



Gershwin Porgy and Bess Highlights

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KEVIN SHORT · MORGAN STATE UNIVERSITY CHOIR
THE PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA · MARIN ALSOP



George Gershwin (1898-1937)

Highlights from **Porgy and Bess** (1935)

Lyrics by **DuBose Heyward and Ira Gershwin**
Libretto by **DuBose Heyward**
based on the play *Porgy* by **Dorothy and DuBose Heyward**

Act 1

1 Introduction 1.03

Scene 1: Catfish Row, a Summer Evening

2 Summertime 2.39

3 A Woman Is a Sometime Thing 2.17

Scene 2: Serena’s Room, the Following Night

4 Where Is Brudder Robbins? He’s a Gone, Gone, Gone 5.24

5 Overflow 1.34

6 My Man’s Gone Now 4.04

Act 2

Scene 1: Catfish Row, a Month Later

7 I Got Plenty o’ Nuttin’ 3.08

8 Lo’ Bess, Goin’ to Picnic? 3.48

9 Bess, You Is My Woman Now 5.22

10 Oh, I Can’t Sit Down 2.17

11 Porgy, I Hates to Go 2.04

Scene 2: Kittiwah Island, Evening, the Same Day

12 It Ain’t Necessarily So 4.05

13 Hear What I Tell You 3.10

14 What You Want wid Bess? 4.08

Scene 3: Catfish Row, before Dawn, a Week Later

15 Now de Time, oh Gawd — I Loves You, Porgy 7.16

Act 3

Scene 1: Catfish Row, the Next Night

16	Andantino dolente	1.20
17	Clara, Clara — Jesus Is Walkin’ on de Water	2.20

Scene 2: Catfish Row, the Next Afternoon

18	Cheer Up, Sistuh	0.52
19	There’s a Boat dat’s Leavin’ Soon for New York	2.25
20	You Low Crawl’in’ Hound!	1.57

Scene 3: Catfish Row, a Week Later

21	Thank Gawd I’s Home Again!	3.49
22	Oh Lawd, I’m on My Way	1.43

Total playing time: 67.01

Bess, Clara, Serena, Choir Soli
Porgy
Sportin’ Life
Crown, Jake, Choir Soli
Maria, Choir Soli
Mingo, Choir Soli

Angel Blue, Soprano
Lester Lynch, Baritone
Chauncey Packer, Tenor
Kevin Short, Bass-Baritone
Alexandria Crichlow, Soprano
Darrin Scott, Tenor

Morgan State University Choir
Director: Eric Conway

The Philadelphia Orchestra
Concertmaster: David Kim
Assistant Conductor: Lina González-Granados

Conducted by Marin Alsop



Grand opera: the search for an American sound

“First of all it is American, and I believe that American music should be based on American Material”

– George Gershwin

For more than 85 years, Gershwin’s self-proclaimed “Folk Opera” *Porgy and Bess* has delighted audiences with its immediately recognizable hit tunes, flashy and energetic orchestration, and quintessential Americana feeling. From the opening glissando and lightning-fast xylophone melody, audiences are transported across time to the Charleston waterfront tenement neighborhood of Catfish Row. The protagonists of this great American story, the easy-going and doting Porgy, and his loving but troubled soul mate Bess, take us on a complex and multilayered journey of adoration, deceit, heartbreak, and hope of redemption.

For decades, this gem of American opera remained largely under-programmed in major opera houses, having received a lackluster reception upon its premiere in 1935. Numerous Broadway and international revivals, and a 1959 movie adaptation did little to inspire interest in bringing this work to the stage. It would not be until the first commercial recording of the original unedited score in 1976, and the Houston grand opera revival in the same year, that *Porgy and Bess* finally reached a level of recognition that has only seemed to grow in scope over the decades. In recent times, in light of social movements that have swept across the U.S. and the world, *Porgy and Bess* has been used as a catalyst for bringing more diverse casts to the opera stage. It is truly considered one of the most popular and enduring gems of American Grand Opera, and one of the most ambitious works of Gershwin’s wide-ranging, if tragically short lifespan of output.

Porgy and Bess was the result of a fast friendship that formed between Gershwin and Southern Renaissance author DuBose Heyward. Heyward was responsible for the first iteration of the underlying story material, having published his novel *Porgy* in 1925. Gershwin wrote Heyward in 1926, expressing interest in collaborating on an opera adaptation of his novel. However, work on what would become Gershwin’s opera was initially stalled for several years, due to the fact that Heyward’s wife, Dorothy, had already begun work on a staged adaption of his novel.

