

## AMERICAN RECORD GUIDE

Cincinnati, OH

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*Americans in Paris***RAVEL:** *Ma Mere l'Oye*; **BARBER:** *Souvenirs*;  
**FAURE:** *Dolly*; **BROWN:** *Chant*; **GERSHWIN:**  
*American in Paris*Jerome Lowenthal & Michael Brown, p  
CAG 116—61 minutes

"Americans in Paris" is the title of the piano duet program performed here. It includes two of the greatest piano duet suites by French composers, probably the greatest by an American, the first recording of a short contribution by Brown, and, naturally, has to end with a one piano, four-hands version of Gershwin's symphonic masterpiece.

Lowenthal needs little introduction as one of the elder American pianists (b. 1932) and teacher of so many over the past 42 years. Brown is a Juilliard graduate who once studied piano with Lowenthal and is now teaching at Brooklyn College.

As an American who has performed piano duets in Paris, I hoped there would be a good story behind this recording. But it was recorded in New York in 2014. The Ravel, Barber, and Fauré performances all stand up well to the dozens of others available. The pianists add narration before each of the *Ma Mere l'Oye* movements—an unusual and effective touch. Brown's brief piece has an interesting interplay of melodic lines that create harmonies reminiscent of the French works that precede it here.

The Italian pianist Alessandra Gelfini made the four-hands arrangement of Gershwin's *American in Paris* in 2013. Both solo piano and two-piano versions have been available for decades, and now this new duet version can be downloaded from [www.preludiomusic.com](http://www.preludiomusic.com). Lowenthal and Brown give as convincing a performance as I could imagine, but I really miss the orchestration. I have performed Gershwin's only piano duet arrangement (*Cuban Overture*) and had the same feelings. It is Gershwin though, and the melodies, harmonies, and rhythms we all know and love are all there, performed with the panache only a couple of excellent American pianists can supply.

HARRINGTON

