George Gershwin's Song Book

18 of George Gershwin's most famous songs, including his own special arrangements for the piano.

Edited and revised by Herman Wasser"
THIS volume contains eighteen George Gershwin songs which were his own favorites. In each case the words and music in their original form appear, and then the song is followed by special piano arrangements which Gershwin made for the purpose of playing for his friends.

This book was published originally in de luxe form in 1932. The edition was quickly sold out, but it was felt that during the depression the public would not wish to buy more copies of a high-priced volume of this sort. During the past years there has been an insistent demand that this book be reissued in a popular-price edition. It now appears in this form.

A special word about Mr. Gershwin's piano arrangements: ever since the original de luxe volume appeared these arrangements have become famous and many piano teachers have taught them to their pupils. Mr. Herman Wasserman, the renowned piano teacher of New York City (who was Mr. Gershwin's piano teacher), has for this special edition refigured the arrangements and eliminated a few typographical errors that appeared in the original edition. For these arrangements especially the book is recommended to piano teachers and students.
Feb 10, 1946

To Rosemary,

With best wishes always

and many, many more

happy birthdays!!

Jane,

[Signature]
GEORGE
GERSHWIN'S
Song-book

Special Piano Arrangements Edited and Revised by
HERMAN WASSERMAN

SIMON AND SCHUSTER · INC ·
NEW YORK
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INTRODUCTION BY GEORGE GERSHWIN

AMERICA, in the last twenty years, has become a veritable hot-bed of popular music. During this same fruitful period it has mothered some of the best music to be found in the musical comedy of the time. The way had been prepared, of course, as long ago as the epoch before the Civil War, when the minstrel show was in its palmy days and we already had truly popular songs and popular composers, not to speak of the faint beginnings of jazz bands and Tin Pan Alley methods long before the pavement of Tin Pan Alley was laid.

American popular music, since its origin, has been steadily gaining in originality; today it may truly lay claim to being the most vital of contemporary popular music. Unfortunately, however, most songs die at an early age and are soon completely forgotten by the selfsame public that once sang them with such gusto. The reason for this is that they are sung and played too much when they are alive, and cannot stand the strain of their very popularity. This is especially true since the invention of the phonograph, and more so since the widespread conquest of the radio.

When the publishers asked me to gather a group of my songs for publication I took up the idea enthusiastically, because I thought that this might be a means of prolonging their life. It also occurred to me that the idea might be taken up by other composers of popular music.

Sheet music, as ordinarily printed for mass sales, is arranged with an eye to simplicity. The publishers cannot be blamed for getting out simplified versions of songs, since the majority of the purchasers of popular music are little girls with little hands, who have not progressed very far in their study of the piano.

At that, if you have the patience to compare the arrangements of our old-time popular music with those of our latter-day hits, the latter-day arrangements, simple as they are, will appear complicated by contrast.

Gradually, with the general increase of technical skill at the piano, there has arisen a demand for arrangements that shall consider that skill. Playing my songs as frequently as I do at private parties, I have naturally been led to compose numerous variations upon them, and to indulge the desire for complication and variety that every composer feels when he manipulates the same material over and over again. It was this habit of mine that led to the original suggestion to publish a group of songs not only in the simplified arrangements that the public knew, but also in the variations that I had devised.

Hence, in this book, the transcriptions for solo piano of each chorus, after its appearance in the regular sheet-music form. Some of these are very difficult; they have been put in for those good pianists, of whom there is a growing number, who enjoy popular music but who rebel at the too-simple arrangements issued by the publishers with the average pianist in view.

