

Michael Dulin's new release, "Follow the River," is his first release of new original material since his 2003 chart-topping "Atmospheres." Anyone who has seen Dulin play live knows his virtuosity at the piano allows him to do virtually anything he can imagine on this most magnificent of musical instruments and make it all look easy. A graduate of Juilliard, Dulin is a lifelong musician who has immersed himself in just about every kind of music, from classical works to being a touring member of The Temptations Review, from hymns and gospel music to playing regularly with a group of Southern jazz legends. Dulin can do it all, and this myriad of influences works its way into his music, making it impossible to classify (a good thing!). Most of the thirteen tracks are more classical in style than jazz, and ten are solo piano - just Dulin and his Steinway. The other three are beautifully embellished with strings, percussion, and other instruments for a more orchestrated sound. I have always preferred Dulin solo, so this CD is just my cup of tea, and my favorite of his eight albums.

The title track begins the journey on an energetic and upbeat note, suggesting a sense of adventure as well as fun. Or perhaps the energy comes from the flow of the river itself rather than its followers. Either way, it's a glorious start! "A Mother's Love" is a much slower and more subdued ballad with a slight southern accent (Dulin is from Alabama). The middle section becomes more effervescent, and then returns to the original theme. "Farewell" is one of my favorites. Chopin-like in its emotional intensity and tricky passages, it's a real beauty! "Siren Song" is one of the orchestrated pieces, and is as enchanting as its title implies - almost like floating on a cloud. "Nimrod" refers to a Biblical character mentioned in Genesis as the first hunter, and tells of his adventures and travels. "Regret" is one of my favorite Dulin pieces ever. It begins simply with a lovely melody that becomes much darker and more intense as it develops, conveying a tangle of emotions - a great piece! Dulin has a tradition of including a lullaby on each of his albums, and this time it's "Teatime for Emily," a light, carefree piece that suggests the innocence of childhood. A very spiritual and religious man, Dulin expresses his faith and reverence in "Family Bible." "April Showers" is a lively and colorful ode to spring that celebrates the refreshing rains that come at this time of year. "Promised Land" is another of the orchestrated pieces, and the rhythm tracks give it more of a smooth jazz sound, full of joy and inner peace. The closing track, "Gone Fishin'," ends the CD with a great big grin. Also orchestrated, this piece is pure musical fun. What an album!

As a reviewer, it is amazing to find an artist who starts out great and just keeps getting

better. Not many pianists have Dulin's ease at the piano (he practices all the time, kids!!!), and as a composer, he has few peers. Give yourself a treat and check out "Follow the River." It is available from michaeldulin.com, cdbaby.com, iTunes, and amazon.com. I give it my highest recommendation!

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