It would not be until 1933 that DuBose Heyward and George Gershwin would begin their work in earnest. In the summer of 1934, at the author’s invitation, Gershwin traveled to Folly Island in South Carolina, hoping to absorb the authentic color and style of the music he hoped to write. He even attended local church services. Gershwin was particularly enamored with a genre of music known as Gullah Music,

a distinct style that originated from the descendants of enslaved Africans who were brought to the sea islands bordering South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida.

With DuBose Heyward and Gershwin’s brother Ira working on the libretto and lyrics, Gershwin was intent on staying true to the nature and form of Heyward’s original novel, seeking only to heighten the emotional drama of the story. Gershwin set about composing his opera, sourcing his newly assimilated styles into a self-styled “Folk Opera.” In a *New York Times* article in 1935, Gershwin explained his characterization: “*Porgy and Bess* is a folk tale. Its people naturally would sing folk music. When I first began work on the music I decided against the use of original folk material because I wanted the music to be all of one piece. Therefore I wrote my own spirituals and folk songs. But they are still folk music — and therefore, being in operatic form, *Porgy and Bess* becomes a folk opera.”

In many ways, Gershwin's writing in *Porgy and Bess* is characteristic of the bedrock ideology of America as a "melting pot." At times his music is emblematic of European opera, likely a result of his intensive training under the influential theorist and composer Joseph Schillinger; at others, it echoes Tin Pan Alley songs and idioms of jazz and spirituals. The brilliance inherent in this score is his innate ability to merge these seemingly unrelated styles into one cohesive work of art. Gershwin focused on the medium of a "Jazz Opera" because he believed that unlike the briefer lifespan of Broadway shows of his time, he wanted to see *Porgy and Bess* enjoy a more robust future. In the same 1935 *Times* article, he wrote: "I chose the form I have used for *Porgy and Bess* because I believe that music lives only when it is in serious form. When I wrote *Rhapsody in Blue* I took blues and put them in a larger and more serious form. That was twelve years ago and *Rhapsody in Blue* is still pretty much alive, whereas if I had taken the same themes and put them

in songs they would have gone years ago."

Gershwin uses his vocal writing to infuse the humanity of his complex characters, reflected in the demanding vocal lines. For example, Bess's complicated nature is directly portrayed through the strength of "I Loves You, Porgy," which requires the legato power emblematic of Manon in Puccini's *Manon Lescaut*. Porgy's dichotomy is emblematic of the darkness of spirit of Tosca's Scarpia when he kills Crown in Act Three, yet shows incredible tenderness when he nurses Bess back to health. Serena's "My Man's Gone Now" at the funeral of her husband in Act I showcases the singer's virtuosity and brings on the chills of Musetta from Puccini's *La Bohème*. Sportin' Life, a role that Gershwin originally imagined for Cab Calloway, must be a derisive, sarcastic minister in "It Ain't Necessarily So," and a silver-tongued seducer in the jazzy legato stylings of "There's a Boat dat's Leavin' Soon for New York." Even the chorus members play an

integral role, acting not as window dressing but active spectators to the action taking place before them.

Over the years, *Porgy and Bess* has earned a wide range of emotions and reception. Through the years of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements, it was criticized as racist and playing heavily into racial stereotypes. Yet influential musicians such as Duke Ellington were enamored with the music, and later analysis seemed to embrace the idea that the opera belonged as much to the black singers as it did to its all-white authors. In fact, Ira Gershwin stipulated that all U.S. productions be required to stage *Porgy and Bess* with an all-black cast. "This, Gershwin's last serious work," wrote David Ewen, "possesses that richness, vitality and variety of melody, that vigor of rhythm, that spontaneity and freshness we associate with Gershwin's best music. Of all Gershwin's serious works, it is the only one to reveal compassion, humanity and a profound dramatic instinct.

Its roots are in the soil of the Negro people, whom it interprets with humor, tragedy, penetrating characterizations, dramatic power and sympathy." It's important to note that *Porgy and Bess* also represented a surprising historic moment in the United States — its premieres in Charleston, South Carolina and Washington, D.C. would be the first desegregated opera performances to be held in those cities.

The success of Gershwin's opera ultimately comes down to his ability to write a truly enrapturing work that draws the audience into an imaginary and idealized world, featuring a unique cast of singers who display every range of emotion and human complexity, all packaged in a product that is catchy, entertaining, and moving all at once.