In a country that spends so much money on its dance music it was inevitable that there should be a radical development in the playing of its most important instrument—the piano. The evolution of our popular pianistic style really began with the introduction of ragtime, just before the Spanish-American War, and came to its culminating point in the jazz era that followed upon the Great War. A number of names come crowding into my memory: Mike Bernard, Les Copeland, Melville Ellis, Lucky
Roberts, Zez Confrey, Arden and Ohman, and others. Each of these was responsible for the popularization of a new technique, or a new wrinkle in playing. Some of my readers will recall various of these procedures, of which a number were really but stunts. There was the habit Les Copeland had of thumping his left hand onto a blurred group of notes, from which he would slide into a regular chord; it made a rather interesting pulse in the bass, a sort of happy-go-lucky sforzando effect. Then there was Bernard’s habit of playing the melody in the left hand, while he wove a filigree of counterpoint with the right; for a time this was all the rage, as it sounded pretty well to ears that were not accustomed to the higher musical processes. Confrey’s contribution has been of a more permanent nature, as some of his piano figures found their way into serious American composition.

To all of these predecessors I am indebted; some of the effects I use in my transcriptions derive from their style of playing the piano.

Now, the American piano player of popular songs has managed to keep pace with the progress of the song that he plays. As the American popular song has grown richer in harmony and rhythm, so has the player grown more subtle and incisive in his performance of it.

One chief hint as to the style best adapted to performance of these pieces is in order. To play American popular music most effectively one must guard against the natural tendency to make too frequent use of the sustaining pedal. Our study of the great romantic composers has trained us in the method of the legato, whereas our popular music asks for staccato effects, for almost a stencilled style. The rhythms of American popular music are more or less brittle; they should be made to snap, and at times to cackle. The more sharply the music is played, the more effective it sounds.

Most pianists with a classical training fail lamentably in the playing of our ragtime or jazz because they use the pedaling of Chopin when interpreting the blues of Handy. The romantic touch is very good in a sentimental ballad, but in a tune of strict rhythm it is somewhat out of place.

I wish to thank B. G. De Sylva, Irving Caesar, Ballard MacDonald, Gus Kahn, and my brother, Ira Gershwin (Arthur Francis), for their permission to use their lyrics in this volume.

I also wish to thank Dr. Albert Sirmaj for his assistance in helping me with the proofs and the preparation of this material in book form; and also Mr. Constantin Alajalov, whose splendid drawings have so well caught the spirit of the songs.

George Gershwin
GEORGE GERSHWIN'S SONG-BOOK
SWANEE

WORDS BY IRVING CAESAR

Allegro moderato

I've been away from you a long time,

I never thought I'd miss you so

Somehow I feel Your love was real,

Near you I long to

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The birds are singing, It is song time.

The banjos strummin' soft and low; I know that you

Yearn for me too, Swan-ee, You're calling me.

REFRAIN

Swan - ee, How I love you, How I love you
My dear old Swan-ee, I'd give the world to be among the folks in Dixie even know my Mammy's waiting for me, praying for me Down by the Swan-ee, The folks up north will see me no more When
(Spoken)

I go to the Swan-ee shore. (I'll be hap-py, I'll be hap-py)

TRIO

Swan-ee, Swan-ee, I am com-ing back to

Swan-ee, Mam-my, Mam-my,

I love the old folks at home.
N O B O D Y B U T Y O U

W O R D S  B Y  B.  G.  D E  S Y L V A

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Bil-lie Burke,  Al-ice Joyce none of them were my choice,

But when I met you,

My thump-ing heart From the ve-ry start

Knew right a-way dear That's why I say dear
REFRAIN

No - bod - y but you,

No - bod - y will do

I have seen them all,  But did - n't

fall                Un - til I saw you       Who's
locked in my heart,

Who's

my little Yum

Yum?

Honey, tell me

who

You know it's nobody but you.
I'LL BUILD A STAIRWAY TO PARADISE

WORDS BY B. G. DE SYLVA AND ARTHUR FRANCIS

All you Preach-ers
Who de-light in pan-ning the danc-ing teach-ers

Let me tell you there are a lot of fea-tures
Of the dance that car-ry you

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through The gates of Heaven. It's madness.

To be always sitting around in sadness When you could be learning the

steps of gladness, You'll be happy when you can do just

six or seven; Begin today! You'll find it nice
The quickest way to Paradise

When you practise,

Here's the thing to do
Simply say as you go.

REFRAIN
p-f Con spirito

I'll build a stairway to Paradise
With a

new step every day!

