyed, perhaps the only great frustration of his musical life -- was the fact that he was never given credit for being a serious composer. His most ambitious large-scale works tend to be attempts to garner just that sort of credibility: "An American in Paris," "Rhapsody in Blue," "Piano Concerto in F Major" -- these are not meant to be pop confections. And yet they point up what is probably the essential truth about [Gershwin](#)'s abilities: as a classical composer, he wasn't bad. As a composer of popular song and dance music, he was an unparalleled genius. And his music is, in many ways, most effective in the most intimate arrangements and settings, as pianist Michael Dulin makes clear with this respectful but joyful collection of [Gershwin](#) song arrangements, preludes, and improvisations. Dulin plays with the kind of grace and elegance that the composer would have appreciated, freely using rubato to bring out the graceful arc of his melodies, even as he adds a touch of barrelhouse stride piano here and there for a more rollicking good-time effect. Given Dulin's generally decorous playing style, a closer and more intimate recorded sound would have been preferable, but overall this is a very fine and beautifully played overview of [Gershwin](#)'s piano music.

- Rick Anderson

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