Synopsis

Porgy and Bess takes place in Catfish Row, a fictionalized black settlement in Charleston, South Carolina. The opera opens on Clara, a young mother, serenading her child with one of the most recognizable songs from the opera, "Summertime." A host of characters begin to enter the square in Catfish Row, among them our protagonist Porgy. Crown, a stevedore, enters with his wife, Bess, along with Sportin' Life, a local dope peddler. Crown joins a dice game organized by Porgy happening nearby, but upon losing kills his opponent in a drunken rage. He is forced to flee until the heat dies down but tells Bess he will return for her. Sportin' Life, sensing Bess's weakness, attempts to convince her to join him in New York, enticing her with "happy dust," but she eventually rejects him. As Act One draws to a close, the people of Catfish Row come together to mourn for Serena, whose husband has just been killed. Bess, who arrives to pay her

respects, is shunned by the other members of Catfish Row, but finds shelter with Porgy, the one man who defends her. Porgy and Bess fall in love and they are transformed.

In Act Two, the people of Catfish Row prepare to journey to a nearby island for a church picnic. Porgy, content with his new outlook on life and companionship with Bess, sings the happy-go-lucky tune "I Got Plenty o' Nuttin'." Due to a physical impairment he is unable to join Bess on the boat to the picnic. Bess hesitates for a moment, but leaves for the island with the others. Arriving at the picnic, the ever jovial Sportin' Life presents to the Greek Chorus his cynical take on the scripture in "It Ain't Necessarily So." As the picnic winds down and everyone prepares to leave, Bess lags behind and is accosted by Crown. He tells her that her time with Porgy is only temporary and that he will never let her go. Crown prevents Bess from boarding the boat home and drags her off into the woods, his will over her unbroken. Bess stays

on the island with him, and returns a few days later, sick and delirious. Porgy nurses her back to health; he tells her that he knows she has been with Crown, and she is welcome to go with him. Bess declares her love for him, but is afraid that Crown will make good on his threat to return for her. Porgy vows to protect her from Crown, promising her she will never have to be afraid again. In the final scene, a horrible hurricane strikes Catfish Row, incurring immense loss of life for the community; though it is not confirmed, Crown is believed to be among the dead.

As Act Three opens, the community of Catfish Row mourns the loss of their loved ones. Bess takes care of Clara's orphan baby, serenading him once more with her reprisal of "Summertime." Suddenly, Crown enters under the cover of night, intent on stealing Bess away; Porgy confronts him, and in the ensuing fight, kills Crown. As the police confront Porgy over the killing, he is ensnared in the inquiry and hauled

off to jail. Sportin' Life finally entices Bess with "happy dust" and garish imagery of their life in New York, and they depart, leaving Clara's orphan behind. Porgy, finally released from prison, returns to discover Bess has left and decides for the first time to leave the safety of Catfish Row and follow her to New York in the overwhelming finale "Oh Lawd, I'm on My Way."

Lina González-Granados



Libretto

Highlights from **Porgy and Bess**

ACT 1

————— 1 —————

Introduction (*instrumental*)

————— 2 —————

Scene 1

Catfish Row, a summer evening.

Clara

Summertime and the livin' is easy,
fish are jumpin', and the cotton is high.
Oh, yo' daddy's rich, and yo' ma is good
lookin',
so hush, little baby, don' yo' cry.

(*Women's voices in the background: Ooh!*)
One of these mornin's you goin' to rise up
singin',
then you'll spread yo' wings an' you'll take
the sky.
But till that mornin', there's a-nothin' can

harm you
with Daddy an' Mammy standin' by.

All

Ah!

————— 3 —————

Jake

What, that chile ain't asleep yet?
Give him to me. I'll fix him for you.
Lissen to yo' daddy warn you,
'fore you start a-travelling.
Woman may born you,
love you, an' mourn you,
but a woman is a sometime thing,
yes, a woman is a sometime thing.

Mingo

Oh, a woman is a sometime thing.

Jake

Yo' mammy is the first to name you,
an' she'll tie you to her apron string.
Then she'll shame you and she'll blame you
till yo' woman comes to claim you,
'cause a woman is a sometime thing,
yes, a woman is a sometime thing.

Sportin' Life

Oh, a woman is a sometime thing.

Jake

Don't you never let a woman grieve you,
jus' cause she got yo' weddin' ring.
She'll love you and deceive you,
then she'll take yo' clo'es and leave you,
'cause a woman is a sometime thing,
yes, a woman is a sometime thing.

All

Yes, a woman is a sometime thing.

Jake

There now, what I tells you; he's asleep
already.

————— 4 —————

Scene 2

Serena's room, the following night.

Woman

Where is brudder Robbins?

All

He's a-gone, gone, gone, gone, gone, gone,
gone.

Woman

I seen him in de mornin' wid his work clo'es
on.