I'm going to get there at
an - y price, Stand a - side, I'm on my way! I've got the blues. And up a bove it's so fair; Shoes! Go on and carry me there! I'll build a stair - way to Par - a - dise, With a new step ev - 'ry day.
Vigorously
DO IT AGAIN

WORDS BY B. G. DE SYLVA

Tell me, tell me,

what did you do to me? I just got a thrill that was new to me,

When your two lips were pressed to mine. When you held me,

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I wasn't snug-gling, You should know I real-ly was strug-gl-ling

re-frai-n
p-mf In slow fox trot-time

Oh, do it a-gain,

I may say, "No, no, no, no, no," But do it a-gain.
My lips just ache to have you take, The kiss that's
cresc.

waiting for you. You know if you do,

You won't regret it, come and get it. Oh,

no one is near; I may cry, "Oh, oh, oh, oh,
"oh," But no one will hear. Mama may

scold me 'cause she told me It is naughty, but then,

Oh, do it again,

Please do it again!

a tempo
Plaintively

PIANO SOLO

\[ \text{PIANO SOLO} \]

\[ \text{Plaintively} \]

\[ mp \text{ ben cantando} \]

\[ \text{piu dim.} \]
FASCINATING RHYTHM

WORDS BY IRA GERSHWIN

Moderato

VOICE

PIANO

Got a little rhythm, A rhythm, a rhythm
That pit-a-pats through my brain.

So darn persistent, The day isn't distant
When it'll drive me insane.
Comes in the morning

out any warning, And hangs around all day.

I'll have to sneak up to it, Some-day, and speak up to it,

I hope it listens when I say:
REFRAIN

"Fascinating Rhythm You've got me on the go! Fascinating Rhythm I'm all a-quiver. What a mess you're making! The

neighbours want to know why I'm always shaking just like a flivver.

Each morning I get up with the sun,
(Start a hop- ping nev- er stop- ping) To find at night, no work_ has been
done. I know that once it did- n't mat- ter But
now you're do- ing wrong; When you start to pat- ter, I'm so un - hap- py.
Won't you take a day off? De- cide to run a- long Some- where
far away off! And make it snappy! Oh, how I
long to be— the man I used to be!
Fascinating Rhythm, Oh, won't you stop picking on me!
OH, LADY BE GOOD

WORDS BY IRA GERSHWIN

I love 'em all, tall or small.
All dressed up no place to go, Each evening I'm awfully blue.
But somehow they don't grow fond, They stagger but never fall.

Listen to my tale of woe, It's terribly sad, but true.
Auburn and brunette and blonde, I love 'em all, tall or small.
I must win some win-some miss; Can't go on like this.
Winter's gone, and now it's Spring! Love! where is thy sting?

I could blossom out I know, With some-body just like you, so,
If some-body won't respond, I'm going to end it all, so,

REFRAIN
p-mf Slow and gracefully
Oh, sweet and lovely lady, be good! Oh
Oh, sweet and lovely lady, be good! Oh

lady, be good to me!
lady, be good to me!
I am so awfully misunderstood,
I am so awfully misunderstood,

So lady be good to me.
So lady be good to me.

This please have some pity,
This is tulip weather,

I'm all a-
So let's put
lone in this big city; I tell you I'm just a
two and two together.

I tell you I'm just a

lone some babe in the wood So lady, be good
lone some babe in the wood So lady, be good

1 2
to me! to me! me! me!
Rather slow (with humor)

PIANO SOLO

---

[Music notation image]

---

[Music notation image]
il basso marcato

poco a poco cresc.
SOMEbody loves me

Words by B. G. De Sylva and Ballard MacDonald

When this world began
It was Heaven's plan,

There should be a girl for ev'ry single man;

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To my great regret
Someone has upset,

Heaven's pretty program for we've never met; I'm

clutching at straws, just because I may meet her yet.

REFRAIN

Somebody loves me I wonder who,
I wonder who can she be.

Somebody loves me I wish I knew.

Who can she be worries me.

For every girl who passes me I shout, Hey!
you.

May...
In a moderate tempo

PIANO SOLO
SWEET AND LOW DOWN

WORDS BY IRA GERSHWIN

Moderato

There's a cabaret in this city-

I can recommend to you;

Peps you up like electricity-

When the band is blowing "blue."

They play nothing classic, oh no! down there;

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They crave nothing else but the low down there
If you need a tonic,

And the need is chronic;
If you're in a crisis,
My advice is:

Grab a cab and go down
To where the band is playing;
Where milk and honey flow down,
Where everyone is saying, "Blow..."
that Sweet and Low-Down!"
(tu- tu!) Bus-y as a bea-ver, You'll

dance un-til you tot-ter; You're sure to get the fe-ver For

noth-ing could be hot-ter Oh, that Sweet and Low-Down!

Phil-os- o-pher or dea-con, You sim-ply have to weak-en.
Spoken:

Hear those shuffling feet! — You can’t keep your seat! — Professor!

Start your beat! — Come along! Get in it! You’ll love the syncopation! The

minute they begin it, You’re shouting to the nation: “Blow

that Sweet and Low-Down!” Low-Down!!
Slow (in a jazzy manner)

PIANO SOLO

57
THAT CERTAIN FEELING

WORDS BY IRA GERSHWIN

Moderato e semplice

VOICE

Moderato e semplice

PIANO

Steve: Knew it from the start
Tip-Toes: I have symp-toms, too,

Love would play a part
just the same as you.

Felt that feeling
When they centered,

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It would be ideal
If that's the way you
Since you've come my

But tell me is it really real? You gave me
I hit the ceiling,
That certain feeling

That certain feeling,
The first time I met you
That certain feeling

I could not forget you.
That certain feeling

I could not forget you.
You were completely sweet, Oh, what could I do?
I felt it happen just as you came in view.

I wanted phrases To Grew sort of dizzy

That certain

“Gee! Who is he?”

That certain

The one that they all love

I'm here to confess, it
No use concealing. I've got what they
Is so appealing. No words can ex-
cresc.  

call love. Now we're together. Let's
press it. I cannot hide it. I
mf
un pochett. rit.
find out whether. You're feeling that feeling
must confide it. I'm feeling that feeling
un pochett. rit.

mf a tempo poco rit.  

1 tempo poco rit.  

too. You gave me too.

mf a tempo poco rit.  

2
Ardently

PIANO SOLO
THE MAN I LOVE

WORDS BY IRA GERSHWIN

Andantino semplice

When the mel-low moon be-gins to beam, Ev-ry night I dream a lit-tle dream,

And of course Prince Charm-ing is the theme The he for me. Al -
though I re-al-ize as well as you, It is sel-dom that a dream comes true,

To me it's clear That he'll ap-pear.

REFRAIN

Some-day he'll come a-long, The man I love; And he'll be big and strong,

The man I love; And when he comes my way, I'll do my best to
make him stay. He'll look at me and smile,

I'll understand; And in a little while He'll take my hand;

And though it seems absurd, I know we both won't say a word. Maybe I shall meet him Sunday, Maybe Monday, maybe

mp poco espress.
Still I'm sure to meet him one day, maybe Tuesday will be

my good news day. He'll build a little home, just meant for two,

From which I'll never roam, who would would you? And so all else above,

I'm waiting for the man I love, love.
PIANO SOLO

Slow and in singing style
un poco rit.

a tempo
dim.
CLAP YO' HANDS

WORDS BY IRA GERSHWIN

Moderato

VOICE

Come on, you children,

Gather around, Gather around, you children,

And we will

lose that evil spirit called the Voodoo.

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Nothing but trouble if he has found,

If he has found you, children, But you can chase the Hoo-doo

with the dance that you do.

Let me lead the way; Jubilee today.
He'll never hound you, stamp on the ground, you children! Come on!

REFRAIN

Clap a yo' hand! Slap a yo' thigh! Hallelu - ya! Hallelu - 

lu - ya! Ev - ry - bod - y come a - long and join the ju - bi - 

leel. Clap a yo' hand!
Slap-a yo' thigh! Don't you lose time, don't you lose time, Come a-long, it's

shake yo' shoes time now for you and me!