All

But he's gone, gone, gone, gone, gone,
gone, gone.

Man

An' I seen him in the noontime straight and
tall,
but death a-come a-walkin' in the evenin'
fall.

All

An' he's gone, gone, gone, gone, gone,
gone, gone.

Woman

An' death touched Robbins wid a silver knife.

All

An' he's gone, gone, gone, gone, gone,
gone, gone.

Man

An' he's sittin' in de garden by de tree of life.

All

An' he's gone, gone, gone, gone, gone,
gone, gone.
Oh, he's gone, Robbins is gone!
Hmm...
Gone, gone, gone, gone, gone.

Serena

Who's dat a-comin' climbin' up my steps?

Maria

It's Porgy, an' Bess is a-helpin' him.

Serena

What's dat woman comin' here for? –
I don't need yo' money for to bury my man.

Bess

Dis ain't Crown's money.
Porgy give me my money now.

Serena

All right, then. You can put it in de saucer.

Woman

Come on, sister, come on, brudder,
fill up de saucer till it overflow.

All

Overflow, overflow,
fill up de saucer till it overflow.

Man

Yes, my Jesus!

Woman

'Cause de Lawd will meet you,
yes, de Lawd will meet you at the court-
house do'.

All

Court-house do', court-house do',
de Lawd will meet you at the court-house
do'.

Man

Yes, my Jesus!

Maria

How de saucer stand now, my sister?

All

Oh, he's gone!

Serena

Fourteen dollars an' fifty cent.

Maria

Dat's a-comin' on, sister, you can bury him
soon.

Serena

What am I goin' do if I ain' got de money?

Porgy

Gawd got plenty of money for de saucer.

All

Bless de Lord!

Porgy

An' he goin' to sofften dese people heart
for to fill de saucer till it spill all over.

All

Amen, my Jesus!

Porgy

De Lawd will provide a grave for his chillen.

Maria

Bless de Lawd!

Porgy

An' he got comfort for de widder.

All

Oh, my Jesus!

Porgy

An' he goin' feed his fadderless chillen.

All

Yes Lawd, truth Lawd!

Porgy

An' he goin' raise dis poor sinner up out of
de grave.

Man

Allelujah!

Porgy

An' set him in de shinin' seat ob de
righteous.

Maria

Amen, my Jesus!

5

All

Overflow, overflow,
oh, fill up de saucer till it overflow.
Everybody helpin' now
sendin' our brudder to heaven.
Send down yo' angels, Lawd, oh Lawd!
Lawd, oh Lawd, send down yo' blessing!
Robbins is rising to heaven!

Porgy

Oh, sufferin' Jesus! You knows right from
wrong.
You knows Robbins was a good man,
an' now he's weary an' he's goin' home.
Reach down yo' lovin' han'
an' take our brudder to yo' bosom.
Thank you, Lawd! Bless you, Lawd!

Porgy and all

Lawd fill de saucer till it overflow!

All

Gone, gone, gone, gone, gone, gone.

6

Serena

My man's gone now,
ain't no use a-listenin'
for his tired footsteps
climbin' up de stairs. Ah!

Ole Man Sorrow's
come to keep me comp'ny,
whisperin' beside me
when I say my prayers. Ah!

Ain't dat I min' workin',
work an' me is travellers,
journeyin' togedder
to de promise land.

But Ole Man Sorrow's
marchin' all de way wid me,
tellin' me I'm ole now
since I lose my man.

All

Since she lose her man.

Serena

Since I lose my man.

All

Ah!

Serena

Ole Man Sorrow
sittin' by de fireplace,
lyin' all night long
by me in de bed.

Tellin' me de same thing
mornin', noon an' eb'nin',
that I'm all alone now
since my man is dead.
Ah, since my man is dead.

All

Ah!

Serena

Ah!

ACT 2

7

Scene 1

Catfish Row, a month later.

Porgy

Oh, I got plenty o' nuttin',
an' nuttin's plenty fo' me.

I got no car, got no mule, I got no misery.
De folks wid plenty o' plenty
got a lock an dey door,
'fraid somebody's a-goin' to rob 'em
while dey's out a-makin' more.
What for?

I got no lock an de door,
dat's no way to be,
dey kin steal de rug from de floor,
dat's okeh wid me,
'cause de things dat I prize,
like de stars in de skies
all are free.

Oh, I got plenty o' nuttin',

an' nuttin's plenty fo' me.
I got my gal, got my song,
got Hebben de whole day long!
Hey, no use complainin'!
Got my gal, got my Lawd, got my song.

Women

Porgy change since dat woman
come to live with he.

Serena

How he change!

All

He ain't cross with chillen no more,
an' ain't you hear how he an' Bess
all de time singin' in their room? Happy!

Maria

I tell you dat cripple's happy now.

Porgy

(the men humming along)

I got plenty o' nuttin',
an' nuttin's plenty fo' me.

I got de sun, got de moon,
got de deep blue sea.
De folks wid plenty o' plenty,
got to pray all de day.
Seems wid plenty you sure got to worry
how to keep de debble away.

I ain't afrettin' 'bout hell
till de time arrive.
Never worry long as I'm well,
never one to strive
to be good, to be bad,
what de hell, I is glad I's alive.

(all humming along)

Oh, I got plenty o' nuttin',
an' nuttin's plenty fo' me.
I got my gal, I got my Lawd,
got Hebben de whole day long.
Hey, no use complainin'!
Got my gal, got my Lawd...

All

Got his gal, got his Lawd!

Porgy

...got my song!

8

Sportin' Life

'Lo, Bess, goin' to picnic?

Bess

No, guess I'll stay home.

Sportin' Life

Picnics is all right for these small-town
suckers,
but we is use to the high life, you know.
You an' me, we understands each other.
I can't see for the life of me
what you is hangin' roun' this place for;
why, with yo' looks, Bess,
an' yo' way with the boys,
there's big money for you an' me in New
York.

Bess

I can't remember ever meetin' a nothin'
what I likes less than I does you.

Sportin' Life

Oh, come on, now, how about a little touch
of happy dus' for old time sake?

Bess

It's through with that stuff!

Sportin' Life

Come on, give me yo' han'.

Bess

I tells you, I's through!

Sportin' Life

Oh, just a pinch, not enough to hurt a flea.

Bess

No, no, I done give up dope.

Sportin' Life

Tell that to somebody else,
nobody ever gave up happy dus'.
Oh, come on!
Mhm! Leggo, you dam' cripple!
Gawd, what a grip for a piece of a man!

Porgy

Sportin' Life, you keep away from my
woman,
or I'll break yo' damn neck!

Sportin' Life

I'd like to see a lousy cripple like you
break my neck.

Porgy

If I get my hands on you once more,
you'll see quick enough.

Bess

Go 'long now.

Sportin' Life

All right, yo' men frien's come an' they go,
but remember ole Sportin' Life
an' de happy dus' here all along.

Porgy

Get out, you rat, you louse, you buzzard!

Jake

Honey, we sure goin' strut our stuff today!
Be sure to come 'long to de picnic, Bess.

9

Porgy

Bess, you is my woman now, you is, you is!
An' you mus' laugh an' sing an' dance
for two instead of one.
Want no wrinkle on yo' brow, nohow,
because de sorrow of de past is all done, done.
Oh, Bess, my Bess!
De real happiness is jes' begun.

Bess

Porgy, I's yo' woman now, I is, I is!
An' I ain' never goin' nowhere
'less you shares de fun.
Dere's no wrinkle on my brow, nohow,
but I ain' goin'! You hear me sayin',
if you ain' goin', wid you I'm stayin'.
Porgy, I's yo' woman now!
I's yours forever,
mornin' time an' evenin' time
an' summertime an' wintertime.

Porgy

Mornin' time an' evenin' time
an' summertime an' wintertime,
Bess, you got yo' man.

Bess

Porgy, I's yo' woman now, I is, I is!
An' I ain' never goin' nowhere
'less you shares de fun.
Dere's no wrinkle on my brow, nohow,
but I ain' goin'! You hear me sayin',
if you ain' goin', wid you I'm stayin'.
Porgy, I's yo' woman now! I's yours forever, ...

Porgy

Bess, you is my woman now an' forever.
Dis life is jes' begun,
Bess, we two is one now an' forever.
Oh, Bess, don' min' dose women.
You got yo' Porgy, you loves yo' Porgy,
I knows you means it, I seen it in yo' eyes,
Bess.
We'll go swingin' through de years
a-singin', ...
Hmm...

Bess

...mornin' time an' evenin' time
an' summertime an' wintertime.
Hmm...

Porgy

...mornin' time an' evenin' time
an' summertime an' wintertime.

Bess

Oh, my Porgy, my man Porgy,
from dis minute I'm tellin' you,
I keep dis vow:
Porgy, I's yo' woman now.

Porgy

My Bess, my Bess,
from dis minute I'm tellin' you,
I keep dis vow:
Oh, my Bessie, we's happy now,
we is one now.