On the sands of time you are only a

pebble;

Remember, trouble must be
treated just like a rebel, Send him to the dungeon!

Clap-a yo' hand! Slap-a yo' thigh! Hal-le-lu-yah! Hal-le-lu-yah! Everybody come along and join the jubilee.

Lee.

Lee.

Red.
Spirited (but sustained)

PIANO SOLO
Moderato grazioso

Jimmy: I re-mem-ber the
un poco rit.

Kay: Sweets we've tasted be-

bliss
fore,

Of that won-der-ful kiss.

Can-not stand an en-core.

I knew that a

boy Could nev-er have more joy
From an-y lit-tle miss.

miss Who al-ways gives a
kiss Would soon be-come a

bore.

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Kay: I re-mem-ber it quite,
     'Twas a won-der-ful night!

Jimmy: I can't see that at all
     True love nev-er should fall.

Kay: I, was on-ly teas-ing
     What you did was pleas-ing. Oh,

Jimmy: Oh, how I'd a-dore it,
     If you would en-core it. Oh,

REFRAIN

p-ff a tempo

do, do, do what you've done, done, done be-fore,

bab-y. Do, do, do what I do, do, do a-dore,
poco espressivo

baby. Let's try again, Sigh again, Fly again to

poco espressivo

heaven. Baby, see, It's A, B, C, I love you and

deciso

you love me. I know, know, know what a beau, beau, beau, should

Jimmy: You dear, dear, dear little dear, dear, dear, come

do, here

baby. So don't, don't, don't say it

snap-ty And see, see, see little
won't, won't, won't come true, baby. My
me, me, me make you happy. Kay: My

heart begins to hum: Dum-de-dum-de-
heart begins to sigh Di-de-di-de-
dum-dum-dum, So do, do, do what you've done, done, done be-
di-di-di, So do, do, do what you've done, done, done be-

fore.
Oh, fore.
In a swinging manner
MY ONE AND ONLY

WORDS BY IRA GERSHWIN

Moderato

VOICE

af-fec-tion
you woke up,

In your
di-rec-tion
you spoke up,

You know
My praise
I'm fit and

chant-ed.

able.

Though we're
not stran-gers

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sin-cere-ly, My cards are on the ta-ble.
the dan-gers Of tak ing me for grant-ed.

There must be lots of oth-er men you hy-pono-tize.
And if you cared you should have told me long a-go.

All of a sud-den I've be-gun to re-al-ize as fol-lows:
Dear, oth-er-wise how in the world was I to know? Jim. Oh, lis-ten:

refrain

p-mf a tempo

Jimmy: My one and on-ly, What am I gon-na do if you turn me down,
When I'm so crazy over you?

I'd be so lonely, Where am I gonna go if you turn me down?

Why blaren all my skies of blue? I tell you

I'm not asking any miracle; It can be done! It
can be done! I know a clergyman who will grow lyrical

And make us one, and make us one. So my one and only, There

isn't a reason why you should turn me down. When I'm so crazy over

you! you!
Lively (in strong rhythm)

PIANO SOLO

Very rhythmic
'S WONDERFUL

WORDS BY IRA GERSHWIN

Moderato

Peter: Life has just begun.
Frankie: Don't mind telling you,

Don't know what you've done,
That you thrill me through,

But I'm all a thrill.
With a tender pash.

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How can words express
When you said you care,
Your divine appeal?

Mag-ine my emo-sh;

You can never guess
I swore then and there
All the love I feel.

Per-ma-nent de-vosh.

From now on lady I insist,
You made all other boys seem
blah;

un poco rit.

For me no other girls exist.
Just you alone filled me with Aah!

un poco rit.
You can't blame me for feeling
From now on my heart's working

OH! 'S wonderfull!

That you should care for

me!
STRIKE UP THE BAND

WORDS BY IRA GERSHWIN

In slow march time

fought in nineteen seventeen, Rum-ta-ta-tum-tum-tum! And

drove the tyrant from the scene, Rum-ta-ta-tum-tum-tum! We're

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in a bigger, better war For your patriotic

pastime. We don't know what we're fighting for, But we
didn't know the last time! So load the cannon! Draw the blade!