All

Oh, I can't sit down!
Got to keep agoin' like de flowin' of a song.
Oh, I can't sit down!
Guess I'll take my honey an' her sunny smile
along!
Today I is gay an' I's free,
jes' a-bubblin', nothin' troublin' me.
Oh, I's gwine to town. I can't sit down!

Happy feelin' in my bones a-stealin',
no concealin', dat is picnic day.
Sho' is dandy, got de lickin' handy.
Me an' Mandy, we is on de way
'cause dis is picnic day.

Oh, I can't sit down!
Got to keep a-jumpin' to de thumpin' of de
drum!
Oh, I can't sit down!
Full of locomotion like an ocean full of rum!
Today I is gay an' I's free,
jes' a-bubblin', nothin' troublin' me.
Oh, I's gwine to town. I can't, jes' can't sit down!

Maria

What's de matter wid you, sister?
Ain't you know you goin' be late for de
picnic?

Bess

I stayin' with Porgy.

Maria

Sho' you're goin'. Ev'rybody's goin'.
You got to help me wid my basket.
Come now, where's yo' hat?
What's dis talk about stayin' home
when ev'rybody's goin' to de picnic?

Bess

Porgy, I hates to go an' leave you all alone.

Porgy

Bess, my honey, I so glad to have you go,
I been wantin' you to be so happy
here in Catfish Row.

Bess

Yes, Porgy, I know.

Porgy

Go, chile, go.

Maria

Come on, chile! Get into dese clo'es.
You stay roun' here an' you'll die
of de lonesome blues.
Come on now, hurry up.
We'll be late for dat boat.

Bess

Goodbye, Porgy.

Porgy

Goodbye, honey.

Bess

Goodbye, Porgy, goodbye.

Porgy

Oh, I got plenty o' nuttin',
an' nuttin' plenty fo' me.

I got my gal, got my Lawd,
got Hebben de whole day long.
Got my gal, got my Lawd, got my song!

12

Scene 2

Kittiwah Island, evening, the same day.

Sportin' Life

It ain't necessarily so...

All

It ain't necessarily so...

Sportin' Life

De t'ings dat yo' li'ble
to read in de Bible,
it ain't necessarily so.

Li'l David was small, but oh my!

All

Li'l David was small, but oh my!

Sportin' Life

He fought big Goliath who lay down an'
dieth.
Li'l David was small, but oh my!

Sportin' Life and all

Wadoo – zim bam boodle-oo,
hoodle ah da wa da – scatty wah.

Sportin' Life

Yeah, yeah, yeah!
Oh, Jonah, he lived in a whale, ...

All

Oh, Jonah, he lived in a whale, ...

Sportin' Life

Now, he made his home
in dat fish's abdomen.
Oh, Jonah, he lived in in a whale.

Li'l Moses was found in a stream, ...

All

Li'l Moses was found in a stream, ...

Sportin' Life

And he floated on water
till Ole Pharaoh's daughter
she fished him, she says, from dat stream.

Sportin' Life and all

Wadoo – zim bam boodle-oo,
hoodle ah da wa da – scatty wah.

Sportin' Life

Yeah, yeah, yeah!
Oh, it ain't necessarily so...

All

It ain't necessarily so...

Sportin' Life

Now, dey tell all you chillun
de debble's a villun,
but it ain't necessarily so.

To get into Hebben,
don' snap for no sebben!
Live clean, don' have no fault.
Oh, I take dat gospel

whenever it's pos'ble,
but wid a grain of salt.

Methus'lah lived nine hundred years...

All

Methus'lah lived nine hundred years...

Sportin' Life

An' now but who calls dat livin'
when no gal'll give in,
to no man what's nine hundred years?

I'm preachin' dis sermon to show,
it ain't nessa..., ain't nessa...,
ain't nessa..., ain't nessa...

Sportin' Life and all

...ain't necessarily so.

Sportin' Life

Dadadada!

Sportin' Life and all

I'm preachin' dis sermon to show,

it ain't nessa..., ain't nessa...,
ain't nessa..., ain't nessa...,
ain't necessarily...

13

Serena

Hear what I tell you,
it's high time you was goin'.

Maria

Hurry up, Bess! Dat boat's gettin' de
whoopin' cough.
Ha ha ha!

Bess

Crown!

Crown

You know very well dis Crown.
I seen you lan' an' I been waitin' all day for
see you.
I mos' dead on this damn island.

Bess

You ain' looks mos' dead, you bigger'n ever.

Crown, I got something to tell you.

Crown

What dat?

Bess

I... I livin' wid Porgy now, and I livin' decent.

Crown

You hear what I tol' you,
I say in a couple ob weeks I's comin' for you,
an' you is goin' tote fair,
lessen you wants to meet yo' Gawd,
you gets dat?

Bess

Take yo' han's off me,
I goin' miss dat boat.

Crown

You tellin' me dat you'd rather have
dat cripple dan Crown?

Bess

It's like dis, Crown,

I's the only woman Porgy ever had,
an' I's thinkin' now, how it will be tonight
when all these other people
get back to Catfish Row.
He'll be sittin' an' watchin' the big front gate,
a-countin' 'em off, waitin' for Bess.
An' when the las' woman goes home to
her man an' I ain' there...

Crown

Ha ha ha!

Bess

Lemme go, Crown!
You can get plenty other women.

Crown

What I wants wid other woman?
I gots a woman an' dat's you, see!

14

Bess

Oh...
What you want wid Bess?
She's gettin' ole now;

take a fine young gal for to satisfy Crown.
Look at this chest
an' look at these arms you got.
You know how it's always been with me,
these five years I been yo' woman,
You could kick me in the street,
then when you wanted me back
you could whistle, an' there I was
back again, lickin' yo' han'.
There's plenty better lookin' gal than Bess.

Can' you see, I'm with Porgy,
now and forever.
I am his woman, he would die without me.
Oh, Crown, won't you let me go to my man,
to my man.
He is a cripple an' needs my love, all my
love.
What you want wid Bess?
Oh, let me go to my man!

Crown

What I wants wid other woman,
I gots a woman, yes, an' dat is you,
yes, dat is you, yes,

I need you now an' you're mine
jus' as long as I want you.
No cripple's goin' take my woman from me.
You got a man tonight an' that is Crown,
yes Crown.
You're my woman, Bess,
I'm tellin' you, now I'm your man!

Bess

What you want with Bess?
Lemme go, hear dat boat,
it's goin' without me!

Crown

You ain't goin' nowhere!

Bess

Take yo' hands off me, I say,
yo' hands, yo' hands, yo' hands!

Crown

I know you ain' change –
wid you and me it always be the same.
Get in dat thicket!

Scene 3

Catfish Row, before dawn, a week later.

Porgy

Now de time, oh Gawd, now de time...

Bess

Porgy, Porgy, dat you there, ain' it?

Porgy

Thank Gawd, thank Gawd!

Bess

I lonesome here all by myself,
it's hot in there,
let me sit here with you in the cool.

Porgy

Oh, Bess! Bess!

Bess

I been sick, ain't I?

Porgy

You been very sick.
But now I got you back, Bess.

Bess

How long I been sick?

Porgy

Over a week now.
You come back from Kittiwah
with eye like fireball,
an' Maria get you into bed,
an' you ain' know me.
What's de matter, Bess?

Bess

I guess I ain' know nuttin' wid de fever,
or I ain' come back at all.

Porgy

Dat's all right, honey,
don't you worry, honey,
I know you been with Crown.

Bess

How you know?

Porgy

Gawd give cripple to understan'
many thing he ain' give strong men.

Bess

You ain' want me to go 'way?

Porgy

No, no, I ain' want you to go.
How things stan' 'tween you an' Crown?

Bess

He's comin' for me
when de cotton come to town.

Porgy

You goin'?

Bess

I tell 'im, yes.
Porgy, Gawd, man!
Why yo' muscle pull up like that?

It make me afraid.

Porgy

You ain' got nuttin' to be afraid of;
I ain' try to keep no woman
what don't want to stay.
If you want to go to Crown,
dat's for you to say.

Bess

I wants to stay here, but I ain't worthy.
You is too decent to understand.
For when I see him he hypnotize me,
when he take hold of me with his hot hand.
Someday I know he's coming back to call
me.
He's goin' to handle me an' hold me so.
It's goin' to be like dyin', Porgy, deep inside
me—
but when he calls, I know I have to go.

Porgy

If dere warn't no Crown, Bess,
If dere was only jus' you an' Porgy, what
den?

Bess

I loves you, Porgy, don' let him take me,
don' let him handle me an' drive me mad.
If you kin keep me, I wants to stay here
wid you forever, an' I'd be glad.

Porgy

There, there, Bess,
you don' need to be afraid no mo',
You's picked up happiness and laid yo'
worries down,
you goin' live easy, you goin' live high,
you goin' outshine every woman in dis town.
An' remember, when Crown come,
that's my business, Bess!

Bess

I loves you, Porgy, don' let him take me,
don' let him handle me with his hot han',
if you kin keep me I wants to stay here
wid you forever. I got my man.

Porgy

What you think I is anyway, to let dat dirty
houn'dog

steal my woman?