Rum-ta-ta-tum-tum-tum! Come on and join the "Big Parade!"
**REFRAIN**

Let the drums roll out!  
Let the trumpet call!

While the people shout!  
Strike up the band!

Hear the cymbals ring!  
Calling one and all!

*(Spoken) (Boom, boom, boom!)*  
*(Imitation of Trpt.) (Ta-ta-ta-ta-ta!)*
(Shouted) (Left, right!) ra-ta-ta-ta-ta-ta!

To the mar-tial swing Strike up the band!

There is work to be done, to be done! There's a

Yan-kee Doo, Doo-dle-oo, Doo-dle-oo, We'll come

war to be won, to be won! Come, you son of a son of a

through, Doo-dle-oo, Doo-dle-oo, For the red, white and blue, Doo-dle-
gun! Take your stand! Fall in line, yea bo!

oo, Lend a hand! With our flag un-furled,

Come along, let's go! Hey, leader! Strike up the band!

We can lick the world! Hey, leader! Strike up the band!

Let the band!
In spirited march tempo
piquantly
LIZA

WORDS BY IRA GERSHWIN AND GUS KAHN

Moderato

VOICE

PIANO

Moon shin-in' on the river Come along, my Liza!

Breeze sing-in' through the tree-tops Come along, my Liza!

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Some-thin' might- y sweet I want to whis- per sweet and low,

That you ought to know, my Li- za! I get lone-some, hon- ey, When I'm

all a- lone so long. Don't make me wait;

Don't hes- i- tate; Come and hear my song:
REFRAIN

*p-mf* a tempo

Li - za, Li - za, skies are gray,

But if you'll smile on me All the clouds'll roll a - way.

Li - za, Li - za, don't de - lay,

Come, keep me com - pa - ny, And the clouds'll roll a - way.
See the honey moon a-shinin' down; We
should make a date with Par-son Brown. So, Li-za,

Li-za, name the day When you be -

long to me And the clouds 'll roll a-way. way.
Very marked poco a poco cresc.

poco a poco cresc.
I GOT RHYTHM

WORDS BY IRA GERSHWIN

VOICE

Lively

Days can be sunny With

PIANO

ne'er a sigh; Don't need what mon-e-y can

buy.

Birds in the tree sing Their

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Why shouldn't we sing a day-ful of song,
I'm chip-her all the day,
Happy with my lot.
How do I get that way?

Look at what I've got:
REFRAIN (with abandon)

I got rhythm,
I got music,

I got my man
Who could ask for anything more?

I got daisies
In green pastures,
I got my man
Who could ask for anything more?

Old Man
Trouble,— I don't mind him, You won't find him

Round my door. I got star-light, I got

sweet dreams, I got my man Who could ask for any-thing

more, Who could ask for any-thing more? more?
PIANO SOLO

Very marked

R.H.

P

mf

P
WHO CARES?

WORDS BY IRA GERSHWIN

Moderato Brightly

Let it rain and thunder!

Let a million firms go under!

I am not concerned with

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Stocks and bonds that I've been burned with.
I love you and

you love me And that's how it will always be, And nothing else can ever mean a

thing.
Who cares what the public chatters?

Love's the only thing that matters.
Who

poco rall.
REFRAIN

p-mf (in a lilting manner)

cares
If the sky cares to

p-mf

melody well pronounced

fall in the sea?

Who

cares What banks fail in Yonkers?

Long as you've got a kiss that conquers,
Why should I care? Life is

One long jubilee, So long as I care

---

---

---

2nd time optional

---

---

---

---

---

---

Who me.
Rather slow
A Tribute To

GEORGE GERSHWIN'S
SONG BOOK

"The real gold of the book is to be found in the inimitable treatments of his best songs, his uncanny mastery of the piano, especially in matters of rhythm and modern color, all of which have evolved into a brilliant and radically individual style which at once becomes identified with Gershwin and with no one else. In these pages any pianist of average ability will find several evenings of entertainment for himself and his friends."

—The New York Times