If you wants to stay wid Porgy, you goin'
stay.

You got a home now, Honey, an' you got
love.

So no mo' cryin', can't you understand?

You goin' to go about yo' business, singin'
'cause you got Porgy, you got a man.

ACT 3

————— 16 —————

Scene 1

Catfish Row, the next night.

Andantino dolente (instrumental)

————— 17 —————

All

Clara, Clara,
don't you be downhearted,
Clara, Clara,
don't you be sad an' lonesome.
Jesus is walkin' on de water,
rise up an' follow Him home.
Oh, Lawd, oh my Jesus,
rise up an' follow Him home.

Jake, Jake,
don't you be downhearted,
Jake, Jake,
don't you be sad an' lonesome.
Jesus is walkin' on de water,
rise up an' follow Him home.

Oh, Lawd, oh my Jesus,
rise up an' follow Him home.

18

Scene 2

Catfish Row, the next afternoon.

Sportin' Life

Cheer up, sistuh,
ole Sportin' Life givin' you de stuff
for scare away dem lonesome blues.

Bess

Happy dus'! I ain' want none of dat stuff,
I tells you, take dat stuff away, Buzzard!

Sportin' Life

Buzzard?!
Mhmm... that's the thing, ain' it?
An' membuh there's plenty more
where that came from.
Listen:

19

Sportin' Life

There's a boat dat's leavin' soon for New York,
come wid me, dat's where we belong, sister.
You an' me kin live dat high life in New York,
come wid me, dere you can't go wrong,
sister.

I'll buy you de swellest mansion
up on upper Fi'th Avenue,
an' through Harlem we'll go struttin',
we'll go a-struttin',
an' dere'll be nuttin'
too good for you.

I'll dress you in silks and satins
in de latest Paris styles.
All de blues you'll be forgettin',
you'll be forgettin',
there'll be no frettin',
jes' nothin' but smiles.
Come along wid me, dat's de place,
don't be a fool, come along, come along.

There's a boat dat's leavin' soon for New York,

come wid me,
dat's where we belong, sistuh,
dat's where we belong!
Come on, Bess!

20

Bess

You low crawlin' hound!
Get away from my door,
I tells you, leave it, you rattlesnake,
dat's what you is, rattlesnake!

Sportin' Life

Rattlesnake!?—
Don't want a second shot, eh!
All right, I'll leave it here.
Maybe you'll change yo' mind.

21

Scene 3

Catfish Row, a week later.

Porgy

Thank Gawd I's home again!

All

Welcome home, Porgy.
We're all so glad you is back again.

Porgy

Why, hello, if dere ain't Serena,
you sho' work fast, sistuh.
I jus' been gone a week,
an' here you are wid a new baby.

Here, hol' on, let me see dat chile,
dat's Bess' baby ain' it? Where you get it?
Where Bess anyhow? She ain' answer me.

Bess, ain' you here? Bess!
Maria, Maria, where's Bess, tell me quick!

Maria

Bess is gone. An' Serena take dis chile
to give 'im a Christian raisin'.

Porgy

You ain' mean Bess dead?

Serena

She worse than dead, Porgy.
She gave herself to de debbil,
but she still livin',
an' she gone far away.

Porgy

Alive, Bess is alive! Where Bess gone?

Mingo

Noo York.

Porgy

I hear you say Noo York. Where dat?

Mingo

A thousand mile from here.

Porgy

Which way Noo York?

Maria

It's way up North pas' de custom house.

Porgy

Bring my goat!

All

Where you goin', Porgy?

Porgy

Ain't you say Bess gone to Noo York?
Dat's where I goin', I got to be wid Bess.
Gawd, help me to fin' her.
I'm on my way!

— 22 —

Porgy

Oh Lawd, I'm on my way...

Porgy and all

I'm on my way to a Heav'nly Lan'.
I'll ride dat long, long road,
if You are there to guide my han'.

Oh Lawd, I'm on my way.
I'm on my way to a Heav'nly Lan'.
Oh Lawd, it's a long, long way,
but You'll be there to take my han'.



The Philadelphia Orchestra

2019–2020 Season

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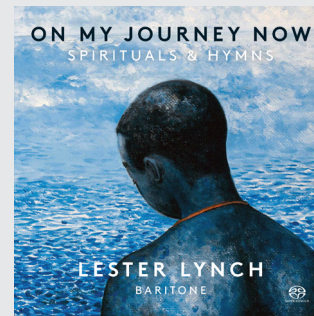
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The Philadelphia Orchestra
Yannick Nézet-Séguin Music Director

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